

“The Creative Art of Weaving”

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Today is January, 30 – a number resonating with our Triangles work as “the soul is basically an expression of three types of energy—life, love, and intelligence”. We are also in the sign of Aquarius, marking with all its three decanates the beginning of the new year and on a greater scale the beginning of “the new age, the new world, and the new culture”. Despite its other name “Water Carrier or Water Bearer”, Aquarius is one of the three air signs – air standing for the thinking principle or mind. Aquarius is par excellence the paradigm of the World Server and this brings to mind the use of the two hands as a symbol of sharing and offering service in the threefold needy and thirsty world.

The astrological symbol of Aquarius is “two horizontal wavy lines” – “two waves”, sweeping our little planet with “the waters of life”. The scientific art of weaving in “mental matter” (between the two waves) lies in humanity’s agility to recreate the planetary garment/fabric with etheric substance and threads of living light and goodwill.

Weaving is among the most ancient and widespread techniques in the world and one of its distinctive characteristics, in addition to having a practical utility, is that it has represented a means of artistic expression for all civilizations – as in ancient times, fabrics were a way of spreading symbols and images. Fabrics were a type of language, and in time they started identifying the people’s characteristics, their culture and social status.

The origins of weaving have become lost in the night of time, because it is a fragile and easily decomposed form, but it is assumed that it begun as a result of the observation and imitation of nature (i.e., the interlacing of bird nests). Technically weaving is the art of creating fabric through a combination of *warp and weft*. The lengthwise or longitudinal warp yarns are held stationary *in tension* on a frame or loom while the transverse weft is drawn through and inserted over and under the warp.

The oldest textile finds are fragments found in the tombs of ancient Egypt that have been preserved thanks to the dry climate and sand. Similar workmanship can be found in fabrics of very fine linen, discovered in Peru, which are also among the oldest archaeological remains. The importance of the textile tradition in ancient Egypt is also confirmed by the discovery of the representation of a loom on a terracotta plate, dating back to 4400 B.C. and by a horizontal loom on the ground that first appeared around 3000 B.C. Archaeological evidence points to a general diffusion of weaving and spinning that suggests a knowledge of natural and vegetable fibers; the Egyptians were distinguished by their ability to spin and then weave linen, the Indians and the Peruvians created the first cotton fabrics, the Mesopotamians produced wool fabrics, the Chinese were the first to produce silk dating back to the first centuries of the third millennium BC.

The rich production of artifacts is echoed by the symbolic importance of weaving; hence the birth of myths and gods protecting weaving and, more generally, of a creative force that governs the world. In Egypt, Neith was worshiped, as the weaver goddess and symbol of the eternal feminine and nature (a goddess of creation, wisdom, and war); Neith's symbol and part of her hieroglyph resemble a loom... And, as Egyptian and Greek myths were interwoven, her role as a creator was conflated with that of Athena – a Greek deity who wove all of the world and existence into being on her loom “reweaving the world daily”. Athena was a Virgin goddess of creation, wisdom, and war, as well, was the protector of feminine works and crafts. In this context

there is a quite relevant and instructive myth on the competition between the goddess and the mortal Arachne. Arachne was known as highly skilled, qualified -praised by men and gods- for her art of weaving, but she was also arrogant and foolish enough to challenge the goddess. As a result of the challenge she was turned into "the first spider" as stated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The myth might be seen as a reflection of creation and imitation, god and man, master and pupil, and therefore about the nature of art.

It is impossible not to mention Penelope of whom Homer writes in the *Odyssey*. She was said to have weaved during the day and then unraveled her work at night. And she did this for three years while waiting for the return of her husband Ulysses from the Trojan War. It is worth mentioning that her name, Pēnelopē, is considered a combination of the Greek word *pēnē* (πήνη), "weft", and *ōps* (ὥψ), "face", a very appropriate name for a cunning weaver.

Another potent symbol can be found in the three Moirae (the English "Fates") who were the personification of fate or karma. These three were Clotho ("spinner") who spun the thread of life from her distaff onto her spindle. Lachesis ("allotter" or drawer of lots) was the one who measured the thread of life allotted to each person with her measuring rod. Atropos (which meant "inexorable" or "inevitable" or literally "unturning") was the cutter of the thread of life. In short, the youngest one presided over the moment of birth, the second spun out all the events and actions of men's lives, and the eldest of the three cut the thread of human life with a pair of scissors. Their role was to ensure that every being, mortal and divine, lived out their destiny as it was assigned to them by the laws of the universe. [The ancient Greek word *moira* (μοῖρα) means a portion or lot of the whole, and is related to *meros*, "part, lot" and *moros*, "fate, doom".]

The three Fates are mentioned by Hesiod in his *Theogony*; Plato in his *Republic* (617a) calls them "daughters of necessity" who are singing (along with the chorus of Sirens) the past, the present, and the future; and, likewise Aristotle, in his work *On the Universe* (401b16-23), identified each one of the Moirae with what it was, what it is and what it will be. Pindar in his Hymn to the Fates holds them in high honor; he calls them to send their sisters, the Hours Eunomia ("lawfulness"), Dike ("right"), and Eirene ("peace"), to stop the internal civil strife.

A more inclusive perspective of this symbology is given by HPB in her work *the SECRET DOCTRINE* (Vol. 1, p. 639 THE NETWORK OF DESTINY) when she wrote: "When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the net-work of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* destiny. It then either fixes him like the inert shell against the immovable rock, or carries him away like a feather in a whirlwind raised by his own actions, and this is -- KARMA." Also, she points out that "the full and awful significance of the Greek NEMESIS (or Karma) has been entirely forgotten for "Nemesis is without attributes; that while the dreaded goddess is absolute and immutable as a Principle, it is we ourselves -- nations and individuals -- who propel her to action and give the impulse to its direction." Adding finally she wrote that "The triform Fates and ever mindful Furies" are her attributes only on earth, and begotten by ourselves. There is no return from the paths she cycles over; yet those paths are of our own making, for it is we, collectively or individually, who prepare them."

Weaving was of such high esteem in the ancient world that in Plato's *Statesmen* it is referred to "as an instance of *epistēmē* ('science')." He wrote that "If the kingly or political *epistēmē* is like weaving, it depends on the ability, first of all, to distinguish what it will weave together." Platonic thought always gave extraordinary importance to the choice of the images most suitable to guide human argumentation and to display the outcomes of cognition. Plato's weaving paradigm in the *Statesman* became one of the most visited topics of the dialogue; it was enigmatic in many aspects and was particularly interesting on account of its puzzling appraisal of political art

in comparison to the more transcendental approaches suggested by dialogues such as the Republic. The section of the Statesman that makes use of the weaving paradigm is often regarded as a key argument of the dialogue. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/>)

In the Greek myth, the Cretan princess Ariadne is perhaps more famous than the Athenian hero Theseus. She gave him a ball of red thread to unroll as he penetrated the labyrinth so he could follow the thread back to the entrance after slaughtering the half-man, half-bull creature, the Minotaur. Etymologically, her name derives from the ancient Cretan dialectical elements ari and adnós, meaning “most holy”.

Weaving was also inextricably linked with ceremony and ritual – a secret language which magically connected mortals with immortals, heroes, and gods--honoring and veiling the mysteries of life. The virgin goddess Athena is always depicted clad in a peplos (the Greek name for “veil”). The sacred garment, which was woven by a chosen group of girls, called the *arrhephoroi* and the *ergastines*, was the focal point of the ritual that took place on the last day of the Panathenaea festival, as it was transported attached to the mast of a ship-cart in a procession to the Sacred Rock of the Acropolis and was delivered to the xoanon-statue of the goddess. [The magnificent procession that carried the peplos is depicted on the Parthenon Frieze which is presently on display at the British Museum!]. The weaving of the enormous sacred peplos started nine months before the festival and contained images of mythic battles between gods and giants woven into its material (usually made of purple and saffron yellow color); the peplos of the statue was changed each year during a minor festival.

As the time cycles passed and the sacred has been hidden from the mundane the effect of “peplos” is still hovering over humanity today separating “the unreal from the real”. It is written in *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 892 that “Glamour, as we understand it, is only a veil over that which is tangible.” This web, self-woven “in the space of aeons” by the “race of men” hold them “enwrapped in the net-work of [their] own doing” unable to see the path ahead leading in the radiance of the full day.

The symbol of the Spider – the transformed Arachne of the ancient myth – remains alive and instructive in connection with humanity the creative, third, planetary center and related with the third Ray of Intelligent Adaptability (potent in the sign of Aquarius). By studying the spider and how amazing it is in weaving its subtle and beautifully structured web without becoming entangled in it, we can learn the lesson to “stand still” in the center – by being rather than by doing. And, “as a spider spins a thread along which it can travel” (*The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 465) so must a man in due time “spin and anchor the thread” “out of the substance of his own life” to construct the “rainbow bridge”, the Lighted Way.