

ASPECTS OF THE WOMAN IN ART

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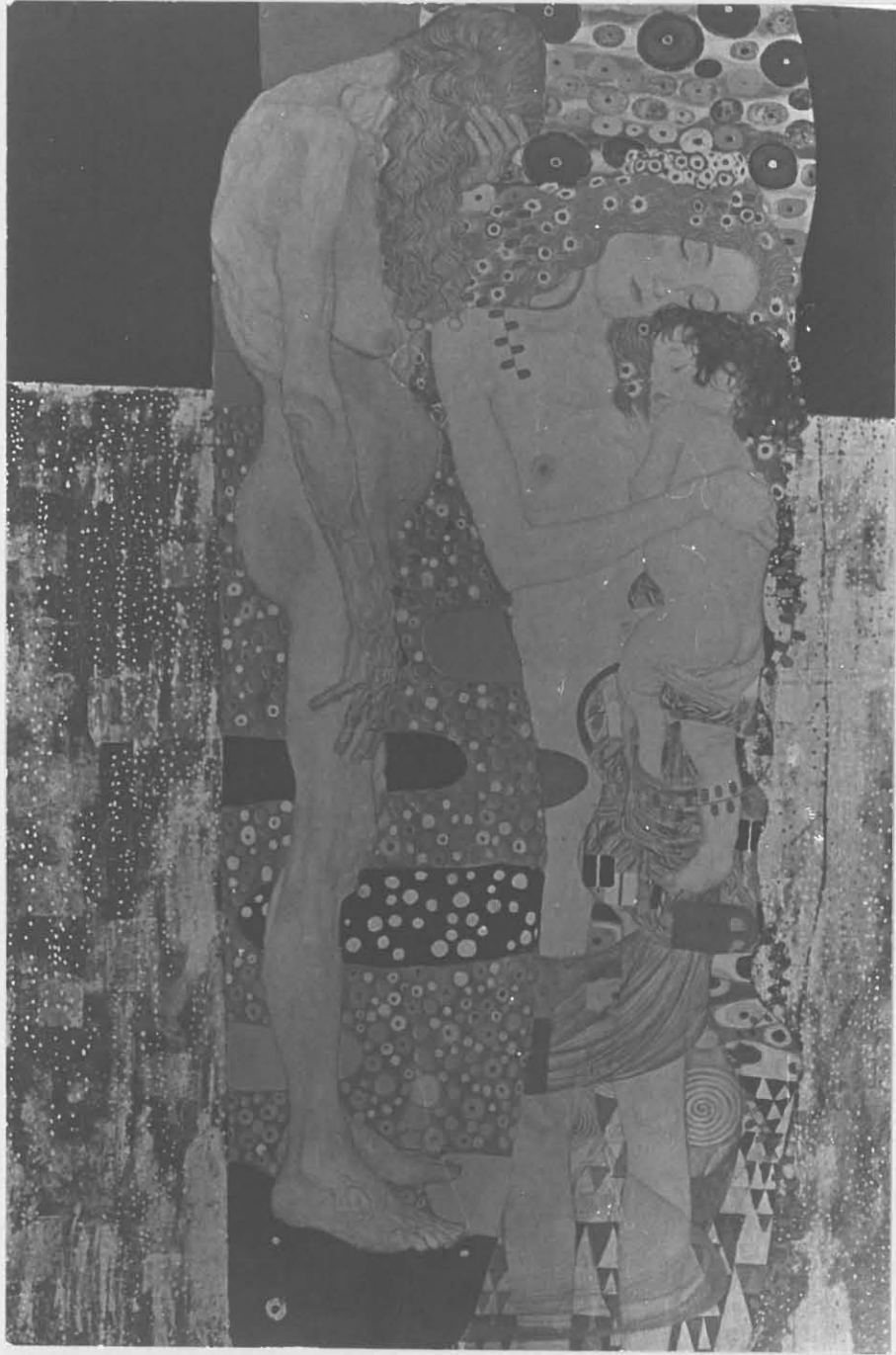


Fig. 1

The Image of Woman in Art.

Woman has been depicted in all mediums throughout the ages, although her image and content have always taken on varying interpretations. Beauty has always been epitomized in the human figure - from an inexhaustible longing for perfection.

Naturally her feminine aspects and her unconscious awareness of the rhythms of nature made her central to the making of myths. She was depended upon as the Earth Mother - the creator and preserver of the species. And her mysteries reverberated throughout the ages. The discovery of the earliest Aurignacian Head (20,000 B.C) [Fig. 2] reiterates this. She is not only woman but also prophetess.

As the neolithic revolution slowly evolved agriculture and herding depended on the great forces of conception, gestation, birth, growth and death. Her image altered to that of a deity with supernatural qualities, the like of Apollo and Aphrodite. Beauty now stepped in, portraying the 'godlike' of the Greeks as human beings, and sexual relations between the sexes was handled in a male adolescent way. The Great Goddess's fecundity was underplayed and elegantly concealed in order to magnify these young graceful gods. Only Crete nearby could show the dignity and power of woman in the Snake Goddess. Unafraid and all woman, not just sex. [Fig. 3]

After 5 B.C. things between man and woman improved and Aphrodite bewitched and bewildered the gods with her magic girdle and Apollo and Adonis became more masculine in their activities. Beauty had become divine, rather than woman. "The courtesan Phryne, on conviction in court, lowered her garment and uncovered her peerless bosom, causing the judges to let her off".



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

(1) The judges felt themselves in the presence of the divine: such beauty must mean that Phryne was under the special protection of Aphrodite, and for this reason "they did not venture to kill the prophetess and priestess of Aphrodite". Praxiteles was commissioned to make a statue of her as Eros, but like the anonymous Venus de Milo, it rather revels in the aspect of beauty rather than Woman as the source. Now 20th Century Art regards this work as the most authentic and no wonder all art has now become skin deep aestheticism.

It is through woman and her creativity from which society evolved. Her tending of the hearth - her omphalos of warmth; the planting of crops and bread-making with its secret fermentation; Pottery and trade as well as weaving with its textures and decorations. Even if mankind did learn by its mistakes, woman was the enterprising one to develop it into a useful and civilized commodity for personalized use. She was not only the Mother, but also the Great Source of Nourishment - she who held her breast out for the world to drink. The Magna Mater whose cave bore the mystery like the womb of the earth, and by her nurture she ensured nourishment. Yoni and Phallus symbolism throughout the world pertain to her great secrets.

The African or Primitive peoples were different. They did not depict the beauty of the female form, but rather realized their ancestors in her form. The ancestors were given the responsibility of the nurturing powers, rain and death. Consequently woman was regarded as someone from nature and left no room for individualization or idealization. She is the Guardian of the ancestors as well as for the tribe and therefore she is placed in a delicate balance between the mortal and the immortal. Neferititi is still the Queen rather than the person. Individualism

arose, (through borrowed means from the Greeks), from the Romans who wished to express the uniqueness of a historical event or a particular characteristic of a man. This fortunately helped to bring woman back to earth a little, although she now became a type-figure.

As political policy and economic bribery flourished, men and women were distracted from personal functionalism into that of industrialization. Man's outer conquest outgrew the authenticity of raw materials for his personal needs, in order to seek Bigger and Faster goods for everyone and no-one in particular. Woman goes on because hers is a creativity which is not taught or learned. She unconsciously knows. This thesis may sound like an exposition on female superiority, but it is really just my research into the significance of the female aspect in its relationship in life to the male aspect; which makes - or should make - Art. Equal pay and Equal rights really is just asking to be shoved into the measured box, becoming a unit with two pressbuttons and a slot for the ticky. The only escape is to play the 'flower-on-the-wall' game and this is also completely useless, because Art, Life and its growth are not games or pastimes. It is not only society, but also the individual that allows this sexless, useless death notion to infiltrate.

It is only in the natural relationship between man and woman that we see the important impulse in the portrayal of Woman as Art. It is natural for the artist not to be able to free himself entirely from the spiritual and physical sensations which the model or woman releases in him. It is not her sex - but her aspect : Female v/s Male. When the Ideal was painted - she was painted nude because it was felt that the Ideal goddess could not disappoint her aspect physically. (as was the case with Phryne). This Ideal of Beauty was a sensation taken out of context. The really



Fig. 4

beautiful and truthful . nudes are those that look like all women apart from the particular individual. These 'Eves' are rare because they are mostly paintings of women whom the artist has loved, and he has made no allowances for the spectator. The painter and his vision have become inseparable. She now becomes the warm, friendly and fully conscious woman. They are usually young and mature nymphs as in the case of Rembrandt and Rubens. Rubens was the first to paint his wife - the individuality expressed in her face and body reflect his inner emotions. [Hélène Fourment wrapped in a fur coat]. Rembrandt's Sakkia as, Danæ waiting for Zeus,]fig. 4], portrays passion as opposed to the divine which he portrayed in his works of Hendrickje Stoffles, who was more of a companion to him. Still, with misshapen legs and a tired body, she is not ugly but a mortal, a woman like all women are and should be.

Through abstraction, woman's mythical context took priority and even the Cyclic figures eliminate her sexual features to these ends. She is no longer the fertility idol of Willendorpf but a symbol of a divine life. (Venus was chaste, this figure of Willendorpf's is full).

With the Curse of Original Sin in the 14th Century, beauty suddenly resided in God. Nudity was a shameful taboo, and woman became the tragic Sufferer and Repenter. Artists now spent their time speculating on what was underneath. When religious feeling waned, it was merely replaced with a leaf. She was now the 'Symbol of Sin' and the 'Gateway to Hell'.

Gothic drooping shoulders, thin bony arms and hands, small high breasts and a protruding belly were gallant attempts to represent woman as progenitress. These fictitious attributes of sensuality were emphasized

in oil painting which had just been discovered at the time. Slick.

Botticelli's modest and calm maidens complied to Armenini's "Treatise on the Rules of Painting", while Michelangelo, the "woman-hater", continued his boisterous hymn to the human body. (2) Because Michelangelo had found his Ideal in the Male, he painted all females in this male technique. The ideal was now hemaphrodite. Giorgione fortunately relaxed into the beauty of the womanly body without placing her into his service. [Sleeping Venus].

But the 'Dolly-girl' frivolity had already begun with Boucher and Fragonard, who unlike today, used soft colours and refined features. But the function of these ladies was just like today, to arouse male desire. It is only that the rules in the game of coquetry have changed a little. David's morality in "Horatio's Oath" (1784) proved to be insignificant in relation to the French Revolution five years later, and woman was banished to the corner. She was now Psyche- the shy and modest one. But it did not take long for the romantic blood of Ingres and others, to warm the atmosphere up a little. The beauty and fullness of 'Eve' glowed with superb skin tones and graceful outline. But although this Age of Reason spoke of 'Back to Nature' it was really only a march headed by Winckelman to Pompeii. Art was now the fort e of the Academician who measured art on his 'Master Tradition' yardstick and he could now sway public opinion and taste according to his own fancies. No wonder male flattery reached its peak in this Public Academic Art.

Because the new middle class did not inspire a new art style in Europe, there was consequently no common motivating spirit in art. Sex and the painters' own egoism now destroyed all absolutes of Beauty, and woman was now painted as the painter wished to see

'Eve' - using abstraction or representation to express this. (Sir Kenneth Clark calls 'Eve' the 'Naked', and the 'Nude' for Venus. He does not talk of womanhood). Man's attitude towards woman has very obviously been that of a "manhandling worshipper of the feline" and he tries to "immerse her in the flux of passion and events, to subject her, like any other element, to the most drastic stylizations and manipulations"(3).

Both Corot and Matisse regarded the female as an object - she takes on the same aspect as the fishbowl. Edward Manet brought intellectual attention back onto the social milieu [Olympia 1865], while Toulouse Lautrec and Degas borrowed subjects from a speculative social strata. Gauguin deliberately chose an exotic subject in order to express or escape from 'civilized' society. Apart from male painters enjoying woman or the nude for what she or it is, the female now became a conveyor-belt expressing some form of spiritual, social or stoic propaganda. The prostitute was now a form of 'realism' which became the 20th Century's avante gardes of Roualt, Toulouse and Picasso.

Now man has taken all sex and grace out of woman, she is again used to arouse compassion and misery for humanity's macabre futility. Even sexuality is separated from life and given special mythologies of glamour or fantasy. e.g. Paul Delvaux : Venus Asleep 1944. There is no longer any ethics or Eros, only doubt and the menace of man's capabilities to wipe himself out through nuclear warfare. "Art would have given up the struggle had it not recognized the solution of the last secrets of the world by silence." (4). Art has now become 'Art for Art's Sake' with no continuation with former art and with "a style of devastating inhumanity"(5). But even if Woman has gone into hiding, she will re-emerge

when the time is right. Man is always seeking for that perfect form of immortal love, which is mysterious and ceases to be love when it becomes it. It then becomes knowledge.

Today, as well as in historical times, woman is no longer a symbol, but rather a sign. The mass media only extended the attitude of the spectator to be 'male' to which the image of woman is used to flatter him! Trailing wet hair down a bare back, or delectable lips with a cheeky tongue peeping through - are all images to feed his hungry male appetite, and she's not to have any of her own. She is now an advertisement - a thing for the moment - which speaks of the future where you the viewer or the buyer will be envied. It is a suggestion, a pose or a pair of legs through which this popular culture invokes our personal dreams and fantasies. We are guided by these images to reconstruct our relationship and behaviour towards each other. Cinema, theatre and now television supply experience through this kind of glamour and excitement at a safe distance. The Male/Female ideals coalesce into hetero- homo-sexual 'glamour' relations.

But it is the whole industrial society that has enormously elaborated the idea of woman as a glamorous erotic object. Woman has altered her attitude and fantasies as she is perpetually and knowingly being watched. During the war, the image of woman, in Russia changed and especially now with economic equality. She lacks glamour, but she is realistic, strong and intelligent in her attitude towards life and men. (And obviously art). She does not project her nakedness, but rather her individuality.

Art has gone down the drain - it has placed itself subservient to advertising and the mass media, in order to flatter, confuse and create a sickly envy.

The French have always known how to make your heart beat a little faster.



When Ingres painted the *Grande Odalisque* in 1814, he deliberately lengthened the back of his nude to make her as sensuous as possible. A contemporary critic described the picture as 'catharsis of the erotic'.



Englishmen at the Moulin Rouge, 1892. Toulouse-Lautrec lived among and loved the cafés, brothels and characters of Montmartre. Perhaps this is why his pictures so perfectly capture that special side of Parisian life.

Hennessy Cognac has been making hearts beat a little faster since 1765.



Fig. 5

Andy Warhol's 'Marilyn Monroe' becomes a creature of others' envy. Advertising uses art to sell a product of "Cultural" authority or luxury e.g. [Fig 5.].

Although this society of patriarchs makes woman to be the outsider, this patriarchal revolution which began when man became a historian and analyst, will obviously be continued by a matriarchal counter-revolution. Maybe the way men use their image in advertising to make suggestions to women is some small indication already? But the response of this female flattery of his god-like image also appeals to him and his power fantasy. Instead of women 'appearing' and men 'participating' the tables are being turned already and 'Playgirl' is making a good turnover. But so what - it's all just fantasy worship.

Even pornography has more to it - it is at least private and the only satisfaction comes from your personal or social response. Pornography is total self-satisfaction without demanding any personal involvement. The violence is inverted and the thrill comes from you identifying and communicating with the image. You can be the good or bad guy. You can even invert the roles. It is all superficial thrills.

But, art widens one's horizons - this type of violence is a far cry from the religious orgies of Orpheus, which at least were of some spiritual significance.

Society v/s Art / Art v/s Society

In the last century there has been considerable theorization about society having developed in phases of Matriarchy and Patriarchy. Some were rather sweeping because they tried to reduce all societies to a pattern which suited them, adding a few psychological trimmings to match.

Particularly Sir Henry Maine and Bachofen's ideas of 1861 led to reams of gynaeocentric (female-centred) and androcentric (male-centred) writings and philosophies. Sir Henry Maine's ideas were that patriarchal systems of authority were the original and universal system of social organization, while matriarchal societies only existed where women outnumbered men. But archaeological and scientific proof has, somehow questioned some of their findings. J.J. Bachofen's theory in 'Das Mutterrecht' was that of matriarchy, which began from sexual promiscuity without a stable family life. Consequently society evolved from promiscuity to matriarchy which was later overthrown in historical times by patriarchy. When reading Robert Graves' comprehensive studies on the myths, there is very obviously a historical trace which indicates that the latter case bears some weight. Because myths express ideas, it would be wrong to dissect them in order to use them for a one-sided view. There's enough dissection as 'it is.'

What is important is Man's growth. And society should serve man, thereby moving with him and not place fixed points on his pendulum - even if it does swing from one extreme to another.

Art makes the pendulum swing even higher in order to integrate the past into the present, thereby becoming natural, (and original).

But with our population explosion and the increase in life expectancy there are static 'dodderers' still heading institutions which no longer can cope with the demands of growing people. Apart from the institutionalized collared folk- the rest of the people have grown beyond society's now static norms and have resorted to 'dropping out' or doing their own thing, leaving the main stream to settle up a rivulet in self-righteousness. Even the church is guilty of this. It pretends to participate by offering a couple of social services at state and civic functions.

There are also some theorists who still hang on to the idea that Matrism and Patrism are two extremes between which the dominant social group seems to swing, thereby intermediate forms become the rule rather than the exception. This seems to fit nicely with Robert Ardrey's statement that this is a century of Mediocrity. We have now become afraid of extremes and we rather create laws and services to secure 'peace and goodwill among men'.

A particular example of this is the universal institution or form - Marriage. Western marriage has become 'a sacrament ordained by God for the furtherance of mankind and the human community'(6) rather than a vehicle for romantic satisfaction. I agree with Ruth Benedict when she claims that the individual's actions within society is interpreted through Art. Art determines the content of men and women's lives and marriage today no longer reflects the individual or his or her gender, but rather society's whims.

This leads to sexuality and the roles society designates to man and woman. Through 20th Century

egalitarian ideals and science, the views on sexuality have altered to suit the individual in the workings of society. Now it is only Art than can try to make Real and build up the ideals of MAN and WOMAN, for the individual today. Laing claims "that today in order to survive the individual must escape from his or her conditioning, culture. Today men and women are not supported by the workings of culture, but threatened and mutilated by it. (7). It is for this reason that through Art the individual must look at culture critically and reassess the significance of the role of Man and the role of Woman, in order to once more become the expression and expressor of the Universal Nous.

Theorization persisted though, and more patterns were drawn to show that matrist societies possessed mother deities, patrist had father deities and societies of 'group marriage' had both human and animal deities. The nature of these deities are particularly evident in cave paintings and drawings as well as in later graves and tombs. Apart from historical and archaeological research, the literature and myths also revealed ample facts to speculate on.

Rattray-Taylor felt that he would follow mediocrity by saying 'Under extreme patrism, spontaneity is too strongly repressed, under extreme matrism there may be insufficient discipline to school and direct the creative urge' (8). But Germain Bazin claims that even if Academicism may stem from Patrism, architecture seems to be one of the few arts that did and does flourish. Elizabeth Gould Davis (9) claimed "Patriarchal peoples place more importance on property rights than on human rights and more emphasis on rigid moral conformity than on concepts of justice and mercy. Matriarchal societies '..... are characterized by a real democracy in which the happiness and fulfilment

of the individual is respected and nurtured." But whether the inheritance is matrilinear or patrilinear, or it's between man and woman and their response to each other, society should and must alter to the practical and spiritual requirements prevailing at the time. A good sign of this happening comes from James Hastings: (10) That it is certain that by far the most frequent process throughout the world has been the transition from mother-right (matriarchy), to father-right [patriarchy]. Thus through the pains and hardships of change, the individual is made aware of him and her Self. This intense personalization reflects itself in a humane culture which must, in order to function as an organic whole, consist of one state, one law and one faith. This does not mean that it is a case of male superiority or female inferiority, in order for it to survive culturally, but an awareness of different visions with regard to the same Source-Nature. (Each individual must serve the god within him and herself in order to be in harmony with Mankind and Nature).

Jung was keenly aware of this dilemma facing the individual today, and he broke all rules of Academicism in the science of Psychology in order to come to terms with this problem. "Since the development of applied science, in the last 100 years, man's material progress has been rapid, but he has moved dangerously far from the roots of the soil. The taller the tree, the deeper its roots should go, but modern man has little relationship with nature and so has become dangerously unstable and a victim of any storms that blow. In addition, our social organization with its laws, - written and unwritten - and its systems of education, represses his unconscious instinctive nature and civilizes him outwardly, while leaving what is primitive in him untamed and chafing under the restraint."(11) But his scientific theories were

based on interpreting 80000 dreams and hours of clinical work with 'patients' through which he came into contact with human fantasy.

Jung's Anima and Animus, Freud's Eros and Thanatos, Oedipus and Electra complexes all justify complexes within man - the object rather than the animate being.

No science can reach or interpret the dark recesses which instinctive energy can only serve. Only art can reflect its truths by exclaiming its mystery. The primitives manifested the Unknown with courage and conviction. They painted from life which has a newness and a freshness because it was an expression of an Experience. Jung even says " in former times men did not reflect upon their symbols; they lived them and were consciously animated by their meaning."(12). But..... today cranks like Bacon and Hockney have to confess that theirs is a game of something that is already known, and all they are really trying to do is distract themselves. So, as they become more bored and helpless, they have to get their kicks out of playing the game a little harder in order to satisfy their appetites. They are trying to break the tradition of painting, but their subjectivity with the 'sign rather than the 'symbol' disallows them to become individuals outside their time-space context.

But art is not static, even if society has become that. It is always growing and it is only drawing back in this century in order to leap forward and manifest itself in its own time and place. One cannot will it - only wait for it. So, by trying too hard, one often misses the boat completely. What is natural - comes naturally, and every



Fig. 6

individual has his/her own time mechanism. Strain and tension make frustrated art - wait. Dubuffet waited till he was 40, now he revels. [Fig. 6]

Woman and Myth Today

Jung claimed that we have even lost religious faith today and we are only left with our minds. So we must now know our minds better. Psychology has now become the new 'science' of the mind. It was Otto Rank's notion that man fashioned his concept of the world in his own physical image. The 'soul' or 'seat of life' moved from the lower parts of the body from the womb or omphalos to the head, so that myth has become bodiless and cerebral. From the warmth and security of man's first dwelling the cave - womb; man developed to tombs and labyrinths until the centre of the city and domestic architecture no longer revolved around the 'living hearth', but rather round the Ideal State or Civic Centre aimed at public reassurance and individual discomfort. Now all life and expression goes indoors and around corners because even public pubs and Wimpy Bars pay homage to some sort of Spectator Public. Even the Art in the Park stuff goes with it now. Pan is now dead - only to be reminisced about.

Just as mythologists have found a great and universal similarity in the Creation Myths between peoples of different races and countries, so have psychologists found that there are universal "primordial images" or archetypes which bear similarity in all people. But because myths baffle and elude us consciously, man has often detached himself in order to retain his sense of 'duty' to some outside object or institution. This means that psychology cannot interpret myth in its research on these individuals who lack this kind of integration or participation. Myth through art is the only solution today to rediscover and understand the mystery of the Creation which by bringing back images to life, invoke powerful forces in man that

have always shaped his destiny. Every man and woman has destiny. It is only through myth and Art that one can determine it. No-one can just paint with his head or with his body. But Art is nevertheless still an attitude of mind. Personality is irrelevant, the artist/mythmaker must not only have the most archaic mind, but also the most subtle and advanced. [Dubuffet had to go through the whole intellectual mush in order to destroy or express himself through it].

Woman, just as myth, is difficult to define - even according to the scientific intellect which is inclined to put on airs of enlightenment. Why is she so difficult to define now, whereas before historical thinking, woman need not have had to be defined or expressed? Man is inclined to think that her psychology is identical to his own and preoccupies her with facts. He becomes bewildered when his sophistry bores, repels or frightens her. Her Eros is a shadowland which entangles him in his feminine unconscious, in something psychic (13) which confuses or repels him. Because woman has traditionally been the 'homemaker' she has not been something he has had to confront. But it is undeniable that today there is a 'Womans' problem' and this would not exist without man and his world. No man can live without a sustaining myth about himself and the world, or least of all society - and this is fast becoming a Reality rather than a problem foreseen, when we judge the relationship between the sexes.

The conflict stems from Hellenism when its Patriarchal 'Logos' took over from the the Matriarchal 'Pandor' - all giving- 'Eros'- by force. It was no longer the Mother of All but the Absolute Father and one's duty to him and his law. The great chasm broadened and all that was secret was dazzled by the

brilliance of this enthronement. (Although this brought an end to myth making, there is always myth. Only it is now in hiding to reappear in a new and disconcerting garb, to give itself out as an ultimate truth when we are least expecting it.) Now the conflict was no longer the tension of the opposites, but rather the same. The one part of man was to slay, and the other was to devour the other - an irreconcilable battle which he waged to such heights that he exposed woman to all the shocks of his world. But instead of her joining his conflict of materialism and bank balance, her conflict became a psychic one. She became an "impenetrable mask behind which everything possible and impossible can be conjectured - and actually seen - without him getting anywhere near the mark" (14). She did not make herself politically, economically, or spiritually visible - because she would then be regarded as a rival that was 'accidentally' a woman. (Naturally she is also to blame because his projected feelings convinced her that things were naturally so, in order for her to be able to hold him).

The Christian Queen of Heaven threw away her primordial chthonic values as well as her Olympic charms to 'brightness, goodness and eternity! Even her body, the thing most prone to material-corruption was given an ethereal incorruptibility. But she is still the Earth from which Christ was born - even if she has been divested of her dark - earthly qualities and has been de-souled! How Isis and Semele, the mortal mothers of Horus and Dionysos would revolt at such malfunctioning! But man, even if he may have temporarily forgotten, is slowly being reminded that Yang cannot exist without Ying - the one contains the seed of the other. In order for man to once more become the growing and eternal Tree, he has to

acknowledge and unite with woman and the feminine aspect - and the only way for this to become possible is through the experience and symbolic provocation that is Art.

Woman, at her best, is the infinite lover and understander, wearing and sacrificing herself in the service of others through help and understanding. But "Hell hath no fury like a woman's scorned" when destructive Hecate draws all those around her to be 'her children' and gains a tyrannical control over their dependence. Without Alchemy and Art man can no longer unite spirit and matter, and to wage against such destruction, he needs to have his feet firmly on the ground.

Now, instead of charity beginning at home, her passivity is filled with purpose. By enabling man to realize his aims, she holds him. The tragedy here is that by digging someone else's hole, you fall into it too. Love is a 'force of destiny whose power reaches from heaven to hell' (15) especially when it concerns woman. Her's is a love of a man, not a thing as in his case, and she can do virtually anything for this love. For this reason, marriage can be a very wholesome experience if she does not suffocate the poor bloke in the process. She can eventually smother her charms and femininity by developing unconscious assumptions or opinions - (her worst enemy) - thereby exasperating and disgusting not only men, but other women. She has an aggressive sexuality which has no feeling capacity - because hers is a purpose of knowing what she wants from life - even at the cost of those central to her.

The idealized medieval form of femininity and marriage no longer holds water for woman

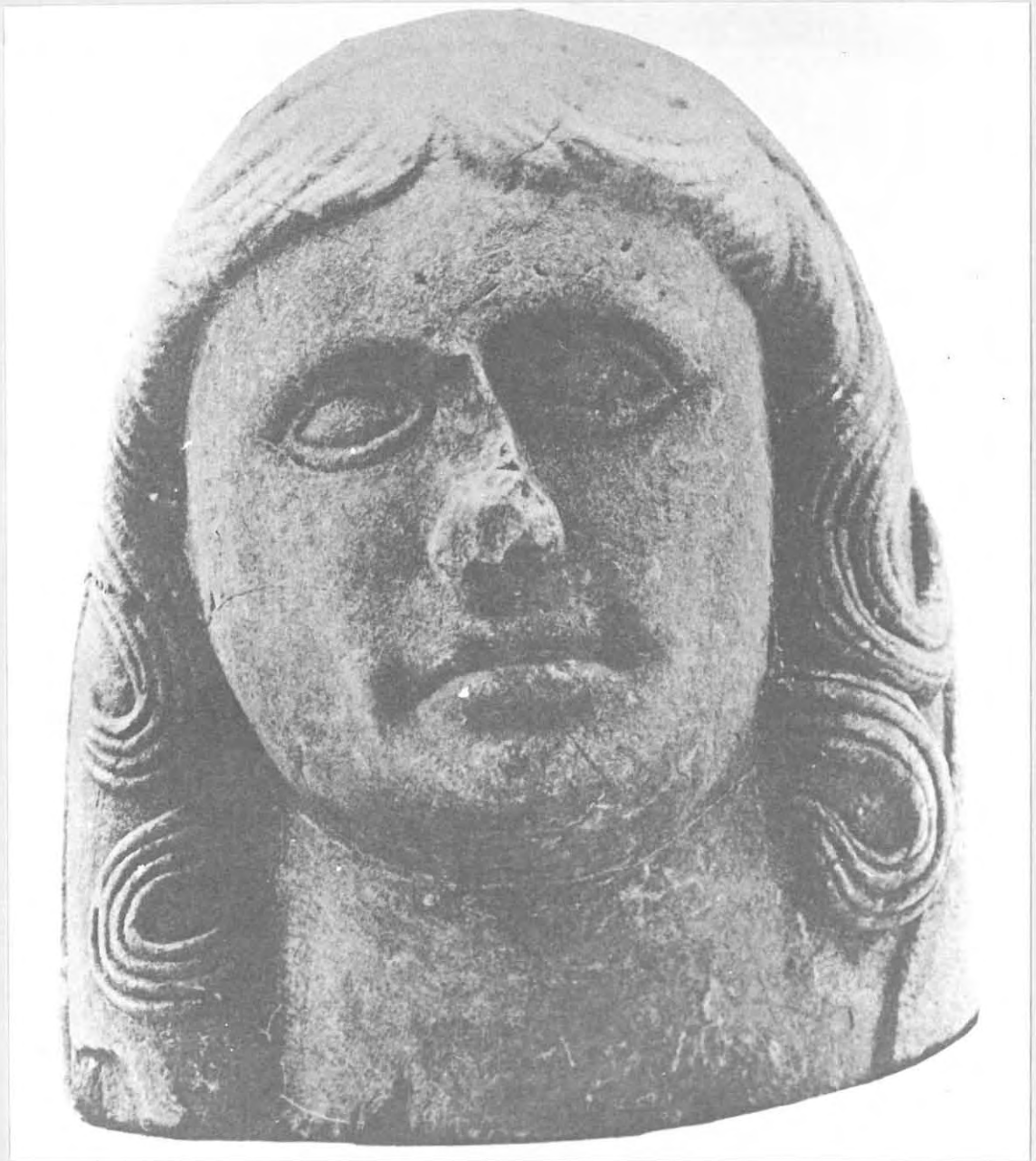


Fig. 7

because of male egoism and rigidity. She devours her husband and shares her intimacy amongst her children - she now projects her intentions through them. A far cry from "bloody Daphne" and her orgiastic cult. Her danger has become far too subtle to do any good now. Their gratitude for her assistance is her victory - Gaia's sickle helps Kronos kill her husband Uranus. [Fig. 7]. Woman's moods and emotions are never naïve - hers is an unacknowledged purpose which is incorrigible. "It is the way of woman, as of nature, to work indirectly, without naming her goal." (16) This is obviously dangerous. Men love comfort and "he has a sentimental belief in institutions, which for him, always tend to become objects of feeling". (17). Little does he realize that women are very realistic about feelings and marriage is, rather than a sexual relationship, a psychic relationship. If she cannot get this kind of unconscious fulfilment, she will destroy all about her in order to reach these ends. While a man will fill his boots on the quiet, without disturbing his lawful institution of marriage, woman will rage through all and sundry. She is not afraid to go 'crooked'. Like myth, she recurs, pulls apart, renews or destroys. She is also the carrier of Truth and Life.

So, through myth, one can interpret how the earth mother gave over to this kind of male sky-worship. It is not to say that Queendoms are superior or inferior to Kingdoms - but it is to say that woman could enter this realm quite efficiently. Catal Huyuk, Minoan as well as Sumerian cultures indicate her sufficiency within this type of matriarchal rule. But to claim that only through this kind of social organization can one find the true creative expression, is extreme. But there is a great deal of politico-history in the

interpretation of Greek myth and Apollo's destruction of the Delphic python records the later 2 B.C. Achaean capture of the Cretan Earth Goddess' shrine. The Queen mothers' decline and the goddesses' attempt to preserve their royal prerogatives, appear in the Homeric myth of how Zeus ill-treated Hera. This myth revolves around how she continually plotted against him. Early myths of nymph seductions also relate to Hellenic chieftains marrying local moon priestesses. This was vainly opposed by Hera. By the time of the Dorian invasions, it was Patrilineal successions and Penelope had to go forth to Odysseus. In the rebellion of the Iliad, where the pre-Hellenics conspired against Zeus, Hera finally became subservient.

But Greek myths were late Hellenic interpretations of far more ancient legends. In later myth the the thunder god becomes Zeus, Thor, Jupiter, Jove, Jehovah, Yahweh, etc. - and so did the Great Goddess become Potnia, Ceres, Cybele, Athene, Diana, Artemis Anat, Isis, Ishtar, Astarta, Minerva, Dana, etc. But in all myth, from the Far East to the Far West, the first creator of all is a goddess. Her names are as variable as the people whom she created. From Tiamat, Gaia and Anat's individual self-sacrifice rose the Culture-Hero and Redeemer. Even through the ancient world the tradition still prevailed that women held the secrets of nature and were the only channels through which flowed the wisdom and the knowledge of the ages. [Fig. 8]. But despite the fact that the image of woman bears little significance today, it is not only part of her nature, but Nature itself to reassert herself. Nature preserves her origins, therefore it is always possible to refer back to nature, because the greatest ideas come from one source or origin. Myth is consequently the





Fig. 8

reverberation of the idea behind the Creation. Instead of Eros though, patriarchal and guilt-ridden Christianity extended Greek Logos to the word - "In the beginning was the word . All things were made by Logos "without Him nothing was made that was made"(18). Apart from that, the intolerance of the monolithic Jews with their "Thou shalt have no other gods beside me", devoured and humanized previous gods to suit their Torah. But the Great Goddess was too strong and she enjoyed a dark and secret life which infuriated the Christians. As a compromise they acknowledged her because there was power in numbers to spread this new Christian word - only they made her into our most venerable "Blessed Lady". (Only the Papacy could enjoy her fruits.). A man regards a woman as alien, whereas the image of herself typifies her conscious life as determined by her sex. Consequently the woman or mother has a symbolical significance for him which probably accounts for his strong tendency to idealize her. But one idealizes whenever there is a secret fear - a fear of her unconscious and magical influence. So, rip, rap, put some clothes on her, make her divine and don't ask questions. The White Mother is indeed a far cry from the Red Earth Mother.

Scholars have narrowed down early man's religion to his moon worship . This is inescapable because women still run on the monthly cycle (not even science or the pill can change this time sequence), and time, tides, seasons and harvesting are still determined by the moon's relation to the sun. Heliotropism and sun-worship with its hierarchy, seems to have gone hand-in-hand with Hellenism and so called democracy. There always seems to be some powerful Patriarch in each religious pantheon, but I feel that their original purpose holds no more meaning

today, and myth only justifies its continuance. But this does not mean elimination, only a reintegration of banished forms to once more make Art and Life mythologically virile - From which new forms and truths can be again engendered. A change like this can only change life and art - like Hellenism coloured the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles. The outward and extravert approach has become superficial, and it is not only art that is signalling the warnings to become inverted and more spiritually aware of the underworld and that which is Woman. Man has remade God in his own image - "A god that does not love, or rather fears women."

Despite all patriarchal attitudes a time will come when there will be a necessity for matriarchal ideals. At present there are a few rubs. Firstly, there are only a few women who actively participate in present day problems. Secondly, she's made a couple of masculine concessions and introduced herself to the visible world. Through economic and other personal factors she has stepped into masculine professions thereby losing some of her own individuality and uniqueness. She nobly handles these masculine professions which are not wholly in accord with her nature. (The good thing is that she no longer hides behind her Mrs. intending to fill her ambitions through her husband or make him pay for it.) I'm talking of those precious few now. Woman has realized that her kind of love is beyond the law and her respectability revolts, only to be curbed by society, who persuades her to live the life of the past. Woman is caught between historical 'norms' and the will to create and any woman who can break this, will have to be superhuman and a bloodthirsty crone. Instead women keep their fecundity neatly tucked away and like nymphs they flatter male

aestheticism, keeping their ego and will for a later date. This is gross confusion - only a few men are realizing that they must meet women half-way in order for love to still generate and create instinctively, otherwise both will eventually change roles and thereby become totally inferior and dead. She's gone cold or is it a he?

It does seem rather obvious when Robert Graves says (19) "There can be no escape from the present more than usually miserable state of the world until the repressed desires of the Western Races, which is for some form of goddess worship, finds satisfaction at last".

Picasso as Man and Artist

Pablo Ruiz Picasso, like other great men, gave woman central place in ~~their lives~~^{his life} and gave her most intimate reaction a universal value.

Picasso's work, no matter how unrelated they may be in a time span, was never divorced from reality. The primary reason for this, as Berger claims, may be because he finds himself in his relationship with woman and can therefore say things as an artist. But the maestro did not become the greatest artist of this century because he excelled himself in his sexual relations. It may appear only so because Picasso was able to express this sensual side rather better than any form of literature, but this was because words have the capacity to hide more truth than reveal it. But this was not his main objective. It is only our century which thrill on his pornographic stuff rather than his better works.

Picasso's true course was, as he says : "My whole life as an artist has been nothing but a continuous struggle against reaction and the death of Art." (20) Woman for Picasso was something that developed naturally by itself and was always taken in the form of Nature. "I do not work from nature, but in front of nature, with nature. (Picasso 1932.) For this reason, Picasso is a Natural Painter, who paints Nature.

This is where Picasso is so different from other artists of this century. He knew from his own experiences that the ready-made manufactured goods of culture were exhaustible - whereas nature in its diversity was infinite. This is why he can say,

"if there is only one truth, one would not be able to paint a hundred pictures on the same theme". (21) Maybe this is why his works revolve particularly around the subject of Woman.

But Picasso tried to express these truths by all possible means - he borrowed and developed different styles, (Surrealism, Cubism, Realism); materials (collages, painting, pottery, sculpture, lithography, etching and his own dynamic interpretation of linocut) and also in his subject (landscape, still-life, mythological, caricature, portraits, animals and architecture). Even his erotic works do not betray him - he still portrays human joy, anguish, horror and misery, and not just that of Picasso. The experience is so intensely personal that it finds expression in all art. So, when he depicts Marie Thérèse Walter (which he did most prolifically), his subjectivity made her into a vehicle from which he painted her as 'Venus' - but like no Venus has ever and will ever be painted in Art. Picasso even says about this, "The picture is not thought out and fixed in advance; while it is being made it follows the mobility of one's thoughts". [Picasso 1935].

One can always have faith that some back page scandalmonger will diagnose that Olga's reticence to give him a divorce, or the flower-like François Gilot's audacity to walk out on him with his two children, are reasons for his work bearing some irony or anger. Maybe women did play a major role in his life - but he was not one who became a painter of credible note only through his possession of François or Marie Thérèse Walter. These and other women were all aspects of his unadulterated Reality - she was just the receptacle or the link to deeper

and more disturbing truths. He had to isolate himself in order to keep his vision unique, his subjection was no longer that of a lover, but that of a MAN-ARTIST. Through this attitude Picasso is the only artist who could abstract sex from society and return it back to nature. Through the most desperate and grotesque means in his sculpture - Woman holding an Orange 1943 - or in his painting of a Nude under a Pine Tree, Jan. 1959, he is endlessly varying the image of woman in order to create the mysterious truth of life. "If I have something to say, I say it in the way that seems to me most Natural". [Picasso 1930].

Power and virility are epitomized in him as Minotaur through which he criticizes civilization. But even Beauty - in her clean and classical image, cannot help but respond to such power. Picasso was unafraid to say what he felt and even when he reflects on the absurdity of slavery to sex, the violence of his youth is transformed into an unselfconscious delight of the act, as a monkey would respond under likely circumstances.

Picasso was very single-minded about two women in particular - Marie Thérèse (about 1932) and Jaqueline Roque (1954), whom he later married. His relationship with Francois Gilot was rather stormy and he used to try and condense the form down to her blossom-like features. When he depicted them in his work, Picasso's participation and subjectivity was reflected with simplicity and light of a new nature. He even says of himself, "At bottom, love is all that matters. Any love. And painters should be blinded as goldfinches are to make them sing better." [Picasso, 1932] [22). Jaqueline vitalized his interest in paintings of the past and his translation of Rembrandt's 'Bathsheba' in 1960 led



Fig. 9

him to become preoccupied with the relationship of the painter (Picasso) and his model. Leiris claims "The painter and his model, the woman and her reflection, the lover and his beloved, the picador and the bull, all of these - if we may be allowed to weave such threads to guide us through the labyrinth of Picasso's work - are the personifications of the two poles of a dialectic in which everything seems to be based on the unresolved opposition of two beings face to face, the living image of that tragic duality, mind confronted by what is foreign to it." (23)

Picasso's political and national feelings were integrated in his first portrait of his first wife, Olga Koklova which he depicted in Spanish costume in 1917 [Fig. 9]. She was touring his homeland on a ballet tour and Picasso left Paris to meet up with her and introduced her to his friends and family in Barcelona. He was warmly welcomed back and this portrait reflects all his joy, love and pride for what he was. But he also expressed violence through the cultural symbols of Spain - the bull and matador, or the Mediterranean mythological bull, satyr or minotaur. Political strife and anguish is not only expressed in the terrified woman across Guernica, but also in the Nude dressing her hair (1940) [Fig. 10], which he raised to "a monument of horror transcending his personal anxieties and embodying the bestiality of men everywhere". (24) In this painting the lurid atmosphere is expressed simply by colour - mauve and green. His subjectivity reflected his anguish for Mankind as is even more visible in his interest in the warrior aspect of man, rather than the paraphernalia of war, in his 1962-3 "Rape of the Sabine Women after Poussin and David.

But Picasso's main preoccupation from 1960 till his death, was his old theme of Bathsheba.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

In the Studio, India ink.

10 January 1954 XIV

Not only was it a searching dialogue between Art and Nature, but also Painting and Reality. He wished to do the nude as nothing more than a nude, which his own subjectivity with his model prevented him from being able to do. Although Picasso's later works were more personal and narrative, it does not appeal "to nothing more elevated than our instinct for survival," (25) as Berger claims. The artist uses his painters, clowns and buffoons to expose sexual impotence in the presence of pure sensual beauty. His works become a satirical double allegory on the nature of intellectual and sexual impotence. "The drawings become a howl of protest against artists who are not sensuous and who become intellectuals but not intelligent." (26)

He draws the young woman or model for what she is to life, sex and nature, and Picasso tries to use his Art instead of his physical senility in a combat against her forces. His duende prevents him from lying, and he does not change the nymph into a crone, or himself back into the minotaur. He just has to admit that all this civilization and culture can and has given him, is acclaim. [Fig. 11] He is left only to his art, but through his physical impotence he can no longer express himself. Woman is now a friend and a companion, and not the receptacle from which he seeks expression.

Picasso's greatness does not lie in the fact that he was so prolific and diverse, but rather in his courage to remind us of Truth and its reality so basically and so naturally.

Popular Art v/s Individual Art

Be the artist either a Man or a Woman, what is really essential is the way their individual experiences are explored and commented upon in an artistic way. To be original - one has to be part of an energy bond in Nature - to make MAGIC! Only in this instinctive and unknowing search can art become personal and original. It does not only serve the eyes, but also the mind. One has to be an individual in order to make individual art. But being an individual is not being a 'hip-freak' but an ordinary man or woman. Someone who makes celebrations of everyday life - like Dubuffet who says "There is no art without inebriation, but in that case a mad inebriety. To make reason totter". (27) He is not a specialist - he lives, moves among the uninhibited, spontaneous people which make up the life of the street, who have no preconceived ideas but experience life as it comes. Madmen, neurotics, children and animals - the unfettered beings from this Western and unnatural "civilization".

This is not Popular Art, because it does not like these kinds of interruptions. It prefers to perpetuate itself in style, manner and repetition - thereby becoming anonymous. But art is rather the rythm of violence and serenity - one must work exclusively for oneself. There is adventure and curiosity, but also Risk. The latter is the sorting machine and most art joins Commercialism to meet the supply-demand racket. Competition leads to small time exhibitions in order to keep up a face. "The artist should not become the slave of the public, because he himself is the best judge of his works which he must respect and not lower

its significance", (28) to that of a publicity stunt. Faint chords of Christo Coetzee's dramatic splice this year ?

Many artists avoid the plunge by choosing a Popular Subject - Drostdy Arch or Cape Dutch (sic) Homesteads with their 'wynlande en volk' paraphenalia. These works have spilt out of the National Galleries and now become decór with horse brasses and 'Ye little Cottage' chairs. It is now the form rather than the content or the artist's idea that speak - which makes home-living comfortable. Something like Esme Berman's critique on South African Art' which she dishes out annually in Cape Town to all the upper-crust ladies of Bishop's Court, whose main concern is her authority on 'what sort of picture can I buy'. Woman - the homemaker securing her own bit of investment and false prestige. Too lazy to think but all too ready to buy. Art is anti-social and creates for its own satisfaction. The creative instinct must be uncontaminated by social conditions and this is why "art is made by the uneducated, obsessed and solitary beings who do not" (and will not) "fit into societies' categories. Those who are independent to what is known in Art". (29)

Women are loathe to take risks - they would rather resort to marriage, intellectualism, and respectability. They make clean and it is their distinction that parallels with male competitive Bigger than Big. Maybe Sam Haskins is right [Fig. 12]. Perhaps Paris does not want the apple anymore. She can lump it now. Women are afraid to isolate themselves - and one can only live one's work in solitude. This affimates Art, and Individualism, which resides in simple, qualitative homes and ways of living. Solitude does not come from vibracrete



Fig. 12

walls - one has to create it oneself in the manner one lives - which is the way of life and communication. Picasso said (1964); "Because I cannot work except in solitude, it is necessary that I live my work and that is impossible except in solitude." (30) This type of solitude is an independence in thought and reality. No-one can feel compassionate towards you, or use you for their own ends. It does not negate life, but rather Affirmates the All and the One. To be creative, it is a matter of course to be in opposition to that which is outside the self - because opposing is a good way of assimilating. Dubuffet saw an irreducible antagonism between the creation of art and the desire to communicate with the public, which confounds the artist. "He refuses to take up the position of alienation implied by the creative activity, and he vainly attempts to reconcile his work with a desire to be integrated into society and receive its honours and awards..... Creative invention has surely no greater enemy than social order, with all the appeals to adapt, to conform, to mimic, which social relationships imply. Creative invention can only survive in taking the opposite stance, refusal and impermeability." (31)

Someone who stands well apart from the regular Association Art hum drum of today, is strangely enough a woman. She is Judith Mason a married woman coping with a family and creating only for herself. She has not been 'prolific' or held many exhibitions, but rather exhibited when asked to. Hers is a religious passion which seeks expression through personalized subject matter and superb control in her line. Her works are not intense - psychological dramas' (32) because

she does not need to communicate with the public. She paints alone and only for herself - her Snakes and Ladders series which were quietly exhibited this year did not invoke a kindred spirit but rather baffled and frightened one. Nils Burwitz should not have expressed his experiences of when he watched his child being born, with the object of exhibiting it. This is psychological drama . But Judith is intelligent and through her art expressed as a woman, she is not only dignified, but also an Artist of Truth.

Township Art is a fake and Cecil Skotnes is a harlequin. Only popular art grooves on sentimentality and social conscience. Both artist and public are gullible to taste and press. No Zulu needs to hear Stephen Grey's agonized 'Assasination of Shaka' because no western intelligent being can tell him who or what he is. He already knows, because he is Shaka and Zulu - that is why he can walk with pride and dignity. There is a desperate wish in South Africa to inspire works of individual and national identity. But through slide shows, posh cheese and wine art exhibitions, and social conscience do's, art becomes a social occasion rather than an individual experience. These frivolities just dull our senses and all the noise is hollow.

'Antique prospecting' attitudes with regard to European art destroys any local qualitative thinking. By looking over one's shoulder, one not only has bad luck but also falls into traps. Art does not come from an Art-History heritage, but from new experiences from an ageless source - which is and can only be - Nature.

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