Virgo: Creativity, Loss, Renewal

Note to UAC Attendees and Recording Purchasers: Per agreement with the client and artists, this slide deck does not include the images of embroidered work shown in the live presentation.
There is no ascent to theory without descent to case.

– Clifford Geertz
Hesiod, *Works and Days*

"There is Virgin Dike, the daughter of Zeus, who is honoured and reverenced among the gods who dwell on Olympos, and whenever anyone hurts her with lying slander, she sits beside her father, Zeus the son of Kronos, and tells him of men's wicked heart, until the people pay for the mad folly of their princes who, evilly minded, pervert judgement and give sentence crookedly."

Aeschylus Fragment

Chorus: How then shall we rightly address you?
Dike: By the name of Dike, her who is greatly revered in heaven.
Chorus: And of what privilege are you the mistress?
Dike: As for the just, I reward their life of justice. But in the reckless I implant a chastened mind. I write their offences on the tablet of Zeus.
Chorus: And at what season do you unroll the list of crimes?
Dike: When the proper time brings the fulfilment of what is theirs by right.
Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*

“At least Nemesis walks at your feet, unnoticed she walks at your feet, snaps your haughty neck, and always holds sway over your sustenance with her forearm.”

Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*

"The balance of Dike keeps watch: swiftly it descends on those in the light; sometimes pain waits for those who linger on the frontier of twilight; and others are claimed by strengthless night."
"Would that I were not among the men of the fifth age, but either had died before or been born afterwards. For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day. Strength will be right and reverence will cease to be; and the wicked will hurt the worthy man, speaking false words against him, and will swear an oath upon them. Envy. foul-mouthed, delighting in evil, with scowling face, will go along with wretched men one and all. And Nemesis and Aidos, shrouding their bright forms in pale mantles, shall go from the wide-wayed earth back to Olympos, forsaking the whole race of mortal men, and all that will be left by them to mankind will be wretched pain. And there shall be no defence against evil."

Hesiod, *Works and Days*
Life Under the Stern Eye of Dike

• A fantasy of perfection arises (Golden Age) against which all life, including oneself, is measured and found lacking
• Picture of “what should be” takes on a life of its own
• Must succeed according to this artificial measure – extreme feelings of responsibility and guilt each time performance falters
• Powerful fantasy that if the picture is fulfilled – one is good, responsible, etc. – then eventually life will work out
• Appropriate and perfection-seeking – strict monitoring and punishment is meted out, constant sense of falling short
• Virginity as psychic enclosure: withdrawal to the heights by the progressed self looking out over the failed self and the failed world (retreat to Olympus)
• An ideal is always there – its unattainability ensures the system can go on perpetuating itself, can never end
• “Respectable” addictions: working, cleaning, saving, taking care of others, drugs to stay awake and be more productive – addictions enable denial of chaos
The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths
Jorge Luis Borges (from El Aleph)

Good men of faith— but Allah knows more— relate that in the first days there was a king in the islands of Babylon who gathered together all his architects and mages and ordered them to construct a labyrinth so confusing and subtle that the wisest men would never venture to enter while those who did would become lost. This work was a scandal because creating confusion and wonder are functions of God not man.

With the passage of time, a king of the Arabs came to court and the king of Babylon (to mock his guest’s simplicity) had him enter the labyrinth, where he wandered about affronted and confused until the afternoon’s declination. He begged for divine help and came upon the door. His lips did not utter any complaint at all, but he did tell the king of Babylon that in Arabia he had a better labyrinth and that, if God were well served, he would reveal it to him some day.
The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths
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Then he went back to Arabia. He gathered his captains and his governors and successfully laid waste to the kingdom of Babylon: he pulled down its castles, destroyed its people, and took the very king captive. He tied him onto a swift camel and carried him off to the desert. They rode for three days.

He said to him: "Oh king of time and substance, cipher of the century, in Babylon you tried to lose me in a labyrinth made of bronze with many stairways, and doors, and walls. Now the All-Powerful has seen fit for me to show you mine where there are no stairs to climb, nor doors to force open, nor fatiguing galleries through which to run, nor walls that would impede your passage."

Then he untied the bindings and abandoned the king of Babylon in the middle of the desert where he died of hunger and thirst.

May the Glory be with The One who does not die.
Subjecting Pure Potential to Form
In satiabili fame Erisichtonem torquet Fames.
The only valid cure for any kind of depression is the acceptance of real suffering.

- Helen Luke
Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
che la diritta via era smarrita.

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself in a forest dark
For the straightforward path had been lost.
## Two Ways of Suffering

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**Inferno**

**Purgatorio**
Diodoros Siculus

"The Horai, as they are called, to each of them, according as her name indicates, was given the ordering and adornment of life."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca

"I [Helios the Sun] carry the measures of time, surrounded by the four Horai, about the same centre, until I have passed through a whole house [of the Zodiac] and fulfilled one complete month as usual . . .

Against Mene the moon I move my rolling ball, the sparkling nourisher of sheaf-producing growth, and pass on my endless circuit about the turning-point of the Zodiakos, creating the measures of time."
Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*

“So the god came once more to the sky; and to receive him the stately Horai threw open the heavenly gates, and crowned the heavens.”
Philostratus the Elder

"The invention of painting belongs to the gods--witness on earth all the designs with which the Horai paint the meadows, and the manifestations we see in the heavens."