



The Goddess Mother of Money

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the feminine face of money©

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Money talks and she has something to say. Wisdom is rooted in her very name. In everything she is abundant, richly bountiful, profusely fertile and generative. Money, in its origins, embodies the divine feminine who desires remembrance.

This Thing We Call Money

If we peel back thousands of years of cultural conditioning and assumptions to take a fresh look at money, we can begin with some very basic observations. Money is not a product of nature. Money doesn't grow on trees. Pennies don't rain from heaven. Money is an invention, a distinctly human invention. It is a total fabrication of our genius. We made it up and we manufacture it. It is an inanimate object that has appeared in many different forms in its more than 2,500-to-3,500-year history, whether we're talking about shells or stones or ingots of precious metals, a paper bill or a blip on a computer screen. (Twist & Barker, 2003), p. 8)

This thing we call "money" is plainly a human invention. The local living economies or the national and global economies in which money circulates are a social construction. Further, money takes innumerable forms as is typical of human inventions.

For example, where I live in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States, the mediums of exchange (the measure and store of wealth too) has included: shells, fish teeth, whale bone, sea otter pelts, dried salmon, eagle feathers, cedar bark baskets, produce from strawberry fields or apple orchards, and millions of board feet of timber (fir, cedar, hemlock, sequoia). In colonial America, tobacco was a complementary currency. In Mesoamerica, cacao was a viable and valued currency (and from which we get chocolate, which some today still consider as valuable as any currency).

Today, money and its many forms exchanged as currency is ubiquitous, flowing from our economic ecosystems through our hands, our bank accounts, our lives, and into the world around us. Like the invention of languages, money is given value and exchanged between us because we give it form and consensually assign value to this social construction.



We use our minds to fabricate money, vivify it with our imaginations, and circulate it in embodied (or disembodied) ways.

Interestingly, money doesn't even have to be in our immediate possession and concretely visible to have value and be declared an asset, a cache of wealth, or our property. Once declared as "my money" or "our money", this invention of our own making then becomes a signifier of our socio-economic class identity as individuals, as nations, or collectively as in the developing world (alternatively described as the Third World or "two thirds world"). By global, national and community agreement, we humans give life to money which is actually a material world object that is neutral or silent about what we desire in relationship with our money.

From a psychological point of view, the old adage "time is money" needs to be reversed. Money is time; money brings fantasies out of the depth and locates them in human time; money provides the means through which imagination takes root in the world. Psychologically, the quantity of money does not enrich the circulation of fantasy in the world. Often, having ready assets do not fulfill our fantasies at all. When money passes into things too quickly there is no fantasy invested in them – no image to care for, no way of coming to recognize our soul through the things of the world (and) ...it is precisely that path that loses the most important element of money's imagination—that it acts as gift from the ancestors. (Sardello & Severson, 1983, p. 5)

What if we take a step back from the everyday talk about money, the never-ending exchange of money, and even the pursuit of money to consider how this human invention has come to be imbued with symbolic value and power? What if we were to host a conversation about money's sacred origins and roots in this material world? What significance lies in the name we give this thing we call money? What meaningfulness is embodied in money, living and breathing meaning that may be unobserved or veiled from our everyday perspectives or perceptions?



Musings on Moneta

What are the origins of the word money? If we search in this direction, we meet a goddess. She lives in the world of archetypes, the larger patterns that shape us and await our discovery.... The word "money" derives from the Roman goddess named Moneta. Coins minted in her temples were issued to the far reaches of the empire. In fact, the Latin word moneta (meaning mint or coins) evolved into the Old English word mynet (meaning coins or money), which became the English word "mint." (Crawford, 1996, p. 14)

So we find a goddess at the root and origins of this thing we call money simply via exploring the word's etymology, tending what resides in the forgotten but still-living and alive depths our words used to name things. Not surprisingly, further etymological exploration reveals the feminine in this thing we call money. "The modern English word 'money' is from the Middle English monioie which comes from the Old French feminine noun monie. This in turn was a development from the Latin word moneta – also a feminine noun." Imagine then this etymological researcher looking up from his dictionaries to make this provocative statement: "Although this is not the place to carry on about the significance of word gender, it is striking that the word for money, so often considered a masculine province, is itself feminine." (Lockhart, 1980, pp. 19 - 20)

This scholar then returns to his dictionaries and tells us that the "word moneta is from an older word, moneo meaning 'to remind,' 'to put in mind,' 'to recollect,' 'to admonish,' 'to advise,' 'to warn,' 'to instruct,' 'to teach.' And then these words which expand slightly our knowing of the divine feminine presence embodied in the origins of this thing we call money:

There is more. We find next that Moneta was an epithet, a name, for Juno, Queen Mother of Heaven. It was, in fact, in Juno's temple where money was minted... As a tribute to Juno's wise council, the mint was set up in her temple which housed as well the Roman treasury. All of this puts money matters, we might say as well the matter of money (i.e. gold and silver and other metals), in the realm of mother... We see it here in the dramatic image of matter being minted into money in the temple of the mother... In her role as Juno Moneta, Juno was a great advisor and seer. She could see the future. (Lockhart, 1980, p. 19 - 20)



To know Moneta more fully, we must return in time to when the first coins were minted by the Romans and Greeks in the Mediterranean—a currency system that is the basis of the currency system we use still to this day. We must also introduce ourselves to deity Juno, the mother goddess of Rome (Hera was the name the Greeks gave her). She was the wife of Rome's god Jupiter (Zeus) – a fertility goddess who was worshipped under many names in consideration of her diverse roles with a myriad of associated functions.

Juno is a fertility goddess whose origins are with the Mother Goddesses who imbue fertility and make harvest abundant. June, the month named for Juno, is a favored month in which to marry. In her role as the preeminent goddess, Juno is the protector of the city of Rome, her favorite city and the capital of the empire. In a more personal role, Juno is the protectress of women and so presides over marriage (as Juno Jugalis), childbirth (as Juno Lucina), and motherhood (Juno Matronalia). Ancient gods and goddesses often have more than a single name. Each name revealed an aspect of their nature. Like Juno, a goddess might preside over marriage, childbirth, and motherhood, and possess a different name for each. Moneta is the name of Juno in her role as the mother of money. She is Juno Moneta from whom money plentifully issues forth. (Crawford, 1996, pp. 14-15)

So each name attributed to a deity then designated an aspect of a goddess' many-faceted nature and companion roles. In the case of Juno, she was both a fertility goddess proffering abundance and a sky-goddess who hurled thunderbolts to protect her people. As Juno Moneta, she was the Roman Goddess of Wise Counsel, whose name means “to warn” and “to advise”.

Juno Moneta comes by this name via a number of stories to describe the goddess' multi-faceted nature. One story speaks of Juno's sacred geese who warned the Romans of an impending attack against the city by the Gauls in 390 BCE. Another story references an earthquake which shakes Juno's temple and from which emanates a voice advising the people to make a sacrifice of a pregnant sow to placate the Earth Mother sourcing the quake. (Perhaps there is an association here between the sow strongly associated with fertility and piggybanks which symbolize a storehouse of coin wealth and, frequently, hold the abundance of our savings as children?) Yet another story speaks to a contingency of the



Roman army losing a long-running battle with a Greek army contingency and nearly out of money to pay for the costs of this war. The people felt demoralized and there was dissension and loss of spirit as well as lives. They prayed to their protectress Juno who advised that, if their cause was just and so long as they fought in a just manner, then money would be forthcoming. The people rallied around this image, believing in this advising, and the money soon flowed from Rome to fund the end of the war.

In all these stories, when the earthquake had passed or when the war was over, it is noted that the people gave Juno the name Moneta in gratitude. Also the people built a temple to Juno Moneta to signify their gratefulness. The earth-based, geographical location of this temple may lead us to the true origins of Moneta's name. Her temple was located near the top of the fortified hill or mountain (mons in Latin) called the Arx (meaning "citadel") on Rome's Capitoline, and this is one illustration of how we today imagine Moneta's temple to be situated.



Temple of Juno Moneta on the top of the Arx

So Juno Moneta is a goddess of fertility and protection and also a goddess of high places. Juno Moneta as the goddess of the Arx would accord well with her aspect as one who warms and keeps watch on approaching trouble given her commanding view.



Her name also accords well with her function as advisor for, from such a vantage point, one is visionary and far-seeing. This is a necessary capacity for advising one's self and offering advising to others.

In addition, in referencing Juno's aspect as a sky-goddess whose hurled lightning bolts were symbolized in the use of spears, Juno Moneta was believed to particularly protective of money and monetary matters through her association with the mint and her temple which housed the city's wealth. Protecting the people's money is an important aspect of protecting the well-being of the people. So when the first Roman Senatorial mint was constructed inside the temple of Juno Moneta in 270 – 290 BC, it was at that time that Juno Moneta became the guardian of wealth and money and the protector of commercial trading. The bronze and silver coins manufactured her temple were nicknamed "moneta" which over the centuries evolved into the English word "money". This turn of events seems to suggest that money's imaginal (spirit) energy seeks collaboration with the human imagination. This is manifested in coins then and now bearing Moneta's name and image. Some coins show her holding scales and cornucopia, calling to mind the ideas of measurement (scales) and abundance (cornucopia).





Some United States dollars also bear Moneta's image – here is a \$50 bill printed by the Confederate states during the Civil War era and a \$100 bill printed by the state of Georgia:



If one agrees that money is a distinctly human invention and a fabrication of our genius, then one cannot help but notice when exploring money's origins how this thing called we call money (and the matter of money) embodies the divine feminine. So when we hear that “the love of money is the root of all evil” or listen to complaints about contemporary people's worship of money, perhaps we can take a step back and consider if these judgments are coming from a perspective that is missing a fundamental insight about money, which is that perhaps many people worship money and imbue it with symbolic value and power because money in its origins was divine. Sardello speculates that money still possesses its divine aspect:

Money is no thing. It is action, to be considered as verb and adverb rather than noun. It is more like the act of imagination's will – divine... and human.... Money, I think, is the ever-present interaction of these two acts of willing, the joining of two acts in a medium of exchange... The craft of “moneying” the world consists then of a flexible erotic transaction freeing the imagination to circulate in the material world while materializing imagination into the boundaries of visible forms. (Sardello & Severson, 1983, p. 19)

James Hillman has said too that money ““possibilitizes the imagination” and that “money in the hand awakens imaginal possibilities: to do this, go there, have those...” (Hillman, 2006, p. 360 - 362); but most importantly, money has an additional function: to keep soul from totally splitting off from reality and flying off into a fantasy world.



Hillman is “on the money” when he points out how money both assumes a role and takes on forms that makes imagination possible in the world while ceaselessly involving us in household matters and the domain of the household:

Money holds soul in the vale of the world, the poetry of the concrete, in touch with the sea as facts, those hard and slippery facts, so perduring, annoying, and limiting, and ceaselessly involving one in economic necessity. For economy means originally “householding,” making soul in the value of the world, charging and being overcharged, crimping and splurging, exchanging, bargaining, evaluating, paying off, going in debt, speculating. (Hillman, 2006, p. 365)

Human beings have seemingly partnered well with money, which can be worked with spiritually or materially but which is itself is neither. Perhaps we succeed at this partnership because we humans are two-natured beings:

Humans are two-natured beings in whom materialism and spirituality co-exist. The struggle between these two natures is represented in the works of all great spiritual leaders. All have taught that spirituality must be based on living normally in the material world. Buddhists, Christians, and Jews, among others developed norms to regulate economic activity so that each individual would strive to satisfy not only his or her own needs but also those of the community. This is the idea in the Middle Way of Buddhism, the concept of “love thy neighbor” in Christianity, and the mitzvah in Judaism.” (Madanes, 1998, p. 6)

Giving Moneta What Moneta is Due

So let’s give Moneta what Moneta is due and remember how money has been endowed with spiritual qualities, starting with its goddess origins. The first banks were associated with the Mother Goddesses who were associated with ritual and worship in temple memorials. The first persons to make, issue, and store money were priests or emperor-priests. The marketplaces of the ancient world were located in or near the temples and designated as sacred sites.

As the goddess mother of money, Juno Moneta is the archetypal fertility goddess following in the model of goddess deities of abundance and plenty, generativity and creativity, seed planting and harvesting. The following word image pays homage to this archetypal divine feminine contained in money’s origins:



Let us imagine Juno Moneta standing before us as a radiant, tall, and full-figured woman. She is mature, not longer a girl and not yet old. Her face is powerful and serene. She wears a flowing gown not from modesty but to protect us from being blinded by her overpowering radiance. On her head she carries a basket filled to overflowing with wheat, corn, and all the foods which nourish humanity. She holds an infant in each arm, a girl and a boy, and has lowered the top of her gown to let them suckle at her full breast. Wild and domesticated animals rub against her flanks to gain her gift of fertility. At her feet are measureless piles of gold and silver coins that flow from her like water from an unending spring. In everything she is abundant, cornucopia, rich beyond measure or imagining. (Crawford, 1996, p. 15)

Today, the goddess named Juno Moneta is seemingly desiring and calling for our remembrance. She is seeded and rooted in the thing we call money and, in turn, calls us individually and collectively as a society into a relationship with money that is fertile, constructive, and productive. Moneta also gives us fair warning that being in said relationship with money will be challenging given how we human are prone to imbue our mediums of exchange with symbolic value and power. We are best advised to consider power as the ability to affect change for good or ill and then employ that ability to affect change for good with our money and the economies we construct locally, nationally, and globally.

So dwelling within the word “money” are images of remembering, advising, warning, and the sense of teaching and instructing through remembering the past... Forgetting about money, not learning about money, not heeding the warnings of money, is forgetting about Juno. (Lockhart, 1980, p. 20)

Like a woman we might meet in our sleeping life dreams, Moneta advises us to see, hear and remember her when we awaken and evolve our relationship with money. Moneta invites us to consider that our lives are seedbeds of promise and to align our values with our checkbooks, and our finances with deepest desires and future dream. She reminds us that a deeper significance resides in money's origins, in both name and form, and invites us to tend this with our imaginations instead of simply literalizing the pursuit and accumulation of money. We have the opportunity to explore money as symbolic of a fertile, generative, and fruitful life force that perhaps can meaningfully connect us more deeply with our own soulful selves, with our families, our local living economies, and our



communities worldwide. Moneta invites us to consciously transform how we feel about and interact with money for both personal gain and the greater, common good. This is living abundantly.



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