

# Cupid and Psyche

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The myth of Cupido and Psyche appears as a story within a story, told by a drunken old woman in a cave, in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass*. Apuleius was born around AD 125 in Madaura, North-Africa. His native tongue was Punic, not Latin. Maybe that is why he has paid extra attention to the beauty of his language.

Of all the myths from antiquity, the one of Cupido and Psyche pertains perhaps most to the practice of psychotherapy, Jungian Psychoanalysis in particular. More generally, it has been proposed<sup>1</sup> that this is the eternal story of Love and the Soul.

Psyche, the soul, and literally translated from the Greek: moth, is of course the object of psychotherapy. Working with Psyche and the development of it in individuation is the heart of Jungian psychoanalysis and the myth can be seen as a metaphor for this process.

The classical Jungian interpretation of the myth of Eros and Psyche is the one from Erich Neumann for whom the transformation of the feminine is central to the myth. This is also reflected in the subtitle of his book "Amor and Psyche, the psychic development of the feminine". The perspective that I am taking in this lecture is that the myth is not so much the transformation of the feminine per se but about the transformation of the totality of psyche. Roughly speaking, I see Eros as the Self end of the ego-Self axis and psyche as the ego end of it. In the beginning of the myth ego is in the grip of the unconscious and later is transforming into a mature totality of ego-self relatedness. Like Neumann I see the story of Eros and Psych as the liberation of the individual from the mythical world. As a de-identification of the ego from the experience of the collective unconscious.

The myth is particularly relevant to therapy because Cupido, Amor, Eros — one of the three Greek words for love—represents attachment. Firstly, biographical attachment to the analysands' early parental figures, secondly to the eros in transference and countertransference in analysis and thirdly, perhaps most importantly: Eros as the relationship between the unconscious and the ego. Importantly, Eros is a God and thus belongs to the Self side of the Ego-Self axis.

Through the work of Bowlby, Winnicott and Stern as well as from more recent research it has been established beyond doubt that a shortage of good enough early parental attachment (Eros), be it because of ignorant parents, or absent parents or alcoholic or disturbed parents, is a key causal factor in the etiology of much psychological suffering. Recent work by Fonegy has shown that the reflective function of the child, its internal working model of Self-Other relationships, depends on childhood opportunities to investigate the mind of the parent. Insufficiently safe early attachments can lead to Personality disorders (particularly Narcissism), social anxiety disorders, depression and even PTSD<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Haight, Elizabeth H.,(1927) *Apuleius and his influence*, New York, repr 1963.

<sup>2</sup> A lack of parental care is associated with increased rates of depression. Childhood sexual abuse has been established as a risk factor for adult major depression. NOTP p 698

As to importance of Eros in analysis, It is also well established clinical experience that Eros —in the sense of therapeutic love and relatedness—plays a key-role in the healing of Psyche in psychoanalysis. Guggenbuhl Craig (p78) writes in his book *Eros on Crutches* (p78) how Eros not only effects the connection between the ego and unconscious but also between the elements in our unconscious, the connection between the complexes. [that is why Juno and Ceres later on stay loyal to Venus]. We see in dreams how archetypes relate to each other, whether it is with or without eros. G-C p80 : where eros is lacking power and control take over (psychopathy).

It is with these considerations in mind that we study the myth of of Cupido and Psyche. Particularly, we can ask ourselves what in the myth lies at the root of the transformation of Psyche?

Particularly from E.J. Kenney's analysis<sup>3</sup> of the myth, we learn that at the heart of Psyche's transformation are the humbling of Psyche (deal with the shadow (her sisters) and perform seemingly impossible tasks), the transformation of Cupid and the transformation of his mother (Venus).

### Synopsis

The story of Psyche and Cupido is a story in a story. There were in a certain city a king and queen, who had three beautiful daughters. The two eldest were fair to see, but there beauty was such that it was thought human praise could do it justice. The loveliness of the youngest, however, was so perfect that human speech was too poor to describe or even praise it satisfactorily. People throughout the land worship her beauty so deeply that they forget to make offerings to the goddess Venus. Venus becomes angry that her temples are falling to ruin, and is jealous of Psyche, a simple mortal, so she takes revenge to ruin her. She summoned her son Cupid, and asked him, to pierce the girl with an arrow and make her fall in love with the most vile, hideous man alive. With this instruction Venus kissed her son with long kisses, open mouthed and closely pressed and returned to the deep sea. Cupido travels to Psyche and when he sees her in her radiant glory, he shoots himself with the arrow instead.

Meanwhile, Psyche and her family become worried that she will never find a husband, for although men admire her beauty, they admired her merely as they would a statue finished to perfection. Psyche's father prays to Apollo for help, and Apollo replied that her marriage would be a "funeral wedlock" and instructed her to go to the top of a hill, where she will marry not a man but something serpent-like. Psyche bravely follows the instructions. On the top of the hill she falls asleep on the hill and the gentle breeze Zephyr imperceptibly lifted her up and carried her smoothly down the slope on to the valley below. When she wakes up, she discovers a stunning mansion. Going inside, she relaxes and enjoys fine food and luxurious treatment. At night, in the dark, she meets and falls in love with her husband.

She lives happily with him but only during the night, never seeing him, until one day he tells her that her sisters have been crying for her. She begs to see them, but her husband replies that it would not be wise to do so. Psyche insists that they visit, and when they do, they become extremely jealous of Psyche's beautiful mansion and lush quarters. They deduce that Psyche has never seen her husband, and they convince her that she must

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<sup>3</sup> Kenney, E.J. ( 1990) *Apuleius Cupid and Psyche*, Cambridge University Press, New York

sneak a look and kill him. Confused and conflicted, knife in hand, Psyche turns on a lamp one night as her husband lies next to her.

When she sees the beautiful Cupid asleep on her bed, she weeps for her lack of faith. She spills a drop of hot oil which awakens Cupid who immediately deserts her because she broke his trust. Psyche pricks herself with Cupid's arrow and falls madly in love with him. Cupid returns to his mother, Venus, who again decides to enact revenge on the beautiful girl.

Psyche, meanwhile, journeys all over the land to find Cupid. On her journey she first meets Pan and Echo who advise her to stop weeping and to start honoring Cupid through tender service. Ceres and Juno, although having sympathy for Venus in the end can not help her to find Cupid as they have their loyalty to Aphrodite. Venus asks Mercury to find Psyche and bring her to her palace. She calls for her handmaids Care and Sorrow

But first she sends her sisters to a certain death. She decides to go to Venus herself in a plea for love and forgiveness, and when she finally sees Venus, the great goddess laughs aloud. Venus shows her a heap of seeds and tells her that she must sort them all in one night's time if she wants to see Cupid again. This task is impossible for one person alone, but ants pity Psyche and sort the seeds for her. But Psyche survives the night easily. Next, Venus commands her to retrieve a golden fleece from the river. She almost drowns herself in the river because of her sorrow, but a reed speaks to her and suggests that she collect the golden pieces of fleece from the thorny briar that catches it. Psyche follows these instructions and returns a sizable quantity to Venus. The amazed goddess, still at it, now orders Psyche to fill a flask from the unreachable well of the River Styx. When Psyche reaches the head of the river, she realizes that this task seems impossible because the rocks are so dangerous. This time, an eagle helps her and fills the flask. Venus still does not give in.

As a final task, Venus challenges Psyche to go into the underworld and have Persephone put some of her beauty in a box. Psyche wants to give up and commit suicide (again). However, a certain tower started giving her instructions how to get safely to the underworld and back. This includes not giving to beggars, taking cookies with her for the dog and coins for the ferry man. Psyche succeeds but on her way toward giving the box to Venus, she becomes curious, opens the box, and instantly falls asleep. Meanwhile, Cupid looks for Psyche and finds her sleeping. He awakens her, puts the sleeping spell back in the box, and takes her to Zeus to request her immortality. Zeus grants the request and makes Psyche an immortal goddess. She and Cupid are married. Venus now supports the marriage because her son has married a goddess—and because Psyche will no longer distract the men on earth from Venus.

At the opening of the myth we read that Psyche's radiance makes her unapproachable. Her gift and her aloneness go hand in hand. The community finds her too dazzling and glorious to relate to. There is almost a Luciferic quality to her initial position. Such an ego believes that it is the centre of the personality. In extreme cases it is identifying with grand archetypal experiences and becomes the grandiose omnipotent centre of consciousness of an un-individuated Psyche. It declares itself the centre and identifies with all that is experienced of Psyche. Yet it longs for relatedness.

Psyche's father consults the oracle: Psyche's marriage will be a marriage of death. This calls up the motif of Death and the Maiden, the story of Proserpina, snow white, blue

beard etc. etc. In our story Psyche is believed to have died after is brought away in the funeral procession. This corresponds the stage in individuation when the ego realizes that it is not as omnipotent as had assumed it was. This is the stage which in alchemy is depicted as the drowning king. This is the burnout. The recognition that the old live was a lie. But she is not really dead. The Zephyr did not throw her of the cliff but gently carried her down in the valley where she woke up near the paradisiacal palace.

Psyche is the 3rd daughter. Her two older sisters feature as shadow figures later on in the myth. Freud in his essay "the three caskets" (1911) wrote about the motif of the third daughters in the Merchant of Venice, King Lear, Cinderella, An Estonian myth but also on Apuleius Cupid and Psyche. The third daughter is always the chosen one although the first two on the surface seem more attractive. In the Merchant of Venice the first daughter is golden, the second of silver and the third is leaden. Freud, after having remarked that Jung treats Eros as a monistic principle whereas he treats Eros as a dual principle (lust-death/Thanatos) suggests that what attracts in the third daughter is death. Eros wants to unite with Thanatos. Freud has further suggested that what is represented in these myths are the three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman—the woman who bears him, the woman who is his mate and the woman who destroys him.

In the mean time Venus became very jealous and insulted and directed all her anger to poor Psyche. Aphrodite is born in the foam (Aphros is foam), Psyche is earth-born. A goddess is angry with a mortal. Venus uses narcissism and lust as fascinates to sedate psyche (ego) to avoid that she becomes conscious: she sends her son Cupid to Psyche to let her fall in love with the least attractive man. The unconscious does not tolerate an outside point of authority or power.

The archetypes want to stay the boss. The unconscious does not accept the veneration (note etymology) of the ego. And this is what most people experience; all they know is ego. They do not yet recognize that not all that they are not to identify with all that they are experiencing within. They still need to distinguish between ego and the unconscious. They "venerate" [note the etymology] the ego as the ego is not sufficiently distinguished from the archetypal forces and complexes at work. In alchemical imagery: The king is swollen and needs to/a shrink. This is when the real suffering starts and people come into analysis. The unconscious protests because the individual does not recognize it, it does not respect. The ego does not yet realize that it is merely an observation and registration system. The same with the Jewish myth of Jahweh's fury when the people were dancing around the golden calf. When the unconscious is not recognized it makes trouble and brings people to despair. This is the anger of Venus.

### **Embrace in the night with Cupid**

It is the earlier Eros, the one who has just kissed goodbye to his mother, and not the Eros of Socrates' second speech, that lies down with Psyche during the first nights in the palace in the valley. And this seems fine to Psyche.

What does this correspond to psychologically? Eros represents the unconscious making its way towards the ego. We could say that before the beginning of individuation, the ego is in the grip of the unconscious-self, it does not recognize the unconscious as such, it does not reflect on the effect of the unconscious on the ego and because it can not acknowledge the unconscious, it also does not contribute to the emancipation of it. It is in blissful unconscious embrace.

But where we are now in the myth Eros is still very undifferentiated. Their entanglement is a carnal-only one. Cupid makes psyche promise never to ask to be allowed to look at him. The unconscious initially does not want the ego to look at it. Eros 1, the archetype says: never question me. Why did we not question our parents more? This is the motif of the forbidden room.

The oracle Apollo had predicted that her marriage would be with a beast. The corresponds with Sappho's characterization of Eros as an uncontrollable beast. What feels a bit unnatural is that until her sisters come around, Psyche seems to accept that she sleeps every night with a husband that she can't see. This initial relationship between Eros and Psyche corresponds to the psychic state of a person who has no idea (yet) that he is at the whim of the archetype and that he attributes all that is experienced within as part of his own personality. Such a person has no reason to recognize the archetypes as such. In a this swollen state he identifies with all the motivations that he experiences. This early part of the myth is a metaphor for psyche to be completely at the service of the whimsical and often possessive gods.

### **Jealousy of the sisters and the spilling of hot oil**

In the next part of the myth Psyche's two elder and profoundly jealous sisters seduce her to disobey Eros' instructions not to light the oil-lamp and to kill him.

The two sisters don't really love their sister and they don't love their own lives. They hate their husbands and are merely interested in their own well-being. They are envious about Psyche's palace and all the luxury that goes with it. Pretending to be well-intending loving sisters they are after quick wins having frantic lust for material pleasure. They are tricksters and evil and want to prevent Psyche from emancipating. **In short, these sisters represent the shadow.** After all the shadow is after quick wins, frantic lust for material pleasure, is tricksterish and evil and above all wants to prevent the ego-self axis from emancipating. The murderous agitation of the sisters embodies resistance of the shadow against Psyche's beginning of higher consciousness.

Also according to Neumann, the sisters represent the matriarchate. They are man-haters and don't want change. They are jealous and don't want Psyche to emancipate.

The sisters represent exactly the same energies as the evil sisters in Frau Holle Cinderella, King Lear etc. etc. The shadow is clearly also an archetype. **The chapters about the sisters plotting their tricks takes up a significant part of the myth in the same way that integrating the shadow forms a big part of an analysis.**

The sisters are successful in convincing Psyche to kill her husband. She takes an oil lamp to see and a dagger to kill. Dagger in hand she sees. This is the onset of consciousness of the unconscious. Spilling the hot oil represents exactly the same energy as the biting snake in Genesis. Both are deeply painful pricking incidents (note the etymology) which can not be denied or forgotten. The prick brings consciousness. In both cases lovers are chased out of paradise. In both cases it is the female disobeying a divine male ruling which starts the trouble or more positively: which starts consciousness.

By freeing herself from Cupid by dagger and lamp Psyche deprives him of his divine power over her. This is the pivotal moment in individuation when the individual comes to see that a big part in him is not of his own making and that ego is only a small part of the totality of inner experience.

Because Psyche also pricks herself with Cupid's arrow, she falls madly in love with him at the instance that she wanted to kill him. **What she sees is Eros beyond the beastly.** Once ego has recognized that there is such a thing as an unconscious a strong urge arises in the individual to learn more about the relationship between the ego and the unconscious. It wants to be with the Self and stay connected to it. From now on all her adventures and decisions are motivated by reconnecting to Eros. She has seen in Eros the heavenly spheres of Socrates' second speech and must find it back. She is willing to make some very big sacrifices to achieve this goal. This seems to correspond to the motivation of anyone in analysis who makes significant sacrifices in a long, intense, costly and often painful process, because somehow he or she has experienced the beginnings of the divine beauty of being connected to his true Self.

### **Psyche abandoned**

The sisters achieve that Eros breaks the relationship with Psyche and that Psyche is left all alone wondering around. **Eros flies back to the gods and gets locked-up again in his mother's palace.** To Psyche, Eros' departure is a burn-out of the relationship and like a burn-out to Psyche. It causes a deep depression with **suicidal thoughts.** This is the deep point of the drama and is a metaphor for the state of psyche that people can be in when they decide to start analysis.

The first who Psyche encounters when wandering around after the river had frustrated her suite attempt and is Pan, the God of the countryside, close to the earth and the animals, with Echo, unattainable Goddess of the mountains, in his arms. Pan, so-called because he delights the hearts of all (Homeric Hymns". Pan's wise advise to Psyche is: "cease to weep, lay aside your grief; rather adore in prayer Cupid, greatest of gods, and strive to earn his favor, young, wanton and pleasure-loving that he is, through tender service".

**Pan's advise gives Psyche the motivation and guiding direction** to complete the tasks that Aphrodite is about to give her. (Neumann p166) comments on the "cease to weep" bit of Pan's advise that self pity is not allowed which he interprets as: "following the lines of the regressive great mother is not allowed" [if we want to individuate].

Next Psyche meets her sisters again and the first thing she does is dealing with them for good. She sends them off the cliff and this time Zephyr is not helping them and they fall death. This death is the death of the effects/workings of shadow. The path of individuation generally starts with dealing with the shadow.

Hereafter, Psyche asks Ceres and Juno for helping her to find Cupido. However, although having sympathy for Psyche, neither of them can help her as neither wants to offend Venus. Beauty among the Gods needs to be honored and is what counts above mortal (=ego) beauty. Neumann (p151) remarks: **the living guidance of life and creativity come from the unconscious and not from the ego.** The mortal psyche is at the mercy of the hostile world of feminine powers. The unconscious in its inhuman constellation dominated human action. Man's relation to this world (Eros) was wholly passive. Psyche of man was at the mercy of the gods and their whims. Venus Vulgaris is as powerful as the negative anima in the man and according to Bachofen she represents the regressive mother archetype. We may add that this Venus is not only an anima power but equally an animus one.

All of this leads Psyche, at complete loss, pregnant, suicidal and longing for Eros, to surrender to Venus. The surrender of ego to something much bigger than itself. In alchemical imagery this important process is often depicted as the death of the King.

Venus' plan to destroy Psyche revolves about four labors. In accepting these tasks in the spirit of Pan's advice, Psyche seeks to find Cupid again. Pan's advice to strive to tender service to Eros spreads to service to his mother. Psyche accepts the labors and is thus becoming a sort of feminine Hercules who successfully completes them with a lot of help from nature. Only in the final labor does she make a human mistake. But then the transformed Cupid comes to her rescue.

Venus orders Mercury to find Psyche for her. Mercury, like Eros is a messenger God. A connection between the Ego and the Self. Venus is very angry (Neumann p 94 calls her a fishwife) with Psyche when she arrives in front of her and handed her over to her handmaids Care and Sorrow to be tormented. "They whipped the wretched girl and afflicted her with every other kind of torture". Venus is insulted in the core of her body and Psyche suffers. We can associate the torment to the state of a person in psychological despair who enters analysis or therapy. What does it mean the Care and Sorrow do the tormenting?

Venus gives Psyche her first task: sorting out before the end of the evening an enormous heap of grains: lentils, wheat, barley, millet, chick-peas, beans and poppy and is strikingly similar to Cinderella's task. It also reminds us of the fairy tale of Frau Holle. Psyche's task seems an impossible one to complete in time: "Psyche did not offer to touch the disordered and unmanageable mass but stood in silent stupefaction, stunned by this monstrous command". Again we can associate "silent stupifaction" a state of burnout or depression for whom the task of returning to a happy and balanced life seems totally impossible. Because such an analysand believes that hitherto in his life he has solved all problems with the ego and knows that the task of sorting his mental despair is to big a task (for the ego). Of course such a person miscalculates as he does not know that the unconscious Self will help in the process. Therefore, the ants and all helping animals in myths and fairy tales for that matter, represent the workings of the unconscious Self, which is more nature than ego is nature.

Erich Neumann sees the sorting of the seeds as a representation of the masculine ordering principle and the awakening of thinking and masculine spirit that enables liberation from the negative mother. The ants he associates with the instinct, the chthonic and the vegetative nervous system.

As always in individuation, nature comes to help Psyche. In analysis it is not the analyst who "heals" the patient. It is the natural Self of the patient, who through the dreams puts the de-railed ego back on the track of the Self. The analyst is merely a midwife and the connection to the true Self is the baby. That the work is completed on time surprises Venus, who just returning from a night party, is quick to prescribe a second labor.

(meanwhile Eros was under strict guard, in solitary confinement in one room in the back of the palace, partly to stop him from aggravating his wound through his impetuous passion, partly to stop him from seeing his beloved.

Than Psyche is given her second task. "as soon as dawn took horse, Venus summoned Psyche and said: You see that wood which stretches along the banks of the river which washes it in passing, and the bushes at its edge which look down on the nearby spring?

Sheep resplendent with fleece of real gold wander and graze there unguarded. Of that precious wool I suggest you get a tuft by hook or by crook and bring it to me directly.” Psyche than again wants to commit suicide by “throwing herself from a rock into the river”. But then a green reed whispers: “Psyche, tried by much suffering, do not pollute my holy waters by your pitiable death” and the reed gives advice not to approach the sheep by day but wait until the sun abates, and not to take the fleece from the sheep but from the branches of the nearby trees where the golden wool sticks everywhere.

The advice is: don’t go straight to the gold. Instead pluck the fleece bit by bit from the trees. This is how it goes in analysis. We can not go straight to heart of the matter. The rams are far too dangerous. And also we can not go at midday i.e. when the rational ego (Apollo is sun) of the analysand is still the dominant observation point. The abating sun is like a state of reverie in analysis. Only in the twi-light of the temenos of the consulting room can we pluck the Gold.

I have had several analysands who brought a dream in which a blazingly strong white light appears and lasts for a while. Often this has a numinous quality to it. One can not go to that light directly. This seems a similar motif to the one in Perseus Medea to don’t look the gorgon in the eyes. We can not go straight to the archetype.

Neumann compares the advice to avoid approaching the sheep (rams) to the disarming of the destructive masculine (**animus**). A symbolic castration, similar to Delilah’s shearing of Samson, the solar Hero. The advice that the reed gave to Psyche is also valid for the analyst: don’t go straight to the gold. ***abaissement du niveau mental***.

### **Fill a flask from well of Styx top of mountain**

The third task is to draw of in a crystal jar, the dark waters from the spring at the top of a steep and dangerous rock. Psyche quickly makes her way to the rock “to find at last an end to her wretched existence”. The task is impossible because the rock was huge and too rough and treacherous to climb. In the hollows lived fierce serpents with long necks. Even the waters warn Psyche that she will die if she attempts to reach the spring. Then an eagle suddenly appeared and tells her to hand it the jar, took off and “steered to left and right between the raging jaws and flickering three-forked tongues of the dragons to draw of the waters and returned the jar to Psyche.

The eagle, symbol of Zeus’ masculine spirit, will not let her climb up the rock and die. Even the gods fear this mountain. A human attempting to climb this rock represents an ego thinking it can do difficult tasks in the wildness of the unconscious. A strong ego is very useful, particularly in the first half of life, but it can not enter and operate in the unconscious. **Ego has to hover near but not in the unconscious.**

According to Neumann Psyche tames the negative masculine spirit (rams) in the second labour, a reconciliation which makes it possible to enter into communication with the positive masculine (eagle) in the third labour. Neumann compares the Eagle of Zeus in the myth of Psyche to the myth of the homo-erotic Ganymedes relationship with Zeus. Both **Psyche and Ganymedes** are human beings loved by gods and both are ultimately carried of to Olympus as earthly lovers of divine Gods. The eagles is a masculine spirit helping to fight the Great mother matrix. Neumann (p. 105) sees the liberation of son-lover Eros from the matrix of Great Mother (Aphrodite) as a prerequisite for an independent relation with Psyche. As an aside: Neumann also sees the homo-erotic and homosexual

pairs as “strugglers” taking up the war of liberation against the domination of the Great Mother.

The eagle holding the jar filled with spring water symbolizes the male-female nature of Psyche. Thus the myth is about the transformation of the totality of psyche and not mainly about the transformation of the feminine as Neumann suggested.

### **Get Persephone's beauty in box from the underworld**

In the final labour, Psyche is sent to the underworld to pick-up beauty-ointment from Persephone. To be a human carrier of divine beauty is like ego pick-up valuable unconscious material for connection and integration.

Psyche's helper this time is a speaking lofty tower from which she initially wanted to throw herself. The tower gives her advice how to survive the trip to the underworld. An important advice is not to take up the soft seat and join her in a rich meal that Persephone will offer, but to sit on the ground and only accept some coarse bread. Also she is not to open the box with Persephone's beauty. These warnings seem to prevent re-identification with the unconscious. “Keep distance” is the red thread of the tower's advice. This is to prevent happening what happened to Narcissus when he lost himself in identification with his mirror image. In Neumann's words on Psyche's last task: it is Venus' attempt to seduce Psyche back into the narcissism of self love in the glass coffin.

But Psyche survives the underworld and returns to the upper world with the box filled with Persephone's beauty ointment. But then: “What a fool I am to be carrying divine beauty and not to help myself even to a tiny bit of it”. This of course speaks of the temptation that those who have just discovered the power of the unconscious to identify with this power. Alas, Psyche can not suppress her curiosity (*Sacrilega Curiositate*: **sacrilege curiosity**), opens the box and falls in an eternal sleep. [Jung's fear for the Mana personality, and the Greek's for Hubris].

Now the crucial transformation of Eros is completed: “Eros wounds have healed, his strength returned, and he was no longer able to be parted for so long from Psyche. **He escapes from the high window of the room in which he was confined**” [by his mother]. Eros flies to Psyche, cleans the sleep from her and as she awakens instructs her to take Proserpina's gift to his mother. Then he flies up to Zeus to ask for his support. Zeus responds by saying to the assembled gods “.... you undoubtedly know this young man well, how I have reared him with my own hands. I have decided that the hot-blooded impulses of his first youth must be somehow bridled; his name has been besmirched for long enough in common report for adultery and all kinds of wantonness. We must take away all opportunity for this and fetter his youthful excess in the bonds of marriage. He has chosen a girl and had her virginity: let him hold her, have her and embracing Psyche for ever enjoy his beloved. Psyche was married to Eros with all due observance, a lavish wedding-feast appeared with Venus dancing to the music of Apollo's lyre, and when her time came there was born to them a daughter, whom we call **Voluptas** (Joy/ pleasure).

### **Venus 1 and 2 and Eros 1 and 2.**

At the very end of the myth we will see that Venus transforms from Venus Vulgaris to Venus Caelestus. Kenney calls them Venus 1 and Venus 2. A transformation that was already announced in Plato's symposium where we can read (180e): “..... We all know that Aphrodite is inseparably linked with Love, but as there are two Aphrodites it follows that

there must be two loves as well. Now what are the two Aphrodites? One is the elder and is daughter of Uranus, and had no mother; her we call Heavenly Aphrodite. The other is younger, the child of Zeus and Dione, and is called Common Aphrodite.....

What the transformation of Aphrodite means in Jungian terms is that the unconscious transforms when ego starts relating to it. The neurosis dissolves. Similarly with the Golden Calf story from the bible. The angry Yahweh of the old testament (Schwartz-Salant calls it a borderline God because of his black and white, all good/ all bad thinking) transforms in a more loving God, when people start relating to it. The relation between the ego and the unconscious is the key. Hence the importance of Eros, the son of Venus and the messenger-god of loving relatedness. But, the crux of the matter is that first Eros himself needs to transform. We will look at the transformation of Eros next.

### **Eros: from a phallic and incestuous beast to a lovely winged boy with an arch**

For the earliest Greek poets, Eros is more about sexuality than loving relatedness (agape) and depicted him as an evil uncontrolled sexual passion. Sappho (600 bc) called him: a “bittersweet uncontrollable beast”. Kenney calls him Eros 1.

In Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* this early and common view on the nature of Eros (love) is challenged. Plato points to the the other (less uncontrolled and beastly, and more loving) side of love. Kenney calls this Eros 2. In *Phaedrus* he lets Socrates holds his famous speech on the conception of Eros in which Eros takes a truly platonic character. It is perhaps interesting to repeat this myth here briefly. Socrates speaking to *Phaedrus* about the nature of Eros:

*Every 10000 years, Zeus (the very image of upward movement and thus the central god of this dialogue) leads an array of gods and their followers -including mortals- to a feast and banquet. Those chariots that are completely good and noble proceed steeply upward to the very edge of the spherical heavens. It is here, the speaker claims, that the winged soul takes its stand on the outer surface of heaven and gazes upon which is beyond the heavens (gr) i.e., that which is beyond physis or nature in the widest sense (247c). This is the feasting of the soul. Eros’ is conceived when seeing a beauty in the other person such that it reminds us the beauty that we saw ourselves thousands of years ago at the edges of the spherical heaven.*

Kenney says (p. 137) that “Apuleius’ setting of this palace, amid grass, trees and water is a typical example of the ideal literary landscape conventionally styled as the *locus amoenis* [lieftallig, bekoorlijk, charming lovable] ..... One of the most celebrated of all such landscapes foamed the setting of Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus*. which Apuleius may very well have had in mind here”. As if the setting somehow already announces the later transformation of Eros.

It is this heavenly Eros, which features at the very end of Apuleius’ myth and the central transformation in the myth is the character change from Eros the possessive to Eros the soul connector. As an aside: Freud called the Platonic Eros as the Eros corresponding to the transference in psychoanalysis (4:18)

In Plato’s *Symposium*, Eros is also the son of *Pernia* (shortage) and *Poros* (abundance) and also stands between wisdom and ignorance. Plato also sees Eros-love as the desire for perpetual possession of the good and immortality. Very fittingly to Apuleius’ myth: Eros also wants to make the mortal immortal. Why is this fitting?

In even later periods of antiquity, Eros-Cupid becomes more sentimentally depicted as “a beautiful boy”. With Ovid Cupid has coupled Apollo and Daphne (revenge and desire), Venus and Adonis (lust) and Hades and Proserpina (Venus thought that too many woman stay unmarried). Eros can therefore also be associated with the “entanglement” of different archetypes.

His most famous temple was in Thespia where he was honored in in the guise of a simple phallic pillar. His mother is Aphrodite. Hermes, Ares and Zeus are mentioned as his father. That in some versions of his genealogy Zeus was both his father as well as the father of his mother, indicates that sexual passion does not shy away for incest. This is amplified in Apuleius myth, when Venus sends Cupido on his mission and kissed her son with “long kisses, open-mouthed and closely pressed”. This is an undifferentiated and primitive state. Neumann says that Eros needs to disentangle himself from the great-mother archetype. Venus 1 and Eros 1 are still entangled. It may look like a coniunctio but it actually is “the lesser coniunctio” which means the premature coming together of that what has not been separated sufficiently.