

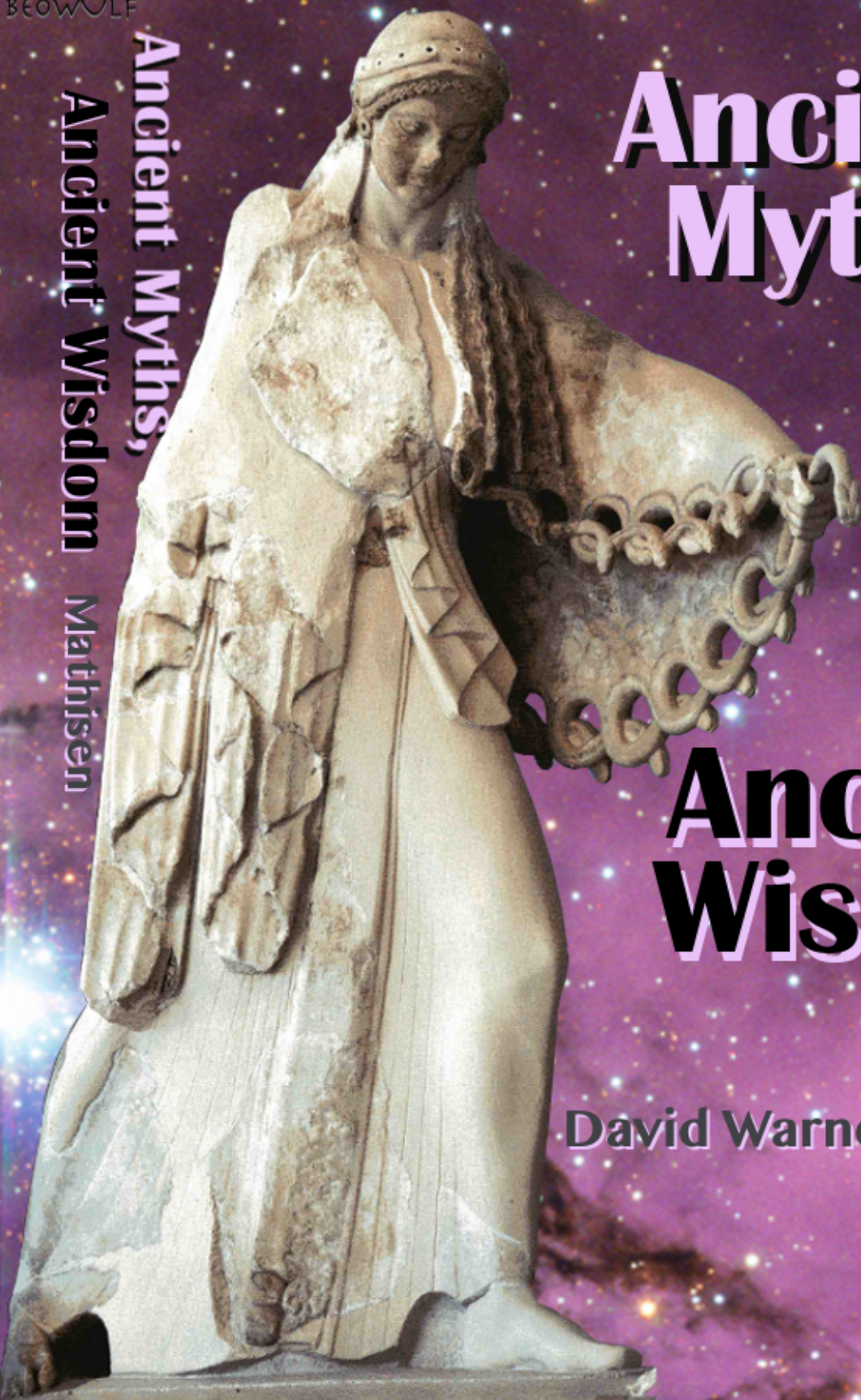
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# Ancient Myths,

# Ancient Wisdom

David Warner Mathisen

Ancient Myths,  
Ancient Wisdom Mathisen



# Ancient Myths, Ancient Wisdom:

Recovering humanity's  
forgotten inheritance  
through  
Celestial Mythology

David Warner Mathisen

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## Introduction

This book is a collection of selections from essays published on my blog, *The Mathisen Corollary* (also available on my newer website, *Star Myths of the World*), exploring the connection between the world's ancient myths and the heavenly landscape of the constellations and galaxies, through which move the sun, the moon, and the visible planets.

The blog started in April of 2011, and by the fall of 2017 is now nearing its first thousandth post. The essays included here are selected from those first one thousand blog posts, organized by general subject and cross-referenced by page number (so that if one essay refers to something in another essay, the page number will be included, similar to the links within the original posts).

During the earliest history of the blog, many posts were devoted to the subject of geology, and the overwhelming amount of evidence that our planet has suffered a major catastrophe in its past. While this is an extremely important topic, and related to the material that later became the main focus of most discussion (the connections between the stars and the myths), most of the material included here focuses upon the subject of "celestial mythology" -- the evidence that the sacred stories preserved by virtually every culture around the world, on every inhabited continent and island, appear to be built upon a common and very ancient system of celestial metaphor.

This system can already be seen to be in operation and fully mature in the earliest human texts to have survived the ravages of the millennia -- such as the Pyramid Texts of ancient Egypt, or the hardened clay tablets containing the Gilgamesh cycle from the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. There are also hints (discussed in some of the essays contained within) that this system was in operation in ancient Japan, ancient China, and even perhaps in the extremely ancient and very mysterious Indus - Saraswati Valley civilizations, of which the ancient city-complex of Mohenjo Daro was a part.



Thus this ancient system of celestial metaphor appears (perhaps) to be a legacy of some even more ancient culture or civilization, of which conventional academia knows (or at least admits) little or nothing. It is possible that this system comes from the time of the cultures responsible for even more ancient monuments, of which the buried stone circles of Göbekli Tepe are an example -- cultures so ancient that they predated the earliest dynasties of ancient Egypt by at least as many millennia as those early dynasties of Egypt predate our own time.

This evidence in the world's ancient myths thus points to the possibility that some catastrophe (or catastrophes) destroyed a culture or civilization of great antiquity, of which the later ancient civilizations (and their myths) were but a much later echo -- perhaps even a much later "re-start" after a long period of centuries in hiding, perhaps even physically underground, due to some catastrophe of unimaginable magnitude.

For this reason, the evidence in earth's geology (and in other parts of our solar system) which points to a cataclysm (or cataclysms) in our planet's history is extremely relevant to the entire story of the myths. However, because much of my earlier examination of the geology of our planet was done during a time when I still took the texts of the Bible (and thus the description of the Genesis Flood) literally, and because I have now found abundant evidence to suggest that the Genesis Flood texts can be shown to be built upon celestial metaphor, and thus to describe a *celestial* flood -- whatever the history of cataclysmic flooding on our planet, and there is certainly plenty of evidence for it -- in this volume the blog posts selected will not focus so much on the geological discussions but rather the celestial aspects of the myths, and what they might mean for us today.

The broad subject groupings are used in order to make this volume a little more coherent, but of course all of these topics connect and intertwine, which means that the dividing lines between the various sections are by no means sharp and distinct, and thus in some cases an essay's inclusion in the subject in which

you find it could be debated. The general progression of subjects begins with the mechanics of the heavens themselves – what causes the heavenly phenomena we observe from our vantage point on earth, including the motions of the moon and visible planets and of course the constellations – followed by a dive into the connections between these heavenly phenomena and the ancient wisdom preserved in the myths and traditions found in different cultures around the globe, and through the millennia, and concluding with essays exploring the wide-ranging ramifications of all of this evidence.

The posts within each section follow chronological order from their original publication date. They have only been lightly edited (in order to change links into page-number references, for example, or to remove a reference to an embedded video which for obvious reasons cannot be included in a book format). Other than those types of edits, the content of the post is as published on the date indicated – and because there has been some evolution of my thought on certain subjects over the years, some changes may be detected as the reader proceeds through each section.

I feel that some of my best writing is done on the blog – it is a medium and a format which lends itself to essays, and writing them may have a "more relaxed" feel than the act of writing a book. In order to preserve those writings in a format that is not dependent upon electricity or upon access to the world-wide web, selections from the blog have been forced out of the world of datacenters and servers, where those posts have been stored in digital form, and pressed into the pages of the analog volume you now hold in your hands.

The format of a book has certain advantages as well. Beyond the obvious fact that its contents cannot be altered or erased or restricted the way something in digital form can be, it is still much faster to flip through the pages of a physical book in order to peruse hundreds of different pieces of writing. It is true that the "search" function can help one navigate rapidly to any part of the

online version of the blog, but searching requires knowing at least something about what you are looking for. Browsing through several hundred past blog posts written over the course of more than 72 months in an online format is much more time consuming and tedious than is flipping through the pages of a physical book.

In addition, there is an index at the back, to help replicate the "search" function which is one of the admitted strengths of the digital format of the blog. When one essay references another in this collection, **a page-number will be indicated using superscript**, which thus functions as a sort of "link" to that other essay, allowing you to turn to that page if you want to see the essay being referenced. If an essay references a post that is not included in this collection, then no superscript number will be indicated, but you can of course look for the title of the post online and find it there.

I hope you will enjoy these selections from the first 1,000 posts, and that their message will in some way be a blessing to you in this incarnate life.

Paso Robles, California  
October, 2017

Again: as you read through the text of this book, when you see a little number in "superscript" (like the number 331 right here<sup>331</sup>), that number refers to a **page number** to which you may turn for the essay which is being referenced in the text (similar to a "link").

# Esotericism and the *Ancient System*





## Know Thyself

2014 March 29

In an important dialogue by Plato known as the *Phaedrus*, the discussion examines the subject of self-knowledge, the meaning of the concept of "knowing oneself," and the role of love in that quest for self-knowledge.

The command to "know thyself" was famously said to have been inscribed upon the temple at Delphi, and Plato has Socrates refer somewhat ironically to this famous dictum early in the *Phaedrus*. As Socrates and Phaedrus are walking along the path of the stream of the Ilissus, Phaedrus asks Socrates whether he was correct in deducing that it was "somewhere about here that they say Boreas seized Orithyia from the river" (referring to a famously beautiful daughter of a legendary king of Athens, who was seized by the god of the north wind, Boreas, and carried

away to be his bride, becoming the mother of two of the heroes who sailed on the *Argos* in search of the Golden Fleece – the incident is described by the later Roman poet Ovid in *Metamorphoses* Book VI, lines 979 through 1038).

Socrates says he believes the abduction took place about a quarter of a mile lower down, and not where the two are currently walking. Phaedrus then asks Socrates whether he believes the story to be true.

Plato has Socrates reply with a wonderful passage in which Socrates says he would be "quite in the fashion" if he disbelieved the tale, and if he came up with some kind of rationalistic explanation for the mythological story, such as if he were to soberly explain that the myth originated when the maiden was blown by a gust of wind over the edge of some steep rocks to her death (quotations from the *Phaedrus* used in this discussion come from the translation of Reginald Hackforth, 1887 - 1957).

Socrates then goes on to say that such theories are "no doubt attractive" but are merely the "invention of clever, industrious people who are not exactly to be envied," (a masterful example of "damning with faint praise") – in other words, that those pedantic scholars who spend their time trying to reduce mythological stories to literal episodes from some imagined history are completely misguided, and that those who indulge in manufacturing such theories deserve more to be pitied than to be taken seriously.

Plato then has Socrates declare of those who want to reduce every myth to some kind of historical, literal episode:

If our skeptic, with his somewhat crude science, means to reduce every one of them to the standard of probability, he'll need a deal of time for it. I myself have certainly no time for the business, and I'll tell you why, my friend. I can't as yet 'know myself,' as the inscription at Delphi enjoins, and so long as that ignorance remains it seems ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters. Consequently I don't bother

about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries, as I have just said, rather to myself, to discover whether I really am a more complex creature and more puffed up with pride than Typhon, or a simpler, gentler being whom heaven has blessed with a quiet, un-Typhonic nature. By the way, isn't this the tree we were making for? 229e - 230b.

It is undoubtedly no accident that Plato has Socrates refer to the inscription from the temple at Delphi at this particular point in the dialogue, nor that Socrates illustrates his ongoing quest to obey that dictum with a reference to a mythological being (Typhon, and the question of whether or not he, Socrates, is "more puffed up with pride than Typhon").

Through Socrates, Plato is here clearly slamming those who completely miss the point of the "ancient treasure" of mythology, and telling us in no uncertain terms that the purpose of the myths is not to preserve some historical, literal event from the past (albeit in slightly exaggerated form, with a girl falling to her death from some rocks transformed into a beautiful maiden being abducted by the god of the bitter north wind), but rather that the purpose of the myths has to do with the Delphic inscription "KNOW THYSELF." To drive the point home, Plato has Socrates illustrate by telling Phaedrus that he himself applies the myth of Typhon to his own examination of himself, and the danger of becoming "puffed up with pride" (like Typhon).

This little passage from the *Phaedrus*, it seems, sheds some extremely helpful light on the famous dictum from Delphi. It reveals that, far from being a mere collection of fanciful tales, or even a compendium of ancient historical events embellished with touches of the fabulous, the sacred myth-traditions of the world were actually an exquisite set of instruments designed to facilitate the quest for self-knowledge, and the removal of the ignorance which Socrates says should be the primary object towards which we devote our time and energy.

But how, exactly, do the sacred mythologies enable us to emerge from our state of ignorance into greater self-knowledge?

As the conversation in the *Phaedrus* moves on from the above passage, it plunges first into a discussion of the nature of love, and then proceeds from there into a discussion of the soul and its incarnation. In 245c - 245e of the dialogue, Socrates determines from his foregoing examination of love that the soul is immortal, that it comes into a body and "*besouls*" the body, and that (at the beginning of section 246), that "it must follow that soul is not born and does not die."

This, in fact, is *precisely* what the ancient mythologies of the world teach us, using an exquisite system of metaphor, according to the penetrating analysis of Alvin Boyd Kuhn, in works such as his *Lost Light* (1940). Through their beautiful allegories, the myths are teaching us just what Plato has Socrates expounding in the *Phaedrus*: that soul is immortal, that we descend into the body only to rise up again into the world of spirit, and descend into the body again, as many times as necessary to obtain the *gnosis* (and overcome the ignorance) that Socrates and the inscription at Delphi are talking about.

In fact, we could tentatively explicate the myth of Orithyia being seized by the wind-god from the river as a metaphorical depiction of the aspect of the soul's journey when it leaves the world of the incarnation (the river, or the body -- the body being composed largely of water and minerals, the lower elements) and returns again to the realm of the spirit (the realms of air and fire, the higher elements or those more illustrative of the spiritual sphere).

The later philosopher (and priest of the oracle at Delphi) Plutarch, in his own dialogue examining the meaning of the inscriptions at Delphi (including the mysterious inscription of the letter "E" at Delphi, which is a subject for another discussion at another time), certainly seems to hint at the same interpretation. In his famous essay *On the 'E' at Delphi*, Plutarch puts these words into the mouth of his own mentor, Ammonius

(beginning in section XVII and carrying on into section XVIII and XIX):

All mortal nature is in a middle state between becoming and perishing, and presents but an appearance, a faint unstable image, of itself. If you strain the intellect, and wish to grasp this, it is as with water; compress it too much and force it violently into one space as it tries to flow through, and you destroy the enveloping substance. [. . .] "It is impossible to go into the same river twice," said Heraclitus; no more can you grasp mortal being twice, so as to hold it. So sharp and so swift its change; it scatters and brings together again, nay not again, no nor afterwards; even while it is being formed it fails, it approaches, and it is gone. Hence becoming never ends in being, for the process never leaves off, or is stayed. [. . .] Yet we fear (how absurdly!) a single death, we who have died so many deaths, and yet are dying. For it is not only that, as Heraclitus would say, "death of fire is birth of air," and "death of air is birth of water"; the thing is much clearer in our own selves. [. . .] What then really is? That which is eternal, was never brought into being, is never destroyed, to which no time ever brings change."

This concept is closely related to the discussion posted over a year ago concerning the myth of Narcissus, a discussion which helps to outline the importance of the concept of love in this whole discussion (the concept of love being the springboard in the *Phaedrus* which Plato uses to launch into his examination of this topic). In a post examining some of the assertions of the neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus entitled "Plotinus and the upward way,"<sup>463</sup> we saw that

Plotinus seems to teach that love of beauty is an entry-gate to the upward way, but that the "lesson" for the lover of beauty is to learn to disentangle from being enamored with one specific embodied form (whatever form that lover of beauty is enamored with) and to see that specific form of beauty as a pointer to "beauty everywhere" (this being the

very opposite of Narcissus, who could only see beauty in himself), and ultimately to the "One Principle underlying all."

Again, this conclusion has strong resonances with the theme of Plato's *Phaedrus*.

As we begin to wrap up this examination, we might pause on the myth-metaphor of Narcissus, another figure who (like Orithyia) is pictured next to an enchanting body of water. As we saw in that previous examination of Narcissus,<sup>463</sup> certain ancient philosophers appear to have interpreted his myth as symbolic of the descent of the soul into this incarnational world, and his fate as a warning against certain tendencies (perhaps even tendencies related to those which Socrates examined himself for, when he referenced the puffed-up self-pride of Typhon). Socrates would surely laugh at us and imply that we were wasting our time if we were to try to go on a scholarly quest to uncover the "historical Narcissus" and to identify some particularly handsome or vain young prince from history who might have inspired the "legend of Narcissus." Such stories are intended to provide us with a tool for self-reflection and ultimately self-knowledge, knowledge about the human condition and our purpose in this life (or this incarnation, if you believe the interpretation that the ancients and Alvin Boyd Kuhn espouse).

If the famous command from the oracle at Delphi to "Know thyself" was intended to tell us to learn that (in Plato's words) our physical existence is temporary and that in reality, "soul is not born and does not die," and that (in Plutarch's words) "we fear (how absurdly!) a single death, we who have died so many deaths," then it follows that those who – either mistakenly, or malevolently – try to reduce the myths to literal or historical interpretations are doing the world a great disservice. They are placing a tremendous obstacle in the path of those who would learn the truth about the human condition, knowledge which is essential in the pursuit of that Delphic command.



Unfortunately, such "clever, industrious people who are not exactly to be envied" are perhaps even more prevalent in our day than they seem to have been in the time of Plato, Socrates, and Phaedrus.

## Scarab, Ankh and Djed



2014 August 23

The importance of the ancient symbol of the Ankh simply cannot be overstated. It is a symbol of eternal life, and as such it is closely associated with two other important ancient symbols, the Scarab and the Djed-column.

Previous posts have explored the abundant evidence which suggests that the Ankh (along with other cross-symbols) represents the two natures which join together in our human existence: the material or animal nature symbolized by the horizontal bar, and the spiritual nature, symbolized by the vertical column, which in the case of the Ankh is surmounted by the circle representative of the infinite or the unending.

The Ankh as a symbol is closely related to the Djed column, which is also depicted as having a horizontal component (when the Djed is cast down, representing our physical incarnation in "animal" matter) and a vertical component (when the Djed is raised up, representing the uplifting of our spiritual nature and representative of spiritual life).

So, the connection between the symbology of the Ankh and the symbology of the Djed is fairly straightforward and easy to understand. But, how are these two symbols connected to the symbol of the Scarab? Let's examine the question more closely – the answer contains many breathtaking connections and sheds light on the exquisite profundity of the ancient wisdom, bequeathed to us in the mythology and symbology of the human race.

In the image above, an elaborate necklace from the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amun is depicted, featuring a central figure of a Scarab beetle with uplifted arms, upon what I would interpret as being (based upon evidence presented below) the solar bark. The Scarab is flanked most immediately by two columns which each feature a prominent Ankh symbol (in dark blue) and immediately above each Ankh for good measure is a Djed column (in light blue, with alternating red and blue segments in the "spinal" columns at the top of each Djed).

On either side of the Scarab, just outside of the two Ankh-adorned columns, are two *uraeus* serpents, each with a solar disc above its head, and above the upraised arms of the Scarab itself is another, larger solar disc. On either side of this larger solar disc are yet two more *uraeus* serpents, and suspended from each is another Ankh.

As can be seen from the image above, this elaborate ornament continues on beyond the section in the close-up view shown above: the wide "straps" of the necklace on either side are adorned with another pair of Scarabs, each of which are surmounted by another solar disc (not shown in the image

above), this time in gold, and again flanked by two *uraeus* serpents. Above these Scarabs and solar discs can be found yet another pair of *uraeus* serpents (on each "strap"), this time flanking a central Ankh symbol (on each "strap").

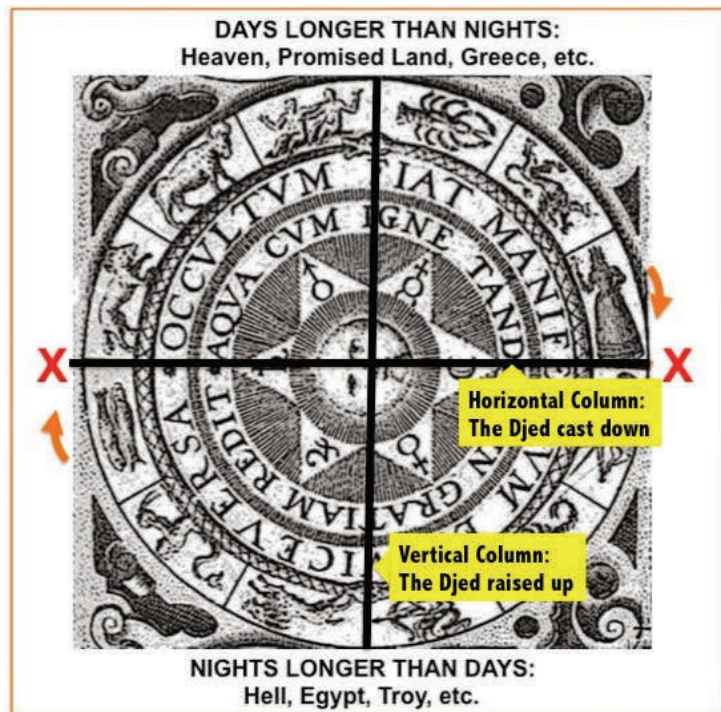
I believe that all of these symbols are powerfully depicting variations upon the same theme, which is the raising-up of the immortal, spiritual component in the individual, symbolized by the raising of the Djed column, which is associated with the vertical and immortal portion of the Egyptian cross (the Ankh), and which is *also symbolized by the vertical line or "column" between the two solstices* of the year on the zodiac wheel of the annual solar cycle.

As discussed in other posts, the vertical pillar of the solstices was connected in mythology with *the Djed column raised up*, and also with the constellation of Cancer the Crab, the sign which commences at the point of summer solstice (a fact which is commemorated in the name of the Tropic of Cancer, which is the latitudinal circle designating the furthest north that the direct rays of the sun will reach each year, on the day of the northern hemisphere's summer solstice, at the start of the astrological sign of Cancer). Because the constellation of Cancer itself appears to have outstretched or upraised arms, this "top of the solstice column" is mythologically associated and symbolized by the upraised arms of Cancer the Crab – and, as we have seen in that same post just linked, by the upraised arms of Moses in the battle against the Amalekites in Exodus 17, as well as the upraised arms of the Egyptian god Shu.

And, as that post also points out, the Ankh symbol (which is closely associated with the symbol of the Djed-column "raised up") itself was often depicted with a pair of human arms raised upwards in just the same way (a famous image from the Papyrus of Ani showing the Ankh with upraised arms, surmounting a Djed column flanked by Isis and Nephthys, has been included in several previous blog posts, such as this one<sup>127</sup>).

And with that in mind, we can now understand the symbology of the Scarab, and why it is "of a piece" with the Ankhs and the Djed columns in this necklace!

The understanding that these upraised arms are associated with Cancer the Crab, whose position at the very summit of the year places him at the top of the vertical Djed column that can be envisioned connecting the solstice-points on the zodiac wheel, and whose upraised arms are responsible for the upraised arms that are sometimes depicted on the Ankh-cross, enables us to see that the Scarab itself is another way of recalling Cancer the Crab and the uplifted arms – symbolic of the vertical, spiritual, eternal force in every man and woman. (Below is an image of the zodiac wheel, with the horizontal and vertical lines depicted: you can see the sign of Cancer with its outstretched arms, looking in this 1618 illustration a bit more like a Lobster than a Crab, at the top of the vertical column and to the "right of the line," just past the point of summer solstice):

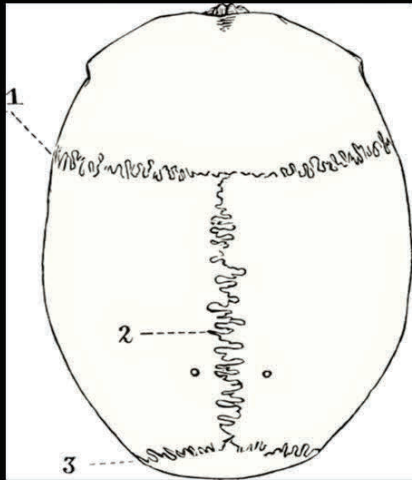


For this reason, we can safely assert that the Scarab in this necklace, surrounded as it is by Ankhs and Djeds, and depicted as it is with upraised arms, is symbolic of the summer solstice, and that the disc above its head must be a solar disc, and the bark on which it and the *uraeus* serpents are positioned must be a solar bark.

The two serpents, by the way, are also closely associated with the vertical Djed-column -- if we imagine the ancient symbol of the caduceus, we will instantly perceive that these two serpents are positioned on either side of all these central (spinal) column images (the Ankh, the Djed, and the Scarab) in just the same way that the two serpents are positioned at the top of the caduceus column (and intertwine all the way down). The fact that elsewhere upon the same necklace the two serpents are depicted as flanking an Ankh shows that the symbols of the Ankh and the Scarab are closely connected and practically interchangeable here.

As has been explored in numerous previous posts as well, the Djed column is closely associated with the "backbone of Osiris," and hence with the backbone of every incarnated man and woman (Osiris being the deity of the underworld and of our incarnated state, as discussed at greater length in *The Undying Stars*). Most appropriate it is, then, to note the connection pointed out by R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz (and reiterated by John Anthony West in *Serpent in the Sky*) between the imagery of the Egyptian Scarab and the top-down view of the crown of the human skull, discussed on page 96 of that book and accompanied by an illustration similar to the one below:





Left: Human skull, top view, showing sutures.  
 Right: Egyptian Scarab ("Marriage Scarab" of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye – likely the father & mother of Akhenaten). Similarity of skull and scarab was noted by Schwaller de Lubicz and discussed in John Anthony West's *Serpent in the Sky* (1979) page 97.  
 Images: Wikimedia Commons.

If we consider that the top of the skull forms the very pinnacle of the vertical "Djed-column" in each man or woman, corresponding to the very peak or crown of the year at the summer solstice (representative of Heaven itself, and in its very domed shape most representative of the dome of heaven in the microcosm of the human body, which reflects the macrocosm of the infinite dome of the universe), then it is most appropriate that a Scarab symbol (reminiscent of the sign of Cancer the Crab, which is located at the solstice-summit of the year) is found there on the top of each of our heads!

In a future post we will explore further the significance of the name of the Ankh itself, following on the illuminating analysis of Alvin Boyd Kuhn on the subject. Some aspects of this important concept have already been touched upon, in a previous post about the ancient Vedic concept of the Vajra, or Thunderbolt, which we saw in that post to be almost certainly connected to the concept of the raising of the Djed column and the "backbone of Osiris." There, we saw evidence from the work of Alvin Boyd Kuhn that

Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋節  
and the  
Total Lunar Eclipse ("Blood Moon") of September 2015



2015 September 25

This Sunday, September 27, marks the beginning of the traditional celebration of mid-Autumn festival in China and Vietnam. It is a very ancient holiday, its observance stretching back to as early as 3600 years ago, and perhaps even earlier, and it is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture. Great effort is usually made to travel and be with family on this day, much like Thanksgiving in the US, and for several days around the holiday many businesses and markets are closed as people make their way back to the places where they grew up, in order to celebrate with their extended families.

The Chinese characters for this holiday are 中秋節 which is pronounced *Zhong Qiu Jie* in Mandarin and *Jung Chau Jit* in Cantonese, and which translates literally into "Mid-Autumn-Day" or "Middle-Fall-Holiday" (or even more literally the "Mid-Autumn-Node").

*Jung Chau Jit* is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, the fifteenth day corresponding in general to the full moon in a lunar month (because a lunar month commences with a new moon, and the moon waxes for fourteen days to become full, which happens on the fifteenth day, and then wanes for fourteen more days to the point of another new moon), and so this festival always falls very close to or directly upon the day of a full moon, as it does this year.

Thus, the Mid-Autumn Holiday is also a Moon Festival, and is in fact often called the Moon Festival, and an important tradition during the days (weeks!) leading up to this holiday and on the day of the holiday itself is the giving of round "mooncakes," light gold in color and filled with a variety of different kinds of heavy, sweet fillings, and sometimes with a candied egg yolk:



These are traditionally served by being cut carefully into four equal quarters (a little combination cutting-and-serving implement, something like a small version of a cake trowel, is often included in commercially-sold mooncake boxes or packages), with each person present being given one section. The

cakes themselves often have "blessing" words baked into the top of them.

Being a Moon Festival, the holiday is also closely associated with the Moon Goddess, pictured at top, whose name is 嫦娥 which is pronounced *Chang Er* in Mandarin and *Seung Ngo* in Cantonese and translates rather directly into "Chang the Beautiful" or "Seung the Beautiful."

There is a legend about Seung Ngo and her husband, 后羿, being banished from the heavenly realms by the Jade Emperor (whom we met in the earlier discussion of the Lantern Festival, which takes place in the first lunar month) and having to live down upon the earth as mortals (his name is pronounced Hou Yi in Mandarin and Hau Ngai in Cantonese, and it means something like "King Archer").

In the legend, he is distraught at the idea that his beautiful wife, having been banished from the celestial realms, is now faced with mortality, and so he seeks and eventually obtains an elixir of immortality which will restore their immortality to them. However, as so often happens in such myths, the plan goes awry, when she is forced to drink it all herself (either to keep it from a marauding robber who breaks in to steal it from her while her husband is away, or because she is overcome with curiosity while he is asleep, and drinks the whole elixir without knowing the consequences).

As soon as she does, she feels herself floating up into the heavens, without her unfortunate husband, who is left behind as a mortal. The two are thus separated forever, but Seung Ngo settles on the Moon, where she can look down upon Hau Ngai, and he can gaze up to her new home and think of her.

Having examined some of the most prominent aspects of this important ancient holy day, we are now in a position to benefit from the deep knowledge contained within its symbols and forms.





R. Smirke R.A. pinxit.

A. Smith A.R.A. sculpsit.

THE GENIUS OF THE LAMP APPEARING  
TO ALADDIN AND HIS MOTHER.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM MILLER, OLD BOND STREET, APRIL 1802.

## The Arabian Nights: can you unlock their celestial metaphors?

2014 October 24

Richard Francis Burton (1821 - 1890) "was one of those Victorians whose energy and achievements make any modern man quail," in the words of the novelist A. S. Byatt in the introduction to Burton's translation of the *Thousand Nights and a Night*, also commonly known as the *Thousand and One Nights*, or the *Arabian Nights* (xv). A partial list of examples ensues, of course:

He lived like one of his own heroes, travelling in Goa, Equatorial Africa, Brazil, India, and the Middle East. He took part in the Crimean war. He went with J. H. Speke to find the source of the Nile and discovered Lake Tanganyika. He disguised in himself as an Afghan dervish and doctor and went on pilgrimage to the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina – a journey where unmasking would have cost him his life. He wrote books on swordsmanship and geology. According to Borges he dreamed in seventeen languages and spoke thirty-five – other sources say forty. xv.

When he died on October 20, 1890, we are told that, "alarmed by the sexually explicit content of her husband's papers, Isabel Burton burned almost all of his notes, diaries, and manuscripts – an immeasurable loss to history" (vii – this quotation from the publisher and not from A. S. Byatt's introduction, which begins on page xiii). That could be what happened, or it could be a convenient cover-story – we will probably never know.

In any case, Burton's translation of the *Nights* was begun in the 1850s and finally published in the 1880s in sixteen volumes. The introduction by A. S. Byatt cited above declares that of all the translations of the *Nights*, "the most accessible complete translation remains Burton's extraordinary translation" along with its "immense apparatus of extraordinary footnotes" (xv). Of the massive work Burton himself said:



This work, laborious as it may appear, has been to me a labour of love, an unfailing source of solace and satisfaction. During my long years of official banishment to the luxuriant and deadly deserts of Western Africa, and to the dull and dreary half-clearings of South America, it proved itself a charm, a talisman against ennui and despondency. Impossible even to open the pages without a vision staring into view [. . .] Arabia, a region so familiar to my mind that even at first sight, it seemed a reminiscence of some by-gone metempsychic life in the distant Past [. . .] air glorious as ether, whose every breath raises men's spirits like sparkling wine [. . .] while the reremouse flitted overhead with his tiny shriek, and the rave of the jackal resounded through deepening glooms, and – most musical of music – the palm-trees answered the whispers of the night-breeze with the softest tones of falling water. xxiii - xxiv.

Burton's translation – and his voluminous endnotes – are famous for their extremely sexually explicit nature, especially during the period that they first appeared, as a private printing of one thousand copies to subscribers only. Modern readers will find that their content (and perhaps their translation) also appears on the surface to be highly objectionable in terms of being both sexist and racist – so much so, in fact, that they may prove difficult or even impossible for some to actually read.

And yet, as with other ancient tales, I would argue that the tales which made their way into the *Thousand Nights and a Night* are almost certainly deeply esoteric in nature, and that to read them only on a literal level is as mistaken as reading Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* as a story about whaling (this concept is discussed in my most recent interview on *Truth Warrior* with David Whitehead, beginning at about 0:17:00 and continuing through to 0:24:00, as well as in the essay I wrote for Jacob Karlin's meditation and *Selfless Self-Help* site entitled "Clothing spirit with matter and raising it up again: How metaphor transcends and transforms the material realm").

The themes of the *Thousand Nights and a Night* ostensibly center around the differences between men and women, and their different "powers," and this is the approach to these fabulous tales that is most commonly employed today (simply search for them on the internet for a host of examples). In the world of the *Nights*, women appear on the surface to be less powerful in the extremely patriarchal (and violent) society that is depicted, and yet they ultimately prove to be far more powerful.

In fact, the entire tension of the story is established by the deflation experienced by first one royal brother, Shah Zaman, and then his brother, King Shahryar, when their wives "get the better of them," each of their frustrations being relived in turn only when each successively encounters an example even more egregious than his own humiliation (their humiliation is only relieved by the even greater humiliation of another man by his wife). Their humiliation leads to a predictably (if excessively) "male" response, the rule that sets the stage for the "thousand and one nights," an extreme and violent "solution" which is finally subverted and corrected by the wisdom, patience, grace, charm, wit, circularity, and feminine power of Shahrazad (or Sheherezad in some translations), assisted by her sister Dunyazad.

Throughout the tales, the power of women can be destructive and devouring, or it can be constructive and restorative, but it is almost always ultimately far more formidable than that of men, despite the latter's excessive bluster, arbitrary ultimatums, and readiness to try to solve most problems by immediately swinging at them wildly with a scimitar.

While the above theme of the "power" of women versus the "power" of men is undeniably present throughout the *Nights*, I would still argue that to read them on this fairly literal level, or to approach them as a sort of "women's studies" about how women "were treated" in some historical society and how they dealt with and overcame that treatment, is actually a mistake, in that it fails to see the *Nights* as deeply esoteric and as almost certainly metaphorical, not literal. The same can be said for the extremely

racist episodes and descriptions in some of the tales: while the racist elements are highly objectionable and regrettable, and one would prefer that some other metaphor had been employed (the same could be said for some of the sexual content as well), it is likely that the real meaning of the tales is on a level other than the literal, and that the fantastical and often bizarre events and episodes which are related were originally intended to highlight aspects of our universal human condition, or were descended from ancient myths whose original intent was to do so (it is possible that the more racist elements came in later, perhaps during medieval times).

And this is the key: if the *Nights* in all their incredible tales and transformations and encounters with fire-beings such as jinns and janns and ifrits are actually describing a vision of the soul in its incarnations, and a vision of the universe as shamanic and holographic in nature, then they are *not* primarily about the division of humanity into men versus women, or this "race" against that one. When a wife is depicted as leaving an almost-ideal husband to chase after rag-bound and filthy and abusive adulterous lovers in illicit affairs, this can be seen as an esoteric depiction of our incarnate condition, in which we can so easily forget our innate (but hidden) spiritual or even divine component and embrace too thoroughly our "animal" or physical nature: a metaphor which applies equally to incarnate men as to incarnate women (see the many similar examples in the scriptures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, including that of the Prodigal Son, who ends up eating husks among the swine before he remembers his true origin).

In other words, if we read the *Nights* on a literal level, they will almost certainly appear to *divide* humanity, along "racial" or "ethnic" or "gender" lines. They will also be quite disturbing and even revolting to many readers, or at least deeply offensive to their sensibilities – even degrading to the human condition and destructive of human dignity. However, if we read them on a metaphorical and esoteric level, they can actually be seen as

teaching a unifying and an uplifting and even a dignifying message – because they show how our descent into the material realm (the very words *matter* and *material* being feminine in connotation, related to the Latin word *mater* or "mother") exposes us to death, to "beatings," to a type of enslavement, to oppressions, to exigencies beyond our control, to transformations, and subjugations, and yet opens the door for exaltation and transformation and even to a transformation that benefits others and enables them to be transformed as well (all of which Shahrazad experiences and demonstrates throughout the *Nights*).

See previous posts such as the post from 10/14/2014 for more on this concept of *unifying* rather than *dividing*.

When profound truths put on the garments of metaphor, they descend from the spiritual realm to the material, in order to enable our matter-bound minds to see, through them, that spiritual realm which we have forgotten – and then these metaphors leap back upwards to the spiritual realms from whence they came, and drag our consciousness along with them. This is what Melville's *Moby Dick* demonstrates,<sup>66</sup> when deep spiritual subjects come down to put on the rough garments of a whaling vessel, and it is what the *Thousand Nights and One Night* demonstrate when profound matters of human incarnation and the nature of our spirit-infused universe are clothed in the often gratuitously violent and sexually explicit situations depicted in those tales.<sup>310</sup>

This motion of "metaphor itself" in descending from the "realms of the ideal" into the physical trappings of the vehicle chosen to house or to clothe the metaphor in familiar material form, for the purpose of elevating our consciousness and pointing us back towards the spiritual and helping us to transcend the physical and material *can be seen to mirror our own experience in this human incarnation*. We descend from the realm of spirit into material and physical vehicles, with the purpose of somehow transforming and transcending and returning with new understanding, and

## The bad judgment of King Midas, and what it teaches us



2016 October 22

King Midas is a well-known figure from ancient Greek mythology famed for his bad judgment.

He is most remembered for his request, when granted one wish by the god Dionysus, that everything he touched would turn to gold – a request which, when granted, made him so giddy with happiness that he could hardly believe what he thought to be his good fortune. As everyone knows, however, he soon came to regret that awful request.

There is another episode from ancient myth in which Midas again displays his bad judgment, this time when he was asked to judge a competition of musical skill between Apollo – the very

god of music who is referred to in some ancient texts as Apollo *Musagetes*, a title which signifies "leader of the Muses" (see for instance Diodorus Siculus Book I and chapter 18, fifth sentence, which you can read online [here](#)) – and a satyr (in some accounts a satyr named Marsyas, and in others the god Pan himself).

Apollo of course played upon a lyre, and the satyr upon the pan-pipes, and in some accounts Midas, the King of Phrygia, was appointed to be the judge of the contest, while in other accounts it was the mountain of Timolus itself (or the god of that mountain) which was to be the judge. In those accounts, Timolus wisely judged that Apollo was the winner, but Midas loudly disagreed with him and indicated that the satyr was the more skilled, while in the accounts in which Midas alone was the judge, he also unwisely selected the satyr as the winner of the contest – and as a punishment, Apollo gave Midas the ears of an ass, saying that the dull judgment of Midas and his lack of discernment in hearing should from then onwards be visible for all to see.

Both of these episodes have clear celestial foundations, and add to the overwhelming body of evidence which supports the conclusion that virtually all the world's ancient myths, scriptures, and sacred stories are built upon a system of celestial metaphor, in order to impart deep knowledge about the simultaneously "material-spiritual" universe in which we find ourselves, as well as *our own* inherently dual material-spiritual nature as men and women.

In fact, not only do I believe that overwhelming evidence points to the fact that virtually all the world's ancient myths are built upon celestial metaphor involving the constellations and heavenly cycles, but I also believe the evidence indicates that they are all built upon *the same system* of celestial metaphor – a common, worldwide system which appears to indicate that they all somehow share the same common source.

This common system unites the ancient myths and sacred stories of all the varied cultures from around the world and across the



millennia – and should in fact be seen as uniting us all as men and women sharing an incredible common inheritance of tremendous value.

In fact, in both of the above episodes involving King Midas and his terrible judgment, we can see very clear echoes to two other well known "judgment myths" or sacred stories involving very much the same theme: the famous "Judgment of Paris," which ultimately leads to the Trojan War, and the equally-famous "Judgment of Solomon," in which – unlike both Midas and Paris – King Solomon displays right judgment when presented with a very similar choice.

In the Judgment of Solomon episode, the most famous aspect of the story involves two mothers and two babies, one of them alive and one of them dead, and Solomon's wisdom in solving the dilemma with which he is faced, in which each of the mothers claim that the living child belongs to her. However, as other posts discuss in more detail (06/23/2016), the famous scene with the two mothers as told in the text of I Kings chapter 3 actually follows immediately from a previous episode in the same chapter, found immediately preceding the two mothers scene, in which Solomon in a dream is visited by the Most High, who asks Solomon what he would like to be given.

This offer very much parallels the offer made to Midas in the myths of ancient Greece, in which Dionysus also offers to grant one request to Midas. Midas unwisely asks for unlimited riches – specifically, the power to turn everything he touches into pure gold. In contrast, Solomon asks for a wise and understanding heart, so that he can be a better ruler on behalf of the people – and the text tells us that this request pleases the Lord, who says:

Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life [*literally: "many days"*]; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

Behold, I have done according to thy words [. . .]  
And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked,  
both riches, and honor: so that there shall not be any among  
the kings like unto thee all thy days. (I Kings 3: 11 - 13).

Note that Solomon's request for wisdom and discerning judgment is contrasted with other possible choices, including riches, honor, long life, or power over his enemies. Clearly, this story has points of resonance with the story of Midas, who unwisely asked the divine Dionysus for the equivalent of riches -- with disastrous results.

In similar manner, in the episode from Greek myth known as the Judgment of Paris, the youth of the same name (Paris, a prince of Troy) is presented with a contest of beauty among three goddesses, each of whom offers him a reward if he will select her. The rewards offered to Paris by the three goddesses include rulership and power (offered by Hera), heroism and fame (offered by Athena), and the most beautiful woman in the world to be his bride (offered by Aphrodite).

As we know, Paris selected Aphrodite and in doing so launched the Trojan War, because the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, was already married to a king of the Achaeans, and all the other Achaean kings and heroes had previously promised to defend whichever among them would be so fortunate as to have won the right to marry Helen.

This disastrous decision by Paris again has clear echoes with the judgment offered to Solomon -- who decided *not* to request riches or honor, but rather asked for wisdom, and who was told that because of this choice, he would also be given those things for which he did not ask, such as riches and honor.

The episode in the Midas story which perhaps resembles the Judgment of Paris even more closely is the episode in which Midas must judge the musical contest between Apollo and either the satyr Marsyas or the god Pan -- because in both of those myths, there is an actual contest involved. Midas, clearly an

exemplar of bad judgment, fails to recognize the god Apollo as the winner – the very deity from whom all skill and talent in music proceeds in the first place. Thus, Midas inverts the proper order of things, disrespecting the divine source, and is punished by being given the ears of an animal (in this case, the long hairy ears of an ass or donkey).

Interestingly enough, this punishment brings to mind a masterpiece of esoteric fiction written by the later Roman author Apuleius (who appears to have been an initiate into the Mysteries of Isis, as well as perhaps other mystery schools). That story was originally called the *Metamorphoses* (not to be confused with the more famous work of the same title by Ovid), but the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius is more commonly known as *The Golden Tale of the Ass*, or simply *The Golden Ass*. In that story, the narrator (Lucius) is himself transformed into an ass, and undergoes a series of outrageous adventures before he is restored to his original form by the goddess Isis herself.

Not only is the condition of Lucius when transformed into an ass reminiscent of the fate of Midas who is given long ass-ears for his lack of judgment, but the restoration of Lucius comes not long after a climactic episode in which Lucius witnesses a re-enactment in a Roman arena of the mythical episode of the Judgment of Paris itself! Thus, it would appear that the theme of "judging or discerning rightly or wrongly" is very much central to the tale of Lucius in *The Golden Ass* – and that Apuleius himself understood the important thematic connection between the Judgment of Midas (in which King Midas ends up receiving donkey-ears, just as Lucius in the story is turned into a donkey) and the Judgment of Paris (the very episode Lucius sees enacted just before his own restoration, and an episode in which Paris brought "damnation upon mankind" by his desire to possess another man's wife, in the words of Apuleius – an interesting way of viewing the story of the Judgment of Paris).

The fact that Paris in that beauty contest selects the winner by giving her an apple is extremely interesting – especially because

the mystery initiate Apuleius says that the disastrous choice of Paris brought "damnation upon mankind." We can all probably think of another ancient episode involving an apple (or other unspecified fruit) which was said to have brought damnation upon mankind as well.

I believe that all these ancient mythological episodes can be shown to be built upon celestial metaphor – and therefore to be esoteric in nature, designed to impart knowledge to us about our own inner connection to the infinite realm: our own spiritual nature, even encased as we are in a material (animal) body of flesh during this life.

The story of King Midas can be shown to relate to very specific constellations in our night sky (and constellations which are in fact visible at this very time of year, during the end of the month of October).

In the story of the disastrous request for the gift of the golden touch, several ancient sources tell us that Midas was at first overjoyed at the granting of his request, but soon realized to his horror that he could neither eat nor drink anything without it also turning to gold (a situation which would soon end in his own death as well).

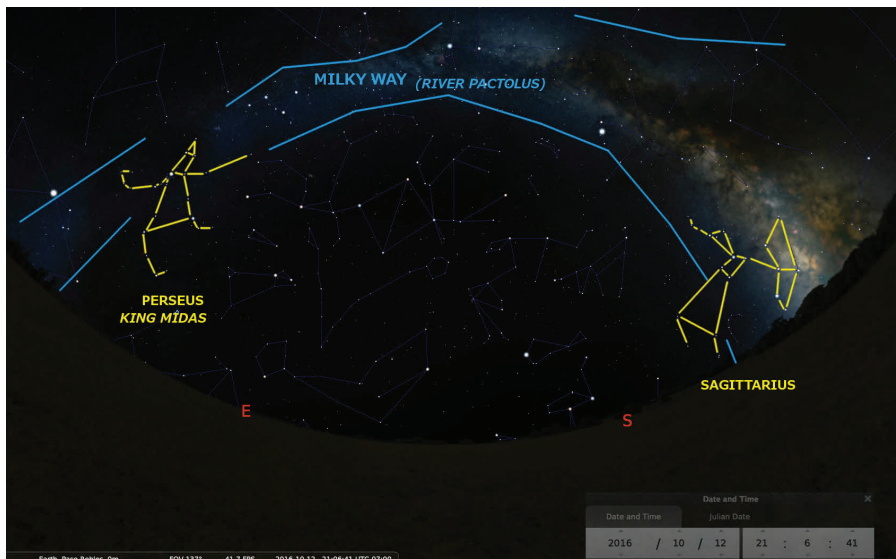
In some versions of the story, the king's own daughter runs up to embrace her father and is herself transformed into solid gold. This particular aspect of the story does not seem to be present in many of the most ancient accounts, but it is perhaps the most well-known part of the King Midas story today.

In almost every ancient version of the myth, Midas prays to heaven (in some versions to Dionysus, who had originally granted Midas one request, and in other versions to Apollo) to have the curse of the golden touch taken away from him, and is told to go immerse himself at the source of the river Pactolus (which is found at the aforementioned Mount Timolus). In some versions of the story, Midas is to immerse his head three times in the river at its source. Thereupon, all the things which had been turned to

gold by Midas after his terrible choice were restored to their original condition – and the river Pactolus from then on had golden sands which often yielded up gold flakes or gold nuggets.

For a variety of reasons, I believe it is almost certain that this story of King Midas is founded upon the constellation Perseus, who is presently rising above the eastern horizon in the hours after midnight. Perseus is a constellation who is located near the very "top" of the Milky Way band as it arches across the sky, on the far side of the galactic trail from the brightest and widest part found between Sagittarius and Scorpio (the galactic core). Thus, it can be envisioned as the "upper reaches" of the galactic river – allegorized in the myth as the upper source of the river Pactolus.

There, Perseus can be clearly seen to be immersing himself in the river – or even dunking his head in it! Here is a star chart with the constellation Perseus outlined in yellow (on the left as we face the page, which is the east), as well as the constellation Sagittarius, who will play a role in the story discussed later on:



Can you see the brilliant arc of the Milky Way band? In real life, if you go outside into the night sky, you will see this arc going over your head, beginning at the western horizon (on the right side of

## Ambrose and Theodosius



2014 September 15

At the death of the Roman Emperor Theodosius I (AD 347 - 394), the formal panegyric was given by Ambrose, the Archbishop of Milan (AD 340 - 397), and amidst all the eulogy's praise of the departed emperor, Ambrose makes reference to the penitence of Theodosius, weaving this incident quite effortlessly and eloquently into a very beautiful metaphor within a larger theme of humanity's need for mercy and therefore the need to be merciful and forgiving to one another.



The reference itself refers to an incident that took place in AD 390, in which citizens of the region of Thessalonika revolted, apparently in anger at the presence of Gothic soldiers in the service of the empire stationed in their midst. It is worth pointing out that the stationing of military forces among the citizenry is one of the hallmarks of tyrannical states, and the use of foreign-born troops to do it is another pattern in history, as they are less likely to feel an affinity with or sympathy for the local populace.

Note that both of these specific grievances were part of those listed by the authors and signatories of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 against the King of Great Britain to support their argument that he showed "a history of repeated injuries and usurpations" with the "direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States":

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States [...]

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

We don't have a similar statement from the Thessalonikans who revolted, but we can image that they were similarly outraged by

the behavior of the foreign "mercenaries" stationed among them by the Empire (these happened to be Goths), and the impunity with which those mercenaries were allowed to behave and the violations of natural law which they perpetrated -- hence the revolt.

Contemporary historians of the time tell us that Theodosius reacted to their revolt by authorizing the Goth commander to slaughter a stadium full of the Thessalonikans, cutting down innocent and guilty alike, as if they were stalks of wheat at harvest time.

Ambrose apparently criticized Theodosius for this ruthless slaughter, barring the emperor from entering church or taking communion for several months, and ordering him to do penance for several months before he could enter again and receive the host (the painting above, from around 1620 or 1621, depicts Ambrose on the right as we look at it, wearing a gold mitre on his head and gold-and-blue robes, barring the entrance to the Milan Cathedral from the hopeful but disappointed Theodosius, who is on the left as we look at the painting, wearing the royal purple, which looks more like what we would probably call crimson today).

Ambrose makes reference to this penance of the emperor in the official panegyric, which can be read in an English translation online at <https://archive.org/details/fathersofthechur012812mbp> (beginning on page 307 of that 1953 text, which is actually page 335 of the "e-text" linked, since the e-text includes some front matter in its page count). There, on page 319 in the original book's pagination, or page 347 in the e-text reader linked above, Ambrose says of Theodosius:

And so because Theodosius, the emperor, showed himself humble and, when sin had stolen upon him, asked for pardon, his soul has turned to its rest, as Scripture has it, saying "Turn my soul unto thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful unto thee.'

The scriptural reference is to Psalm 116:7. The paragraph itself is numbered 28 in the text of Ambrose's speech.

Let's just pause to note that this is actually a fairly astonishing situation. The absolute ruler of the entire Roman Empire, Theodosius I, who is basically the supreme authority and seemingly answers to no one, is apparently being refused entrance to the Mass by the Archbishop of Milan (it is important to know that Milan, located in northern Italy, was then the western seat of the empire, after Constantine earlier moved the center of political power east to Constantinople, a fact which plays a part in the theory discussed below). Not only that, but the emperor is being ordered to repent, humble himself, and do penance by the Archbishop, and the emperor does so for several months before being reinstated to the privilege of taking communion.

The fact that this incident is mentioned in the official eulogy of the emperor by Ambrose is a pretty good indication that it actually happened: if it did not, there would have been plenty of people who could have said so at the time. And so, we can see here an indication that the emperor himself was answerable to the most powerful bishops in some matters, who were obviously seen as representatives of an even higher power.

We might also note that the relatives of those several thousands who were slaughtered in Thessalonika were probably not particularly satisfied at this evidence of the accountability of Theodosius for his war crime – a few months of being barred from taking communion, and all was forgiven.

In fact, this incident – and the larger significance of the reign of Theodosius and his actions as emperor – along with other important pieces of evidence preserved in that eulogy written by Ambrose, provides remarkable support for the revolutionary theory presented by Flavio Barbiero in *The Secret Society of Moses: The Mosaic Bloodline and a Conspiracy Spanning Three Millennia* (2010). In the analysis of Flavio Barbiero, the hierarchical Christianity that Ambrose represented was part of an

## "Vision A" or "Vision B"



2015 January 13

When Black Elk, a holy man of the Lakota people, expressed the difference between the life before the arrival of the European invasion and after, he said:

Once we were happy in our own country and we were seldom hungry, for then the two-leggeds and the four-leggeds lived together like relatives, and there was plenty for them and for us. But the Wasichus came, and they have made little islands for us and other little islands for the four-leggeds, and always these islands are becoming smaller, for around them surges the gnawing flood of the Wasichus, and it is dirty with lies and greed. [*Black Elk Speaks*, 8].

There is a lot to notice in these two sentences. Black Elk chooses to characterize the difference between the two cultures by saying that his culture saw humanity as part of nature: they lived *together* with the earth's other creatures *like relatives*. In contrast, the bringers of the new culture clearly saw themselves as divided from nature, and created what Black Elk describes as "little islands" to physically separate people from the earth's other creatures.

This short passage also implies that directly related to these two opposite views of humanity's place in nature are two opposite views of nature itself: in the first, a vision of abundance, that "there is plenty for them and for us," and in the second, a vision of scarcity and a "gnawing flood [. . .] dirty with lies and greed."

I would argue that in these two sentences, Black Elk has pinpointed the most important negative consequence of the literalist twist that was imposed upon ancient scriptures in Europe (in the time of the Roman Empire) that actually changed their teaching from a message that is closer to the first position Black Elk articulates (we could call this "vision A" for ease of discussion) to the horrific vision of the "gnawing flood" and the ever-shrinking "little islands" described in the second half (we could call this "vision B").

In other words, the ancient scriptures actually articulate "vision A," but at a certain point in history they were twisted into "vision B."

For example, previous posts [as well as later books] discuss the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, as well as the Genesis account of Noah's three sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, and argue that if they are understood allegorically, or esoterically, they clearly convey a message that applies to *all* men and women equally, and a message that our physical form is only a "coat of skin" and that our common spiritual origin unites us all. Understood this way, they also convey a message that unites humanity with all of nature, including the infinite starry heavens – often expressed in the teaching "as above, so below."

However, the same stories when interpreted as describing literal and historic men and women named Adam and Eve, or Noah and his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, have historically led to all kinds of racist ideologies, and have been used to divide men and women, to elevate one group and devalue another, and even to divide humanity from the other creatures (based on literalistic

misinterpretations of the enmity with the serpent, the teachings that man has "dominion" over all the earth and its animals, and the teachings given to Noah about domesticating animals, for example).

In other words, the scriptures that became central to western European culture, and which should be seen as teaching "vision A," were given a literalistic twist at a specific point in history, which led to a culture that was largely guided by "vision B."

In fact, the Biblical scriptures when understood esoterically can be seen as teaching a vision of the natural world, and humanity's place in it, which can be accurately characterized as shamanic. This is because they actually can be shown to be clearly built upon the same foundation as the sacred stories and traditions found around the world, all of which contain clear shamanic elements and teachings.

The literalist takeover of these scriptures, and the campaign to deliberately eliminate texts and teachers who taught an approach which challenged this literalistic "vision B" view of the scriptures, can be demonstrated to have taken place during the years that western historians call the first four centuries AD.

It is very important to understand that, whatever good things western European civilization and culture produced in the centuries that followed (and it cannot be denied that it did produce many good things), this fundamental "vision B" understanding guided much of its development, and that it in fact continues to inform "western civilization" in very powerful and sometimes very destructive ways.

Because, as Black Elk so incisively explains in just two sentences, the vision that shaped "western" thought contains a powerful tendency towards self-imposed division of humanity from nature, as well as antagonistic division between humanity itself. Connected to this division, in Black Elk's view, is a vision of scarcity rather than plenty.



Perhaps nothing illustrates the ongoing influence of this "vision B" attitude better than the rush to create and release genetically-engineered plants and animals into nature. Previous posts have cited ancient philosophers, who wrote prior to the triumph of the literalist takeover, admonishing those whose vision of scarcity led them to horrible treatment of animals and mistrust of nature's bounty – see for example the arguments of Plutarch and Ovid, both of whom articulate a vision of humanity as related to the animals and to the rest of nature.

Since those posts were written, a new and even more horrific example of what we might call a "runaway vision B" has emerged, with the deliberate creation of genetically-engineered mosquitos, which have already been released *en masse* in at least two parts of the globe, and which are slated for release in Florida in either January or February of this year (no word yet on whether that has actually taken place already, or if it is set to occur within the next couple weeks).

If there is a better symbol of the terribly misguided decisions that the self-imposed division from nature that "vision B" produces than the decision to genetically alter an insect that regularly feeds on human blood, I don't know what it is – unless it is the decision to start releasing clouds of them into the wild in an act that can never be un-done.

But just wait a few months and there will probably be a new example even more ominous and un-natural than this one.

It should be starting to become clear to even the most unthinking adherent of the "vision B mindset" that something has gone terribly wrong. Black Elk saw the problem with crystal clarity more than a hundred years ago.

But, the good news is that "vision A" is actually the vision that is at the heart of the shared ancient heritage of all of humanity. It was treacherously supplanted by and replaced with "vision B" in a certain part of the world, in a single culture, many centuries ago – and the results have been catastrophic for many other cultures

around the world in the intervening centuries since that takeover. But if "vision B" could replace "vision A," then that means that there is hope that the process could be reversed – perhaps even more rapidly than the original switch.

People can and do change their entire outlook on the world, without violence and sometimes quite rapidly. I know this personally, as I have changed my own vision quite radically within the course of my own life.

The division from nature and from one another described above and in the quotation from Black Elk is clearly a self-imposed separation – which means that it can also be "self-un-imposed."

We can still listen to the vision that Black Elk shared with the world – before the gnawing dirty flood of lies and greed covers over the shrinking little islands altogether.



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# KNOW THE STARS, CHANGE THE WORLD

The world's ancient myths, from virtually every inhabited continent and island, are built upon a common, world-wide system of celestial metaphor.

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