

## Ecocriticism and the Human Psyche: An Appraisal of Hermann Hesse's *Demian* through Jungian Psychoanalysis

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Human psyche is an intricately woven web that encompasses a wide range of conscious as well as unconscious materials essential for the development of the individual. These materials consist of an amalgamation of diverse psychic constituents which are innate in nature. Carl Gustav Jung developed his concept of the contents of the psyche as made up of both the personal as well as the collective unconscious. According to him, it is in the collective unconscious that the nature resides. He also believed that the unconscious part of psyche is intrinsically creative and that it can be compared to the wilderness with its own native creatures. As Susan Rowland avers:

The notion of creative mystery harboured in the human psyche gives us a route to rethink our relations with nature and literature" (The Ecocritical Psyche 2).

The unconscious being the "natural part" of the human beings, has an indelible relationship with nature. In Jungian terms, nature exists in our psyche, in the forms of archetypes and symbols, and they are mostly manifested through the channel of dreams. Hermann Hesse, the seminal writer, through his novel *Demian*, furnishes ample paradigms to exemplify this concept. The novel is an account of Jungian individuation that incorporates nature as an inevitable force that influences the protagonist's mind through his journey towards self-realization. Archetypes and symbols, the unconscious entities which are parts of nature, are used extensively by Hesse, to drive home the idea that nature is inherent in us and helps us in the development of our psyche.

*Demian*, essentially a bildungsroman, sketches out the story of Emil Sinclair, a boy of ten, who, throughout the stages of his life, undergoes myriad surrealistic experiences to accomplish the realization of his self. In this journey toward self-realization, he is being assisted by various people, Max Demian being the foremost among them. Demian can be regarded as the archetype of nature, that imparts everything essential for the well-being of an individual. When Sinclair gets subjected to the intimidation of Franz Kromer, an older boy, it is Demian who "rescues" him. Demian serves as a saviour, teacher, guide, and mentor to Sinclair. He liberates Sinclair from his confused state of belonging between the two worlds, the world of "light" and the world of "dark" and helps him to view life in an entirely new perspective. His influence on Sinclair is best expressed in the protagonist's words:

I succumbed to his voice and influence as in a dream. All I could do was to nod. It was like a voice which could only emanate from myself. A voice, indeed, that knew everything better and more clearly than myself" (*Demian* 43).

Demian taught Sinclair how to interpret the Bible in an altogether different outlook, and helped him effect a reconciliation between the "godly" and the "satanic". Later on, in Demian's absence, Sinclair found out that his mentor still exerts his influence on him with his unseen presence. Demian helps him like the all encompassing river that imparts wisdom and knowledge without being asked. He prepares Sinclair towards the goal of achieving self-realization, and finally when that gets accomplished, Demian "takes leave" of him with his parting advice:

Listen, young Sinclair, I've got to go. Perhaps you'll need my help against Kromer or something else...If you send a message I shan't come riding crudely on horseback or by railway train next time. You will have to listen to your inner voice and then you will hear me speak within you"(Demian 183).

Another archetype is that of the mother, the woman as an ideal form, that is part of nature. Woman, in her numerous forms, offers heterogeneous assistance, and is capable of doing so, as the quality of nature is inherent in her. Throughout the different stages of his life, Sinclair refers to various females, including his sisters, Beatrice and Frau Eva, as his ideals. His relationship with his sisters and mother, and his musings about Beatrice and Frau Eva, all encompass the essence of the natural world. Asymmetry exists between the protagonist and his natural world. These archetypes that symbolize the essence of nature are the "manifest" forms of the "latent" Nature. The unconscious, the storehouse of archetypes and symbols, gets catalysed by the effect of nature, which propels the mind towards the journey of self-realization. An insight into the unconscious will affirm the universal truth that our inspiration lies within ourselves. Sinclair's advice to young Knauer states this:

You must rely on yourself and then do what comes to you from within. There is no other way. If you can't find the way to yourself you won't find any spirits either, I am sure (*Demian* 129).

Pistorius, the organist is yet another symbol of nature who educates Sinclair in a surrealistic manner. Boundless music flows from his "immortal treasury" and that draws the protagonist toward him to make himself susceptible to the reception of the knowledge of many other things from this Embodiment of Nature. From Pistorius he learns more about the acceptance of what is right and what is wrong. In his presence he is able to learn things all by himself. When Pistorius and Sinclair gaze into the fire intently, forgetting everything worldly, Sinclair is able to accept the fire within himself and he feels and sees images that he longed for. It is this submission to nature's irrational, strangely confused formations that produces a feeling of "inner harmony." Our psyche accommodates the Archetypes, which form part of the "collective unconscious" that is innately natural. Sinclair's observation asserts this: "He brought along a volume of Zoology for me to study and showed me the names and illustrations of these ancient fish. And with a peculiar shudder I felt conscious of a function that existed in me from earlier stages of evolution"(Demian 119). Pistorius further remarks The things we see are the things which are already in us. There is no reality beyond what we have inside us. That is why most people live such unreal lives; they take pictures outside themselves for the real ones and fail to express their own world"(Demian 125).

C.G.Jung interprets the collective unconscious as

This part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. (*Four Archetypes* 2).

The symbol of the sparrow hawk draws our attention at the outset, and throughout till the conclusion of the novel. A bird is part of the environment and hence it symbolizes nature and its association with liberty. The sparrow hawk first appears in the novel when Demian refers to it at his first notice of it in the archway

above the door in Sinclair's house. It forms a connection between Demian and Sinclair. The meaning of the symbol is not fully realized until later, in the novel, when it becomes an inevitable part of Sinclair's dreams. The bird represents a desire to break free, to be independent. Symbolically, since the bird appears on Sinclair's childhood house, it shows that this longing has been with him from the very beginning. Eventually, the bird appears much brighter and illuminated. This signifies that he has reached within himself to trigger off the part of him that longs to be set free. These symbols that stem from their storehouse of the unconscious, get catalysed by the effect of nature to manifest themselves in different forms. *Demian* is thus replete with archetypes and symbols that bring about the paramount truth of the protagonist's self-realization. Hermann Hesse, implements the conceptualization of Jungian process of individuation to affirm the universal truth that asymmetry prevails between the psyche of the individual and the external forces of nature, through his novel *Demian*. C.G.Jung's statement well affirms this :

Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole. (*Memories* 1).

#### **WORKS CITED**

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