

selected writings by

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A Blue Fire



*Introduced and edited by Thomas Moore,
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“James Hillman is the most lively and original psychologist we have had in America since William James. I honor him, and read something in his work almost every day.”

—ROBERT BLY

WAR

You will recall, if you saw the film *Patton*, the scene in which the American general, who commanded the Third Army in the 1944-45 drive across France into Germany, walks the field after a battle: churned earth, burnt tanks, dead men. The general takes up a dying officer, kisses him, surveys the havoc, and says: "I love it. God help me I do love it so. I love it more than my life."



I believe we can never speak sensibly of peace or disarmament unless we enter into this love of war. Unless we enter into the martial state of soul, we cannot comprehend its pull. This special state must be ritually entered. We must be "inducted," and war must be "declared"—as one is declared insane, declared married or bankrupt. So we shall try now to "go to war" and this because it is a principle of psychological method that any phenomenon to be understood must be empathetically imagined. To know war we must enter its love. No psychic phenomenon can be truly dislodged from its fixity unless we first move the imagination into its heart. . . .

My method of heading right in, of penetrating rather than circumambulating or reflecting, is itself martial. So we shall be invoking the god of the topic by this approach to the topic. . . .

Besides the actual battles and their monuments, the monumental epics that lie in the roots of our Western languages are to a large proportion "war books": the *Mahabarata* and its *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Iliad*, the *Aenead*, the Celtic *Lebor Gabala*, and the Norse *Edda*. Our Bible is a long account of battles, of wars and captains of war. Yahweh presents himself in the speeches of a war god and his prophets and kings are his warriors. Even the New Testament is so arranged that its final culminating chapter, Revelations, functions as its recapitulative coda in which the Great Armageddon of the Apocalypse is its crisis.

In our most elevated works of thought—Hindu and Platonic philosophy—a warrior class is imagined as necessary to the well-being of humankind. This class finds its counterpart within human

In fact, we need to look again at the aesthetic aspect of Mars. Also there a love lies hidden. From the civilian滑稽, military滑稽 and rhetorical seem kitisch and pomposity. But look instead at this language, these procedures as the sensitization by ritual of the physico-imagination. Consider how many different kinds of blades, edges, points, metals and temperings are fashioned on the variety of knives, sabres, spears, axes, rapiers, daggers, lances, pikes, halberds that have been lovingly honed with the idea of killing. Look at the rewards for killing: Iron Cross, Victoria Cross, Medal of Honor, Croix de Guerre, the accoutrements: bamboo baton, swag, ger stick, epaulets, decorated sleeves, ivory-handled pistols. The music: reveille and taps, drums and pipes, fife and drums, trumpets, bugles, the marching songs and marching bands, brass, braids, stripes, brown belts, green berets, red coats, "whites." Forms, ranks, promotions, flags, banners, trooping to the colors. The military mess—its postures, toasts. The manners: salutes, drills, commands. Marriages—eyes—eyes front! Of the hands, the neck, the voice, ramrod back trials of the feet—turns, steps, paces, warrios, dances. Of the bone, abdomen—"Suck in that gut, soldier." The names: Hussars Dragoons, Rangers, Lanciers, Goldstream Guards, and nickname bluesacket, leatherneck, doughboy. The great walls and bastions of

Love and war have traditionally been coupled in the figures of Venus and Mars, Aphrodite and Ares. This usual allegory is expressed in usual slogans—make love not war, all's fair in love and war—and in usual oscillating behaviors—rest, recreation and relaxation in the whorehouse behind the lines, then return to the all-male barracks. Instead of these couplings which actually separate Mars and Venus into alternatives, there is a venusian experience within Mars itself. It occurs in the sense of life in the midship of battle, in the care for concrete details built into all marital regulations, in the sprucing, prancing and dandying of the cavaliers (now called bows) on leave. Are they sons of Mars or of Venus?



mature, in the heart, as virtues of courage, nobility, honor, loyalty, steadfastness of principle, comradely love, so that war is given location not only in a class of persons but in a level of human personality organically necessary to the justice of the whole.

severe beauty built by Brunelleschi, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Buontalenti. The decorated horse, notches in the rifle stock, the painted emblems on metal equipment, letters from the front, poems. Spit and polish and pent emotion. Neat's-foot oil, gunsmith, swordsmith; the Shield of Achilles on which is engraved the whole world.

Our American consciousness has extreme difficulty with Mars. Our founding documents and legends portray the inherent nonmartial bias of our civilian democracy. You can see this in the Second, Third and Fourth constitutional amendments which severely restrict military power in the civilian domain. You can see this in the stories of the Massachusetts Minutemen versus European mercenaries and redcoats, and in the Green Mountain boys and the soldiers of the Swamp Fox—civilians all. And you can see it in the casual individualistic Texans at San Jacinto versus the Mexican officers trained in the European mold.

Compared with our background in Europe, Americans are idealistic: war has no place. It should not be. War is not glorious, triumphal, creative as to a warrior class in Europe from Rome and the Normans through the Crusades even to the Battle of Britain. We may be a violent people but not a warlike people—and our hatred of war makes us use violence against even war itself. Wanting to put a stop to it was a major cause of the Los Alamos project and Truman's decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a bomb to "save lives," a bomb to end bombs, like the idea of a war to end all wars. "The object of war," it says on General Sherman's statue in Washington, "is a more perfect peace." Our so-called double-speak about armaments as "peacemakers" reflects truly how we think. War is bad, exterminate war and keep peace violently: punitive expeditions, preemptive strikes, send in the Marines. More firepower means surer peace. We enact the blind god's blindness (Mars *Caecus* as the Romans called him, and Mars *insanus, furibundus, omnipotens*), like General Grant in the wilderness, like the bombing of Dresden, overkill as a way to end war. . . .



The rhetoric of Mars in war journals, poems and recollections speaks of attachment to specific earthly places, comrades, things. The transcendent is in the concrete particular. Hemingway writes

man and values more than my life yet bound with this world and its
in fire. If the epiphany in battle unveils love of this place and that
worst sin of all; fascination by the spirit. *Supernatural*. The soul goes up
The nuclear imagination leaves the human behind for the

That would be like the splendor of the Mystery One.

*We burst at once into the sky
If the radiance of a thousand suns*

heimer when he saw the atomic blasts:
Or like that passage from the *Bhagavad Gita* which came to Oppen-

... mind consciousness is on fire.
All things, O priests, are on fire ... the mind is on fire, ideas are on fire

things, as in the Buddha's fire sermon:
a pillar of cloud, an epiphanic fire revealing the immost spirit of all
apocalyptic transformation of the world into fire, earth ascending in
degree. It is different in kind: archetypally different. It evokes the
merely a defining cannoneade or rebombing carried to a further
heightened regard for the destroyed. Nuclear devastation is not
a heretic. The emotion is stupification at destruction itself rather than
herbal. Quite different is the transcendental experience of the nuclear
my life.

Martial psychology turns events into images: physical
bundled, named. Hurtgen Forest, Vimy Ridge, Iwo Jima. A beach,
a ridge, a railroad crossing: battle places become iconic and sacred,
physical images claiming the utmost human love, worth more than

more likely evokes a sense of comradeship." "A macabre gun nest to destroy, a strong point to annihilate —
defend, a limited and specific objective. A physical goal — a piece of earth to
in abstraction. Glenn Gray writes: "Any fighting unit must have a
explosion, or the names of people or places or units engagéd. Gone
where it is), the date of Hiroshima, of the first hydrogen bomb
How rare for anyone to know the date of Alamogordo (or even
numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the regiments and dates."

that after World War I: "abstract words such as glory, honor, cour-

life, the nuclear epiphany unveils the apocalyptic god, a god of extinction, the god-is-dead god, an epiphany of nihilism.

Apocalypse is not necessary to war. Let me make this very clear: apocalypse is not part of the myths of Mars. Mars asks for battle, not wipeout, not even victory. (*Nike* belongs to Athena, not Ares.) Patton supposedly said: "I like making things happen. That's my share in Deity." Apocalypse is inherent not in the martial deity, but in the Christian deity. Fascination with a transcendent Christ may be more the threat to the Christian civilization than the war god himself. Are not civilizations saved by their gods also led to destruction by those same, their own, gods?

There is one more distinction, one that may be of the most therapeutic significance. If nuclearism produces "psychic numbing," stupefaction, stupidity, Mars works precisely to the contrary. He intensifies the senses and heightens fellow feeling in action, that energized vivification the Romans called *Mars Nerio* and *Mars Moles*, molar, massive, making things happen. Mobilization. Mars gives answer to the hopelessness and drifting powerlessness we feel in the face of nuclear weapons by awakening fear. Phobos, his Greek companion or son, and rage, *ira*, wrath. Mars is the instigator, the primordial activist. To put the contrast in eschatological terms, Mars is the god of beginnings, the sign of the ram. March is his month, and April, *Mars Apertus*, opening, making things happen. Apocalypse may lift veils, but it closes down into the truly final solution, after which there is no reopening, no *recurso*. Broken the wheel.



To hold the bomb as image in the mind requires an extraordinary extension, and extraordinary daring, in our imagining powers, a revolution of imagination itself, enthroning it as the main, the greatest reality, because the bomb, which imagination shall contain, is the most powerful image of our age. Brighter than a thousand suns, it is our omnipotent god term (as Wolfgang Giegerich has expounded), our mystery that requires constant imaginative propitiation. The translation of bomb into the imagination is a transubstantiation of God to *imago dei*, deliteralizing the ultimate god term from positivism to negative theology, a god that is all images. And, no more than any other god term can it be controlled by reason or taken fully literally without hideous consequences. The task of nuclear

families that the terror is there even if it's not perceived. At least instance, we know from studying what goes on in schizogenetic not feel as cruelty and force—but still they are cruelty and force. For and force were used. Cruelty and force can happen in ways that are course, and I'm not denying that in the 1940s in Germany cruelty what's done to you is "voluntary" or not—that's a big part of it, of "wanted," these operations. Terror doesn't depend only on whether Mandarins culture were horrors, errors in fact, even if the women Mafics in some African societies or the bidding of Chinese feet in the surges and want the operation, it is still a horror. The clitoridectomy with those hysterectomies. Even if the drug prescriptions or toxic dumps and industrial pollutants or with their those camps of the forties as the only kind of terror, then we miss ally, with barbed wire and SS guards. But if we go on imagining those actual horrors that are perpetrated every day—whether with those camps of the forties as the only kind of terror, then we miss you see?

pills of some kind every night. This is *Fabernacht* 45; 1984, . . . don't today: one out of seven people—that means millions—take sleeping pills of some kind every night. They come willingly: it's "Good for you." Or take Germany camp. They come willingly: it's "Good for you." Or take Germany营, terrible—it's not forced on the women as in a concentration and tonsillectomies. It's America's favorite operation. This is terribly and tonsillectomies. Hysterectomies are performed more than appendectomies uterus. United States has no woman over forty you pass in the street in the United States have their wombs removed. Imagine that! Every other United States took out your womb, that would be a war crime, wouldn't it? All right, and now more than half of the women over forty in the doctors took out your womb, that would be a war crime, wouldn't

TERROISM

("Mars," 118-120, 123-125, 128-130, 134-135)

psychotherapy is a ritual-like devotion to the bomb as image, never letting it slip from its pillar of cloud in the heaven of imagination to rain ruin on the cities of the plain.