

THE GREEK NATURE GOD PAN AND WORLD TERRORISM

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The Greek nature god Pan's locales at the edges of civilization, the borders of the known, and his relationship with animals connect him with the more unruly and capricious sides of human nature. Half divine and half goat, Pan is split and he reflects the mind/body split in human nature. The mind/body split asks us to tolerate the co-mingling of philanthropic aspirations and visceral longings in our one being. When the ambiguity is too much to handle, the two are cleaved and fundamentalism can rush into the vacuum. An internal problem has then been externalized and the split that Pan is able to bridge in his nature becomes the abyss between the "chosen ones" and the "others".

Pan, a chthonic divinity, was worshipped for supporting life through fertility and the hunt, but also created unpredictable bouts of agitation and panic; he brought disorder, sudden frenzies, and routs in war. Does this imply abundance flows to us when we are in conscious accord with the chthonic archetype while discord is the result of being unconsciously influenced by it? Today, anxious, panicky, Pandean symptoms are one of the most prevalent psychological states that signal disorder in a person (APA 433-475).

Is there a connection between Pan's nature and world terrorism? Pan's midday torpor and sudden explosive charges into life can be compared to the internal damping down of one's passion and the inevitable eruptions that follow. Ideological differences, when fueled by a repressive intolerance on the part of the status quo, lead to depressive states of cultural torpor or to an intensification of group anxiety

states that engender revolutionary tactics and unpredictable, explosive acts of terrorism. These states reflect Pan's habitual states. This pattern, mitigated through religious reverence in the ancient cult of Pan (whether consciously or not) is linked to both personal and cultural suffering.

One attribute of the chthonic, the Greek word for the underworld, is a connection to darkness and death. Pan represents an archetypal place that embraces the visceral sides of human nature, the dark as well as the light. Darkness, an absence of light, is not evil. It is that which obscures aspects of libido, or psychic energy. Our societies disinclination to attempt to understand, to explore, and thus to respect the darker sides of our nature often results in brutal upsurges of anger, panic, and war. We compensate for the repressed parts of our nature by projecting them on to others whom we then view as enemies.

Pan is remembered more for his anxiety arousing qualities than as either a hunter or herdsman. He represents the fear of being invaded by forces beyond our control. The need to have an enemy appears to be archetypal (Hillman 29-39) but what if this is because we have not come to grips with the chthonic aspect of our nature? In WW II the Allied nations fought an enemy comprised of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The cold war found the free world at odds with the USSR. Today fundamentalists battle each other. The alliances and enemies may change, the disputed territory may change, but the continual warfare, with sacrificial blood leaching into the soil, even as the Greek chthonic rituals poured blood into the earth to summon the dead, is more the common occurrence than is peace on earth.

But Pan's land of Arcadia and Pan himself were also associated with safety. Most especially the herders relied on Pan. Grottos were dedicated to Pan and to the

nymphs as secure places of refuge for shepherds and their flocks. Pan, the split god, embodies both sides of the problem.

Artists have long touched on universal themes as they emerge or reemerge from the unconscious. Consider Picasso and his foreshadowing of our fractured times. For the Romantics Pan was the melancholy figure of a lost essence (Merivale 48-75). Today the sinister side of Pan, not the protector, predominate in modern versions of his story. The visual nerve and moral implications of the film *Pan's Labyrinth* (del Torro) reflect the Pandean dangers of the chthonic archetype as it emerges today.

For all of the technological advances of recent times, we have progressed little from the psychic state of aboriginal peoples. The world quakes at the thought of being undermined by the fury that arms the disenfranchised on every continent, save the poles. The panic provoking startle response is no further from the surface in the psyche today than it was 2,500 years ago. We have only to observe how many checkpoints, walls, and new weapons are built to safeguard "us" from a sudden invasion of "them" to affirm how much the instinctive side of human nature shapes our world.

Pan's role as an arouser of fear naturally led him to the battlefield. Pan deified the instincts to survive, to procreate, to celebrate with music, and to protect one's land from invaders. Warfare is territorial. In social groups a threat of loss of one's territory induces depression or anger, or both, and often leads to warfare.

Pausanias' second century *Geography of Greece* is an incomparable source for the way ancient Greeks thought about their world. He reported a Greek battle with the Gauls when

...during the night there fell on them a "panic." For causeless terrors are said to come from the god Pan. It was when evening was turning to night that the confusion fell on the army and at first only a few became mad, and these imagined that they heard the trampling of horses at a gallop, and the attack of advancing enemies; but after a little time the delusion spread to all. So rushing to arms they divided into two parties, killing and being killed, neither understanding their mother tongue nor recognizing one another's forms or the shape of their shields. Both parties alike under the present delusion thought that their opponents were Greek, men and armour, and that the language they spoke was Greek, so that a great mutual slaughter was wrought among the Gauls by the madness sent by the god. (503 [VIII, xxiii, 6-9])

His weapon was not his *lagabon*, (Pan's hunting stick) but instead a far more powerful one, fear. "Causeless terrors" brought panic and madness in the night to the enemies of Pan. In the dark his power is strong enough to overcome rationality. It is not surprising that the discounted chthonic surfaces now as we approach the far reaches of "...the Enlightenment thesis that epistemological method is the road to truth and that everything not guaranteed by such method is mere prejudice and illusion"(Gadamer qtd. in Hollinger xii). Compare Pan's rout of the Gauls to the modern description of a panic attack in the DSM-IV. "An unexpected (spontaneous, uncued) Panic Attack is defined as one that an individual does not immediately associate with a situational trigger (i.e., it is perceived as occurring 'out of the blue')" (APA 434). Apparently the Gauls suffered from symptoms still prevalent today.

Some psychological disorders correspond directly with the *zeitgeist* of their times. Hysteria, found principally among women in the Victorian era, included symptoms such as numbness in the hands but not the arms, is no longer seen in consulting rooms and has never been included in the DSM. Yet this diagnosis was what prompted Freud to introduce his "talking cure" (Herman 13-14). But some of these inner states of discord, especially anxiety, remain as unresolved and mysterious in cause or relief, save numbing through medications, today as they were to the Greeks.

Mainstream psychology's current tactic of medicating away the symptoms, sometimes combined with talk therapy, has not resulted in an end to anxiety. Since the Berlin wall came down in 1989 and effectively ended the cold war, a case can be made for a deepening of anxiety for our age. The endless attempts to wall off the border between the US and Mexico, the fruitless chase after weapons of mass destruction, the Patriot Act's unilateral dismissal of civil rights all suggest a fear creeping into the hearts and minds of the majority of one of the most "civilized" countries today, the United States. These fears are exploited by a minority in power who have turned public discord into personal profit.

Pan's battle strategies, as guerrilla warfare, are even more effective today than they were 2,500 years ago. The attempt to dismantle Pan's power can be traced from Plutarch's recording the legend of his death in 83-84 CE, to his being demonized through associations with the Devil by the Catholic Church, and now onto the pages of the DSM-IV. And yet, the chthonic archetype was worshipped in pre-history as The Master of the Animals (Gimbutas 250-251). Can a conscious assimilation of Pan's attributes reverse this repressive trend? The gradual, imperceptible diminishing of the value of the chthonic has been an invisible parallel to the rise of civilization, at least since pre-history Europe.

Pan's cult spread to Athens in 490 BCE after he was believed to have come to the aid of the Athenians at the battle of Marathon and "a torch-race in honour of Pan may have been stimulated partly by the recollection of the famous race of Pheidippides in the course of which he met Pan on the mountains (Farnell 382). Rather than their prowess in battle, the torch of divine intervention was believed to have saved them.

In Athens Pan's place of worship was located in an out of the way cave below the Parthenon, Long Cliffs.

Aristophanes assumes that the cave of Pan tolerated sexual activity because he places the aborted seduction of Kinesias by Myrrhine in this place—perhaps even the same cave where Euripides had located Apollo's rape of Kreousa. Pan did not forbid casual entry, and apparently even sexual intercourse in his precinct would not have been an insult. (Kovacs 58-59)

Apparently when the smelly nature god came to Athens he was not granted entrance into the inner, gated precinct, but in the dark recesses of Pan's cavernous abode, "your cave shaded from the sun, O Pan" (Euripedes 377-379 [498-503]) sexual rules were relaxed. The darkness of the cave and the absence of the light of the sun, in which all is seen and made clear, is emphasized in the myths of Pan. His chthonic and uncivilized nature, even when worshipped in the center of the civilized world, was not in the central place, but down below it. Here new energy, exciting, fertile, and dangerous, filtered up from the chthonic depths to the civilized world above in the great Parthenon.

From this I conclude that a process of assimilating the unconscious aspects of the chthonic archetype as embodied by Pan begins by abandoning the attempt to avoid anxiety, acknowledging a psychic split in humanity and turning toward that split. This does not mean to me we must battle with the powers that be nor with their enemies. But how we choose to envision the future will affect that future. If we can allow ourselves to embrace the chthonic as exciting and fertilizing we can revolutionize without throwing our *lagabon*.

A conscious choice to accept as inevitable our fears of the unknown and difficult situations in life helps to manage those fears and be able to face danger with courage. Fear is an inevitable instinctive reaction to the unknown. The point here being that there is no end to the unconscious, there is only more that surfaces as

greater amounts are assimilated. To accept the task of attempting to truly know oneself requires accepting that there will be no end to the task. The deeper one can see into oneself the more there is to learn. To fear looking into one's dark corners constellates an adversarial position to Pan, creating feelings of danger, fear, and panic, to be in accord with Pan allows one to be protected while hunting out the game, the repressed libido, in the dark corners of one's psyche.

Compassion and empathy do not dwell side by side in a heart filled with hatred and resentment. Without the numbing of medication or the distancing of distraction the fearful and split off parts of the individual psyche calm down when a therapist and client face them together. Cannot this method be of use on the world stage as well? The first move would be to stop trying to quash the fear by destroying (or bottling up in contained territories or refugee camps) one's enemies.

What hairy Pan lacks in looks and grace he makes up for in practicality and loyalty. He comes to us in nightmares bringing panic and terror, a favorite method of the unconscious when it demands attention. The terrors that haunt our dreams are not so different from the headlines of our newspapers. If the unconscious is active in the outer world as well as the inner, we would be prudent to read the world theater the same way we read dreams. What is amiss in the *anima mundi*? The important question is not whether we are more violent today than our ancestors were, nor if TV is the negative mother spawning evil children, nor whether gun control will solve things. The point is that the denial of the dark side of the soul, and by dark I do not mean evil, I mean an insufficiency of illumination, inevitably creates projection and out of this projection are spawned the murky societal problems that lack easy answers, but ignored, build up and explode in violence, whether as criminal

behaviors or as war. This process, then, is the dynamic aspect of the chthonic archetype being acted out unconsciously.

Would Pan suggest we make loud noises and confuse the status quo that holds our world in its grip? Surely the militant Iraqis would agree with that strategy. But is this not holding only one end in the tension of the opposites when the opposites are the status quo and the disenfranchised? Can we take this psychological method and find a way to hear both voices, first within ourselves and then as one people, members of the human race? If we face our own inner fear, we begin to honor the sensitive, instinctive side of Pan. This is the god who instructed Psyche in how to love. This is the god who played music that drew the nymphs to him. This is the god who can bring defeat to his enemy without throwing a spear or a grenade.

Pan is within us and is an embodiment of our own split nature as humans. If we do not honor the darker sides of our nature we will find ourselves obsessed by anger or despair. Pan instructs the collective psyche, which is in such pain, as well. The hope is that there will be less brutality when we see that Pan is not dead, but only repressed. The chthonic needs to be heard, even as the brutal militant factions need a voice, even as the angry children need a voice, even as the despairing sniper needs a voice.

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