

Apollo and Artemis: A Reflection on the Archetypal Consciousness in Space Travel

By Jason D. Batt

Abstract

This article explores the influence of archetypal and mythological forms on efforts to explore space, with a focus on the gods Apollo, Artemis, and Hestia. The Apollo program, which landed men on the moon in the 1960s, was reflective of the Apollonian ideal of achievement and audacious pursuit of lofty goals. In contrast, the Artemis program, which aims to land humans on the moon to stay, is inspired by the goddess Artemis, who represents not only achievement, but also protection and the joy of the hunt. The author argues that the consideration of Hestia, the goddess of the hearth fire, is essential in space exploration, as it grounds us and reminds us of our shared humanity and origins. The article concludes by suggesting that Hestia may be calling us home to the cosmic hearth, and that Apollo and Artemis are guides to this journey.

Keywords: Space exploration, Greek mythology, Apollo program, Artemis program, Hestia, archetypal psychology, achievements, home, humanity, cosmology.

The 1960s were marked by an extraordinary feat: the landing of humans on the Moon. Under the umbrella of the Apollo program, the United States sent men who are now viewed as near demigods to the lunar surface. Their names would settle in our collective consciousness: Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins. That first landing, Apollo 11, would become a hallmark of American exceptionalism and be cited as proof of America's burgeoning innovation and ingenuity. In the last few years, NASA has stridden towards landing again on the Moon this time, to stay. The new initiative is called Artemis, in honor of the twin sister of Apollo. The very structure of the two programs, Apollo and Artemis, intentionally or unintentionally, reflects the nature of the deities after whom they were named. The years under Apollo were carried with an Apollonian ideal of achievement. Artemis, as a hunter, shifts the intent to not simply achievement, but also protection and the joy of the hunt. Through the lens of psychologist James Hillman's perspective on archetypal psychology, I intend to explore the influence and understanding of these respective gods on the efforts to explore space—along with a consideration of another deity that has been neglected and needs acknowledgment—namely Hestia.

James Hillman's use of mythology to explore humanity's archetypal psychology is not intended to be conclusive, but instead to open possibilities for exploration in imagination: "Myths do not tell us how. They simply give the invisible background which starts us

imagining, questioning, going deeper.”¹ The mythology of Artemis and Apollo, and later Hestia, will not provide us a blueprint for reaching the destinations of the Moon and Mars, but they will help us to begin to understand what we are doing in these labors, providing potential considerations for the enormity of the efforts and the risks that the archetypes in discussion—as patterns of our consciousness and lenses of our perception—bring to the missions. This is a mining of the imagination of both space exploration and the deities under which the exploration takes place, recognizing that Hillman’s psychology of soul is “*poetic basis of mind* ... [and] the process of imagination.”²

First, we turn to Apollo, both the deity and the initial mission to the Moon. Psychologist Ginette Paris reminds us that Apollo was quite apt nomenclature for the Moon launch mission: “To leave the Earth, leave the Mother, and approach the Sun is the Apollonian ideal, Apollo never being high enough or far enough. Whoever is inhabited by Apollo’s spirit always wants to go ‘higher, and forward.’”³ Apollo, in reflection, was channeled in both the history of the program and the personas of the two men who actually stepped foot on the lunar surface—personalities who are linked to daring and achievement. Returning to the earliest days of space exploration, the United States was galvanized in the shadow of the Cold War by the aim to reach the Moon. In an often-replayed recording, President John F. Kennedy coalesced the country upon the audacious mission of landing a man on the Moon:

I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade [the 1960s] is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.... But in a very real sense, it will not be one man going to the Moon—if we make this judgment affirmatively, it will be an entire nation. For all of us must work to put him there.⁴

That moment of Kennedy’s speech is a collective moment of imagination—a collective soul-making—a national “poetic basis of mind” possessed by the Apollonian spirit.

Apollo is an appropriate god to reign over this remarkable endeavor. Historian Marcel Detienne comments that “Among philosophers, Apollo’s reputation is settled. A sizeable consensus recognizes him to be the god of moral superiority. The loftiness of his spirit, his sense of measure, his pedagogical science based on self-knowledge are vaunted and

¹ James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992).

² Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, xvii.

³ Ginette Paris, *Pagan Meditations: The Worlds of Aphrodite, Artemis, and Hestia* (Washington, DC: Spring, 1986), 196.

⁴ John F. Kennedy, “May 25, 1961: JFK’s Moon Shot Speech to Congress,” Space.com, May 25, 2011, www.space.com/11772-president-kennedy-historic-speech-Moon-space.htm.

eulogized.... He brings knowledge and the desire for knowledge."⁵ Apollo's rise drags all his domains with him—he elevates prophecy and dreams and science—each being pushed ever further upward. Apollo is a god of ascension and the audacious pursuit of lofty goals. Of all the gods to touch the Moon, it would be Apollo.

Apollo was fitting, but we risk forgetting his other aspects. As with all the gods, there is more than a singular aspect to Apollo. Apollo propels us to achieve along lines of reason, but he is not always rational. In fact, Apollo can be possessed with an irrationality that seems more Dionysian than Apollonian. Hillman reminds us that not only was Apollo all that Detienne describes, but also that he was "very very male, violent and failed with female figures, and [was] a killer of serpents and dragons."⁶ Consider that Apollo is cursed to pursue Daphne—an endless chase of immortality. Apollo is a predator, made with passion.

Apollo, like all gods, has two aspects (or more): he achieves the lofty but also requires sacrifice. The temple of Apollo requires seared flesh—a horrific synchronicity materialized when Apollo 1 (the first of the Apollo attempts) ended in a gruesome fire killing the entire crew. Eight more launches of various heights and crew configurations were done before the historic reach of Apollo 11 that resulted in landing physically on the Moon.⁷ The very temple of Apollo even has a violent, fiery aesthetic that manifests his dualistic nature:

The sanctuary has two rooms, and over it reigns a two-headed Apollo. The first head is called Lakeutes; he presides over the fiery feast of sizzling meat and flaming flesh: a sonorous Apollo, whose music is the hissing of flames, the wheezing of deflated entrails, and the more subdued crackling of naked bones. As for the second epithet of the deity at Pyla, Mageiros, it designates Apollo as the god of butchers.⁸

We should not be surprised that the first Apollo attempt was met with fiery disaster—fire and sizzling flesh are the mark of the Lakeutes head of Apollo. The achievement of the lofty ambition could not happen until the sacrifice had occurred. I am not saying that those who chose the name somehow conjured death for the first crew. Instead, Apollo finds its full nature there: somehow, we recognize, at the archetypal level, that to achieve audacious goals requires sacrifice, that somehow, to achieve something with an intensity like the Moon launch would undoubtedly find its fiery passion mirrored on the other end—the beginning.

Does this archetypal perception also manifest with the modern Moon effort branded around Artemis? NASA has positioned the Artemis effort in contrast to Apollo: "Our charge is to go quickly and stay.... To press our collective efforts forward with a fervor that will see us return to the Moon in a manner that is wholly different than 50 years ago....

⁵ Marcel Detienne and Anne Doueïhi, "Apollo's Slaughterhouse," *Diacritics* 16, no. 2 (1986): 46, doi.org/10.2307/465070.

⁶ James Hillman, *Mythic Figures*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: Spring, 2007), 319.

⁷ After the Apollo 1 fire, the program resumed with Apollo 4.

⁸ Detienne and Doueïhi, "Apollo's Slaughterhouse," 47.

We're going to the Moon.... To stay.... By 2024."⁹ NASA has portrayed the efforts to reach the Moon within the framework of Artemis. NASA's own communications tell the story of the last half century of lunar exploration through the invocation and incarnation of the Greek deities. Apollo went first. Artemis comes seconds but takes us further. "While Apollo placed the first steps on the Moon, Artemis opens the door for humanity to sustainably work and live on another world for the first time. Using the lunar surface as a proving ground for living on Mars, this next chapter in exploration will forever establish our presence in the stars."¹⁰ That there are technological advancements and people's lives latched to these missions does not enter the dialogue at this point. Conversation with the masses invokes the gods, sets this drama amongst the pantheon, and raises the mission to a religious dimension. From the start, we cannot envision these audacious tasks as simply the works of humans. Perhaps that is why we were successful—the tone from the beginning, and carried through to today, acknowledged that we were treading into the playfield of the gods and that only the gods could traverse the fierce landscape before us. This mythological tone was not and is not conscious—again, we are dealing with the archetypal here, the aspects of the collective unconscious.

NASA recognizes that the switching of focuses from Apollo to Artemis requires a different sense and way of going to the Moon. Primarily, NASA views this as an opportunity to correct for the overt racism and sexism that was displayed in the early and middle years of space exploration: "NASA will land the first person of color in addition to the first woman on the Moon with the Artemis program."¹¹

The first difference cited by NASA is that the Artemis missions are prioritizing the inclusion of women. Within the organization, this is viewed as a priority. Artemis's social-media creator Chad Siwik discusses this at length: "It's a pretty radical shift to talking about female energy. They're putting the first woman of color to walk on the surface of the Moon. To me, this is a huge recognition and shift of energies and focus, which has been needed for a long time, but we haven't been to the Moon. This is night and day."¹² This seems to evoke an archetypal "Aha!" moment. From an archetypal perspective, to go with Artemis is to go differently than Apollo. The Moon has often been correlated with the feminine. This correlation emerges in the goals of the Artemis Moon mission: to have the first woman to land on the Moon and to establish our permanent abode there—a stark difference from the simpler "let's just get there" arrival of Apollo. Apollo targeted and achieved. Artemis is to stay. Paris reminds us that "Artemis ... comes to sanctify solitude, natural and primitive living to which we may all return whenever we find it

⁹ NASA, "We Are Going," YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=vl6jn-DdafMxt=73s.

¹⁰ NASA. "How We Are Going to the Moon—4K." YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8cn2J13-4.

¹¹ Acting NASA Administrator Steve Jurczyk, quoted in Chelsea Gohd, "NASA to Land 1st Person of Color on the Moon with Artemis Program," Space.com, April 9, 2021, www.space.com/nasa-sending-first-person-of-color-to-moon-artemis.

¹² Chad Siwik, Interview with Jason D. Batt, July 13, 2021.

necessary to belong only to ourselves. An Amazon and infallible archer, Artemis guarantees our resistance to a domestication that would be too complete.”¹³ Artemis, referenced as the Virgin, defines the idea of “virgin” space: “What we call today a ‘virgin’ forest was in former times called a forest ‘of the Virgin.’ By both of these expressions is designated a nature (as a woman) that has not known man. It appeared most important to the ancients that men learn to venerate a nature that is not there for their profit, but solely for their devotion.”¹⁴ Artemis will resist efforts to profiteer off herself—she is not to be abused that way. “The myths associated with Artemis suggest that one may hear her or sense her presence, but that it is dangerous to violate her, even with the eyes. It is to Artemis that the virgin forest belongs, or the wild prairie.”¹⁵ Apollo saw the Moon as a destination to be achieved—but there was no respect of the nature of the place. Artemis, as a mission, approaches the lunar surface as feminine to feminine—there is a desire not to conquer or just to achieve, but to abide.

Paris insists that Artemis must be honored through refusing to possess her: “The male who wishes to honor Artemis must understand that he may neither see nor possess her: there is a core in the mysteries of untouched nature and of femininity that must remain virgin.”¹⁶ This reality creates dissonance with the intent of the Artemis mission. That mission aims to inhabit the Moon—and it is a mission spearheaded by a capitalist nation that sees all physical matter as property. Is it possible for us to land on the Moon and maintain the spirit of Artemis by refusing to possess her? Our history would argue this is impossible. So, are we risking failure by approaching the Moon under the aegis of Artemis while simultaneously ignoring a significant aspect of who she is?

As Apollo’s nature was ignored to our own harm (the death of three astronauts), we cannot risk ignoring all that Artemis is. This exploration is not meant to be premonitory—the actual expression of Artemis upon the now-being-written history of the Moon will not be something we can predict. Yet, we should still walk in acknowledgment of all she is and could choose to manifest as. But there is also a warning that seems to mirror that of her brother Apollo: “The goddess who slays the beasts, whose patron she is, has a liking for bloody holocausts. It is not only animal sacrifice that is attributed to Artemis. In the most distant time of Greek religious history, she was associated with the practice of human sacrifice.”¹⁷ Paris also reminds us that the requirements of sacrifice for Artemis may not need to be so literal—instead, ascetism itself can be seen as Artemisian sacrifice.¹⁸ Artemis, along with many other gods, demands sacrifice—however, her traditions allow the sacrifice of more than just flesh. So, what sacrifice do we bring Artemis

¹³ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 124.

¹⁴ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 128.

¹⁵ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 129.

¹⁶ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 130.

¹⁷ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 135.

¹⁸ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 143.

as we unconsciously ask her to bless our journeys? A possibility is to reconsider our approach to the exploration of the Moon. Commercializing the lunar landscape is at odds with the aegis of Artemis. Instead, we could aim to explore the moon for all of humanity and avoid profiteering from it. A more radical approach to align with the spirit of Artemis would be forever to recognize the Moon as the virginal wild and to not touch it at all—to affirm that it does not belong to us. That however seems unlikely.

Whole papers can be written on the archetypal psychology expressing itself in these two gods. What is missing in all this talk is reflection upon what we are leaving behind: Earth. It is not just that we go with Apollo (or *as*) or with Artemis (or *as*). Have we in mind the home we leave? To understand the full complexity of our archetypal exploration in space, we must bring Hestia to the conversation. Or rather, acknowledge that Hestia is present in all of this.

Placed as the center of the home, Hestia is not a goddess of movement. She is fixed and stable against the discordant and unexpected activities of the Olympians. Hestia, as ever, is notoriously overlooked. Sometimes considered a minor god, she yet had a place in the pantheon as was afforded great honor by Zeus. Paris reminds us, “no divinity, even the humbled Hestia, permits such neglect without avenging herself for her ill treatment.”¹⁹ Hestia is not only in the home, but also in our global home: the Earth. Hestia’s name signified not just the fire of the home, but also the fire at the heart of the Earth.²⁰ “[Hestia’s] role is so central that we understand immediately how her power is exercised and the function she performs in the home. Hestia is the center of the Earth, the center of the home, and our own personal center. She does not leave her place; we must go to her.”²¹

Plato records Socrates as asking, “Shall we begin, then, with Hestia, according to custom?” To which Hermogenes replies, “Yes, that will be very proper.”²² So, as is custom and as is proper, let us explore what beginning with Hestia means at the archetypal level and how that affects space travel. “The dimension of soul is depth (not breath or height) and the dimension of our soul travel is downward.”²³ So, as we move further out, we must ask ourselves if we are leaving our soul behind? Does the risk of space travel mean an abandonment of soul travel? In my own novel on space travel, *Onliest*, I poetically explored this:

Between the stars, there are no seasons. Shadows of dead worlds drift in the void, but there is no laughter. Perhaps small nebulae, lit with their own faint fires, float without aim, but there are no voices. In the vast gulf, a gap far

¹⁹ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 196.

²⁰ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 192.

²¹ Paris, *Pagan Meditations*, 185.

²² Plato, *Cratylus* (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1871), 438.

²³ Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, xvii.

larger than the human mind can comprehend, perhaps wonders wait to be discovered. But not life. Life does not spread through the cosmic distances. It roots itself on the microscopic worlds that hug the warm stars. Life is a coward. It never ventures far from the blanket of the solar winds, and the dusting of magnetism that sparks the skies above its head. Between the stars, there is only loneliness. And in time, madness. This is a fact as constant as the tick of hydrogen spinning in its singular electron shell. Unalterable. Between the stars is death and only fools aim to cross it... A thousand Earths—a million million Earths could careen through this frozen vacuum without touching. In a gulf so immense, madness was nature.²⁴

What we possibly risk, from an archetypal perspective, is the loss of our soul and out of that loss, potentially madness in the reduction of our humanity. This compels us to consider how to delve into our own souls as we physically go out. So how do we go “in” as we go out?

Perhaps, what is needed is the attitude of seasonal rotation—moving through reflection of Apollo, Artemis, and Hestia, in constant turning of possession and honoring of those deities in our efforts to explore space. Apollo alone is dangerous, and as history has shown us, ultimately unsustainable. We must also go with Artemis all the while reflecting upon and sacrificing to Hestia, so we do not forget the goddess who does not go with us.

These are not disconnected archetypes. Hestia also tends the house of Apollo—the “farshooter” (from the Hymn to Hestia). Yet, we can also thank Apollo for reminding us of Hestia. Those photos taken from the Moon show us the great blue dot.

The Earth is so small and so fragile and such a precious little spot in that universe that you can block it out with your thumb, and you realize on that small spot, that little blue and white thing, is everything that means anything to you—all of history and music and poetry and art and death and birth and love, tears, joy, games, all of it on that little spot out there that you can cover with your thumb.²⁵

All our history, all our experience, was in that single photo. It was the center—the hearth. Hestia. “She is always seated on circular elements, just as the places where she is worshiped are circular.”²⁶ Hestia’s home is that of the globe—the very place we abide and the design of the places we seek to travel to.

²⁴ J. Daniel Batt, *Onliest* (Charlotte, NC: Falstaff Books, 2019), 1–2.

²⁵ Rusty Schweickart, quoted in Frank White, *The Overview Effect* (Multiverse Publishing, 2021), 50.

²⁶ Hillman, *Mythic Figures*, 232.

So, we go, and we return. "She does not leave her place; we must go to her."²⁷ Perhaps it is keeping Hestia in focus that allows us to "go in" while we "go out." Astronaut Buzz Aldrin remembered his meditation on his home planet (in a manner, a meditation on Hestia although he did not recognize Hestia in the moment): "100,000 miles out, to look out four windows and find nothing but black infinity, to finally locate the blue and white golf ball in the fifth window, to know how fortunate we are to return to it."²⁸ The pull of Hestia perhaps even extends beyond the globe to our time on the Moon and Mars. I penned this also in the introduction to my novel *Onliest*:

Don't make the mistake of comparing the space between stars to the simple exercise of circling the globe or navigating to the Moon or Mars. On the red soil, on the peak of Olympus Mons, the warmth of Sol can still be felt on your skin. The tug of gravity was still there, although, in such a minuscule degree it goes unnoticed. The dunes of Mars gaze upon the oceans of Earth. It was a risky trip but still within the neighborhood. Help was just a call away.²⁹

Hestia's powerful pull can keep us grounded and remind us of our humanity. By focusing on Hestia as our aegis in exploration, we remind ourselves of our beginnings, of our home, and of our shared humanity—the further we explore in space, the more likely we are to forget our home. Moving under the direction of Hestia reminds us of our shared collectedness.

Let us move to the next step beyond the Moon: Mars. Mars is being considered as a second world for humanity. Is the final destination of Mars a potential second hearth fire? The intent is to go to stay. This is not simply reaching for the stars without consideration of habitation. For every house and every polis, there was a hearth fire that was Hestia. Are we recognizing Mars as a second home? Artemis could be viewed as taking that hearth fire and lighting a new hearth. As Hestia is the same Hestia house to house, could she be the same Hestia planet to planet? Yes—but as with all things of the god, she asks us to be cognizant of her and to acknowledge her in our efforts.

A further consideration of Hestia flips the conversation on its head. Reflect on the aspect of Hestia that is the hearth fire. When we look at ourselves as biological creatures made of physical matter, we discover that so much of us is formed of elements brought into existence through the intense energy of supernovas. We came from the great fires of the sky themselves. So, when we look up, and we feel the pull outwards, should we be surprised to discover that it has been Hestia all along, at the center of the fires of our original creation, calling us home?

²⁷ Hillman, *Mythic Figures*, 233.

²⁸ Buzz Aldrin, quoted in White, *The Overview Effect*, 50.

²⁹ Batt, *Onliest*, 3.

We are made of star stuff—the furnace of our atoms is out there—drifting as Nebulas. Our true cosmic hearth is the equivalent of ash. Either it is to be reignited (possible) or we simply see the universe as the collection of hearths. Are we propelled out there because we seek our origins? Our return to the warmth of creation? We know that which we are formed of was flung violently from the death of a star and drifted for eons before collecting upon this planetary spaceship named Earth—we are all refugees away from our home. Is Hestia calling us home? Are Apollo and Artemis guides to the cosmic Hestia? All three should be kept within our mind simultaneously: “Still, the gods never appear alone, either mythically or psychologically—even the reclusive Hestia is linked to others—and all of her connections, except for the one with Hermes, are shown in this hymn.”³⁰ We travel with Apollo and Artemis, but we reflect and sacrifice to Hestia.

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³⁰ Janis Jennings, “Hestia, Goddess of the Hearth: Fire at the Center,” PhD diss., Pacifica Graduate Institute, 34, www.proquest.com/docview/305229030/abstract.