

Therapeutic Keys  
to Self-Actualization  
in Homer's *Demeter*



# Therapeutic Keys to Self-Actualization in Homer's *Demeter*

By

Lindy McMullin PhD

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



Therapeutic Keys to Self-Actualization in Homer's *Demeter*

By Lindy McMullin PhD

This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2018 by Lindy McMullin

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1123-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1123-1

**To all those too numerous to mention who added something to my life  
and who assisted me in bringing all this together**

**I AM BECAUSE OF YOU**

*Ubuntu*

# ***TO THE MUSES AND APOLLO***

***(Fragment XXV, Evelyn-White, 1914)***

*I will begin with the Muses and Apollo and Zeus. For it is through the Muses and Apollo that there are singers upon the earth and players upon the lyre; but kings are from Zeus. Happy is he/she whom the Muses love: sweet flows speech from his/her lips.*

*Hail, children of Zeus! Give honour to my song! And now I will remember you and another song also.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....	ix
Abstract .....	xi
Acknowledgements .....	xii
Preface .....	xiii
Outline of the Study.....	xxv
Chapter One.....	1
Orientation to the Study	
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Theoretical Synthesis .....	13
1.3 Research Objectives.....	23
1.4 Research Methodology .....	24
1.5 Foundational Concepts.....	29
1.6 Historical Background .....	30
1.7 Discussion .....	43
Chapter Two .....	47
Literature Review	
2.1 Historical Background .....	47
2.2 The Application of Myth and Music in Changing Consciousness ...	60
2.3 Myths, Dreams and Visions.....	67
2.4 Myth and Spirituality .....	73
2.5 Myth, Self-Actualization and Self Transformation .....	78
2.6 Transpersonal Education and Myth .....	81
2.7 Myth and Symbol.....	83
2.8 Myth and Music .....	86
2.9 Myth and Transformation .....	89
2.10 Summary .....	94

Chapter Three .....	97
Research Design, Methodology and Study Implementation .....	
3.1 Design of Study.....	97
3.2 Research Method .....	106
3.3 Methods of Data Collection .....	112
3.4 Data Collection .....	116
3.5 Data Implementation.....	117
3.6 Data Analysis .....	119
3.7 Summary.....	124
Chapter Four .....	126
Data Analysis .....	
4.1 Analysis .....	126
4.2 Transformative Elements .....	183
4.3 Structural Constraints.....	184
4.4 Follow up Session .....	186
4.5 Summary .....	187
Chapter Five .....	189
Discussion of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations .....	
5.1 Summary of the Study .....	190
5.2 Main Findings .....	191
5.3 Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious .....	215
5.4 Mysticism.....	220
5.5 Dreams .....	221
5.6 Personal Development .....	223
5.7 The Epiphany and Professional Development .....	225
5.8 Transpersonal Development .....	227
5.9 Further Research .....	230
5.10 Limitations .....	231
5.11 Personal Implications.....	232
References .....	235
Appendix: Glossary .....	260
Sources Used for Glossary.....	264
Individual Participant Charts .....	265
Images of Experiential Content .....	301
Original Hymn to Demeter .....	309
Index .....	321

## FOREWORD

At a time of resurgent interest in the more spiritual dimension of our lives, it is important to be reminded of the profound insights that ancient civilizations embedded in their oral stories and sacred texts. Engaging with the spiritual core of our being is not only a matter of cultivating a mindful awareness of the present, but also requires practices that can open us to the depths of the psyche where real transformation is seeded. That ancient sources can convey wisdom for understanding what it is to be human and to seek the highest hardly needs reiterating. What does need careful and creative attention is the ways through which we can engage with that wisdom at a level that has the potential to bear fruit for enriching our lives. It is this elusive yet crucial skill that lies at the core of McMullin's work

This book offers an excursion deep into the therapeutic and developmental potential of ancient Greek myths and hymns. Based on McMullin's PhD dissertation, the publication is the result of a study that investigated the effects that myth in sacred text may have on personal, professional and transpersonal development. Journey with her as she invites 17 participants into a unique experience, accompanied by lyre music as occurred in ancient practice, while she reads in modulated tones Homer's *Hymn to Demeter*. A clinician as well as researcher, the author succeeded in extracting and examining personal epiphanies that appeared to have the potential to change perceptions and contribute to a healing process. Her insightful and long-standing clinical skills as a transpersonal therapist, honed over decades, combined with her attention to research details, offers a compelling journey and fascinating reading. She also invites the reader into her own inner thoughts and observations while journeying with participants. Simultaneously spanning the boundary of staying mindful of one's own processing while navigating participants on a discovery journey, all within a research pursuit, provides a transparency from which much can be learned.

We learn of the value of myth, not as merely a historical legacy but as a living fount for those seeking to grow through transpersonal challenges in their lives. McMullin brings a sophisticated contemporary understanding of Greek myth and shows through her research how myth can be a living presence for bettering individual lives. By opening themselves to the

power of myth, the participants in her research found ways to explore their inner processes—ways to envision anew their anxieties, creative potentials, and the decisions that impact the flow of their lives.

This book represents a courageous and novel attempt to integrate ancient wisdom with modern scientific inquiry that honours all levels, states, and structures of consciousness within both the researcher and the study's participants. The reader is afforded insights into the deep inner preparatory work McMullin undertook prior to, and during the inquiry to situate herself in the historical context and to prepare her psyche at a fundamental level to receive the data, perceptions, and experiences from participants. Skill and creativity are evident in the nuanced sophisticated manner of data collection and analysis—not only with words but with accompanying drawings that depict the data in a differently expressed manner that illuminates the many ways of knowing and expressing understanding. Moreover, the inclusion of a glossary helps navigate the reader through a delightfully rich and full experience.

Throughout the book, the focus of the inquiry (investigating the application of ancient Greek myth and music in personal, professional and transpersonal development) is reinforced. This work portrays a deep respect for the many ways of knowing inherent in the human species, calling for a re-visiting of sacred script and its benefits in education and psychology, both from a research perspective as well as in terms of its usefulness in a continuing journey of Self-discovery.

By the end of the book, having learned what inspired the inquiry, what motivated the writing of the book, how the author prepared for the journey herself and how she prepared the participants, it may not be surprising to find oneself experiencing the author as a trusted colleague and perhaps new-found friend with whom one will want to communicate further.

Marcie Boucouvalas, PhD  
Editor, The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology  
Professor Emerita of Human Development  
Virginia Tech/National Capital Region USA

B Les Lancaster PhD  
Academic Dean, the Alef Trust  
Professor Emeritus, Liverpool John Moores University UK

## ABSTRACT

Self-actualization and self-transcendence are both areas of Maslow's Hierarchy that remain elusive to the majority of humankind, largely due to the lack of education about the self. To know the self is also to care about the self, and this study aims at investigating how the use of myth in sacred text with music may contribute to this process of self-knowledge.

The objective of the study is to investigate the effects that myth in sacred text may have on personal, professional and transpersonal development. To ensure maximum impact in terms of imagery-enhancing properties, Greek myth was read, accompanied by lyre music, in a therapeutic setting. The study included a focus on personal epiphanies that, it is argued, have the potential to change perceptions and contribute to a healing process.

Seventeen participants were read *Homer's Hymn to Demeter* over five sessions. Interviews before and after each session focused on participants' imagery in dreams and waking fantasy, together with their reflections and interpretations. An Interpretive Interactionist methodology was used with a post structuralism critical approach, capturing the ways in which participants experienced the hymn and the relations with the epiphanies that have taken place in their lives.

Results show that the *Hymn* facilitated participants in working through relationship issues and birth and death traumas, both major aspects of the myth. The extent to which the myth may have facilitated positive outcomes is discussed. Results also highlight the role dreams played in between sessions, in enriching reflection and understanding of problems that arose across the five sessions. It is concluded that the exposure to myth in the imagery-encouraging setting used in the study has the potential to impact poignantly on personal, professional and transpersonal development.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all those who have supported me during this process and express my gratitude for the role they played in contributing to this dissertation:

- a) The National Research Foundation (NRF) for their financial support with a bursary detailed by Professor R. Newmark
- b) Stellenbosch University: Professor Robinson for her support, encouragement and understanding
- c) Professor L. Lancaster for invaluable guidance and supervision of this thesis
- d) Professor Z. Senyucel for valuable feedback on Methodology
- e) Didem Kizen for her expert assistance with the Bibliography
- f) Michael Schneider, Monique Tiberghien & Nour Goodall for their love, support and financial assistance
- g) Ioannis Kotsomitis and Stavroula Nasopoulou for their expert IT advice and creative talent
- h) My participants for taking part in this study as co-researchers
- i) Ramona O'Neill, Michael Kypriotakis, Edward & Chrysanthi Kypriotakis for their invaluable insights as to how to proceed with my work
- j) My grandmother and my mother for inspiring me to get a PhD and not to give up as they did

*I dedicate this work to my beautiful granddaughter Callisto, in faith, hope and trust that it will inspire her to fully comprehend and embrace self-actualization and transcendence.*

## PREFACE

My interest in ancient Greek mythology began many years ago, especially as I have had the privilege of living in Athens since 1978. Having experienced a number of epiphanies over the years, particularly at different sacred sites, I explored the notion that myth may play an important therapeutic role in healing the psyche. This hypothesis coupled with a few of my personal experiences kept me in deep reflection, especially when reading the works of scholars such as Jung, Hillman, May, Campbell and Eliade, amongst others. I concluded that if the inner aspects of being were interlaced with myths of an ancient past, myths may be of value in developing self, as they emerged through sacred text.

I also considered that initiation into mysteries may not be restricted to specific spiritual or religious rituals but could perhaps take place through the intention to know the self. I began to question whether language of myth could rekindle an inner process of growth that would then influence personal, professional and transpersonal development. My experience both as founder and president of the Greek Association for Transpersonal Psychology and Research in Athens for a period of four years before its closure in 2015, led me to question whether modern day Greece was in crisis because it had become estranged from its own rich ancient past. I wondered if rekindling the interest in myth as a tool for personal, professional and transpersonal development could bring about a paradigm shift that would lead to a change in perception; this change in perception included revisiting ancient Greek thought from a psychological and educational point of view. In developing my ideas around this topic, I came to realize the importance of this thesis not only as implicated in my own spiritual path, but as a social contribution.

Comparing my personal spiritual life process to Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis' (1993) quest orientation, there was an endless process of questioning and focusing on self-development that culminated in me finding particular value in the myth of Persephone and Demeter.

My interpretation of the myth was very clear, even though it was always in a process of evolution. Persephone symbolized the inner being, longing for union. The flower she picked, not unlike the *Golden Flower* in the

tradition of Taoism (Cleary, 1993), represented the beauty and grace of the divine; the *Golden Flower*, symbolized the opening up of the light of the mind, suggesting in the book that the real self, and its hidden potential, was awakened through the quintessence of the path of Buddhism and Taoism. I used this to deepen my experience of ancient Greek tradition.

Longing to embody Truth, Beauty necessitated Persephone's plunge into the underworld (unconscious) to meet with shadows lurking there; her challenge was to understand and accept them. Her union with Aidoneus (Hades) was necessary for her to become queen of the underworld; in other words, to master this shadow realm she had to recognize aspects of herself in the face of Aidoneus, as well as the nature of emptiness that was inherent in Hades. Her subsequent journey to join her mother indicated her need to periodically connect with the divine aspect of her own being, as only this could deepen her understanding of the material and non-material worlds; it also represented the cycle of death, birth and rebirth.

Ancient Greek thought supported the notion that if one was born and one died, it was logical that the next stage would be rebirth in the eternal cycle of life. There was also an underlying message in the story of Demeter; both seen and unseen worlds were equally influenced by the law of cause and effect. Union between Demeter and Persephone was not enough to bring abundance back to the land; emotions had to be mastered as well, before the grain could be offered by Demeter to the world; the grain signified the process required to bring sustenance and life, giving power back to the body and the soul. It demarcated the process from seed to plant, from plant to grain and the process of change that came after this. By familiarizing herself and mastering the land of shadows, Persephone initiated change and development that brought greater harmony. Demeter, as divine feminine located in heart, challenged the divine masculinity of Zeus, located in mind. Demeter's actions showed clearly that withdrawal of the divine feminine and the intuitive aspect of soul resulted in chaos, barrenness and loss of creation. Both aspects of self, masculine and feminine, mind and heart were needed to actualize all potential. Moreover, the divine masculine could not be integrated without acceptance of the intuitive divine feminine, as evidenced by the support given by Mother Earth to Zeus in creating the Narcissus flower. The gift of life was the initiation that Demeter and Persephone gave to humankind, offering them a way to move beyond the dual aspects of existence.

Divinity remains a mystery, for it is something that cannot be intellectualized; however, openness to the experience of manifestation is

necessary for one to connect to this realm, through the mysteries. The flower, Persephone so longed to possess, is a key symbol leading to realization of self. Narcissus represents the need to know the hidden self, for only then can the divine be appreciated and understood.

Rituals and discourse with gods and goddesses in ancient times were considered to be conducive to well-being and quality of life, not only in ancient Greece, but elsewhere around the world. Each culture shared its own tales, but the majority of myths were interrelated in many different and subtle ways. Myths gave hope and understanding of the everlasting cycle of life and the necessity to revere what was considered to be sacred, as opposed to that which was considered to be profane; as Harvey and Baring (1996) point out, the loss of the divine feminine is what has led to the present day ecological and spiritual crisis. They urge its reawakening especially in light of the current social and economic crisis facing the world. Edward Tick (2001), who investigated the medical and psychotherapeutic benefits of dream healing based on the Asclepiad therapeutic tradition, wrote:

We may identify with a mythic tradition to such a degree that we undertake a journey that replicates the mythic hero's journey as recorded in ancient sources...We go beyond association into a living identification. We do not forget who we are as modern people with a modern consciousness. But we accept and believe that the ancients had access to transpersonal dimensions that we have lost and that by following their teachings we may regain and achieve success as well. (p. xiii)

The importance of revisiting an ancient past also emerged from a preliminary literature review that did not reveal studies similar to mine. This showed a gap in research that had existed from the time of Jung, who described his own psychological ideational process as "mythologizing," according to Hillman (1996); moreover, Hillman and a number of other scholars supported the notion that the psyche projected itself into the myth, and yet current attitudes towards myth give little credit to these stories that are taken literally and believed to be of no importance at all. I was therefore challenged to carry out research in this field, even though I knew it would not be an easy task.

Martin (2005) has pointed out that poetic myth-writing is part of a process through which the human mind evolves, as it explores multiple levels of meaning. Both myth and ritual are known to complement the process of internal transformation and based on my emotional experiences and moments of revelation, I had my own inspiring breakthroughs. I began to

consider how the quality of life of the ancient world that birthed Western European culture may well have been inspired by the power and experience of myth through epiphany and initiation. I was drawn into the mysteries interlaced with the story of Persephone and Demeter and further encouraged by Eliade's (1978) informed position of these Eleusinian mysteries.

In the last analysis, besides the central role that the Eleusinian mysteries played in the history of Greek religiosity, they indirectly made a significant contribution to the history of European culture and notably to interpretations of initiatory secrecy. (p.301)

I concluded that the mysteries had not only played a role in ancient Greek religion, but that they had also contributed to the foundations of Christian tradition. This enhanced my view that loss of culture and stability may occur due to loss of what the ancients call 'soul', and which holds significance for me, as 'essence'. As sacred experience presented itself directly in my awareness, this represented a qualitative shift in my mode of experiencing (Braud & Anderson, 1998). I became aware of the contrast between rationalistic thinking that communicated through what was specific, empirical, logical objectivity, and intuitive based experiential feeling. I clearly understood the need for a theoretical synthesis of ideas and an expanded approach to research, as well as an experiential approach (Braud & Anderson, 1998). I found myself drawn more and more into a space where I felt it was of utmost importance to separate, what can be called, pre-conceived thought and a mental frame work from what is spontaneous, experiential and intuitive processing. This is what prompted me to start exploring the essence of the particular attributes held by the gods or goddesses. I concluded that as a researcher I was entering into a transpersonal field of potential and possibility where ideas and deities might still exist in perfected form. I also concluded that if I was to embark on empirical study I must in every way try to promote imaginative experience and not mental activity with preconceived ideas about the deities. At this stage, I tried to move beyond the forms and into an archetypal understanding of the gods and goddesses.

I was drawn intuitively to extract elements from the deities, in order to assist this process; I extracted Zeutian, Demetrian, Hestian, Persephonian, Apollonian, Hadean, Hecatan, Dionysian, Medusian, and Hermesian elements amongst others, drawing out the qualities of each persona. The Persephonian element was mysterious, shy, quiet, submissive and highly intuitive; the Demetrian element was forceful, sharp, integrated, strong and

majestic; the Apollonian element was soft, billowing and creative, constantly in change and movement; the Dionysian was wild, ecstatic, humorous and yet grounded; the Hermesian was mystical, essential, and mysteriously deep and the Hestian fiery, passionate, loyal and strong; the Hadean was dark, shadowy, mysterious and absolute and the Hecation sharp, clear, bold and far-sighted. The Medusian was highly analytical, focused, logical and firm. The Zeutian encompassed a mixture of all these, clarifying for me that each element became more and more refined, as greater consciousness was experienced. The Muses, who had become manifest on Mount Helicon, became natural elements that existed somewhere in the collective unconscious as well as in the personal; they also emerged from the depths of Hesiod and Homer's imagination and the pantheon of gods and goddesses, became a periodic table of elements and mirrored inner aspects of being.

In the *Hymn to Demeter*, the Narcissus was an elixir that shone brightly as a reminder of the journey that must be taken, to gain access to Mount Olympus; at the height of the mount, there was union, whereas in Hades, where the dead became shadows, there was separation. Cleary (1993) described this Netherworld perfectly as one, "...not confined to a state after death, but standing for a condition of depletion in which there is no creativity left." (p.89)

Von Franz (2008) reminds us of Jung's call to integrate thinking and feeling, calling for "... a whole-making, healing Eros, through which even the opposites of the collective versus the individual may be reconciled" (p.18). Wanting to enliven my scholarly and scientific inquiry and to facilitate a personal paradigm shift that might support renewed imaginative and creative scientific inquiry and discourse about the ancient world I focussed on the sacred aspects of my work.

Eliade(1959) described the manifestation of the sacred in our lives, through what he called hierophanies. When elementary hierophanies occurred the sacred was seen in ordinary objects, whereas supreme hierophanies confronted one with realities that did not belong to the world but rather appeared as manifestations of a different order. These manifestations brought the sacred into a more profane world of nature, changing perception of that world completely (Eliade, 1959). Finding the sacred in myth, sacred text and music was not difficult but, as I pondered on the deities, I understood that I would not find the answers I was seeking only through my conscious and intellectual mind, as it was necessary for me to experience the deities as much as I could. The sacred alchemical

nature of my work began to slowly emerge, for I was literally working with archetypes that were in a process of evolution. It became evident that in this process I had to face the *nigredo* stage of alchemy to make sense of Persephone's plunge into the underworld and relate it to personal experience. I wondered if my plunge into Hades would strengthen or weaken my work, and if I would ever be able to herald the *albedo* and *rubedo* stages in order to produce the *lapis philosophorum*, my completed PhD. Using this symbolism clearly indicated that it was necessary for me to perform ritual to ground my process as it became clearer that hard work was needed to face the state of dissolution; I needed to distil and refine feelings and thoughts over and over again, to become quieter and more detached as opposites came together. It was important for me to merge with the experiences of my participants and extract the results of my study in the most appropriate and proper way, like the gold that was supposedly attained at the end of the long and tedious alchemical process.

I focussed on how rock became totem, and in this intuitive exercise I connected with the land that held a certain natural magic inherent in plants and rocks. It became obvious that the attributes of love, war, growth, creativity, fire, and other symbolic expressions had been given form; however, it also became clear that the challenge facing me was to embody these attributes and integrate them in some kind of process that could lead to transformation. I also experienced difficulty in changing my perception of the deities, and had to make every effort to see them as projections of emotions and feelings.

Braud and Anderson (1998) discussed the five characteristics of organic research, supporting the notion of finding a sacred and personal voice in research. Drawn to the five characteristics of organic research, I chose to follow my process based on them. The first stage, required preparing the soil; the second, included planting the seed; the chthonic third, allowed the roots to emerge; and the relational fourth facilitated growth of the tree. The final stage was transformative with the harvesting of fruit

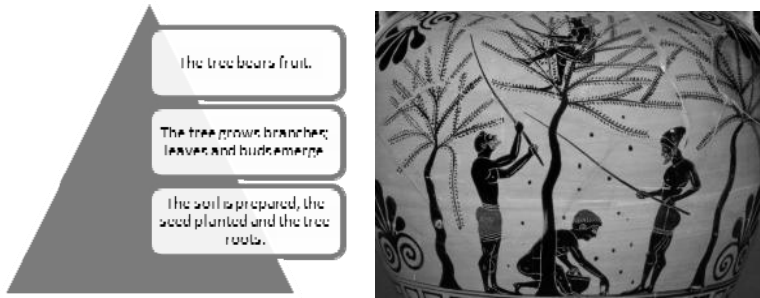


Figure 1. The organic research process

As I began to ponder on the first stage of preparation, I received a chance invitation to visit the ancient site of the Eleusinian mysteries, located two hours from Athens, by a group of shamanic practitioners. Eleusis today is a small, industrial town approximately fourteen miles west of Athens, at the end of the Thracian plane. I wondered if Eleusis had lost its soul as in antiquity it had been one of the most important religious centres, owing its fame and prosperity to the mythological event of Persephone's disappearance into the underworld. Mylonas (2010) had drawn a picture of a family or clan cult that spread to include the State of Athens, becoming a Panhellenic institution that then acquired universal status. I had never visited this ancient site before that had seemingly lost its importance, and I was particularly interested that the shamanic practitioners planned to visit the precinct of Plouton as part of an initiation ceremony. We did not walk to Eleusis, as was common practice, but were reminded of the process and given the background information of the mysteries on our journey by a modern twelve god worshipper; in accord with ancient ritualistic custom, he tied a yellow ribbon on our left arm, to remind us of the solemn oaths that had been taken by so many people not to divulge the secrets of the mysteries, and to remind us of the need to be respectful to the old ways. I approached the site as an initiate might do, located the entrance of the sacred way to the right of the well, and made my way to the precinct of Plouton. I realized that I would not be allowed to break away from the group to visit the *Telesterion*, where it was believed initiation took place, so I settled for the silence of the underworld and a sense that I was being offered a sweet honey cake; I knew I would return on my own.

Although I was aware that my study did not carry the intent to initiate, I resonated with Eliade's (1958) description of initiation as part of an experience where one sets off on an expedition into the wilderness, to

spend days waiting in nature for a spontaneous or drawn out initiation. Eliade (1958) had established initiation as an archetypal form, a universal rite linked with the very structure of spiritual life. Rites of initiation showed basic patterns for change, and change was not a simple adaptation or switch in lifestyle. In the process of death and rebirth there was a radical altering of the person's mode of being. The initiate became like another person, more fully in life, more emotionally and spiritually aware. It was an ordeal to find meaning in knowing and unknowing, to return to the roots of consciousness and the seeds of meaning that had changed perception and quality of life. When I returned to the site a few weeks later, I made every effort to connect to the land and the essence of the goddesses.

Revisiting the ruins opened another door in the process I was following; I purchased a statue of Demeter and located a website offering information about the Orphic Theological background, which is practiced as a religion today. I allowed my intuition to guide me and was drawn to buy small bronze statues of the twelve deities to create a sacred space for them in my office. I placed the deities into their ordered pairs according to Orphic tradition and as set out by Marcilio Ficino, the fifteenth century scholar who played a major role in renewing Platonic and Hermetic philosophies (Voss, 2006). The Divine Consorts were placed as Hestia and Hephaistos, Artemis and Apollo, Hera and Zeus, Athena and Hermes, Aphrodite and Ares, Demeter and Poseidon. Ficino, in his writings edited by Voss (2006), has made every attempt to combine active and contemplative life in the service of both physical and spiritual well-being; he adopted the Orphic hymns as vessels of ancient theology dressed in poetic attire and attempted ritual interaction with life. There was promise that access to hidden meaning would be granted through imaginal, visionary knowledge that came from revelation and insight of individual experience, rather than what was imposed from without through institutionalised dogma (Voss, 2006). The message of the divine essence was something that could be hidden in poetry and other sacred text, opening the imagination to deeper levels of reality. At first I focussed on form and on what appeared beautiful to the senses, rather than the intrinsic light of consciousness, to experience the deities as they were presented in mythology. I then moved towards a higher aspect of being whenever I focussed on their essence that moved in two directions – upwards and then downwards into the earthy heaviness of physicality, which appeared essential and yet awe inspiring. Persephone was there to remind me of this dark and distant, empty place that was fearful at times. I resonated with this fear when trying to locate statues of her and Hades; wherever I went to inquire about her, I was told

there were no statues of Hades and Persephone. Persephone, however, challenged me to seek her out in the darkness. I noted that a very important part of my self might emerge through my research, as occurs when using transpersonal methods (Braud & Anderson, 1998). I sensed that a part of my self was trapped in the underworld just as Persephone was. Furthermore, I sensed that opening to the inner life of spirit, I was in a process of releasing the potential and possibilities within me (Eliade, 1958); I understood that eventually I must face the shadow within me if I was to free myself from it. After months of hard work, I asked for a rendition of Persephone in painting form and hung her up on the wall next to my desk. She was a mysterious figure who beckoned and acted as guide. She was the figure that persuaded me that the shadow was only an illusion and that, instead of empowering it, all I needed to do was to let it go. This archetypal figure represented elements of my own nature and possibly even a feminine collective divine nature; she represented a figure that had embodied many faces and races of women who were forced to succumb to tradition and custom. She spoke of the need to embrace the changes one was forced into and to extract the essential lessons that were hidden in the shadows. I could not help but elevate her to the position that she deserved to be in. I recognized the emergent feeling and expression of reverence for self. It was in the act of focusing on the sacred that I had allowed the deities to communicate with me at a soul level. I was drawn to acknowledge the beauty and grace of their divine light, and was thus invited to do so for myself as well. I attended to the sacred and recognized the profane; two opposing poles, each aspects of the other that urged what was beautiful, good and true in understanding to emerge. I felt that it was very important to respect the deities as emanations of divine elements in nature and not to lose touch with their essence through psychologizing and intellectualizing.

I was particularly interested in the connection I found myself making between individual experience and that of the collective, as though I was being drawn into a hermeneutic circle that was timeless. I wondered about my own evolution, as I thought about the mythical figures that I saw in their subsequent transformation into saints. I began to study patterns emerging from different cultural myths and was delighted when I stumbled on the Irish myth of Fintan MacBohra, the shaman who survived the flood as a salmon and then changed into a hawk and other animals. When he caught sight of his reflection in a pond, he was horrified to realize how many animalistic traits he had adopted that had removed him from his own humanity. He reminded me completely of Narcissus who had captured his reflection in a pond, but whose love of self was so binding that he turned

into a flower. I experienced the powerful message of Fintan's experience in the Irish myth; to journey along the spiritual path was not enough if one did not transcend the self and offer back to humanity what had been received in the form of knowledge. Acknowledging the many animals within, some wild and ferocious, I recognized the need to tame them and so resonate with the divine. I welcomed the figures of the gods and goddesses as elements and archetypes and invited them to present their true natures and locate themselves in my study. They also presented me with a guided journey into the true nature of self, mirroring human aspects that required transmutation and acknowledgement.

I imagined these figures as parts of my inner world and tried to reflect on them. As I did not want to mix eastern and western practices, I chose to focus on an exercise in active imagination, rather than one rooted in meditational practice. I envisioned entering into the communal temple of the gods. I experienced golden light and remained the observer until I realized that I must as well visit the communal temple of the goddesses where I found children playing in the Eleusinian fields and the mother and child figure resplendent in Demeter's ultimate message, which encouraged the sewing of seeds, the harvesting of the grain, the threshing that produced flour, and the final baking of the bread. This was symbolic bread that reminded me of the work that had to be done – the cleaning of the fields, the cycle of preparing the ground to plant the seed, the nurturing of the plant, and the harvesting of the grain – so that eventually I could integrate and realize that continual work was needed to perfect the inner self.

I was conscious that the field I had entered had its own laws and there was a natural feeling of wonder and respect for the meaning given to life. This was enhanced by a motif of the *coniunctio*, a bringing together of opposites, which necessitated changed perception. I regarded these opposites as complementary forces of each other and, therefore, attempted to free them of the meanings that had been interposed onto them. I was again reminded that experience cannot come from the conscious mind but rather must return to its original intuitive form (Von Franz, 1980). I had a dream two evenings after my imaginative visit to the temple of the gods and goddesses about a vast sea; an earthquake had sunk many lands as well as a temple, from which began to emerge a number of figures. There was a very deep silence that I awoke to and that I carried with me throughout the day. Had I unwittingly released a plethora of inner selves that had been buried deep within me, or had I unwittingly unleashed what had been hidden in the collective unconscious? The silence prompted me

to follow my intuition and pay attention to my thoughts over the next few weeks, as it was not at all easy to look at the complementarity of opposites. I intellectualized but only to integrate my experiences of union. The process reminded me of the cutting and polishing of an enormous rough diamond that needed illumination. Each facet in its own process of illumination manifested; union could only be achieved once all the facets had been cut and polished.

I decided to explore the possible epiphanies that might emerge through reading the myth of Persephone and Demeter, by simulating through intention, an ancient poetic practice with music. It appeared logical that myth which was directly connected to the mysteries that had lasted for two thousand years, and that had never been revealed, might carry profound insights. The psychological intention that I believed the sacred text to carry was, therefore, multiplied by placing the myth into solid geographical, historical and religious context. I became absorbed in playing the role of an archaeologist, carefully dusting and exhuming tiny shards in the hope that I would be able to create a picture that could offer something to the deeper understanding of the role myth plays in our lives.

It became apparent that my study had a twofold approach. One approach was through the theoretical synthesis of scholarly works due to the apparent lack of literature on similar studies; the other was to conduct an empirical study in order to investigate how reading the myth as sacred text with music, might influence personal, professional and transpersonal development. I was aware that my topic was vast and that it not only needed to be grounded into academia, but it also required looking at multifaceted perspectives that needed to be joined coherently. I decided to focus mainly on Hillman at this stage, as he had promulgated what I was attempting to achieve.

In his book, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, James Hillman (1992) invited a "return to Greece" as a path to further spiritual development both for the individual and society. He referred not just to a geographic Greece or historical time, but to what he termed an "inner Greece". According to Hillman (1992), this return was a model of integration, an inner Greece that was seen to be a historical and geographic psychic region that could assist in rediscovering the archetypes of mind and culture. He recommended reading and absorbing documents and fragments of myth since, he suggested that they had witnessed something of the imaginal, thus supporting the revision of psychology to move beyond egocentricity. By "fragments" he meant writings such as hymns and early Greek epic

poetry that had survived intact, especially those restored and ascribed to Hesiod and Homer.

Of the thirty-three hymns ascribed to Homer, I discovered the *Hymn to Demeter*, purportedly dated no later than the sixth century and heralded as the finest in the collection, to have contained the myth and to have referred to the secret initiatory practice that had lasted for over two thousand years (Evelyn-White, 1914; Orlin, 2015). Hillman (1992) had pointed out that although classical scholars had used Greece extensively in their work, copying architecture, metrics, and studying literature and language, few actually had worked with empirical Greece, namely the original Greek text; instead, he believed, they had focused on the emotionally charged Greece. Hillman's work inspired me and I realized that the poets had, in a way, been forgotten for their experiential contributions, which were the foundation of spiritual and religious practice then. They had been replaced by the philosophers, who had based their work primarily on logic even though myth was part of their search for truth. By re-visiting this past, I aimed to bring balance by attempting to situate myth in the context of psychology and education. I could only hope that more research would be carried out on the benefits of using myth in sacred ancient text.

To accompany the reading of the *Hymn*, I also chose a piece of lyre music played by a musician who believed Apollo played through him when he composed his pieces. I wanted to investigate how the sacred text read out to participants, with music playing in the background over five sessions, would be experienced. I wondered how parts of the inner psyche might be revealed and how development of self in a personal, professional and transpersonal sense might be promoted. I entered into a process that was continuously striving to perfect itself, and so, as part of this process, I invite you, the reader, to join my participants and me, on this journey into the depths of the self.

In the appendix the reader will find a glossary of unfamiliar words, summaries of each participant's epiphanies, artistic representations of the epiphanies experienced by the participants and the original Hymn to Demeter.

## OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter One establishes a background to the study, explains key concepts, and formulates the research question. Placing the study in context, the chapter provides specific background material to enable a more robust foundation and deeper understanding of the complexity of the topic.

Chapter Two provides a detailed literature review on the application of myth and music in Personal, Professional and Transpersonal Development. It gives a detailed account of the different areas that underline the importance of myth and music in different states of consciousness.

Chapter Three gives a detailed background of the Research Methodology used. It explains in detail the gathering of material, the method of analysis used, and the differences between Transpersonal Research and more conventional research.

Chapter Four presents the findings and discusses the relevant areas of analysis, including interpretation of the findings.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the research, conclusions reached, insights garnered, and recommendations for future research and professional practice are also offered.



# CHAPTER ONE

## ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

The study is ideally situated in the context of modern day Greece, replete with the ongoing economic and social crisis that lingers and may provide a unique environment for spiritual development of participants in this context. In this study I have attempted to explore the value of ancient Greek myth for contemporary discourse and models of development. I have also aimed to situate the value of Greek Myth in the context of transpersonal psychology and education by making an attempt to emulate the approach of the ancients, through reading a hymn, accompanied by the integrated use of lyre music, preceded by some preparatory work.

The purpose of this study was to invite participants into an experience of myth through sacred text and music. Creating an environment to catalyse the experience was a key issue and my background and skills as therapist, educator and researcher, played a central role in this process of facilitation. My intent was also to shine a light on the work of the poets, who were shadowed by the philosophers of the time. In order to explore the experience of inner knowing, I discuss Maslow's Hierarchy in this chapter, situating the myth in its transpersonal context. I detail the theoretical and scholarly synthesis, locate the study in its historical context and draw on depth psychology and other text-based disciplines to explore myth in terms of the psyche and transformation. I then discuss the empirical study, give details of the myth and raise questions as to its relevance today in personal, professional and transpersonal development.

#### 1.1.1 Know Thyself

According to Athanassakis and Wolkow (2013), the Homeric Hymns were used with Lyre music in mystical and religious ceremonies to invoke the presence of the deities by naming and praising their particular attributes. Experience first came to the poet Hesiod from the Muses of Mnemosyne,

who breathed the divine voice into him allowing him to sing of the race of blessed and eternal gods from inspiration rather than logic (Evelyn-White, 1914). Discourse with the deities was largely seen as therapeutic interventions that assisted well-being, improved quality of life and facilitated the process of inner knowledge. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates claimed, "I must first know myself as the Delphian inscription says; to be curious about the old myths while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous" (c.370 BC/2005, p. xxiii). It is clear that the ancient Greeks were concerned with self-knowledge; to know the self, one had to have recourse to both empirical as well as theoretical knowledge. This search for knowledge of self has brought prominent scholars and researchers together, and yet it still remains a mystery; unable, however, not to recognize that transpersonal psychology has contributed much to this search, I turned to the pioneers who still carry on attempting to fully comprehend the psyche.

Hjelle and Ziegler (1985, p.374) highlighted the fact that Maslow (1971) in his research on self-realization concluded that a very low percentage of the global population ever reached self-actualization and self-transcendence. May (1983b) described those who lived in ancient Greece as capable of facing existence without guilt and anxiety because their myths were so strong. He connected the heartache that ensued during the collapse of myth, in the third and second centuries, with the emptiness experienced in modern life, alienation from the inner world of myth and soul that brought about a loss of interest in the self. Baring (2013) reminds us that the Divine Feminine must return to help recover a sense of trust and a dimension of consciousness that has largely been ignored up to now. This absence of soul has largely contributed to the loss of quality of life not only for humans, but for the planet and its kingdoms as well. This study attempts to highlight the need to bridge the gap between past cultural heritage and present day modern life, in order to facilitate development of a transpersonal self. The apparent low number of individuals that reach actualization challenges the effective researcher to investigate returning to Hillman's (1992) internal Greece, to explore different methods that may improve quality of life and self-development.

Humanistic Psychology rejects the notion that individuals are solely products of hereditary or environmental factors, stressing that each individual is a conscious being, experiencing and freely choosing action (Maslow, 2010). This highlights the fact that effective learning entails intrinsic, experiential and meaningful content. The process of becoming responds to inner needs as determined by the individual's core self. This

includes realizing human potential, which comes from a direct, intimate experiential knowing that remains timeless.

While the first forces of psychology included the behaviourist, objectivist, mechanistic and positivistic groups and the second included psychoanalysis, Maslow saw humanistic psychology as the third force of psychology. Rather than being opposed to these first two forces, he claimed that he belonged to all three and, further, to a fourth that reflected self-transcendence (Maslow, 2010). This fourth wave, namely transpersonal psychology, has been largely overlooked in mainstream psychology, possibly because Maslow's hierarchy is often depicted in textbooks with only self-actualization present, not including self-transcendence. Boucouvalas (1983) addressed this error by offering a revised visual depicting self-transcendence as a superimposed triangle that illustrated the potential for self-transcendence at any level of the hierarchy. Koltko-Riviera (2006) argued that this omission has mitigated against a "...more comprehensive understanding of world views regarding the meaning of life, broader understanding of motivational roots of altruism, social progress and wisdom, integration of religion and spirituality into the mainstream of psychology and a more multicultural integrated approach to psychological theory" (p.302). This incomplete picture of Maslow's hierarchy has not helped contribute to the understanding of the process that one needs to go through, and neither has it secured self-education as an essential component of being and becoming.

This study proposes that Maslow's hierarchy of needs might benefit from an inclusion of self-education either as a superimposed triangle that suggests a need to address learning about the self at each level or as a tier prior to self-esteem. This comes under the premise that knowledge of self must be integrated and actualized at each level. This could function as a bridge between internal and external needs with focus on the self-education that each stage brings to surface. One would be compelled to experience each level with the challenges that each presented, as a developmental model that has understanding and knowledge of self as a primary cause that evolves into self-transcendence as an ultimate goal. It is suggested that only through self-education at each level, can needs as described by Maslow (1993b) be attended to.



*Figure 2.* Maslow's adapted hierarchy including self-education after belonging needs

Ventegodt et al. (2003), who acknowledged self-transcendence in Maslow's hierarchy, claimed that, "Maslow described the ideal life as a long journey through the needs, which takes its departure from the concrete and down to earth to the abstract and divine" (p.1051). However, the abstract and divine are to be found in the lower needs as well and ought not to be realized only at higher levels. A sense of self allows for the coping mechanism to be activated when one is challenged on the lower levels. It is this sense of self that contributes to actualization of self and incorporates self-knowledge and integration of this emerging knowledge into a deeper sense of wholeness.

Concerned with understanding human nature, Maslow's hierarchy of motivational needs was based on his position that one needed to learn significant things about the self and the world to evolve as a human being (Maslow, 1993b). Maslow's (1962/2010) hierarchy postulated that human beings were driven to grow and develop, and that this growth process was based on the appearances of different needs that relied on the prior satisfaction of others, with motivation based on goals rather than drives. As there is less focus on emotional and intelligence quotients, myth may facilitate a deeper understanding of emotions, aspirations, feelings and underlying drives inherent in human nature.