

lectual tools. Despite all [my] tolerance and realization of the necessity of doctrinal opinions of various kinds, I have never wearied of emphasizing that oneness and dogmatism harbour in themselves the gravest dangers precisely in the domain of psychology. The psychologist should constantly bear in mind that his hypothesis is no more at first than the expression of his own subjective premise and can therefore never lay immediate claim to general validity. What the individual researcher has to contribute in explanation of any one of the countless aspects of the psyche is merely a point of view, and it would be doing the grossest violence to the object of research if he tried to make this one point of view into a generally binding truth. The phenomenology of the psyche is so colourful, so varied in form and meaning, that we cannot possibly reflect all its riches in *one* mirror. Nor in our description of it can we ever embrace the whole, but must be content to shed light only on single parts of the total phenomenon.

Since it is a characteristic of the psyche not only to be the source of all productivity but, more especially, to express itself in all the activities and achievements of the human mind, we can nowhere grasp the nature of the psyche *per se* but can meet it only in its various manifestations. The psychologist is therefore obliged to make himself familiar with a wide range of subjects, not out of presumption and inquisitiveness but rather from love of knowledge, and for this purpose he must abandon his thickly walled specialist fortress and set out on the quest for truth. He will not succeed in banishing the psyche to the confines of the laboratory or of the consulting room, but must follow it through all those realms where its visible manifestations are to be found, however strange they may be to him.

Thus it comes that I, unperturbed by the fact that I am by profession a doctor, speak to you today as a psychologist about the poetic imagination, although this constitutes the proper province of literary science and of aesthetics. On the other hand, it is also a psychic phenomenon, and as such it probably must be taken into account by the psychologist. In so doing I shall not encroach on the territory either of the literary historian or of the aesthetician, for nothing is further from my intentions than to replace their points of view by psychological ones. Indeed, I would be making myself guilty of that same sin of oneness which I have just censured. Nor shall I presume to put before you a complete theory of poetic creativity, as that would be altogether impossible for me. My observations should be taken as nothing more than points of view by which a psychological approach to poetry might be oriented in a general way.

PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERATURE¹

Introduction

Psychology, which once eked out a modest existence in a small and highly academic backroom, has, in fulfilment of Nietzsche's prophecy, developed in the last few decades into an object of public interest which has burst the framework assigned to it by the universities. In the form of psychotechnics it makes its voice heard in industry, in the form of psychotherapy it has invaded wide areas of medicine, in the form of philosophy it has carried forward the legacy of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, it has quite literally rediscovered Bachofen and Carus, through its mythology and the psychology of primitives have acquired a new focus of interest, it will revolutionize the science of comparative religion, and not a few theologians want to apply it even to the cure of souls. Will Nietzsche be proved right in the end with his "scientia ancilla psychologiae"?

At present, unfortunately, this encroaching advance of psychology is still a welter of chaotic cross-currents, each of the conflicting schools attempting to cover up the confusion by an all the more vociferous dogmatism and a fanatical defence of its own standpoint. Equally oneness are the attempts to open up all these different areas of knowledge and life to psychological research. Oneness and rigidity of principle are, however, the childish errors of every young science that has to perform pioneer work with but few intellectual

¹ [First published as "Psychologie und Dichtung" in *Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin, 1930), ed. by Emil Ermatinger; expanded and revised in *Gestaltungen des Unbewussten* (Zurich, 1950). The original version was translated by Eugene Jolas as "Psychology and Poetry," *translation: An International Quarterly for Creative Experiment*, no. 19/20 (June, 1930); also translated by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London and New York, 1933).
A typescript of an introduction was found among Jung's posthumous papers; it is first published here, in translation. Evidently Jung used the introduction when he read the essay as a lecture, though nothing certain is known of such an occasion. Cf. p. 132, par. (1).—Editors.]

It is obvious enough that psychology, being a study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear on the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the arts and sciences. The investigation of the psyche should therefore be able on the one hand to explain the psychological structure of a work of art, and on the other to reveal the factors that make a person artistically creative. The psychologist is thus faced with two separate and distinct tasks, and must approach them in radically different ways.

In the case of a work of art we are confronted with a product of complicated psychic activities—but a product that is apparently intentional and consciously shaped. In the case of the artist we must deal with the psychic apparatus itself. In the first instance the object of analysis and interpretation is a concrete artistic achievement, while in the second it is the creative human being as a unique personality. Although these two objects are intimately related and even interdependent, neither of them can explain the other. It is of course possible to draw inferences about the artist from the work of art, and *vice versa*, but these inferences are never conclusive. At best they are probably surmises or lucky guesses. A knowledge of Goethe's particular relation to his mother throws some light on Faust's exclamation: "The mothers, the mothers, how eerily it sounds!" But it does not enable us to see how the attachment to his mother could produce the *Faust* drama itself, however deeply we sense the importance of this relationship for Goethe the man from the many telltale traces it has left behind in his work. Nor are we more successful in reasoning in the reverse direction. There is nothing in *The Ring of the Nibelungs* that would lead us to discern or to infer the fact that Wagner had a tendency towards transvestism, even though a secret connection does exist between the heroics of the Nibelungs and a certain pathological effeminacy in the man Wagner. The personal psychology of the artist may explain many aspects of his work, but not the work itself. And if ever it did explain his work successfully, the artist's creativity would be revealed as a mere symptom. This would be detrimental both to the work of art and to its repute.

The present state of psychological knowledge does not allow

us to establish those rigorous causal connections in the realm of art which we would expect a science to do. Psychology, after all, is the newest of the sciences. It is only in the realm of the psychophysical instincts and reflexes that we can confidently operate with the concept of causality. From the point where true psychic life begins—that is, at a level of greater complexity—the psychologist must content himself with widely ranging descriptions of psychic processes, and with portraying as vividly as he can the warp and woof of the mind in all its amazing intricacy. At the same time, he should refrain from calling any one of these processes "necessary" in the sense that it is causally determined. If the psychologist were able to demonstrate definite causalities in a work of art and in the process of artistic creation, he would leave aesthetics no ground to stand on and would reduce it to a special branch of his own science. Although he should never abandon his claim to investigate and establish the causality of complex psychic processes—to do so would be to deny psychology the right to exist—he will never be able to make good this claim in the fullest sense, because the creative urge which finds its clearest expression in art is irrational and will in the end make a mock of all our rationalistic undertakings. All conscious psychic processes may well be causally explicable; but the creative act, being rooted in the immensity of the unconscious, will forever elude our attempts at understanding. It describes itself only in its manifestations; it can be guessed at, but never wholly grasped. Psychology and aesthetics will always have to turn to one another for help, and the one will not invalidate the other. It is an important principle of psychology that any given psychic material can be shown to derive from causal antecedents; it is a principle of aesthetics that a psychic product can be regarded as existing in and for itself. Whether the work of art or the artist himself is in question, both principles are valid in spite of their relativity.

1. *The Work of Art*

There is a fundamental difference of attitude between the psychologist's approach to a literary work and that of a literary critic. What is of decisive importance and value for the latter may be quite irrelevant for the former. Indeed, literary products

of highly dubious merit are often of the greatest interest to the psychologist. The so-called "psychological novel" is by no means as rewarding for the psychologist as the literary-minded suppose. Considered as a self-contained whole, such a novel explains itself. It has done its own work of psychological interpretation, and the psychologist can at most criticize or enlarge upon this.

In general, it is the non-psychological novel that offers the richest opportunities for psychological elucidation. Here the author, having no intentions of this sort, does not show his characters in a psychological light and thus leaves room for analysis and interpretation, or even invites it by his unprejudiced mode of presentation. Good examples of such novels are those of Benoit, or English fiction after the manner of Rider Haggard, as well as that most popular article of literary mass-production, the detective story, first exploited by Conan Doyle. I would also include Melville's *Moby Dick*, which I consider to be the greatest American novel, in this broad class of writings. An exciting narrative that is apparently quite devoid of psychological intentions is just what interests the psychologist most of all. Such a tale is constructed against a background of unspoken psychological assumptions, and the more unconscious the author is of them, the more this background reveals itself in unalloyed purity to the discerning eye. In the psychological novel, on the other hand, the author himself makes the attempt to raise the raw material of his work into the sphere of psychological discussion, but instead of illuminating it he merely succeeds in obscuring the psychic background. It is from novels of this sort that the layman gets his "psychology"; whereas novels of the first kind require the psychologist to give them a deeper meaning.

I have been speaking in terms of the novel, but what I am discussing is a psychological principle which is not restricted to this form of literature. We meet with it also in poetry, and in *Faust* it is so obvious that it divides the first part from the second. The love-tragedy of Gretchen is self-explanatory; there is nothing the psychologist can add to it that has not already been said in better words by the poet. But the second part cries out for interpretation. The prodigious richness of the imaginative material has so overtaxed, or outstripped, the poet's powers of expression that nothing explains itself any more and every line only makes the reader's need of an interpretation more appar-

ent. *Faust* is perhaps the best illustration of these two extremes in the psychology of art.

For the sake of clarity I would like to call the one mode of artistic creation *psychological*,² and the other *visionary*. The psychological mode works with materials drawn from man's conscious life—with crucial experiences, powerful emotions, suffering, passion, the stuff of human fate in general. All this is assimilated by the psyche of the poet, raised from the commonplace to the level of poetic experience, and expressed with a power of conviction that gives us a greater depth of human insight by making us vividly aware of those everyday happenings which we tend to evade or to overlook because we perceive them only dully or with a feeling of discomfort. The raw material of this kind of creation is derived from the contents of man's consciousness, from his eternally repeated joys and sorrows, but clarified and transfigured by the poet. There is no work left for the psychologist to do—unless perhaps we expect him to explain why *Faust* fell in love with Gretchen, or why Gretchen was driven to murder her child. Such themes constitute the lot of humankind; they are repeated millions of times and account for the hideous monotony of the police court and the penal code. No obscurity surrounds them, for they fully explain themselves in their own terms.

Countless literary products belong to this class: all the novels dealing with love, the family milieu, crime and society, together with didactic poetry, the greater number of lyrics, and drama both tragic and comic. Whatever artistic form they may take,

² [The designation "psychological" is somewhat confusing in this context because, as the subsequent discussion makes clear, the "visionary" mode deals equally with "psychological" material. Moreover, "psychological" is used in still another sense in pars. 136-37, where the "psychological novel" is contrasted with the "non-psychological novel."]

[The term "personalistic" suggests itself as coming closer to defining the material in question, which derives from "the sphere of conscious human experience—from the psychic foreground of life" (par. 140). The term "personalistic" occurs elsewhere in Jung's writings, e.g., in *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, pars. 212 and 281, n. 34. Both times it characterizes a particular kind of psychology. The second instance is the more significant in that "personalistic" is contrasted with "archetypal," and this would appear to be precisely the distinction intended between the two kinds of psychological material and the two modes of artistic creation.—EDDORS.]

their contents always derive from the sphere of conscious human experience—from the psychic foreground of life, we might say. That is why I call this mode of creation “psychological”; it remains within the limits of the psychologically intelligible. Everything it embraces—the experience as well as its artistic expression—belongs to the realm of a clearly understandable psychology. Even the psychic raw material, the experiences themselves, have nothing strange about them; on the contrary, they have been known from the beginning of time—passion and its fated outcome, human destiny and its sufferings, eternal nature with its beauty and horror.

¹⁴¹ The gulf that separates the first from the second part of *Faust* marks the difference between the psychological and the visionary modes of artistic creation. Here everything is reversed. The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is something strange that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind, as if it had emerged from the abyss of prehuman ages, or from a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and its shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from timeless depths: glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque, it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form, a terrifying tangle of eternal chaos, a *crimen laesae majestatis humanae*. On the other hand, it can be a revelation whose heights and depths are beyond our fathoming, or a vision of beauty which we can never put into words. This disturbing spectacle of some tremendous process that in every way transcends our human feeling and understanding makes quite other demands upon the powers of the artist than do the experiences of the foreground of life. These never rend the curtain that veils the cosmos; they do not exceed the bounds of our human capacities, and for this reason they are more readily shaped to the demands of art, however shattering they may be for the individual. But the primordial experiences rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world, and allow a glimpse into the unfathomable abyss of the unborn and of things yet to be. Is it a vision of other worlds, or of the

darknesses of the spirit, or of the primal beginnings of the human psyche? We cannot say that it is any or none of these.

Formation, transformation,
Eternal Mind's eternal recreation.

¹⁴² We find such a vision in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, in Dante, in the second part of *Faust*, in Nietzsche's Dionysian experience,³ in Wagner's *Ring*, *Tristan*, *Parsifal*, in Spitteler's *Olympian Spring*, in William Blake's paintings and poetry, in the *Hyperotomachia* of the monk Francesco Colonna,⁴ in Jacob Boehme's poetic-philosophic stammerings,⁵ and in the magnificent but scurrilous imagery of E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale *The Golden Bowl*.⁶ In more restricted and succinct form, this primordial experience is the essential content of Rider Haggard's *She* and *Ayesha*, of Benoit's *L'Atlantide*, of Alfred Kubin's *Die andere Seite*, of Meyrink's *Das grüne Gesicht*, of Goetz's *Das Reich ohne Raum*, and of Barlach's *Der tote Tag*. The list might be greatly extended.

¹⁴³ In dealing with the psychological mode of creation, we need never ask ourselves what the material consists of or what it means. But this question forces itself upon us when we turn to the visionary mode. We are astonished, confused, bewildered, put on our guard or even repelled;⁷ we demand commentaries and explanations. We are reminded of nothing in everyday life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears, and the dark, uncanny recesses of the human mind. The public for the most part repudiates this kind of literature, unless it is crudely sensational, and even the literary critic finds it embarrassing. It is true that Dante and Wagner have made his task somewhat easier for him by disguising the visionary experience in a cloak of historical or mythical events, which are then erroneously taken to be the real subject-matter. In both cases the compelling power and deeper

³ Cf. my essay “Wotan,” pars. 375ff.

⁴ Recently interpreted along the lines of analytical psychology by Linda Fierz-David, in *The Dream of Poliphilo*.

⁵ Some samples of Boehme may be found in my *Psychology and Alchemy*, pars. 214ff., and in “A Study in the Process of Individuation,” pars. 533ff., 578ff.

⁶ Cf. the detailed study by Aniela Jaffé in *Gestaltungen des Unbewussten*.

⁷ One has only to think of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is a work of the greatest significance in spite or perhaps because of its nihilistic tendencies.

meaning of the work do not lie in the historical or mythical material, but in the visionary experience it serves to express. Rider Haggard, pardonably enough, is generally regarded as a romantic story-teller, but in his case too the tale is only a means—admittedly a rather lush one—for capturing a meaningful content.

It is strange that a deep darkness surrounds the sources of the visionary material. This is the exact opposite of what we find in the psychological mode of creation, and we are led to suspect that this obscurity is not unintentional. We are naturally inclined to suppose, under the influence of Freudian psychology, that some highly personal experiences must lie behind all this phantasmagoric darkness, which would help to explain that strange vision of chaos, and why it sometimes seems as if the poet were intentionally concealing the source of his experience. From here it is only a step to the conjecture that this kind of art is pathological and neurotic, but a step that is justified in so far as the visionary material exhibits peculiarities which are observed in the fantasies of the insane. Conversely, psychotic products often contain a wealth of meaning such as is ordinarily found only in the works of a genius. One will naturally feel tempted to regard the whole phenomenon from the standpoint of pathology and to explain the strange images as substitute figures and attempts at concealment. It is easy enough to suppose that an intimate personal experience underlies the "primordial vision," an experience that cannot be reconciled with morality. It may, for instance, have been a love affair that seemed morally or aesthetically incompatible with the personality as a whole or with the poet's fictitious view of himself. His ego then sought to repress this experience altogether, or at least its salient features, and make it unrecognizable, i.e., unconscious. For this purpose the whole arsenal of pathological fantasy is called into play, and because this manoeuvre is bound to be unsatisfactory, it has to be repeated in an almost endless series of fictions. This would account for the proliferation of monstrous, daemonic, grotesque, and perverse figures, which all act as substitutes for the "unacceptable" reality and at the same time conceal it.

Such a view of the poet's psychology has aroused considerable attention and is the only theoretical attempt that has been made so far to give a "scientific" explanation of the sources of visionary material. If I now put forward my own view, I do so

because I assume it is not so well-known, and is less understood, than the one I have just described.

¹⁴⁶ The reduction of the vision to a personal experience makes it something unreal and unauthentic—a mere substitute, as we have said. The vision thus loses its primordial quality and becomes nothing but a symptom; the teeming chaos shrinks to the proportions of a psychic disturbance. We feel reassured by this explanation, and turn back to our picture of a well-ordered cosmos. As practical and reasonable human beings, we never expected it to be perfect; we accept these unavoidable imperfections which we call abnormalities and diseases, and take it for granted that human nature is not exempt from them. The frightening revelation of abysses that defy human understanding is dismissed as illusion, and the poet is regarded as the victim and perpetrator of deception. His primordial experience was "human, all too human," so much so that he could not face it and had to conceal its meaning from himself.

¹⁴⁷ We should do well, I think, to bear clearly in mind the full consequences of this reduction of art to personal factors, and see where it leads. The truth is that it deflects our attention from the psychology of the work of art and focuses it on the psychology of the artist. The latter presents a problem that cannot be denied, but the work of art exists in its own right and cannot be got rid of by changing it into a personal complex. As to what it means to the artist, whether it is just a game, or a mask, or a source of suffering, or a positive achievement, these are questions which we shall discuss in the next section. Our task for the moment is to interpret the work of art psychologically, and to do this we must take its foundation—the primordial experience—as seriously as we do the experiences underlying personalistic art, which no one doubts are real and important. It is certainly much more difficult to believe that a visionary experience can be real, for it has all the appearance of something that does not fall to the ordinary lot of man. It has about it a fatal suggestion of vague metaphysics, so that we feel obliged to intervene in the name of well-intentioned reasonableness. We are driven to the conclusion that such things simply cannot be taken seriously, or else the world would sink back into benighted superstition. Anyone who does not have distinct leanings towards the occult will be inclined to dismiss visionary experiences as "lively fan-

tasy" or "poetic licence." The poets themselves contribute to this by putting a wholesome distance between themselves and their work. Spitteler, for example, maintained that his *Olympian Spring* "meant" nothing, and that he could just as well have sung: "May is come, tra-la-la-la!" Poets are human too, and what they say about their work is often far from being the best word on the subject. It seems as if we have to defend the seriousness of the visionary experience against the personal resistance of the poet himself.

¹⁴⁸ In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Divine Comedy*, and *Faust*, we catch echoes of a preliminary love-episode which culminates in a visionary experience. There is no ground for the assumption that the normal, human experience in the first part of *Faust* is repudiated or concealed in the second, or that Goethe was normal at the time when he wrote Part I but in a neurotic state of mind when he wrote Part II. These three works cover a period of nearly two thousand years, and in each of them we find the undisguised personal love-episode not only connected with the weightier visionary experience but actually subordinated to it. This testimony is significant, for it shows that in the work of art (irrespective of the personal psychology of the poet) the vision represents a deeper and more impressive experience than human passion. In works of art of this nature—and we must never confuse them with the artist as a person—it cannot be doubted that the vision is a genuine primordial experience, no matter what the rationalists may say. It is not something derived or secondary, it is not symptomatic of something else, it is a true symbol—that is, an expression for something real but unknown. The love-episode is a real experience really suffered, and so is the vision. It is not for us to say whether its content is of a physical, psychic, or metaphysical nature. In itself it had psychic reality, and this is no less real than physical reality. Human passion falls within the sphere of conscious experience, while the object of the vision lies beyond it. Through our senses we experience the known, but our intuitions point to things that are unknown and hidden, that by their very nature are secret. If ever they become conscious, they are intentionally kept secret and concealed, for which reason they have been regarded from earliest times as mysterious, uncanny, and deceptive. They are hidden

from man, and he hides himself from them out of religious awe, protecting himself with the shield of science and reason. The ordered cosmos he believes in by day is meant to protect him from the fear of chaos that besets him by night—his enlightenment is born of night-fears! What if there were a living agency beyond our everyday human world—something even more purposeful than electrons? Do we delude ourselves in thinking that we possess and control our own psyches, and is what science calls the "psyche" not just a question-mark arbitrarily confined within the skull, but rather a door that opens upon the human world from a world beyond, allowing unknown and mysterious powers to act upon man and carry him on the wings of the night to a more than personal destiny? It even seems as if the love-episode had served as a mere release, or had been unconsciously arranged for a definite purpose, and as if the personal experience were only a prelude to the all-important "divine comedy."

¹⁴⁹ The creator of this kind of art is not the only one who is in touch with the night-side of life; prophets and seers are nourished by it too. St. Augustine says: "And higher still we soared, thinking in our minds and speaking and marvelling at Your works; and so we came to our own souls, and went beyond them to reach at last that region of richness unending, where You feed Israel forever with the food of truth . . ." ⁸ But this same region also has its victims: the great evil-doers and destroyers who darken the face of the times, and the madmen who approach too near to the fire: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" ⁹ It is true indeed that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. However dark and unconscious this night-world may be, it is not wholly unfamiliar. Man has known it from time immemorial, and for primitives it is a self-evident part of their cosmos. It is only we who have repudiated it because of our fear of superstition and metaphysics, building up in its place an apparently safer and more manageable world of consciousness in which natural law operates like human law in a society. The poet now and then catches sight of the figures that people the night-world—spirits, demons, and gods; he feels the secret quick-

⁸ *Confessions* (trans. Sheed), p. 158.

⁹ Isaiah 33:14.

ening of human fate by a suprahuman design, and has a presentiment of incomprehensible happenings in the pleroma. In short, he catches a glimpse of the psychic world that terrifies the primitive and is at the same time his greatest hope. It would, incidentally, be an interesting subject for research to investigate how far our recently invented fear of superstition and our materialistic outlook are derived from, and are a further development of, primitive magic and the fear of ghosts. At any rate the fascination exerted by depth psychology and the equally violent resistance it evokes are not without relevance to our theme.

From the very beginnings of human society we find traces of man's efforts to banish his dark forebodings by expressing them in a magical or propitiatory form. Even in the Rhodesian rock-drawings of the Stone Age there appears, side by side with amazingly lifelike pictures of animals, an abstract pattern—a double cross contained in a circle. This design has turned up in practically every culture, and we find it today not only in Christian churches but in Tibetan monasteries as well. It is the so-called sun-wheel, and since it dates from a time when the wheel had not yet been invented, it cannot have had its origin in any experience of the external world. It is rather a symbol for some inner experience, and as a representation of this it is probably just as lifelike as the famous rhinoceros with tick-birds on its back. There has never been a primitive culture that did not possess a highly developed system of secret teaching, a body of lore concerning the things that lie beyond man's earthly existence, and of wise rules of conduct.¹⁰ The men's councils and the totem clans preserve this knowledge, and it is handed down to the younger men in the rites of initiation. The mysteries of the Graeco-Roman world performed the same function, which has left behind a rich deposit in the world's mythologies.

It is therefore to be expected that the poet will turn to mythological figures in order to give suitable expression to his experience. Nothing would be more mistaken than to suppose that he is working with second-hand material. On the contrary, the primordial experience is the source of his creativeness, but it is so dark and amorphous that it requires the related mythological imagery to give it form. In itself it is wordless and imageless, for

¹⁰ *Die Stammeslehren der Dschagga*, edited by Bruno Gutmann, comprises no less than three volumes and runs to 1975 pages!

it is a vision seen "as in a glass, darkly." It is nothing but a tremendous intuition striving for expression. It is like a whirlwind that seizes everything within reach and assumes visible form as it swirls upward. Since the expression can never match the richness of the vision and can never exhaust its possibilities, the poet must have at his disposal a huge store of material if he is to communicate even a fraction of what he has glimpsed, and must make use of difficult and contradictory images in order to express the strange paradoxes of his vision. Dante decks out his experience in all the imagery of heaven, purgatory, and hell; Goethe brings in the Blocksberg and the Greek underworld; Wagner needs the whole corpus of Nordic myth, including the Parsifal saga; Nietzsche resorts to the hieratic style of the bard and legendary seer; Blake presses into his service the phantasmagoric world of India, the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse; and Spitteler borrows old names for the new figures that pour in alarming profusion from his muse's cornucopia. Nothing is missing in the whole gamut that ranges from the ineffably sublime to the perversely grotesque.

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The psychologist can do little to elucidate this variegated spectacle except provide comparative material and a terminology for its discussion. Thus, what appears in the vision is the imagery of the collective unconscious. This is the matrix of consciousness and has its own inborn structure. According to phylogenetic law, the psychic structure must, like the anatomical, show traces of the earlier stages of evolution it has passed through. This is in fact so in the case of the unconscious, for in dreams and mental disturbances psychic products come to the surface which show all the traits of primitive levels of development, not only in their form but also in their content and meaning, so that we might easily take them for fragments of esoteric doctrines. Mythological motifs frequently appear, but clothed in modern dress; for instance, instead of the eagle of Zeus, or the great roc, there is an airplane; the fight with the dragon is a railway smash; the dragon-slaying hero is an operatic tenor; the Earth Mother is a stout lady selling vegetables; the Pluto who abducts Persephone is a reckless chauffeur, and so on. What is of particular importance for the study of literature, however, is that the manifestations of the collective unconscious are compensatory to the conscious attitude, so that they have the effect

of bringing a one-sided, unadapted, or dangerous state of consciousness back into equilibrium. This function can also be observed in the symptomatology of neurosis and in the delusions of the insane, where the process of compensation is often perfectly obvious—for instance in the case of people who have anxiously shut themselves off from the world and suddenly discover that their most intimate secrets are known and talked about by everybody. The compensation is, of course, not always as crass as this; with neurotics it is much more subtle, and in dreams—particularly in one's own dreams—it is often a complete mystery at first not only to the layman but even to the specialist, however staggeringly simple it turns out to be once it has been understood. But, as we know, the simplest things are often the most difficult to understand.

If we disregard for the moment the possibility that *Faust* was compensatory to Goethe's conscious attitude, the question that arises is this: in what relation does it stand to the conscious outlook of his time, and can this relation also be regarded as compensatory? Great poetry draws its strength from the life of mankind, and we completely miss its meaning if we try to derive it from personal factors. Whenever the collective unconscious becomes a living experience and is brought to bear upon the conscious outlook of an age, this event is a creative act which is of importance for a whole epoch. A work of art is produced that may truthfully be called a message to generations of men. So *Faust* touches something in the soul of every German, as Jacob Burckhardt has already remarked.¹¹ So also Dante's fame is immortal, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* was very nearly included in the New Testament canon. Every period has its bias, its particular prejudice, and its psychic malaise. An epoch is like an individual; it has its own limitations of conscious outlook, and therefore requires a compensatory adjustment. This is effected by the collective unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desire of his times and shows the way, by word or deed, to its fulfilment—regardless whether this blind collective need results in good or evil, in the salvation of an epoch or its destruction.

It is always dangerous to speak of one's own times, because

¹¹ Letter to Albert Brenner. [In 1855. See Dru trans. of Burckhardt's letters, p. 116, and Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, par. 45, n. 45.—Editors.]

what is at stake is too vast to be comprehended.¹² A few hints must therefore suffice. Francesco Colonna's book takes the form of a dream which depicts the apotheosis of love. It does not tell the story of a human passion, but describes a relationship to the anima, man's subjective image of woman, incarnated in the fictitious figure of the lady Polia. The relationship is played out in the pagan setting of classical antiquity, and this is remarkable because the author, so far as we know, was a monk. His book, written in 1453, compensates the medieval Christian outlook by conjuring up a simultaneously older and more youthful world from Hades, which is at the same time the grave and the fruitful mother.¹³ The *Hypnerotomachia* of Colonna, says Linda Fierz-David, "is the symbol of the living process of growth which had been set going, obscurely and incomprehensibly, in the men of his time, and had made of the Renaissance the beginning of a new era."¹⁴ Already in Colonna's time the Church was being weakened by schisms, and the age of the great voyages and of scientific discovery was dawning. These tensions between the old and the new are symbolized by the paradoxical figure of Polia, the "modern" soul of the monk Francesco Colonna. After three centuries of religious schism and the scientific discovery of the world, Goethe paints a picture of the megalomania that threatens the Faustian man, and attempts to redeem the inhumanity of this figure by uniting him with the Eternal Feminine, the maternal Sophia. She is the highest manifestation of the anima, stripped of the pagan savagery of the nymph Polia. But this compensation of Faust's inhumanity had no lasting effect, for Nietzsche, after proclaiming the death of God, announces the birth of the Superman, who in turn is doomed to destruction. Nietzsche's contemporary, Spitteler, transforms the waxing and waning of the gods into a myth of the seasons. If we compare his *Prometheus and Epimetheus*¹⁵ with the drama that is being enacted on the world stage today, the prophetic significance of the great work of art will become painfully apparent.¹⁶ Each of these poets speaks with the voice of thousands and tens of thousands, foretelling changes in the conscious outlook of his time.

¹² Written in 1929. ¹³ *The Dream of Poliphilo*, pp. 234ff. ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁵ I am referring to the first version, written in prose.

¹⁶ Cf. *Psychological Types*, pars. 321ff.

2. *The Artist*

155 The secret of creativeness, like that of the freedom of the will, is a transcendental problem which the psychologist cannot answer but can only describe. The creative personality, too, is a riddle we may try to answer in various ways, but always in vain. Nevertheless, modern psychologists have not been deterred from investigating the problem of the artist and his art. Freud thought he had found a key to the work of art by deriving it from the personal experience of the artist.¹⁷ This was a possible approach, for it was conceivable that a work of art might, like a neurosis, be traced back to complexes. It was Freud's great discovery that neuroses have a quite definite psychic cause, and that they originate in real or imagined emotional experiences in early childhood. Some of his followers, in particular Rank and Stekel, adopted a similar approach and arrived at similar results. It is undeniable that the artist's personal psychology may occasionally be traced out in the roots and in the furthest ramifications of his work. This view, that personal factors in many ways determine the artist's choice of material and the form he gives it, is not in itself new. Credit, however, is certainly due to the Freudian school for showing how far-reaching this influence is and the curious analogies to which it gives rise.

156 Freud considers a neurosis to be a substitute for a direct means of gratification. For him it is something inauthentic—a mistake, a subterfuge, an excuse, a refusal to face facts; in short, something essentially negative that should never have been. One hardly dares to put in a good word for a neurosis, since it is apparently nothing but a meaningless and therefore irritating disturbance. By treating a work of art as something that can be analysed in terms of the artist's repressions we bring it into questionable proximity with a neurosis, where, in a sense, it finds itself in good company, for the Freudian method treats religion and philosophy in the same way. No legitimate objection can be raised to this if it is admitted to be no more than an unearthing of those personal determinants without which a work of art is unthinkable. But if it is claimed that such an anal-

¹⁷ See his essays on Jensen's *Gradiva* (Standard Edition, IX), and on Leonardo da Vinci (XI).

ysis explains the work of art itself, then a categorical denial is called for. The essence of a work of art is not to be found in the personal idiosyncrasies that creep into it—indeed, the more there are of them, the less it is a work of art—but in its rising above the personal and speaking from the mind and heart of the artist to the mind and heart of mankind. The personal aspect of art is a limitation and even a vice. Art that is only personal, or predominantly so, truly deserves to be treated as a neurosis. When the Freudian school advances the opinion that all artists are undeveloped personalities with marked infantile autoerotic traits, this judgment may be true of the artist as a man, but it is not applicable to the man as an artist. In this capacity he is neither autoerotic, nor heteroerotic, nor erotic in any sense. He is in the highest degree objective, impersonal, and even inhuman—or suprahuman—for as an artist he is nothing but his work, and not a human being.

157 Every creative person is a duality or a synthesis of contradictory qualities. On the one side he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other he is an impersonal creative process. As a human being he may be sound or morbid, and his personal psychology can and should be explained in personal terms. But he can be understood as an artist only in terms of his creative achievement. We should make a great mistake if we reduced the mode of life of an English gentleman, or a Prussian officer, or a cardinal, to personal factors. The gentleman, the officer, and the high ecclesiastic function as impersonal officials, and each role has its own objective psychology. Although the artist is the exact opposite of an official, there is nevertheless a secret analogy between them in so far as a specifically artistic psychology is more collective than personal in character. Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is "man" in a higher sense—he is "collective man," a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind. That is his office, and it is sometimes so heavy a burden that he is fated to sacrifice happiness and everything that makes life worth living for the ordinary human being. As K. G. Carus says: "Strange are the ways by

which genius is announced, for what distinguishes so supremely endowed a being is that, for all the freedom of his life and the clarity of his thought, he is everywhere hemmed round and pre-vailed upon by the Unconscious, the mysterious god within him; so that ideas flow to him—he knows not whence; he is driven to work and to create—he knows not to what end; and is mastered by an impulse for constant growth and development—he knows not whither.”¹⁵⁸

In these circumstances it is not at all surprising that the artist is an especially interesting specimen for the critical analysis of the psychologist. His life cannot be otherwise than full of conflicts, for two forces are at war within him: on the one hand the justified longing of the ordinary man for happiness, satisfaction, and security, and on the other a ruthless passion for creation which may go so far as to override every personal desire. If the lives of artists are as a rule so exceedingly unsatisfactory, not to say tragic, it is not because of some sinister dispensation of fate, but because of some inferiority in their personality or an inability to adapt. A person must pay dearly for the divine gift of creative fire. It is as though each of us was born with a limited store of energy. In the artist, the strongest force in his make-up, that is, his creativeness, will seize and all but monopolize this energy, leaving so little over that nothing of value can come of it. The creative impulse can drain him of his humanity to such a degree that the personal ego can exist only on a primitive or inferior level and is driven to develop all sorts of defects—ruthlessness, selfishness (“autoeroticism”), vanity, and other infantile traits. These inferiorities are the only means by which it can maintain its vitality and prevent itself from being wholly depleted. The autoeroticism of certain artists is like that of illegitimate or neglected children who from their earliest years develop bad qualities to protect themselves from the destructive influence of a loveless environment. Such children easily become ruthless and selfish, and later display an invincible egoism by remaining all their lives infantile and helpless or by actively offending against morality and the law. How can we doubt that it is his art that explains the artist, and not the insufficiencies and conflicts of his personal life? These are nothing but the regrettable results of his being an artist, a man upon whom a heavier burden is laid

¹⁵⁸ *Psyche*, ed. Ludwig Klages, p. 158.

than upon ordinary mortals. A special ability demands a greater expenditure of energy, which must necessarily leave a deficit on some other side of life.

¹⁵⁹ It makes no difference whether the artist knows that his work is generated, grows and matures within him, or whether he imagines that it is his own invention. In reality it grows out of him as a child its mother. The creative process has a feminine quality, and the creative work arises from unconscious depths—we might truly say from the realm of the Mothers. Whenever the creative force predominates, life is ruled and shaped by the unconscious rather than by the conscious will, and the ego is swept along on an underground current, becoming nothing more than a helpless observer of events. The progress of the work becomes the poet's fate and determines his psychology. It is not Goethe that creates *Faust*, but *Faust* that creates Goethe.¹⁹ And what is *Faust*? *Faust* is essentially a symbol. By this I do not mean that it is an allegory pointing to something all too familiar, but the expression of something profoundly alive in the soul of every German, which Goethe helped to bring to birth. Could we conceive of anyone but a German writing *Faust* or *Thus Spake Zarathustra*? Both of them strike a chord that vibrates in the German psyche, evoking a “primordial image,” as Burckhardt once called it—the figure of a healer or teacher of mankind, or of a wizard. It is the archetype of the Wise Old Man, the helper and redeemer, but also of the magician, deceiver, corrupter, and tempter. This image has lain buried and dormant in the unconscious since the dawn of history; it is awakened whenever the times are out of joint and a great error deflects society from the right path. For when people go astray they feel the need of a guide or teacher, and even of a physician. The seductive error is like a poison that can also act as a cure, and the shadow of a saviour can turn into a fiendish destroyer. These opposing forces are at work in the mythical healer himself: the physician

¹⁹ Eckermann's dream, in which he saw Faust and Mephistopheles falling to earth in the form of a double meteor, recalls the motif of the Dioscuri (cf. the motif of the two friends in my essay “Concerning Rebirth,” pp. 135ff.), and this sheds light on an essential characteristic of Goethe's psyche. An especially subtle point here is Eckermann's remark that the swift and horned figure of Mephisto reminded him of Mercurius. This observation is in full accord with the alchemical nature of Goethe's masterpiece. (I have to thank my colleague W. Kranefeldt for refreshing my memory of Eckermann's *Conversations*.)

who heals wounds is himself the bearer of a wound, a classic example being Chiron.²⁰ In Christianity it is the wound in the side of Christ, the great physician. Faust, characteristically enough, is unwounded, which means that he is untouched by the moral problem. A man can be as high-minded as Faust and as devilish as Mephistopheles if he is able to split his personality into two halves, and only then is he capable of feeling "six thousand feet beyond good and evil." Mephistopheles was cheated of his reward, Faust's soul, and for this he presented a bloody reckoning a hundred years later. But who now seriously believes that poets utter truths that apply to all men? And if they do, in what way would we have to regard the work of art?

In itself, an archetype is neither good nor evil. It is morally neutral, like the gods of antiquity, and becomes good or evil only by contact with the conscious mind, or else a paradoxical mixture of both. Whether it will be conducive to good or evil is determined, knowingly or unknowingly, by the conscious attitude. There are many such archetypal images, but they do not appear in the dreams of individuals or in works of art unless they are activated by a deviation from the middle way. Whenever conscious life becomes one-sided or adopts a false attitude, these images "instinctively" rise to the surface in dreams and in the visions of artists and seem to restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or of the epoch.

In this way the work of the artist meets the psychic needs of the society in which he lives, and therefore means more than his personal fate, whether he is aware of it or not. Being essentially the instrument of his work, he is subordinate to it, and we have no right to expect him to interpret it for us. He has done his utmost by giving it form, and must leave the interpretation to others and to the future. A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain itself and is always ambiguous. A dream never says "you ought" or "this is the truth." It presents an image in much the same way as nature allows a plant to grow, and it is up to us to draw conclusions. If a person has a nightmare, it means he is either too much given to fear or too exempt from it; if he dreams of a wise old man, it means he is either too much of a pedant or else in need of a teacher. In a subtle way both meanings come to the same thing,

²⁰ Cf. C. Kerényi, *Asklepios*, pp. 78f.

as we realize when we let a work of art act upon us as it acted upon the artist. To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it shaped him. Then we also understand the nature of his primordial experience. He has plunged into the healing and redeeming depths of the collective psyche, where man is not lost in the isolation of consciousness and its errors and sufferings, but where all men are caught in a common rhythm which allows the individual to communicate his feelings and strivings to mankind as a whole.

¹⁶² This re-immersion in the state of *participation mystique* is the secret of artistic creation and of the effect which great art has upon us, for at that level of experience it is no longer the weal or woe of the individual that counts, but the life of the collective. That is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal, and yet profoundly moving. And that is also why the personal life of the artist is at most a help or a hindrance, but is never essential to his creative task. He may go the way of the Philistine, a good citizen, a fool, or a criminal. His personal career may be interesting and inevitable, but it does not explain his art.