

# BITTERNESS OF DESTRUCTION, OR SWEET TASTE OF HONEY?

Paco Mitchell

*“... a mood of universal destruction and renewal ... has set its mark on our age. This mood makes itself felt everywhere, politically, socially, and philosophically. We are living in what the Greeks called the ‘kairos’ — the right moment —for a ‘metamorphosis of the gods,’ of the fundamental principles and symbols.”*

—C. G. Jung<sup>1</sup>

*“Emotions are most contagious, they are the real carriers of mental contagion. For instance, if you are in a crowd that is in an emotional condition, you cannot help yourself, you are in it too, you were caught by that emotion....By sympathy your sympathetic system gets disturbed, and you will show very much the same signs after a while.”*

—C. G. Jung<sup>2</sup>

A few years ago, I drove to Home Depot to make some returns. A truck was parked in the space next to me. The driver had gotten out, and was walking around his truck, toward the store entrance. As I was getting out of my car, I heard a banging commotion behind me. Looking around, I saw the driver of the truck violently bashing the passenger-window of a small sedan—with his bare fist. He was obviously trying to destroy the window with his fist. Basically, he was a big, bearded, and beefy bruiser.

What kind of outrage prompted the disturbance? I don’t know. But, judging from the position of the sedan relative to the truck, I guessed that the driver of the sedan—a young Hispanic man—might have turned too closely, or too sharply, into the lane behind the truck. Maybe the kid had either brushed the bruiser, or his truck, or had just come too close to either one.

Whatever the case, the bruiser was clearly enraged. The young driver of the sedan had a terrified look on his face, but managed to drive off before the passenger-window gave way. Who knows what the bruiser would have done had he gotten his hands on the kid?

The bruiser went into the store, and a few minutes later I too entered. As I took my place at the end of the Returns line, I saw that the bruiser was giving me the “evil eye.” Why? Had I done something wrong? Did I look like a “woke lib from the deep state”? Or was I just his next excuse to punch somebody, a perfect target for his “mood for violence”? Fortunately, the Returns employee called out—“Next!”—and the bruiser turned away. Thus, I was “saved by the bell,” and I never saw him again.

Weeks later, I found myself at Lowes, the other big hardware store in town, walking out of the lumber-department toward my car. That’s where I saw a different man—tall and lanky—about to load several 4’ x 8’ pieces of sheetrock into the back of his truck. *Nota bene:* I am familiar with sheetrock—having lifted, loaded, carried, installed, and finished, what feels like ten thousand tons of sheetrock, over the decades. New Yorkers might say, “*I know*

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<sup>1</sup> C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*,

<sup>2</sup> CW 18 ¶146 [<https://jungiancenter.org/jung-on-the-power-of-affects/>]

*from sheetrock.*” I appreciate the NYC colloquialism, but I also know that another pair of hands is usually welcome. Unfortunately, nowadays my shoulders—my joints in general, actually—are literally worn out from too much burdensome physical work.

One last detail, Russ: This lanky guy, before driving to Lowes to pick up his load of sheetrock, had dressed in casual street clothes. His “outfit” for today, however, included a *huge black pistol in a “tactical” holster* strapped onto his belt. (The gun was probably a “Glock 9,” as action-novelist Lee Child might put it.) That enormous piece of highly-engineered, finely-crafted, deadly gunmetal, not to mention the deadly accessories—bullets, gunpowder, and the copper-jacketed lead slugs to go with it—acted like a broadcast signal, a flashing semaphore. I thought better of my helpful impulse. This lanky, pistol-packin’ person didn’t need—let alone want—my help. Parked askew, and well away from the other cars, he-and-his-pistol radiated a “leave me alone” kind of dark-energy frequency. Of course, I could always be wrong, but that kind of “dark-energy” seems to be evermore widespread these days.

A strange thought occurs to me: *What if* those two men, the fist-basher and the pistol-packer, were actually manifesting *aspects of our collective future*? Is this where we are headed? I know it sounds goofy, but I don’t see why it could not happen—the “future” come to meet the “past.” For centuries now, we humans have been laying the groundwork for collapse on virtually every front, as if it couldn’t come soon enough to suit us. So, we practice a strange, reverse-diligence, a race-to-the-bottom, hurtling into the one-way maw of what will surely be harsh, unwelcome truths. Yet here we stand, regressive and proud, teetering on the brink of ruin. We swim through morasses of political sewage, beset by terroristic threats of upheaval. We call for Civil War, as if that’s what we desire. Do we even know who we are anymore?

## DREAM OF VIRGIN-LUTE-BEEHIVE

This moody urge to trample and destroy, this desire to murder people with AR-15s or kitchen matches (cf. the camera-queen Kari Lake: “Burn it down!” Cf. also the sobering fact that, of all the weapons on hand in America, one out of twenty arms is now an AR-15 Assault Rifle. The gun-makers are even manufacturing them for, and marketing them to, children!!!!) **is sweeping not only this country**, but it’s a dangerously widespread MOOD that’s popping up all over the planet—spreading like yet another infectious plague. This is our own self-generated pandemic—no “Chinese hoax” à la Trump is required. In fact, Trump is deliberately, by his actions and intentions, spreading his own psychological pandemic that involves a moral collapse, similar to his own morality, after two thousand years of Christian moral exhortations—and this is where we find ourselves? What a poor, pathetic excuse for “Christianity,” that such a *malignant, narcissistic, charlatan*, like Trump, seeks power and adulation by manipulating people on emotional levels that are essentially the opposite of what his accusations of others are. Psychologically, that’s called “projection,” a term that does not come close to holding to the burden of consciousness, and yet millions of Americans and other global citizens suffer under the spur of this kind of lazy, crazy way of thinking and being.

To say that it is “neurotic” doesn’t go nearly far enough. Millions of people are flirting with restoring the “base passions” that Christian morality was long-since supposed to have saved us from. The ubiquity of these, our base impulses—lies, violence, regressive restoration of tyranny, etc.—suggests to me that it is a deep-seated problem, i.e., it touches on our animal instincts as a species. And why wouldn’t that be possible? Of course, it’s easy and tempting to blame the boy-child-madman, former “President” Donald Trump, for all the

mischievous. But Trump is a *symptom* of the malignancy, the way a tumor is the symptom of a deeper metabolic imbalance. These psycho-somatic toxins have been coursing through human veins for many millennia. I have lots of ideas about it, but this is not the right place for such an exegesis. For now, I want to turn my attention to what you called for in one of our recent conversations, Russ, when you asked: “Is there an antidote?”

### **The Virgin-Lute-Honeycomb Dream:**

This dream, from only a few months ago, has set me back on my heels.

As I continue to live with it, and as its import deepens further into my body, I can say that, in its magnitude, it seems to encompass my entire life (resonating from my earliest “epiphany” at age two, to my present age of eighty-one). Eighty-one, then, at the time of the dream, and it seemed that I was dreaming not only for myself, but for others as well. Perhaps I was even dreaming “for the planet.” I know that sounds strange, maybe even arrogant and inflated, but I don’t mean it that way. I simply mean to indicate how “big” it feels to me. Here is the dream:

*I am looking across a gently sloping, grassy meadow, in the middle of which I see a sculpture, perhaps five or six feet tall. I am able to discern that it is skillfully fashioned out of at least two layers of thin, interwoven strips of wood, in a way that only a master craftsman/artist could accomplish.<sup>3</sup> I am astonished to realize that the “sculpture” is, in fact, **“the body of the Virgin Mary”!** My astonishment increases when I see, on her lap, a **lute**—or rather, the shape of a lute. Strikingly, the “body” of the lute is not separate from Mary’s body, it is integrated into the body of the Virgin. It is part of her body. The shapes flow together seamlessly. It is beautiful. In other words, the body of the Virgin contains or includes the music-producing lute.*

*But that’s not all. The sound-hole of the lute—which in waking life permits the music of any lute or guitar to be heard—just like the flamenco guitar that I play!—is also the opening through which honeybees are flying in and out of the body of the Virgin! In other words, the body of Mary, the Virgin Goddess, is where the honeybees have chosen to build their multi-celled, hexagonal honeycomb, according to the deepest of earthly—and therefore cosmic—instincts. I watch as the honeybees busily fly in and out, back and forth, making honey in the body of the Earth Goddess!<sup>4</sup>*

*As the dream fades, I am filled with wonder. I feel like I have just witnessed a great vision, pointing to possibilities for the future. Possible, yes—but not guaranteed. [End of dream.]*

This dream came to me fewer than three months ago, and I have been preoccupied with it ever since—to this extent, that I feel like *a planet orbiting a star*. There are far more implications to this dream than I can present here, but I at least want to make a few comments and draw some conclusions, in the spirit of this ONTSO project of ours, Russ.

One caveat: I realize that my perspective on dreams, though “Jungian,” is also personal, unusual, experiential, therefore idiosyncratic, and has evolved over decades, after contemplating many hundreds of dreams. I am beginning to think that *every dream* may be

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<sup>3</sup> The only craftsman/artist I am personally aware of capable of such a remarkable construction is the sculptor Martin Puryear, whose exhibit I visited at the MOMA museum in New York City in 2007 (<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/28>). I spent two hours at the exhibition, studying and marveling at the creative sculptural shapes he was able to construct, mostly out of wood.

<sup>4</sup> A friend of mine visiting Chile witnessed a beehive phenomenon, and told me that as she walked near the collection of beekeepers’ hives, the sound of the bees fanning their thousands of wings to cool hives to protect the queen bee, made a kind of primordial *music*. She described it as sounding “*like a symphony*.” How beautiful!

composed, as it were, of something like a “cosmic substance”—rather like *honey*, but in this specific sense: that *dreams in general, like honey, do not spoil or rot*. It is as if dreams have, not only *medicinal properties*, as honey does, but they also act as *preservatives*, just like honey. In fact, honey was an ingredient in *earliest Egyptian embalming practices*, where bodies of the deceased were prepared and treated with special formulae, to last for *eternity*. Mummies thousands of years old have been found, in which the honey they contain as a *preservative*, is said to be *still edible today!* The honey jar on your kitchen counter does not need to be refrigerated. It does not spoil. It could sit there for millennia, and still serve as a healing balm, an elixir, a food.

Part of my response to this dream was to investigate bee-keeping practices. I watched a documentary film about Slovenian beekeepers.<sup>5</sup> There was a married couple who set up their “bedroom” in the same building where the bees were kept. They slept peacefully among the bees, and raved about how well they (the bee-keepers) slept; about how healthy they were; how much energy they had, from eating honey every day and routinely using honey for medicinal purposes. They loved the bees, and took great care to see that the bees were well-fed and comfortable, making sure the bees had enough honey for themselves.

I found the couple’s testimony—their Eros connection to honeybees—profoundly moving.

The “everlasting” quality of honey is one reason why honeybees have been revered as sacred creatures, since as far back as 6000 BC, perhaps more. Ancient cultures imagined bee-goddesses, bee-spirits, bee-nymphs—all winged spirits that served their goddesses faithfully. Honey is a product of honeybees’ devotion to their Queen. Hence, honeybees have been highly regarded throughout history as exemplars of industrious virtue and service. They are also indispensable for human life. Albert Einstein is reported to have observed that if honeybees go extinct, humans will not survive for more than perhaps four years. That’s how crucial they are, as pollinator-spirits.

Here are a few images out of many available online. The first image is a small plaque or pendant, fashioned out of gold—the color of the sun, the color of honey. It depicts a “melissa,” a bee-nymph:

(1) Melissae were oracular Bee Nymphs of ancient Greece—divine messengers, sources for prophecy, oracles for divine truths, inspirations for poetry, for song, probably for dance as well:



(2) Detail of a sunken-relief carved in stone, depicting a honey bee. According to Egyptian mythology, honey bees were the tears of the sun god Ra.



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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hg0T-C6R0n8>

(3) Sumerian cylinder-seal depicting a bee as “divine bird.” The Sumerian bee as “divine bird” was one of the earliest mythological winged-figures, possibly prefigurations of the angel-archetype found in traditions around the world.



### 1. Dreaming The Body of the Virgin

When I first woke up with this dream, Russ, I was startled that the central image was identified as the “Virgin Mary.” So, perhaps I should clarify: I am not a Catholic, nor do I adhere to the Protestant “faith” or “creed” of my family, relatives, and ancestors—much less the Marjorie Taylor Greenes or the Mikey Johnsons of the world, with their “Christian Nation” fantasies for America—that is to say, fascist control over our lives. In my view, much of the cultural chaos we are undergoing today is due to the fact that we are in a *kairos*, as Jung famously said in the epigraph above, and you and I have discussed.<sup>6</sup>

I might as well admit that, in the turmoil of this kairotic “changing of the gods,” I see most organized religious traditions today hanging by a thread. The ground is shifting beneath our feet. Deep values are being jettisoned in shocking ways, as the sailors on the ship carrying Jonah (which Melville wrote up as “Father Mapple’s Sermon” in “Moby Dick”) were tossing boxes and bales overboard in a violent storm to keep from sinking the *Pequod*. The sailors knew that a “Jonah” was aboard the ship, so they finally tossed him overboard with all the other boxes and bales. Jonah—food for the Leviathan. The religious premises and viewpoints—the languages even—that gave rise to those traditions of the past are threadbare today, well past the Best-By date. Those traditions, despite their depths of piety and virtue on the grand scale, seem to be just as devoted to the twin gods of *money* and *power* as most people who profess “no faith” or “no creed.”

I have lived in Santa Fe, NM, for over thirty years, and I have great respect for the cultural and personal stability conferred by Mexican and New Mexican Catholicism—mostly thanks to the Virgen of Guadalupe, female patron saint of Mexico. The revelation of her feminine sanctity is nothing to sneeze at. It’s not for me, but I would not for an instant take it away from my Mexican brothers and sisters.

We have become too accustomed to treating Holy Writ as if it were the first and last word ever written about matters touching on the divine. I disagree. Nor do I believe that rational-materialism will have the last word on “what is real.” To me, there is much yet to be salvaged from the junk-heap of cultural history, and many have contributed to this important

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<sup>6</sup> 1950, when Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus*, proclaiming the Assumption of Mary into Heaven as dogma, Jung declared it to be one of the most significant events of the century—when the Church finally got around to granting divine status to the feminine principle, rather than “nothing but” a source of “sins,” as many preachers have proclaimed.

work of *recovery*. And not only recovery—there are *new forays* being made into the vanguard realms of quantum science.<sup>7</sup>

I choose to regard the “Virgin Mary” as one of a series of ancient Earth Goddesses, dating from a time when the *entire earth* was most likely recognized as sacred. Animals were sacred. All of nature was sacred. Is that that an “animist” perspective? If so, then I must be an animist. To me, we’re better off if we think of the entire cosmos as sacred. OK, call me a pagan animist, and whatever else seems to fit. But I believe that, by and large, our current religious traditions have essentially run out of steam, and it’s past time to re-consider the fundamental values. Anyone who doubts this premise need only consult public figures like Marjorie Taylor Greene, or Mikey Johnson, or—God forbid—Donald Trump, to see how far we have fallen in terms of values and virtues. If you take a close look at the history of Christianity, even discounting all the bloodshed and cruelty, just ask yourself why so much blood was spilled over so many centuries. Why so much violence? Who do we think we are? What are we doing?

And what about the “bruiser” I witnessed, bashing the car-window with his fist, then glaring hatefully at me in the Returns line. Why is there so much violence and hatred in the air? Why are people driving cars into crowds of peacefully protesting marchers. You know the list, Russ. Our readers know the list. It goes on and on.

## 2. The holy name of María

In approaching the dream’s designation of the “Virgin Mary,” I recalled something I once read about an *esoteric tradition* which derived the holy name of María as, “Maya with the solar Ra in her womb”: Ma-ia + R = María.

I take the Virgin Mary as a late “Christianization” of the whole Mediterranean tradition of *earth goddesses*, going at least as far back as the primordial carved-stone “Venus” figures like the *Venus of Willendorf*, approx. 30,000 years BCE. I have no hesitation in referring to the “Virgin Mary” as an ancient, pre-biblical Goddess, a feminine aspect of divinity and divine wisdom. Her “body” therefore symbolizes the beauty and harmony of the natural world—this living Earth, this Edenic Garden. The Virgin Goddess expresses cosmic order and beauty. I am happy to think of Mary as an outgrowth, a late expression of Aphrodite, the Goddess of love, sex, and beauty. Or as Isis, or any of the other “pagan” love goddesses. She symbolizes the principle of harmony and order in the universe, which the honeybees exemplify, and their honey epitomizes.

## 2. Music emanates from the body of the goddess

So, I have no difficulty imagining that “the body of the earth goddess” is equivalent to “the body of the Virgin Mary,” and that the “Edenic” qualities of spontaneous generativity and unsurpassable cosmic creativity, manifest her musical essences and similar qualities, among other things. The “music” of the Earth can be heard anywhere—by anyone with “ears to hear.” And when the dream states clearly that the Virgin and the Lute are one sculptural unit, it suggests that, since they constitute one body, then, in that same precise sense, this is a hint that the feminine wisdom of the Earth belongs to the musical nature of the cosmos.

Just as with the ancient teachings around music and harmony throughout nature—cf. Pythagoras and the “Music of the Spheres”—the earth, once again known as “Gaia,” is inherently musical. I can *feel it in my own body*, and in the bodies of the animals I am happy to observe.

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<sup>7</sup> You recently sent me a fascinating article, Russ, on the “fractal psyche,” in which quantum and chaos theories and such, are profoundly informing various aspects of what we call “mysticism,” and in potentially revolutionary ways

### 3. The Lute is the entrance to the body of the goddess

Let's call it a gateway into the Garden of Eden. Some philosopher or esotericist—I don't recall who—said: "Mary and Eve are one." Intuitively, I agree with that formulation. So, the bees make their music, as they fly in and out of the sound-hole of the Lute. Thus, the Earth's *body* is like a musical instrument and all the Earth's beings constitute a kind of *choir of creatures*, singing in harmony to the Goddess of the Musical Planet.

Tell me that this is NOT a healing antidote to the sickness we have been visiting upon the earth, upon ourselves, and upon our mother goddess. I do not expect that we will pull out of this death spiral before it is "too late."

I would love to be proven wrong.

## The Path of Dreams

Russell Lockhart

Paco, the news of the Slovenian beekeepers sleeping with the bees also caught my attention. What it suggests is that potential "antidotes" to the perils that threaten humanity's existence may require "unheard of" changes in human behavior. Most approaches to the problems that confront us may be classified as "same old story," and thus are very unlikely to lead to anything of value.

But sleeping with bees! Now that is not the same old story at all. So, this is a hint that we are after "new stories." And here, what you bring dramatically to our attention is the "new story" potential of *dreams*. Might we say, Paco, that you too were sleeping with bees and then you woke up to find not only bees but the Virgin Mary and a lute! Now there is a vast distance between what the dream brings and what we see offered as collective solutions to today's perils. So, you are right to be taken up so fully with this dream. It is extraordinary by any measure. Three extraordinary elements bound together by the dream weaver: the miraculous product (honey) of honeybees, the divine feminine (Mary), and music (the lute). This congeries is not something you would come up with by conscious effort. So, the offering of this new story is authored by "something other." I use congeries deliberately because it is an excellent example of images "thrown together," which is the meaning of "symbol." Congeries is usually used in a disparaging manner with synonyms being words like hodgepodge, mess, clutter, disarray. But this is often the *character* of symbols. Images or gatherings that "don't make sense," in the usual sense. Of course, the symbol is always after something other than what ego consciousness thinks is the right agenda. The symbol points to a different path.

And you explore various waystations along the path. And you conclude that the dream is an antidote is response to my question. And I agree. Not that the dream has a singular meaning, but that it keeps prompting you to go further. Not that analysis of the dream or its interpretation is the main thing; but moving further along the path is. This certainly is an example of the Frost's "path less travelled."

So, we might say that a dream may prompt a journey—perhaps a never-ending journey and that this is the most significant way we can "be with" a dream. This is quite

different than the reductionism to singular meanings that is so often the only approach to dreams and which serves the ego's needs and agendas.

It is true that humans are meaning-creating, meaning-seeking animals. So, even when presented nonsense, or meaning-absent phenomena, meaning of some kind will be generated. It is as if ego consciousness fears any vacuum of meaning, so every effort is made to eliminate meaninglessness. We might call this "meaning bias." The problem with meaning-bias is that it inhibits or forestalls meaning being generated by something other than ego consciousness. This is what Keat's was after when he formulated his principle of negative capability, that is, holding the tension of doubt until something emerges from a deeper source than the ego. Though not often noted, negative capability points to a larger principle of deliberately holding the urgency of meaning seeking in abeyance and holding that tension until it gives birth to something from a deeper source. One such deeper source is dreams. But not just dreams: visions, synchronicities, and all manner of parapraxes, such as, forgetting, slips of tongue, misspellings, accidents, mishearing, etc. All these things are not "errors" but better understood as open doorways to a deeper experience of psyche that is not available to ego consciousness.

In relation to non-ego events, the ego is immediately confronted with the "problem of meaning." This is usually dealt with by all manner of denial, devaluation, or dismissal. This ensures the "coherency" of the ego is preserved, but at the cost of illumination from the deeper psyche. I can't see this as anything but an on-going major disaster and a barrier to dealing more creatively with what is menacing us from every angle. Yes, there are individuals here and there who have this sort of relation with psyche, but in comparison with the vast numbers of humans, it is but a drop in the ocean.

What would a "call to arms" look like in terms of mobilizing a large number of humans to take up a relationship with psyche? Other things seem to capture large numbers of people, but I do not see any evidence anywhere that awareness of psyche is happening on any scale. What would it take, Paco?