

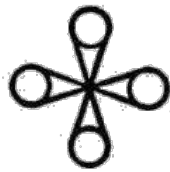
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Art and  
the Creative Unconscious  
**Erich Neumann**

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BOLLINGEN SERIES LXI



ERICH NEUMANN

*Art and the Creative  
Unconscious*

FOUR ESSAYS

*Translated from the German by*  
Ralph Manheim



BOLLINGEN SERIES LXI

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

The present volume is a translation of *Kunst und schöpferisches Unbewusstes*, which was published in 1954 by Rascher Verlag, Zurich, as the third of a series of volumes of collected essays by Erich Neumann under the common title "Umkreisung der Mitte." To the three original essays a fourth has been added.

The first essay, on Leonardo da Vinci, has been considerably revised for this edition. The second, "Art and Time," was previously published in *Eranos-Jahrbuch 1951* (Zurich); in the present translation it appeared in *Man and Time* (Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, 3; New York [Bollingen Series XXX], 1957, and London, 1958). The fourth, "Creative Man and Transformation," was previously published only in *Eranos-Jahrbuch 1954*.

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ART AND THE CREATIVE  
UNCONSCIOUS

# I

## LEONARDO DA VINCI AND THE MOTHER ARCHETYPE

In any attempt to come closer to the personality of Leonardo da Vinci, it will be well to bear in mind the words of Jakob Burckhardt: "The colossal outlines of Leonardo's nature can never be more than dimly and distantly conceived."<sup>1</sup> And yet this towering figure, great artist and great scientist in one, will always represent a challenge: What was the mysterious force that made such a phenomenon possible? 

Neither Leonardo's scientific interests nor his versatility were unique in the age of the Renaissance when the world was being newly discovered; but even next to the many-sided Leon Battista Alberti, as Burckhardt said, "Leonardo da Vinci was as the finisher to the beginner, as the master to the dilettante."<sup>2</sup> Yet although, in addition to his writings about art, Leonardo arrived at fundamental insights about the nature of science and experimentation; although he discovered important laws of mechanics and hydraulics, geology and paleontology; although

1. Jakob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, p. 87. [For full references, see the List of Works Cited.]

2. Ibid., p. 87.

⑥ as an engineer he may be said to have anticipated the discovery of the airplane and the submarine; although he not only studied the anatomy and physiology of the human body, but perhaps, through his comparative anatomy of man and animal, was the first of thinkers to grasp the unity of organic development—what fascinates us more than all these impressive individual achievements, each one of which has been surpassed in the course of the centuries, is the unsurpassable individuality of Leonardo the man, which extends into an area of human existence that is beyond time and in human measure eternal. ★

As a Western phenomenon, Leonardo fascinates us very much in the same way as Goethe, precisely because we here encounter a striving for a life of individuation, a life of wholeness, which seems to be in keeping with the intimate intention of Western humanity.

We owe the first basic attempt to understand Leonardo by means of depth psychology to Sigmund Freud, who in his essay *Leonardo da Vinci and A Memory of His Childhood*, which was written in 1910, took up certain essential problems of Leonardo's psychology. The present work will embody a different approach, based on the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung, which, unlike the personalistic psychology of Freud, starts from transpersonal, archetypal factors.

Whereas Freud attempts to derive Leonardo's psychology from the personal events of his childhood—i.e., from a mother complex created by his family circumstances—we find a fundamental, not a pathological, phenomenon in the dominance of the mother archetype, i.e., of a

suprapersonal mother image, in the creative man. It is revealing in this connection that Freud, unconsciously no doubt, distorted Leonardo's family circumstances in a manner consonant with his theory, but that on the other hand, precisely in this study, he penetrated to the transpersonal process underlying Leonardo's development, broadening "the basis of this analysis by a comparative study of the historical material."<sup>3</sup> But he drew no consequences from all this.

Leonardo was born in 1452, the illegitimate son of a notary, Ser Piero da Vinci, and of a peasant girl "of good family."<sup>4</sup> Freud's personalistic derivation of Leonardo's psychology is based on the assumption that Leonardo spent the first (and, in Freud's view, decisive) years of his life as a fatherless child with his mother Caterina.<sup>5</sup> The facts, however, were quite different. "After 1452 Piero made a marriage appropriate to his class, and shortly afterward Caterina did likewise."<sup>6</sup> The child Leonardo grew up with his father and stepmother in his grandfather's house, where the whole family was living together in 1457.<sup>7</sup> Since legitimate children were born to Leonardo's father only in 1472, in his third marriage, Leonardo lived as an only child with his grandmother

3. C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, par. 3.

4. Marie Herzfeld (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci, der Denker, Forscher und Poet*.

5. Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Standard Edn.), p. 91.

6. Herzfeld, introduction.

7. We happen to have documentary proof of this family life for the year 1457, but of course this does not mean that Leonardo was taken into the family only at this time, as Freud (p. 91) supposes.

and successively with two childless stepmothers. We know nothing of any meetings with his real mother. But in any event the family circumstances are very complicated, sufficiently so to provide a basis for all sorts of contradictory psychological constructions.

But even though all the psychological consequences that Freud drew from a false personalistic approach are thus annulled, he did not stop here; for in an extremely penetrating way he made Leonardo's childhood recollection, i.e., an unquestionable document of Leonardo's psychic reality, into a broader foundation of his work. This childhood recollection, the so-called "vulture fantasy," is to be found among Leonardo's notes on the flight of birds, particularly vultures. It runs as follows: "It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures; for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a vulture came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips."<sup>8</sup>

It is striking that so critical a man as Leonardo should have recorded this recollection as something perfectly self-evident; he did not make the reservation that Freud unhesitatingly adopts in speaking of the "vulture fantasy." The very fact that Leonardo, despite the critical "mi pareva" ("it seemed to me"), speaks of this event as an actual childhood memory demonstrates the psychic

8. "Questo scriver si distintamente del nibio par che sia mio destino, perchè nella mia prima recordatione della mia infanta e' mi pareva che, essendo io in culla, che un nibio venissi a me e mi aprissi la bocca colla sua coda e molte volte mi percuotesse con tal coda dentro alle labbra." Codex Atlanticus, fol. 65<sup>v</sup>; Freud, p. 82.



reality of his experience. The child—and the smaller he is, the more intensely so—lives in a prepersonal world, i.e., a world essentially conditioned by the archetypes, a world whose unity is not yet, as in a developed consciousness, split into an outward physical reality and an inward psychic reality. Consequently, everything that happens to his still undeveloped personality has a numinous, mythical character, a fateful significance like the intervention of the divine.<sup>9</sup> In this sense Leonardo's "naïve," unreflecting record shows that his recollection deals with a fundamental event, a central motif in his existence, and that if we can understand it we shall have arrived at a hidden but decisive aspect of his life.

But before we go into the interpretation of this fantasy and its significance for Leonardo in Freud's view and our own, we must say a few words about Freud's so-called "mistake." It was pointed out recently<sup>10</sup> that the bird mentioned by Leonardo, the *nibio* or *nibbio*, is not a vulture but a kite. And the question rises: to what extent does this destroy the foundations of Freud's study and of our own that is partly based on it?

Freud's "mistake" in taking the bird for a vulture led him to the mother-significance of the vulture in Egypt, and the symbolic equation *vulture* = *mother* provided

9. Cf. Rudolf Otto, "Spontanes Erwachen des sensus numinis," and Ernst Barlach's childhood memories in *Ein selbsterzähltes Leben*.

10. Irma A. Richter (ed.), in a footnote to her *Selections from the Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (1952), p. 286; Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. II (1955), p. 390; James Strachey, editorial note to Freud, Vol. XI (1957), pp. 59 ff.

the basis for his understanding of Leonardo's childhood fantasy, for his unsubstantiated theory about Leonardo's relation to his personal mother, and for the mother fixation by which he explained Leonardo's development. "The phantasy and the myth," writes Strachey, the able editor of Freud's works, "seem to have no immediate connection with each other."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless he argues against the reader's possible impulse "to dismiss the whole study as worthless."<sup>12</sup>

As we shall see, Freud's "mistake" is by no means so damaging to his study, much less to our own, as one might at first suppose. On the contrary, our critique of Freud's study and our attempt to substitute a transpersonal interpretation for his personalistic derivation of the fantasy from Leonardo's relation to his personal mother are actually confirmed by the discovery of this error. Even if the bird is not a vulture, i.e., a bird whose mother-significance is mythologically established, but some other bird, the basic element of the fantasy is preserved, namely the movement of the bird's tail between the infant's lips.

Birds in general are symbols of the spirit and soul. The bird symbol may be male as well as female; when it makes its appearance, we know nothing of its sex, except in the case of birds of definite symbolic sexuality, such as the eagle—male—or the vulture—female.

But the real basis of any interpretation is the bird's action in Leonardo's childhood fantasy. In connection with the infant lying in his cradle, the bird's tail is primarily

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 61.



a symbol of the maternal breast; but at the same time Freud correctly interpreted it as the male genital organ. From this basic constellation emerging in the childhood memory, he attempted to derive both the personal mother complex of the fatherless Leonardo and a passively homosexual tendency in his love life. Both derivations are false and require a correction, since the "vulture fantasy" is a transpersonal, archetypal constellation, and not one that may be derived personalistically from Leonardo's family romance. ?!

In the situation of the babe drinking at the maternal breast, the mother always represents also the uroboric, i.e., male-female, greatness of the mother in relation to the child she bears, nourishes, and protects. In this function, her lifegiving breasts—as may be demonstrated in primitive sculpture, for example—often become phallic symbols, in relation to which the child takes the attitude of receiving and conceiving. This is a fundamental human situation with nothing perverse or abnormal about it; and in this situation the child, whether male or female, is feminine and conceiving, while the maternal is male and fecundating. The suprapersonal character of this experience for Leonardo is made clear by the fact that in his recollection the personal mother is meaningfully replaced by the bird symbol.

We call a unity of this sort "uroboric," because the uroboros, the circular snake eating its tail, is the symbol of the "Great Round," which, circling round itself, begetting and bearing, is male and female at once.<sup>13</sup>

13. See my *Origins and History of Consciousness*, pp. 8-13.

This uroboros, whose hieroglyph in Egypt is interpreted as universe,<sup>14</sup> embraces heaven, water, earth, and stars, i.e., all the elements as well as old age and renewal; in alchemy it is still the symbol of the primordial unity that contains the opposites. This is what makes the uroboros so eminently appropriate a symbol by which to represent the early psychic state in which consciousness is not yet separate from the unconscious, with all the decisive psychic consequences that this situation embraces for the relation of the ego to the unconscious and of man to the world.

Therefore, even if the bird in Leonardo's childhood fantasy is not a vulture but some other bird, it remains a symbol of the uroboric Great Mother, with whom we must associate not only the feminine symbolism of the nurturing breasts, but also the male symbolism of the fecundating phallus. Thus the image of the uroboric mother does not result from a mistaken notion of the little boy concerning his mother's genitals, but is a symbolic representation of the Archetypal Feminine as the creative source of life, which is alive in the unconscious of every human being regardless of sex.

Here we must go into some detail regarding the archetype of the maternal kite-vulture. As Jung has shown, such archetypes can also emerge spontaneously, i.e., independently of any historical or archaeological knowledge, in the dreams and fantasies of modern men.<sup>15</sup> In

14. George Boas (tr. and ed.), *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, p. 57.

15. Cf. the works of Jung and his followers on the spontaneous emergence of the archetypes in children, normal persons, psychopaths, and sufferers from mental disorders.



original, primitive mankind, to whom the connection between sexuality and childbearing was still unknown, the feminine—as is still shown by totemism, with its descent from animals, plants, elements—was fecundated by a transpersonal male principle that appeared as spirit or godhead, as ancestor or wind, but never in the form of a concrete personal man. In this sense, the woman was “autonomous,” i.e., a virgin dependent on no earthly male. She was the numinous conceiver, the numinous author of life, father and mother in one.

But the outstanding representatives of this archetype of the Great Mother are the Great Goddesses of Egypt, whose chief symbol is the vulture which Freud, “by mistake,” substituted for the “more innocuous” bird of Leonardo’s fantasy. Yet in all likelihood this “blunder” on the part of a man so conscientious as Freud is explained by his preoccupation with Leonardo’s fantasy, which, despite his personalistic view and interpretation, seems to have activated the archetypal image of the Great Mother within him.<sup>16</sup> In support of this contention it might be remarked that in this study, which he first, oddly enough, published anonymously, Freud drew on mythological, archetypal material in a way quite unusual for him. He pointed out that the vulture goddess Mut, identical with Nekhbet, was often represented phallically in Egypt.<sup>17</sup> The androgynous Great Mother

16. There is no contradiction between this possibility and Strachey’s explanation that Freud found “*nibio*” translated as “*Geier*” (vulture) in many of his German sources.

17. Lanzzone, *Dizionario di mitologia egizia*, Pls. cxxxvi–cxxxviii.

Goddess, i.e., equipped with a phallus and sometimes a beard, is a universally distributed archetype symbolizing the unity of the creative in the primordial creatrix, the "parthenogenetic" matriarchal Mother Goddess of the beginning. This fundamental view of matriarchal psychology, the importance of which we have repeatedly stressed,<sup>18</sup> expressed itself in Egypt in the belief that vultures, which were all thought to be female, conceived by the wind.

The vulture goddess Nekhbet with the white crown, the reigning goddess of Upper Egypt, is the representative of an ancient matriarchal stratum. She was the mother of the king, and even in late times hovered protectively over his head, while the queen's vulture hood indicated her ancient rank. In Egypt the word "mother" was written with the sign of the vulture, which is the symbol of the goddess Mut, the original "Great Mother." As a devourer of corpses, the vulture is also the Terrible Mother, who takes the dead back into herself; as "she with the outspread wings," the vulture was the sheltering symbol of heaven, of the generative and food-giving Goddess, who generates the lights, the sun, moon, and stars, out of her motherly nocturnal darkness. For this reason the vulture goddess was called Eileithyia by the Greeks, i.e., equated with the Mother Goddess who helped in childbirth—a figure encompassing the pre-Hellenic Cretan Mother Goddess, the many-breasted Artemis of Asia Minor, as well as Hera and the Demeter of the Eleusinian mysteries. The Goddess

18. Cf. my *Zur Psychologie des Weiblichen*, a volume of essays devoted to that theme.



and the queen representing her ruled over life, fertility, heaven, and earth. The Egyptian king, her son, says characteristically of himself: I am descended "from those my two mothers, the vulture with long hair and exuberant breasts, up on Mount Sehseh; may she set her breast to my mouth and never wean me."<sup>19</sup> "Never weaned": the grown king is represented sitting in the lap of the Mother Goddess—Mut, Hathor, or Isis—drinking from her breasts. And this symbolism is of decisive importance for our context.

The vulture goddess of the rain, from whose fruitful breasts, in the case of the Egyptian Nut, for example, the fecundating moisture flows, gives the masculine earth to drink—as Isis suckles King Horus. As Great Goddess she is male-female, fecundating and childbearing, in one.

For this reason the vulture goddess Nekhbet was worshiped as a "form of the primeval abyss which brought forth the light,"<sup>20</sup> and her name was "The father of fathers, the mother of mothers, who hath existed from the beginning and is the creatrix of the world."

Against the background of these archetypal relations, the bird of Leonardo's childhood fantasy, considered in its creative-uroboric unity of breast-mother and phallus-father, is symbolically a "vulture" even if Leonardo called it a "*nibio*." For only if we penetrate the symbolic, archetypal significance of the fantasy can we understand

19. Kurt Heinrich Sethe (ed.), *Die alt-ägyptischen Pyramidentexte*, Pyr. III 16/19.

20. E. A. W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol. I, p. 440. This watery abyss is the heavenly water of the night sea in its unity of upper and lower world, as will be discussed elsewhere.

this bird and what it does. Whether with Freud we take Leonardo's "reminiscence" as a "fantasy" or with others term it a "dream," we are referring to symbolic action in a psychic area, not to the physical action of a zoological specimen in a geographically definable locality.

For this reason we are perfectly justified in retaining the term "vulture" which Freud chose "by mistake," for it was through this very "blunder" that his keen intuition penetrated to the core of the matter, even though he did not fully understand and interpret it. For no zoologically definable bird, no "kite" or "vulture," is uroboric and behaves like Leonardo's bird. But such behavior is perfectly plausible for the "vulture" as symbol of the uroboric Mother, which lived in the psyche of the Egyptians as of Leonardo<sup>21</sup>—and of Freud.

The symbolism of the bird and its male-phallic components accent the spirit aspect of this archetype in contrast to its earth aspect. In Egypt we know the nutritive cow of heaven also as a symbol of the nurturing Great Mother. Yet in the paradoxical symbolism of the "vulture with the exuberant breasts," the accent is on the heavenly nature of this bird, which shelters the earth with its wings. But bird-heaven-wind are archetypal spirit symbols that are also characteristic of the father archetype. Above and below, heaven and earth, are contained in the father-mother unity of the uroboros and the uroboric Mother. The spirit character of this Mother is

21. Possibly this phenomenon provides the answer to another "riddle" with which we shall be concerned below, namely the "picture-puzzle" of a vulture discovered by Pfister in one of Leonardo's paintings. See below, pp. 63 f.



expressed by the bird—just as her earth character is expressed by the snake symbol.

If we know that the bird in Leonardo's childhood fantasy relates not to the father but to the uroboric *Great Mother*, it is only because it appeared in the earliest phase of human life, to an infant lying in his cradle, for this is the phase of the Mother with her nourishing or phallic breasts. In an older child, a similar experience of a bird, e.g., the rape of Ganymede by the eagle of Zeus, would have an entirely different meaning.

The "kite," to be sure, calls for a new correction of Freud's study. But this correction consists in still stronger emphasis on the impossibility of a personalistic interpretation, i.e., an interpretation on the basis of Leonardo's family history and relation to his actual mother. Not only has the transpersonal, archetypal interpretation of Leonardo and the creative process in general been confirmed, but we see that it must be carried to new depths. Another shift of accent necessitated by the discovery of Freud's error (in which we had partly followed him) is to lend new emphasis to the uroboric character of Leonardo's "vulture mother."

Here we cannot take up the whole scope of what the Archetypal Feminine means to mankind,<sup>22</sup> but we must give at least some idea of it. It appears both as the all-generative aspect of nature and as the creative source of the unconscious, from which consciousness was born in the course of human history, and out of which unceasingly, in all times and in every man, there arise

22. Cf. my *Great Mother*.

new psychic contents that broaden, intensify, and enrich the life of the individual and of the community. In this sense the prayer to the Mother Goddess, "May she set her breast to my mouth and never wean me," is valid for all men, but most particularly for the creative man.

Nevertheless the question remains: In cases where this archetypal image is dominant, when are we dealing with a mother complex—i.e., a pathological, "infantile" mother fixation that makes healthy life impossible, especially for a male—and when with a legitimate and genuine archetypal situation? In this sketch devoted specially to Leonardo, we have space only to suggest certain contexts that will be discussed elsewhere in detail.

With the development of consciousness the male-female uroborus becomes differentiated into the First Parents. In the matriarchal phase of human history, and in child development, where the unconscious is preponderant, the First Parents are constellated as the uroboric Virgin Mother in union with the invisible Spirit Father, who is the paternal uroboros, an anonymous transpersonal spiritual being.<sup>23</sup> In normal development a "secondary personalization" takes place, i.e., a process of demythicization, in which the archetypally mythological images are projected upon the persons of the family or the immediate environment and experienced through them. This process leads to the formation of a normal personality and of a "normal" relation to the outside world. The archetypes are gradually transferred to the "cultural canon" recognized by the community in ques-

23. See my *Origins and History*, p. 18.



tion and in this way the individual is adapted to normal life. The archetypal tension between Spirit Father and Virgin Mother is reduced in this development to a tension between consciousness, which by way of the patriarchal world comes into the inheritance of the Spirit Father, and the unconscious, which becomes the living representative of the Great Mother. Normal Western development, which for this reason we call patriarchal, leads to a dominance of consciousness or of the father archetype, and to an extensive repression and inhibition of the unconscious and the related mother archetype. But in the creative man—and to a considerable degree in the neurotic—this reduction of the archetypal tension between the First Parents is impossible or incomplete.

In the creative man we find a preponderance of the archetypal in keeping with his creative nature; in the sick man we find a disturbance of the normal development of consciousness, caused in part by the constellations of the family and in part by genuine childhood experiences—or else the factors making for sickness may arise at later stages of development.

The consequences of this accentuation of the archetype in the creative man, who by his very nature is dependent on his receptivity toward the creative unconscious, manifest themselves partly in deviations from the development of the so-called normal man; here we need not deal with the somewhat similar condition of the neurotic. In the life of the creative man the emphasis always lies on the transpersonal factors; i.e., in his experience the archetypal factor is so predominant that in extreme cases he becomes almost incapable of personal

relations. But even where he retains his capacity for human contact and human relations, it is always at the price of an essential conflict that he assimilates the archetypal projections and does justice to the human limitations of his counterpart. And this is why many artists, even among the most gifted, have such intense anima relations with the "distant loved one," epistolary relations, relations to the unknown, the dead, etc.

In normal development, the man's "feminine component" is largely repressed and contributes to the constellation of the anima <sup>24</sup> in the unconscious, which, projected upon the woman, makes contact with her possible. But in the creative man this process is incomplete. By his very nature he remains in high degree bisexual, and the retained feminine component is manifested by his increased "receptivity," by his sensibility and a greater emphasis in his life on the "matriarchal consciousness," <sup>25</sup> expressed in inward processes of parturition and formation that essentially condition his creativeness.

Nor does the anima develop in the same way as in the normal man. As we have elsewhere shown, it is the patriarchal, masculine development of consciousness that conditions the constellation of the anima figure and its differentiation from the mother archetype.<sup>26</sup> In the creative man this differentiation cannot be fully effected; the creative man lacks the requisite one-sidedness that

24. Jung, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious," pars. 296 ff.

25. See my *Psychologie des Weiblichen*.

26. See my *Origins and History*, p. 198.



marks ego-identification with the purely masculine consciousness, for he remains both more childlike and more womanly than the normal man. The preponderance of the archetypal world of the Great Mother, his dependence on her "exuberant breasts," are so strong that he is never capable of the "matricide" necessary for the liberation of the anima. For this reason the creative man—except in his supreme representatives—is usually less a man than a creator. Precisely in the measure of his ability to assimilate and give form to the contents of the unconscious that are lacking in the community in which he lives, he is incapable of developing himself as an individual in relation to the community.<sup>27</sup> Whereas the normal man to a great extent pays for his adaptation to life in Western civilization with a loss of creativity, the creative man, who is adapted to the requirements of the unconscious world, pays for his creativity with loneliness, which is the expression of his relative lack of adaptation to the life of the community. Of course this characterization applies only to the extreme positions, between which an endless number of transitions and shadings are possible.

In any event the creative man is very largely fixated in the matriarchal stage of the psyche, and, like the Egyptian king, he experiences himself as the archetypal hero-son of the Virgin Mother, who "never weans" him. Thus Leonardo as "vulture child" is a typical hero-son and fulfills the archetypal canon of the hero's birth, which we have elsewhere discussed at length.

27. See the next essay in this volume.

"The fact that the hero has two fathers and two mothers is a central feature in the canon of the hero myth. Besides his personal father there is a 'higher,' that is to say an archetypal, father figure, and similarly an archetypal mother figure appears beside the personal mother. . . .

"As A. Jeremias<sup>28</sup> has pointed out and amply proved, the essence of the mythological canon of the hero-redeemer is that he is fatherless or motherless, that one of the parents is often divine, and that the hero's mother is frequently the Mother Goddess herself or else betrothed to a god."<sup>29</sup>

Leonardo's bird mother is the Mother Goddess herself; she is the "god's betrothed," impregnated by the "wind," one of the archetypal symbols of the Spirit Father, but at the same time she is the phallic, uroboric Mother who begets and gives birth to herself. In this sense Leonardo, like all heroes, had "two" mothers, and experienced himself as the son not of a personal but of an "unknown" father, or else was "fatherless."<sup>30</sup>

The relation to the Great Mother determines the childhood and youth of the hero; in this period he lives as her son-lover, favored by the fullness of her devotion and endangered by her dominance. Psychologically speaking, this means that the development and unfolding of his ego consciousness and his personality are largely gov-

28. *Handbuch der altorientalischen Geisteskultur*, pp. 205 ff.

29. See my *Origins and History*, pp. 132-33.

30. As we know, the childlike notion of being a "stepchild," i.e., not the real child of the father or mother, is found in many neurotics, but not only in neurotics.



erned by processes in which the unconscious plays a more important part than the ego.

In the course of the patriarchal development of consciousness, the bond with the Great Mother is broken, and after the dragon fight the hero is reborn into a relation with the Spirit Father; he fulfills his mythological task as one twice born.

Dragon fight and "slaying of the parents" mean the surpassing of the "mother" as the symbol of an unconscious that holds the son fast in the collective world of drives; and they signify also the surpassing of the "father," symbol of the collective values and traditions of his time. Only after this victory does the hero achieve his own new world, the world of his individual mission, in which the figures of the uroboric parents, of the mother and father archetype, assume a new aspect. They are no longer hostile, confining powers, but companions, bestowing their blessings on the life and work of the victorious hero-son.

The Great Individual, the creative man, must travel this archetypally determined way in the manner appropriate to his individuality, his time, and his mission. But although the terms "hero" and "dragon fight" apply to this type of career, another form of the Great Individual's development may take a different course.

One group of Great Individuals with their dramatic careers pursues the way of the hero; we have only to think of Michelangelo or Beethoven. But there are other careers that rather take the form of a slow development, of a gradual inner growth. Although dramatic crises and phases are not lacking in these developments, in the life

of Goethe, for example, here one has more the impression of a steady, almost imperceptible being-led than of conscious heroic action.<sup>31</sup> The first development corresponds to a patriarchal development in opposition to the Great Mother, and the heroes reborn in the dragon fight prove themselves sons of the Spirit Father. The other type of heroic development is clearly more matriarchal, i.e., closer to the mother archetype.

In both cases the mythological constellation of the hero's birth and childlike, youthlike relation to the Great Mother Goddess stands at the beginning of the development. But whereas the patriarchal heroes leave the Great Mother and in opposition to her must prove themselves sons of the Spirit Father, the life of the matriarchal heroes is continuously dominated by the Mother and never wholly departs from the shelter of her spirit wings.

Although a preponderance of the transpersonal archetypal world may be demonstrated in all Great Individuals, it makes a great difference in their life development whether, when the First Parents separate, it is the archetype of the Virgin Mother or of the Spirit Father that remains dominant.<sup>32</sup>

A one-sided development, in which the one or the other archetype is exclusively dominant and there is no compensation by its complement, represents an extreme

31. Here one is involuntarily reminded of Schiller's distinction between "naïve" and "sentimental" writing in "Über naive und sentimentale Dichtung," though in this connection it cannot be reduced to the opposing types of attitude developed in Jung's *Psychological Types*.

32. Here we need not discuss the different meanings that these constellations may assume in masculine and feminine psychology.



psychic danger.<sup>33</sup> But in the Great Individuals we always find that although one of the First Parents, either the Great Mother or the Great Father, sets his stamp on their destiny, the other member also exerts an important influence on the course of their development.

In the career of the patriarchal hero, the hero reborn as son of the Spirit Father ultimately returns to a relationship with the archetype of the Great Mother. His heroic career begins with his conquest of her, but ultimately—as in the case of Herakles and Hera—the original conflict is resolved in his reconciliation with her. Similarly, the Great Individual whose life is stamped by the dominance of the Archetypal Feminine must, in the course of his development, come to grips with the Spirit Father. Only in the tension between the archetypal worlds of the Great Mother and the Great Father is the wholeness of a truly creative existence fulfilled. But the individual mode of development, of life and work, will be determined by whether the hero-son takes a predominantly patriarchal or matriarchal, solar or lunar, course; by whether the patriarchal and matriarchal aspects of his consciousness are relatively balanced or in a relation of tension to one another.

It can be demonstrated in many cases that these decisive constellations of the archetypal world are often manifested in the dreams, fantasies, or memories of early

33. This danger is manifested in neurosis and psychosis. It takes the form of matriarchal or patriarchal "castration," the overpowering of the individual by the maternally uroboric nature of the unconscious, or by the equally menacing paternally uroboric nature of the spirit. (Cf. my *Origins and History*, index, s. vv.)

childhood. Precisely because the child, with its undeveloped consciousness, still lives in the mythical world of the primordial images and like early man has a "mythological apperception" of the world, the impressions of this period, in which the profoundest strata can be expressed or rather "imagined" without falsification, seem to anticipate the whole life.

Such "image-inations" take the form of childhood memories or fantasies.<sup>34</sup> In this sense Leonardo's childhood memory strikes the dominant chord of his life; it is a meaningful symbol of the fact that his life would be dominated by the vulture goddess, the Great Mother.

It is hard to judge to what extent Leonardo's actual family situation favored the projection of his archetypal hero situation. We may safely assume that there was little intimacy between him and his father. The notary was an extremely worldly and active man; aside from the illegitimate relation to Leonardo's mother he contracted no less than four legitimate marriages. But by his third and fourth marriages—when he married for the third time he was already forty-five years of age—he had nine sons and two daughters. If to this biography we compare the life of Leonardo—who, except perhaps in his youth,<sup>35</sup> had no known physical relations with any woman—and if we consider that Leonardo, despite his fame, was treated by his father as an "illegitimate son"

34. In his seminars on the dreams of children at the Technische Hochschule in Zurich, Jung expressed decisive insights regarding the life-determining character of childhood dreams. (Unpublished.)

35. Cf. his attitude toward sexuality and the "desires," pp. 28 ff.



and not even mentioned in his will, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that there was a basic antagonism between father and son. Besides this alienation from his personal father, this man so arrogant in his worldliness as to disinherit his "illegitimate son," we must consider the problematic relation of the child Leonardo to women, to his grandmother, his two stepmothers, and to his own mother, whom he may or may not have known.

Even in the average child such abnormal family situations usually lead to disorders: as a result of a compensatory excitation of the unconscious, the parent archetypes are not "abolished," as in normal development, and the great suprapersonal parents compensate in a sense for the absence or insufficiency of the personal parents.<sup>36</sup>

When we take into account Leonardo's creative predisposition, with its "natural" preponderance of the archetypal, his childhood fantasy becomes understandable as a symbol of his detachment from the normal human environment and of his relation to the transpersonal powers with all their fateful meaning. And what makes Leonardo's "vulture fantasy" so significant a document is precisely that the same archetypal constellations and symbols that were related concerning the mythical heroes of prehistory should appear in a man of the Western Renaissance.

Even as a young man—insofar as we are able to form a picture of him—Leonardo was characterized by the inability to tie himself down to any one preoccupation

36. The disturbances in normal adaptation brought about by this compensation need not concern us here.

that distinguished him throughout his lifetime. Even for a period when versatility was almost the rule, his many-sidedness is amazing. For in addition to his genius as a painter, which stood out so clearly when he was a boy studying under Verocchio that his master is said to have given up painting on his account,<sup>37</sup> the youthful Leonardo seems to have fascinated all those about him by the abundance of his talents.

Up to his old age Leonardo was uncommonly beautiful, combining charm and elegance with extraordinary physical strength; he could bend a horseshoe with his bare hands. He was a playful child of the Muses, known for his ability to sing, write poetry, play musical instruments, and improvise music. His outstanding mathematical and technical gifts made him famous in his time as a hydraulic and military engineer, a builder of fortresses, and an inventor; and these gifts too he employed in a characteristically playful way.<sup>38</sup> He was called to the court of Milan, for example, not as a famous painter but because he had invented an odd musical instrument shaped like a horse's head. Even as an old man he continued to devise strange toys and enlivened the court festivities of many princes with all sorts of technical

37. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters*, Vol. III, p. 222.

38. Two hundred of his inventions were constructed in the twentieth century by the Italian government and shown in an exhibition. (See *Life* magazine, July 17, 1939.) Machine gun, parachute, fire ladder, steam engine, telescope, printing press, roll press, drill, windmill, propeller, steering gear, and many other inventions, as well as instruments such as a step counter, a wind measurer, and innumerable others (F. M. Feldhaus, *Leonardo der Techniker und Erfinder*) are among the products of his technical genius.



games and inventions that strike us as unworthy of his genius. From the very start he was more preoccupied with the inventiveness and inexhaustible fertility of his own nature than with the shaping of a reality which in a sense he never in all his lifetime took quite seriously. He moved through his time and world—painting, sculpturing, experimenting, discovering, and inventing, profoundly interested in all these pursuits—yet always uncommitted, always independent, always an outsider, never giving himself entirely to anything or anyone, except to his own nature, whose dictates he obeyed as though in a dream, but at the same time with the sharpened alertness of a scientific observer.

"To devise," he writes, "is the work of the master, to execute the act of the servant."<sup>39</sup> One might be tempted to regard this as the motto of his fragmentary work and of his life. But unjustly so. In his youth, perhaps, his unwillingness to tie himself down may at times have involved him in the arrogance that merely plans but never executes. In reality he was a stupendous worker, except that, for reasons the investigation of which is one of our main tasks, he never strove to build up an "opus" such as that of Michelangelo, who in his hard one-sidedness despised him for this.

The fragmentary tendency in his art was not based on indifference regarding execution, nor did it spring wholly from the vastness of his inward image. It was

39. MS. C.A., fol. 109. See Herzfeld, p. 139; for the abbreviations etc., see p. clxvi, or Richter, *Selections*, p. 393. English version in Edward MacCurdy, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, Vol. I, p. 95.

also an expression of the fact that the work of art, and art itself, were not for him an end in themselves but only—though perhaps he himself was not aware of it—an instrument and expression of his inner situation. In this, as in his fascination with the problem of flying, to which he devoted so much energy and passion, Leonardo showed himself to be a "vulture child." At heart he despised reality and its tasks; he despised money and fame, the opus, the establishment of a school, for in his unconscious devotion to the Spirit Mother he was profoundly alien to everything material and matter of fact. This was also the reason for his aversion to the instinctual urges and his rejection of sexuality. "The ermine will die rather than besmirch itself,"<sup>40</sup> runs one of his aphorisms. And another: "The man who does not restrain wantonness allies himself with beasts."<sup>41</sup> And, concluding a banal allegory about a butterfly that comes to grief after being attracted by the radiant beauty of the light, he moralizes in true medieval style: "This applies to those who, when they see before them carnal and worldly delights, hasten to them like the butterfly without ever taking thought as to their nature, which they will learn to know to their shame and loss."<sup>42</sup> The in-

40. MS. H. I, fol. 48<sup>v</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 143; Richter, *Selections*, p. 319. [The quotations and ms. citations are mainly from the latter volume, though page citations are given to both presentations of the *Notebooks*.—ED.]

41. MS. H. III, fol. 119<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 140; *Selections*, p. 280.

42. MS. C.A., fol. 257<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, pp. 270–71; *Selections*, p. 243.



yolved translation does justice to Leonardo's own suddenly halting and stammering expression.

Unquestionably there was in Leonardo a strong sexual block, a kind of sexual anxiety, but this rejection extended to the whole material side of reality and life. As we have seen, the uroboric Great Mother has also phallic, procreative, masculine, paternal features, in relation to which—to the phallic breasts, for example—the child is receptive and “feminine.” In the same sense, the creative man is “feminine” in his passive openness to the creative flow. Accordingly, we have termed this attitude of the personality and consciousness “matriarchal.” Here we need not decide whether the predominance of passive-feminine or active-masculine traits in the creative life of the individual is brought about by constitutional factors or by the events of his life. It seems likely that such constellations affect the relationship between activity and passivity, between masculine and feminine elements, not only in the individual's psychic life but also in his relation to his own and the opposite sex. In any event the ultimate sexual attitude of the personality is determined not by a single factor but by many, not by a single developmental constellation, such as an orientation toward the “Great Mother,” but by a number of such constellations and phases. Thus the bond with the uroboric Great Mother is characteristic of many creative men who show no sign of homosexuality.

Another typical constellation of symbolic homosexual attachment is that of the young lovers—in whom the

accent is precisely not on openness toward the masculine aspect of the Great Mother, but on resistance to it. We often find such a resistance in the "young sons" of the Great Mother, who in their hypersensitive budlikeness reject life; supposing life to be "meaningless," they are actually for the most part unequal to it. His by no means proved homosexuality—in any case, his homoeroticism—fits into this context. As in many young lovers of the Great Mother, compensatory resistance to her aspect as Earth Mother, as matter, favored a tendency toward male association and toward a rejection of the beauty of the feminine, which fetters the passions and binds one to the commonplace reality of matter. If Leonardo, as alleged, selected his pupils more for their beauty than for their talent, this is quite in keeping with his nature, in which Eros played so crucial a role, and with his devotion to the purposeless beauty of living things, which meant more to him than any opus or school. The actual aim and motive of his central actions can always be shown to lie in something "transcending the real."

There is no doubt that in studying the flight of birds and the mechanics of their wings, in his tireless efforts to build a flying machine, Leonardo was striving very concretely to acquire the technique of flight for mankind. "The great bird will take its first flight from the back of a giant swan," he wrote. "It will fill the universe with wonder; all writings will be full of its fame, bringing eternal glory to the place of its origin."<sup>43</sup> This famous sentence is usually taken quite concretely to mean that

<sup>43</sup> MS. Trn. O., inside cover 2. See Herzfeld, p. 32; *Selections*, p. 357.



"Leonardo already sees his 'bird' rising up into the air from the 'Cecero' [Swan], a hill in Florence." And this interpretation is probably correct. But at the same time Leonardo's case offers unique proof that the "technological invention" so characteristic of the West originally sprang from a still unconscious inward reality. Up to the end Leonardo remained a childlike, playful dreamer; everything he did was the symbolic expression of an inward reality. In the last analysis nothing was what it purported to be, or what he himself took it to be. The earnestness of his interest in science, the precision of his work, the technical clarity of his will, and the brilliance of his reasoning in no way alter the fact that—as he himself obscurely felt—everything that he did actually meant something quite different. Only in this way can we explain the continuity of his development, the indefatigable, insatiable course of his life work. And likewise, his desire to fly was in reality more than a technique to be learned, a machine to be built.

How can one prove oneself as a son of the bird mother, of the Great Goddess; what does it mean to "fly" and lift oneself above the earth? These are the symbolically real questions that live in his scientific work.

But Leonardo's flight from the earth, if in this concept we wish to epitomize his rejection of matter, the Earth Mother as lower aspect of the Great Mother, could not, in a nature so vast and so oriented toward wholeness, remain without its inner dialectical countermove. Where the life base is narrower, this constellation of flight from the earth gives rise to delicately lyrical, psychically and intellectually hypersensitive artists, in whom the aesthetic

predominates; but with Leonardo's all-encompassing vitality there was bound to be an essential though unconscious countermovement, tending to compensate for his one-sidedness. Herein again he proved to be an authentic son of the Great Mother, who in her wholeness as the Great Round combines the heavenly and the earthly aspect.

Whereas the Middle Ages—and particularly the Gothic period—were dominated by the archetype of the Heavenly Father, the development begun in the Renaissance was based on a revival of the feminine earth archetype. In the course of the last centuries it has led to a revolution of mankind "from below," taking hold of every layer of Western existence. Today the human world as a whole and man as an individual—no longer the celestial world and the nature of the angels—stand at the center of our picture of the world, and man no longer experiences himself as a Lucifer expelled from the celestial paradise, but as an authentic son of the earth. This striking of roots made possible the discovery of the body and natural science, and also of the soul and the unconscious; but underlying all this was the "materialistic" foundation of human existence, which as nature and earth became the foundation of our view of the world as manifested in astronomy and geology, physics and chemistry, biology, sociology, and psychology.<sup>44</sup>

This reversal of the Middle Ages began with the towering figure of Leonardo, who anticipated all these developments, gathered them all in himself, and projected them into the future. But he did not stop here; in

44. Cf. my "Die Bedeutung des Erdarchetyps für die Neuzeit."



the unfolding of his personality he went much farther than the ensuing centuries and our own present age in the integration of all these traits so pregnant with the future.

The generations that came after him developed all the particulars of his world vision; they surpassed him in every field; but they lost what was decisive and most magnificent in Leonardo, namely, the unity. For the essential in Leonardo is not that his mind encompassed such a wide scope of interests, not the encyclopedic aspect of his inquiring will that reached out into the world, but the integration of all this multiplicity into a symbolic human existence. For him nothing had meaning "in itself," nothing was an end in itself, neither the insight nor the practical application, neither the discovery nor the invention, and not even the unity of the opus. For him, almost alone among the artists of the West, art was not everything and not the whole. And also, for him alone among the discoverers and scientists, science was a secret of his individual life, which remained sealed in his copious notebooks, as though it was not important for him to communicate these books, which never became books, to the world.

Unknown to himself, his whole life was directed by the tendency toward an integration of his personality, which experienced itself in the likeness of a godhead encompassing in itself the higher and the lower, heaven and earth. The principle of this unity, which analytical psychology discerned centuries later as the principle of individuation,<sup>45</sup> appears as a mandala, as the Great

45. Cf. the work of Jung on this theme.

Round that—like the Great Goddess—embraces heaven and earth.

Just as his “unearthliness,” a medieval trait of his being and his times, was transposed into something entirely new, namely, the scientific problem of flight, so the counterthrust of his nature was also transformed into something revolutionary and charged with future. This counterthrust, as we shall see time and time again in Leonardo, was effected simultaneously on different planes of his being and activity, and this too is a symptom of how totally possessed he was by the processes which were taking place within him and which it required the whole of his many-sided effort to assimilate.<sup>46</sup>

The artistic expression of this situation is a picture unique of its kind, *The Virgin of the Rocks* (Pl. I), of which Merejkowski seems to have given us the profoundest description: “Queen of Heaven, she was shown to men in the gloom of twilight, in a subterranean cavern, in the most secret of the recesses of nature, perhaps the last refuge of ancient Pan and the wood-nymphs—

46. In this essay we shall not arrange Leonardo's biographical data and utterances chronologically, but seek to penetrate the underlying archetypal structure, the pattern. The material of life precipitates in varying depth at the most varying times, so gradually revealing the latent archetypal foundation—as though the inherently rectilinear stream of time was also a circular stream “rotating” above the archetypal structure. For this reason central insights may emerge early in a life and the utterances of the later period need not necessarily be central. Even if a life intention is fulfilled within a definite period, the creative as well as the expressive man does not at all times live at the same stage or at the same depth of his existence.



she the mystery of mysteries, the mother of the God-man, in the very bosom of mother earth."<sup>47</sup>

This madonna is unique. In no other work of art has the secret that light is born of darkness, and that the Spirit Mother of the child savior is one with the sheltering infiniteness of earthly nature, been manifested so eloquently. The triangle, with its base on the earth,<sup>48</sup> which determines the structure of the picture, is an old feminine symbol,<sup>49</sup> the Pythagorean sign of wisdom and space.<sup>50</sup>

The other manifestation of the earth archetype in Leonardo occurs in his scientific work, which in its totality bears witness to this awakening, this Renaissance, which in reality was not a rebirth of antiquity but of the earth. Three areas of his scientific work stand under the sign of the earth, of the Earth Mother: the human body, the earth as an animated organism, and nature as a divine being embracing the two.

Assuredly Leonardo first became interested in anatomy in connection with his work as a painter and sculptor, but how far he advanced beyond this starting point, what vast provinces of nature he discovered in his dissecting of thirty corpses! The drawings and descriptions which

47. Dmitri Merejkowski, *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci: The Forerunner*, p. 295.

48. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, p. 18.

49. Rudolf Koch, *The Book of Signs*, p. 3.

50. By this remark we do not mean that Leonardo knew this or intentionally smuggled this symbol into the picture. But the agreement of content, structure, and unconscious symbolism nevertheless remains noteworthy.

make up the anatomical study that he planned and largely executed are of such quality that a modern anatomist, writing in 1905, found some of them unequaled even in our times.<sup>51</sup> He made a great number of anatomical discoveries. One writer has gone so far as to declare that "Vesalius's fundamental work on the structure of the human body is nothing but a great plagiarism, a theft from Leonardo's life work."<sup>52</sup> The essential is not that he founded the modern form of topographical anatomy or that he was the first to study comparative anatomy, to establish a correlation between the human organs and those of the animal world. What is most characteristic of his farsightedness and wholeness of outlook is that he was perhaps the first to see anatomy in its functional relationships, so discovering the physiology of the human body. He discovered the great unity of the human circulation, and, as Spengler aptly put it, when he "studied anatomy it was . . . *physiology* studied for the inward secrets"; he "investigated the *life* in the body."<sup>53</sup>

And despite many mistakes in details, what discoveries he made in every field! A hundred years before Kepler he wrote: "The sun does not move,"<sup>54</sup> so shaking the

51. Moritz Holl, *Eine Biologie aus der Wende des XV Jahrhunderts: Leonardo da Vinci*.

52. Herzfeld, p. cliii.

53. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Vol. I, pp. 277 f.

54. MS. W., fol. 12669<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 53; *Selections*, p. 54. J. P. Richter remarks in reference to this passage: "One runs across this passage in the middle of mathematical notes; it is written in uncommonly large letters."



foundations of medieval cosmology. In characterizing this antithesis, Marie Herzfeld quotes the admirable words of Gabriel Séailles: "The stars are incorruptible, divine, without relation to our sublunar world, whose law is generation, change, death. The earth teaches us nothing about the heavens, which belong to a different order. . . . boldly Leonardo shatters this hierarchy; he moves the earth into the heavens." And Leonardo writes: "In your discourse you must prove that the earth is a star much like the moon, and the glory of our universe." 55

Now it is strange and significant that despite the abundance of Leonardo's fundamental new insights regarding the earth, he should have been held fast by a mythological image of it. He recognized the water cycle and the stratification of the earth caused by sedimentation; he refuted the legend of the Flood and correctly concluded that the fossils lying on the mountains bear witness to the existence of oceans that once covered these mountains. But the passion that he devoted to his investigations, his fascination with their object, the earth, led him to animate it. How alive this earth-body equation was for him may be seen from the following quotation:

"The water which rises in the mountains is the blood which keeps the mountain in life. If one of its veins be open either internally or at the side, nature, which assists its organisms, abounding in increased desire to over-

55. MS. F., fol. 56<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 59; *Selections*, p. 54.

come the scarcity of moisture thus poured out, is prodigal there in indulgent aid, as also happens with the place at which a man has received a blow. For one sees then how as help comes the blood increases under the skin in the form of a swelling in order to open the infected part. Similarly, life being severed at the topmost extremity (of the mountain), nature sends her fluid from its lowest foundations up to the greatest height of the severed passage, and as this is poured out there it does not leave it bereft of vital fluid down to the end of its life."<sup>56</sup>

And in botany he finds the same law of compensation, for Mother Nature never leaves her creatures "bereft": "When a tree has had part of its bark stripped off, nature in order to provide for it supplies to the stripped portion a far greater quantity of nutritive moisture than to any other part; so that, because of the first scarcity which has been referred to, the bark there grows much more thickly than in any other place."<sup>57</sup>

This maternal character of the earth is so much a certainty to him that he experiences the earth in the image of a living body:<sup>58</sup> "So then we may say that the earth

56. MS. H., fol. 77<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 63; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 77.

57. MS. C.A., fol. 76<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 120; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 317.

58. One of his riddles runs as follows: "Many there will be who will flay their own mother and fold back her skin." The answer is: "The tillers of the ground." (MS. I., fol. 64<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld p. 279; *Selections*, p. 245.) The archetypal character of this formulation is shown by the flaying which played so prominent a part in the fertility rites of ancient Mexico.



has a spirit of growth; that its flesh is the soil; its bones are the successive strata of the rocks which form the mountains, its muscles are the tufastone, its blood the springs of its water. The lake of blood that lies about the heart is the ocean. . . . " 59

Nature is the Great Goddess herself; she bestows on the maternal earth as upon the human mother the vegetative soul that "nourishes and animates the child."

"Nature places the soul in said body, the formative soul, namely, the soul of the mother, who first forms in her womb the shape of man and at a fitting time awakens the soul which is to be its inhabitant, which was formerly dormant and in the safeguard of the mother's soul, which she nourishes and animates through the navel cord with all her spiritual organs, and will so continue as long as this navel is connected with the fruit and the seed leaves, whereby the child is joined with the mother." 60

It was said of Leonardo: "In nature he finds time and time again something to learn; he is devoted to her as a son to his mother." 61 And this is true in a far deeper and more fundamental sense than this "poetic image" might at first lead us to suppose.

Here it is not our task to discuss Leonardo's importance as a scientist, which lies most of all in his discovery of scientific experiment. "Experience does not err," he

59. R. 1000, MS. Leic., fol. 34<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 62; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 91.

60. R. 837, MS. W. AN. IV, fol. 184<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 119.

61. Herzfeld, p. 119.

wrote; "it is only your judgment that errs in expecting from her what is not in her power." <sup>62</sup>

What concerns us is how very much alive the archetype of the Great Mother, the unity of the heaven-and-earth goddess, was in Leonardo's life and work. She lived for him not only as a mythological image, but in his scientific work was raised to the level of a scientific view of the world.

Thus he speaks of the "ever generative goddess": "Nature is full of infinite causes that have never occurred in experience." <sup>63</sup>

Or: "The genius of man may make various inventions, encompassing with various instruments one and the same end; but it will never discover a more beautiful, a more economical, or a more direct one than nature's, since in her inventions nothing is wanting and nothing is superfluous." <sup>64</sup>

But he did not succumb to a romantic transfiguration of nature. Side by side with the Good Mother he also recognized the Terrible Mother in her, as follows clearly from a sentence whose insight and perspective seem so characteristic of Leonardo: "Here nature appears to have been a cruel stepmother to many animals instead of a mother, and to some not a stepmother but a most tender mother." <sup>65</sup>

His evaluation is no longer Christian and medieval.

62. MS. C.A., fol. 154<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 5; *Selections*, p. 5.

63. MS. I., fol. 18<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 11; *Selections*, p. 7.

64. MS. W., fol. 19116<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, pp. 118-19; *Selections*, p. 103.

65. MS. S.K.M. III, fol. 20<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 117; *Selections*, p. 278.



He sees that "Our life is made by the death of others,"<sup>66</sup> but this does not fill him with a sense of guilt; it does not prove to him the fallen state of man, darkened by original sin. This earth too is a star, and man, potentially at least, is a divine creator, although he belongs to the animal world.

"In fact, man does not vary from the animals except in what is accidental, and it is in this that he shows himself to be a divine thing; for where nature finishes producing its species, there man begins with natural things to make with the aid of this nature an infinite number of species; and as these are not necessary to those who govern themselves rightly as do the animals, it is not in their disposition to seek after them."<sup>67</sup>

And: "The painter strives and competes with nature."<sup>68</sup>

But in this rivalry and this "godlikeness," Leonardo is not Luciferian; he is humbly devoted to nature and the earth. In contrast to the decree of the Heavenly Spirit of the Scholastics, which determined all life deductively "from above," the modern man in Leonardo bowed down to the earth.

"All our knowledge," he wrote, "has its origin in our perceptions."<sup>69</sup> Here "perceptions" might be translated as "actual experience," for "Where there is the most

66. MS. H., fol. 89<sup>v</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 117; *Selections*, p. 278.

67. Sp. MS. W. AN. B., fol. 13<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, 4th ed., pp. 104-5; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 129.

68. MS. S.K.M. III, fol. 44<sup>v</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 159; *Selections*, p. 216.

69. MS. Triv., fol. 20<sup>v</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 131; *Selections*, p. 4.



sensation, there is the greatest martyrdom,"<sup>70</sup> i.e., pain and suffering.<sup>71</sup>

But with all his awareness of his divine creative power, Leonardo, son of maternal nature, remains a "servant" in his humble devotion to the earth. "I am never weary of serving."<sup>72</sup> "Obstacles do not bend me." "Every obstacle yields to firm resolve."<sup>73</sup>

"No labor is sufficient to tire me," he writes, and continues: "Hands into which ducats and precious stones fall like snow; they never become tired of serving, but this service is only for its utility and not according to our intention." And he concludes with the proud words: "Naturally nature has so disposed me."<sup>74</sup>

This sense of service draws its unshakable power from the intense alertness of a higher being. It is the alertness of consciousness that here appears as activity and movement, as the psychic core of the human and the creative: "Rather death than weariness!"

"O thou that sleepest, what is sleep?" writes Leonardo. "Sleep resembles death; oh, why not let thy work be such that after death thou mayst retain a resemblance to

70. MS. Triv., fol. 6. See Herzfeld, p. 131.

71. That Leonardo's remark about sensation has nothing to do with a materialistic theory of knowledge may be shown by his aphorism: "The senses are of the earth; the reason stands apart from them in contemplation." (MS. Triv., fol. 33<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 131; *Selections*, p. 6.)

72. R. 685, MS. W.P., fol. 11<sup>v</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 139.

73. R. 682, MS. W.L., fol. 198<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 141; J. P. Richter (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, Vol. I, p. 382, No. 682.

74. R. 685, MS. W.P., fol. 11<sup>v</sup>. Cf. Herzfeld, p. 139; cf. Richter, *Literary Works*, Vol. I, p. 389, No. 685.

perfect life, rather than during life make thyself resemble the hapless dead by sleeping."<sup>75</sup>

The work he intended is no finished work like the work of the artist or scientist, however great; his intention is manifested in the symbol of "alertness," of "not-being-tired."

"Intellectual passion drives out sensuality,"<sup>76</sup> he writes. This highly characteristic utterance proves that with him it was a question not only of repressing and inhibiting the world of the drives, and not only of sublimating energies to a higher plane, but of a regrouping in which a genuine power, which Leonardo designates as the "passion of the spirit," becomes dominant. For the spirit too is a genuine "driving force" of the human psyche.

The hero-son in the myth is not only the son of the Virgin Mother but also of the Spirit Father who fecundates her. This "mythological situation," which in Leonardo—as in all creative men—takes the form of the search for the "true father," the Spirit Father, leads as a rule to two complementary events: the "slaying of the collective father," i.e., the surpassing of the traditional value world of the hero's time; and the finding of the unknown God.

In Leonardo the slaying of the father is evinced in his radically antiauthoritarian, antischolastic, and anti-confessional attitude, which was so strong that the men of his time thought him "suspect" and even—though

75. MS. C.A., fol. 76<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 122; *Selections*, p. 274.

76. MS. C.A., fol. 358<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 140; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 72.



mistakenly—anti-Christian. "Whoever in discussion adduces authority uses not intellect but rather memory,"<sup>77</sup> he wrote. The full import of these words can be understood only if we consider not only that the science and medicine of his time were built on the authority of the ancients, but that the entire religious edifice of the Middle Ages was also founded on the "authority" of the Bible and its exegetes. With this protest, to be sure, Leonardo followed an inner call that often made itself heard at that time, but his dangerous proximity to heresy was assuredly one of his reasons for putting down his notes in mirror writing and only as a record for his own use. This danger is obvious when we consider Spengler's sentence: "When Leonardo da Vinci, at the summit of the Renaissance, was working upon his 'Anna Selbdritt,' the Witches' Hammer was being written in Rome in the finest humanistic Latin."<sup>78</sup>

A part of his heretical attitudes and thoughts is hidden in his riddles. One of them runs: "In all parts of Europe there shall be lamentations by great nations for the death of one man who died in the East."<sup>79</sup> And the solution is: "The lamentations made on Good Friday." Or—and this was before the Reformation—his riddle on the worship of images of saints: "Men shall speak with men who hear not; their eyes shall be open and they

77. MS. C.A., fol. 76<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 9; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 95.

78. Spengler, Vol. II, pp. 291–92. [Anna Selbdritt = St. Anne, Virgin, and Christ Child, as an art motif. Witches' Hammer = *Malleus Maleficarum*, manual on the punishment of witches.—Ed.]

79. MS. C.A., fol. 370<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 297; *Selections*, p. 248.



shall not see: they will speak to them and there shall be no reply; they will ask pardon from one who has ears and does not hear; they will offer light to one who is blind."<sup>80</sup>

These are iconoclastic words, especially in the mouth of a painter of madonnas and saints. They are no less revolutionary than the riddle "of churches and the habitations of friars": "Many there will be who will give up work and labor, and poverty of life and of goods, and will go to live among wealth in splendid buildings, declaring that this is the way to make themselves acceptable to God."<sup>81</sup>

The antiauthoritarian attitude of the hero, whose mission it is to usher in the new, is archetypally conditioned and cannot, as Freud attempts to do, be derived from Leonardo's childhood history—a history falsely construed to begin with. Freud writes: "In most other human beings—no less today than in primeval times—the need for support from an authority of some sort is so compelling that their world begins to totter if that authority is threatened. Only Leonardo could dispense with that support; he would not have been able to do so had he not learnt in the first years of his life to do without his father."<sup>82</sup>

As so often in Freud, what is false when considered on the personalistic plane is true on the archetypal plane. The hero's Spirit Father, his inner "pneumatic" reality, the "wind" that fecundates the vulture goddess,

80. MS. C.A., fol. 137<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 292; *Selections*, p. 249.

81. MS. C.A., fol. 370<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 302; *Selections*, p. 249.

82. Freud, pp. 122-23.

is unknown to the hero. He experiences "everything" through the mother, who as "Great Mother" also contains within her the masculine and the spiritual aspects. We also find this constellation in the normal development of the child—in the Western world at least. Only gradually does the child free himself from the uroboric Great Mother of the original relation, whose one world then separates into oppositions dominated by the mother and father archetype, and finally turns into the patriarchal world dominated by the father archetype. But in the "hero" the constellation is different. Estrangement from his personal father and the world he represents then leads the hero to the "quest" for his "real father," the spiritual authority, from which he is essentially descended.

But whereas the heroes who are "Father's sons" attain to an experience of unity in the dragon fight ("I and the Father are one"), the "Mother's sons," even if they have found their relation to the Spirit Father, always remain closer to the Mother, in whom the supreme godhead is manifested to them. In this case it is not infrequent for the paternal-male principle to be juxtaposed or subordinated to the maternal principle, as is the rule in the matriarchal phase.

Thus in Leonardo's religious experience the paternal spirit-godhead as the newly discovered unknown God remained subordinated to the Mother Goddess—although Leonardo was not conscious of this. As demiurge, as master builder, inventor, and constructor, Leonardo praised the creative God, and his religious feeling rises up time and time again from the fervent emotion in-



spired in him by his knowledge of nature and its laws.

"How admirable thy justice, O thou First Mover!" he cried out. "Thou hast not willed that any power should be deprived of the processes or qualities necessary for its results."<sup>83</sup> This formulation still bears the stamp of the Platonizing philosophy of his time. But as his formulations became more closely integrated with his own researches, his imagery became richer and more concrete. "Let no man who is not a mathematician read the fundamentals of my work."<sup>84</sup> This sentence may be said to anticipate the development of the natural sciences, yet it is not Leonardo's profoundest insight.

"Necessity is the mistress and guide of nature.

"Necessity is the theme and inventor of nature, its eternal curb and law."<sup>85</sup>

"Nature does not break her law."<sup>86</sup>

The bond between the Spirit Father as law, as fundamental idea or reason, and the Great Goddess Nature is the archetypal foundation of all pantheistic conceptions. Mythologically, the wind fecundates the vulture goddess and engenders movement in her; it is the spirit law of her vitality. At the corresponding stage of insight Leonardo declares: "Nature is constrained by the logical necessity of her law, which is infused in her."<sup>87</sup> And the mythological image of the spirit seed is still discernible in the image of the "infusing."

83. MS. A., fol. 24<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 22; *Selections*, p. 76.

84. MS. W., fol. 19118<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 3; *Selections*, p. 7.

85. MS. S.K.M. III, fol. 43<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 12; *Selections*, p. 7.

86. MS. C., fol. 23<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 12; *Selections*, p. 7.

87. MS. C., fol. 23<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 12; *Selections*, p. 7 (mod.).



Here we find a strange similarity between Leonardo and Spinoza, who was in other ways so very different from him. I am referring not only to the "mathematical method" foreshadowed by Leonardo and to the "deus sive natura" that for Spinoza as well was no materialistic conception, but most particularly to the principle of "love out of knowledge," which for both men was the highest form of human realization. Leonardo said: "For painting is the way to learn to know the maker of all marvelous things, and this is the way to love so great an inventor. For in truth love springs from the full knowledge of the thing that one loves; and if you do not know it, you can love it but little or not at all."<sup>88</sup>

And like an echo Spinoza answers, almost 150 years later: "This kind of knowledge . . . result[s] . . . from a direct revelation of the object itself to the understanding. And if that object is glorious and good, then the soul becomes necessarily united with it. . . . Hence it follows incontrovertibly that it is this knowledge which evokes love."<sup>89</sup>

This "gnostic" attitude of love through knowledge<sup>90</sup> under the auspices of the Spirit Father contrasts with the unconscious feeling tone of his relation to the Great

88. From the *Traktat von der Malerei* [*Trattato della Pittura*], p. 54; *Selections*, p. 217.

89. A. Wolf (tr.), *Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being*, Part II, ch. 22, p. 133.

90. The transition to Spinoza is supplied by the Renaissance philosophy of love, whose most significant exponent was Leo Hebraeus. His *Dialoghi d'amore* appeared in 1535.

Mother, discernible in his words of proud gratitude: "Naturally nature has so disposed me."

His bond with nature is direct and primary, his love of knowledge derived and secondary, just as the mother is direct and first for the child, the father derived and second.

Only when we grasp these inner developments and experiences in Leonardo can we conceive of the loneliness in which he lived. The situation of the hero-son who experiences himself as son of a Spirit Father unknown in his contemporary world is always that of gnostic "existence in an alien world." But in Leonardo this one-sided gnostic constellation is compensated and complicated by the "Mother's son's" earthliness and profound affirmation of life. This central conflict explains the ambiguity and splitness of his existence. He, the illegitimate child, moved among the aristocracy, the princes, kings, and popes of his time, with the lonely aristocracy of genius, which though admired from afar is understood and loved by no one.

Leonardo saw in man the great and perfect work of nature; in a marginal note to some anatomical drawings and expositions he wrote: "And thou, man, who in this work of mine dost look upon the wonderful works of nature, if thou judgest it to be a criminal thing to destroy it, reflect how much more criminal it is to take the life of man; and if this external form appears to thee marvelously constructed, remember that it is as nothing compared with the soul that dwells in that structure; and in truth, whatever this may be, it is a thing divine. Leave



it then to dwell in its work at its good pleasure, and let not thy rage and malice destroy such a life—for in truth he who values it not does not deserve it.”<sup>91</sup>

But this same respect for man fills him with loveless contempt for the rabble, which is not creative and therefore not made in the divine image: “It seems to me that coarse men of bad habits and little power of reason do not deserve so fine an instrument or so great a variety of mechanism as those endowed with ideas and great reasoning power, but merely a sack where food is received and whence it passes. For in truth they cannot be reckoned otherwise than as a passage for food, because it does not seem to me that they have anything in common with the human race except voice and shape. And all else is far below the level of beasts.”<sup>92</sup>

The same Leonardo who was opposed to the taking of life, who was a vegetarian,<sup>93</sup> and who was said, even in the days of his poverty, to have bought birds in the market only to set them free—this same Leonardo dissected live frogs, constructed the most frightful war machines, and even boasted of being their inventor. He was an intimate adviser of Cesare Borgia; he studied the physiognomy and made sketches of men on their way to be executed. This unique painter of the soul’s beauty was without equal in his discernment of the bestial and evil in the human face; he was the first to see man as an ape, as a caricature of himself.

91. MS. W., fol. 19001<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 137; *Selections*, p. 280.

92. MS. W., fol. 19038. See Herzfeld, p. 105; *Selections*, p. 279.

93. R. Langton Douglas, *Leonardo da Vinci: His Life and His Pictures*, p. 1.



Leonardo suffered from this tension between the contraries of heaven and earth; in his realm beyond good and evil he was as lonely as scarcely another creative man before Nietzsche. For he had no ties with even the greatest among his contemporaries. He was as alien to Michelangelo's titanic preoccupation with his opus as to Raphael's unquestioning felicity. The "unreliable," problematic Leonardo who never finished anything lived as an outsider and almost as an outcast among the famous men of his time. And yet with all his many-sidedness, and despite his desperate inability to fulfill himself in any one thing, Leonardo was never restless, never hunted. He was anything but a "problematic nature" in the usual sense, let alone a sick man "incapable" of doing his work.

The task he set himself—of combining in art the law and necessity of the spirit, which he sought to apprehend in the measurements and proportions of the body, with the creative spontaneity of nature's beauty—was so immense and paradoxical that the product was almost bound to be experimental and fragmentary. Equally paradoxical was his striving to build a higher unity from infinite space and the open, unconfined human form, from depth of background and fullness of foreground, and from the opposition between light and shade in all its transitions and gradations. "Leonardo begins with the inside, the spiritual space within us, not with the considered definition-line, and when he ends . . . the substance of color lies like a mere breathing over the real structure of the picture."<sup>94</sup>

94. Spengler, Vol. I, pp. 277-78.

Here again the aim is a synthesis of spirit and nature, of the infinite and finite, of the invisible reality of a soul grown visible and the tangible reality of a body unlimited in space. Leonardo was captivated by the paradoxical character of these problems and devoted to them with the entire passion of his nature; yet at the same time he saw them from a distance, just as he saw himself from outside. This is most clearly revealed by the strange form of his notes; he never writes "I will," "I should," but, as though a strange voice were speaking to him, "You must," "you should." This distance, this tireless attempt, never abandoned in all the passion of his work, to achieve a midpoint between the contraries which he experienced and suffered in all their depth and power is indeed the unique in Leonardo.

He was open to everything; he was the son of the Mother as well as the Father. He suffered within himself a crossing of the vertical—Spirit, medieval man, and the heavenly Father—with the horizontal—earth-bound and earth-oriented modern man and the Great Mother. It was in this crossing of heaven and earth, which is the Cross of the modern man,<sup>95</sup> that Leonardo discovered man's new position between the powers.

His *Last Supper*, it seems to me, is an expression of this struggle and of this synthesis of opposites. In the Christ of this painting the synthesis of God and man, of above and below, is perceived and configured in an entirely new way. This Son of Man surrounded by the disciples is an archetypal yet real and earthly, that is, incarnate, image of primordial man. He is the image of

95. Jung, *Aion*, index, s.v.



what man "really and essentially" is. Leonardo's Christ is no sufferer, no man of pain, nor is he the Christ of the Gospel of St. John. He is more human, for he is the very core of the human, around which the disciples representing the different temperaments that make up human nature are dramatically yet harmoniously grouped. He is not only the "man from the East" and the man who stands alone; he is not only the youthful God incarnate; he is the transfiguration of all that is human, the loneliness of the wise. And in his outspread arms there lives the receptive silence of him who surrenders to the necessity of a destiny which is his very own self.

We know how long and perseveringly—with a perseverance characteristic of him despite his fragmentary work—Leonardo struggled with this painting. If he left the face of Christ unfinished, this only proves that he remained faithful to his inner image, and was not concerned with the ideal of completeness that means so much to mankind and was so particularly important to his time. This image of man, which first manifested itself to Leonardo, had to remain incomplete; for incompleteness is intrinsic in the human and earthly, as Leonardo, perhaps the first of modern men, experienced it in the suffering of his own existence.

But the struggle with the Great Mother, the central theme of Leonardo's life, was never appeased; it led him, at the age of fifty, to the supreme and ultimate creations, not only of European painting, but of all creative embodiment of the feminine.

The *Mona Lisa* and the *St. Anne with Virgin and Christ Child* are the incomparable expressions of this



period, in which the feminine through Leonardo was manifested to the Western world in a new and, in a sense, definitive form. It is no accident that the *Mona Lisa* has fascinated innumerable thousands of men for centuries or that this painting occupies a unique place in European painting. But why does the *Mona Lisa*, of all the European portraits of women, pass as the embodiment of the riddle of the feminine; why does this smile time and time again invite interpretation, as though confronting modern man with a question that calls for an answer?

In this painting the feminine appears in a unique way, not as Heavenly Goddess or Earth Mother, but as a human soul in which the heavenly and the earthly achieve a new synthesis. There is in *Mona Lisa* something ambiguous and indefinable, something fugitive and mystical, a fascination and a mysterious sensuality; but one might say equally well that all this is manifested through her. For in the endlessness of the background, in the color transitions, the merging of light and shade, there lives a soul which is embodied equally in *Mona Lisa* herself and in the landscape, in the indescribable unity of the picture and in every one of its details, the hands, the smile, the mountains of the background, or the serpentine leading to the mystery of the blue lakes.

"The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of

strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as St. Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has molded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea."<sup>96</sup>

The mediating and indefinable, the gentle and cruel, the far and near, actual and yet timeless, which Pater

96. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance; Studies in Art and Poetry*, pp. 129-30.



expressed in this almost magical picture, correspond almost exactly to the archetypal soul image of the feminine, the anima, later discovered by depth psychology. And it is extremely significant that only Leonardo, who had freed himself from the reality of all earthly bonds, should have succeeded in conjuring up this figure of the feminine soul. In *Mona Lisa* the immortal beloved appeared to this man of fifty as Sophia, as man's intangible and transcendent counterpart.

In Valentinian Gnosis, "the world soul was born of Sophia's smile."<sup>97</sup> And with *Mona Lisa*'s smile was born the soul of modern man, in which Madonna and witch, the earthly, and the divine, are combined.<sup>98</sup>

The break-through that occurred in Leonardo's encounter with *Mona Lisa* led in his life to the victory of Eros over Logos, of love over knowledge. The words "Love conquers everything,"<sup>99</sup> which would sound banal on any other lips, seem in Leonardo, for whom love was born from knowledge, to express a new insight.

All of Leonardo's great paintings after *Mona Lisa* must be understood in the light of this Eros, which transformed and renewed his life. This is most evident in connection with the *St. Anne* (Pl. II), in which he

97. G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, n. 76.

98. This picture, on which Leonardo worked for four years, also remained unfinished. *Mona Lisa* died suddenly at the age of twenty-six. Leonardo, who kept this picture with him to the end of his life, may himself have perceived the bond between life and death that lies like a veil of unreality on her mysterious face.

99. MS. C.A., fol. 344<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 149; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 96.



achieved a magnificent new conception of the Holy Mothers.

In addition to the unity of mother and daughter, Demeter and Kore, the matriarchal group in Eleusis includes a third: the divine daughter or the divine son.<sup>100</sup> In the Christian paintings of *St. Anne with Virgin and Christ Child* this primordial matriarchal figure enters into a predominantly patriarchal-Christian realm. For this reason Mary, holding the child Jesus, is often represented as herself a child sitting in her mother's lap. St. Anne thus appears as the all-embracing fountainhead of the generations, as a form of "Great Mother" living on in Christianity.<sup>101</sup>

According to her legend, St. Anne belongs to the archetypal group of women who, barren with their earthly husbands, are impregnated by the godhead. Later, this mythological impregnation by the god is usually replaced by the god's promise to the barren woman. According to the legend, St. Anne married three husbands, gave birth to innumerable saints, and is the patron saint of childbirth and mines; all this bears witness to her original fertility aspect as Earth Mother. In Christian painting she wears over a red undergarment, the symbol of love, the green mantle of nature in contrast to the blue mantle of Mary, who represents the Sophia-Spirit aspect.

In Masaccio's work the figure of St. Anne fills the

100. C. Kerényi, "Kore," pp. 198 ff. in *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, cf. my *Great Mother*, pp. 305 f.

101. We owe this discovery to Olga Froebe-Kapteyn, founder of the Eranos Archive in Ascona, Switzerland.

background; in a protective attitude reminiscent of the mantle madonnas, she still enfolds Mary and the Child in her outspread arms.

In the symbolic figures of Anne and Mary we discern the contrast between the "elementary" and "transformative" character of the Archetypal Feminine.<sup>102</sup> To simplify, the elementary character corresponds to the maternal, containing, childbearing, nurturing, and protective aspect; while the transformative character, in its highest form, corresponds to the Sophia aspect of the feminine.

The historical circumstances surrounding the painting of Leonardo's picture are not without interest. The *St. Anne* was ordered in 1500 by the Servites for the Church of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence.

"During that period, the religious orders that were devoted to the cult of Mary had stressed the importance of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The acceptance of this dogma led, in the course of time, to the adoption of the thesis that the Virgin's mother was a woman of great sanctity. The old legends relating that St. Anne had three husbands and three daughters became more and more discredited. This movement in Catholic theology reached its culminating point in 1494, on the publication of a book in praise of St. Anne, by a famous German scholar, Johannes Trithemius, Abbot of Sponheim.<sup>103</sup> St. Anne, wrote the author, was chosen by God for her appointed service before the foundation of the world. She conceived 'without the action of man,'

<sup>102</sup>. Cf. my *Great Mother*, pp. 24 f.

<sup>103</sup>. Johannes Trithemius, *De laudibus Sanctissimae Matris Annae tractatus* (1494).



and was as pure as her daughter. 'Why then,' Trithemius asks, 'do we not honor the mother as we honor the daughter?' " 104

This doctrine of St. Anne's virginity, later rejected by the Church, gave Leonardo the opportunity to awaken the archetypal image of the feminine that lay dormant in his unconscious and to represent the mother-daughter archetype in the unity of Anne and Mary.

At first sight Leonardo's picture seems to retain the usual pattern. St. Anne's silhouette enfolds Mary, who is sitting on her lap; the two form a unit. In Leonardo's (differently composed) cartoon for *St. Anne* (Pl. III), one is almost tempted to speak of a two-headed figure. This condensation of the "two mothers" into one figure, noted by Freud,<sup>105</sup> springs from an archetypal constellation characterized by the myth in which the hero possesses an earthly and a heavenly mother.<sup>106</sup>

However, St. Anne is usually represented as mother and Mary as daughter. But Leonardo's figures are eternally youthful twin figures of the feminine. They too, like the Eleusinian Demeter and Kore, might be called "the goddesses."<sup>107</sup> But in Leonardo there is a strange reversal. Mary, as she bends forward to clasp the child, represents the maternal, elementary character of the feminine; the smiling St. Anne dwells in the spiritual, transformative realm of Sophia,<sup>108</sup> which here forms a

104. Douglas, p. 26.

105. *Leonardo*, pp. 111 ff.

106. Often, though not always, the opposition of good and evil is involved.

107. Cf. my *Great Mother*, pp. 305 f.

108. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 329 f.



background even more meaningful and mysterious than in the *Mona Lisa*.

This reversal, in which the Sophia-Spirit-transformative character outweighs the elementary character of the maternal, is the symbolic expression of an archetypal situation that seems to be characteristic not only for Leonardo but for modern man in general.

Where the elementary character of the feminine is predominant, as in matriarchally accented epochs, the psychic world is relatively static, for the rule of the Great Mother implies not only a domination of the unconscious over consciousness<sup>109</sup> but also a relatively stable situation. Such cultures are conservative and even in a certain sense reactionary, because the instinctual aspect of the unconscious, represented by the archetype of the Great Mother, dictates a fixed system of unconscious attitudes, in which there is little room for the initiative and activity of the ego and consciousness, that is, of the masculine aspect. In opposition to a situation in which the Great Mother dominates her son-lover, the hero, with his development of the ego and consciousness, represents a "fresh attempt" on the part of the psyche. But where the elementary character of the feminine predominates, the masculine youth—to formulate it mythologically—is the "thing of a season." He is condemned to an early death; the unconscious assimilates all the activities of the ego, employing them for its own purposes, and prevents it from ripening to the reality of an independent world of consciousness.

Medieval man was "contained" in the bosom of

109. See my *Origins and History*, pp. 40 f.

Mother Church. But when the transformative became predominant over the elementary character, this meant that henceforth the transformation of consciousness and of the total personality would be the theme of Western development.

The synchronistic growth of alchemical literature, which, as Jung has shown,<sup>110</sup> was an attempt to express this process of psychic transformation, and many other "signs of the times," such as the Reformation, indicate that the center of psychic life was beginning to shift to the individual. The Renaissance has justly been called the epoch of the discovery of the individual. In the following centuries the individual and his destiny, the problem of his containment in the collective psyche—in the collectivity without and within—come increasingly to the forefront in politics, art, literature, sociology, and psychology.

The indefatigable mobility which prevented Leonardo from stopping at any work or insight and drove him to change continuously is an expression of this unrest in modern man, who was beginning to take cognizance of the endlessness and mystery of the psyche. It was no accident that Walter Pater should have discovered this transformative character precisely in Leonardo's feminine figures, in the *Mona Lisa* and the women of the Holy Family, of whom he says:

" . . . They are the clairvoyants, through whom, as through delicate instruments, one becomes aware of the subtler forces of nature, and the modes of their action, all that is magnetic in it, all those finer conditions

110. Especially in *Psychology and Alchemy*.



wherein material things rise to that subtlety of operation which constitutes them spiritual, where only the finer nerve and the keener touch can follow. It is as if in certain significant examples we actually saw those forces at their work on human flesh. Nervous, electric, faint always with some inexplicable faintness, these people seem to be subject to exceptional conditions, to feel powers at work in the common air unfelt by others, to become, as it were, the receptacle of them, and pass them on to us in a chain of secret influences."<sup>111</sup>

In Leonardo's painting the daughter who gives birth to the savior represents, then, the elementary character; she is subordinated to St. Anne as the Great Mother and source of spiritual transformation. And here we find manifested an archetypal constellation whose revolutionary import we cannot fully fathom even today.

After Leonardo, Goethe alone of Western men disclosed the same tendency toward individuation in an infinitely mobile unity of life and work. It is no mistake to regard Leonardo as a "Faustian man." In Goethe's *Faust* the archetypal constellations to which Leonardo gave form achieve conscious formulation. And what Goethe says of the Mothers is fully in keeping with their transformative character: "Formation, transformation, eternal preservation of the eternal meaning."

And the constellation of the *St. Anne* also reappears at the end of Part II of *Faust*. To the double form of Anne-Mary raising the son aloft corresponds the Eternal Feminine, drawing the child Faust "onward." The vulture goddess is the Goddess of Heaven. In Leonardo's paint-

III. Pater, p. 120.



ing St. Anne's head towers into the ethereal world of heaven. And in Goethe:

Höchste Herrscherin der Welt  
Lasse mich im blauen  
Ausgespannten Himmelszelt  
Dein Geheimnis schauen.

(Supreme goddess of the world  
Let me behold thy secret  
In the blue unfolded  
Tent of heaven.)

Strangely enough, the unity of the matriarchal group of Anne, Mary, and the Child with the vulture, the

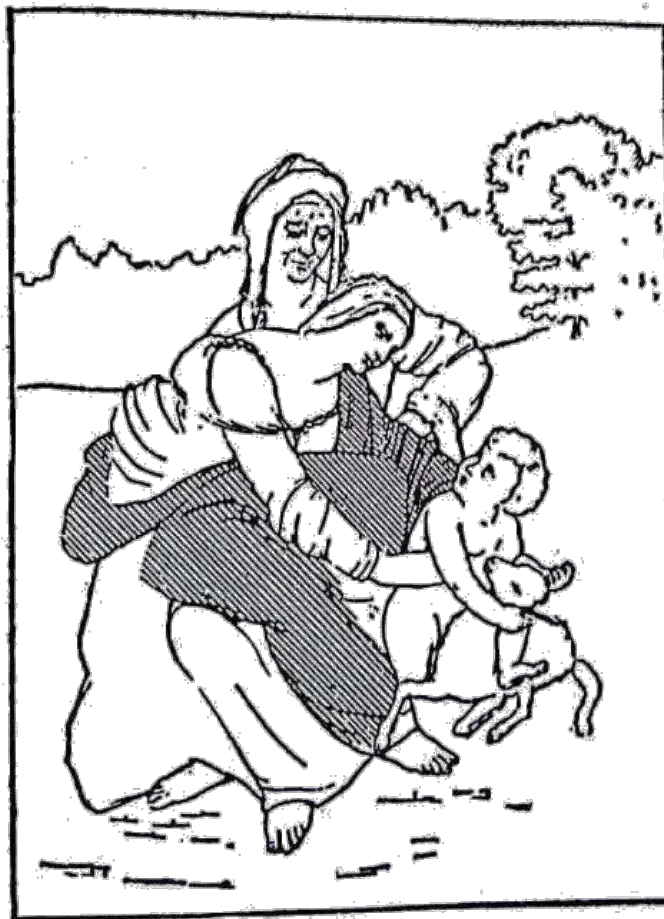


Fig. 1

archetypal symbol of the Great Mother, is expressed, though obscurely, in Leonardo's painting. The discovery was made by Pfister (cf. Fig. 1): "In the length of blue cloth, which is visible around the hip of the woman in front and which extends in the direction of her lap and her right knee, one can see the vulture's extremely characteristic head, its neck and the sharp curve where its body begins. Hardly any observer whom I have confronted with my little find has been able to resist the evidence of this picture-puzzle."<sup>112</sup>

Quite naturally, Freud and Pfister connect the unconscious image of the vulture with Leonardo's childhood recollection. In the picture the vulture's tail, as in the fantasy, is over the mouth of the child, who turns his head upward while holding the little lamb at his feet.

The question now arises as to whether Freud's "mistake," which we have discussed at some length above, discredits Pfister's discovery. For if the bird in Leonardo's childhood reminiscence was not a vulture but a *nibio*, a kite, why should the form of a vulture turn up in the *St. Anne with Virgin and Christ Child*? Strachey's answer is that "the 'hidden bird' in Leonardo's picture must be abandoned."<sup>113</sup> But if we look into the matter more deeply, we shall come to a different conclusion. Pfister and Freud had in mind an *unconscious* figure, and there is no reason to suppose that such an unconscious image must coincide with Leonardo's conscious reminiscence of the "kite." If with Pfister and Freud we

<sup>112</sup> O. Pfister, "Kryptolalie, Kryptographie und unbewusstes Vexierbild bei Normalen," p. 147. (Tr. as in Freud, p. 115.)

<sup>113</sup> Strachey, editorial note to Freud, p. 61.



recognize—and so we do—the form of a vulture touching the Christ Child's lips with its tail, our picture-puzzle is just as much in need of interpretation as before—more so in fact, for now we must ask: how did the conscious recollection of a kite become transformed into the unconscious image of a vulture? But in formulating this question we have almost answered it. The conscious recollection of the zoologically definable kite has been replaced by the symbolic image characteristic of the Great Mother. Regardless of whether we suppose this form to have sprung from an archetypal image—and we know that such images can arise spontaneously in men possessing no “knowledge” of them—or whether we assume that Leonardo was aware of the mother-significance of the vulture, Freud supports his assumption that Leonardo, who was very widely read, knew of the vulture as a mother symbol by pointing out that the Church Fathers, in speaking of the virgin birth, repeatedly cited the legend of the female vulture fertilized by the wind. This “vulture image” occurs in a picture of St. Anne, who as we have seen is closely connected with the problem of “virgin birth.” Having noted this connection, we can scarcely help wondering whether the “hidden vulture,” far from being a product of the unconscious, might not have been consciously put into the picture by Leonardo. This seems perfectly compatible with his playful nature and love of mystery. But in any case, whether we believe that the vulture found its way consciously or unconsciously into the picture of St. Anne, the fact remains that its tail touches the child's mouth as in his childhood reminiscence. In other words, Leonardo related



this fundamental constellation of the "divine child" with the "divine mother" to himself, and identified himself with this child. If our basic assumption that Leonardo's whole work was a self-unfolding of his individuation process is correct, there is nothing surprising about this phenomenon. But in any event—and this must be emphasized here—if the picture-puzzle is unconscious rather than conscious, Freud's "mistake" corresponds to a mistake by Leonardo himself. In both men the symbolic image of the Great Mother proved stronger than the actual image of the "kite."

If we follow the right edge of the large triangle into which Leonardo, as in *The Virgin of the Rocks*, composed the figures of this picture, we obtain an ascending sequence of symbolic figures embracing the whole matriarchal world, the relations of the Great Mother Goddess to the world and to man: the earth, the lamb, the child savior, the vulture, Mary, and above them the smiling face of St. Anne surrounded by the spectral blue mountains of the spirit, which dissolve into an ethereal sky.

The conception is not a sacral one; the emphasis seems to be wholly on the human. And herein this painting manifests the secret of the modern world, for which the archetypal symbolism appears to coincide with earthly reality. In the symbol the unity of the earthly and the divine is experienced as human life; and the ancient as well as the medieval cleavage between a higher celestial world and a lower earthly world gives way to a new anthropocentric experience.<sup>114</sup>

Whether Mary was worshiped as a heavenly goddess

114. See my "Bedeutung des Erdarchetyps."

or was regarded as a lower vessel, the earthly genetrix of a God who entered into her from above, in either case the earthly, human middle zone was distinct from the realm of the divine. In Christianity, for this reason, the human was always a prey to sin, needful of grace. But as the human psyche became the scene of divine history, or rather came to be perceived as such, man achieved a new evaluation of the world that we call anthropocentric, because only through such an evaluation do the relation of the divine to the human, the dependency of the divine on the human, become clear.

Leonardo did not reflect on all this; none of it is directly stated in his meditations. But the profane character of his portrayal<sup>115</sup> is compensated by a numinosity of the human, and it is this that fascinates us in his work.

In this new but not yet fully conscious view of the world, the feminine as vehicle of the psychic regains its old rank as the principle that gives birth to life and spirit. For this reason the goddesses with the son, to whom his earthly nature as lamb is subordinated, play a greater part than the Spirit Father of the Middle Ages in determining the new human view of the psyche. In the *Sa. Anne*, as in nearly all Renaissance madonnas, the son is not the redeeming sacrifice, bleeding on the Cross, forsaken by a cruel God and offered up to mankind, but the "Divine Child"<sup>116</sup> living in the smile of

<sup>115</sup> For this reason it is the London *Virgin of the Rocks* with the halo and not the picture in the Louvre that must be regarded as a work of a student.

<sup>116</sup> See Jung and Kerenyi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, pp. 33 ff.

the Mothers, looking up at them, linking the supreme Sophia with the fruit-bringing earth. He plays with the lamb, the childlike animal life of the earth and mankind, which as the good shepherd he will later protect. But even as good shepherd, to whom the flock is entrusted, he remains the beloved son of the Mothers, the bringer of divine salvation, the Spirit-Son of Sophia, who not only holds and shelters the life born of her but also transforms, enhances, and redeems it.

In this Sophia with her mysterious smile there lives the lonely, aging Leonardo's new and supreme experience of Eros. Merejkowski speaks of a drawing in which Mary is shown teaching the little Jesus geometry, and **this**, I believe, indicates that there is nothing arbitrary or accidental about the relationship we have found between Mona Lisa, St. Anne, and Sophia. From this time on the mysterious smile of Mona Lisa never departs from Leonardo's work; all his remaining paintings are united by the experience of Sophia. The two last among his important paintings, the *John the Baptist* and the closely related *Bacchus*, seem in some mysterious way to develop the motif of the bond between the Divine Son and the Mother.

Leonardo's *John the Baptist* (Pl. V), pointing upward with a mystical smile, as well as the *Bacchus* (Pl. IV), have a puzzling, strangely free and open expression. Even Freud, who, as he himself knew, lacked the "oceanic feeling," and with it the feeling for religion and for any profound art, was captivated by these pictures and expressed this feeling in words that have no parallel



in his work: "These pictures breathe a mystical air into whose secret one dares not penetrate."

And further: "The figures are still androgynous, but no longer in the sense of the vulture-phantasy. They are beautiful youths of feminine delicacy and with effeminate forms; they do not cast their eyes down, but gaze in mysterious triumph, as if they knew of a great achievement of happiness, about which silence must be kept. The familiar smile of fascination leads one to guess that it is a secret of love. It is possible that in these figures Leonardo has denied the unhappiness of his erotic life and has triumphed over it in his art, by representing the wishes of the boy, infatuated with his mother, as fulfilled in this blissful union of the male and female natures."<sup>117</sup>

Of Mona Lisa's smile it has been written: "Men call it mysterious, for they stand outside of the woman's bond with the Father God, and it is this bond that calls forth the smile."<sup>118</sup>

This remark does not seem adequate, as is proved by the smile of these divine youths, in whom the Christian and pagan are transcended on a higher plane. Their smile, too, is the symbol of the "love secret" between them and the Great Mother. Both partners in this secret, the young god and the Spirit Mother, are fully entitled to bear the same seal of mystery on their lips. But what does this actually mean? For we know nothing of any

<sup>117</sup>. *Leonardo*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>118</sup>. F. du Bois-Reymond, "Über die archetypische Bedingtheit des erstgeborenen Sohnes und seiner Mutter," p. 45.

relationship between John the Baptist and a "mother," and in neither of the two paintings does there seem to be so much as a hint of such a relationship.<sup>119</sup>

The controversy over Leonardo's *Bacchus* leads us to the profound archetypal intention realized in these portrayals of the *puer eternus*. According to one interpretation, the "Bacchus" was originally another "John in the Desert," and the panther skin, vine leaves, and thyrsus were added only at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>120</sup> Against this thesis Marie Herzfeld writes: "There is no doubt that this poetic composition was always conceived as a Bacchus, since the finding by a contemporary, Flavio Antonio Giralaldi, of an epigram in praise of this painting entitled 'Bacchus (!) Leonardi Vinci.'"<sup>121</sup>

The relaxed and indolent way in which the hermaphroditic god sits resting in the countryside is wholly in keeping with the ancient conception of Dionysus. In this picture of the "oriental god," Leonardo, unconsciously no doubt, portrayed a central figure of the matriarchal mystery world, closely related to the vulture goddess. For Dionysus is the mystery god of feminine existence, son of the Phrygian Zemelo, a form of the Great Earth-Mother Goddess of Asia Minor. In Greece the Goddess became the earthly Semele, but even in the

119. The only known connection is characteristically that of the Gospel of St. John, in which Christ on the Cross recommends a mother-son relationship between John the Evangelist and the Madonna.

120. *Tout l'œuvre peint de Leonard de Vinci*.

121. Herzfeld, *op. cit.*



myth of Semele, who dies at the sight of Zeus her lover, the connection between the Virgin Goddess and the masculine Wind-Spirit, the "paternal uroboros," remains discernible.<sup>122</sup> The nymphs and animals that feed Dionysus, as well as his orgies—the ecstatic orgies of the Mother Goddess Cybele,<sup>123</sup> in which man becomes one with nature, and the god is dismembered and eaten in the form of an animal—are expressions of the multiform bond between the young god and the feminine.

Even in antiquity the Dionysian mysteries, which came only late to Greece, were believed to have originated in Egypt, whose goddesses—with Leonardo's vulture goddess at their center—were among the earliest representatives of the Great Mother.

But how can such a Bacchus have passed as a John the Baptist, or, if the painting was originally a Bacchus, how is it that this Bacchus resembles John the Baptist like a twin brother? What a change from the wild desert ascetic to this figure shining with a mysterious inner light! And why the "mysteriously triumphant" look and the mysterious smile of Sophia on his lips?

It is, as Freud dimly saw, the knowledge of a secret union with the Great Mother as mother of all life, the knowledge of the Great Goddess's beloved son that he is forever blessed through his bond with her, through the "blessed union of masculine and feminine being." It is the secret of the matriarchal mysteries, the secret of the immortality of the divine luminous son of the Great

122. Cf. my *Amor and Psyche*, p. 99.

123. Euripides, *The Bacchae*.



Mother, resurrected in death.<sup>124</sup> The secret of all her divine sons, bringing redemption and receiving redemption, is one in the mystery smile of St. Anne, of Bacchus, and of John the Baptist.

John crying out in the desert is a symbol of the promise stated in the words of the mystery: "He must increase but I must decrease." John and Christ go together; that is why the festival commemorating the death of St. John occurs at the summer solstice and is celebrated with descending wheels of fire, rolling down the mountains, while the birth of Christ is celebrated at the winter solstice with the kindling of the tree of light, symbol of the newly ascending light. In this sense John and Christ are twin brothers; they are the kindred bearers of light, one of whom in the mysteries of Mithras holds a lowered torch, the other an upraised one, symbols of the falling and the rising light, whose outward sign is the annual course of the sun.

This whole symbolism has its source in the matriarchal sphere, where the Great Mother, the Heavenly Goddess, the vulture goddess, is also the virgin with the ear of light, Demeter-Kore, who in the Eleusinian mysteries bestows the mystery torch, the wheat of heavenly light, upon the masculine, giving it immortality in rebirth.

For the mystery experience of John, John and Christ are one in the exact sense that St. Paul expressed in the words: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The movement of the hands in the *John the Baptist*

124. Cf. my *Great Mother*, pp. 309 f.

and the *Bacchus* symbolizes the "showing of the secret" in the mysteries. John points upward to the sun of Christ that is rising in him, whose light shines on him from above, while the rest of him is shrouded in darkness. And as John points to the Cross, so Bacchus points to the secret of the thyrsus; while with his other hand, like the youthful John the Baptist in an early study now in the Windsor Library, he points, as though accidentally, downward to the earth. For Bacchus-Dionysus is also a god of life and death, and the rending of Dionysus is a mystery side by side with the crucifixion of Christ and the beheading of John. In Dionysus as in John, ascent is bound up with descent, and both growth and decline are accompanied by the smiling certainty that speaks from their "mysteriously triumphant" gaze, confident of an indissoluble bond with the regenerating Mother of the mysteries.

The hands are always in Leonardo—and not only in the *Last Supper*—essential symbols. The connection between John's upward-pointing hand and St. Anne's identical gesture in the cartoon (Pl. III) is evident. Not only does St. Anne turn with a loving smile to Mary, who is wholly taken up with her love for the Christ child; as Sophia she also admonishes her with her upward-pointed hand: Do not forget, he is not only your child; he belongs to heaven, he is the rising light. If we interpret the otherwise puzzling gesture in this way, the later version of the painting, in which this perhaps too patent indication is lacking, becomes all the more significant; for now this knowledge merges with the higher



form of creation that bears its interpretation within itself.<sup>125</sup>

In his attempt to describe the process of individuation,<sup>126</sup> Jung refers to the above-quoted words of St. Paul and remarks that "the center of the total personality no longer coincides with the ego, but with a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious. This would be the point of a new equilibrium, a new centering of the total personality, a virtual center which, on account of its focal position between conscious and unconscious, ensures for the personality a new and more solid foundation."

This process is expressed symbolically in Leonardo's John, with his smile beyond life and death and his knowledge of the waning ego and the waxing self,<sup>127</sup> a knowledge in which the pagan and the Christian are

125. The importance of John for Leonardo, who seems to have taken a profound interest in this figure throughout his life, is reflected by a remarkable and otherwise unintelligible trait in another painting: the strange gesture with which the angel in the incomparably more beautiful Louvre version of *The Virgin of the Rocks* points to the worshiping boy John. It is possible that even then the symbolic contrast between John and Christ, John representing the earthly and human aspect of human nature, Christ the immortal and divine aspect, had become meaningful for Leonardo. Here again we discern Leonardo's "homoerotic" problem, which, as the problem of the archetypal "twins," occurs over and over again in mythology, e.g., the friendship between Gilgamesh and Engidu, between Castor and Pollux, etc.

126. Jung, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious," par. 365.

127. On Christ as a Western symbol, cf. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," and *Aion*.



joined in a new synthesis. In the Renaissance as in the psychology of modern man, nature, condemned by the Middle Ages, and paganism often appear as symbols of the "contrary aspect" that requires to be integrated. The Christianity of Savonarola and the Inquisition could not but regard Leonardo's John the Baptist as an "alien devil," and it is almost a miracle that Leonardo's paintings survived the religious reaction; but for moderns they are signs and numinous symbols of a new era in modern man's new understanding of himself.

This transcending of good and evil, the Christian and pagan, the masculine and feminine, in Leonardo did not escape Nietzsche's unique psychological insight: "Perhaps Leonardo da Vinci alone of those artists had a really supra-Christian outlook. He knows the East, the 'land of dawn,' within himself as well as without himself. There is something supra-European and silent in him: a characteristic of every one who has seen too wide a circle of things good and bad."<sup>128</sup>

For the experience that took form in Leonardo's picture, Eros and Logos no longer stand in opposition to each other, but form a higher unity. He perceived in the world a mystic unity of creative spontaneity and law, of meaning and necessity. For him love and knowledge had become one.

From this point of view Leonardo recognized that the necessity of death is inherent in nature, just as he had recognized the compensation of nature, who does not leave her creatures "bereft":

<sup>128</sup>. "Peoples and Countries," *Complete Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 216-17 (modified).

"Why nature did not ordain that one animal should not live by the death of another.

"Nature being inconstant and taking pleasure in creating and making continually new lives and forms, because she knows that they augment her terrestrial substance, is more ready and swift in creating than time is in destroying; and therefore she has ordained that many animals shall serve as food one for the other; and as this does not suffice for her desire she frequently sends forth certain poisonous and pestilential vapors and continual plagues upon the vast accumulations and herds of animals; and most of all upon men, who increase rapidly because other animals do not feed upon them. . . . The earth therefore seeks to lose its life while desiring continual reproduction."<sup>129</sup>

And out of the same feeling for necessity, he wrote: "While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die."<sup>130</sup>

His self-portrait as an old man shows that Leonardo reached a stage of development unique in the West, that of the old sage. But the face in this drawing is not only that of a wise old man; in addition it is the face of a creator and scientist in whom kindness and severity, the torment and restlessness of creation, and the remote serenity of knowledge seem to be balanced. It is strange that among all the faces of "Great Individuals," that of

<sup>129</sup>. MS. B.M., fol. 156<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 133; *Selections*, p. 277.

<sup>130</sup>. MS. C.A., fol. 252<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. cxxiii; *Selections*, p. 275.



the aloof and lonely Leonardo should most resemble European man's image of God the Father.

The old sage and the young god are the two archetypal forms in which the masculine is connected with the Great Mother as Sophia. In relation to the young god, the maternal aspect of the Spirit Mother is predominant: he is her son and lover. For the old sage the dominant figure is the young and daughterly Virgin-Sophia; this for Leonardo was Mona Lisa; in her he encountered the Eros of Sophia. Both aspects, which form the totality of the spiritual feminine, were effective for Leonardo to the end of his life; in relation to them he remained problematic and ambivalent: youth and old sage at once.

Leonardo's lifelong fidelity to the figure of the vulture goddess, to which every phase of his creative existence bears witness, was the actual reason for his loneliness, never broken by any human proximity.<sup>131</sup>

His love and his Eros exceeded the limits of the

131. That the archetypal picture of the vulture goddess, of the feminine fecundated by the masculine spirit-wind, never ceased to grow in him is also reflected in the fact that one of his last works, preserved in a drawing and in a student's copy, was a picture of Leda and the Swan. Impregnated by the bird-wind, Leda is the mother of the hero. She too discloses the smile, bearing witness to the woman's bond with the Father God. At her feet play the children born of the egg, and the egg always symbolized the offspring of the Great Mother. These children are Castor and Pollux, who, in antiquity, like John and Christ, embody the twin, mortal and immortal, nature of the hero. Some copies show beside them the daughters of the egg, Helen and Clytemnestra, the matriarchal representatives of the seductive and the killing aspects of the Great Mother, so dangerous to the masculine.



human. That was his greatness and at the same time his limitation. His Eros never forsook its bond with the infinite, the mother goddess. What in the beginning was an unconscious motive became in the course of his life a reality, the reality of his works and scientific investigations, and at last, in his middle years, resulted in the human encounter with Mona Lisa. But it was no accident that this encounter was with a woman doomed soon to die: even in his human dealings he preserved his bond with the infinite.

He had written these radical, misanthropic words: "While you are alone you are entirely your own; and if you have but one companion, you are but half your own, and even less in proportion to the indiscretion of his conduct. And if you have more companions, you will fall deeper into the same trouble. If you should say, 'I will go my own way, I will withdraw apart the better to study the forms of natural objects,' I tell you that this will work badly because you cannot help often lending an ear to their chatter."<sup>132</sup>

But this attitude was not that of the solitary, brooding eccentric. Vasari had written of Leonardo: "By the splendor of his magnificent union he comforted every sad soul, and his eloquence could turn men to either side of the question."<sup>133</sup>

Not bitter hatred of man, as with Michelangelo, but devotion to the inner forces guiding his existence was at the bottom of this aloofness so uncommon in the frantically convivial Renaissance. But he was perfectly capable

<sup>132</sup>. From the *Traktat von der Malerei; Selections*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>133</sup>. *Lives of the Painters*, Vol. III, p. 327.

of love and affection; witness the profound attachment of his pupil Melzi, who accompanied Leonardo to France and remained with him to the day of his death:

"To me he was like the best of fathers," he wrote, "for whose death it would be impossible for me to express the grief I have felt; and so long as these my links endure I shall possess a perpetual sorrow, and with good reason, since he showed to me day by day the warmest love and devotion. It is a hurt to anyone to lose such a man, for nature cannot again produce his like."<sup>124</sup>

Yet in spite of all this he was always closer to the infinite than to the finite, and in a mysterious, symbolic way his life was lived in the myth of the Great Goddess. For him the figure of the Spirit Father, of the great demiurge and fecundating wind god, always remained secondary to the Great Goddess, who had chosen the child in the cradle and showered him with her gifts, who spread her spirit wings over his life as she spread them over the world. For Leonardo the yearning to return to her, his source and home, was the yearning not only of his own life, but of the life of the whole world.

"Behold, the hope and the desire of going back to one's country [*repatriarsi*] and of returning to the primal state of chaos is like that of the moth to the light, and of the man who with perpetual longing looks forward with joy to each new spring and to each new summer, and to the new months and the new years, deeming that the things he looks for are too slow in coming; and he does not perceive that he is longing for his own destruction. But this longing is in its quintessence the spirit of

<sup>124</sup> *Selections*, p. 392.



the elements, which finding itself imprisoned as the soul within the human body is ever longing to return to its sender; and I would have you know that this same longing is that quintessence inherent in nature, and that man is a type of the world." <sup>135</sup>

Thus the star of the Great Mother is the central star in Leonardo's sky. It shines over his cradle as over his death. The same goddess who appeared to the unconscious child in his cradle becomes St. Anne, the supreme spiritual and psychic incarnation of the feminine smiling down upon the Christ child. As earth and nature, she was the object of his researches; as art and wisdom she was the goddess of his transformations. Preserving a balance almost unique among Western men, Leonardo, in a process of unremitting self-discipline, fused his many gifts into a higher unity. He halted at no stage of development, but passed through the world as though from the very start his inner eye had perceived the constellation to which his way and life led him, the constellation of the mother goddess, protectress of his childhood, home of his old age. His life was the realization of the maxim that he recorded in one of his notebooks:

"He who fixes his course by a star changes not." <sup>136</sup>

<sup>135</sup>. MS. B.M., fol. 156<sup>r</sup>; *Selections*, p. 276.

<sup>136</sup>. R. 682, MS. W.L., fol. 198<sup>r</sup>. See Herzfeld, p. 141; MacCurdy, Vol. I, p. 99.



## II

### ART AND TIME

Art and time is a vast theme; I am sure you do not expect an exhaustive treatment of it in one lecture. Here we shall not concern ourselves with the phenomenon of time as it enters into man's experience or into his actual works of art; in other words, we shall not concern ourselves with the relation of the ego to the living stream of time, to eternity or the moment, to the swirling eddies of time, or to repose in time. Our discussion will deal principally with the relation of art to its epoch; the second part of our lecture will take up the specific relation of modern art to our own time.

However, I shall speak neither as an artist nor as an art critic; I shall not even speak of the artistic phenomena with which I come into contact as a psychologist, the more or less artistic productions that arise in the course of analytical therapy. Our present inquiry lies within the psychology of culture; it aims at an understanding of art as a psychological phenomenon of central importance to the collectivity as well as the individual.

We shall start from the creative function of the unconscious, which produces its forms spontaneously, in a manner analogous to nature, which—from atom and

crystal through organic life to the world of the stars and planets—spontaneously creates forms susceptible of impressing man as beautiful. Because this substratum and background of the psychophysical world is forever bringing forth forms, we call it creative. And to the unknown in nature which engenders its forms of the external world there corresponds another unknown, the collective unconscious, which is the source of all psychic creation: religion and rite, social organization, consciousness, and finally art.

The archetypes of the collective unconscious are intrinsically formless psychic structures which become visible in art. The archetypes are varied by the media through which they pass—that is, their form changes according to the time, the place, and the psychological constellation of the individual in whom they are manifested. Thus, for example, the mother archetype, as a dynamic entity in the psychic substratum, always retains its identity, but it takes on different *styles*—different aspects or emotional color—depending on whether it is manifested in Egypt, Mexico, or Spain, or in ancient, medieval, or modern times. The paradoxical multiplicity of its eternal presence, which makes possible an infinite variety of forms of expression, is crystallized in its realization by man in time; its archetypal eternity enters into a unique synthesis with a specific historical situation.

Today we shall neither inquire into the development of specific archetypes in *one* culture nor follow the different forms of the same archetype in diverse cultures. Anyone wishing to convince himself of the reality of this



overwhelming phenomenon need only consult the Eranos Archive,<sup>1</sup> a pioneer effort in this direction.

Nor shall we take up the aesthetic aspect, the history of styles, which inquires into the forms assumed by the archetypes in the various periods, although it would be exceedingly interesting to show, for example, how the archetypal world of Egypt was shaped by a static conception of eternity and time, while in Central America the same archetypal world is almost submerged in a jungle of ornament because here the all-devouring aspect of the Terrible Mother is dominant. Our effort will begin and end with the question of what art means for mankind and what position it occupies in human development.

At the beginning of the development of human consciousness the original psychic situation prevails: unconscious, collective, and transpersonal factors are more significant and evident than conscious and individual factors. Art is at this stage a collective phenomenon, which cannot be isolated from the context of collective existence but is integrated with the life of the group. Each individual is artist, dancer, singer, poet, painter, and sculptor; everything he does and his way of doing it, even where a recognized individual possession is involved, remains an expression of the group's effective situation.

Although from the very outset the collective receives its primary impulse from "Great Individuals," even they themselves, in accordance with the dialectic of their re-

1. [At the Warburg Institute, London. A duplicate is incorporated in the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, New York.—Ed.]



lation to the group, never give themselves as individuals credit for what they have done but impute it to their inspiring predecessors, to the spirits of their ancestors, to the totem, or to whatever aspect of the collective spirit has inspired them individually.

Not only *is* the creative situation numinous; it is also experienced as such, for all existence was originally shaped by experience of the transpersonal. The festivals and rites are the nodal points of the numinosum, which shapes everything that comes into contact with its sacral sphere: cult implement and mask, figure and image, vessel and ornament, song and dance, myth and poetry. The original integration of all these into life and the numinous context as a whole is shown by the fact that a certain "style" is Oceanic or African, Indian or Nordic, and that it is manifested in the kinship between ornamented door post and ritual vessel, between tattoo motif and mask, fetish and spear shaft.

This unity is a symptom of the individual's immersion in a group context that transcends him; however, when we say that the group is unconsciously directed by the collective psyche, we do not mean that it is directed by urges or instincts. True, the individual's consciousness is almost blind to the underlying forces: his reaction to the creative impulse of the psyche is not to reflect; it is to obey and execute its commands. But the psychic undercurrents which determine man's feeling and image of the world are manifested through colors and forms, tones and words, which crystallize into symbolic spiritual figures expressing man's relation both to the archetypal world and to the world in which he lives.

Thus from the very outset man is a creator of symbols; he constructs his characteristic spiritual-psychic world from the symbols in which he speaks and thinks of the world around him, but also from the forms and images which his numinous experience arouses in him.

In the original situation man's emotion in the presence of the numinosum leads to expression, for the unconscious, as part of its creative function, carries with it its own expression. But the emotional drives which move the group and the individual within it must not be conceived as a dynamic without content. For every symbol, like every archetype, has a specific content, and when the whole of a man is seized by the collective unconscious, that means his consciousness too. Consequently we find from the very start that the creative function of the psyche is accompanied by a reaction of consciousness, which seeks, at first in slight degree but then increasingly, to understand, to interpret, and to assimilate the thing by which it was at first overwhelmed. Thus at a very early stage there is a relative fixation of expression and style, and so definite traditions arise.

In our time, with its developed or overdeveloped consciousness, feeling and emotion seem to be bound up with an artistic nature; for an undeveloped consciousness this is by no means the case. For primitive and early cultures, the creative force of the numinosum supports or even engenders consciousness: it brings differentiation and order into an indeterminate world driven by chaotic powers and enables man to orient himself.

In the creative sphere of the psyche, which we call the unconscious, significant differentiations have been ef-



fectured in the direction which will be characteristic of subsequent elaborations by consciousness. The very appearance of a psychic image represents a synthetic interpretation of the world, and the same is true of artistic creation in the period of origination. Artistic creation has magic power; it is experience and perception, insight and differentiation in one.

Whether the image is naturalistic or not is immaterial; even the extremely naturalistic animal paintings of the Ice Age are, in our sense, symbols. For a primitive, magical conception of the world, each of these painted animals is a numinosum; it is the embodiment and essence of the animal species. The individual bison, for example, is a spiritual-psychic symbol; he is in a sense the "father of the bison," the idea of the bison, the "bison as such," and this is why he is an object of ritual. The subjugation and killing, the conciliation and fertilization of the animal, which are enacted in the psychic sphere between the human group and the image that symbolically represents the animal group, have a reality-transforming —that is, magical—significance, because this image symbol encompasses the numinous heart and center of the animal living in the world, whose symbolic figuration constitutes an authentic manifestation of the numinous animal.

mess In the period of origination, the forms of expression and driving archetypal contents of a culture remain unconscious; but with the development and systematization of consciousness and the reinforcement of the individual ego there arises a collective consciousness, a cultural canon characteristic for each culture and cultural epoch.



There arises, in other words, a configuration of definite archetypes, symbols, values, and attitudes, upon which the unconscious archetypal contents are projected and which, fixated as myth and cult, becomes the dogmatic heritage of the group. No longer do unconscious and unknown powers determine the life of the group; instead, transpersonal figures and contents, known to the group, direct the life of the community as well as the conscious behavior of the individual in festival and cult, religion and usage.

This does not mean that man suspects a connection between this transpersonal world and the depths of his own human psyche, although the transpersonal can express itself only through the medium of man and takes form in him through creative processes.

But even when the cultural canon develops, art in all its forms remains at first integrated with the whole of the group life, and when the cultural canon is observed in religious festival, all creative activity is articulated with this integral event. As expressions of archetypal reality, the art and music, dance and poetry of the cult are inner possessions of the collective.

Whether the epiphany of the numinosum occurs in a drawing scratched on bone, in a sculptured stone, in a medieval cathedral centuries in the building, or in a mask, fashioned for *one* festival and burned after it, in every case the epiphany of the numinosum, the rapture of those who give it form, and the rapture of the group celebrating the epiphany constitute an indivisible unit.

But the breakdown of this original situation in the course of history is revealed also by the phenomenon of

the individual creator in art. With the growth of individuality and the relative independence of consciousness, the integral situation in which the creative element in art is one with the life of the group disintegrates. An extensive differentiation occurs; poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, dancers, actors, architects, etc., become professional groups, practicing particular functions of artistic expression. The majority of the group, it would appear, preserves only a receptive relation, if any, to the creative achievement of the artist.

But neither is the individual so isolated—nor are art and the artist so far separated—from the collective as first appears. We have learned to see the consciousness of the individual as the high voice in a polyphony whose lower voice, the collective unconscious, does not merely accompany but actually determines the theme. And this reorientation is not limited to the psychic structure of the individual; it also necessitates a new approach to the relations between men.

We see the group as an integral psychic field, in which the reality of the individual is embedded, so that he is organ and instrument of the collective. But not only through his consciousness or his education by the collective is the individual embedded in this psychic field.

The separate structures of the human organism regulate one another in a highly complex way, and in dreams those structures necessary for the whole of the individual personality are animated in such a way as to compensate for the one-sidedness of conscious life; similarly, there exists between the members of a group a compensatory mechanism which—quite apart from the directives of the



individual consciousness and of the cultural authorities  
tends to round out the group life.

In the group as in the individual, two psychic systems are at work, which can function smoothly only when they are attuned to each other. The one is the collective consciousness, the cultural canon, the system of the culture's supreme values toward which its education is oriented and which set their decisive stamp on the development of the individual consciousness. But side by side with this is the living substratum, the collective unconscious, in which new developments, transformations, revolutions, and renewals are at all times foreshadowed and prepared and whose perpetual eruptions prevent the stagnation and death of a culture. But even if we see the group as an integral psychic field, the men in whom reside the compensatory unconscious forces necessary to the cultural canon and the culture of the particular time are also essential elements of this constellation. However, only the historian—and he, too, is limited by his personal equation and his ties with his epoch—can evaluate the authentic historical significance of a group, a movement, or an individual. For there is no necessary relation between the true importance of a man and that imputed to him by his own time—that is, by the representatives of his own cultural canon. In the course of time, "leaders" and "geniuses" are exposed as frauds, while outsiders, outlaws, nobodies, are found to have been the true vehicles of reality.

Not the ego and consciousness but the collective unconscious and the self are the determining forces; the development of man and his consciousness is dependent



on the spontaneity and the inner order of the unconscious and remains so even after consciousness and unconscious have entered into a fruitful dialectical relation to each other.

There is a continuous interchange between the collective unconscious (which is alive in the unconscious of every individual in the group), the cultural canon (which represents the group's collective consciousness of those archetypal values which have become dogma), and the creative individuals of the group (in whom the new constellations of the collective unconscious achieve form and expression).<sup>2</sup>

Our attempt to distinguish different forms of relation between art and the artist and their epoch is based upon the unity of the group's psychic field, in which, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, every single individual, and every sphere of culture as well, takes its place.<sup>3</sup> This unity—like that of the individual psyche—is composed of collective consciousness and collective unconscious.

2. We must leave out of account here the fact that the same constellations may appear in Great Individuals and in borderline cases of neurosis and insanity.

3. The psychological evaluation of the individual within the group as a whole presents an analogy to his sociological position. But the two evaluations, as we have stressed, can be utterly divergent. Since an insight into these compensatory relations is necessary to an estimate of the individual's importance to the community, we must, in judging the individual, use the notion of "social adaptation" much more cautiously than was previously the case when—quite understandably—adaptation to the values of the cultural canon was regarded as the sole criterion. The dilemma that this circumstance creates for depth psychology in its relation to the collective cannot be discussed here.

The first stage in the relation of art to its epoch is, as we have suggested, the self-representation of the unconscious in the symbolic expression of the numinosum, characteristic of the situation of origination and of early cultures. The self-representation of the unconscious in art always presupposes a greater or lesser degree of unity, whether conscious or not, in the creative man's personality; and it presupposes that he must be embedded in his group. Moreover, the product of this phase is also characterized by unity; it is an art integrated with the group as a whole.

In the representation of the cultural canon, the second stage in the relation of art to its epoch, this is no longer the case. And here it is immaterial whether it is an ancestor, a god, or a Buddha who appears in the cultural canon, and whether it is the awakening of Osiris, a crucifixion, or the cutting out of the god's heart that figures as a part of the savior myth. 2

Such canonical forms are, of course, also grounded in archetypes; that is, even in its representative form, art is a symbolic expression of the collective unconscious and, although it is essentially a representation of symbols close to consciousness, it has a decisive therapeutic function for the life of the group. For the fact that the symbol is consciously represented does not necessarily mean that it has been made fully conscious or that it has been dissolved through conscious assimilation. + N +

True, the representation of the archetype in a cultural canon is closer to consciousness than the pure self-representation of the unconscious; the numinous power becomes less unknown. But because every symbol also



expresses an essential unknown component of the psyche, its unconscious workings continue for a long time, even when it is interpreted and understood as part of the cultural canon.

Thus in all cultures the archetypes of the canon are the numinous points at which the collective unconscious extends into the living reality of the group.<sup>4</sup> Whether this be a temple or a statue of the godhead, a mask or a fetish, a ritual or sacral music, it remains the function of art to represent the archetypal and to manifest it symbolically as a high point of existence.

This artistic representation of the cultural canon resembles the digging and walling in of deep wells, around which the group gathers and from whose waters it lives. Every such well is adorned with traditional symbols in which lives the religious consciousness of the epoch.

But the cultural canon is not only a bond with the archetypal substratum of the unconscious. As "canon" it is also a means of limiting and fixating the intervention of the numinosum and excluding unpredictable creative forces. Thus the cultural canon is always a fortress of security; and since it is a systematic restriction to a dogmatic section of the numinosum, it carries with it the danger of one-sidedness and congealment. For the archetypal world is a dynamic world of change, and even the numinosum and the divine are mortal in the contingent form which can be apprehended by man.

The archetypal as such is imageless and nameless, and the form which the formless assumes at any time is, as an image arising in the medium of man, transient. And

4. Cf. my *Origins and History of Consciousness*, pp. 371-75.

just as the archetypal cultural canon must arise and take form, so likewise its representation is transient and must undergo change and transformations.

For the artist, whose vocation it is to represent the cultural canon, it is a question of growing into a tradition—that is, into the situation of his time and into the collective consciousness—rather than of receiving a direct mandate from the powers of the unconscious. Of course, an image of the canon can also be full of inner experience, but its archetypal reality may no longer encompass the whole of the artistic personality. An art which is oriented toward those sectors of the archetypal world that have already entered into consciousness through representation will never realize the supreme possibilities of art.

grows  
retro in  
recess

However, the creative process need not consist of an outward shattering of the cultural canon; it can operate underground, within the canon. Accordingly, the object depicted in a work of art cannot tell us whether we have to do with a representation of the cultural canon or with an evolution or revolution from it. If, within the Christian canon that has dominated the West for nearly two thousand years, we compare a Gothic, a Renaissance, and a modern Madonna, we see at once the revolutionary transformation of this archetypal figure. And a Byzantine Christ-Pantocrator and Grünewald's Christ on the Cross have their source in different worlds of God and man. One might almost say that they were no longer related.

compensate  
Madon

The next stage in the relation of art to its epoch is the stage of compensation for the cultural canon, and the



significance of this has repeatedly been stressed by Professor Jung.<sup>5</sup> It is grounded in the vitality of the collective unconscious, which is opposed to the collective consciousness in the integral psychic field of the group. This stage presupposes the existence of an established opposition of consciousness to the unconscious, characteristic of the modern world. In it we go back to the immediate presence of the creative numinosum. Great art of this type almost necessarily implies tragedy. Compensation for the cultural canon means opposition to it—that is, opposition to the epoch's consciousness and sense of values. The creative artist, whose mission it is to compensate for consciousness and the cultural canon, is usually an isolated individual, a hero who must destroy the old in order to make possible the dawn of the new.

When unconscious forces break through in the artist, when the archetypes striving to be born into the light of the world take form in him, he is as far from the men around him as he is close to their destiny. For he expresses and gives form to the future of his epoch.

For example, the realism which emerged in Renaissance painting and which for centuries dominated our art has a significance far beyond such purely artistic considerations as mobility of the figure, perspective, plasticity, color, etc. Renaissance art did not, as it might appear, abandon medieval symbolism in order to reproduce the objective outside world; what actually took place—and it is a phenomenon decisive for this epoch—was the re-

5. Cf. especially his articles on Picasso and the novel *Ulysses*.

appearance of the earth archetype, in opposition to the heaven archetype that had dominated the Middle Ages. In other words, this naturalism is the symbolic expression of a revolution in the archetypal structure of the unconscious.

The beginning of natural science and sociology, the discovery of the individual and of classical antiquity, the schism in Christianity, the social revolution, etc., are all a part of the integral transformation of the psychic field, which seized upon the unconscious of all men—particularly of creative men. Thus a Dutch genre painting is not merely a representation of a fragment of external reality; it is a glorification of this world as opposed to the next, a discovery of the sanctity, the beauty, and the vitality of the material world, a praise of life in this world and of earthly man, in opposition to the praise of heaven, which had hitherto passed for the "real" world.

And whereas man's relation to this transcendent "real" world had led to a life burdened with original sin, with a sense of guilt and eternal inadequacy, man now came to feel that he was a son of the earth, at home on earth.

This intense conflict governed the work of Bosch, one of the most magnificent painters ever to have announced the coming of a new era.<sup>6</sup> He clung consciously to the old medieval canon, but beneath his hand the world transformed itself. It became demonic and gnostic;

6. See Wilhelm Fränger, *The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch: Outlines of a New Interpretation*. I have intentionally avoided consideration of Fränger's interpretations, since it is impossible to judge at the present moment to what degree they are tenable.



everything was temptation, and in the paranoiac despair of his ascetic, medieval consciousness he experienced the revival of the earth archetype around him, glittering demonically in every color. Paradoxically enough, although, and precisely because, for him Satan—in the form of an owl—had stood from the very first at the heart of creation, his earth transformed itself into an “earthly paradise.” And all the colors and forms of this ostensibly accursed earthly paradise shine alluringly in a wealth of archetypal and classical ritual symbols, with such beauty that, although he himself did not know it, the curse, like Balaam's, has turned unexpectedly to blessing.

In his attempt to represent the demon-infested earth in the earthly colors of his unique palette, the earth magnificently triumphed over his medieval conception. Consequently, for example, his *Christ Bearing the Cross* (Pl. VI), and the Veronica in this painting, disclose nothing medieval but on the contrary point to one of the most modern problems of future generations: the Great Individual with his soul, alone in the mass of men.

The workings of this ascendant earth archetype, which was to become a central component of the new cultural canon, extended down to the French Revolution, to philosophical materialism, and to the Madonna's rather belated dogmatic assumption into heaven. Only today has this process begun to be intelligible, but concurrently this archetype is beginning in turn to undergo a transformation: the projection is being dissolved and the content reintegrated into the psyche. As one of the greatest poets of our time has written:

Earth, isn't this what you want: an invisible  
 re-arising in us? Is it not your dream  
 to be one day invisible? Earth! invisible!  
 What is your urgent command, if not transformation?  
 Earth, you darling, I will!<sup>7</sup>

The need of his times works inside the artist without his wanting it, seeing it, or understanding its true significance. In this sense he is close to the seer, the prophet, the mystic. And it is precisely when he does not represent the existing canon but transforms and overturns it that his function rises to the level of the sacral, for he then gives utterance to the authentic and direct revelation of the numinosum.

The advance of specialization and differentiation has destroyed the closeness of every individual to the psychic substratum, characteristic of the original situation. Since culture is in part a safeguard against the numinosum, the representatives of the cultural canon have lost contact with the primal fire of direct inner experience. Nor is this inner experience their function, for they represent the conscious and rational aspect of the archetypal world, the striving to safeguard and secure the artificial, cultural shell of life. Consequently, the creative struggle with the numinosum has fallen to the lot of the individual, and an essential arena of this struggle is art, in which the relation of the creative individual to the numinosum takes form.

In following the drive of the psychic substratum, the artist fulfills not only himself but also his epoch. In the

<sup>7</sup> R. M. Rilke, *Duino Elegies* (tr. Leishman and Spender), IX, p. 87.



original situation the artist, or any person proposing to shape a cult object, had to cleanse himself in order to achieve an exalted and detached transpersonal state, in which alone he could become the creative instrument of the powers. In the original situation this ritual preparation was undertaken in accord with the collective. To the modern artist it happens involuntarily; an outsider in society, he stands alone, delivered over to the creative impulse in himself.

We know that the creative power of the unconscious seizes upon the individual with the autonomous force of an instinctual drive and takes possession of him without the least consideration for the individual, his life, his happiness, or his health. The creative impulse springs from the collective; like every instinct it serves the will of the species and not of the individual. Thus the creative man is an instrument of the transpersonal, but as an individual he comes into conflict with the numinosum that takes hold of him.

**I** Creative phenomena range from the lowest, unconscious stages of ecstatic frenzy and somnambulism to the highest level of conscious acceptance, in which the artist takes full responsibility and a formative, interpreting consciousness plays an essential part.

A similar conflict dominates the relation of the artist to his collective and his time. If he is driven to compensate for the cultural canon, there is an implication that he has been captured by it and has survived and transcended it in himself. Only by suffering, perhaps unconsciously, under the poverty of his culture and his time can he arrive at the freshly opening source which is

destined to quench the thirst of his time. In other words, the creative man (though often this is not evident) is deeply bound up with his group and its culture, more deeply than the common man who lives in the security of the cultural shell, and even more deeply than the actual representatives of this culture.

And because of the predominance of the transpersonal in the psychic substratum of creative men, their psychic field is integral. For although creative men usually live unknown to one another, without influence on one another, a common force seems to drive all those men who ever compensate for a cultural canon at a given time or shape a new one. They are all moved in the same direction, though they follow an unknown impulse in themselves rather than any new road charted in advance. This phenomenon is called simply *Zeitgeist*, and no further attempt is made to account for it.

surgimento  
do  
movimento  
sistêmico

At a later day we can analyze and set up all sorts of chains of causality to explain the *Zeitgeist*, but these explanations after the fact are only in part convincing. Perhaps the least presumptuous of them states that the force which breaks through at one and the same time in philosophy and literature, painting and music, science and politics, and in innumerable creative individuals—the force that sets its imprint on the spirit of a time, of any time—is transpersonal and unconscious. Here again we do not wish to underestimate the role of the conscious-ness that responds to conscious problems, but we must attach great significance, crucial significance, to the directives of the collective unconscious.



In all these stages in the relation of art to its time—



self-representation of the unconscious, representation of the cultural canon, and compensation for the cultural canon—the psychic field in which the individual is embedded remains the decisive factor. Despite all the changes brought about in the course of human development, the individual's relation to the collective remains his destiny.

But in the course of human history the artist becomes constantly more individualized and loses his original anonymity. As the ego and consciousness develop, the physiognomy of the individual artist is liberated from the anonymity of the current style. This individualization of creative man is the beginning of his individuation—that is, of the last form of relation between art and its epoch.

We shall designate this last phase as the transcendence of art. It rests, we believe, on an individual development of the artist, which makes him into the Great Individual who, precisely, transcends his bond with the collective both outwardly and inwardly. It is no longer his function to express the creative will of the unconscious or to depict a sector of the archetypal world, or to regenerate or compensate for the existing culture out of the depths of the collective unconscious.

What is fundamentally new and different in this stage is that the artist here attains to the level of timelessness. And reluctant as we are to use such terms, this stage of artistic creation cannot be characterized without such words as “eternity,” “intuition of essence” (*Wesensschau*), and “metaphysical experience.”

Although every creative representation of an arche-