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Cupid and Psyche: Ego Development and Individuation through the Struggle against Uroboros.

Bachelor's project in Comparative Literature

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Introduction

In this thesis I will interpret the tale of Cupid and Psyche as it appears in *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius. I will base my work on Erich Neumann's *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, and *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine* subtitled *A Commentary on the tale by Apuleius*. I will first present relevant terms from the field of Jungian depth psychology, also called analytical psychology. Then I will do a systematic analysis of the tale, primarily focusing on the development of Psyche - a character in the story. I will look at the interactions between Psyche and uroboros – which is the first stage of the ego development, and Psyche and the Great Mother – an archetype, and the second stage of ego development. I will also look at her process of individuation, that is, the process of integrating with the repressed, or, unrecognized traits in the psyche. The Hero's Journey of Psyche, and by what means she successfully completes the tasks posed to her by Aphrodite, the Terrible Mother of the tale, will be covered. I will also look at the interactions between Eros and the Great Mother, and how the power of love is ultimately what drives both Eros' and Psyche's egos towards differentiation from the Great Mother. Differentiation is the process of the ego's recognition of itself as an independent, individual entity. Consequently, it is also the power of love which drives the process of both Psyche's and Eros' individuation towards its end, resulting in a conscious love relationship between two equal individuals. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of the most central points of the interpretation.

Theory

For this reading, I will use Erich Neumann's *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine*, subtitled *A commentary on the Tale by Apuleius* extensively. In his commentary, Neumann reads the tale and stresses mythical motifs, therefore using the Greek names of the Roman figures in the story; Aphrodite instead of Venus, Eros instead of Cupid, Hera instead of Juno etc. These are also the names I will be using in this paper. Another work which will be used extensively, is Neumann's *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, where the developmental stages of the ego are presented. Before presenting the stages of ego development, I will present other relevant terminology used in this thesis will be presented.

Psyche

In analytical psychology, a psyche is defined as one's total personality. A psyche consists of two realms: the conscious and the unconscious. At the center of consciousness is the ego, while the unconscious realm is divided into two; the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (Academy of Ideas, 2016). The first consists of repressed elements of an individual's life, the second of instincts and archetypes.

Archetypes

Archetypes can be understood as psychic structures that govern all psychic activity (Academy of Ideas, 2016). An archetype consists of two parts: archetypal images and the archetype-as-such (Neumann, 1963, p.4-6). Archetypal images are, for example, images and symbols through which an archetype can be understood figuratively; for instance, the Great Mother archetype as the sea, the earth, or the cornucopia of the fruitful womb (Neumann, 1970, p. 40). An archetype-as-such can be described as the pattern underlying the occurrence of archetypal imagery; whether it occurs in the form of dreams, in psychoanalysis, mythology, works of art, music or literature.

The Ego

The ego is regarded as the center of consciousness (Neumann, 1970, p.262). As the development of consciousness starts with the ego being a mere ego germ, the further development of consciousness depends on its strengthening and its differentiation from the archetypes that wield power over it. In analytical psychology, roughly speaking, the masculine traits are connected to the realm of consciousness, and therefore to the ego (Neumann, 1970, p.42, 63). Through the ego's acquisition of masculine traits, or recognition of them within its own psyche, it becomes stronger. Some of the symbols of the masculine

and the consciousness are the light, the eye, the sun, and the ram (Neumann, 1970, p.42) (Neumann, 1971, p.98-99).

The Shadow

The Shadow is an archetype existing in the realm of the personal unconscious. It consists of repressed personality traits. These are often negative, but not always – sometimes people reject certain personality traits, not because they are harmful, but because they don't fit with the dominant social attitudes of the day. However, integrating the Shadow-elements within one's psyche, can bring about a renewed sense of vitality, and in the process, one may discover the positive repressed traits as well (Academy of Ideas, 2016). In this thesis, the Shadow-elements we are about to encounter, are Psyche's sisters. They are the ones who interrupt the paradisaical existence of Eros and Psyche in the uroboric palace, but their interference is also what pushes Psyche towards individuation and psychic development, so that she and Eros can have a productive love relation as two conscious individuals.

The history of consciousness

In *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Neumann presents the stages of ego development from an unconscious, prehistoric age, to the state of full consciousness. In different stages, the ego will be up against different archetypes, and therefore the stages can be called archetypal. Though Neumann's development of the ego in the book is presented in a linear fashion, the development does not need to happen linearly in real life, and a single individual may jump between different archetypal stages several times during their life (Neumann, 1970, p.264). These jumps may be triggered by a disturbance in a person's life, examples being the death of a loved one, or a partner's unfaithfulness. The seeming orderliness of the past and/or future is shattered, and the person is thrown into chaos, revisiting uroboros (Bite-sized Philosophy, 2017). All archetypes, and therefore all archetypal stages, exist in the collective unconscious, and are always latent in all individuals. Several of the stages have theory and terminology relevant to the reading of the tale of Eros and Psyche, which will be presented below.

Uroboros

Uroboros is the first archetypal stage of the ego development – the development of consciousness. The uroboros is the realm of the unconscious, where the ego is not yet developed (Neumann, 1970, p.5). It is a germ swimming in the dark uroboric sea of enmeshment: life and death, night and day, male and female, good and evil, all of which are

not differentiated from each other - all is one (Neumann, 1970, p.11). All is anonymity, and lust in the dark. The symbol of the uroboros is a snake eating its own tail (Neumann, 1970, p.10).

The Great Mother

The Great Mother is the second stage of the archetypal development. This archetype consists of two aspects: The Good Mother and the Terrible Mother. There are archetypal images and symbols connected to both aspects. In her good aspect, the Great Mother might be fullness and abundance; the dispenser of life and happiness, the nutrient earth, the cornucopia of the fruitful womb. In her terrible aspect, she is shown as the evil (step)mother, the bloodstained goddess of death or war, plague, famine, or flood (Neumann, 1970, p.40).

The relationship between the Great Mother and son-lover defines this developmental stage of consciousness (Neumann, 1970, p.88-101). It is a cyclical relationship where the Mother bears a son, then he becomes her lover, impregnates her and then dies, only to be born again as his own son and child. An example of such a relationship would be the one between the Great Goddess and the Horned God in the Wiccan belief-system. In the spring, the Great Goddess bears forth a child, who turns out to be the Horned God. The Horned God and the Great Goddess copulate during the summer, conceive a child, and on the All Saints' Day, the Horned God dies. The Great Goddess bears the child through the winter, and in the spring the Horned God is born again. The cyclical nature reveals the ever-pervasive uroboric bonds between the Great Mother and the son-lover, the latter of which represents the ego (Neumann, 1970, p.88-101).

As mentioned in the previous section, The Great Mother and the uroboros co-exist. When the ego is submissive to the Great Mother, she is the Good Mother. But as the development of consciousness is necessary, a new stage must be entered by the ego. The Great Mother stands for the collective instincts and urges, anonymity and anonymous creation. She is concerned with life and death, but who the individuals being born and dying are, does not matter to her (Neumann, 1970, p.51-52). The ego must differentiate itself from the Great Mother to achieve individuality. So, with the ego's initial attempts at differentiation, she becomes the ego's enemy: The Terrible Mother (Neumann, 1970, p.93).

The Hero's Journey

The Hero's Journey is a later stage of the ego development. Here, the hero sets out on a journey in which the hero must overcome chaos itself. Chaos can be connected to the realm of the uroboros, where nothing is differentiated. It manifests itself as different problems our hero

must succeed in overcoming. Often the hero must slay a dragon - the dragon is a snake, which is connected to the symbol of the uroboros, which is depicted as a snake biting its own tail. The hero is an ego in a progressed state of differentiation, who must encounter the uroboric dragon, in order to remain differentiated from it. In the process, the ego will become stronger. Having slayed the dragon, or in other words, overcome the problem, the hero receives a reward, usually in the form of gold. The gold can be interpreted as the sun in a tangible form, for as mentioned earlier, the sun is a symbol for consciousness and the masculine. In other instances, the reward may be a princess, easily interpreted as the good aspect of the feminine. In many cases, the hero will be rewarded both. The ego will be rewarded with individual consciousness for fighting off the transpersonal forces. It will also be rewarded with a loving, fruitful relationship with the good aspects of the feminine (Jordan B Peterson, 2017). An example of such a journey would be in the story of the prince in "Sleeping Beauty". A feminine example of the Hero's Journey would be that of Belle in "Beauty and the Beast", and more importantly, the story of Psyche in the tale pertinent to this paper.

Individuation

Another term worth presenting is individuation. Individuation, in short, is the process of integrating the repressed unconscious elements of the psyche into its conscious part. All the psychological traits, deemed undesirable by the dominant societal discourse, become repressed in the individual living under aforementioned societies, and therefore develop the part of the psyche called the Shadow (Academy of Ideas, 2016). Integrating the Shadow is a big part of the individuation process, but as we shall see in this paper's subject matter, other traits must be recognized and integrated as well - particularly masculine traits, being the ones connected to the ego and consciousness.

Reading of the tale

The story starts with the existence of a woman so beautiful she is said to be Aphrodite of the earth. That woman is Psyche. Because of her beauty, men worship her instead of the actual goddess. They admire her from a distance, as is appropriate for a deity. No one wants to marry her, and Psyche's life is lonely and miserable. Aphrodite, not receiving the worship she is entitled, works herself up into a great rage. For how dare these mortals worship a human girl in her place?, she reasons. She sets out to punish Psyche's alleged "hubris" with the help of her son Eros. Aphrodite kisses him "long and hungrily with parted lips" and commands him to make Psyche fall in love with the most hideous of monsters (Apuleius, p.77). Here the first sign of Aphrodite as an aspect of the Great Mother emerges – the relationship with the son-lover. Eros obeys, but in seeing Psyche, he finds such pleasure in her beauty that, for a moment as he is distracted, he pricks himself with his own arrows, and thus falls in love with Psyche. He decides to make Psyche his wife – which is a curious part of the tale. If Eros is the son-lover, that is, the submissive ego, at the onset of the story, here we see him act independently, thus breaking his submissive bonds with the Great Mother by disobeying her command.

Psyche is prophesied to marry a monster. She is left alone on a mountaintop by her grieving parents, destined to a fate of a deadly wedlock she has willfully accepted. The mountain is phallic in shape, symbolizing consciousness - the ego (Neumann, 1970, p.158). Psyche, residing on the mountain top, can be interpreted as a conscious individual. She is swept down by the "kindly breeze of Zephyr", into the beautiful valley where the palace of Eros is located (Apuleius, p.79). She is to become Eros' wife, and exist in the unconscious paradise of uroboric darkness.

The symbolism here is closely connected to the realm of uroboros and the Great Mother. Psyche is an ego germ swimming around in the uroboros – the ecstasy she lives in is an ecstasy of darkness. The woods, the rich and beautiful palace, the bodiless voices she has for company, all these are images connected to the nourishing aspect of the Great Mother. Even her husband keeps Psyche in the dark by forbidding her to look at him. To keep himself unknown he comes only at night and leaves before sunrise. All of this strikes Psyche as very strange, but "soon what seemed strange at first by force of habit became a delight" and for her husband she proclaims "I would rather die a hundred times than forgo the supreme joy of my marriage with you. [...] I value you higher than [Eros] himself" (Apuleius, p.83). But, of course, this state cannot go on forever, as the unconscious elements of the psyche always

strive towards becoming conscious, and the ego must develop, meaning, break free from the uroboric state, or in other words, to differentiate (Neumann, 1970, p.5, 302-306).

The unconscious elements that initiate the ego differentiation in this tale are symbolized by Psyche's sisters. They represent her Shadow, steering her course of action from the unconscious realm. For even though the palace is beautiful, and the husband's love is delicious, Psyche grows lonely without human company; and despite urgent warnings from Eros, she persuades him to bring down the sisters for a visit. Now the sisters convince Psyche that her husband is indeed a monster; how could he not be, when he refuses to show his face to the beloved wife?

Armed with an oil lamp and a knife, Psyche sneaks to the husband's side of the bed at night, intending to kill him. But while she hates the beast, she loves the husband. As we shall see, objects in this tale are filled with psychic meaning and symbolism, and are Psyche's helpers in this context. Not willing to kill the husband, Psyche turns the knife on herself. But the knife falls out of her hand to prevent her from suicide. Psyche then comes closer to the husband's face, and in the light of the lamp, recognizes him as Eros. Overcome by his beauty, Psyche loses herself in gazing at Eros, pricks herself on his arrow and falls in love with Love. But this is another kind of love: it is a conscious one, not of the uroboric kind. Eros has been consciously in love with her from the beginning, even though he denied her the same love by keeping her in the dark. This may be due to Eros' own fear of the Great Mother, as he himself is not a differentiated ego yet. But now, through disobedience and her individual decisiveness, Psyche has made the union of conscious and equal love possible between them. But it is also her disobedience that makes Eros disappear. Again, an object intervenes: as Psyche is busy marveling at Eros, a drop of oil from the lamp falls on his skin, wounding and awakening him. Here, Neumann comments on the symbolism of the oil:

“The oil as essence of the plant world, an essence of the earth, which is accordingly used to anoint the lord of the earth, the king, is a widespread symbol. In this case it is significant as the basis of light, and to give light it must kindle and burn. Similarly, in psychic life, it is the heat, the fire of passion, the flame and ardor of emotion that provide the basis of illumination, that is, of an illuminated consciousness” (Neumann, 1971, p.84).

This newfound, conscious love is what drives Psyche to consciousness. But for Psyche and Eros to be together, both must differentiate completely from the Great Mother. However, the two processes are individual: so, Eros disappears to his mother's chambers, that is, regresses to a less conscious state. He has done enough, but what he has done has not always been right.

Love cannot flourish in an unequal couple. Psyche has been held unconscious by Eros, which she has put a stop to herself. Now, she must complete the process of individuation on her own, and in the end, be made divine by the conscious, individual love she and Eros are to share. But before that, she must undergo and complete the Hero's Journey.

Psyche is left alone to fight the archetypal world – for fight she must, as Aphrodite, the terrible aspect of the Great Mother herself is after her. Upon Eros' return to Aphrodite's chambers the latter learns that her son-lover has exceeded his role as her instrument and made himself independent by disobedience. Not to mention, the one Eros loves is Psyche, Aphrodite's enemy – whom Aphrodite goes into a mad frenzy searching for.

When the undeveloped ego starts to differentiate from the Great Mother, it becomes fearful of the archetype's numinosity, and expresses its fear in the form of flight, that is, self-castration or suicide (Neumann, 1970, p.88). This is also what Psyche does after Eros' disappearance. She throws herself into a river, hoping to drown. But the river, just as the knife, stops her from killing herself. The river is water, which is the feminine unconscious element of Psyche which knows that regression is now impossible. This is particularly because Psyche already has been impregnated by the masculine, which is connected to consciousness. She is bearing the divine Eros' child. Now, the only for Psyche, is forward.

After her first suicide attempt, Psyche meets in the forest is Pan, the god of nature, in the forest. This meeting bears a profound psychological meaning. Pan is the god of natural existence, matured by “advanced age [and] considerable experience”, close to earth and animals, a lover of life and living creatures (Apuleius, p.94-95). He advises Psyche to address Eros with “prayers of adoration” and tender submission (Apuleius, p.95). He remains entirely in the background during the rest of the tale, yet this advice is what determines Psyche's course of action and development (Neumann, 1971, p.97-98). Pan opens her eyes to the meaning hidden in the labors Aphrodite is preparing for her. Psyche's connection with the earth and her own instinctual nature, as symbolized by helpers connected to nature, is what will help her complete the first three tasks.

As the Shadow-sisters have played their part, Psyche punishes them in a gruesome fairy-tale like fashion, luring them to death through jumping off the mountain where Zephyr got her for the first time, into the uroboric valley.

Having disposed of the treacherous pair, pregnant Psyche seeks shelter with Demeter (Ceres) and Hera (Juno), but is refused by both, despite their feelings of pity towards her. Demeter,

who nourishes by harvest, and Hera, who aids pregnant women when the birth is near, are the good aspects of the Great Mother. But after the initial differentiation of ego from the Great Mother has begun, she will show her good aspects only much later, when the ego is independent (Neumann, 1970, p.15). Now, being the weak ego which she is, Psyche must face the Terrible Mother alone to become differentiated.

Refused by the goddesses, and with a warrant for her arrest even in the human world, Psyche finally surrenders to Aphrodite. The overwhelming pain and labors of differentiation are demonstrated by the images of Aphrodite and her handmaidens beating up the pregnant Psyche. But Psyche, having taken Pan's advice, submits herself to her fate. After the beatings, Aphrodite decides to destroy Psyche through imposing several tasks on her.

Here we can see that the Hero's Journey is about to begin. Psyche, an individual, is to struggle against the transpersonal – the archetype of the Great Mother as shown through Aphrodite. In performing the labors posed before her, Psyche becomes a feminine Heracles, and Aphrodite plays the role of Heracles' stepmother. In both tales the Terrible Mother performs the role of destiny, leading to our protagonist's heroism and "memorable deeds" (Neumann, 1971, p.93). Through the completion of the tasks, Psyche will integrate with the masculine traits: the ego will grow stronger, more conscious and differentiate into an independent entity.

For the first task, Aphrodite mixes together a huge mound of barley, poppy seeds, peas, lentils and beans, all of which Psyche must separate. This motif is known to us from the story of Cinderella, and the story of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Beautiful. The ego is overwhelmed by the strength of the archetypal realm to the degree of stupefaction. Here, Neumann suggests that the mound of seeds symbolizes a uroboric mixture of the masculine, a promiscuity typical of Bachofen's swamp stage (Neumann, 1970, p.95). The helpful animals are symbols of the instinctual realm, and the ones that come to Psyche's aid are ants. Kerényi is referenced in Neumann's *Amor and Psyche* to have pointed to the primordial human character of the earthborne ant peoples and their connection with autochthony – the earthborn nature of life and especially of man (Neumann, 1971, p.95). Aphrodite is the Great Mother for whom the individual masculine does not matter. But Psyche is an ego, and even in her first labor, she has reached the stage of productivity. She counters Aphrodite's promiscuity with an instinctual ordering principle, symbolized by the ants. Psyche's connection with her instinctual world helps her accomplish the first task.

Unsuccessful with destroying Psyche at her first attempt, Aphrodite poses a second task upon her. It is again filled with masculine symbolism, with which Psyche's instinctual nature must interact with successfully, in order to achieve the desired results. Psyche is to retrieve golden wool from the backs of the sun rams who are grazing in a grove. The sun and the ram are symbols of the masculine. But here they are the negative aspects of the masculine principle, whose deadly aggression is the incursion of the unconscious powers into the psyche (Neumann, 1971, p.100). Psyche's ego has begun regressing into the flight mode of suicide, but again she is hindered by the natural world; in this case, the reed. With its roots deep in the water, the reed, representing the feminine, unconscious, instinctual sphere, is the counterpart of the rams. The reed begs Psyche not to kill herself, but instead, implores her to wait until after noon, when the sun has gone lower and the breeze has lulled the sheep to sleep. Unless its pleads are heeded, they will attack Psyche with "their sharp horns, their rock-hard heads, and sometimes their poisonous bites", for "they tend to be fired by the burning heat of the sun and charge about in ferocious rage" (Apuleius, p.106). But with the sun low and the rams asleep, it is safe to collect the wool, which represents the fructifying power of the masculine, which the feminine, as positive Great Mother, plaits into the web of nature as sun-threads (Neumann, 1971, p.101). Psyche heeds the reeds' pleas, and thus, Aphrodite is yet again unsuccessful in her attempt to destroy Psyche. She accuses Psyche of succeeding due to the help of Eros, which surely is also the reason Psyche succeeded at completing the first task as well. These accusations may seem arbitrary, but if one considers Eros to represent the masculine half of the union of Psyche and Eros, the accusations may be true. As Psyche grows more conscious, the masculine traits are more integrated within her psyche – the traits Aphrodite prescribes to Eros. Therefore, in her accusations, Aphrodite is correct – it is Eros who helps Psyche, but only insofar as the traits prescribed to him are being recognized and integrated by Psyche in her own character.

Aphrodite does not relinquish her attempts to destroy the daughter-in-law. For the third task, Aphrodite gives Psyche an urn she is to fill with water at the peak of a mountain stream, whose black waters flow down into "the marshes of the Styx and feed the hoarse stream of Cocytus" (Apuleius, p.107). It is not implicated that the water itself has any special qualities, thus the reason why it is posed as a task for Psyche must be the difficulty of attaining it. In this task, Psyche must face the uroboric powers as presented by the cyclical stream, which connects the highest of heavens and the lowest of the underworlds, enmeshing them. Thus, the stream may be seen as the water of life, and what Psyche is asked to do, is to capture a unit of

the life stream without being crushed by it and bring it back to Aphrodite, who is now sure of Psyche's imminent destruction (Neumann, 1971, p.103-104). Psyche's ego is made stronger by her successful completion of the second task, and therefore she does not immediately flee from the third. As she ascends the mountaintop, she sees it filled with dragons, slippery surfaces, and the water itself screaming for her to stay away. She is paralyzed by fear. The helper in this scene is the eagle of Ganymede. The eagle represents the unconscious masculine spirit, which once again is what Psyche must integrate, or recognize, to overcome the task. The masculine is connected to consciousness, and therefore, to a greater stage of differentiation. It is the masculine that Psyche's ego must integrate for it to differentiate itself (Neumann, 1971, p.105-106).

The eagle of Ganymede is the eagle of Zeus (Jove). Why does Zeus send help to Psyche? Since Psyche is up against the transpersonal feminine power, it is only natural that the powers which help her will be of masculine nature. The transpersonal feminine wishes to destroy Psyche, so that the transpersonal masculine will save her from destruction. But why is this so? Firstly, Zeus is himself protesting against the Great Mother in the form of Hera, who tries to control Zeus' free flow of love, as well the Great Goddess as Aphrodite, who denies love to her own son, but freely bestows the same pleasures upon mankind. Zeus knows the seizures of love and sympathizes with Eros. Also, Zeus and Ganymede have played the role of "the strugglers". "The strugglers" take up the war of liberation from the domination of the Great Mother, just as Psyche is doing (Neumann, 1970, p.86-93). Sometimes, they are portrayed as homosexual couples, as in the case of Zeus and Ganymede (Neumann, 1971, p.104-105). Ganymede and Psyche are also both human beings loved by gods, and both are ultimately carried off to Olympus as earthly-heavenly companions of their divine lovers (Neumann, 1971, p.104-105). The eagle fills the urn with water, and Psyche returns it to an even more wrathful Aphrodite.

The last task set before Psyche is different than the first three. This time, she is to descend to the underworld, to the realm of Persephone (Proserpine) to retrieve a beauty anointment for Aphrodite. This task scares Psyche to such a degree that her ego regresses into a weaker state; she fears again the Great Mother, the numinous powers she is up against, and decides to end her misery in death. The high tower from which she is to jump speaks to her: "Poor girl, why do you seek to put an end to yourself by throwing yourself down? What is the point of rash surrender before this, your final hazardous labour?" (Apuleius, p.109). This helper is different from the ones in the previous tasks. In the first three labors, the entities of nature

helped Psyche: the ants, the reed and the eagle. But the tower is, firstly, a human construct. It is raised by human hands and is therefore the result of human collective physical and spiritual labor. Therefore, it is called the “far-seeing tower”. The fact that the helper is not connected to nature, but to culture, signalizes that in this last task, Psyche will have to stand alone. She cannot tap into her instinctual nature; she will have to rely solely on reason alone, in order to succeed. It also signalizes that the ego of Psyche has reached a new development stage – it is about to completely differentiate itself from the Great Mother – there is but one last step that has to be taken, one last obstacle to be overcome before the uroboric bonds to the Great Mother are broken and the ego enters an independent existence. This, the conscious ego also knows, since the tower, the symbol of culture and consciousness, exclaims “What is the point of rash surrender before this, your final hazardous labour?” Psyche has integrated the masculine traits to such a degree that her spirituality is, indeed, masculine and feminine at once (Neumann, 1971, p. 111).

Psyche descends to the underworld, following all the instructions the tower gave her, and retrieves the beauty anointment as requested. She comes up in the daylight, relieved that she has made it. Now, one of the instructions the tower, symbolizing a higher consciousness, gave Psyche, was to not, at any cost to open the box with the beauty anointment. But, as mentioned before, “it is the heat, the fire of passion, the flame and ardor of emotion that provide the basis of illumination, that is, of an illuminated consciousness” (Neumann, 1971, p.84). The power of love is stronger than Psyche. She wishes to be more pleasing for her lover, Eros; being human, she still doesn’t feel equal to him. So, for the sake of love, Psyche opens the box – only to fall over, possessed by the sleep of death.

What has Eros been up to while his pregnant wife has slaved away on labors imposed on her by the mother-in-law? Eros has, presumably, spent all the time in his mother’s chambers, tending to his wound. It is strange that one wound caused by hot oil should take such a long time to heal. It is then more appropriate to view the wound not only as physical, but also a psychological one. Psyche’s disobedience caused much trouble to Eros, disclosing to the Great Mother the information that her son-lover has disobeyed her. Psyche’s disobedience pushes the ego of Eros further on the pathway of ego development, making complete regression impossible; even though Eros’s ego does regress to a weaker state temporarily, when Psyche disobeys him, and he is found out by Aphrodite. But since Eros was the one who initiated the relationship, in other words, was the one who made active, individual decisions first, the burden of responsibility rested on Psyche because she violated his premises

of darkness. But now that Psyche has done everything she could, and followed the advice given to her by her own instinctual nature, that is, “submit yourself”, the time has come for Eros to act. For his love, Psyche disregarded the warning of her reason. For his love, she was willing to lose everything. Now that Psyche is, figuratively, “sleeping in the glass coffin” as the heroine in the tale of Snow White, Eros can again become the savior, and thus restore the equality between them. Eros is now healed; he misses Psyche and sneaks out of his mother’s chambers. With a kiss, Eros takes the duvet of deathly sleep off her. This may be seen as the kiss of true love; conscious, illuminated love between individuals, conscious contact between two psyches where both egos are differentiated and independent.

But there is one last thing that remains for Psyche and Eros to become equal. Psyche must be deified; this is made possible by Eros’ conversing with Zeus, who, as we know, already sympathizes with the couple. All the gods are called to the heavenly theater, and Psyche is flown there as well. By drinking ambrosia, she becomes immortal, and a great wedding feast is arranged for Eros and Psyche. The central figures of Pan, Aphrodite and Ganymede are present. The ego is now differentiated and does not view the Great Mother as a threat, so there is no danger in with Psyche and Aphrodite being in the same room together. Not least, Zeus, representing the masculine transpersonal, asks Aphrodite, the feminine transpersonal, not to hold a grudge and instead enjoy herself. She listens to him and is for the first time showing her good aspects at the wedding feast of her son.

Psyche was pregnant when doing the labors. After her marriage with Eros, she gives birth to a daughter. But in the book, both Aphrodite and Eros refer to the child Psyche is bearing as a son. What could that mean? According to Neumann, “the birth of the divine child” and its significance is known to us not only from mythology, but also in connection with the individuation process. The birth of a divine daughter represents a central process, relevant to the woman’s self and wholeness (Neumann, 1971, p.140). With the birth of her daughter, Psyche’s individuation process is complete, and she and Eros are a divine couple with a personal love relationship between two conscious individuals forevermore.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have done an archetypal reading of the tale of Cupid and Psyche as it appears in *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius. I based my interpretation on Erich Neumann's *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, and *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine* subtitled *A Commentary on the tale by Apuleius*. In the theory part of this paper, I presented terms that were later used as a means of effectively reading the story. These terms were the psyche, the ego, the Shadow archetype, archetypal development stages, the uroboros, the Great Mother, the Hero's Journey and individuation.

In the interpretation of the tale, I focused mainly on the development of Psyche. She is a mortal woman, but divinely beautiful. Her beauty turns Aphrodite into an enemy of Psyche, leading Aphrodite to command her son-lover, Eros, to destine Psyche to loving the most hideous of monsters. Instead, Eros himself falls in love with Psyche, and weds her without Aphrodite's knowledge. Psyche does not know her husband's true personality either, as Eros only visits their mutual palace in the night. Both Eros and Psyche are individual psyches with individual, but weak egos, destined to differentiate from the Great Mother and the uroboros. Eros has already started his own process of differentiation and individuation by disobeying Aphrodite, while Psyche, however, only starts her process upon the visit of her sisters. The sisters are Psyche's Shadow, and by integrating with them, she disobeys Eros' command to not discover his true appearance. She shines on him with an oil lamp, pricks herself on his arrows, and thus, triggered by a conscious act, her illuminated love for Eros is called forth. At the same time, a drop of oil is spilled, wounding and awakening Eros, consequently driving him away and setting Psyche on the path of the Hero. She surrenders herself to Aphrodite, who beats her and sets forth four tasks that Psyche must complete in order to achieve individuation. Each of the tasks are filled with masculine symbolism, which relates to consciousness and therefore to the ego. The masculine traits are integrated within the psyche, strengthening the ego and differentiating it from the Great Mother. Psyche grapples with continuous suicidal tendencies throughout the tale, which is a weak ego's expression of fear in encountering the Great Mother. Psyche is helped to overcome these tendencies by the helpers she meets as she performs the different tasks. The fourth, and final task is not completed as planned; she retrieves a beauty anointment for Aphrodite from the underworld, but despite her helper's urgent warnings, she opens the box with the anointment to use some of it on herself to please Eros. Upon opening the box, she is overcome by a deadly sleep, and Eros is the one who saves her. His wound has been healed, he misses Psyche, and now that she is in a

vulnerable position and in need of help, he can assume the role of the savior, thus positioning them on an equal ground in the relationship. With a kiss Eros wakes Psyche up, and with the help of Zeus, they are married, and Psyche is deified with an intake of ambrosia. Now, Eros and Psyche truly are equal partners; both individuals have independent, completely differentiated egos, and the relationship between them is that of conscious individual love. The completeness of differentiation is shown by Aphrodite's attendance of the wedding. She dances and enjoys herself – now that the egos are differentiated and strong, the Great Mother is of no threat to them, making her good aspects visible. With the birth of Psyche's and Eros' divine daughter, the individuation process of Psyche is complete.

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