

***Remembering Dionysus: Revisioning Psychology and Literature in C.G. Jung
and James Hillman***

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Remembering Dionysus, a research monograph emerging from the disciplines of literary studies and the psychology of the unconscious, offers a distinctive argument about transdisciplinary as proposed by the eminent Basarab Nicolescu. It suggests that, viewed from these disciplines, transdisciplinarity reenacts a myth of Dionysus as a necessary dismemberment, followed by a remembering of the god. “God” here denotes the sum of our knowing, what we *believe* about reality as structured through modern disciplines.

The aging patriarchal god of previous hierarchical disciplinary knowing (historically emergent from Western Christian monotheism), gives way to transdisciplinarity as a remembering of the body of knowing as related *parts* with no one discipline able to fashion divinity (epistemological dominance) in its own likeness.

Such a re-membered body of transdisciplinarity follows Dionysus in providing *rejuvenation* of consciousness, or as depth psychologist James Hillman put it, a new embodied consciousness renewed because it puts us in touch with *zoe*, meaning an endless instinct for life. Also notable is that such a conception of transdisciplinary shows it to be offering a feminine epistemology in contrasting and drawing away from what has characterized the prior relations of disciplines in thrall to a patriarchal god of knowing.

Specifically, the “included” middle so definitively rehabilitated by Nicolescu in revising the perennial subject/object division in knowing, returns in Dionysian transdisciplinarity as the

embodied symbol; that image that connects body, unconscious, imagination and “other” as devised by C. G. Jung and makes up scraps of the dismembered Dionysus. “Knowing” via the imaginative image as symbol, positions the knower as Ariadne, that abandoned feminine deserted by the hero Theseus on the island of Naxos after she enabled him to navigate the labyrinth and so kill the monster, minotaur. In the history of Western epistemology, a heroic ego is constructed by repressing all that is other to rationality. Theseus split knowing apart into subject/object in the very killing of the monster, by characterizing the other as monster. No doubt abandoning the feminine also enabled subjectivity to be uncontaminated by otherness in the form of gender.

Now Dionysian transdisciplinarity approaches as the god approached forlorn Ariadne on the remote shore. Via dismemberment of disciplines into parts (knowing that they are parts and never able to delude themselves that they incarnate a dominant reality), the *matter* of knowing in symbols invites Eros, relational values, body, materiality, and imagination (hitherto gendered as the feminine), into the renewed consciousness sponsored by the transdisciplinarity paradigm. *Remembering Dionysus* argues that transdisciplinarity shifts the knowing subject from a Theseus, heroic warrior identity, to an Ariadne who can thread her way through a labyrinth without killing.

Above all, transdisciplinarity as Dionysian dismemberment decenters the human subject in favor of a figure who spans nature, human nature and supernature. Gone is the model of knowing that locates human consciousness as a subject without intrinsic connections to the realities from which it emerged. Dionysian transdisciplinary is true to transdisciplinarity’s complexity paradigm in the fluid boundaries and wild cosmic becoming that the paradigm opens up.

For readers meeting this book directly from transdisciplinarity, it is chapter 2 that most directly looks at Nicolescu's work from the point of view of the mythical unconscious. Other chapters aim to explore what it means to have disciplines in a non-hierarchical relationship by looking at how two writers on the unconscious as innately creative, both do, and do not, want a relationship between their "psychology" and what the culture designates as "literature." Therefore chapters 1 and 5 consider productive and supportive transdisciplinary intimacies while chapter 6 on the sublime considers the notion of conflict between ontological claims. Three other chapters directly interrogate writings by Jung and Hillman (chapters 3 and 4 on Jung's newly published *Red Book* (2009), and chapter 7 on Hillman's *Revisioning Psychology* (1975)).

The result is to trace in C. G. Jung an intuitive leaning towards transdisciplinary and multiple ontologies while Hillman struggles more to overcome his disciplinary locatedness. I end by suggesting that Hillman achieves the notion of a "superdiscipline" as not quite the masterful "hyperdiscipline" portrayed by Nicolescu for when bodies of knowing pretend that they are the only god in the cosmos.

Transdisciplinarity is not only cogent, it is, *Remembering Dionysus* insists, necessary, as we face a future of climate change requiring a planetary culture without epistemological arrogance or cultural claims for ontological superiority. *Remembering Dionysus* hopes to contribute to this vital transdisciplinary project by showing just how *vitalizing* it is.

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