

Magic Rites, Psychodrama and Morality

If the phenomena of magic and witchcraft cause moral disquiet, which I have sought to address in a previous article (*'Magic, Witchcraft & Morality'*, Nov. 2022), the ancient magic rites of Eleusis and the practice of magical psycho-drama provoke greater and often indiscriminating condemnation which I will here try to answer.

But first let us freely admit those rites and practices that do justify horror and outright condemnation. These include necromancy, involving congress with souls of the restless dead or demons for magical operations; blood rites and human sacrifice; perverted sexual practices and orgiastic rites; and anything offensive to ordinary human decency or the natural order of things. As well, we might proscribe and denounce any rites that are abusive of divinity, the sacred, piety or the common rules of the (seven) great religions.

Gaean rites include invocations of devas used in high magic, as well as a liturgical component as a magical order, usually seasonal in character. The three basic rules are that such rites are used 'parsimoniously' (mainly at the eight Sabbats or to a lesser extent at lunar Esbats); always according to prescribed texts with carefully apprehended meanings; and in accord with moral and aesthetic sensibility. Existence of an esoteric liturgy in no way intends to supplant religion, indeed members are encouraged to continue orthodox liturgy according to their own beliefs. Nor is magical liturgy intended to distract from community, family or religious life.

Any feeling of separation, rebellion or superiority with respect to people outside the order is frowned upon at every turn. Membership of Gaia does not mean any break with community or family, nor does it confer moral superiority any more than one cell or organ of a body has any greater claim to belonging to an organism than any other. Not everyone can stomach magical ritual, nor should they be expected to. It is a matter of taste and temperament, and such differences are to be respected.

In the Eleusinian rites, reconstructed in Alexandrian form from incomplete accounts of ancient Hellenic ceremonies, and then embellished with Rosicrucian and neo-pagan psychodrama, there are many morally equivocal features. It is only the particular interpretation and performance quality of these elements and features that determines their decency. I will address these in turn to try to allay any lurking suspicions that they are morally indefensible.

PSYCHODRAMA

Let us first look at the rationale of psychodrama. There are at least three good reasons for it. First, it is cathartic; that is it is a way of experiencing and adjusting to most profound archetypes of the collective unconscious in a virtual reality created and made safe by the circle. Secondly, drama is a basic human need, a performance art form that permits experimenting with different roles that are liberating and empowering, as well as strengthening social bonds through sharing and 'fun'.

As psychotherapy, at a most basic level psychodrama rebalances the unconscious aspects of the psyche to achieve mental health and 'self-actualisation'. On the spirit plane, it seeks to evolve the soul to re-connect with its authentic spirit home and the source of its energy, to restore it to its unfallen state.

As an artform, psychodrama is a basic human need, usually stifled or starved. The theatrical is the satisfaction of the desire for human completeness of expression, but also for immersion in the beauty of the drama of the personal archetypes.

But thirdly and most importantly, it is a method for transporting into another world and for invocation of (beneficent) supernatural entities, sub-natural devas, and of the Anima mundi, the Immanence or third person of Divinity.

As a meditation technique, it also has the practical use of involution into the psyche of the beneficent powers of the entities it evokes.

INTERPRETATION OF EQUIVOCAL FEATURES

The Circle. This is 'between worlds', that is a neutral space that is 'outside time'. It has no moral character whatsoever, except insofar as it empowers the psychodrama that occurs within its bounds.

The Athame. This is the sacred knife used by the Priestess to direct all action within the stage of the Circle. There have been various types of athame, but the one used in a Gaian context is ceremonial and holy. It is rather like a conductor's baton.

The Altar. This is the ritual focal point of the Circle, but it is also a 'psychic hotplate' used for virtual operations that alter the 'conditions of consciousness' and therefore reality. In a Gaian context, the Altar is only used in this way indirectly by invoking beneficent devas or the Divine Anima.

The Old Ones. These are spiritual entities bound up in the natural elements and structures of our planet. Another term for them is 'Watchers', including good, bad and neutral spirits. Some are dangerous, and all are extremely powerful; many are malign entities bent on doing harm. The main ones used in Gaian ceremonies are the Watchtowers who are renegade angels of neutral disposition who as penance for their premature entry into Nature were disembodied by God and charged with helping mankind when so asked. They are normally asleep and must be stirred.

'Darksome and Divine'. As with all equivocal poetic drama, the title of the Goddess or Anima should be read in a sacred light. We now associate darkness with evil, but this is not original. The dark light of the universe before the Cosmos was created is now an accepted physical property of its far edges and its beginning, the ebony skin of Africans is beautiful, and the Spirit behind Nature is Divine.

‘Naked in All Your Rites’. This was the naturist practice of the Greek mystery rites, and some Covenants still celebrate nudity as a non-sexual characteristic of unfallen Nature. However ‘nakedness’ is mostly taken to be a metaphor for a state of natural simplicity consciously up-taken before entering Circle; robes are almost universal.

‘Queen of Heaven, Queen of Hell’. This does not refer to an ambivalent or evil character of Divinity, but rather to sovereignty even over damned souls enduring punishment; demons are ultimately under the control of the angels of Heaven, for ‘Hell can have no dominion’, all action ultimately rebounds to the good.

‘Mine the Scourge, Mine the Kiss’. Refers to the unity of pain and pleasure; never to take pleasure from pain, but rather to accept that pain reminds us of pleasure. In occult tradition, the ‘scourge’ represents darkness, which reminds the soul of Light.

‘Five-point Star of Love and Bliss’. The Pentacle is symbol of the five elements that belong to the Anima, and also of the complex interaction between the hypostases of matter and spirit that by Love permits evolution towards the Heaven of Bliss.

‘Fivefold Kiss’. This is a naturist rite that celebrates unfallen nature, through metaphorical or symbolic acceptance of flesh restored to a state of grace.

GAIAN BELIEFS AND VALUES UNDERLYING RITUAL

The Goddess. The feminine spirit of Divine Immanence, vessel of the Sacred Heart or Holy Anima which is the third person of Divinity. Her spirit is traditionally viewed as a Noctad of flavours of Immanence, each representing an aspect of the Divine that underlies Nature. Unlike ‘gods’ who are angels that have assumed the ‘raiment of earth’, these nine goddesses are refracted images of the Anima itself.

In the Gaian belief system, the Anima underlies the whole universe, which can be seen as a living organism striving to manifest the Divine Immanence. Mystics believe that this partially occurs through the rite of ‘Drawing Down the Moon’ into the body of a mortal woman, but more fully at the end of time by generation of the Shekinah.

Other beliefs include that the Mother of God, one of the Nine Aspects, is a human assumed to become the immortal Queen of Heaven, whose title she disposes on her sister manifestations; also that the Bride of the Atman, or Body of the Divine, is the Anima acting through conscious beings in space-time.

According to Teilhard de Chardin, this process of conglomeration is achieved by resonance of consciousnesses motivated by a Lamarckian process of end causation towards the Omega point. This is the Atman, second person of Divinity, standing at the event horizon of time, therefore at a point transcending (more than, beyond) consciousness. Beyond this is The Unity or first person of Divinity.

Spiritual Ecology. This is the combined belief that the Anima mundi or 'world-soul', is the presence of Spirit within matter; that it creates its own conditions favourable to life and consciousness; and that humans were originally created to replenish these characteristics of the material universe. Some Gaian rituals are specifically geared to enabling such changes through collective transcendental meditation, or to externally manifesting or invoking into the human psyche this Spirit. These purposes might be characterised as practical ecology and theurgy.

The world-soul grows plants and animates animals, provides vitality and creativity, and gives humans the capacity to fulfil their destinies. Gaians consider destinies to be governed both by choice and end-causation in a dual universe. The birth of every individual soul in the universe of space-time is mediated by the Anima.

Gaians also believe that contact with Nature is a powerful way to nurture the soul, through wilderness experience and 'earth-keeping' (Jung & Juzek, 1974). This latter is the conscious tending of ecological balances that make up the web of life, consisting of practices just as spiritual as meditation, prayer or liturgy.

Deep Ecology. This is the principle that the web of life must be respected integrally and in its entirety; not for its short-term instrumental value to humans, since the long-term value of ecology to the whole system is identical with its long-term and greater value to humans. Overpopulation, climate change and pollution are seen as interrelated threats to the long-term viability of the whole ecology of the planet; beings with consciousness can channel Gaia in opposing or regulating these.

RITES TO BANISH, BIND OR HARNESS DEMONS

Primordial Deviation. The principle of Omega end-causation is paradoxically enhanced by the long-term battle between Gaia and the so-called Medea or ecological death complex. Nature is regarded as having evolved by a series of battles between the angelic beings and primordially fallen counterparts, in which a fragile victory of beauty and harmony has been established by balancing and harnessing the effect of sub-natural demons.

Demons and a supernal order of devils are thought to be responsible for much of the rapaciousness and overgrowth of nature, as well as for disease and death. These paradoxically provide vehicles for new and greater expressions of harmony and beauty, clear up spoiled creation and provide the conditions for new life. As carriers of plagues including disease, affliction, old age and death, they complete a purely angelic task that is related to preserving the total nature of Creation. As executioners they cleanse our world by eating those parts of it that are spoiled and failed beyond redemption, and they also eat each other and the damned. They also give occasion for practice of the Virtues which are the modus operandi of redemption.

Although their enjoyment of the tasks of physical corruption is peculiar to their fallen nature, once their adjunctive task in creation is complete and the Omega-point is manifest in space-time they will disappear through the vortex of Hell.

[A list of traditional operations to banish or bind demons is given in the text under the heading 'GREAT SUBJECTS / DEMONS'].

The Abramelin rite is the only practice in the Gaian tradition that permits harnessing demons for the greater good, but has many caveats. Only those adepts having manna of the 3rd degree are permitted to perform the (usually) six month rite, and then only in exceptional circumstances and with the dispensation of the Priestess as head of the order. The greater demons are off limits, as their presence would normally overwhelm, possess and corrupt even a master adept.

Only Solomon-bin-Dwd was able to conjure a master demon (or devil) and compel it to do his bidding in building the Temple at Jerusalem without calamity.

ANGELS, DEVAS AND MIRACLE

For the most part, the only acceptable form of magic is miracle that involves Qabalistic pathworking, or direct invocation of beneficent angels and devas. This does least harm since it places its centre of action outside the comparatively weak human frame, does not pervert the ego, and both for its rarity and competent intermediaries, least disturbs the equilibrium of the universe.

These rites often require involution of an angelic or devic entity into the psyche of the person acting as conduit, and use of Shamanic correspondences and specific rites, meditations or mythopoeia borrowed from other religious imagery in order to safeguard the proceedings. In the case of Qabalah, the Golden Dawn system which has much of its basis in Judaic tradition, specific temporary empowerments are sought by leave of the angelic entities controlling the spheres from which downward involution is requested. In yet other cases, manifestation of an angelic presence may be sought, although this requires the highest level of manna and poser.

ORDINARY SEASONAL RITES

These celebrate the changing moods of Nature, amplifying their colour and beauty with the magic of ritual. The cycles of Sun and Moon are used as the occult markers of the times when this is best achieved. They are also an excuse for merrymaking and the pleasure of invocation of the Spirit that underlies the Universe.

They enrich the observance of orthodox religious liturgy, enhance involvement in community and the natural world, and accelerate manifestation of the Anima.