

Eros, the Evolution of Life and Mind,



and Moving from Psychology Toward Soul-Making

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Introduction

Change is omni-present, development forever unfolding, and in today's context, it might be more crucial than ever to understand our place, and our role as humans within a broader, evolutionary perspective. In order to orient our therapeutic efforts, and more broadly our ability to live, and lead in a regenerative manner within community, and a complex web of life, understanding and living in deliberate relationship with that which is developing, might afford us greater wisdom and guidance.

In response to the question, 'what is developing,' it will be shown that Eros, as the attracting, binding and unifying force underlying the emergence and evolution of complex systems, is a foundational organising principle of both evolution and development. Hence, it will be shown that Eros is that which is developing. This will be explored and postulated within the evolution and development of Life, Mind and the Self. As such, Eros will come to be known as that which is animating the autopoietic and emergent nature of development. Furthermore, and in order for this exploration to contribute to the restoration of human wholeness, as well as ecological regeneration, insights into how an Eros-(re)infused ontology may contribute to clinical practice will be offered.

Situating this Exploration within a Meaningful Context

"We must dare again to dream the impossible and to romance the world, to feel and honour our kinship with all species and habitats, to embrace the troubling wisdom of paradox, and to shape ourselves into visionaries with the artistry to revitalize our enchanted and endangered world. (Plotkin, 2013, p. 2)

In order to situate this exploration, and its intended contributions within a personally, culturally and ecologically meaningful context, it is important to set the frame for its depths. Beginning in this way, there is increasing necessity in opening to the horizons beyond the mechanistic paradigm and its focus on “reducing complex phenomena into elementary parts and processes” (von Bertalanffy, 1972, p. 409). According to Western science, the universe is an immensely complex assembly of material particles, with “consciousness, Eros and intelligence being insignificant and accidental latecomers on the cosmic scene” (Groff, 1998, p. 13). This Newtonian ontology, leading to our understanding of life, the self and the systems abound becoming “a fractured mosaic of disconnected bits and pieces, whose parts will never add up to a coherent narrative” (Suzuki, 2007, p. 27). Within a mythopathological lens, we have lost the third, middle position, that which lays between ‘things,’ and between outer tangible reality and subjective experience (Hillman, 1975). Put another way, we have become alienated from that which binds us, connects us and holds us together, or as David Abram (2012) passionately exclaims, we have become “caught up in a mass of abstraction...hypnotised by a host of human-made technologies...forgetting our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities. Rob[bing] our sense of integrity...our minds of their coherence” (p. 22). We are simply, radically disconnected. A restoring, or re-storying (Meade, 2016) of the world to move beyond self-help, to a relational and inclusive narrative is necessary.

From within this ontological, and by extension cultural and personal environment, an understanding of Eros as “a desire for being and wholeness, from which the human soul has been alienated from the beginning” (Gordon, 2012, p. 6), as a binding and connecting force of evolution and development becomes meaningful, and necessary. In this sense, and within this paper, Eros is beyond simply a sexual or bodily desire, as it is often defined. Eros (note the capitalisation) is a noun, which within Greek mythology is the archetypal presence of longing and attraction, desiring to reunify that which has become fragmented in the physical. Moreover, in a very human register, Eros can be felt as “our sensuous longing beyond the sensately concrete” (Hillman, 1975, p. 42), the pull toward transcendence, toward our greater potentialities. Within a therapeutic context, in which our attempt may be to support clients in the restoration of their original wholeness, Eros as an organising feature of evolution and development offers us great utility in going beyond a mechanistic psychology, and edge towards a more congruent re-

unification of self, of mind and of life. As the great Greek myth of Psyche and Eros teach, it is the unification of Psyche and Eros that evokes wholeness, as “their union is essential for soul-making.” (Hillman, 1975, p. 185)

Now that the platform has been laid for understanding the utility in an Eros-(re)infused ontology, an exploration into the ways Eros is that which is developing across Life, Mind and the Self, as well as how this might contribute to a more totalising therapeutic approach will be offered.

The Erotic Life

“The great web of life in all its infinite perfection and dynamic chaos, through which runs the common blood and beats the single heart of an Eros seeking its own higher wholeness, and always finding it, and seeking yet again” (Wilber, 2007, p. 301).

Eros is an autopoietic feature of life, a fifth force (Gafni, 2012, p. 8) that guides the self-organising or cosmo-erotic universe (Gafni & Kingaid, 2017).

Moreover, it is a self-organising property which supports the ubiquitous movement of organismic life to ever-higher levels, and order. Distinguished from the first four physical forces thought to govern ‘reality’ - the electromagnetic, gravitational, the nuclear, the strong, and the weak - this fifth force is an inherent, ceaseless creative force of attraction, supporting the ever-widening, and deepening holarchical chain of being (Wilber, 2000). The leading edge of systems theory, chaos and complexity theory spotlights this tendency of matter to self-organise, to rise above a chaotic state to both ever more unified, and complex forms.

Without looking far, simply in subtle and refined ways, one can witness this unfolding and “unexpected emergence of a new whole” (Suzuki, 2007, p. 29), or a new state or organisational complexity, such as in the evolution of “a collective of molecules into a cell, a collection of sounds into

speech, or a collection of individual ants into a colony" (p. 29). Biologically, this can be seen in the atomic, cellular, and then organismic development of all Life: from single-cellular organisms, to multi-cellular organisms and beyond! Eros supports this movement towards greater wholeness, it is the whole seeking to know itself again, through its parts. Through the lens of a holon, recognising that all systems (the atom, the cell, the organism, the community and the planet) are both whole within themselves, and a part within a larger whole, "Eros drives the emergence of ever higher and ever wider holons" (Wilber, 2000, p. 117). Furthermore, through von Bertalanffy's (1972) notion of the coincidentia oppositorum, or Michael Meade's (2016) tension of opposites, "it is the opposition, or indeed fight among parts within a larger whole which at their integration, forms a unity of higher order" (von Bertalanffy, 1972, p. 408). It is this movement of transcendence and inclusion (Wilber, 2000), that is at the basis of the this holarchical evolution and development of all life. Further, it could be said that this movement towards greater complexity, a more unified and inclusive whole, is the transcendent guiding the organisation of the immanent in order for the whole to know itself again. In Wilber's (2000) poetic postulation, this developmental movement is "pulled through the great morphogenetic field by the force of 'gentle persuasion toward love' - pulled, that is, by Eros, by Spirit-in-action. By the Eros that moves the sun and other stars" (p. 128).

An exploration of the self-organising nature of life, within the context of Eros as an attracting and binding force would be biased, or simply incomplete without acknowledging the nature of entropy within natural systems. The Second Law of thermodynamics states that all systems run into cold disorder. In An Outline of Psychoanalysis, Freud (2003) gives his final statement: "we have decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, Eros and the destructive instinct. The aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities—in short, to bind together." There is no mistaking the meaning of that: it is pure Eros. "The aim of the second is, on the contrary, to undo connections and so to destroy things. In the case of the destructive instinct we may suppose that its final aim is to lead what is living into an inorganic state [matter]." It is, again, this tension between integration and disintegration that allows systems to harvest the energy of entropy to support the development of emergent systems of higher complexity (Capra and Luisi, 2014). Thus, Eros and the desire for a more unified and inclusive expression of the whole, again, persists in its attempt to bind, and glue fragmented parts together in

greater coherence. As such, it can be said that Eros is that which is developing, an autopoietic feature of life, guiding the self-organising cosmo-erotic universe.

Until this point, and within the context of an Eros-(re)infused ontology, we've begun with an understanding of the ways in which Eros is guiding the development of Life through an evolutionary perspective. Following this trajectory, at a certain point in the evolution of the sensorium's sophistication, there came the "development of a nervous system and with it, eventually, the emergence of consciousness, not as a transcendent entity, but always manifest within an organic living structure" (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. 142). In this sense, there is a continuity of life and mind, and as Thompson (2010) states, "life and mind share a set of basic organisational properties, and the organisational properties distinctive of mind are an enriched version of those fundamental to life" (p. 128). Hence, if "life prefigures mind, and mind belongs to life" (p. 128), and Eros is that which is developing Life, an understanding into the ways in which Eros continues to organise, and guide development at the level of Mind will now be explored.

The Erotic Mind

"Eros signals both our connection to, and our alienation from an original condition among noetic objects. Eros is a desire for reunification that can show itself in a variety of ways" (Gordon, 2012, p. 6).

Further continuing on this path of evolution, Mind is found to be an emergent feature of Life, fuelled and maintained by Eros, with the function of supporting the organism to navigate the environment in which it finds itself, for its self-preservation and regeneration, within the whole. Founded on the primary premise of an "organism either moving toward what is good for its genes, or away from what is bad" (Grinde & Grinde, 2016, p. 47), it could be said that 'toward or away' is a core movement pattern of Life (or a holarchical organism) that carries the capacities of Mind, born of nervous system sophistication. Within this 'toward or away' movement lies the fundamental tension within a holon; to be a differentiated and self-asserting organism (a whole within itself), as well as to belong to a whole larger than itself (to be a

part). Herein lays a tension, an Eros, in which Wilber (2000) describes is “found not by staring at the physical organism and its environment, but by looking into the subjective and intersubjective domains” (p. 117). Understanding the “Mind as an emergent process that arises from and also regulates both relational and embodied patterns of energy and information flow” (Siegel, 2012, p. 42-2), Eros is the connective tissue in Life, as well as in the social life of Minds.

As social organisms, between birth and dying, that mercurial stretch, Minds cannot thrive in isolation from their kind. Like the caribou that wanders too far from the herd, Minds exist in the tension and paradox of being embodied and embedded. In the world of the social mind, and the Mind as embodied and relational, “these needs [for both, togetherness and union] are absolute, inalienable, and where they are not met [Minds] suffer, even perish” (Suzuki, 2007, p. 229). In this sense, it may be said that this tension, again von Bertalanffy’s coincidentia oppositorum (1972) and the transcendence and inclusion of this tension of opposites that allows the emergence of a new whole: an evolution.

In order to further elucidate this understanding of the Erotic pull in satisfying the needs of the Mind, and supporting its evolution, one can look to both Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, (1943) and Sullivan’s (1953) energy transformations, and tension of needs. Maslow outlined both Deficiency needs (D-Needs), which “arise due to deprivation and are said to motivate people [minds] when they are unmet,” as well as Being needs (B-Needs), “stemming not from a lack of something, but rather from a desire to grow as a person [mind/organism]” (Maslow, 1943, p. 2). Moving from physiological needs, to psychological needs, sociological needs, towards cosmological needs, organisms, or Minds must satisfy lower level D-Needs before progressing to meet higher level B-Needs, and it is within this attempt that Minds “experience the alternation of euphoria and tension” (Evans, 2006, p. 65). It is through energy transformations, and the dissolving of the tension of needs that an organism experiences development in this sense; “when the energy is not held in the tension, but in the completion of the need” (Evans, 2006, p. 65), and is therefore euphoric. This has also been well evidenced in mammalian minds, within Attachment Theory, understanding that the “general colour of the mother’s emotional attitude toward her child is crucial for the child’s subsequent development” (Bowlby, 1940, p. 157). From early infancy on, mammals seek the proximity of a sensitive and responsive caregiver for protection and security. Put another way, something

in the individual yearns to be re-unified with a greater whole - there is an Erotic pull from within the part, back toward the whole, known to be necessary for not only the Minds' survival, but also generation.

To this point, the role of Eros within the process of the development of Minds as moving from evolutionary forces towards the basic neurophysiological substrates of mindedness has been explored, leading us to consider the Erotic nature of the organisation and coherence of mind. As Wilber (2000) beautifully articulates, "Eros unites us with the rest of the Kosmos: the same currents that produce birds from dust and poetry from rocks produce egos from ids and sages from egos" (p. 192). From this understanding of the Erotic nature of the mind, supporting its holarchical developmental integrating and transcending its embodied and relationship features, and as "personality is made manifest in [these] interpersonal situations" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 32), it follows that an exploration of the Self and its development would proceed.

The Erotic Self

"Eros is a driver of holarchy, which, in the interior domains, as an expansion of identity from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit" (Wilber, 2000, p. 117).

Following a movement from Life as the self-organisation and preservation of matter and energy, to Mind as the self-organisation of information, embedded within and therefore Erotically pulled to include relationality, the Self follows and is a product of Mind, an extension of such an embodied and relational process. (Siegel, 2012) In articulating the construction of a Self, as it pertains to this evolutionary movement, Hillman (1975) states that "the movement into psychological existence [into Selfhood] proceeds through her [Eros] in one form or another" (p. 43). In another sense, the Self is our centre of gravity (Wilber, 2000), or the locust of our position within a physical and social world. As a locust, there is an imperative of the self-structure to develop in such a way that supports the preservation and regeneration of the organism in which it inhabits, in the environment it finds itself within. In order to not

only survive, but evolve as a now, social creature, "we have to liberate a sense of self so that we honour both the embodied and relational aspect of who we are" (Siegel, 2012, p. 42-3).

This imperative, or impulse to develop the self might be called the "third force" (Schuster & Ashburn, 1992, p. 19), the will within a self, that orients its development toward successively higher levels of personal integration. Articulated another way, this impulse may also be called Eros, that which continues to guide the evolutionary movement, now at the level of the Self, erotically inviting the narratives that construct the Self to become more complex, totalising and inclusive. In this sense, Eros guides the holarchical and hierarchical development of the Self to begin to contextualise the Self, and then redefine the Self in increasingly wider vistas (Wilber, 2000). As Gordon (2012) states, "when our Eros is well guided, we create works of art, we act courageously, we 'love;' when we are poorly guided, we are tyrants, we ambitiously pursue power, and we destroy things and people" (p. 6). It is then, within our citizenship as stewards of Life, to Grow Up, Wake Up, Show Up and Clean Up (Wilber, 2000), moreover, to allow Eros and this evolutionary impulse to guide our psychological development from egocentric, to ethnocentric, to worldcentric, and to cosmocentric (Wilber, 2000). As a Self begins to conceptualise, and narrativise itself within larger contexts, then, to include those contexts within its concept of Self, it "continues to shift holarchically toward the deeper layers of the Self. Consciousness is increasingly organised" (Wilber, 2000, p. 128). Affording the Self longing, a yearning for wholeness, and a re-unification with wholeness is Eros, as the Self slips into the "ongoing sweep of holarchical embrace, the ever-deeper unfolding that is consciousness evolution, prepersonal to personal to transpersonal, subconscious to self-conscious to superconscious" (Wilber, 2000, p. 192).

Herein lays the activism and invitation in this paper: our potentials, our possibilities and the cultural and ecological renewal necessary, calls for us to intervene at the level of the Self, to see ourselves as equal in a larger web of life. "Helping our planet may come from our intentionally shaping cultural evolution to support an expanded sense of self, to grow beyond an isolated and localised Me, to transform our cloistered clan mentality and cultivate a truly collaborative and globalized We" (Siegel, 2012, p. 42-7). Furthermore, to drink from the well of our potentials, personally and collectively, by listening to the draw of Eros as the "personification of all unknown psychic capacities that lie waiting, drawing us

seductively, uncannily inward to the dark of the uncut forest and the deeps below the waves" (Hillman, 1975, p. 42).

Now that an understanding of the role of Eros as a developmental draw across Life, Mind and the Self has been explored, a reflection on its utility within a clinical context will be offered.

Insights for Clinical Practice

"Evolution, as Spirit-in-action, as Eros moves through you and me, urging us to include, to diversify, to honour, to enfold. It moves the sun and other stars, theories such as this, and it will move many others, as Eros connects the previously unconnected, and pulls together the fragments of a world too weary to endure" (Hillman, 2000, p. 194).

As therapists, and quite simply stewards of consciousness and community, our intention may be to support clients (and fellow citizens) in re-connecting, cohering and integrating their many parts in such a way that it affords them greater wellbeing, in their life-world. As such, to re-unify previously fragmented, deferred, referred, suppressed or alienated aspects of their innate capacities. Within this frame, understanding Eros as a longing for greater integration, for greater unification and wholeness may afford therapists with a thrust they can trust: a force similar to Rogers' (1961) organismic valuing that practitioners can align with. Clinicians, and again, citizens of culture might be afforded greater grace and utility in aligning with Eros as a natural organismic tendency towards one's own potentialities. As has been shown, there is an innate capacity within Life, the Mind and the Self to evolve, to integrate and to seek solutions to problems. Eros might be that which pulls and guides this development and "attuning to these different dimensions of consciousness can facilitate their more graceful unfolding" (Wilber, 2000, p. 127).

Furthermore, and to close by offering an invitation that may have become quiet since it's initial utterance, amidst this time of radical fragmentation, an orientation towards the mythological, the poetic and the erotic may afford us the guidance we need to weave our culture, our selves and our world

together in ways that regenerate. We must remember, or (re)learn to think, and feel in systemic, relational, and inclusive ways, aligning with this pulse of evolution and organismic movement towards wholeness. In this sense, we may re-orient our attention away from the atomised and particularised 'self,' to re-engage the third and the relational. Eros invites us to connect with how entwined we are with the whole, even as we experience distance and fragmentation, the tension in this polarity may afford us both direction and energy on our path towards integration, together.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been shown how Eros is that which is developing. Eros, as the attracting, binding and unifying force underlying the emergence and evolution of complex systems, is a foundational organising principle of both evolution and development. This has been explored and postulated within the evolution and development of Life, Mind and the Self. As such, Eros has come to be known as that which is animating the autopoietic and emergent nature of evolution, across its many layers and levels, driving the hierarchical and holarchical developmental movements, towards greater wholeness and inclusion. Furthermore, the pertinence of an Eros-(re)infused ontology within therapeutic (and living) practice has also been offered.



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