

NORTHROP FRYE: THE ARCHETYPES OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Northrop Frye was born in Canada in 1921 and studied at Toronto University and Merton College, Oxford University. Initially he was a student of theology and then he switched over to literature. He published his first book, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* in 1947. The book is a highly original study of the poetry of Blake and it is considered a classic critical work. Northrop Frye rose to international prominence with the publication of *Anatomy of Criticism*, in 1957 and it firmly established him as one of the most brilliant, original and influential of modern critics. Frye died in 1991. On the whole, he wrote about twenty books on Western literature, culture, myth, archetypal theory, religion and social thought. The *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* is a critical work published in 1963. The present essay, "Archetypes of Literature," is taken from the book. In the essay Frye critically analyses literature against the backdrop of rituals and myths. He interprets literature in the light of various rituals and myths. Frye has divided the essay into three parts. The first part deals with the concept of archetypal criticism. The second part throws light on the inductive method of analysis of a text. The third part focuses on the deductive method of analysis. All the methods fall under structural criticism.

Part-I THE CONCEPT OF ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM

Literature can be interpreted in as many ways as possible, and there are different approaches to literature, and one among them is the archetypal approach. The term "archetype" means an original idea or pattern of something of which others are copies. Archetypal approach is the interpretation of a text in the light of cultural patterns involved in it, and these cultural patterns are based on the myths and rituals of a race or nation or social group. Myths and rituals are explored in a text for discovery of meaning and message. In recent times this type of critics approach to a text has gained popularity. James George Frazer and Carl Gustav Jung are the two great authorities who, have greatly contributed to the development of archetypal approach. Frazer was a social anthropologist and his book *The Golden Bough* makes a study of magic, religion and myths of different races. Jung was a psychologist associated with Freud. The "collective consciousness" is a major theory of Jung. According to Jung, civilized man "unconsciously" preserves the ideas, concepts and values of life cherished by his distant forefathers, and such ideas are expressed in a society's or race's myths and rituals. Creative writers have used myths in their works and critics analyze texts for a discovery of "mythological patterns." This kind of critical analysis of a text is called archetypal criticism. T.S. Eliot has used mythical patterns in his creative works and *The Waste Land* is a good example of it. Northrop Frye in his essay does not analyze any particular myth in a work and in

fact, he presents an analysis of "mythical patterns" which have been used by writers in general.

Two Types of Criticism and the Humanities

Like science, literary criticism is also a systematized and organized body of knowledge. Science dissects and analyses nature and facts. Similarly literary criticism analyses and interprets literature. Frye further says that literary criticism and its theories and techniques can be taught, but literature cannot be taught, rather it is to be felt and enjoyed. Indeed, literary criticism is like science and it can be creative. There are two types of literary criticism: a significant and meaningful criticism, and a meaningless criticism. A meaningless criticism will not help a reader in developing a systematic structure of knowledge about a work of literature. This kind of criticism will give only the background information about a work. A meaningless criticism will distract the reader from literature. Literature is a part of humanities and humanities include philosophy and history also. These two branches of knowledge provide a kind of pattern for understanding literature. Philosophy and history are two major tools- for interpretation of literature and archetypal criticism is based on philosophy and history of a people. Archetypal criticism is meaningful criticism.

Formalistic Criticism & Historical Criticism

There are different types of criticism and most of them remain commentaries on texts. There is a type of criticism, which focuses only on an analysis of a text. Such a criticism confines itself to the text and does not give any other background information about the text. This type of formalistic or structural criticism will help the readers in understanding a text only to some extent. That is, a reader may understand the pattern of a text, but how the pattern is evolved, he cannot understand without the background information, which may be called historical criticism. Structural criticism will help a reader in understanding the pattern of a text and historical criticism will make the reader's understanding clearer. What the readers require today is a synthesis of structural criticism and historical criticism. Archetypal criticism is a synthesis of structural criticism and historical criticism.

Literary Criticism is a Science

Science explores nature and different branches of science explore different aspects of nature. Physics is a branch of science, which explores matter and natural forces of the universe. Physics and Astronomy gained their scientific significance and they were accepted as branches of science during the Renaissance. Chemistry gained the status of science in the eighteenth century, and so did Biology in the nineteenth century. Social Sciences assumed their significance as part of science in the twentieth century. Similarly, literary criticism, today, has become systematic in its analysis, and therefore it could be considered as a science. Based on this concept, a work of literature may be critically (or scientifically) evaluated, says Northrop Frye. Among the tools of criticism, he uses the two methods: structural criticism and historical criticism. The two concepts, he explains in detail in the second and third parts of this critical essay respectively.

Part-II

THE INDUCTIVE METHOD OF ANALYSIS Structural Criticism and Inductive Analysis

Towards the close of the first section, Frye contends that structural criticism will help a reader in understanding a text, and in his analysis, he proceeds inductively. That is, from particular truths in a work, he draws forth general truths. Owing to jealousy, Othello, in the Shakespearean play, inflicts upon himself affliction and this is the particular truth of the drama from which the reader learns the general truth of life that jealousy is always destructive. This is called the inductive method of analysis under structural criticism, and Frye discusses this in detail in this section of the essay. An author cannot intrude into his text and express his personal emotions and comments. He should maintain absolute objectivity. A critic studies a work and finds out whether an author is free from textual interference. This is a sort of psychological approach also, and this method of criticism helps the reader in understanding an author's personal symbols, images and myths which he incorporates in his works. At times the author himself may be unconscious of the myths, symbols etc., which he has exploited in his works, and the critic "discovers" such things.

Historical Criticism and Inductive Analysis

Under the second type of criticism called historical criticism, a critic interprets the birth of a text and resolves that it is an outcome of the social and cultural demands of a society in a particular period. The social and cultural milieus are the causes responsible for the creation of a work. Quite evidently the historical-critic plays a major role in the understanding of a text. In fact, both structural criticism and historical criticism are a necessity in archetypal criticism and neither can be dispensed with. But either of them alone does not explain a work completely. A historical critic discovers common symbols and images being used by different writers in their works, and resolves that there must be a common 'source from which writers have derived their symbols, images and myths. The sea is a common symbol used by many writers over the years and therefore it is an archetypal symbol. Not only symbols, images and myths are archetypal; even genres are archetypal. For example, the genre of drama originates from Greek religion. Thus the historical inductive method of criticism helps the readers in understanding not only symbols, images and myths, but also the very genre itself.

The Collective Unconscious or Racial Memory

Archetypal criticism dissects and analyses symbols, images and mythologies used by a writer in his works, and these symbols, myths and rituals have their origin in primitive myths, rituals, folk-lore and cultures. Such primitive factors according to Jung lie buried in the "collective unconscious" which may otherwise be called "racial memory" of a people. Since a writer is part of a race, what lies in his "unconscious" mind is expressed in his works in the form, of myths, rituals, symbols and images. Archetypal criticism focuses on such things in a work. In archetypal criticism, under the reductive method of analysis, a critic, while elucidating a text, moves from the particular truth to the general truth. A particular symbol or myth leads to the establishment of a general truth. Works of art are created in this way and their origin is in primitive cultures. Literature is produced in this manner over the years.

Archetypal Criticism and Its Facets

Archetypal criticism is an all-inclusive term. It involves the efforts of many specialists, and at every stage of interpretation of a text, it is based “on a certain kind of scholarly organization.” An editor is needed to “clean up” the text; a rhetorician analyses the narrative pace; a philologist scrutinizes the choice and significance of words; a literary social historian studies the evolution of myths and rituals. Under archetypal criticism the efforts of all these specialists converge on the analysis of a text. The contribution of a literary anthropologist to archetypal criticism is no small. In an archetypal study of *Hamlet* an anthropologist traces the sources of the drama to the Hamlet legend described by Saxo, a thirteenth century Danish historian in his book entitled *Danes, Gesta Danorum*. He further traces the sources of the drama to nature myths, which were in vogue in the Norman Conquest period. Thus an anthropologist makes a threadbare analysis of the origins of *Hamlet* under archetypal criticism.

Part - III

DEDUCTIVE METHOD OF ANALYSIS Rhythm and Pattern in Literature

An archetypal critic, under the deductive method of analysis, proceeds to establish the meaning of a work from the general truth to the particular truth. Literature is like music and painting. Rhythm is an essential characteristic of music and in painting, pattern is the chief virtue. Rhythm in music is temporal and pattern in painting is spatial. In literature both rhythm and pattern are recurrence of images, forms and words. In literature rhythm means the narrative and the narrative presents all the events and episodes as a sequence and hastens action. Pattern in literature signifies its verbal structure and conveys a meaning. In producing the intended artistic effect, a work of literature should have both rhythm (narrative) and pattern (meaning).

Rhythm in a Work

The world of nature is governed by rhythm and it has got a natural cycle. The seasonal rhythms in a solar year are spring, winter, autumn and summer. This kind of rhythm is there in the world of animals and in the human world also. The mating of animals and birds rhythmically takes place in a particular season every year and the mating may be called a ritual. A ritual is not performed frequently, but rhythmically after a long gap and it has a meaning. The mating of animals has the meaning of reproduction. In the world of nature also rituals are rhythmic. Crops are planted and harvested rhythmically every year and they have their seasons. At the time of planting and harvest, sacrifices and offerings are made and they have a meaning: fertility and consummation of life. In the human world rituals are performed voluntarily and they have their own significance. Works of literature have their origins in such rituals and the archetypal critic discovers and explains them. He explains the rhythm of the rituals, which are the basis of literature in general.

Pattern in a Work

It has already been established that in literature pattern is recurrence of images, forms and words. Patterns are derived from a writer's "epiphanic moments." That is, a writer gets the concepts of his work or ideas of his work in moments of inspiration and he looks into the heart of things. Then he expresses what he has "perceived" in the form of proverbs, riddles, commandments and etiological folktales. Such things have already an element of narrative and they add further to the narrative of the writer in his works. A writer expresses what he has "perceived," and he uses myths either deliberately or unconsciously, and it is the critic who discovers the archetypes, the myths, in a work and explicates the patterns in the work. Both pattern and rhythm are the major basic components of a work.

The Four Phases of the Myth

Every myth has a central significance and the narrative in a myth centres on a figure that may be a god or demi-god or superhuman being or legend. Frazer and Jung contend that in the development of a myth the central figure or central significance is the most important factor and many writers have accepted this view. Frye classifies myths into four categories:

1. *The dawn, spring and birth phase.* There are myths dealing with the birth of a hero, his revival and resurrection, defeat of the powers of darkness and death. Subordinate characters such as the father and the mother are introduced in the myth. Such myths are the archetypes of romance and of rhapsodic poetry.

2. *The zenith, summer and marriage or triumph phase.* In this phase, there are myths of apotheosis, (the act of being raised to the rank of a god), of sacred marriage and of entering into Paradise. Subordinate characters in these myths are the companion and the bride. Such myths are the archetypes of comedy, pastoral and idyll.

3. *The sunset, autumn and death phase.* These are the myths dealing with the fall of a hero, a dying god, violent death, sacrifice and the hero's isolation. The subordinate characters are the traitor and the siren. Such myths are the archetypes of tragedy and elegy.

4. *The darkness, winter and desolation phase.* There are myths dealing with the triumph of these powers. The myths of floods, the return of chaos and the defeat of the hero are examples of this phase. The ogre and the witch are the subordinate characters here and these myths are the archetypes of satire.

These are the four categories of myths, which Frye identifies and they recur in different types of works written by different writers. Indeed they constitute the bases of many great pieces of literature.

Quest - Myth

In addition to the four categories of myths mentioned above, Northrop Frye discusses the quest-myth also which was supposed to have been developed from the four types of myths. In the quest-myth, the hero goes in quest of a truth or something else, and this type of myth recurs

in all religions. For example, the Messiah myth is a quest myth of the Holy Grail (a Christian myth) in the last part of *The Waste Land*. Sacred scriptures of all religions have their own myths and an archetypal critic will have to examine them closely for an appropriate interpretation of texts. From an analysis of the archetypes of myths, a critic can descend to make a study of the genres and from the genres he can further descend to the elucidation of a text in terms of myth. This type of dissension in criticism is called the deductive method of analysis. That is, the critic moves from the general truth (a myth) to an elucidation of the particular truth (the truth of why a character behaves so) in a text. In this way a critic can analyse from myths how a drama or a lyric or an epic has been evolved. Frye further says that, almost all genres in every literature have been evolved from the quest-myth only. It is the duty of an archetypal critic to analyse myths and establish the meaning and message of a work.

Literary Criticism and Religion

There is a close relationship between literary criticism and religion. In his analysis, a literary critic considers God as an archetype of man who is portrayed as a hero in a work. God is a character in the story of *Paradise Lost* or *The Bible*, and the critic deals with Him and considers Him only as a human character. Criticism does not deal with any actuality, but with what is conceivable and possible. Similarly religion is not associated with scientific actuality, but with how things look like. Literary criticism works on conceivability. Likewise, religion functions on conceivability. There can be no place for scientific actuality in both, but what, is conceived is accepted by all. Both in religion and literary criticism, an epiphany is at work. It is a revelation of God or truth and it is a profound insight. It originates from the subconscious, from the dreams. In human life there is a cycle of waking and dreaming and in nature also, it could be seen and it is the cycle of light and darkness. Waking and dreaming, and light and darkness are two antithetic factors, which bring about epiphany in a person. It is during the day that man develops fear and frustration, and it is in the dark of the night his libido, the strong force of life, awakens and he resolves to achieve. It is the antithesis, which resolves the problems and misunderstandings of man and makes him perceive truth both in religion and literary criticism.

The Comic Vision and the Tragic Vision in a Myth

Both art and religion are alike and they aim at perfection. Perfection is the end of all human efforts. In art it is achieved through dreaming (imagination) and in religion it is through visualization. Perfection can be achieved in literary criticism also and it is the archetypal critic who does it through an analysis of the comic vision of life and the tragic vision as well in a work. The central pattern of the comic vision and the tragic vision in a myth is detailed below:

1. In the comic vision of life, in a myth, the “human” world is presented as a community, or a hero is portrayed as a representative of the desires of the reader.

Here the archetypes of images are symposium, communion, order, friendship, and love. Marriage or some equivalent consummation belongs to the comic vision of life.

In the tragic vision of life, in the “human” world, there is tyranny or anarchy, or an individual or an isolated man, or a leader with his back to his followers or a bullying giant of romance, or a deserted or betrayed hero. In addition to these, there will be a harlot or a witch or other varieties of Jung’s “terrible mother” in the tragic vision of life.

2. In the comic vision of life in a myth, the “animal” world is presented as a community of domesticated animals, usually a flock of sheep, or a lamb, or one of the gentler birds (usually a dove). The archetypes of images are pastoral images. In the tragic vision of life, in the “animal” world there are beasts, birds of prey, wolves, vultures, serpents, dragons and so on.

3. In the comic vision of life, in the “vegetable” world of a myth, there is a garden, a grove or park, or a tree of life, or a rose or lotus. The examples of the archetypes of Arcadian images are Marvell’s green world and Shakespeare’s forest comedies.

In the tragic vision of life, in the “vegetable” world of a myth, there is a sinister forest like the one in Milton’s *Comus* or at the opening of Dante’s *Inferno*, or a heath or wilderness, or a tree of death.

4. In the comic vision of life, in the “mineral” world of a myth, there is a city, or one building or temple, or one stone, normally a glowing precious stone. These are presented as luminous or fiery. The example of the archetype of image is a “starlit dome.”

In the tragic vision of life, the “mineral” world of a myth is seen in terms of deserts, rocks and ruins, or of geometrical images like the cross.

5. In the comic vision of life, in the “unformed” world of a myth, there is a river, traditionally fourfold, which influenced the Renaissance image of the temperate body with its four humours.

In the tragic vision of life, this world usually becomes the sea, as the narrative myth of dissolution is so often a flood myth. The combination of the sea and beast images gives us the leviathan and similar water-borne monsters.

After discussing the central pattern of the comic vision and the tragic vision in a myth, Frye introduces W.B. Yeats’ “Sailing to Byzantium” as a befitting and famous example of the comic vision which, in the poem, is represented by the city, the tree, the bird, the community of sages, the geometrical gyre and the detachment from the cyclic world. It is either tragic or comic vision of life which determines the interpretation of a symbol or myth, says Frye.

Conclusion

Of the different approaches of literary criticism, Northrop Frye has established the validity of the archetypal approach and its relevance in the elucidation of a text. Like works of literature, criticism is also creative and an archetypal critic discovers the meaning of a text and the motives of a character. No human endeavor is independent and the work of an archetypal

critic is inclusive of formalistic criticism (or structural criticism) and historical criticism. Both J.G. Frazer and C.G. Jung opened up new vistas in archetypal or mythical criticism and Frye has obviated the impediments in the appreciation of a text. In mythical criticism, both the inductive method and the deductive method are effective tools and neither can be dispensed with, according to Frye. If one method explains a text based on the derivation of a general truth from the particular, the other method does it the other way round. Both the methods are complementary, and if either of them is unexploited, archetypal criticism will be incomplete. Archetypal approach to a text has contributed to the establishment of a systematic and comprehensive concept of literary criticism.

PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERATURE

BY

CARL YUNG

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a pupil and protégé of Freud, but broke away from his master's teaching in 1913 to develop his own school of analytical psychology. The main disagreement between the two men was over the nature of libido, which Jung believed to be more than sexual.

Jung postulated the existence of a racial memory inherited by all members of the human family and connecting modern man with his primeval roots. The collective unconscious is manifested in the recurrence of certain images, stories, figures, called 'archetypes'—the 'psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type'.

Psychological maturity, or 'individuation' entails the individual's recognition and acceptance of archetypal elements of his own psyche, for which Jung coined the descriptive terms 'shadow', 'persona', and 'anima' (a triad that might be compared to Freud's Id, Ego, and Super-ego). Failure in this regard leads to a neurotic projection of unacknowledged elements of the psyche on to others.

Jungian psychology has been in many ways more congenial to the literary mind than Freud's, though not necessarily more influential. Freud always regarded himself as an empirical scientist, and science has been seen as a threat to literary values from the Romantic period onwards. Jung, much more sympathetic than Freud towards visionary, religious, and even magical traditions, readily endorsed the claims of literature to embody knowledge—knowledge of a kind particularly vital to alienated, secularized modern man; and his assertion that 'it is his art that explains the artist, not the insufficiencies and conflicts of his personal life' is obviously nearer in spirit to Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' than Freud's 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming'. Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious

tied in neatly with the anthropological study of primitive myth and ritual, initiated in England by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), which exerted a strong influence upon modern writers such as T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence. Out of this fusion of literature, anthropology and psychology evolved a kind of literary criticism in which the power and significance of works of literature, or of national literatures, or of the whole of literature, is explained in terms of the recurrence of certain archetypal themes, images, and narrative patterns. Jung himself however, was careful to point out that this approach was more relevant to some kinds of literature than to others, and that its emphases were not always relevant to literary standards of value.

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Modern Man in Search of a Soul (1933), translated by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes.

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(New Flaven, 1962)

J. Baird, *Call Me Ishmael* (Baltimore, 1956)

Psychology and literature

It is obvious enough that psychology, being the study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear upon the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and arts. We may

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PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERATURE

It is obvious enough that psychology, being the study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear upon the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and arts. We may expect psychological research, on the one hand, to explain the formation 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 the work of art we have to deal 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 we must attempt the psychological analysis of a definitely circumscribed and concrete artistic achievement, while in the second we must analyse the living and creative human being as a unique personality. Although these two undertakings are closely related and even interdependent, neither of them can yield the explanations that are sought by 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 probable surmises or lucky guesses. A knowledge of Goethe's particular relation to his mother throws some light upon Faust's exclamation: 'The mothers—mothers—how very strange it sounds!' But it does not enable us to see how the attachment to his mother could produce the Faust drama itself, however unmistakably we sense in the man Goethe a deep connection between the two. Nor are we more successful in reasoning in the reverse direction. There is nothing in *The Ring of the Nibelungs* that would enable us to recognize or definitely infer the fact that Wagner occasionally liked to wear womanish clothes, though hidden connections exist between the heroic masculine world of the Nibelungs and a certain pathological effeminacy in the man Wagner. The present state of development of psychology does not allow us to establish those rigorous causal connections which we expect of a science. It is only in the realm of the psycho-physiological instincts and reflexes that we can confidently operate with the idea of causality. From the point where psychic life begins—that is, at a level of greater complexity—the psychologist must

content himself with more or less widely ranging descriptions of happenings and with the vivid portrayal of the warp and weft of the mind in all its amazing intricacy. In doing this, he must refrain from designating any one psychic process, taken by itself, as 'necessary'. Were this not the state of affairs, and could the psychologist be relied upon to uncover the causal connections within a work of art and in the process of artistic creation, he would leave the study of art no ground to stand on and would reduce it to a special branch of his own science. The psychologist, to be sure, may never abandon his claim to investigate and establish causal relations in complicated psychic events. To do so would be to deny psychology the right to exist. Yet he can never make good this claim in the fullest sense, because the creative aspect of life which finds its clearest expression in art baffles all attempts at rational formulation. Any reaction to stimulus may be causally explained; but the creative act, which is the absolute antithesis of mere reaction, will for ever elude the human understanding. It can only be described in its manifestations; it can be obscurely sensed, but never wholly grasped. Psychology and the study of art 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 psychic events are derivable. It is a principle in the study of art that a psychic product is something 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.

I. The work of art

There is a fundamental difference of approach between the psychologist's examination of a literary work, and that of the literary critic. What is of decisive importance and value for the latter may be quite irrelevant for the former. Literary products of highly dubious merit are often of the greatest interest to the psychologist. For instance, the so-called 'psychological novel' is by no means as rewarding for the psychologist as the literary-minded suppose. Considered as a 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. The important question as to how a particular author came to write particular novel is of course left unanswered, but I wish to reserve this general problem for the second part of my essay.

The novels which are most fruitful for the psychologist are those in which the author has not already given a psychological interpretation of his

characters, and which therefore leave room for analysis and explanation, or even invite it by their mode of presentation. Good examples of this kind of writing are the

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novels of Benoit, and English fiction in the manner of Rider Haggard, including the vein exploited by Conan Doyle which yields that most cherished article of mass-production, the detective story. Melville's *Moby Dick*, which I consider the greatest American novel, also comes within this class of writings. An exciting narrative that is apparently quite devoid of psychological exposition is just what interests the psychologist most of all. Such a tale is built upon groundwork of implicit psychological assumptions, and, in the measure that the author is unconscious of them, they reveal themselves, pure and unalloyed, to the critical discernment. In the psychological novel, on the other hand, the author himself attempts to reshape his material so as to raise it from the level of crude contingency to that of psychological exposition and illumination—a procedure which all too often clouds the psychological significance of the work or hides it from view. It is precisely to novels of this sort that the layman goes for 'psychology'; while it is novels of the other kind that challenge the psychologist, for he alone can give them deeper meaning.

I have been speaking in terms of the novel, but I am dealing with a psychological fact which is not restricted to this particular form of literary art. We meet with it in the works of the poets as well, and are confronted with it when we compare the first and second parts of the Faust drama. The love-tragedy of Gretchen explains itself; there is nothing that the psychologist can add to it that the poet has not already said in better words. The second part, on the other hand, calls for explanation. The prodigious richness of the imaginative material has so overtaxed the poet's formative powers that nothing is self-explanatory and every verse adds to the reader's need of an interpretation. The two parts of Faust illustrate by way of extremes this psychological distinction between works of literature.

In order to emphasize the distinction, I will call the one mode of artistic creation psychological, and the other visionary. The psychological mode deals with materials drawn from the realm of human consciousness—for

instance, with the lessons of life, with emotional shocks, the experience of passion and the crises of human destiny in general—all of which go to make up the conscious life of man, and his feeling life in particular. This material is psychically assimilated by the poet, raised from the commonplace to the level of poetic experience, and given an expression which forces the reader to greater clarity and depth of human insight by bringing fully into his consciousness what he ordinarily evades and overlooks or senses only with a feeling of dull discomfort. The poet's work is an interpretation and illumination of the contents of consciousness, of the ineluctable experiences of human life with its eternally recurrent sorrow and joy. He leaves nothing over for the psychologist, unless, indeed, we expect the latter to expound the reasons for which Faust falls in love with Gretchen, or which drive Gretchen to murder her child! Such themes go to make up the lot of humankind; they repeat themselves millions of times and are responsible for the monotony of the police-court and of the penal code. No obscurity whatever surrounds them, for they fully explain themselves.

a Pierre Benoit (b. 1886), French author of novels of adventure, e.g. *Koenigsmark* (1918) and *VAtlantidc* (1919).

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Countless literary works belong to this class: the many novels dealing with love, the environment, the family, crime and society, as well as didactic poetry, the larger number of lyrics, and the drama, both tragic and comic. Whatever its particular form may be, the psychological work of art always takes its materials from the vast realm of conscious human experience—from the vivid foreground of life, we might say. I have called this mode of artistic creation psychological because in its activity it nowhere transcends the bounds of psychological intelligibility. Everything that it embraces—the experiences as well as its artistic expression—belongs to the realm of the understandable. Even the basic experiences themselves, though non-rational, have nothing strange about them; on the contrary, they are that which has been known from the beginning of time—passion and its fated outcome, man's subjection to the turns of destiny, eternal nature with its beauty and its horror.

The profound difference between the first and second parts of Faust marks the difference between the psychological and the visionary modes of artistic creation. The latter reverses all the conditions of the former. The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind—that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a super-human world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding, and to which his is therefore in danger of succumbing. The value and the force of the experience are given by its enormity. It arises from timeless depths; it is foreign and cold, many-sided, demonic, and grotesque. A grimly ridiculous sample of the eternal chaos—a crimen laesae majestatis humanae ['treason against humanity'], to use Nietzsche's words—it bursts asunder our human standards of value and of aesthetic form. The disturbing vision of monstrous and meaningless happenings that in every way exceed the grasp of human feeling and comprehension 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 never transcend the bounds of the humanly possible, and for this reason are readily shaped to the demands of art, no matter how great a shock to the individual they may be. 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 unfathomed abyss of what has not yet become. Is it a vision of other worlds, or of the obscuration of the spirit, or of the beginning of things before the age of man, or of the unborn generations of the future? We cannot say that it is any or none of these.

Shaping—re-shaping—

The eternal spirit's eternal pastime . 1

We find such vision in The Shepherd of Hermas a , in Dante, in the second part of Faust, in Nietzsche's Dionysian exuberance, in Wagner's Nibehingen-

a A treatise by Ilermas, a Christian writer of the second century, so named because an angel, in the form of a shepherd, was supposed to have dictated part of its contents to the author.

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ring in Spitteler's *a Olympischer Friihling*, in the poetry of William Blake, in the *Ipnerotomachia* of the Monk Francesco Colonna, and in Jacob Boehme's philosophic and poetic stammerings. In

a more restricted and specific way, the primordial experience furnishes material for Rider Haggard in the fiction-cycle that turns upon She, and it does the same for Benoit, chiefly in *L'Atlantide*, for Kubin in *Die Andere Seite*, for Meyrink in *Das Grime Gesicht*—a book whose importance we should not undervalue—for Goetz in *Das Reich ohne Rautn*, and for Barlach in *Der Tote Tag*. This list might be greatly extended.

In dealing with the psychological mode of artistic creation, we never need ask ourselves what the material consists of or what it means. But this question forces itself upon us as soon as we come to the visionary mode of creation. We are astonished, taken aback, confused, put on our guard or even disgusted—and we demand commentaries and explanations. We are reminded in nothing of everyday, human life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears and the dark recesses of the mind that we sometimes sense with misgiving. The reading public for the most part repudiates this kind of writing—unless, indeed, it is coarsely sensational—and even the literary critic feels embarrassed by it. It is true that Dante and Wagner have smoothed the approach to it. The visionary experience is cloaked, in Dante's case, by the introduction of historical facts, and, in that of Wagner, by mythological events—so that history and mythology are sometimes taken to be the materials with which these poets worked. But with neither of them does the moving force and the deeper significance lie there. For both it is contained in the visionary experience. Rider Haggard, pardonably enough, is generally held to be a mere inventor of fiction. Yet even with him the story is primarily a means of giving expression to significant material. However much the tale may seem to overgrow the content, the latter outweighs the former in importance.

The obscurity as to the sources of the material in visionary creation is very strange, and the exact opposite of what we find in the psychological mode of creation. We are even led to suspect that this obscurity is not unintentional. We are naturally inclined to suppose—and Freudian psychology encourages us to do so—that some highly personal experience underlies this grotesque darkness. We hope thus to explain these strange glimpses of chaos and to understand why it sometimes seems as though the poet had intentionally concealed his basic experience from us. It is only

a step from this way of looking at the matter to the statement that we are here dealing with a pathological and neurotic art— a step which is justified in so far as the material of the visionary creator shows certain traits that we find in the fantasies of the insane. The converse also is true; we often discover in the mental output of psychotic persons a wealth, of meaning that we should expect rather from the works of a genius. The psychologist who follows Freud will of course be inclined to take the writings in question as a problem in pathology. On the assumption that an intimate, personal experience underlies what I call the 'primordial vision'—an experience, that is to say, which cannot be accepted by the conscious outlook—he will try to account for the curious images of the vision by calling them cover-figures and a Carl Spitteler (1845-1924), Swiss epic poet, awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1919-

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by supposing that they represent an attempted concealment of the basic experience. This, according to his view, might be an experience in love which is morally or aesthetically incompatible with the personality as a whole or at least with certain fictions of the conscious mind. In order that the poet, through his ego, might repress this experience and make it unrecognizable (unconscious), the whole arsenal of a pathological fantasy was brought into action. Moreover, this attempt to replace reality by fiction, being unsatisfactory, must be repeated in a long series of creative embodiments. This would explain the proliferation of imaginative forms, all monstrous, demonic, grotesque, and perverse. On the one hand they are substitutes for the unacceptable experience, and on the other they help to conceal it.

Although a discussion of the poet's personality and psychic disposition belongs strictly to the second part of my essay, I cannot avoid taking up in the present connection this Freudian view of the visionary work of art. For one thing, it has aroused considerable attention. And then it is the only well-known attempt that has been made to give a 'scientific' explanation of the sources of the visionary material or to formulate a theory of the psychic processes that underlie this curious mode of artistic creation. I assume that my own view of the question is not well known or generally understood. With this preliminary remark, I will now try to present it briefly.

If we insist on deriving the vision from a personal experience, we must treat the former as something secondary—as a mere substitute for reality. The result is that we strip the vision of its primordial quality and take it as nothing but a symptom. The pregnant chaos then shrinks to the proportions of a psychic disturbance. With this account of the matter we feel reassured and turn again to our picture of a well-ordered cosmos. Since we are practical and reasonable, we do not expect the cosmos to be perfect; we accept these unavoidable imperfections which we call abnormalities and diseases, and we take it for granted that human nature is not exempt from them. The frightening revelation of abysses that defy the human understanding is dismissed as illusion, and the poet is regarded as a victim and perpetrator of deception. Even to the poet, his primordial experience was 'human—all too human', to such a degree that he could not face its meaning but had to conceal it from himself.

We shall do well, I think, to make fully explicit all the implications of that way of accounting for artistic creation which consists in reducing it to personal factors. We should see clearly where it leads. The truth is that it takes us away from the psychological study of the work of art, and confronts us with the psychic disposition of the poet himself. That the latter presents an important problem is not to be denied, but the work of art is something in its own right, and may not be conjured away. The question of the significance to the poet of his own creative work—of his regarding it as a trifle, as a screen, as a source of suffering or as an achievement—does not concern us at the moment, our task being to interpret the work of art psychologically. For this undertaking it is essential that we give serious consideration to the basic experience that underlies it—namely, to the vision. We must take it at least as seriously as we do the experiences that underlie the psychological mode of artistic creation, and

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no one doubts that they are both real and serious. It looks, indeed, as if the visionary experience were something quite apart from the ordinary lot of man, and for this reason we have difficulty in believing that it is real. It has about it an unfortunate suggestion of obscure metaphysics and of occultism, so that we feel called upon to intervene in the name of a well-intentioned reasonableness. Our conclusion is that it would be better not to take such things too seriously, lest the world revert again to a benighted superstition. We may, of course, have a predilection for the occult; but ordinarily we

dismiss the visionary experience as the outcome of a rich fantasy or of a poetic mood—that is to say, as a kind of poetic licence psychologically understood. Certain of the poets encourage this interpretation in order to put a wholesome distance between themselves and their work. Spitteler, for example, stoutly maintained that it was one and the same whether the poet sang of an Olympian Spring or to the theme: 'May is here!' The truth is that poets are human beings, and that what a poet has to say about his work is often far from being the most illuminating word on the subject. What is required of us, then, is nothing less than to defend the importance of the visionary experience against the poet himself.

It cannot be denied that we catch the reverberations of an initial love-experience in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, in the *Divine Comedy*, and in the *Faust* drama—an experience which is completed and fulfilled by the vision. There is no ground for the assumption that the second part of *Faust* repudiates or conceals the normal, human experience of the first part, nor are we justified in supposing that Goethe was normal at the time when he wrote Part I, but in a neurotic state of mind when he composed Part II. *Hermas*, *Dante* and *Goethe* can be taken as three steps in a sequence covering nearly two thousand years of human development, and in each of them we find the personal love-episode not only connected with the weightier visionary experience, but frankly subordinated to it. On the strength of this evidence which is furnished by the work of art itself and which throws out of court the question of the poet's particular psychic disposition, we must admit that 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—we cannot doubt that the vision is a genuine, primordial experience, regardless of what reason-mongers may say. The vision is not something derived or secondary, and it is not a symptom of something else. It is true symbolic expression—that is, the expression of something existent in its own right, but imperfectly known. The love-episode is a real experience really suffered, and the same statement applies to the vision. We need not try to determine whether the content of the vision is of a physical, psychic, or metaphysical nature. In itself it has psychic reality, and this is no less real than physical reality. Human passion falls within the sphere of conscious experience, while the subject of the vision lies beyond it. Through our feelings 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 back and concealed, for which reason

they have been regarded from earliest times as mysterious, uncanny and deceptive. They are hidden from the scrutiny of man, and he also

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hides himself from them out of deisidaemonia [fear of demons]. He protects himself with the shield of science and the armour of reason. His enlightenment is born of fear; in the daytime he believes in an ordered cosmos, and he tries to maintain this faith against the fear of chaos that besets him by night. What if there were some living force whose sphere of action lies beyond our world of every day? Are there human needs that are dangerous and unavoidable? Is there something more purposeful than electrons? Do we delude ourselves in thinking that we possess and command our own souls? And is that which science calls the 'psyche' not merely a question-mark arbitrarily confined within the skull, but rather a door that opens upon the human world from a world beyond, now and again allowing strange and unseizable potencies to act upon man and to remove him, as if upon the wings of the night, from the level of common humanity to that of a more than personal vocation? When we consider the visionary mode of artistic creation, it even seems as if the love-episode had served as a mere release—as if the personal experience

experi

ence were nothing but the prelude to the all-important 'divine comedy'.

It is not alone the creator of this kind of art who is in touch with the night-side of life, but the seers, prophets, leaders, and enlighteners also. However dark this nocturnal world may be, it is not wholly unfamiliar. Man has known of it from time immemorial—here, there, and everywhere; for primitive man today it is an unquestionable part of his picture of the cosmos. It is only we who have repudiated it because of our fear of superstition and metaphysics, and because we strive to construct a conscious world that is safe and manageable in that natural law holds in it the place of statute law in a commonwealth. Yet, even in our midst, the poet now and then catches sight of the figures that people the night-world—the spirits, demons, and gods. He knows that purposiveness out-reaching human ends is the life-giving secret for man; he has a presentiment of incomprehensible

happenings in the pleroma. In short, he sees something of (hat psychic world that strikes terror into the savage and the barbarian.

From the very first beginnings of human society onward man's efforts to give his vague intimations a binding form have left their traces. Even in the Rhodesian cliff-drawings of the Old Stone Age there appears, side by side with the most amazingly life-like representations of animals, an abstract pattern—a double cross contained in a circle. This design has turned up in every cultural region, more or less, and we find it today not only in Christian churches, but in Tibetan monasteries as well. It is the so-called sun-wheel, and as it dates from a time when no one had thought of wheels as a mechanical device, it cannot have had its source in any experience of the external world. It is rather a symbol that stands for a psychic happening; it covers an experience of the inner world, and is no doubt as lifelike a representation as the famous rhinoceros with the tick-birds on its hack. There has never been a primitive culture (hat did not possess a system of secret teaching, and in many cultures this system is highly developed. The men's councils and the totem-clans preserve this teaching about hidden things that lie apart from man's daytime existence things which, from primeval times, have always constituted his most vital experiences. Knowledge about them is handed on to younger men in the rites

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of initiation. The mysteries of the Graeco-Roman world performed the same office, and the rich mythology of antiquity is a relic of such experiences in the earliest stages of human development.

It is therefore to be expected of the poet that he will resort to mythology in order to give his experience its most fitting expression. It would be a serious mistake to suppose that he works with materials received at second-hand. The primordial experience is the source of his creativeness; it cannot be fathomed, and therefore requires mythological imagery to give it form. In itself it offers no words or images, for it is a vision seen 'as in a glass, darkly'. It is merely a deep presentiment that strives to find expression. It is like a whirlwind that seizes everything within reach and, by carrying it aloft, assumes a visible shape. Since the particular expression can never exhaust the possibilities of the vision, but falls far short of it in richness of content, the poet must have at his disposal a huge store of materials if he is to communicate even a few of his intimations. What is

more, he must resort to an imagery that is difficult to handle and full of contradictions in order to express the weird paradoxicality of his vision. Dante's presentiments are clothed in images that run the gamut of Heaven and Hell; Goethe must bring in the Blocksberg and the infernal regions of Greek antiquity; Wagner needs the whole body of Nordic myth; Nietzsche returns to the hieratic style and recreates the legendary seer of prehistoric times; Blake invents for himself indescribable figures, and Spitteler borrows old names for new creatures of the imagination. And no intermediate step is missing in the whole range from the ineffably sublime to the perversely grotesque.

Psychology can do nothing towards the elucidation of this colourful imagery except bring together materials for comparison and offer a terminology for its discussion. According to this terminology, that which appears in the vision is the collective unconscious. We mean by collective unconscious, a certain psychic disposition shaped by the forces of heredity; from it consciousness has developed. In the physical structure of the body we find traces of earlier stages of evolution, and we may expect the human psyche also to conform in its make-up to the law of phylogeny. It is a fact that in eclipses of consciousness in dreams, narcotic states, and cases of insanity—there come to the surface psychic products or contents that show all the traits of primitive levels of psychic development. The images themselves are sometimes of such a primitive character that we might suppose them derived from ancient, esoteric teaching. Mythological themes clothed in modern dress also frequently appear. What is of particular importance for the study of literature in these manifestations of the collective unconscious is that they are compensatory to the conscious attitude. This is to say that they can bring a one-sided, abnormal, or dangerous state of consciousness into equilibrium in an apparently purposive way. In dreams we can see this process very clearly in its positive aspect. In cases of insanity the compensatory process is often perfectly obvious, but takes a negative form. There are persons, for instance, who have anxiously shut themselves off from all the world only to discover one day that their most intimate secrets are known and talked about by everyone . 2

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If we consider Goethe's Faust, and leave aside the possibility that it is compensatory to his own conscious attitude, the question that we must

answer is this: In what relation does it stand to the conscious outlook of his time? 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 to everyone living in that age. A work of art is produced that contains what may truthfully be called a message to generations of men. So Faust touches something in the soul of every German. So also Dante's fame is immortal, while The Shepherd of Hermas just failed of inclusion in the New Testament canon. Every period has its bias, its particular prejudice and its psychic ailment. 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 in that a poet, a seer, or a leader allows himself to be guided by the unexpressed desire of his times and shows the way, by word or deed, to the attainment of that which everyone blindly craves and expects—whether this attainment results in good or evil, the healing of an epoch or its destruction.

It is always dangerous to speak of one's own times, because what is at stake in the present is too vast for comprehension. A few hints must therefore suffice. Francesco Colonna's book [Hypertierotomachia Polyphili] is cast in the form of a dream, and is the apotheosis of natural love taken as a human relation; without countenancing a wild indulgence of the senses, he leaves completely aside the Christian sacrament of marriage. The book was written in 1453. Rider Haggard, whose life coincides with the flowering-time of the Victorian era, takes up this subject and deals with it in his own way; he does not cast it in the form of a dream, but allows us to feel the tension of moral conflict. Goethe weaves the theme of Gretchen-Helen-Mater-Gloriosa like a red thread into the colourful tapestry of Faust. Nietzsche proclaims the death of God, and Spitteler transforms the waxing and waning of the gods into a myth of the seasons. Whatever his importance, each of these poets speaks with the voice of thousands and ten thousands, foretelling changes in the conscious outlook of his time.

II. The poet

Creativeness, like the freedom of the will, contains a secret. The psychologist can describe both these manifestations as processes, but he can find no solution of the philosophical problems they offer. Creative man

is a riddle that we may try to answer in various ways, but always in vain, a truth that has not prevented modern psychology from turning now and again to the question of the artist and his art. Freud thought he had found a key in his procedure of deriving the work of art from the personal experiences of the artist. ³ It is true that certain possibilities lay in this direction, for it was conceivable that a work of art, no less than a neurosis, might be traced back to those knots in psychic life that we call the complexes. It was Freud's great discovery that neuroses have a

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causal origin in the psychic realm—that they take their rise from emotional states and from real or imagined childhood experiences. Certain of his followers, like Rank and Stekel, have taken up related lines of inquiry and have achieved important results. It is undeniable that the poet's psychic disposition permeates his work root and branch. Nor is there anything new in the statement that personal factors largely influence the poet's choice and use of his materials. Credit, however, must certainly be given to the Freudian school for showing how far-reaching this influence is and in what curious ways it comes to expression.

Freud takes the neurosis as a substitute for a direct means of gratification. He therefore regards it as something inappropriate—a mistake, a dodge, an excuse, a voluntary blindness. To him it is essentially a shortcoming that should never have been. Since a neurosis, to all appearances, is nothing but a disturbance that is all the more irritating because it is without sense or meaning, few people will venture to say a good word for it. And a work of art is brought into questionable proximity with the neurosis when it is taken as something which can be analysed in terms of the poet's repressions. In a sense it finds itself in good company, for religion and philosophy are regarded in the same light by Freudian psychology. No objection can be raised if it is admitted that this approach amounts to nothing more than the elucidation of those personal determinants without which a work of art is unthinkable. But should the claim be made that such an analysis accounts for the work of art itself, then a categorical denial is called for. The personal idiosyncrasies that creep into a work of art are not essential; in fact, the more we have to cope with these peculiarities, the less is it a question of art. What is essential in a work of art is that it should rise far above the realm of personal life and speak from the spirit and heart of the poet as man to the spirit and heart of mankind. The personal aspect is a limitation—and even a

sin—in the realm of art. When a form of ‘art’ is primarily personal it deserves to be treated as if it were a neurosis. There may be some validity in the idea held by the Freudian school that artists without exception are narcissistic—by which is meant that they are undeveloped persons with infantile and auto-erotic traits. The statement is only valid, however, for the artist as a person, and has nothing to do with the man as an artist. In his capacity of artist he is neither auto-erotic, nor hetero-erotic, nor erotic in any sense. He is objective and impersonal—even inhuman—for as an artist he is his work, and not a human being.

Every creative person is a duality or a synthesis of contradictory aptitudes. On the one side he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other side he is an impersonal, creative process. Since as a human being he may be sound or morbid, we must look at his psychic make-up to find the determinants of his personality. But we can only understand him in his capacity of artist by looking at his creative achievement. We should make a sad mistake if we tried to explain the mode of life of an English gentleman, a Prussian officer, or a cardinal in terms of personal factors. The gentleman, the officer, and the cleric function as such in an impersonal role, and their psychic make-up is qualified by a peculiar objectivity. We must grant that the artist does not function in an

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official capacity—the very opposite is nearer the truth. He nevertheless resembles the types I have named in one respect, for the specifically artistic disposition involves an overweight of collective psychic life as against the personal. 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’—one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind. To perform this difficult office it is sometimes necessary for him to sacrifice happiness and everything that makes life worth living for the ordinary human being.

All this being so, it is not strange that the artist is an especially interesting case for the psychologist who uses an analytical method. The artist’s life cannot be otherwise than full of conflicts, for two forces are at war within

him—on the one hand the common human longing for happiness, satisfaction, and security in life, and on the other a ruthless passion for creation which may go so far as to override every personal desire. The lives of artists are as a rule so highly unsatisfactory—not to say tragic—because of their inferiority on the human and personal side, and not because of a sinister dispensation. There are hardly any exceptions to the rule that a person must pay dearly for the divine gift of the creative fire. It is as though each of us were endowed at birth with a certain capital of energy. The strongest force in our make-up will seize and all but monopolize this energy, leaving so little over that nothing of value can come of it. In this way the creative force can drain the human impulses to such a degree that the personal ego must develop all sorts of bad qualities—ruthlessness, selfishness, and vanity (so-called ‘auto-erotism’)—and even every kind of vice, in order to maintain the spark of life and to keep itself from being wholly bereft. The auto-erotism of artists resembles that of illegitimate or neglected children who from their tenderest years must protect themselves from the destructive influence of people who have no love to give them—who develop bad qualities for that very purpose and later maintain an invincible egocentrism by remaining all their lives infantile and helpless or by actively offending against the moral code or 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 the fact that he is an artist that is to say, a man who from his very birth has been called to a greater task than the ordinary mortal. A special ability means a heavy expenditure of energy in a particular direction, with a consequent drain from some other side of life.

It makes no difference whether the poet knows that his work is begotten, grows, and matures with him, or whether he supposes that by taking thought he produces it out of the void. His opinion of the matter does not change the fact that his own work outgrows him as a child its mother. The creative process has feminine quality, and the creative work arises from unconscious depths we might say, from the realm of the mothers. Whenever the creative force predominates, human life is ruled and moulded by the unconscious as against the active will, and the conscious ego is swept along on a subterranean current,

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being nothing more than a helpless observer of events. The work in process becomes the poet's fate and determines his psychic development. It is not Goethe who creates Faust, but Faust which creates Goethe. And what is Faust but a symbol? By this I do not mean an allegory that points to something all too familiar, but an expression that stands for something not clearly known and yet profoundly alive. Here it is something that lives in the soul of every German, and that Goethe has helped to bring to birth. Could we conceive of anyone but a German writing Faust or Also sprach Zarathustra? Both play upon something that reverberates in the German soul—a 'primordial image', as Jacob Burckhardt once called it—the figure of a physician or teacher of mankind. The archetypal image of the wise man, the saviour or redeemer, lies buried and dormant in man's unconscious since the dawn of culture; it is awakened whenever the times are out of joint and a human society is committed to a serious error. When people go astray they feel the need of a guide or teacher or even of the physician. These primordial images are numerous, but do not appear in the dreams of individuals or in works of art until they are called into being by the waywardness of the general outlook. When conscious life is characterized by one-sidedness and by a false attitude, then they are activated one might say, 'instinctively'—and come to light in the dreams of individuals and the visions of artists and seers, thus restoring the psychic equilibrium of the epoch.

In this way the work of the poet comes to meet the spiritual need of the society in which he lives, and for this reason his work means more to him than his personal fate, whether he is aware of this or not. Being essentially the instrument for his work, he is subordinate to it, and we have no reason for expecting him to interpret it for us. He has done the best that in him lies in giving it form, and he 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 never unequivocal. 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 we must draw our own conclusions. If a person has a nightmare, it means either that he is too much given to fear, or else that he is too exempt from it; and if he dreams of the old wise man it may mean that he is too pedagogical, as also that he stands in need of a teacher. In a subtle way both meanings come to the same thing, as we perceive when we are able to let the 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 once shaped him. Then we understand the nature of his experience. We

see that he has drawn upon the healing and redeeming forces of the collective psyche that underlies consciousness with its isolation and its painful errors; that he has penetrated to that matrix of life in which all men are embedded, which imparts a common rhythm to all human existence, and allows the individual to communicate his feeling and his striving to mankind as a whole.

The secret of artistic creation and of the effectiveness of art is to be found in a return to the state of participation mystique—to that level of experience at which it is man who lives, and not the individual, and at which the weal or woe of the single human being does not count, but only human existence.

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This is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal, but none the less profoundly moves us each and all. And this is also why the personal life of the poet cannot be held essential to his art—but at most a help or a hindrance to his creative task. He may go the way of a Philistine, a good citizen, a neurotic, a fool or a criminal. His personal career may be inevitable and interesting, but it does not explain the poet.

Notes

1. Gestaltung, Urn gestaltung,

Des ew'gen Sinnes ew'ge Unterhaltung (Goethe).

2. See my article: 'Mind and the Earth', in Contributions to Analytical Psychology, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1928.

3. See Freud's essays on Jensen's Gradiva and on Leonardo da Vinci.