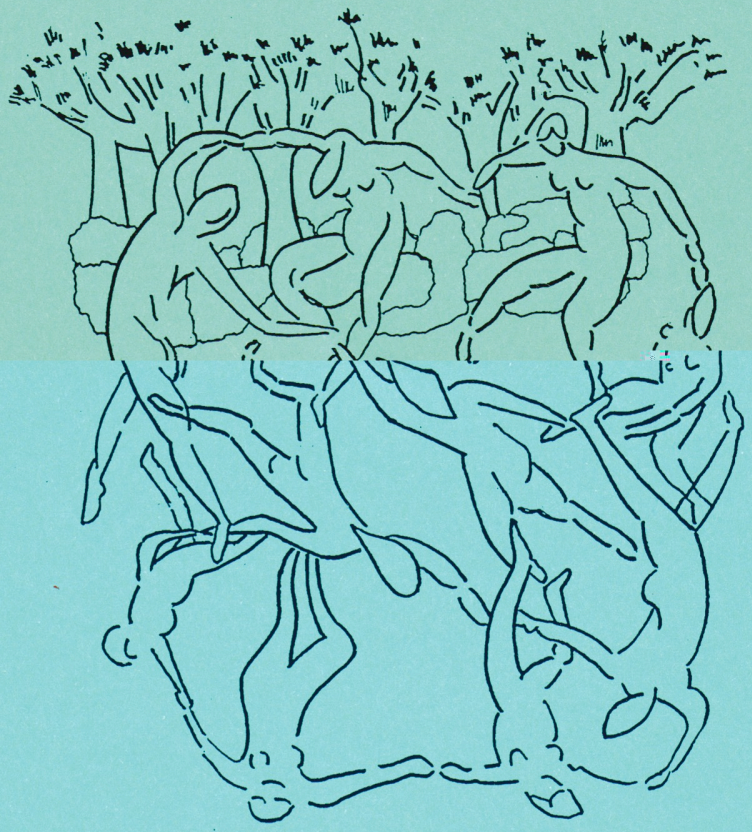
SHAMANISM AND THE SUBLIME



TIM CLOUDSLEY

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Front Cover *Dancing On The Edge Of Chaos* and Back Cover *Ayahuasca* both by Anne Cloudsley

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SHAMANISM AND THE SUBLIME

or

SEARCH FOR THE NUÑI

or

The Shaman as Inspired Myth-Teller within the Decline of Social integration and the Progress of Alienation

or

The Shaman as Visionary Wanderer and Mediator between the Community and the Supernatural

or

Shamanistic Experience and Ecstatic-Mystical Creation; Shamanism as Primordial Visionary Creativity

or

The Artist as Shaman in Modern Society

Tim Cloudsley

PREFACE

The first time I heard the chanting of a Yaminahua shaman in the rainforest of Eastern Peru, was a very important experience for me. Independent ethnic groups like the Yaminahua live in small bands, of between thirty and a hundred people, in each of which there tends to be one, or two, or three, shamans; though one is usually the most important one.

The shaman contains in a sense, the congealed culture of the people. The life-style of the people is hunting and gathering, and a little bit of farming where they stop in one place and cut down some forest and grow a few crops; but mostly they are hunters and gatherers. They do not have many material things, and their culture, their art, their religion, their philosophy, and their entire cultural constellation is really what happens through the shaman. They have sessions, in the evenings after dark, when the shaman wears a magical head-dress and they take *ayahuasca* , the hallucinogenic vine that is found in the rainforest. The main voice in the chanting is the shaman, but other men and women start to chant around him. He starts to chant, as the *ayahuasca* begins to bring everyone into its enchanted state; he may suck out the evil spirits from an ill person, in order to cure him or her. He evokes the spirit of *ayahuasca* , or the Mother of *ayahuasca* , and as the effect of the hallucinogenic drug starts to take hold, people feel that the spirit of *ayahuasca* has come into them. The shaman is the main inspirer, or the main person who is inspired by the spirit; he or she sees visions which consist of ancestors, spirits, heroes and heroines of the culture, and forces of all sorts - some abstract, some personalised, some demon-like - and he steers the group to confront certain sorts of experiences. The others start to chant as well, following his cue.

I was immediately struck by the thought that this was a kind of primordial, human, imaginative creativity. All the fundamental arts are involved in it: it is clearly poetry, as the words are magic incantations. The words do not actually belong to the Yaminahua language any more; they probably belonged to that language as it was centuries ago, and are words that have been preserved as magic words. It is rather like the way the Catholic Church used Latin until recently in its services, which is a 'dead' language, until vernacular languages replaced it. I am not a Catholic, but I can sympathise with those Catholics who were disappointed when this change was made; they felt some sacred magic was being lost, and one might suggest that the meaning of the words was not meant

to be understood. Often among native groups in the Peruvian rainforest only the shaman understands the literal meanings of the words used; the other participants do not properly understand them, though they feel their force.

This by the way, is similar to the reasons why I have always felt it is a mistake to translate the librettos of operas in performance. The words in the original language are part of the total musical sound of the opera: they hold a magic which is lost in translation.

The shaman takes visionary flights; he enters celestial heights high in the air, and he goes under the ground or under rivers into subterranean realms where he discovers and experiences underlying realities, the essences behind appearances. Thus it is a very philosophical thing he is doing: all philosophies develop subtle ideas about what is reality, what is superficial and what is deep, what is the essence or deep form, and what is appearance. Plato is a 'late' shaman, a philosopher who in fourth century B.C. Greece developed in extremely complex form of what is essentially shamanism. The ascent into an ecstatic state in order to understand Truth is essentially shamanism, transmuted through the development of a civilization.

So the shaman is trying to understand underlying realities, is trying to negotiate with the spirits to ensure that the community of which he is a part fares well; he is hoping to see the animals that he will be trying to hunt the next day, making deals with them, promising them that if he kills one of them he will perform a ceremony in its honour, promising he won`t kill pregnant females: and if he does kill one of them, asking them please not to be nasty to his people afterwards.

He negotiates with plants to ensure they grow well. All this is religion, prayer, and philosophical comprehension of reality; and it is also curing - cosmic on one level, societal on another, and of specific individuals who are unwell, physically or mentally (in Western terms), on yet another. So he is a doctor and psychiatrist in modern terms as well; and he is the primordial *artist*. It is in a sense all really art: it is poetry in the magical incantation; music - although they have no musical instruments, they chant; and where the native group performs active rituals it is drama. Most groups that take *ayahuasca* do not perform rituals at the same time, as under its influence one cannot move very well. In that case the 'visual art' dimension is in the personal, inner hallucinations experienced. With the eyes closed, they become extraordinary screens upon which amazing visions appear. These visions have both physiological and culturally relative aspects. With the eyes open, people see the spirits of the jungle - trees and plants, writhing with a

new quality of life, and in the sky they see the stars and moon with a new, mystical intensity.

The shamanic sessions are thought of as entering into the world of *supernature*, which is a world equally as real as the daytime, 'normal' reality. The enchanted, 'out of one`s head', night-time world of the *ayahuasca* session is as real as the practical world of the day: of fishing, hunting, farming, making houses or hammocks and so on. In the world which *ayahuasca* opens up, the deeper realities of existence are experienced. In visionary flights up to the celestial heights and down under the earth, the Idea behind appearances is perceived: of the male sun fertilizing the female earth, just as the shaman penetrates the supernatural in visions, under the influence of *ayahuasca*, the Muse, or divine inspiration. In the face of this, magical incantations cure the evils of the world.

I became more knowledgeable about all this, through participating in shamanic *ayahuasca* sessions with the Yaminahua. This arose in the course of working in the 1980s with Survival international, on behalf of the Yaminahua and Nahua who were suffering due to the encroachments of lumbermen and seismologists exploring oil for Shell, on the Mishagua river in the Peruvian rainforest. I was struck, both as a poet and a sociologist, how this could be seen as a primeaval art, the original *Gesamtkunstwerk* , to use Wagner`s term - a 'total work of art' - which includes music, poetry, vision, and inspiration in all the arts.

In one particular session l was struck by the thought that Brunnhilde`s glorious awakening within her ring of fire, in Wagner`s Gotterdammerung, when she sings: "Heil dir Sonne, heil dir Licht " ("Hail to you sun, hail to you light"), was a modern version of the same essential thing l was experiencing here. Just as Wagnerian music drama unites poetry, magical incantation, with music and visual drama, so the *ayahuasca* sessions of the Yaminahua united, through their shaman, chanting, music, and hallucinogenic visions. What Wagner seems to have intuitively understood is the primordial basis of art, which he then recreated in a modern context. He understood that art was originally united with myth, ritual, and magic, and that all the media were involved. He is not the only artist to have had such ideas, but in none other have they been so powerfully realized.

His one-time friend Friedrich Nietzsche explored this, again through intuitive insights, in *The Birth Of Tragedy*. He tried to show that Athenian tragedy in the fifth century B.C. came from Dionysian ritual, which was concerned with initiation and puberty rituals, and tied up with the return of Spring in the rebirth of each new year. This was a time for Bacchanalian festivity, for women to get

pregnant – the time of rebirth. This was the underpinning of what developed into Athenian tragedy. As with the primitive rituals from which they developed, Athenian tragedies were performed in festivals, between which there were musical performances and Bacchanalian orgies. Jane Harrison was to show later, when more concrete evidence was available, that the essence of Nietzsche`s insight was correct. What for Nietzsche was the greatest art the world had yet known, had its origin in the meeting of wild Dionysian ecstasy and Apollonian harmony and serenity. The visible drama came from ritual, the content came from myth.

Nietzsche at this time, in great awe and reverence for Wagner to whom he dedicated the book, thought that never until Wagner had the peak of greatness represented in Athenian tragic drama again been achieved. In this homage to Wagner, Nietzsche in his supreme genius seems to have seen the primordial shamanistic origins of art. For since the origins of anatomically modern *homo sapiens sapiens* some 40,000 years ago, as we now know, there has been art. In fertility symbols, in the wall paintings in southern Africa and Lascaux, the sense of form shows it is 'we' who created them. Without having access to the results of modern anthropological and archeological studies, Wagner and Nietzsche seem to have grasped that this was the case.

In complex civilizations the role of the shaman splits into a plurality of roles. The 'artist' (in the broadest sense of the term) is one of these. The role of the artist becomes more and more problematical as society becomes more complex and differentiated. To some extent the shaman always was somewhat estranged and marginalized - though much needed - in society, but this condition intensifies as history unfolds. Perhaps it is as well, as when the artist integrates too well into an hierarchical society, it can lead to unfortunate results, as Nietzsche felt when he went to the first Bayreuth Festival, to proclaim in disgust that Wagner had been taken over by the Wagnerites!

This book was written over a very long period of time, and this fact is shown in its strangeness in various respects. It was written outwards from a number of 'nodal points', not in a linear way. It did not advance from a preconceived notion, but rather my ideas developed as I wrote it - over a period of time in which I was doing many other things. Its idiosyncrasies could not be eliminated by an attempt to re-scramble it, so to speak. Writing the book was an experimental process in which I was researching and learning and thinking out the issues as I went, not ‘writing up’ what I had already thought out. The numbered sections, or episodes, do not have chapter headings, as they do not split neatly into different chapters.

Each episode does not specifically deal with one or another of the themes making up the whole, rather themes recur in circles that overlap and sometimes repeat. It is multi-thematic in a way that makes it difficult to arrange in a clear logical sequence. The book can be read in many ways, from many points, backwards of forwards. It is demanding of the reader, but I hope it warrants the effort. Lastly, the book is nowhere a complete, definitive discussion of any issue. It cannot be viewed in the usual academic way which demands a comprehensive or systematic coverage of any area.

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I

In ‘primitive’ societies, the shaman is a seer, one who flies to the sky and bores down through the earth, to meet all manner of gods, spirits, demons, and forces. He or she learns of the fundamental realities of the world, of his or her community, and of his or her self. He or she can try, if motivated by goodwill, to procure the best fortunes for his/her community, by negotiating with the spirits of animals and plants for successful hunts and harvests. He can discern the sources of his fellows` ills, and seek to fight off these evil forces. Or he can bring the nuñi to earth, as do shamans among the Secoya of the Ecuadorian Amazon(l). The nuñi are stars that are also the spirits of *ayahuasca*, the hallucinogenic vine that grows in the Amazon basin. By bringing visionary wine to his people, as Prometheus brought fire to humanity in Greek myth, the shaman gives them the opportunity to fly or burrow, and to learn the song, myth, and awesome wisdom that the celestial and subterranean realms open up.

The shaman meets the ancestors of his or her community and the heroes of its myths. He is a keeper, preserver, but also a continual re-creator of his people´s mythical history; of their vital forces affirmed in stories, incantations, songs, and chanted poetry or magic spells. The visionary flights of South American and Siberian shamans are archetypical creative-ecstatic experiences, like the Dionysian possession in Ancient Greece that developed into ideas of poetic inspiration and artistic genius: the special, extreme, irrational, terrible, sublime, unpredictable and amazing visions of wisdom or beauty, which gradually take on different forms in the philosopher, the scientist, the religious oracular seer or prophet, the priest who mediates with the divine on behalf of his community, as well as the, poet, the artist, and the musician.

The shaman does something else which goes beyond human society - dancing on the edge of chaos, breaking all social rules as well as all laws of nature and supernature: typically in the Amazon by transforming himself into a jaguar, in which guise he can ravish women without guilt or fear of recognition, or can dispatch enemies, and can lose his human self and become one with nature or Supernature(2). For the North American Navajo, the Coyote is the ambiguous, enigmatic figure who pushes at the limits of morality, taste, correctness - the trickster who overturns all expectations, and whose behaviour is condemned as bad and dangerous but is simultaneously tolerated as necessary in a universe of

change and forced adaptation, where innovation and visionary risk are exciting as well as indispensable. The *ukuku*, half bear and half man in Andean Indian fiestas(3), is likewise such a Rabelasian figure, to borrow from the typology used by Bakhtin(4), which finds its parallel in the Greek gods - especially Zeus, who turns himself into an animal or a shower of gold in order to satisfy his erotic impulses. This anarchic, asocial quality is also there in Mozart`s character *Don Giovanni*, who like the Coyote or the *ukuku* challenges all norms, pushes and tests reality to the limits, enters and lives out amoral fantasies, and takes on the life-force in the same way that the shaman transforms himself into a jaguar.

As primitive societies turn into more complex federations and larger territorial units, and gradually develop a state form and a progressively more unitary structure of economy, political order, religion, language, and mythology, the shaman differentiates into many figures. Civilizations develop large social totalities into which small, cohesive, primitive communities are collapsed. On one level civilization means a growth in integration, but on another it marks a decline, a fall into alienation. The face-to-face, rounded social world of primitive society becomes fragmented, its horizon disappearing ever further beyond the immediacy of experience. Differentiation into classes, localities, pluralities of specialized activities, occupations and roles, is the paradoxical other side of a forced integration from the varied activities and psychological all-roundedness of the primitive individual. As the dynamic whole of the egalitarian primitive community is broken, ushering in ever larger, hierarchical unities - tribes, nations, civilizations, continents, blocs, and finally a global society - so gradually is the unitary, visionary creative-ecstatic experience of the shaman splintered into that of many personages. The relatively harmonious psychic integration of the primitive individual self evolves into varied, unevenly developed, often lop-sided selves in class civilizations with their alienated divisions of labour and symbolic roles. Specializations in cultural, religious, ideological; as well as in economic, political, and administrative functions find their counterpart in the compartmentalized and un-harmoniously integrated psychic faculties of the individual. The interfluous activities of the hunter-shaman are dissociated in the forms taken on by civilizations. This is not perhaps due to any final inevitability that civilization must be un-harmoniously integrated, though due to the dominant trajectory of human history since the end of the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, it has been the case up until the present.

We can trace these general developments in particular regions of the world, and in particular epochs, and we can see what happens to the archetypal shamanistic

experience; for although the activities and mental or aesthetic modes of expression that cluster within the shaman differentiate into the poet, the musician, the seer, the priest, the philosopher, the adventurer, and the scientist, the core experience retains its essence. In Greek society Homer`s Odysseus is a shaman, and so is Orpheus, while as Mircea Eliade shows(5) Orphism can be regarded as a shamanistic cult. Plato`s archetypal philosopher is a shaman, his path to ecstatic knowledge being essentially shamanistic.

Aristotle`s tragedian produces a *catharsis* in his audience which is simultaneously suffering and ecstasy, as part of the understanding of the truth of life. He is a shaman, and the tragedies of Aeschylus can be seen as evolving from initiation rituals, as George Thomson and others have shown(6). In Nietzsche`s view (in *The Birth of Tragedy*) the Athenian tragedian is the human type that unites the Dionysian lyric poet and the Apollonian epic bard or story-teller, in a labyrinthine evolutionary synthesis from tendencies in conflict. Athenian tragedy, which has been so widely regarded as *the* explosion of unbelievable greatness in art, could be seen as a rebirth of the shaman`s power. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides grasp the destiny of the Athenians in visions of shattering power and intensity.

The Athenian community, the Attic citizenry: saturated in emotion they engage in a Durkheimian experience of collective reaffirmation, regeneration, emotional and psychic catharsis, self-celebration. Part orgiastic and Bacchanalian ritual, part psychological war-dance – the Athenians must fight the Persians, or Sparta - and part precursor or prototype of Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the festivals of which these tragedies were parts fused the citizenry. For, as Nietzsche asks: "how can anyone experience the third act of *Tristan and Isolde*..... How is it possible for a man who has listened to the very heartbeat of the world-will and felt the unruly lust for life rush into all the veins of the world..... How can he bear, shut in the paltry glass bell of his individuality, to hear the echoes of innumerable cries of weal and woe sounding out of the `vast spaces of cosmic night,` and not wish, amidst these pipings of metaphysical pastoral, to flee incontinent to his primordial home?"(7) Tragedy allowed or made the Athenians confront their heroes and heroines as they bawled and thundered their lines of poetry in entranced ecstasy or despair, as if these were dictated to their post-bicameral minds, to use Julian Jaynes`s expression(8), by the gods themselves; and made the audience know what it was to be Athenian. The fifth century Athenians were certain they were the greatest people on earth: "a race so hypersensitive, so emotionally intense, so equipped for suffering"(9) as Nietzsche described them. And as this tragic vision was explored, the Athenian

citizen saturated himself in it, just when Athens was at its zenith, was at its greatest culturally, economically, politically, and militarily. Did Athens sense its future (the Pelopponesian War, defeat, the collapse of democracy, class conflict, its decline)? Or was it precisely, by a process of *enantiodromia*, because of its greatness, its success, its achievement, its joy, that such a vision appeared to Athens?

The tragedians saw the gods and demons, united the opposites of sun and earth, light and darkness, and pointed out to the Athenian polis its plight, its past, its possible futures and its probable ones: what it could not evade, and what it could build if it faced its reality with ruthless honesty, courage, and well-balanced wisdom or *sophrosune*.

The archetypal shamanistic experience became for Aristotle the emotional catharsis induced by the intensity of tragic drama, `by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions`. He says: `By language that is enriched I refer to language possessing rhythm, and music or song; and by artistic devices appropriate to the several parts I mean that some are produced by the medium of verse alone, and others again with the help of song.`(10)

The emotions aroused by tragic drama are registers of tragic destiny, of predestination and the impossibility of directing or controlling life, where thought and the feeling for freedom as a real possibility, have made the Greeks so sensitive to suffering. For Walter Benjamin this is mythical justice, where life is governed by a universal network of misfortune and guilt, the realm of fate. For Benjamin this characterizes both pagan religious systems and the modern world, where under the guise of justice, misfortune and guilt take on the forms of secular law.

The mythic realm for Benjamin is one of human alienation, falsity, and fetishized consciousness; heroic or authentic action is inevitably tragic. In Athenian tragedy the noble hero is sacrificed to the willfulness of the mythical gods in order that the community might come to self-consciousness in the face of its subjection to the irrationalism of mythical powers; for Seventeenth-Century German *Trauerspiel* only a tragic vision displaying the wretchedness and insignificance of earthly existence could allow a glimpse of the realm of salvation, while the characters in Goethe‘s novel *Elective Affinities* ´live under a nameless law, a fate, which fills their world with the dull light of a solar eclipse.`(11) Hope lies only in the intimation of an existence free from such fate.

So for Benjamin myth is not merely the imaginative rendering, or transformation of experience - cosmic, social, or individual - by what E.R. Curtius, following Bergson, called the ´fabulatory function`(l2): through which instinct, sublimated into intuition, expresses reality in ways that differ according to the different social forms that confront and feel it. It also represents all conditions of human existence in which the destinies of society and the individual self have been shaped by forces beyond societal comprehension and outside of collective control. Thus thought Benjamin about Greek tragedy.

Unstoppable chains of tragedy - life as it is, seen in hallucinatorily intense clarity, faced absolutely and squarely. Questions asked: why? can it be stopped? No answers: just reality. Reason and emotion in an eternal dogfight, courage and fear in perpetual conflict. Freewill and choice in eternal embrace with predestination. The bright light of thought, and optimism; the dark wild pessimistic irrationality of the heart and soul. Athens with its beauty, democracy, culture, and philosophy - resting upon slavery, fighting barbarism across the seas with supreme barbarity.

Athens arose: a city such as vision
  Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
  Of kingliest masonry: the ocean-floors
Pave it; the evening sky pavilions it;
        Its portals are inhabited
        By thunder-zoned winds, each head
Within its cloudy wings with sun-fire garlanded,-
  A divine work! Athens, diviner yet,
    Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will
 Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set;
    For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
Peopled, with forms that mock the eternal dead
 In marble immortality, that hill
 Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle(13).

II

In 'primitive' society the shaman as professional technician of the sacred, and as transgressor, lives his personal existence in a balanced harmony. This balance is often lost in the successors to shamans in rigid hierarchical societies, such as the priests in Aztec civilization who practiced human sacrifice. The anarchistically spontaneous balance and integration of intuition and intellect are frequently lost in the contradictory development of the shamanistic impulse in un-integrated and alienated social realities. The 'primitive' shaman is a wild visionary wanderer by night, who returns in the day to practicality and responsibility(l4). The realms of nature and supernature, practicality and vision, day and night, are equally and absolutely real. Yet, though subsequent shamans, from Romantic poets to Jim Morrison, may have evolved in psychic unevenness, in their visions they have still been striving for such balance and integration. The kernal of original shamanism has persisted as an ultimate unity of wild, ecstatic vision, reasoned concern for concrete reality, and ethical judgement.

Virgil`s Aeneas is a shaman who descends like Orpheus to the Underworld. Dante is instructed and initiated into his shamanistic visions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, by Virgil. Dante speaks to Christendom but Shelley, in the modern age, in the first dawn of urban industrialism, is the poet whose imaginative, visionary faculty ´ascend(s) to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar`(15); for whom poetry `redeems from decay the visitations of divinity in a man ..... (and) transmutes all that it touches..... its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms.`(l6)

Shelley is the visionary who willed the wild West Wind:

> Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
>
> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
> And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy!(17)

Shelley is a shaman who would cure the world by weaving a spiritual and psychological spell, and performing a therapeutic symbolic resolution of conflicts psychic, social, and cosmic, in the transcendent poetic imagination. Unleashed in all people, in all the world, this visionary wisdom would allow or ensure a redemption from exploitation and alienation:

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
Passionless? - no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.(l8)

Humanity and human society would henceforward be subject only to the misery that ensues from the inevitabilities of existence within an untranscendable nature.

Baudelaire is more pessimistic in the mid-nineteenth century (or is `tragic` a better word? - used in Nietzsche`s sense, as: `Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems; the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility..... that is what I called dionysian, that is what I recognized as the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic* poet. *Not* so as to get rid of pity and terror, not so as to purify oneself of a dangerous emotion through its vehement discharge - it was thus Aristotle misunderstood it - : but, beyond pity and terror, *to realize in oneself* the eternal joy of becoming - the joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*…… In this sense I have the right to understand myself as the first *tragic philosopher* - that is to say the extremest antithesis and antipodes of a pessimistic philosopher..... Affirmation of transitoriness *and destruction*..... , *becoming* with a radical rejection even of the concept *being*

..... `(19) Baudelaire is the *flaneur*/dueller on the dark underside of the modern city - the visionary wanderer in the street, the crowd, and the brothel, the poet who loses his halo in the crowded macadam-covered street, who nevertheless wishes to unite `the transient, the fleeting, the contingent..... (with) the eternal and the immutable.`

But in the l920s, in the hell of post World War I capitalist crisis, André Breton wants the Surrealist artist/poet/visionary/revolutionary to penetrate the unconscious and the world of dreams, bring them to waking life, to open up Artaud`s labyrinth:

`Further away than science will ever reach, there where the arrows of reason break against the clouds, this labyrinth exists, a central point where all the forces of being and the ultimate nerves of Spirit converge. In this maze of moving and always changing walls, outside all known forms of thought, our Spirit stirs, watching for its most secret and spontaneous movements - those with the character of a revelation, an air of having come from elsewhere, of having fallen from the sky.`(20)

The Surrealist André Breton wants a creative experimental transformation of human life - not merely a revolution in `society`, `politics`, or `the economy`:

`I say that what the surrealist attitude initially shared with that of Lautréamont and Rimbaud and what definitively linked our destiny to theirs was the DEFEATISM of war..... In our eyes, the field was free only for a Revolution, fantastically radical..... that extended to every realm..... Only this attitude corresponds adequately to all the excesses which can be attributed to us...`(21)

He wants to open up the psyche, the imagination, dream, and eroticism, to recreate the world, to overcome the repressive dichotomies between reality and dream, ego and id, conscious and unconscious, reason and desire, in order to liberate love, adventure, laughter, and fantasy. This is the Surrealist shaman, represented for Breton in Lautréamont`s Maldoror. Taking the character of Maldoror as his main shaman-mentor, Breton legendizes himself into the poet of Nadja. The Surrealist shaman enters, through love of a woman, into madness and childhood, or into the world of Lautréamont`s imagination - flying or diving into the sky, earth, or sea, discovering and hallucinating a Surreality, a world of animals and people in metamorphosis, ambiguity, and the extraordinary. He eradicates the boundaries between `inner` and `outer` to obtain absolute consciousness. As Nadeau(22) wrote:

`The surrealists did set out in search of both revolution and dream, social action and the unconscious..... Much more than in any `mental vantage-point`, they found in passionate devotion to a single woman over a long period of time the surest means of liberating desire. And for `desire` read `imagination`. They wished to release the imagination as completely as Lautreamont had done ..... Amazingly enough, that kind of imagination, kindled in the house of love, brought back to poetry the long lost figure of woman as embodiment of magic powers, creature of grace and promise, always close in her sensibility and behaviour to the two sacred worlds of childhood and madness. The cult of the mythical woman, foreign as it may be to some contemporary readers, lies at the heart of the surrealist credo.´

Here is some of Breton`s poem *Free Union* :

> My wife with her wood-fire hair
> With her thoughts of heatsparks
> With her hour-glass figure
> My wife with her figure of an otter between the tiger`s teeth.....
>
> My wife with savanna eyes
> My wife with watery eyes to drink in prison
> My wife with wooden eyes always under the axe
> With eyes of water level air level earth and fire level(23)

André Breton and the Surrealists pursued in reverence the divine madness and childishness of woman, of Nadja, to understand the irrational mystery of the contingent, the accidental, the extraordinary. As Magritte expressed it: `For me art is a means of evoking mystery`(24). The classic Surrealist image was drawn from the strange nineteenth century poet Lautréamont: `He is as handsome ..... as the fortuitous encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella.`(25) And that mysterious, erotic, grand line of Byron`s: `She walks in beauty, like the night`(26), is a Romantic precurser of Surrealism.

Robert Graves`s ideas in *The White Goddess* are also in harmony with this. The poem *In Dedication* at the beginning of the book, goes:

> All saints revile her, and all sober men
> Ruled by the God Apollo`s golden mean -
> In scorn of which I sailed to find her
> In distant regions likeliest to hold her

Whom I desired above all things to know,
Sister of the mirage and echo.

It was a virtue not to stay,
To go my headstrong and heroic way .
Seeking her out at the volcano`s head,
Among pack ice, or where the track had faded
Beyond the cavern of the seven sleepers:
Whose broad high brow was white as any leper`s,
Whose eyes were blue, with rowan-berry lips,
With hair curled honey-coloured to white hips.

Green sap of Spring in the young wood a-stir
Will celebrate the Montain Mother,
And every song-bird shout awhile for her;
But I am gifted, even in November
Rawest of season, with so huge a sense
Of her nakedly worn magnificence
I forgot cruelty and past betrayal,
Careless of where the next bright bolt may fall. (27)

To the question, ´Must then the shaman be a man?´ the answer is `No´. In primitive societies shamans are often women, just as poets have been subsequently. Sappho, Mary Shelley, Emily Bronte, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Barret Browning, and Christina Rosetti, all explore the feminine, as women. This is Sappho:

FULL MOON

The glow and beauty of the stars
are nothing near the splendid moon
when in her roundness she burns silver
about the world

TO EROS

From all the offspring
of the earth and heaven
Love is the most precious

SEIZURE

…when I look at you my voice fails,

my tongue is broke and thin fire
runs like a thief through my body.
My eyes are dead to light, my ears
pound, and sweat pours down over me.
I shudder, I am paler than grass,
and am intimate with dying - but

I must suffer everything ..... (28)

The following are some excerpts from the commentary by C.M. Bowra on Sappho: ·

"She lived on terms of passionate affection with young girls..... in a heightened intensity of consciousness which belonged to Aphrodite, the Muses, and the Graces.

"Aphrodite was the inspiring force of her life, and Sappho sees her as the author of all that is sweetest and most magical in it..... It was this belief that cast a celestial radiance on Sappho`s passions. In following them, and making the most of them, she felt that she was obeying a divine will, and her service to it was the secret of her inspiration.

" ..... what matters for her is less the visible scene than the invisible powers at work in it, who are present to the eye of her imagination and whom she believed that she actually saw. When she summons the Graces and the Muses to come to her, she means what she says; for these are the divine sources of her inspiration. It is this sense of present divinities which gives so radiant a quality to Sappho`s words and transforms her every love into something at once passionately human and celestially exalted. She is indeed a poet of love in many moods, but for her all love was an expansion of the self in the being of another, the intensification of her faculties, of life throbbing through her. When she loses it, she is empty and almost dead..... Sappho knows (love) is ‘a bitter-sweet, inescapable creature’ and falls upon her as a wind falls on oaks on a mountain, knows also its incalculable rewards.....

" ..... the divine forces at work in her compelled her to move at this exalted level of speech.

" ..... though she was certainly moved deeply by physical passions, their physical aspect vanished in her treatment of them ..... What counts is their pure flame, their immediate intensity, which enhances the consciousness by making her see things, both visible and invisible, with a peculiar clairvoyance and mark what happens in herself with an unfaltering candour. Living, as she believed, in a world where divine presences were always near and at work, she has the exalted excitement which they evoke, and it was this that kept her poetry of love at so radiant a level… there is no evidence that she held an official post as priestess of Aphrodite, but it is impossible to see her rightly unless we recognize that she was in her own way deeply religious, conscious of divine support and of the obligations which this laid upon her… Even now… we can… understand what Plato meant when he claimed that she was the Tenth Muse, as if she belonged to a company of celestial spirits who inspire the art of song." (29)

H.C. Baldry describes Sappho´s communing with the spirit of Shelleyan Love as "prayer(s) to Aphrodite close to ritual and the original purpose of ritual – magic", and as "songs connected with the cult of Aphrodite….. festivals of the goddess herself or the Graces and Muses, marriage ceremonies which ended the girls` stay at the ´school´." (30)

III

The principle of authentic affirmation of identity for a primitive, traditional ethnic group or tribe, which has the right to resist ethnocidal encroachment, moves over to a completely different terrain once a society is modernized. There is then no going back to the former reality; attempts to do so often result in variants of fascism. A modern society must be cosmopolitan, universalist, secular, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. For example, to consider the issue of `identity` for small modern nations (like Denmark, Scotland, Serbia or the Basque country) in the same terms that Survival International speaks concerning the rights to identity of the Yanomami or the Awa Guaja of the Amazon Basin, is absurd and dangerous, as it threatens freedom and justice. There are always many residents of a nation or region who do not fit into any given definitions of cultural identity, many who cross boundaries, and there are those who do not wish to identify themselves with a single cultural definition; and where, as so often, a nation is a patchwork quilt of different cultures, mobilizing such identities can easily generate hatred, civil war, and deflect attention from any kind of emancipatory social praxis. The imagination must always seek to find diversity within unity in ways that allow dynamic harmony, and creative differences within a peaceful, pluralistic society. Structures need to be created according to un-dogmatic, un-preconceived principles, which best allow the coexistence of maximum local uniqueness with maximum universalist civil and legal rights.

Nationalism is not necessarily based on racism or religious exclusivity or bigotry, for it can be both multi-ethnic and secular. However, it has a profound tendency or propensity towards one kind of racism and bigotry or another, as it inevitably emphasizes something special or distinctive about `the people` of one particular nation, which distinguishes them from `the peoples` of other nations, these distinguishing features being valued positively, negatively, or in a compound of both, through stereotypical generalizations. And of course such distinguishing characteristics are rarely derived from contemporary empirical investigations or rational analyses, as these would often indicate great divergences between reality and assumption, and the chimerical nature of the alleged national characteristics. Rather they are thought to constitute an essence which may be discovered through metaphysical speculation, psychological introspection, or historical analyses of the past. The characteristics of a `people` can never therefore be what they empirically, democratically, choose to be, in the

actual, present reality they create. All too characteristically, evil is projected onto the Other, who then warrants being thought of and treated callously. The Other is necessary to the psychology of nationalism, and allows the `in-group` to be blind to its own inadequacies. Indeed, it frequently serves the function of allowing an avoidance of facing fundamental ethical and philosophical-existential considerations.

This last was nowhere more evident than in the Cold War system of a `balance of terror`; Mutually Assured Destruction, `deterrence` etc., were generated by a mutual interaction between economic, political, ideological, and military structures or processes. ln both the Western capitalist and the Soviet state socialist systems, there were direct economic pressures to expand and develop military technology. These included its role as a cuttingedge for advanced technology, its position as a huge component of state expenditure which occupied a pivotal function in the management and constant adjustment of both types of economy. There were specific political imperatives driving the military build-up, varying from demands for territorial and geopolitical hegemony and national security, to the requirements for markets, sources of raw materials,access to other nations` labour forces and so on. The latter obviously converged with economic processes. Ideological functions of the military escalation and the Cold War included providing rationalizations for each social system`s failures, and allowing - in conditions of manipulated fear and ignorance - rulers to depict to their peoples the `alternative` system as bad, or at least worse than their own, as dangerous, and as the Other. The Cold War buttressed nationalistic sentiments, ethnocentric affirmations of cultural identity, and collective superiority complexes on both sides. lt fuelled the psycho-social phenomenon of projecting `evil‘ onto the Enemy and evoking anxiety complexes that made people blind to the problems in their midst; real sources of insecurity were then obscured, so that, remaining unchanged they could constantly aggravate that very insecurity. The `evils` in both systems locked into a self-expanding double-bind in the Cold War; each needed its opposite to survive. This in itself should have alerted the world to the danger that either former Cold War participant might be driven by still-operating economic, political, ideological and military forces to find another enemy if the Cold War thawed away.

The military establishments on both sides developed their own momentum, self-interest, and world-view. The two systems locked into mutual escalation: a situation prevailed in which global proliferation of nuclear and otherweapons through military `aid ` and the arms trade, became intertwined with Third World

hunger, injustice, and the spread of dictatorships (frequently instated or supported by one or the other side in the Cold War); which problemscould not be effectively combatted. Furthermore, the whole idea that nuclear and other forms of military threat were acceptable ways for `civilized` nations and blocs to defend themselves or further their interests, was for decades presented to the entire world as respectable, normal, and inevitable. Massive resources were poured into apparently endless military build-ups, into increasing capacities for mutual overkill, whilst global famine, poverty, underdevelopment, and environmental deterioration persisted and grew. As a sort of grotesque retribution, both systems suffered deformations, ranging from McCarthyism and the Vietnam War in the West, to Stalinism and the war in Afghanistan in the East. The leaning of each on the other, only served to reinforce xenophobia, short-sightedness, and hypocrisy – especially in the blatant disregard of the very values on which the two social systems were supposedly based, and in whose name the Cold War itself was waged. The proclaimed values of both humanist and universalist philosophies - namely liberal democracy and socialism - were continuously trampled on by both sides. The Cold War justified repression, censorship, governmental secrecy, espionage, and unaccountable covert `security` activities on both sides. Material, environmental, and human resources were wasted; reason, integrity, and good faith were sacrificed.(3l)

lt is when the modern artist/thinker tries to connect imaginatively with a primordial shamanic creativity (as Wagner so powerfully did), but then thinks through theimplications of this creativity in terms of a nationalistic philosophy, that he or she can tend towards the conscious politics of fascism and racism. The ancient Athenian tragedian belongs to a community that understands itself as racially `pure`, defines itself in opposition to `other Greeks` or `barbarians`. The primitive shaman belongs to a specific community, that often even calls itself `*the* people`, though in fact it is only one human group among many. lf the modern artist/thinker sees him or herself as a latter-day shaman or tragedian, still beholden to a specific `race`, then this can obviously encourage the conscious philosophies of nationalism, racism, or fascism. lt is making an ideology out of myths and realities that belong to earlier kinds of society - instead of extracting the partial truths that are still pertinent to today. Thus the all-roundedness of the primitive community and of the individual`s psyche and experience, or the Greek ideals of heroism, nobility, wisdom, and balance, remain significant. Goethe`s and Schiller`s concerns to recreate Classical ideals in terms relevant to the modern age were exemplaryin this.(32) But it should be all humanity that the modern shaman sees him or herself immersed within, from within which he summons up his powers, flies, and sets the world afire with visionary flames, as

did Shelley, Jim Morrison, or Bob Marley. No doubt this was the deep meaning of Freemasonry to Mozart: a creed of universal enlightened brotherhood. The Scottish poet Hugh McDiarmid, however, expressed a contradiction between his racially pure, homogenous Scottish cultural nationalism, and his universalistic socialism. They are, for all that he and others have argued to the contrary, utterly irreconcilable. The `raciaI` component to Scottish nationalism is anyway fatuous, as the population of the whole of the British Isles is a mixture of ethnic stocks, predominantly Celtic-Germanic.(33) There is no scientific reason nor humanly progressive sense in basing any politics in the British Isles upon race, ethnicity, or `peoples` understood in any terms other than those concerning national self-determination, democracy, civil rights, or citizenship. If the imagined `tribe` of the modern shaman is a nation, race, bloc, exclusive civilization, culture or religion, or even one only of the two sexes (as in either conventional male supremacism or in some kinds of so-called `radical` feminism, with its moral puritanical dogmatism, its dualistic stereotyping, its projection of `badness` onto the Other - men, and its excluding mode of discourse and its associated hostile, sometimes almost terroristic, violent tone), rather than *all* humanity, the consequences of the magical and mythical power aroused can be disastrous. If the shaman`s yearning for unification concerns a particular `volk`, rather than the whole of the human race, then the sadness at its inevitable frustration comes to be felt in a fatalistic way, as it was by Wagner (though this fatalistic philosophy is transcended in the power of his music, as is his conscious racism); whilst its apparent `achievement` cannot avoid the meanness, shabbiness, arrogance and hatred of Bayreuth, Karl Marx`s `festival of fools`, of which Nietzsche said: "I one day came to myself in Bayreuth. It was as if I had been dreaming..... Where was I? I recognized nothing, I hardly recognized Wagner. In vain I scanned my memories..... The incomparable days of the foundation-stone laying, the little band of *initiates* who celebrated them.... not the shadow of a resemblance. *What had happened?* – Wagner had been translated into German! The Wagnerian had become master of Wagner! - *German* art! The *German* master! *German* beer!..... We others, who know only too well.... to how cosmopolitan a taste Wagner`s art alone speaks, were beside ourselves to rediscover Wagner bedecked with German `virtue` ..... Truly, a hair-raising crowd!"(34)

When the primitive, ancient, or traditional identification of people with their land is simplistically taken into a modern correlation between cultural identity, nation-state, and the countryside, you easily get a `blood and soil` philosophy. The true modern equivalent of primitive or traditional` Gaian` consciousness is universalist, global, and eco-socialist; imbued with a romantic-mystical aesthetic

sensibility. A conservationist political ecology, a commitment to human justice and equality, and a love of and feeling for the `higher order of chaos` and beauty in nature, are all intertwined in the profound idea of humanity feeling at home on the earth, as a conscious part of Gaia; or as spontaneously in harmony with, and aligned to, theTao.(35)

The politics of the modern nation and nation-state should never be based upon race, exclusive culture, religion, language or anything other than principles of universalistic citizenship. There is a moment at which the creating or inventing of a unified or homogenous identity by a people is no longer `innocent`, but has become as it were an inauthentic or more importantly a deadly business - of nationalism, racial mythology, or ethnic purity. A primitive or traditional shaman or bard or minstrel entering visions of his ethnic group`s ancestral myth-history is a powerful, beautiful imagining; but in the racist mythology of Aryanism, for example, its counterpart became a murderous banality.

The Marxist concept of an `lnternational`, though so often falsified and betrayed in the practices undertaken in its name, and so prone to dogmatic, monolithic prescriptions resting upon a single, supposedly `real` interpretation of history`s process, is nevertheless closer to a true `festival of *all* human beings`. The pain experienced in its failure hitherto, and in its transformation into murderous totalitarianism - is the pain known when `that best philosophy, whose taste` is the `harmony of truth`(36), remains unrealized. This is a different kind of tragedy, one that remains suffused within the beauty of SheIIey`s *Epipsychidion* , or of which Nietzsche spoke, unknowingly in view of much of his consciously espoused philosophy, in these words: "Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love……"(37)

If the shaman in primitive society works for his or her specific community, the philosopher-artist-prophet in complex civilizations tends towards universality. Though consciously many have not so thought - Wagner in the modern world is the prime example of this contradiction between an artist`s immediate consciousness and his deeper creative being - universality, the Kantian `categorical imperative`, is where the visionary imagination drives. The community becomes all humanity, as part of the Cosmos, Gaia, the Totality.

Even the notion of 'cultural identity', or of pluralistic identities, entails in-group and out-group distinctions and stereotypes, and veers toward irrational kinds of

explanation of social, economic, and political phenomena: from governmental stability or instability, to high or low levels of *per capita* income, to high or low levels of suicide, alcoholism, or particular sexual proclivities; and displaces explanations based on social processes other than those connected with nation, race, cultural identity, or a people (in the sense of a *single* people - e.g. the Scots, the Croatians, the Bylorussians, the Jews etc.) – displacing in particular those explanations concerned with social class. At the same time it diverts attention from class exploitation within the nation, the race, the cultural unity, the people; and from commonality of experience, interest, and possibility of radical, emancipatory action within classes but across nations, races, cultural entities, and peoples. lf the citizenship of a modern nation is defined in any other way than as the accident of people living within the sovereignty of a particular nation state, as being thus passport holders, as having legal rights to participate in democratic processes etc., it almost inevitably begins to mobilize one or more features characteristic of fascism, of which the essence among other things is a taking of nationalism and racism to extremes. 'Traditional', tribal, or 'indigenous' nations are an entirely different case; it is precisely the false association of modern nations with traditional peoples that allows the creation of ideological constructions like 'Aryanism' in Nazi ideology (though Nazism was contemptuous of anyone else's identity of that kind), just as the refusal to accept primitive, indigenous, traditional, or native identities on the part of 'vu|gar' or 'Stalinistic' Marxism, and its reduction of all such groupings to the international or national proletariat or peasantry, was an equivalent, though oppositely repressive mode of thinking.

Exclusivity, cultural stereotyping, and bigotry always accompany nationalist movements and sentiments to some degree, even where the latter`s more important historical significance has been radical and progressive, as has often been the case in the Third World in the twentieth century. The understanding of history and society through the concepts of 'the nation' and nationalism, is always to some degree distorted, or bleached of the insights that the concepts of mode of production, class, or gender relations can generate. (Though it is gradually becoming clear that the understanding of all-important issues concerning society`s relations with the natural environment, which have to be grasped in non-dualistic ways, is not necessarily enhanced by the latter either). Even when 'the nation' or 'the national interest' are not, like racist projections, mere cloaks for the preferences of the ruling classes - i.e. even when they do embrace the vast empirical majority of the people in question, they cannot orientate action, thought, and sensibility towards human emancipation, even for those particular people. Only with universalist perspectives - thinking globally,

acting locally - can even a single people really transform their lives, emancipatorily for the better.

IV

Great art is the vision of intense love, in uniquely individual imaginations - Dante`s vision of Beatrice, the power of Goethe`s *Faust*, Shelley`s shimmering beauty in *Epipsychidion* - in which the civilization`s psyche is embraced and interpreted, as a manifestation of the human archetype, and as a specific manifested variation, for which a vision of redemption and salvation is offered. lt is an infinite mirror or mantra for reflection and contemplation.

Nietzsche`s inspiration was partially hell-fired from syphilis (both symptom and allegory of the modern age), so that his ecstatic-creative states, his Dionysian-intoxicated dithyrambic oceans (for him Beethoven`s Ninth Symphony is `world redemption jubilation. ..... inundated by (a) sea of flames`(38)), were sometimes uncontrollable. In his yea-saying moods he could not make moral distinctions, and he could not, as Shelley puts it, `descend, and perish not`(39). Art`s function for Nietzsche was to ensure we do not perish from the banal, hideous truth of life: `We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*.`(40) Thus he could not always see the real truth of his own insights, could not understand the necessary balance in life between the ecstatic state and other moods, judgements, and feelings; he did not understand:

> ..... that best philosophy, whose taste
> Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
> As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
> Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.(4l)

An intoxicated Nietzschean state, if granted permanent ascendancy, can seem to justify or allow anything - erotic, spiritual, wild, grotesque, or murderous. Fatuously Nietzsche found an affirmation of life even in war, and could celebrate power over and oppression of other people - not only the power of vision and transcendant spiritual strength; he could proudly disdain the faltering but dignified struggle of humanity to gain democracy; he exaggerated absurdly and apparently relished the ugliness he supposed underlay the greatness of `great men`; and he embraced that banal and ghastly philosophy, `the higher breeding of humanity, together with the remorseless destruction of all degenerate and parasitic elements ..... `(42) The cost of his fantastic understanding of so much, was his insane acceptance of the unacceptable, in the name of the shamanistic

visionary flight to celestial heights. He lost at times the integrated awareness of Goethe or the British Romantics, and the White Light of harmonious beauty in Dante, though he goes deeper and further along certain paths, and like Baudelaire attains an extraordinarily courageous sweetness in spite of, or because of, his dark, heroic, black, fiery hell, his damnation, his knowing love out there, in the outer galaxies of reified, schizophrenic modernity, like Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, or Janis Joplin did: who were new, twentieth century versions of the exiled poet`s burning love and pain. Nothing could be more absurd than the accusation that Nietzsche`s instinctual, ecstatic, life-affirming mode of being is intrinsically 'dangerous' in the sense of being 'proto-fascist'.

Revelatory, intense, sudden, absolute vision is creativity that seems close to madness, as when Edvard Munch wrote in the sky of *The Scream* - that vision of *angst* within human subjectivity and all nature, of loss, madness, death, but also of miraculous rebirth or new life: `only someone who knows madness could paint this`. lt is like the sudden intuition of a creative scientist - a leap, a total bending, squeezing, of reality into a subjective form, an instantaneous wresting from a medium (such as paint, words, or musical sounds) a stunning uniqueness, yet a familiarity, a something that seems to *need* to exist. (Albert Einstein knew about this when he commented that Mozart`s music "seemed to have been everpresent in the universe, waiting to be discovered by the master".) This is the high-point, or climax, the ninth level of a Siberian shaman`s ascent to frenzied tranquillity.

In three of the greatest shamanistic visions of truth, recommendation, and prophecy in the European modern age - Mozart`s *Requiem*, Shelley`s *Epipsychidion*, and Wagner`s *Parsifal*, we have works absolutely suspended above and outside the world, shimmering between life and death, in the most extreme and absolute blendings and syntheses of love and death, Eros and Thanatos, yearning, desire, and stillness, oneness. The triumph of life and heroic affirmation are, in each, saturated in tragedy and the welcoming of death. Transcendence, regeneration, and beauty beyond comprehension clasp and embrace the final abysses of excruciating grief, pain, and loss.

Here we could do no better than take Nietzsche`s description of the musician/lyrical poet:

` ..... the most important phenomenon of ancient poetry (is) that union - nay identity - everywhere considered natural, between musician and poet ..... He is, first and foremost, a Dionysiac artist, become wholly identified with the

original Oneness, its pain and contradiction, and producing a replica of that Oneness as music, if music may legitimately be seen as a repetition of the world; however, this music becomes visible to him again, as in a dream similitude, through the Apollonian dream influence. That reflection, without image or idea, of original pain in music, with its redemption through illusion, now produces a second reflection as a single simile or example ..... The sleeper`s enchantment through Dionysiac music now begins to emit sparks of imagery, poems which, at their point of highest evolution, will bear the name of tragedies anddramatic dithyrambs. `(43)

This describes perfectly a Yaminahua shaman at work in the Amazonian rainforest of Eastern Peru, who waits for the hallucinatory visions to come after drinking ayahuasca, gradually striking up a stronger chant appealing to the Mother Spirit of ayahuasca, until he feels himself in gear with the forces and rushes, and begins to *see* . He is as much poet as musician, as well of course, as curer, magician, seer, and cosmologist.

Nietzsche could be speaking of a shaman as much as a musician or poet, flying and boring into the essences of reality, throbbing in ecstatic chant, like a virtuoso lyrist amid an orchestra of chanting fellow Yaminahua, flying together in orgasmic cathartic streams of visionary hallucinatory colour and libidinal pleasure:

`The Dionysiac musician, himself imageless, is nothing but original pain and reverberation of the image. Out of this mystical process of un-selving, the poet`s spirit feels a whole world of images and similitudes arise ..... the lyrical poet .... himself becomes his images, his images are objectified versions of himself. Being the active center of that world he may boldly speak in the first person, only his`I` is not that of the actual waking man, but the `I` dwelling, truly and eternally, in the ground of being. It is through the reflections of that `I` that the lyric poet beholds the ground of being. Let us imagine, next, how he views himself too among these reflections - as non-genius, that is, as his own subject matter, the whole teeming crowd of his passions and intentions directed toward a definite goal; and when it now appears as though the poet and the non-poet joined to him were one, and as though theformer were using the pronoun `I`, we are able to see through this appearance, which has deceived those who have attached the label `subjective` to the lyrical poet. The man Archilocus, with his passionate loves and hates, is really only a vision of genius, a genius who is no longer merely Archilocus but the genius of the universe, expressing its pain through the similitude of Archilocus the man. Archilocus, on the other hand, the

subjectively willing and desiring human being, can never be a poet. Nor is it at all necessary for the poet to see only the phenomenon of the man Archilocus before him as areflection of Eternal Being: the world of tragedy shows us to what extent the vision of the poet can remove itself from the urgent, immediate phenomenon.`(44)

Among the many perceptions in this sublime and extraordinary passage, is a distinction between the `ordinary` conscious ego, and the artist when immersed in the `ground` of creative inspiration, become one with the world, the Tao, or the Wild West Wind for Shelley:

> O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn`s being .....
> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is .....
> Be thou, Spirit fierce, My spirit!
> Be thou me, impetuous one!(45)

The distinction allows us to make sense of (though this was not Nietzsche`s conscious intention at the time of writing *The Birth of Tragedy* ) the outstanding, contradictory phenomenon of Wagner: most sublime visionary composer, yet banal thinker about society and politics - if `Aryanism` and anti-Semitism even warrant the word `thought`.

The artist, like the shaman, sees into the essences of things through the transfiguration of life in art - `turning into potable gold the rivers of death that flow through life`, as Shelley wrote. The visionary flight is a mystical-creative experience. The artist-shaman-scientist embodies in his experience the contradictions of his community, his age, his circumstances - intellectually and intuitively - in a massively powerful empathy and living struggle; as Rilke said of Michaelangelo, `one man lifts the burden of his age and hurls it down the chasm of his heart`.(46)

But then is an artist like Matisse not ´serious´ enough, does he not root around into the taboos or repressions of the psyche, the problems and anxieties of his age and the contemporary society? Is his art `merely decorative`, allowing an aesthetic of form and colour to cover over the authoritarianism, the suffering, the intentions, forge a unity out of the spiritual and sensual worlds, energizing the drained spirit and body of the viewer, rekindling the spark of deep love for life, which cannot be cruel or unconcerned about others if it is real? Is he an `escapist`, or rather a `perpetual dreamer`, as Louis Aragon called him, who floats into the world but is never really there, creating an alternative world, a

utopia, a fantasy, Adorno`s `*promesse de bonheur*` or Marcuse`s `beautiful image of Iiberation`, which is no cowardly or irresponsible or unconcerned evasion of reality, just because its subject matter appears restricted on the level of what is often called `content`? ls he not a shaman, who always worked in Nietzschean states of creative paroxysm?

The shaman penetrates the feminine, the supernatural; meanders and seeks within her labyrinths for truth, for the Minotaur to slay, as Theseus does with the help of his loving Ariadne; like Odysseus who wanders and seeks, in integrity, courage, and perseverance through adversity, his return to Ithaca and Penelope. Shelley meets Her on his `visioned wanderings, far aloft`:

> She met me, Stranger, upon life`s rough way,
> And lured me towards sweet Death; as Night by Day,
> Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
> Led into light, life, peace. An antelope,
> In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
> Were less aethereally light: the brightness
> Of her divinest presence trembles through
> Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
> Embodied in the windless heaven of June
> Amid the splendour-winged stars, the Moon
> Burns, inextinguishably beautiful:
> And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
> Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
> Killing the sense with passion; sweet as stops
> Of planetary music heard in trance.
> In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
> The sunbeams of those wells which ever leap
> Under the lightnings of the soul - too deep
> For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
> The glory of her being, issuing thence,
> Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
> Of unentangled intermixture, made
> By Love, of light and motion: one intense
> Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence,
> Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing,
> Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
> With the unintermitted blood, which there
> Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air

The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,)
Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furled
Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world;
Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress
And her loose hair; and where some heavy tress
The air of her own speed has disentwined,
The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind;
And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
Into the bosom of a frozen bud.-
See where she stands! a mortal shape indued
With love and life and light and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die;
An image of some bright eternity;
A shadow of some golden dream; a Splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless; a tender
Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions Iife`s dull billows move;
A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning;
A Vision like incarnate April, warning,
With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
Into his summer grave.

Ah, woe is mel
What have I dared? where am I lifted? how
Shall I descend, and perish not? I know
That Love makes all things equal: I have heard
By mine own heart this joyous truth averred:
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship, blends itself with God .....

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth`s dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor

Paved her light steps;- on an imagined shore,
Under the gray beak of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odours deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of her to the enamoured air;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance,- in form,
Sound, colour - in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.(47)

In these unbelievably beautiful, magical, awesome lines, are contained so many of the shamanistic-poetical elements we are considering. The poet flies in `visioned wanderings, far aloft`, and meets a Being, a Stranger, who is feminine, divine, supernatural; thus he echoes Dante finding Beatrice who opens the divine realms of truth to him, `halfway through the forest of our life`, rather as for Shelley:

At length, into the obscure Forest came
The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn`s
And from her presence life was radiated
Through the gray earth and branches bare and dead;
So that her way was paved, and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love;
And music from her respiration spread
Like light,- all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around;

And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air:
Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious One
Floated into the cavern where I lay,
And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
As smoke by fire, and in her beauty`s glow
I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
Was penetrating me with living light ..... (48)

This Vision is incarnated on earth in a real, loved woman; in art, philosophy, the politics of freedom, justice, and the revolt against tyranny (` ..... whatever checks that Storm/Which with the shattered present chokes the past`), in nature, and in all ecstatic, wondrous experience.

Such experience can be most intense in the direct, intuitive apprehension of the child, or in memories of childhood: `In the clear golden prime of my youth`s dawn`, and `the caverns of my dreamy youth`, for Shelley. This is the theme of Wordsworth`s Ode: *lntimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* :

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore,-
Turn wheresoe`er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more .....

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy ..... (49)

Wordsworth remembers:

..... when like a roe
I bounded o`er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The courser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in aIl,-I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye ..... (50)

Those immaculate, miraculous, mystical experiences are also moments of flight for Wordsworth:

There are in our existence spots of time,
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
A vivifying Virtue, whence, depress`d
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repair`d,
A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced
That penetrates, enables us to mount
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life in which
We have had deepest feeling that the mind
Is lord and master, and that outward sense
Is but the obedient servant of her will.
Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,
Are scatter`d everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood: in our childhood even

Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,
As far as memory can look back, is full
Of this beneficent influence.(51)

ln his *Poems of the Imagination* , Wordsworth seems constantly to be a shaman summoning up spirits from a female Nature. Take for example *To The Clouds*:

Army of Clouds! ye winged Host in troops
Ascending from behind the motionless brow
Of that tall rock, as from a hidden world,
Oh whither with such eagerness of speed?
What seek ye, or what shun ye? of the gale
Companions, fear ye to be left behind,
Or racing o`er your blue ethereal field
Contend ye with each other? of the sea
Children, thus post ye over vale and height
To sink upon your mother`s lap - and rest?
Or were ye rightlier hailed, when first mine eyes
Beheld in your impetuous march the likeness
Of a wide army pressing on to meet
Or overtake some unknown enemy? .....

Whence, whence, ye Clouds! this eagerness of speed?
Speak, silent creatures.-They are gone, are fled,
Buried together in yon gloomy mass
That loads the middle heaven; and clear and bright
And vacant doth the region which they thronged
Appear; a calm descent of sky conducting
Down to that hidden gulf from which they rose
To vanish - fleet as days and months and years ..... (52)

The sublime in the Romantic vision, taking up aspects of Kant`s ideas, is the experience of nature through the aesthetic faculty, which includes the infinite, the beautiful, and the terrifying. Aesthetic judgement mediates between, forges a synthesis from, the different faculties of imagination and intellect. The form of this experience, the precise characteristics of nature that engender it, and the artistic means of expressing it, all vary from one social and historical context to another. In the present work, l have tried to convey this idea through the notion

of a continuous historical transformation of an essential shamanistic vision of nature. The finding of `final form` in nature, the harmonious mystical vision of nature`s beauty, is a part of this archetypal shamanistic flight of humankind. The shaman`s visionary flight enters the sublime in ways that vary in form, tone, and sensibility according to his or her personal and social experience and context; and is infused with a prophetic quality which is appropriate to the circumstances, hopes, needs, and yearnings of the community within which, or from which, his or her visionary flight begins. The spiritual, moral, intellectual, and political c message of the shaman`s vision is intertwined with its particular entry into the universal experience of the sublime. It is thus that we should understand the hallucinatory cosmology of the Amazonian native shaman, the Taoist nature poet and landscape painter, the Northern European Renaissance landscape painter, and the Romantic poets or the Surrealists.

In these lines: "------whatever checks that storm/Which with the present chokes the shattered past" – Shelley, like Walter Benjamin, looks back to Paradise in the *Epipsychidion*, from within the "Storm of Progress". In the Ninth of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, the German Jewish Marxist mystic gave his view of modern history:

"A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something ..... His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is ..... the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past ..... he ..... sees catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage ..... in front of his feet ..... A storm is blowing from Paradise which irresistibly propels him into the future ..... This storm is what we call progress."(53)

The Angelus Novus faces backwards, not forwards, as Western Civilization so often believes it does, with its myths of 'progress' and 'development'. It is like a shaman, who in visionary, curing flights in frenzied trance penetrates the supernatural realm as the male enters the female in sexual ecstasy (Paradise). In Shelley`s *Epipsychidion* there is an ascent ("There was a Being whom my spirit oft/Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft"), a descent into darkness ("Ah, woe is me!/What have l dared? where am I lifted? how/Shall I descend, and perish not?"), ruins (" .... a wreck of Paradise"), Paradise itself or a Garden of Eden ("lt is an isle under Ionian skies", and "This land would have remained a solitude/But for some pastoral people native there,/Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air/Draw the last spirit of the age of gold/Simple and spirited; innocent and bold"), and prophetic vision (" ..... high Spirits call/The future from its cradle,

and the past/Out of its grave"). As the Angel of, or witness to, history, the poet`s " ..... sails were never to the tempest given" (*Adonais*, final stanza).

The 'angel of history' in Walter Benjamin`s millenial, visionary, eschatological 'Marxism' views the past as Paradise, and progress from it into the present and future as a catastrophic storm causing debris and ruins to pile up along its path. In this tragic view of history – a catastrophic inversion of Marxism - instead of humanity facing the future and moving forward, it is blasted away from the Paradise at which it stares, transfixed by what it is losing and moving away from, its wings tangled up in the storm. Involuntary, violent, piling up heaps of rubble at thefeet of the angel of history, with all revolutions aiming for a better world going wrong, the storm in Benjamin`s *Theses on History* and that in Shelley`s *Epipsychidion* have much in common. Both Benjamin and Shelley look backwards biographically at childhood and at primitive, anarchistic paradise. This is Shelley:

> " ..... some pastoral people native there,
> Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
> Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
> Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
>
> " ..... ere crime
> Had been invented, in the world`s young prime"(54)

For Benjamin, life`s special moments of affection and spontaneity looked back upon, and the moments in history when the spirit of freedom burst out in revolutions, are 'Now-times', 'shot through with chips of Messianic time', as are the moments of great art, that leap into immortality, transcendence. These have to be sustained by vision in the present, since "even the dead are not safe"; and they are accumulated, then allowed to leap out in the millennial impulse, the rupture in history`s continuum, which is revolutionary ecstasy, to redeem the chaos and suffering of humanity up to the present. These are like the 'Great Time' of the world's creation, which Eliade considers in the context of shamanism. That magical world, the primordial 'dawning', is revisited when the shaman enters his creative-ecstatic trance states.

Shelley`s shamanic incantation to the power of the West Wind, entreating it to give strength to his Imagination, so as to allow it to ignite the world in a rebirth, is thoroughly Gaian in its awareness of the interrelated wholeness of the

inorganic and organic Earth. A great poet`s inspiration is aroused, like a shaman, as a fading coal is fanned into flames by the wind. I shall quote some passages from Shelley`s *Defence of Poetry*:

"The poet not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time.

"A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one.

"Poetry awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. It lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar.

"We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know: we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life: our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest.
The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that the discoveries which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam?

"The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature.

" ..... poetry ..... bring(s) light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar ..... the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness.

"Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide - abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

"Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. lt transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms.

"lt makes us the inhabitant of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos ..... it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. lt compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. lt creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.

" ..... what is called poetry in a restricted sense, has a common source with all other forms of order and of beauty according to which the materials of human life are susceptible of being arranged, and which is poetry in a universal sense."(55)

Shelley counters the 'calculating faculty' with the imagination. The imagination disperses the habit of mind that moves from designing a machine to thinking and acting in society without any change in style. The capitalist calculates how to reap maximum profit, through maximum productivity, from a labour force working a maximum of hours for minimum wages. Like the Luddites, Shelley`s imagination sees the "poetry concealed in these systems of knowledge", and asks why the progress of science and technology, "which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam"; asks why they should not be used to ensure no one starves, to reduce the average working day, and to produce things of beauty that people really need.

Shelley`s imagination allows him to see that "the great secret of morals is love ..... a going out of our own nature to understand many others." Wisdom lies not in individuals calculating the means for their own maximised private gain, consumption, or happiness, disconnected from others in society and from nature. "The pleasures and pains of the species must become his own" is a statement directed in a slightly ironic fashion towards the creed of utilitarianism, according to which individuals move robot-like away from pain and towards pleasure. Where in utilitarian philosophy is the dark, contradictory, irrational, passionate humanity that the Romantic imagination discovers? The ends of progress according to utilitarianism are to create the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people, as the capitalist produces the maximum possible quantity of a given commodity from a minumum quantity of resources. In this mathematical calculus of happiness, which mirrors the capitalist system, all is quantity, never quality. Implicitly, if 95% of a society`s population were to be very happy for the other 5% to be murdered or exiled, that would be acceptable. But the Romantic imagination knows, like Walter Benjamin, that "if there is still one beggar, there is myth": as long as anyone else is oppressed, starved, tortured, murdered, or persecuted, no one is free ("an injury to one is an injury to all", as the SACTU slogan so correctly had it); since society has not yet been collectively appropriated by unalienated humanity, in freedom, awareness, and joy. Existence is still in the cave, not the sunlight.

Shelley`s *A Defence Of Poetry* is an onslaught on all measley thinking in terms of utilitarian loss and gain, pleasure and pain. As Martinez-Alier says of orthodox economics:

" ..... economics does not wish to explain the origins ofpreferences; all it requires is that preferences are expressed according to rules which allow formal analysis. Economics becomes a science of choice between anything in general and nothing in particular ..... economics makes the assumption of commensurability between things which are, perhaps, incommensurable from other points of view ..... We are asked to accept that, political leaders` assessment of the rationality of trade-offs between millions of deaths and territorial conquests (or political gains), has nothing in common with the trading-off, in elementary micro-economics, of apples and pears on an indifference curve."(56)

A Defence of Poetry rejects an economics that conceives only in terms of profit, or a 'foreign policy' that conceives only in terms of a narrow 'national interest',

etc. It rejects a society in which all things occur through decisions of capitalists in the market, based on maximizing pleasure and minimising pain, and of workers who choose whom to work for on the basis of the same shallow principle. This orientation in thought has also so often been mirrored in socialist thought, in a scientistic, mechanistic denial of feelings and of an inner drive of the heart towards morality and affection; as also in the Leninist notion of ends justifying means in thought and action.

V

Though the experience of desire for absolute fulfilment or happiness in love, and their inevitable impossibility, was made available to Wagner by western bourgeois capitalist civilization, once discovered the idea pertains to an eternal ontological condition of human existence. lt is not bound by bourgeois conditions; infinite yearning could never be requited in finite reality, no matter how rich it was; no change in society could open horizons that would allow a total resolution to this conflictive experience - and only total resolution would suffice for that intensity of desire and tragic feeling. Hence art that expresses this idea, after *Tristan and Isolde* , can only repeat, in new forms and with different adumbrations, the same circles. The alternative would be to jack it in, laugh it off, enter the world of pop culture and jaded `post-modern` superficiality. But some people would rather repeat tragic conflict than feel nothing real at all.

A certain kind of feminist reaction to Elizabeth Browning or Christina Rosetti, sees in their poetry of yearning for total fulfilment in the love of a man, a foolish hope for the impossible, which is a result of a mere Victorian patriarchal conditioning. This represents an inability to understand the nature of uncompromising dark (and bright) absolute desire, complete commitment, staking all - `putting one`s last shilling on it` as Robert Graves put it, without fearing for the consequences nor for disappointment; as disappointment is inherent in absolute, unyielding love or commitment, which knows no utilitarian calculation, but has rather to be what it is, wherever that may lead. Pragmatic, `masculine`, one-sidedly intellectual, career-minded feminism knows nothing of all this, any more than do the businessmen and bureaucrats it imagines it opposes, but really only seeks to mimic and replace.

But it is a hallmark of the shaman-artist-lover, whether male or female. *The Art-Work of the Future*, an essay in which Wagner discusses among other things the "redemption of the utilitarianist thinker" by "the artistic man of the future"(57), could as well in this respect be a personal confession from Maria Callas.

Maria Callas was a voluptuous, difficult, passionate woman. She did not want to be treated with kid gloves by a man, still less to be fawned over by a sycophantic wimp, but she did wish to have her noble, uncompromisingly romantic sensibilities respected. Significantly, she did not like the role of Tosca, whom

she saw as governed by undignified, uncontrollable passions. She loved Norma most, the ancient High Priestess who is torn between love and duty, and will not betray either. She had to die rather than calculate a utilitarian compromise with them.

Love, dream, nature, death - these are the great themes of early Romanticism, especially Shelley:

> How wonderful is Death,
> Death and his brother Sleep!(58)

and Keats:

> …….for many a time
> I have been half in love with easeful Death,
> Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
> To take into the air my quiet breath;
> Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
> To cease upon the midnight with no pain (59)

They are parts of a pantheistic, pagan, tragic death-wish, a rejoining of nature. A yearning for the Essence, for the Platonic soul, Shelley`s "fire for which all thirst"(60), leads to rejection of material appearance, to a melancholia towards time and change. Similarly the experience of human, social reality as alienated, leads to a feeling of unrequitable, insatiable yearning for, and sense of inevitable loss of, all objects that exist within time and change, as for Keats in his *Ode to Melancholy*:

> She dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die:
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
> Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
> Ay, in the very temple of Delight
> Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
> Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
> Can burst Joy`s grape against his palate fine;
> His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
> And be among her cloudy trophies hung.(61)

The perennial experiences of decay, mutability and death earn an obsessive intensity; the idea that Death and Love, as in Schubert`s song *Death and the Maiden*, are the twin powers of the universe, the twin instincts or psychic forces, is an artistic and poetic anticipation of Freud`s later theories of libido and aggression, Eros and Thanatos; from the sublimations, displacements, and repressions of which are woven the tissues of civilization`s institutions, customs, and arts. (The first version of his worldview derived from his investigations into the sexual neuroses of predominantly upper-middle class women in Victorian Vienna, the second from his experiences of the First World War, the rise of Nazism, and the setting into motion of the Second World War.) As he himself observed, however, the unconscious had already been discovered by artists and poets.

In increasing disillusionment with history, and despair at industrial capitalist society in the later nineteenth century, the totalising dimension of the Romantic experience in Britain became more circumscribed. Fiery radicalism in the first part of the nineteenth century changed into an increasing conservatism among many sections of the working class after the decline of Chartism; developed into the stolidness of Victorian British imperialistic society, with its resistance to radical change as opposed to shallow, piecemeal reform, and the century witnessed an increasing sway of a status quo-oriented commercial sensationalist press and the hegemony of dominant bourgeois values in middle and working class entertainment, leisure pastimes, and culture generally. The inner experiences of Keats and Shelley developed into those of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, which lost the dimensions of social critique and hope for transcendence *in* life:

> Come to me in the silence of the night;
> Come in the speaking silence of a dream"

and:

> When I am dead, my dearest,
> Sing no sad songs for me:
> Plant thou no roses at my head,
> Nor shady cypress tree .....
>
> I shall not see the shadows,
> I shall not fear the rain;

I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on as if in pain ..... (62)

Art becomes explicitly an escape into an inner world of beauty and love for Dante Gabriel Rosetti. The outer world is avoided and despised, as part of a cynicism towards all political or general cosmic creeds. Rosetti withdraws into an interiorized world where the entrancing beauty of languid women is spiritualized into a divine truth. Within his interiorized world, with his lover or model, the artist shuts out the outside world, and with the curtains permanently almost drawn, only a little shaft of sunlight is let in. The ugly world of Victorian industrial exploitation is not embraced in this Dream of Love, as was the earlier industrial society in Shelley, and even in Keats, through indirect criticism. Rather, Robert Browning in 1852 insists that Shelley, who would by then have been sixty had he lived, would have grown out of his radicalism and uncompromising idealism, and would have accepted that his doctrines could not resolve problems "general to the condition of the universe". Matthew Arnold calls Shelley an 'ineffectual angel', and wants to transform the 'Hyde Park roughs' of 1848 - demonstrating radical Chartist workers and artisans - into social conformists, through 'culture' and 'education'. The nineteenth century saw the transformation of a semi-rustic, earthy, anarchistic working class into a more disciplined, tamed, conservative, and conformist one.

Imagination became a source of escape, rather than of visions for a transformed reality. Historically determined conditions came to seem eternal, intrinsic to existence, metaphysical: this existential hopelessness was transposed onto the abstractions of Death, Time, etc. In Tennyson, an alternative example of this Victorian split between the personal and the public, the inner and the outer, is expressed in a languid or anguished inner emotional experience that lives alongside a pseudo-optimism for 'progress' in the outer, public world.

This is the 'progress' that cannot be believed in with the heart and soul; it is one governed by 'one-dimensionaIity' and 'technical reason', to use Herbert Marcuse`s terms, which precludes the asking of fundamental questions about human needs, about the soul of society, or about principles of justice, freedom, equality, or beauty.

The *Liebestod* theme, expression of which in *Tristan and Isolde* is but the most powerful and influential symptom of the increasing European experience of emotional tragedy, strikes the deepest chord of the European nineteenthcentury. Hence the paradox that Romantic music in its extremest and most intensely

beautiful forms burgeoned out at the height of the positivistic cultural climate of the second half of the nineteenth century. Music is *the* refuge from mechanistic industrial impersonality and alienation, even for the very people who are responsible for producing it. How rich was Wagner`s metaphor that music absorbs civilization as lamplight is absorbed by daylight!

In *Tristan* three hours of discord and chromatic tension and ambiguity are resolved only in the last note: death-in-love, love-in-death; love too intense for earthly, material existence, and inevitably coming into conflict with 'normal' conventions and 'sensible' social and material existence; love that persists beyond the grave as in Emily Bronte`s *Wuthering Heights*, that can only be conveyed through timeless ghosts on the wind-torn moors of Yorkshire, in night under the moon, something so intense it is insane: life without or beyond death. Or, as for Shelley, though his despair was still mingled in an extraordinary harmony with triumphant hope:

> ..... true Love never yet
> Was thus constrained: it overleaps all fence:
> Like lightning, with invisible violence
> Piercing its continents; like Heaven`s free breath
> Which rides upon a thought, and makes his way
> Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
> Of arms: more strength has Love than he or they;
> For it can burst its charnel, and make free
> The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
> The soul in dust and chaos.(63)

Nietzsche`s theory of tragedy, garnering the entire Romantic experience, sees in tragedy`s depths the most honest, intense, and complete embrace of life, and of lust for real experience (with all its joys and woes). The most extreme affirmation of life (for the *Liebestod* in *Tristan* is simultaneously a 'transfiguration'), relies necessarily on a tragic understanding that reality is a sea of chaos and danger (as it had been, according to Nietzsche, to the Athenians).

The progress from hope to despair during the nineteenth century has an arc whose span in time varies for different movements, tendencies, genres, media of expression, disciplines of thought, and individuals. It crosses from the first notes of *Rheingold* to the finale of *Götterdammerung* in Wagner`s *Ring* ; from the youthful, innocent love of Queen Victoria for Albert to her widowed, death-obsessed old age; in the story of early Romanticism's descent into late

Romanticism, as narrated for example by E.P. Thompson in his book *William Morris*; from the milieu of the young Marx to the disillusionment around him when old, as narrated by Isaiah Berlin in his *Karl Marx*, - a pessimism which Marx of course, going against the grain of his age, did not accept intellectually and could not tolerate emotionally.

Of course the radiance in the first notes of *Rheingold*, and the conflagration of despair in the last notes of *Götterdammerung*, are permeated (in true Taoist and dialectical interpenetration, mutual interdependence, entailment, and interrelatedness), with primordial intimations of tragedy in the one, and soaring flames of transcendent new hope and rebirth, in the other. Celestial flight and descent to the depths are both alternate and simultaneous. Yet generally over the course of the nineteenth century, death as celestial, visionary transcendence in art, is replaced by a dark nose-dive to the tomb. (As repeated many times, we are speaking here of Wagner`s music, not his philosophy - particularly not his horrible idea that the decadence, materialism, and pseudo-progress of the nineteenth century could be transcended in the 'rebirth' of a pure, Aryan community.)

Whereas for the earlier nineteenth century Romantics like Shelley and Keats, love and tenderness towards nature and visionary flight resisted the 'iron cage' - the laws of industrial capitalist civilization - later nineteenth century Romantics like Dante Gabriel Rossetti were pessimistic and fatalistic about history. The island of paradise in love and art escapes from society, it no longer challenges it. In Wagner too, there is a resignation to the machine of historical development. Certainly the heroic love of *Tristan and Isolde* is defiant, but it is also resigned to death. The eternal *Ring* of power, loss, betrayal of love, and death, can be rebelled against, but not transformed - only a total destruction can come from the attempt to overthrow it.

Modern bourgeois civilization makes possible and available the experience of romantic love for a number of reasons. First, it allows the meeting of individuals across classes, ranks, nationalities, family differences etc., or a great deal more at least than did earlier social forms, due to its formal equality, meritocracy etc. Second, it abolishes forced marriage, polygamy, and other institutions that desacralize enduring relations between individual men and women - one of Shelley`s themes in his Defence Of Poetry; and third, it increases the possibility of trusting emotional investment in 'love' - in marriage, and towards children, as the likelihood of sudden unexpected death due to disease and famine is gradually reduced, first in the upper and middle classes, then among the popular classes -

the showing of affection being more risky the more separation by death is a constant possibility. And the other side of absolute giving, immersion in erotic, spiritual, and romantic oneness, is the pain of self-sacrifice and loss. It is on the idealization of the two sides of this coin that nineteenth century romantic tragedy is based - in Bellini, Verdi, Puccini, and centrally of course, in Wagner`s *Tristan and Isolde* .

With many composers other than Wagner we do not know their views on nationality and race, on philosophy, on love and sexual desire, virtue and renunciation, death and rebirth; or if we do, we do not know how they saw the links between their creative works and such views. This is particularly the case with composers of pure instrumental music; but also in opera or song, where some distance between the work and the subjectivity of the composer is usually assumed. We could recall Nietzsche in *The Birth Of Tragedy*, where Archilochus is said not to be the "I" of Archilochus`s poetry, nor the source, or ground of being of its creation. As Leo Bersani puts it, "Nietzsche uses the early Greek poet Archilochus — called "the first 'subjective' artist" in contrast to Homer, "the first 'objective' artist - to raise the question of how the "lyrist" is even "possible as an artist - he who, according to the experience of all ages, is continually saying 'I' and running through the entire chromatic scale of his passions and desires. Nietzsche answers this question by positing a nonrepresentational "I." In the first place, as a Dionysian artist (the lyrist) has identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction."(64)

But with Wagner not only did his obsessively autobiographical character lead him constantly to proclaim such connections, but his entire theory of art, and of music-drama in particular, insists upon the connections he presumed to find in his own consciousness, which may not even have been true for him, let alone for others. That is why it is best with Wagner not only to separate the music from the man`s ideas generally, but to distance it sometimes even from his theories of music.

If there was any composer who by nature should have written 'absolute' music - utterly beyond any literal or singular and fixed meaning or interpretation, it was Wagner. Perhaps he really should have eliminated the personal traces of his ascents to divine realms of music! For after all, the conflict between spiritual love and lust, between the two hearts that beat in the human breast, has probably been among the most common sources of creative inspiration for many artists since the Renaissance in Europe, but none were drawn to intellectuallze,

publicize, or set in concrete their unconscious processes of artistic sublimation as much as Wagner.

As for racial prejudice, we do not know what was in the mind of J.S. Bach, for example - and though it would be fascinating and instructive to know, such information surely could not affect our judgement of his music.

If we compare Wagner with Mozart, we find the latter`s purely instrumental, absolute music notoriously celebrated as utterly and infinitely enigmatic, ambiguous, mercurial, enantiodromial and so on, whilst his operas are felt as perfect integrations of music with drama, plot, and characterization. By contrast Wagner turned away from 'absolute' music, though in his music dramas the music is so much greater than the dramaturgy, even in the *Ring* or *Tristan*, where the drama is nearest to matching the music`s power. In *Parsifal*, the dramatic plot is outsoared by the music, and the sense of unevenness in quality of both music and drama in *Tannhäuser* accentuates the unworthiness of the overall dramatic idea against the best parts of the music (in Act 1 and the Conclusion of Act 3), which are as great as anything of Wagner`s. The sense that fragments of greatness fly out from a relatively tawdry whole is particularly acute in *Tannhäuser*, the work which Wagner constantly returned to revise over thirty years; and considered unsatisfactorily resolved at the end of his life: for as Cosima Wagner recorded in her diary, it is "finished, and yet unfinished, because it seems to him that some of the music is underdeveloped," and also that her husband " still owes the world *Tannhäuser*." Werner Breig describes *Tannhäuser* as "a work in progress, a piece whose shape was continually changing in the course of its performance history."(65)

There is no better indication of Wagner`s mistaken belief that the ideas consciously underlying his works represented their essence, than his remarks to Cosima that "*Tannhäuser*, *Tristan*, and *Parsifal* belong together",(66) and that after *Tannhäuser* and *Tristan* he wrote nothing new (67) - in idea, not style or technique. Or as Wagner wrote to Mathilde Wesendonck in 1860: "In a certain very deep sense which only the World Spirit can understand, I can now only repeat myself in new works: I can reveal no new essence of my nature."(68) Wagner never retracted this judgement, even after writing *Parsifal*. But the ideas underlying these works are not the clues to their essence.

VI

An initiation or fertility ritual, or fiesta, entails gesture, movement, dancing, games and sports, feasting and drinking, sexual orgies, dressing up, doing up hair, using make-up or tattooing, body and face-painting, wearing masks, and primordial chanting. Together with re-enactment of myth, storytelling, curing, resolution of conflicts and disputation - these are the roots of the arts. It was from such a matrix that Greek art, poetry, drama, and music evolved and differentiated themselves, along numerous lines of development. In the symbolic death and rebirth associated with puberty, funereal, and other ceremonial rituals, lie the origins of tragedy and redemption - in art, such as Attic tragic drama, and in religion, such as Orphic and Christian mysticism.

Homer in the eighth century B.C. is a bard, not a shaman, who writes down his version of the traditional bardic poetry accreted over centuries. Going further back in time, this would be a shamanistic chanting, just as one finds today among the Yaminahua of Peru. Then, in the Athens of the fifth century B.C., tragic drama develops out of Dionysian and Orphic rituals, which also represent remnants of shamanism - in some ways more ‘pristine’ in that they retain the multi-media qualities of prehistoric ritual. In the Greek word *musike* Wagner saw "the three purely human artistic genres in their original unity," that is, "dance, music and poetry." As Ulrich Muller writes:

"It is a sense of unity that was later lost and which Wagner sought to reestablish with his new *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art. The idea propounded by Nietzsche in his *Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* of 1872 (an idea explicit in the title of that work) had already been developed by Wagner with reference to Greek drama both in the basic outline of his argument and in the metaphorical language which he had used to expound it."(69)

In fifth century B.C. Athens drama merged with the traditions of epic poetry that flowed from Homer, so that Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are the fruits of a convergence of many strands of development from ancient shamanism, and retain the essential core of this primordial imaginative creativity. Nietzsche saw Athenian tragedy as a synthesis from Apollonian epic and Dionysian lyric, that burst into the greatest art the world has ever known.

The heaving, sighing, half-awake psychic breaths in the music of *Parsifal* are like the heavy breathing and blowing of smoke of an hallucinating visionary shaman, exploring the primordial depths of being: the `animal magnetism` of all organic life, the psychic archetypal human libido, the `orgone energy' of Wilhelm Reich`s terminology: the life forces of all nature, organic and inorganic. The music has a sense of diabolical suffering, of men and women alone, flailing around in the universe, though primordially connected with inorganic matter, all organic life, and the rest of humanity: yearning to feel at one with them again yet remaining conscious, rational, and capable of sensibilities beyond those of all other kinds of matter and life; erotic in the sense of feeling part of the sun`s connection with the *Urgrund*, of light mingling with the unconscious, of masculine day entering into female night and vice versa.

I shall quote at length here from a section called *Ecstasy And Eroticization Aroused by Wagner`s Music*, in Isolde Vetter`s essay *Wagner in the History of Psychology* :

"In the case of Wagner, research in the field of audience psychology has hitherto been hindered by a certain taboo, inasmuch as his music - or rather his music drama – has repeatedly been associated with trancelike states and feelings of ecstasy. Susanna Grossmann-Vendrey, one of the most knowledgeable experts on reactions to Bayreuth in the German press, speaks, for example, of "numerous accounts of trance-like states of near-ecstasy in the Bayreuth audience." Such experiences, however, were subject to powerful social constraints: "In the west, states of music-induced trance and ecstasy were frowned upon from the nineteenth century onwards, at least outside the realm of national customs, so that descriptions of them (such as the Viennese waltz) are, for the most part, correspondingly pejorative." However explicitly belletristic writers have seized on the theme of Wagnerian intoxication, it has been stubbornly ignored by science, perhaps in keeping with the idea that the left (or "rational") half of the brain is not supposed to know what the right (or "emotional") half can feel .....

“In the case of Wagner`s works, the aesthetic taboo bound up with musical ecstasy must have combined with the moral taboo associated with the ecstasy of sexual love to produce a particularly unassailable barrier, so that only in the subculture of nonprofessional musical audiences has justice been done to the eroticizing effect of Wagner`s music in the form of a more or less self-evident open secret ..... Bernard Shaw admitted in *The Perfect Wagnerite* , first published in 1898, that Wagner hadfollowed back "poetic love" to its "alleged

origin in sexual passion, the emotional phenomena of which he has expressed in music with a frankness and forcible naturalism which would possibly have scandalized Shelley. The love duet in the first act of *The Valkyries* is brought to a point at which the conventions of our society demand the precipitate fall of the curtain; whilst the prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* is ..... an astonishingly intense and faithful translation into music of the emotions which accompany the union of a pair of lovers." Christian von Ehrenfels ..... remembered now only for having coined the term "Gestalt quality", was himself an advocate of sexual reform who saw in Wagner "the most powerful eroticist yet produced by Mother Earth" .....

"While working on the score of *Tristan* , Wagner himself had written these half-joking but also perhaps half-serious lines to Mathilde Wesendonck: "Child! This *Tristan* is turning into something *terrible* ! This final act!!!..... I fear the opera will be banned ..... (it) will be bound to drive people mad ..... ""(70)

These comments speak volumes about the creative-ecstatic side of shamanism, its continuity into modern European art, and especially in Wagner; and yet its denial by the very social establishment that turned the worship of Wagner`s music into a cult. This schizophrenia of western civilization - on the one hand *needing* visionary-erotic ecstasy, on the other hand condemning and denying it – is part of western culture`s libidinal repression, its habitual separation of fleshly from spiritual experience, and its consequent fear of a `return of the repressed`. Ernst Bloch speaks thus of music`s evolution in Western `Christian` Civilization, which has created profound dualisms between heaven and hell, body and soul, nature and spirit:

"Even today we find with all savage tribes an interchanging, mysterious whirling, and there is perhaps no significant difference between this and the dancing of dervishes or David`s dance in front of the Ark. This rotating is not only physically intoxicating as representations of hunting, desire and convulsive movements of various kinds, but is moreover of an altogether stellar character. The dancing dervishes are secretly participating in the dance of the houris, indeed of the angels, in a round-dance and spinning around their own axis until spasms, swooning and sidereal ecstasy set in. For the houris are regarded as the spirits of the stars that control destinies. By thrusting himself into this imitative rotating, the dervish seeks to conform to the constellations, to absorb and to draw down upon himself the efflux of the *primus agens* around which the constellations revolve and whose eternal splendour is most directly beheld by the stars. Thus the dancing dervish would, as ibn Tofail has explained, undertake the

various types of rotating movement as a duty. Even Dionysius the Areopagite praised the rotating motion of the soul as its withdrawal into itself, no longer in order to copy the circle of the starry spirits in the revolution of the heavenly spheres, to be sure, but rather - with the beginning of the divorce from all Dionysian or Mithraic ecstasy - in order for the soul to withdraw in a cyclical motion into its own ground `s beauty and goodness. So in the end, any outward convulsion was rejected as pagan by the early Christian communities. That is to say, the singing whichaccompanied the dancing survived as a religious stimulant; but just as the lascivious sound of musical instruments was abhorrent, so too did the vigorously and variously divided measures of the ancient dance seem at odds with the still waters of the Christian temperament. This gave rise to the time-change of the chorale, which was merely suggested harmonically - anti-pagan in its total lack of tension, unless we already claim to find a tension in the calmest of motions towards the tonic."(7l)

This partly explains why modern western civilization has so intensified the contradictions in the experience of, and in the receptions to, the artist-shaman, which are common in some degree to all cultures. At their core they involve simultaneously both a loving awe and a marginalizing hostility. Modern western civilization`s fear and suspicion of ecstatic flight is common to traditional religious moral puritanism, to rationalism, to bourgeois conformism, and to left-wing and feminist orientations that claim it is the harbinger of fascism or the domination of women. These attitudes mirror Plato`s banishment of poetry and Phrygian music - which was especially wild, ecstatic, or tragically intense - from his Republic, lest they disturb its totalitarian hierarchy and the rule of reason.

The shamanistic power of Wagner`s music need not have become part of the process of Hitler`s black occult magic, or evil psychic force, any more than Nietszche`s celebration of the Dionysian had any necessary proto-fascist implication. As with any Amazonian shaman, or the twentieth century Surrealist painter Max Ernst, the good intentions of a strong visionary lead him through all kinds of involutions and strange experiences. Though he will avoid the Evil Presence, he has to know it. Anyone but a madman chooses not to raise it up and ride on it, fully knowing it will destroy him and everything around him. However, his techniques *can* be appropriated by a mere black magician. The relationship between Wagner and Hitler (who explicitly boasted he had created his own religion out of *Parsifal*), may be somewhat analogous to this.

The magical, bewitched, and bewitching aspects in the experience of the music of *Parsifal* - especially Klingsor`s and Kundry`s - goes far beyond, in subtlety of

content – in ambiguity, enigma, contradiction - the themes of the plot, as does the experience of anguish and agony (especially in Amfortas` music) go far beyond the reasons for it as provided in the mythical plot. Generally, the depths of suffering, grief, joy, stoical determination, love, erotic desire, and of sheer wild, delirious, intense mystery of life, and of unrestrainable yearning and aspiration for an Ideal, wholly outsoar the dramatic plot and much of the libretto - that is, the words as bearers of meaning rather than of sound, resonance, or poetic association. The world of medieval Knights of the Grail does not provide a strong or convincing enough mythical metaphor for this greatest of all dramas-in-music, - a drama that grasps the very core, and outermost wisps of fantasy, in human existence.

Absolutely, *Parsifal* listened to with the eyes shut (as Nietzsche would listen to *Tristan*) is the great *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but not quite in the way Wagner intended consciously. It unites music, word, and vision - the vision of the inner imagination being far greater than can be created on a stage. Perhaps Wagner`s belated wish for an 'invisible stage' reflected a dawning of awareness of this in his mind, as did his expressed intention of writing a symphony in the last year of his life. The unity of music, word, and vision in Wagner (especially *Parsifal*), is a recreation not only of ancient Athenian artistic unity – in tragic drama, poetry, music, and ritual - but of primordial shamanism, such as that practised by the Yaminahua in the rainforests of eastern Peru. The Yaminahua chant their magic incantations, and with eyes closed they focus on the inner hallucinogenic visions of spirits and ancestors brought into being by the ayahuasca and shaped with the shaman`s guidance. The essence of their culture is all here - myth, cosmology, magic - in magic word, music, and inner vision.

It was Nietzsche`s great insight that although Wagner may have thought his musical creativity followed from the text, plot, or idea of his music dramas, in fact it was autonomous of it. Other writers on Wagner have also believed that the music was in his mind before the libretto. Wagner may have experienced on the conscious level, for example, the idea of the 'death of Siegfried' as the source of that unbelievable music, but actually it has its origins somewhere far more powerful, in the *Urgrund*, the 'indicipherable', deeper than the Will. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche talks of the subject of lyric and tragic poetry as the 'Ground of Being', and perhaps this is equally applicable to Wagner`s music. Take the opening of *Das Rheingold* for example - deep in dark water, amniotic fluid, primordial cosmic bubbles of light. Likewise we can say - though Nietzsche does not seem to have seen this due perhaps to his growing disgust with Wagner *in toto* – that the latter`s music does not rely upon, does not need, his fatuous and

odious ideologies of Germanic Aryanism or anti-semitism. Generally, the reason that a 'bourgeois artist`s' creative being can be in such contradiction with his conscious self-reflection, is well explained by Lukács in his *The Age of Goethe*:

" ..... critical processing must proceed on two levels: the historical and the systematic-aesthetic. It is precisely in his immediate artistic work that it is almost impossible for the bourgeois artist, even if he has a very high level of awareness, to see really clearly the historical basis of the problems he poses. The material that he draws from contemporary life is defined and conditioned in a particular way, and he himself is born into a definite tradition of formulating aesthetic questions. Regardless of whether his attitude to this material and this aesthetic tradition is positive or negative, he attempts to find his way in this complex situation without being really clear about the truly decisive social categories that determine both, and in a great many cases without even striving for such clarity..... (We) must learn to analyse this relationship conceptually and to obtain both a historical and critically systematic distance with respect to the views of great artists about their own work."(72)

Wagner`s anti-semitic ideologies cannot be denied even in the ideas of his music dramas, but that does not mean they are actually implicated in his music. And though disturbing, this fact is not really so surprising. Do we not assume that the sculpture of Praxiteles, or the poetry of Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Euripides or Sophocles have an existence independent of belief in the Olympian gods or Greek racial superiority? That the painting of Leonardo da Vinci transcends Christianity as the music of Schostakovitch - though forever 'Socialist' in some ultimate, true sense - outsoars any miserable compromise with Stalinism? But of course it is the recentness of Wagner by contrast with the ancient Greeks, and the horrible implications of anti-semitism after Wagner`s time, that makes the moral contradiction between his philosophical consciousness and his creative being seem so dire.

It is the Wagner who will not compromise artistically before those with power, nor before the Philistines or anyone else; who will express his feelings, be himself wholly and fully wherever that may lead, however strange the emotional states, moods, and experiences he is takeninto; who will push his experience to the utmost shattering intensity, feel up to the hilt, be what he cannot help but be (artistically) in spite of the privations, the suffering, the persecution this causes him - this is the Wagner who is Nietzschean, who in spite of any conscious capacity for suffering" (Nietzsche`s characterization of the Greeks in *The Birth of Tragedy*), because he so totally and deeply says Yes to life, and is able to take

all the joys and woes, as they are all "entwined in love" (Nietzsche`s expression in *Ecce Homo*). This is Wagner the artist-creator-shaman, like Shakespeare of the Sonnets who loves totally, eternally; despite all searing pain, immovably, and who learns of the dark dualities of erotic and metaphysical truth; and who like Shelley speaks of " .....that best philosophy, whose taste/Makes this philosophies of pessimism or anything else, is one who has an "exquisite cold common hell, our life, a doom/As glorious as a fiery martyrdom" (in *Epipsychidion*).

In fact, as Dahlhaus shows, Wagner`s and Nietzsche`s views came to coincide ultimately, though their fatuously stubborn and childish natures prevented them from recognizing (or admitting) this, preferring instead to remonstrate as if they wholly diverged - perhaps due to personal resentments between them. They both came to disagree with the ideal of a 'total artwork', the idea that an art which united all the media (poetry, music, drama, movement, the plastic arts), and appealed to all the aesthetic senses simultaneously, 'synaesthetically', would be the greatest art; and would be the heir to the highest achievements of mankind from Athenian tragedy to Beethoven`s Ninth Symphony. They both realized that if opera or music drama was great - Wagner`s or anyone else`s - it was the music that was great, and the plot, text, words, idea, drama, etc. in it were only the occasion for the great ('divine') music; that these must be good enough to allow the composer`s genius to fly, but that they were not equal partners either in the psychological chronology of creation (Nietzsche emphasizes that this is so regardless of how the composer thinks he creates), or in terms of metaphysical priority. The right hemisphere - the natural realm of music and intuition - overtakes the left, the sphere of linguistic meaning, turning words into a species of musical sound.

In fact, even if a great 'total art work' *were* possible - and none has yet been created; those that exist have been trivial - Wagner did not create any. His librettos work as very powerful ingredients in his music, as words entering music, but they could not be considered great works of literature in their own right. Wagner was no genius in stage-design or theatrical direction; whilst the plots, the philosophical conceptions, even the theatrical drama of his work - though often good, and always an effective leaven for his *musical* genius - are not a patch on his music. The drama of his works is *in* the music. Wagner was no Homer, or Shakespeare, nor a Brecht or Pirandello. He was only above or at the average in these pursuits. It is only as a composer of music that Wagner is as great as any great artist the world has so far produced: utterly unique, extraordinary, a spirit of the universe beyond normal understanding. Creator of an heroic beauty quite astounding, shattering, unsurpassable, and ultimately

incomprehensible. The music is utterly beyond any philosophy. It is infinite, absolute, as Wagner himself described it (in this at least he was correct): 'divine.'

In actual fact it is clear that Wagner moved toward an aesthetic of 'absolute' music at the end of his life, as did Nietzsche, and away from either 'music drama' or 'total artwork' ideas. As John Deathridge writes: "The idea of musical autonomy within a musical-dramatic work, too, is clearly part of the philosophy of the composer of Parsifal, who had become disappointed with the theatre and whose ambition to write symphonies increasingly came to dominate his ideas on music and aesthetics in his last years."(73)

Deathridge considers that the musicologist Alfred Lorenz`s "attempt to prove that Wagner was the exact opposite of the 'actor' Nietzsche accused him of being was a landmark not only in Wagner research but also in the history of music analysis ..... The crux of Lorenz`s argument was the claim that Wagner`s dramas are coherent musical structures that have to do neither with operatic devices nor with the mechanical application to a text of leitmotifs that creates something anarchic and entirely arbitrary. Using an array of graphs and tables that presented Wagner`s music principally in terms of spatial analogies, Lorenz set out to dislodge the criticism implicit in Nietzsche`s shrewd epithets. According to Lorenz, Wagner was neither a superficial *histrio* masquerading as Beethoven`s successor nor a failed opera composer whose music was shallow and formless. Rather he was a master of minutely organized musical edifices of astounding formal complexity 'relentlessly saturated with the flow of symphonic argument' ..... Lorenz believed that he had successfully refuted the reproach of formlessness which Hanslick had leveled at Wagner by constructing immaculate tables demonstrating the huge, formal expanses of the music dramas ..... and tended to a mystical interpretation of Wagner`s music that ignored its roots in operatic tradition ..... Lorenz (supported) the later Wagner`s view of his works, which, unlike *Opera and Drama*, uses the authority of Schopenhauer to give greater weight to the role of music in his dramas than to their other components."(74)

Thus Wagner gradually moved away from his early view as expressed *in Opera and Drama*, in which the extramusical, ideological, and historical contexts and significances of his works are made paramount, towards one where that which he had earlier eschewed as 'absolute' is central. It is in a sense just as well, if indeed Susan Sontag is correct, that "few puzzle anymore, in the way generations of Wagner lovers and Wagner fearers did, about what Wagner`s operas *mean*."(75)

Deathridge considers some of the twists and turns in critical understanding of the relationship between 'meaning' and the 'absolute' quality of Wagner`s music:

"The doctrinal views of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, for instance, were not shared by independent minds that had difficulty in accepting the narrowly defined Bayreuthian interpretation of Wagner`s works. Indeed, many critics and admirers felt compelled to raise the question of meaning as an issue in itself, or to invent strategies that skirted it altogether. Nietzsche, who sensed 'the apologetic desire' in the religion of redemption and 'the truly systematic totality of the Wagnerian music drama' (Adorno), tried to expose the ideological character of Wagner`s work by elevating the Wagner 'case' to the level of a historical and artistic catastrophe. Lorenz, a Bayreuthian, certainly, but no leitmotif-hunting Wagnerite, was able to trace what he claimed to be vast and intricate formal patterns in the dramas only by rigorously separating form from content. Paul Bekker (1924) even managed to write an entire book based on a single esthetic concept, 'the art of expression' (*Ausdruckskunst*), without seriously asking what it was that Wagner was supposed to have been expressing. Cleansing Wagner from contamination with the ideology of the Third Reich also required some spectacular critical somersaults, especially in postwar Bayreuth. Wieland Wagner spoke of 'the clearing way of old lumber' (*Entrumpelung*), producing stage pictures bereft of their 'reactionary' ethos - and, as skeptics were prone to add, most of their content as well."(76)

These examples reaffirm or underline that Wagner`s music is better listened to without the visual theatre - "closing the eyes" as Nietzsche said - since either we get the 'old lumber' or there is no content at all to the stage production; to repeat, the real drama of Wagner`s supreme art is actually in the music. As a further example of how Wagner`s music transcends the text, Deathridge cites Dahlhaus:

"'The categories of 'progressive' and 'conservative'," Dahlhaus writes, "become rather confused when applied to Wagner, with musical factors contradicting dramatic situations ..... It is the 'villains', the 'antis', Venus in Tannhauser, Otrud in Lohengrin and Beckmesser in Meistersinger, who are presented in exploratory and adventurous musical language ..... On the other hand Syberberg`s film of *Parsifal* is consciously overloaded with symbols on different levels of meaning, almost as if he were agreeing with the idea that the work is little more than an empty space to be filled with cultural detritus. On the other hand, without resorting to the rigid absolutes of the Old Bayreuthians or the neutral abstractions of New Bayreuth, he sets as his goal nothing less than obtaining our undivided attention to, and passionate involvement with, the work of art itself - a

quintessentially Wagnerian claim, as Sontag notes, that "manages to perpetuate in a melancholy, attenuated form something of Wagner`s notions of art as therapy, as redemption and catharsis.""

Wagner converges with the worlds of shamanism and of Attic tragic drama, and the meaning of his music is infinite, as is the meaning of all great music. The discussion above supports the idea that as in shamanistic wandering visions, in really 'absolute' music listeners can project their own meanings, just as Wagner had *his* own *conscious* meanings for his music. But the music itself transcends all constraining intellectual meaning, coming as it does from the individual and collective unconscious, the Nietzschean cosmic Ground of Being, or the Indicipherable. Ideology itself cannot exist in music, even if ideology may have inspired or influenced the creator of the music.

Equally, though Wagner`s ideas about Myth are very profound, his *music* is independent even of them, though he tapped his perceptions concerning myth creatively - his recreation of the essential spirit of Greek drama is real, his ideas here were fertile. The *Ring* really is modern Aeschylus. But his music transcends his words as *poetry*, they are swept up into the music to become pure sound, as a part of the total pure sound.

VII

As art and all other cultural products in bourgeois society become commodities, so the artist becomes dependent on a fickle, unpredictable market precisely as he or she becomes emancipated. The Renaissance brings into being the 'independent-minded' artist, confident in expressing his unique aesthetic vision which is recognized by his public as his own, but as his serf-like relation to his patron declines, so does his material and psychological security. There is no longer a traditional style, shared form, or expected aesthetic mood that he can assume hisaudience will recognize and appreciate, and he himself have faith and conviction in. Now he must innovate, create ahead of existing taste, but he cannot rely on an audience`s subtlety or ability to recognize depth.

Henceforth he may be a millionaire or destitute, famous and celebrated or unknown and wretched. He may be admired as a cult figure or despised as a useless parasite or vagrant. From Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, and Raphael who signify the first archetypes of the artist in the modern world, to Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison or Jimi Hendrix, the same cluster of experiences is to be found. But this artist of the bourgeois world is but the modern variant of the shaman - the creative-mystic visionary who has always been loved, needed, held in awe even as he or she is feared, resented, exiled or deliberately ignored.

A primordial resentment and envy of the shaman`s power, and of the awe and attraction he provokes in others, always lurks behind the adulation of the artist in modern society, taking the forms of reactionary-conservatism or Marxist ideology, of puritanical, moralistic feminism or rationalistic-cynical criticism, whether from the ruling establishment or its supposedly radical opposition.

This ambiguity in the social position of the artist/shaman is well exemplified in the history of classical music, that extraordinarily paradoxical product of western bourgeois civilization, that ordering of raw sound into artificiality as Christopher Small(77) depicts it - that hierarchical construction of tonality, melody, and structure-in-development, which begins, grows, and develops in time, moving through conflicts and tensions to climaxes and resolutions, conclusions; until the chromaticism and dissonance of late nineteenth-century composers, especially Wagner, pushed tonality, melody, and developmental structure to their extremes,

allowing their dissolution and opening up the possibility of a new kind of atonal, ‘modern’ music.

Is classical music in any meaningful sense aristocratic or bourgeois music, as it is sometimes called? From J.S. Bach - church organist and school choir master, to Haydn - virtual busker until taken up as court musician to Count Esterhazy, to Mozart - born into a family of travelling musicians and never able to find either a satisfactory post among the aristocracy or maintain continuous financial success among the new bourgeois audience in the Vienna of his day; to Beethoven who rails at the aristocracy: "Princes will come and go, but there is only one Beethoven", and who, though managing quite well financially, always felt a marginalized, misunderstood outsider, angry and rebellious toward established society; to Wagner who becomes obsessed with feeling he is an exile within philistine bourgeois civilization: classical composers occupied a strange position within European society. They had to appeal to some minimal extent to monarchs, or the aristocracy, or the Church, or the bourgeoisie, in order to survive so they could create: a composer needs an orchestra and an audience, unlike a writer or painter who can sometimes survive in bohemian isolation, at least for a while. It is very striking how often the ‘great’ composers have not been strongly liked by their patron classes - the immortal remark of Emperor Joseph: "Too many notes, Mozart!" is an emblem of this.

It is a cliché of Western culture that the ‘greatness’ of composers is only recognized by posterity. J.S. Bach`s reputation was far lower in his lifetime than that of his contemporary, Telemann (whom Frederick the Great presented as an example of greatness for Bach to emulate), and Bach remained little known until Mendelsohn`s ‘rediscovery’ of him in the nineteenth century. Salieri and Kozeluch and a dozen other composers were more ‘successful’ than Mozart in his lifetime, though they subsequently fell into obscurity. Long periods were required for Schubert, Bruckner, or Mahler to be properly regarded. The early part of Wagner`s career is an archetypal demonstration of extraordinary greatness notbeing appreciated. A performance of *Tannhauser* in Paris in 1861 was brought to a premature end by booing and jeering. As the curtain came down Niemann, the German tenor, was seen shaking his fist at the audience, tears of rage and frustration in his eyes.(78) How the later acceptance of Wagner, in the kitchy *volkisch* pseudo-grandeur of Bayreuth, degrades this image of the earlier bold, revolutionary, excluded, but noble artist!

Yet the ‘great’ composers never came from the ruling classes they had to appeal to, at least to a minimal extent. When Mozart was in the employment of

Archbishop Colloredo "music ..... was something to be delivered, an ever-ready product from a socially inferior servant whose seat at the domestics` table was a bit above those of the kitchen staff."(79) He was not even a member of the Viennese Society of Composers when he died: his music was too passionate, intense, and difficult for his patrons, ("the irrational and incomprehensible element, the 'dark' emotional content of his works, irritated many of his contemporaries"(80), though some recognized its greatness. In his last few years, he left them behind entirely - unintentionally, but with full awareness, quite unable to do otherwise - in their bewilderment, shallowness, and resentment towards his unorthodox, socially critical, even demonic world of imagination.

The extraordinary 'tradition' - of Bach, Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, Verdi, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner, Mahler, Puccini, Richard Strauss, Schostakovitch: though we could add other names, this shortlist grasps the main constellation of astonishment, both 'timeless' and also located in specific social-historical contexts - holds a very odd position within Western European civilization indeed. The above list represents a strange band of social misfits - more so really than an equivalent list of 'great' painters or writers of post-Renaissance Europe, even though the latter might appear to be more archetypically rebels and exiles. Their musical impulses and inspiration came very often from the music of the popular classes, or of marginalized outsider groups like gypsies; their sentiments, experiences, ideas, and attitudes tended likewise to be unusual or unconventional from the standpoint of the 'respectable' establishment. Mozart`s life-predicament seems to epitomize the enigma most perfectly, and ultimately, incomprehensibly. The final words from two of the finest biographies of Mozart, both masterpieces in their own rights, focus on this phenomenon. This is Alfred Einstein:

"Mozart's music, which to so many of his contemporaries still seemed to have the brittleness of clay, has long since been transformed into gold, gleaming in the light, though it takes on a different luster for each new generation..... No earthly remains of Mozart survived save a few wretched portraits, no two of which are alike; the fact that all the reproductions of his death-mask, which would have shown him as he really was, have crumbled to bits seems symbolic. It is as though the world-spirit wished to show that here is pure sound, conforming to a weightless cosmos, triumphant over all chaotic earthliness, spirit of the world-spirit."(81)

This is Wolfgang Hildesheimer:

"Thus died Mozart, perhaps the greatest genius in recorded human history. We feel no qualms in using the sentimental cliche ..... Impoverished, broken (our examination obliges us to retain this cliche, too), he "leaned his head against the wall" (a dubious recollection of the factotum Joseph Deiner, whose presence has not been verified) and left his world, which, to the end, consisted only of his city, the scene of his futile efforts..... it favoured inferior musicians..... True to the rules of tragedy, the rescue came too late.

"In all likelihood, the caesura of his death did not even disturb Mozart`s most intimate circle, and no one suspected, on December 6, 1791, when the fragile, burned-out body was lowered into a shabby grave, that the mortal remains of an inconceivably great mind were being laid to rest - an unearned gift to humanity, nature`s unique, unmatched, and probably unmatchable work of art."(82)

'Great art' has been in opposition to, crushed by, the status quo of Western Civilization: it is not the cream from it, and neither expresses nor represents its essence. There is no 'canon' of 'great' artists, writers, or composers. There are great artists, writers, and composers, some of them buried by prejudices of class, sex, nationalism, or ethnocentricity, who should be unburied, resurrected, and refound. Those who have been considered great for centuries by the official agencies of the dominant civilization should be re-scrutinized, and if some of them turn out not to be so marvellous, then the 'emperor`s clothes' should be taken off them. But these circumstances apply to few: Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Max Ernst; or Bach, Mozart, Wagner, Schostakovitch; or Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Shelley, are 'there' for good reasons. What needs to be asked is: how has the bourgeois, white European, predominantly male cultural establishment recognized them, when their art has been so desperately against their dominant civilization`s norms? Though the powerful have created cults around them, mystifying them in order to assert and maintain their power, why have they latched upon these, as Mrs. Thatcher will talk of Shakespeare, even when they represent the very opposite of their philistine, chauvinistic, narrow, hateful outlooks? They could have picked on figures as miserable as they themselves; why do they choose great artists? In order perhaps, to innoculate people against their subversive meaning; or because some of them, perhaps the minority within the dominant groups - bourgeoisie, Europeans, men etc. - feel the wildness and truth of the Mona Lisa, La Boheme, "My love is red as a red red rose", in spite of the normality they feel constrained to live by; and that is the point! The magic of truth penetrates those who have ears and eyes to see or hear, in spite of inauspicious circumstances. Marxists - from Marx and Engels themselves, to Plekhanov, to Arnold Hauser - have claimed that

bourgeois art, music, and literary critics and aestheticians, have considered the right artists significant, but for the wrong reasons. They, the Marxists, were right, but again perhaps for the wrong reasons. Perhaps a small proportion of the dominant groups have always hugged onto a recognition of truth in art - since social consciousness is not wholly determined by social being - and having power and influence, have ensured that Shelley - Shelley for god`s sake! - is part of the ‘canon’!

An extraordinarily complex and contradictory set of ideas crowd around the idea of a 'great tradition', or 'canon', of major art, music, and literature from any civilization. With respect to Western Civilization, the notion is often associated with conservatism, cultural chauvinism, Eurocentrism, and a political commitment toward the status quo ; but although those relationships do hold in some cultural contexts, they are by no means the only relationships of meaning possible. As with 'tradition' in ancient Greek, Chinese, or other civilizations, the Western 'tradition' is often invoked in the name of a higher humanity, of human decency in thought and conduct, of 'civilized values' which sometimes include equal rights, universal justice, or moral rectitude that resists corruption from greed, lust for power, or cruelty.

Sometimes the imagined utopia of the 'tradition' is set in the past, as for so-called 'romantic anti-capitalist conservatism'; at others the radical alternative to present reality or the apparently dominant tendencies of the present exists in the future, after a revolutionary transformation. But in Western Civilization there are many moments where art - whether conservatively or radically conceived - is aspiritual bulwark against chauvinism, barbarism, injustice, oppression, commercialism, or human devaluation, and a force for the magical rejuvenation of beauty in life. On this level the da-daist, anti-art character of Surrealism takes its stand with the values of the gentile New England movement for moral and artistic improvement in late nineteenth century America. If the Surrealists took inspiration from the statues of Easter Island, the Bostonians took it from the Indian cultures of the American Southwest. For Sylvester Baxter and his circle in the l880`s, an understanding of Zuni culture allowed a 'universal bond of brotherhood' to be established, and a fundamental spiritual unity of mankind to become manifest.

In the contemporary global context there is no need for the cultural values of respect for a 'tradition' to be in conflict with, for example, values of cultural pluralism and difference. It is absurd for there to be an antagonism between, or for there to be a necessity to choose between, the study of Dante or Rigoberta Menchu.

There is a sense in which the rebellion against all oppression and human devaluation, is always in the name - or spirit - of a timeless, or primordial quality of experience, rich and ultimate in its unquantifiable and absolute nature, that could be called the shamanistic spiritual imagination. Whether ideologically, i.e. in terms of the philosophy of history, its flowering lay in the past, lies in the future, or is the essence of the present - i.e. whether it is viewed conservatively, complacently, or radically; optimistically or melancholically - the valuation of 'great art' should entail valuation of the universal character of humanity, celebrated through an infinite cultural diversity, both synchronically and diachronically. For just as equality among diverse cultural identities within a single, all-embracing humanity is a supreme socio-political value, so recognition and imaginative opening up to the great art of all times and places, all cultures, periods, and kinds of individual creator, is a supreme aesthetic value. Aesthetic incommensurability without hierarchy; political equality of value in difference; both within a unitary humanity:

" .... the unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but in its spiritual history, which has everywhere unfolded in the manner of a single symphony, with its themes announced, developed, amplified and turned about, distorted, reasserted, and, today, in a grand *fortissimo* of all sections sounding together, irresistibly advancing to some kind of mighty climax, out of which the next great movement will emerge. And I can see no reason why anyone should suppose that in the future the same motifs already heard will not be sounding still - in new relationships indeed, but ever the same motifs."(83)

The 'Leavisite problem', of whether there is or can be acommon culture in modern society, whether Literature can speak to all as a shaman can speak to all in his community, or an ancient tragedian could speak to all Athenians; or whether the 'false prophets' rather than the visionaries have the majority`s attention, is a very real one. The answers surely do not lie in Leavis`s fetishization, canonization, and reification of 'the tradition', any more than they lie in Lukács`s Marxist calculation as to what is an appropriate aesthetic for Revolutionary Socialism, or in André Breton`s orthodoxy of anarchic imagination (as for example in Breton and Trotsky`s *Manifesto for an Independent Art* !). There is no theoretical answer to this problem. Rather, as Marx puts it in the *Theses on Feuerbach*," mankind must prove the this-sidedness of his thought in practice".

A crucial point is that in former societies, though the shaman or poet may have demanded change, he was still of his society, in a paradoxical sense reaffirming

it. But in Modern Civilization, he or she is crushed by the hierarchical pyramid; intrinsically (and this refers to the meaning of his imagination`s products, whether he understands it or not) he is not at the pinnacle, but panting from the bottom for its radical overhaul.

Sociology can explain how particular social and institutional contexts have given rise to specific genres and forms - such as the Symphony in central Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but it cannot explain the extraordinary, beyond-this-world quality of Beethoven`s or Schubert`s Ninth Symphonies. The sociology of art can explain the genres, forms, and to an extent the intellectual contents of artworks in terms of social processes - class, gender, and other institutional structures - but not completely, if at all, the peculiar experiential magic of them, which is what distinguishes the few that are 'great' from the many others that may be similar in terms of the socially structured genres, forms, contents etc. A real 'political' question is: how have 'great' works become accepted by the ruling establishment, when their meanings so transcend, or subvert, its values and practices; this involves processes of incorporation, co-opting, enclosing within other meaning systems, and concealment of great works, without banishing them, as banishment is difficult to sustain over the long term, since there are always a few people, even at the heart of the Establishment, who can appreciate their value in spite of their experiential meanings being oppositional to their own 'interests', as narrowly conceived within simplistic versions of Marxism or feminism.

Thus 'classical music' is not well understood as the dominant music of bourgeois civilization`s ruling class, in a mechanical 'base and superstructure' sense; nor as 'male music' within a rigid feminism, nor as 'white music'.

In the immaculate, miraculous music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, or Wagner, or in the inexplicable poetic power and beauty of Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, or Shelley, the spontaneity of improvised 'folk' music or of oral poetic traditions is maintained. It is pointless to contrast the genius of great written work with that of the finest improvisatory traditions, either to the advantage of 'elitist', 'formalized' aesthetic values or to the inverted snobbery of preferring unwritten music and poetry. The greatest productions of the human spirit are in both, according to the context in which they were created: it is the greatness of meaning, feeling, and thought that is important in each case, which has found its appropriate form - written or improvisatory as the case may be. And anyway, the contrast is not absolute. A great symphony or quintet is an infinite mirror, or lake, susceptible to limitless interpretations; whilst 'folk' or

oral traditions have their rules, conventions, and formalities. One need not be deflected from an insistence that it *is* indeed possible to speak of a great Yaminahua shaman, of Jimmi Hendrix, and of Schubert, in the same context.

Art is the cry of distress from those who experience, or echo, the fate of mankind inside themselves - thus thought Arnold Schoenberg. ("The pleasures and pains of the species must become his own", to borrow Shelley`s phrase.) His circle in Vienna were archetypal shamans with their disciples or acolytes: rejected, misunderstood, marginalized, even hated; but not ignored - their existence was very much noticed. The ignored shaman is much worse off than one who is hated and rejected; for hatred and rejection are often indications that in time he or she will be recognized; being ignored spells nothing for the future. Schoenberg sounded the reality of his time and prophecied its immediate future: the Viennese public knew that instantly and unconsciously, but did not want to accept it - consciously. That is quite different from a total lack of recognition, which provokes neither understanding nor the kind of violent antipathy that is a sure symptom of a repression of what the unconscious senses is true, undertaken to maintain a false psychic equilibrium.

The marginalisation of the ‘exceptional’ individual, especially the creative artist, in modern societies (as well as in some traditional societies, such as Imperial China) is a counterpoint to, or development upon, the predicament of the shaman in ‘primitive’ societies. In post-Renaissance European societies (and subsequently in neo-European and other modern societies also) it takes the form of an insensitivity to the feelings, needs, and qualitative experience of the artist (as well as the aspects of awe, resentment, envy, and hero worship) - a ‘philistine’ inability or refusal to accept his or her subjective reality, whether or not the artistic productions from this reality are accepted or not. It is this wide experience of suffering that paradoxically allows the artist-shaman to identify so well with the sufferings of others - whether individuals, particular social groups, whole societies, or all humanity.

Gradually this experience is worked into an ideology in the nineteenth century which, buttressed by the greater respect accorded to some artists and by the financial success also achieved by some, comes at times to glorify any eccentricity and condone selfishness and inconsideration towards other people. The experience of Mozart is transformed into that of Wagner. The ‘natural’ avant-garde of artists, who explore new experiences, life-styles and modes of organizing life, and come to understand the relativity of morality, the differences in the needs of individuals, and who must struggle against pettiness, moral

restrictiveness and narrow life-forms for their spiritual survival, can become debased into a cult of arrogant assertion of ‘special’ people`s special needs, which others are deemed not to have, and in the satisfaction of which others can be used as mere instrumental means (as evidenced in periods of Wagner`s life, and as formulated in some of Nietzsche`s writings).

VIII

Someone who loves Mozart`s music may read about his character, and his biography, and thereby become endeared to his personality - become sympathetic to his foibles, admiring of his kind and honourable qualities and his fortitude, and earn an affection for his absurd and superb idiosyncrasies. But no one could find him a saint, nor someone whose life in any way matched the supreme truth and beauty of his music. He was a man who harboured as it were a divine creativity in music, inside an ordinary humanity.

Perhaps this is what Shelley means when he says at one point in *A Defence of Poetry* that the poet as a man may be only of average or lower than average virtue, or may represent oppressive tendencies in history, yet his poetry may express transcendent love and freedom; at another seems to argue that a great poet will also as a man be among the wisest and happiest of men. In the second case he is recognizing that it is a real person who composes the poetry, though inspired; it does not literally float down from heaven - and in that sense the poet harbours the wisdom and beauty of his poetry. This *is* like a traditional shaman - who is inspired by spirits, forces, or muses, or is lifted by hallucinogens; yet as a shaman he is a person whose peculiar capacities allow him to fly in supreme visions of power, mercy, succour, and courage, rather as a successful hunter is a man whose skill and boldness allow him to bring succour, relief, and happiness to his community in the form of food. He himself is not the protein, the good taste, or the satisfying warmth of the food.

Mozart`s *Requiem*, Shelley`s *Epipsychidion*, and Wagner`s *Parsifal* are ultimate shamanistic artworks of modern civilization, each one outside of and above this world, yet wholly palpable at the same time. In supreme visionary flights, afterglows beyond life, we confront inexplicable power, searing and sundering intensity, spiritual light flooding and drowning with its beauty, love, forgiveness, and understanding triumphant, in a defiance and freedom that is terrifying, spine-chilling, an absolute that is never heard or read in the same way twice; these are works that one could sit in front of happily for ten years, as Vincent Van Gogh said he could have done with Rembrandt`s *The Jewish Bride*, and with only a crust of bread, bathed in ecstasy, amazement, and unearthly perfection. They are

insane recognitions of simple truth, tearing the veil from the awesome Absolute, and feel like oaths to the timeless spirit of the free stars, to the boundless moon of love.

In the *Revolt of the Patoranians* Rembrandt - rejected, reduced to nothing, yet defiant - painted a gang of rogues off the streets of Amsterdam, portraying them and their one-eyed leader in a blasphemous form that suggests the Last Supper, roughly and 'incompetently' done. This did not provide a myth that would suit the ruling class and Establishment of the new Dutch nation, though it bathed the oath of freedom in holy light. The fire of freedom and light is an ultimate oath, with swords meeting in the extreme raggle-taggle rabble, in no compromise with earth; revolt bathed in holy, celestial light. It is as Nietzsche speaks of Beethoven`s last quartets:

"(They) put to shame everything visual and the whole realm of empirical reality. In the face of the supreme deity revealing himself, the symbol no longer has any significance; indeed, it comes to be seen as an insulting externality."(84)

This reminds one of Joseph Campbell`s insistence, in *The Masks of God*, that the many and various 'masks' are not themselves God, and should never be worshipped instead of God. Just as no theology, limited by prosaic language and the spatial and temporal context of its creation, should be mistaken for the Truth about which it attempts to speak, so also the analysable and definable forms, styles, means and genres through which great art expresses ineffable mysteries should never be confused with those mysteries themselves. 'The awful shadow of some unseen Power' should not reduced to the fetishized reifications from previous experiences of its revelations, the wondrous apprehensions of older times, or other people, codified into now dead and cold systems.

Periods of dislocation, disruption, and rapid social change throw up intensive need for shamanistic visionary searching for truth, in modern society as for 'primitive' communities. Problems and anxieties provoke the need for visions, the opportunities and air of excitement and possibility stimulate the psychic creativity behind them. *Angst*, sometimes even apocalyptic horror may combine with euphoria at such times, inviting bold, adventurous visionary exploration. This is so for primitive societies struggling for cultural survival in the face of ethnocidal or assimilatory pressures from occidental society in the Amazon basin today, as it was in Europe in the Renaissance, during the Industrial Revolution, and during the heyday of the avant-garde in twentieth century western civilization. The breakdown of traditional constraints in beliefs, values, and

institutions opens up new terrains and orbits; the morass of problems experienced cry out new visions of truth behind the flux of appearances. These visions will be framed in ways that articulate variously with different class interests and experiences in a class society, but neither the class origins of the individual visionaries nor the class identifications they opt for will explain the drive behind the visions, nor envelop or wholly determine their forms, styles, and contents.

A ‘revolutionary artist’ in modern society may seek (whatever his or her class origins - and it is no more likely that he will do so because he comes from a proletarian, rather than a middle-class or bourgeois background) to express what his or her intellect and intuition lead him to formulate as the ‘ascribed consciousness’ of the revolutionary proletariat (in the senses of the term that the Marxist theorists Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann worked out). This involves values, beliefs, and aspirations orientated towards universal emancipation, social harmony, the liberated individuated personality, and a non-destructive system of social production within nature. The Marxist utopian vision of disalienation is described thus by Bertell Ollman:

"Communism is the complete return of man to himself as social (i.e. human) being - a return become conscious, and accomplished with the entire wealth of previous development. It is the positive transcendence of all estrangement, the return of man to his human, i.e. social mode of existence. In communism this breach is healed and all the elements which constitute a human being are united."(85)

However, the intellectually graspable aspects of such visions do not exhaust art, any more than the analytical intellect can wholly understand shamans` visions. Indeed the intellect does not tap very deeply at all into the greatest art. The truly visionary quality of a powerful shaman, as of a Romantic poet or a Surrealist, is unpredictable, indeterminate, and unsusceptible to complete formulation by the rational intellect; its discoveries surprise all, even their authors - leaping ahead of conscious intention or understanding - for they derive from the imagination in flight. The aesthetic-imaginative- intuitive faculty is distinct from the cognitive-conceptual-intellectual faculty, as the tradition of aesthetic thought from Kant through Marx to Lukács has well known; though these faculties fuse both in scientific/philosophical discovery and in artistic creation.

An essential paradox about ‘great’ works, about the artistic, literary and musical ‘canon’, is that they do look, sound, and seem familiar on a certain plane, as if

they represent, stand for, or are typical of traditions within European civilization - in *retrospect*. But below the surface, either if approached without already knowing them, or if approached with new innocence, stripped of supposed familiarity and open to their extraordinariness and strangeness, *The Last Supper*, *MacBeth*, or *The Magic Flute* are exceptions, are the very unusual, the counter-normal and non-exemplary, in terms of their genres and epochs. Certainly, you can hear Schubert`s Ninth Symphony and place it in the 1820s, slot it into the history of the symphony, recognize its influences and anticipations: but then if you tear away the mask, the film of familiarity, you hear an excruciatingly unique, utterly remarkable, strange, timeless and placeless, immortal work of art - a leap from normality into a rationally inexplicable alternative reality.

When Walter Benjamin wrote that "the uniqueness of the phenomena which hold sway in the cult image is more and more displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the creator or of his creative achievement"(86), he was trying to describe the secular aura that surrounds the artwork in post-Renaissance western civilization, distinguishing it from the fabric of sacred ritual or myth in which art existed in earlier traditional societies, and from the alleged disappearance of this aura from modern artworks in the twentieth century. He was describing the cult of genius, of ‘great art’ and ‘great artists’.

For some this is a realm of fetishized consciousness, to be explained away in terms of the mechanisms of ideological production in bourgeois society. But I would suggest it describes a real, concrete situation that needs neither religion nor metaphysics to support its reality (though perhaps it does require, and involve, magic). There are and have been, out of the many millions of people who have lived or live now in western, bourgeois society, a relative handful of ‘great artists’. (One may disagree with Benjamin about the disappearance of aura in the twentieth century.) If the world lost the music of the twelve greatest composers, the paintings of the twelve greatest painters, and the poetry or prose of the twelve greatest writers from these five or six centuries, it would become a dismal place. If they were saved, but all the music, painting, and literature produced by all the other composers, painters, and writers, were destroyed, that would be sad but not so desperate. This is a strange fact, but nonetheless it is true. Great art is absolutely baffling; it does indeed leap out from the historical moment of its creation; it is indeed ‘timeless’, in the ‘time of the Now’, ‘shot through with chips of Messianic time’. Benjamin`s words should not be scoffed at: he is trying to describe a truth. Great works of art are "waiting to be blasted out of history by a movement of transcendence ..... "(87) For Benjamin, writes

Leo Bersani, “without messianic time, history is always nature, unredeemed existence. The modern city and modern technology make even more visible, somewhat paradoxically, the bare, denuded aspect of nonmessianic being.”(88) Bersani sees Benjamin as reactionary and mystified: "He knew..... that our only chance for experiencing the timeless (or something we feel tempted to call the timeless) lies in a special type of receptivity to the present. So Benjamin promotes "the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop.""(89)

Perhaps however, Benjamin was right. Great art exists within the social matrix of its creation, which explains its rationally comprehensible forms and contents, but as a transcendent miracle it is inexplicable and infinite, ineffable and always new, and ever different. Embodiments of the fundamental and timeless yet moving contours of the soul, both human and cosmic, are dotted throughout the transient and contingent realities of history and society. Something created in a specific time and place becomes universally significant and communicable, as Beethoven observed when he claimed that the secret of happiness and healing would be disclosed to whomsoever divined the meaning of his music.

At the end of Mozart`s *Cosi fan Tutti*, a miraculous resolution is felt to the contradictions between human lust or passion, and loyalty; between earthliness and spirit; between the urge for adventure and the need for convention. These agonizing contradictions are situated - actually or potentially - in all human reality, whatever the social form; the conclusion to the opera is ironic, to say the least - even fatuous, containing an element of grotesque, mask-like unreality. The discovery, recognition, and understanding of terrible revelations about human feelings do not point to any distinct set of ideological principles through which these contradictions and their implications and consequent wounds could be transformed or cured in the world; indeed the understanding of such conflicts does not render us certain about their precise sources or causes: are they the consequences of particular social institutions, especially class hierarchies, or of sexism and male domination, or of nature in some sense - either human or elemental, or both? No intellectual, dogmatic, or moral parochialism comes from Mozart in the resolution. As the tragi-farce careers and hurtles to its conclusion, through the divinely ecstatic music, the glow of hope which grows up within profound pain and disillusionment has something to do with a yearning for mutual understanding, and tolerance (though it is also clear that there will, and always should, be limits to these); and in the final *Tutti* to a strange kind of all-encompassing love:

"Fortunate is the man who takes
everything for the best,
and in all events and trials
allows himself to be led by reason.
What usually makes others weep
is, for him, a source of laughter,
and in the midst of the world`s whirlwinds
he will find a lovely calm."

This 'reason' is in part the intellectual objectivity that Don Alfonso uses to justify his cynical, cruel joke, but also some deep, calm, transcending acceptance of reality which it was Mozart`s special gift to understand (though this is not a Panglossian complacency). Don Alfonso`s side-splitting "*Io crepo se non rido* " ("I'll die if I don`t laugh"), is mingled in absolutely with the supremely beautiful and tender expressions of love from Fiordiligi and Dorabella totheir supposedly departing lovers, which are nonetheless real and heartfelt for their being shown subsequently to be subvertible by absurd, misled fantasies.

The 'message' of *Cosi Fan Tutte* is no more specific than this, but it thereby resists, as does all Mozart`s work, being bound to the culture of its origins - its institutions, morals, values, or available ideas.

Such thoughts pertain to the ideas, the drama`s plot, and the characters in the opera, expressed or embodied as they are in music. Yet the beauty and truth of the music, heard as pure music (if this artificial separation be allowed for a moment), are too ineffable for purely rational explication; the experience of its textures too miraculously ambiguous, unearthly, and mercurially complex to reach in words; thus, ultimately futile attempts should not be criticized for being impressionistic or 'poetic'.

In spite of *Cosi fan Tutti* having a clear plot, 'typical' (in a Lukácsian sense) characters and situations, nevertheless Marxist and/or feminist analyses could never come up with a clear, definitive determination of 'where the opera stands' in a social class or gender sense. That is to say, any particular attempt, such as the feminist one presented by Germaine Greer in a BBC Radio talk in the late 1980s, might arrive at a position; but another feminist analysis could quite as well come up with a different one. Though certainly art can be used as an 'infinite mirror' for infinite viewers in all ages and places, the essences of such

analyses could be quite satisfactorily conveyed without reference to the work of art in question at all. This fact has always been a bewildering paradox in the history of Marxist cultural analysis also.

In spite of genuine professions of love and loyalty for their two men, both women in *Cosi fan Tutte* can very soon afterwards fall for (what they understand to be) two entirely different men. In addition to this difficulty and enigma of human emotionality (and Mozart`s subversiveness lies in making real love fickle, not merely presenting sexual infidelity), the two men are not in fact 'different'; actually they are the first two, in disguise and swapped around. Thus the women do really 'know' them, and this is a classic cross-over, partner swap. But it is the two men pretending to be men other than those they 'really' are, i.e. 'imaginary' men, that the women fall in love with. Thus there is an idea of loving an illusion, a mirage, someone in a mask or fancy dress, someone role-playing in a game or on holiday away from home: is this 'unreal', or shallow, or does it actually show that the men have 'another side' to them, which the bet brings out and displays to the women; and also that new capacities for love and passion, also 'real', are discovered in the men and the women in the new 'unreal' situation?

As well as the movements of these superimposed, dovetailing dilemmas and mysteries of human feeling and desire, the opera explores the dilemma of whether or when any of the characters are ‘sincere' or 'insincere', through music that shows alternately and simultaneously deep tragic beauty and farcical, sparkling superficiality. Is there any hope for humanity if people can be like this? 'Yes', the opera sometimes seems to answer, at other times 'no'; at others again, both 'yes' and 'no'. Finally, or again perhaps at the same time throughout, it gives out and suggests that there is no answer. We swim in this sea of unknowingness, exhilaratingly, tragically. One might say that the unspecific, yet absolute, pull towards sympathy and forgiveness, and the oceanic yearning for universal brotherhood breathed here as everywhere in Mozart, constitutes a general philosophical position, implying advocacy for a radical societal/cultural/psychological change. But it is thrown wholly into the listener`s court to decide what kinds of change are required, and in what ways to make them. This is again why such a work cannot date, cannot be ethnocentric, nor gender nor class-bound; cannot seem restricted to one man`s or one age`s or one culture`s wisdom or morality. It is one of those magical shamanistic visions - of eternal being, yet in always-new encounters - concerning which it is unlikely that human beings could ever become so wise, or so beatifically happy, that they would no longer crave its beauty, truth, and all-suffusing love; its grief, and its joy.

When Freud spoke of the magic of art he linked it with illusion. But what he said might be better received seriously, rather than sceptically:

"In only a single field of our civilization has the omnipotence of thoughts been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects - thanks to artistic illusion - just as though it was something real. People speak with justice of the "magic of art" and compare artists to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art`s sake. It worked in the service of impulses which for the most part are extinct today. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes."(90)

There seem to be extraordinary artists, whose works are like flames that do not burn in the same air as anything else, and which stand out miraculously against all other products of human endeavour, however good or noble. When such artists are looked at closely, it seems they always suffer in some excruciating way. "The Medici made me, but they also destroyed me", said Leonardo da Vinci, in a symbolic and symptomatic lament. Before the idea of the creative genius as a type had taken on its characteristic form for Western Civilization, Vasari wrote:

"The heavens often rain down the richest gifts on human beings, but sometimes they bestow with lavish abundance upon a single individual beauty, grace, and ability, so that whatever he does, every action is so divine that he distances all other men, and clearly displays how his greatness is the gift of God and not an acquirement of human art. Men saw this in Leonardo."(9l)

A work of art should not be approached (as art that is, rather than as an object of scholarly investigation - which is a legitimate but different thing) with preconceived criteria of judgement (positive or negative), grids of convention, ideas of what constitutes good practice in terms of form, style, genre, worldview etc. One needs to be open, as a child who first sees a garden of wonderful, previously unknown flowers, and is receptive to their structures, forms and colours as miraculous, sensing their unique marvels only in terms of themselves, and thus finding them infinite and capable of opening up ever different labyrinths of resonation and interior experience, worlds of thought and feeling, with each new hearing, reading, or seeing. This is to be always surprised, rather

than to have expectation confirmed by familiarity; or to be ever again terrified by the abysses of truth revealed by their opening up of the veil of familiarity.

This is why the sociological, philosophical, or even 'aesthetic' modes of understanding art delimit the power of its experience. Art to be experienced, rather than learnt from or interpreted intellectually, does not belong to specific places or times or cognitive frameworks of perception. These latter involve either 'political' or philosophical battles (concerning cultural imperialism for example), that timeless, great works of art escape from, as well as illuminate, almost as if from outside,transcendently. Though of course wholly valid in their appropriate contexts, such (political) considerations can block off creative open-mindedness and appreciation.

Thus for example, music as sound-experience cannot be ideological: would Smetana`s *Ma Vlast* evoke for us the bleeding, suffering history of Czechoslovakia if we did not know of Smetana`s patriotism and of Czech history? Would Elgar`s music evoke the green English countryside, bathed in a sunlight of unspoken sadness for her sons drowning in blood on the Somme, all by itself? If one heard such music amid a personal tragedy, or while looking at a garden in an early dawn of crystal cold light, the music might equally seem to evoke that tragic experience, or that sight.

It is dangerous and mistaken to attach ideological or even clear and specific psychological motifs to music, as the suggestibility of the mind to musical associations is 'after the event', and though a 'real' experience, is actually a phenomenon of the inherently 'infinite mirror' characteristic of all 'great art'. Parts of *Gotterdammerung* and *Parsifal* are regularly made to accompany archive film from the Third Reich, as the second movement of Beethoven`s *Eroica* symphony is attached to scenes of Dresden or Berlin in 1945. This may be 'effective', but it says nothing about the pieces of music in question beyond the fact that they are powerful, enigmatic, and intense. A mistake still often made, along with the idea that Nietzsche`s philosophy is 'proto-fascist' (I am not referring to Nietzsche`s views on democracy, war, or indeed politics in the narrow sense, which often were sources - though taken out of context - for fascist ideology, but rather the *core* of his philosophy of existence, of creativity, and of aesthetic experience), is the assumption that the 'heroic', 'Herculean', 'irrational', struggling emotional nature of particularly Beethoven or Wagner are of the same ilk as the Nazi vision of German supremacy, the *"Drang nach Ost*", etc. This is unjust, to say the least. Beethoven`s heroic qualities can far better be associated with the universal struggles of the oppressed to throw off tyranny (which is what

Beethoven himself consciously identified with), or with an internal, outwardly quiescent struggle of the soul for truth, harmony and peace through all the indefinable, indescribable (except through music, that is) reaches and depths of personal human experience.

Though not true of all, or even the majority of 'great' artists in the history of Western civilization, there is a paradigm that applies to many of them (Dante, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Bach, Mozart, Blake, and Van Gogh are some), and which may well apply to their counterparts in other civilizations too. These artists create work which is quite extraordinary, towering above most if not all other achievements of their time and place, in utterly unique and atypical, newly invented wildnesses of creative thought, feeling, and spirit (though the forms, genres, and media may be taken from available possibilities to a greater or lesser extent). These are not well appreciated, understood or liked by the immediate audiences they find; decades later, or after their lifetimes, or even centuries later their true greatness is recognized, but a strange transmogrification occurs in the psychological reception accorded to them within the hegemonic culture.

This is similar to the process that Joseph Campbell(92) describes in his treatment of the ways in which religions develop. Campbell speaks of a 'mythic seizure' that lies behind all religious revelations, which is masked and smothered-over by time with the symbols that were originally created to express the awesome, inexpressible wonder and mystery of existence. In time they become representative archetypes of 'Culture': they become absorbed and normal. The raw, subversive, bold and strange qualities of original art - indeterminate, infinite, and unique, exceptional, and peculiar - are similarly co-opted into a 'canon', a safe framework of familiarized and familiarizing perception and tame prejudice.

The difficulties surrounding the initial reception of great artworks are then either conveniently forgotten, or transformed into an *ersatz* myth of the neglected, struggling artist; their differences from the aesthetic norms of their times and places are transformed into anassumed characteristicness, the falsity of which is concealed by the fact that the numerous, really 'average' or typical products of their time and place have so often been lost or forgotten, and by the peculiar way these works are smoothed by custom into the expected, as if covered by a new 'veil of familiarity' - a veil similar to that which they originally stripped away from reality, and still do, essentially, when looked at under 'the aspect of eternity'.

The Marxian ‘base and superstructure’ conception of cultural forms allows the recognition that all artworks exist in a dialectical relation to the totality of conditions in which they are produced, received or appreciated. But it does not help to grasp the fact that many of the deeper-than-intellectual meanings - especially feelings and the kinds of cavernous, labyrinthine, and interior experiences explored in art (as opposed to many aspects of form, style, convention etc., as well as content and ‘perspective on reality’), do not necessarily belong uniquely to the time and place of the art’s creation. Rather, as infinite, enigmatic mirrors to the viewer, reader, or listener, they can be ‘timeless' and ‘placeless’.

The Marxist view - though valid within its bounds - also inclines one to see a certain kind of linear progress, or at least progression, in the history of an artistic medium or form, which suggests that any artist, poet, or composer who follows on from an historically earlier one must have ‘moved on’ artistically in some sense. But often, a point on a river’s bank that comes ‘later’ than an ‘earlier’ point for a viewer on a moving boat, is not necessarily more beautiful or profound, nor does it offer a more complete or different vista. Similarly, the miraculous visionary flight into the spirit world undertaken by an artist in any particular socio-historical context, may be most profound in its exploration of areas of experience, or in its entering of dreams, or of patterns, sounds, rhythms or textures, in ways that do not bear clear, simple, or necessary links to the specific social base or circumstance - in terms of class, ethnicity, civilization, or gender - of its creator, nor to his or her position within the chronological, sequential history of the art-form in question.

Great art is always ultimately on the side of human freedom, justice, and happiness, though what these mean varies from one time and place to another. Anna Balakian’s description of Surrealism’s vision could apply to authentic art in general:

" .... man’s lot on earth cannot be transformed merely by social legislation if the habits of mental regimentation were not broken as well. The ‘non-slavery to life’ ..... (is) only partly economic and mostly spiritual in character..... A surrealist had empathy with the victims of all kinds of enslavement but committed himself wholly to no particular program for the political or social liberation of slaves."(93)

In the modern world the shamanistic spirit in art displays sublimity in the Kantian sense - infinity, awesomeness, absolute expansiveness, or the bursting of

truth and imagination into the will for a re-integrated world, as in early nineteenth century Romantic poetry, and much early twentieth century avant-garde art or anti-art. This spirit exists in authentic aesthetic experience, but risks negation in the tendency toward a flat, death of art in the modern ‘mass media'. But the shamanistic spirit itself cannot have a ’death’, or an ‘end of history’ - whether it looks back to great art of the past and restores its power in contemporary, but ‘traditional’ forms, genre, media etc, or whether it stays alive in the revolutionary, experimental avant-garde, including its moment of negation of all Art.

IX

Unlike realist writers, poets make their home in the world of the spirit, rather as shamans (or ‘mamos’ as they are known among the Arhuaco of the Sierra Nevada in Colombia) do, through long periods of training, in order to "tune their bodies, minds, and spirits to a calling which will last their lifetime".(94) In this, the Spirit, or Muse of creative Imagination (Shelley`s “power which is seated on the throne of their own soul"(95)) transcends the particular, concrete locality of experience, though the way it flies reflects the context in which it has grown. That is, the concrete social, historical, and biographical context of a poet-shaman`s activities provides mythologies, a language, and styles from which archetypes of eternal universal moods, such as ‘moral idealism’, are distilled.

The great poets and composers of western civilization have dreamed into existence, and dreamt within, particular spirit-worlds, which are remarkable and beautiful. These exist in parallel to the civilization`s ‘real’ history – but not in any simple relation of reflection or symbiosis, so that to glorify or celebrate this world - of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, or of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley - is not a western European chauvinism, as such creators are not spokespeople of this civilization`s dominant forms of consciousness or sensibility at all. The spirit-world they inhabit - as shamans who leave behind ‘natural’ reality in flights through ‘supernatural’ reality - may not even coincide with the conscious, cognitive world even they consciously think within. This was certainly true of Wagner. What remains of Wagner after the historically and psychologically constrained aspects have fallen away, that which is transcendent, is the music. The theories, the cult phenomenon, the plots and ideas, and even the drama in the sense that Wagner intended it, are largely left behind. But the music *itself* is *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the sense of being a unity of magic word-spell, music, and vision - of an inner, imaginative or hallucinogenic kind, not one of physical movement on an external, visual stage.

The use of words in opera, and even more in Wagner`s music drama (not to be called ‘Wagnerian’ music drama, as there were no significant followers of Wagner`s specific theories, as opposed to composers who were influenced by his music, as music, i.e. his drama-in-music – including Bruckner, Mahler, Richard Strauss, Puccini, Berg and Schostakovitch, who are merely the greatest among very many), is as magic word-spells, not as purveyors of meaning. Even to read

Wagner`s librettos in German, let alone in English translation, whilst listening to the music, is to drag it down, and to break the spell. The state of entrancement does not require the listener-participant to know the literal meanings of the words at every point, and certainly not to think about, or consciously focus upon, what they mean. This is like the shaman`s chanting in native Amazonian societies, where the words are not ordinary words belonging to the group`s normal language: they are magic words, and even if they do have meanings in some language (perhaps an extinct language or one greatly changed in the present day), it is not as bearers of these meanings that they serve in magical shamanistic sessions. (The use of Latin in the Roman Catholic Mass retains this condition.) It is as sound, the very particular sound of the human voice singing German words, that the words in Wagner`s music dramas function. It is as word-spells within the overall musical sound, that they function. To 'translate' the words into a different language would be absurd, especially in Wagner but in all great opera also.

The completely different worlds and personalities of Amazonian native shamans by day, and by night - the world of practical activity and decision on the one hand, and that of hallucinatory visionary trance on the other - is echoed in the split between the realms of the real and the aesthetic in many civilizations, but especially in modern western civilization. (It also seems likely that the separation between the right and left hemispheres of Wagner`s brain was particularly strong!)

As both Shelley and Nietzsche emphasized, the 'spirit' that speaks through apoet is not that person`s ego or self. Modern neurology and psychology are groping toward a conception of consciousness and the unconscious as the experiential component of active brain-cell assemblies or circuits, which are always changing, developing, improvising. The individual`s psyche probably retains traces not only of his own society`s 'collective unconscious', but of all human history and prehistory, and indeed of all organic evolution. Could this also be true in some other sense for the inorganic evolution of the universe, as Mahler intuited in his *Third Symphony* ?

Mircea Eliade describes the Eskimo shaman thus:

"The shaman sings for a long time in 'secret language' to evoke the spirits. Falling into trance, he speaks in a high, strange voice that seems not to be his. The songs improvised during trance may reveal some of the shaman`s mystical experiences.

My body is all eyes.
Look at it! Be not afraid!
I look in all directions!

sings a shaman, no doubt referring to the mystical experience of inner light that he undergoes before entering into trance."(96)

Eliade`s fundamental observations upon the Eskimo shaman can be taken as the core of all that we are considering:

"Eskimo initiation in all cases exhibits the universal schema of initiations into mystical life: vocation, withdrawal into solitude, apprenticeship to a master, acquisition of one or more familiar spirits, symbolic ritual of death and resurrection, secret language. As we shall soon see, the ecstatic experiences of the Eskimo *angakok* include mystical flight and the journey to the depths of the sea, two exploits that are characteristic of North Asian shamanism. We also observe close relations between the Eskimo shaman and the celestial divinity or the cosmocratic god who was later substituted for him.....

"The Eskimo shaman`s principal prerogatives are healing, the undersea journey to the Mother of the Sea Beasts to ensure a plentiful supply of game, fair weather ....., and the help that he provides for sterile women. Illness is presumably caused by violation of taboos, that is, disorder in the sacred, or by the theft of the patient`s soul by one of the dead. In the former case the shaman attempts to cleanse the impurity by collective confessions; in the latter he undertakes an ecstatic journey to the sky or the depths of the sea to find the patient`s soul and bring it back to his body. (The patient`s soul is believed to travel to regions rich in all kinds of sacrality - the great cosmic regions ("Moon," "Sky"), places haunted by the dead, the sources of life ("the land of bears," as among the Greenland Eskimo)). It is always by ecstatic journeys that the *angakok* approaches Takanakapsaluk (Mother of the Sea Beasts) in the depths of the ocean or Sila in the sky. He is, besides, a specialist in magical flight. Some shamans have visited the moon, others have flown around the earth. According to the traditions, shamans fly like birds, spreading their arms as a bird does its wings. The *angakut* also know the future, make prophecies, predict atmospheric changes, and excel in magical feats."(97)

When Eskimos ritually enact the descent of a shaman into the underworld, where he meets the spirits of animals with whom he negotiates terms for the future of

them and for ‘the people’, much is demonstrated of the primordial essence of shamanism as pan-specific to humanity, as is consciousness itself. Orpheus` descent to the underworld, his taming of the animals and furies with his music, is the essence of shamanism in myth, and of the healing powers of art. The safety and well-being of ‘the people’ - which is what the name of most tribes means in their languages – is secured by the wild flights of the shaman, who dices with madness, braves terror, and risks the possibilities of insanity, torment, and death. The people need him to secure this well-being, as in all civilizations they need the achievements of art, even though they may envy, resent, fear, and often misunderstand the process. Sometimes the people come to believe the results of visionary flight - in prophecy or art - could be obtained without the dangerous adventure, the openness to the unexpected, or the voyaging beyond good and evil. They condemn the ‘bourgeois bohemian’, sneer at the ‘suffering artist’, or claim his suffering is pretence, self-indulgent, unnecessary, contingent, or avoidable. Shelley would not have drowned if there had been no storm, Van Gogh could have been treated with modern drugs, Mozart need not have fallen into crippling debt if he had been less extravagent and more realistic. Marxists have seen the boldness and suffering of the ‘exiled’ modern artist as constructed by or within the cultural superstructure by bourgeois social relations - whether they see them as reality or myth. But perhaps one is really seeing a modern form of shamanism, the essence of which is something intrinsic to human existence, as inherent to the nature of humanity as tool-making or language.

The boldness, the willingness to transgress, that are part and parcel of the shamanistic impulse to create and innovate, are both revered and envied by others. The capacity for visionary flight is necessary for society, but it gives great power to the shaman, and is thus feared by others even as they seek it out to help them in their lives. At the same time the society does not need everyone to be a visionary, indeed it could not function with more than a few people possessing these powers and for that reason too the powers are mistrusted, held in check, constrained. And if this complex of contradictory social impulses felt towards the shaman, and later in history towards the visionary artist, is common to all human societies, it becomes clear that both the conservative and radical, both the reactionary and progressive tendencies in human societies are equally omnipresent, and equally essential for survival.

Society must have the capacity to innovate psychologically and imaginatively, it must be able to change its collective psyche, its myths, its sensibilities, its thoughts andfeelings about experience - indeed change experience itself. But it

must not fall apart, change too rapidly or too totally at any given time; security rests partially upon the stability of institutions, behaviours, and thought patterns (whether these are 'good' or not). Survival is invested in continuity as well as in cultural flexibility, in the capacity to adapt and change, to experiment and be adventurous. It is in the balance between these conflicting tendencies, as in the conflicting attitudes of the majority in society towards creative imagination and its bearers and products, that human society`s capacity to survive ultimately resides.

The wild, outward-bursting flash of deep artistic creativity in modern societies is matched by the shaman`s amorality; it is seen in the dark, restless, erotic wanderings of Byron, in Van Gogh`s cutting-off of the ear that he presented to a prostitute, or in Baudelaire`s self-damnation in the brothel. Or on the contrary the wild, visionary wanderer by night may be a practical, sensible, reliable hunter and leader of his community by day, as was Schostakovitch with his black spectacles and grey suit who does not seem to break out visibly from conformity within Stalinist Russia, though his red-rimmed eyes betray his sympathy with all humanity`s suffering, even with the scorched victims of the Allied saturation bombing of Dresden, just when his own country had had forty million of its people die at the hands of the Germans. He was a shaman of all people, risking danger to himself in his universal identification, in his all-inclusive 'aesthetic-hypocratic' oath.

But in other cases the shaman-artist has separated his wildness and nonconformity in life, from those in his art, at his peril. Wordsworth decided to become 'sensible' – to forgo the love of his sister and marry respectably, to forget the revolution which in his youth had been 'very heaven' and become a Tory, to leave behind his spontaneous, Taoist pantheism in favour of Churchdom. Thereafter his poetry lost its extraordinary originality and specialness.

When Eskimos perform masked rituals to represent the shaman`s flight, they take a step beyond the Amazonian native groups who drink *ayahuasca*. The latter enter hallucinatory visions under *ayahuasca*, and due to the effects of synaesthenia, see visions as the shaman chants his magic words. The shamanistic art here is poetry and music combined, which induces its visual and psychically dramatic dimension in the retinas of all present, who keep their eyes tightly shut. Partly because one cannot move well under the influence of *ayahuasca*, and partly because the visual hallucinations are so intense, and are perfectly shaped by culture, custom, myth, expectation, and the shaman`s directions, no physical

or visual rituals are enacted. ‘The people’ merely sit around or lie on hammocks, and perform to themselves the greatest *Gesamtkunstwerk* conceivable, in and about the spirit world. The shaman galvanizes and harmonizes the individual visions of those present, into a communal magic experience of the sacred, supernatural sphere, where they see the spirits, demons, ancestors, heroes and heroines of their myths.

Nietzsche`s view of art, that it is a means to transcend suffering, to negate reality yet affirm life through entry into the aesthetic realm, is a thoroughly anthropological and pan-human idea. Only a strange modern misunderstanding - whether ‘bourgeois’ or Marxist - has allowed such experience, such entry into the aesthetic dimension, to be considered ‘escapist’. If we imagine a ‘primitive’ community, or an ancient civilization that is under attack, being conquered, or disintegrating due to economic, political, or ecological crises or disarray, we can picture an intensification of ritual, of activities involving entry into the spirit-world, as absolutely essential to any regrouping or strategic reorientation of action, thought, or feeling in the concrete, practical world of the ‘day time’, or of material everyday reality. Shamanism among Amazonian peoples bears exactly such a relationship towards threatened genocide or ethnocide, or cultural assimilation into occidental ‘civilization’. As well as informing members of the ethnic group at both the conscious and unconscious levels of the psyche, about summons up intuitive and psychic strengths to draw upon for survival, let alone success or practical transcendence.

Performances of Schostakovitch`s music in Russia before, during, and after the Second World War had a similar function and significance. If we picture the first performance of the Fifth Symphony at the height of Stalin`s Terror in 1937, when the audience wept and afterwards applauded for as long as the whole concert had lasted; or of the Seventh Symphony in Leningrad, when the Nazis were within sight of the city whose inhabitants were reduced to eating rats to avoid starvation and burning their houses to keep warm, we cannot find it difficult to imagine the import of the music both to the audiences in the concert halls and to those listening to the radio broadcasts of them. lt was shortly after the Seventh Symphony that the Red Army, as Winston Churchill put it, ‘tore the guts out of the *Wehrmacht*’.

The alternative world of the feminine supernatural, entered into by the shaman in flight, is an imaginative night-dream adjunct to the concrete day-reality of the particular society in which the shaman is esconsed, but is also a completely opposite, or distinct world. Thus in some respects it bears identifiable relations to

the pragmatic day-world it shadows, as primitive myths, cosmologies, heroes and demons echo, reflect, and reinforce the forms of life and the attitudes towards nature typical of small-scale hunter-gathering or agricultural communities, or as twentieth century avant-garde abstract or Surrealist art reflected, explored, bemoaned or celebrated the totalisation and fragmentation, or the individualised and unleashed private spheres of fantasy, in modern urban society and its isolated, privatised citizens. But in other respects these spirit-worlds are quite amazing contrasts to their societal bases, particularly inasmuch as they are not limited to the everyday social values, perceptions, and assumptions, and therefore do not register as the exclusive possessions or preserves of those societies, and are thus available for appropriation by people of other times and other social contexts. This makes possible, though not inevitable, the 'universality' of creative art, and means that concepts like 'cultural imperiaIism' and 'cultural relativism' should be deployed rather carefully when it comes, for example, to judging if Beethoven`s music is 'essentially' European, or German, or bourgeois, or male, or Nineteenth Century, rather than Universally Human, or even more-than-human.

There is in human mental activity a continuous oscillation between intuition and intellect, imagination and analysis - which in neurological terms is a movement between the alternating predominance of activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain. This alternation obviously occurs simultaneously at different rates, from every few seconds to every few days, weeks, months, even years, in an individual`s life. In religious, mystical, mythical, and poetic experiences, the immediate intuition or revelation of Godhead, of oceanic oneness, of Life, of fundamental archetypes, or of love, beauty, certainty of truth,- is followed - not always within the same individual - by systematisation. Mystical revelations and wondrous or awesome disclosures are formulated into religions (paralleled by the evolution, discussed by Max Weber in his sociology of religion, from prophecy and charisma to orthodoxy and formalised religion), and theological systems. Spontaneous, unanticipated, extraordinary insights and aesthetic perceptions, shocks and surprises are transformed from their anarchic strangeness into after-the-event theories, precepts, traditions. Some religious movements, like Chan and Zen Buddhism, have tried to avoid a transition from revelation to metaphysical speculation. Some twentieth century Western avant-garde art movements, especially Da-da, have tried to abstain from explaining creativity in terms of analytical, philosophical principles. But in the main, the process is unavoidable, and desirable, for human beings are both artistic and scientific, both spiritual and rational, necessarily for their survival.

However, the means at hand to theorize the meaning of revelatory or intuitive experience in a particular social context, may sometimes be inadequate or exceptionally poor for the task in hand, or may lag far behind the experience it is wished to interpret, in sophistication. In Amazonian and Siberian shamanism, this does not seem to be the case; there is a marvellous balance in these cultures between intensity of vision and subtelty of mythic interpretation.

But when we look at the artistic theories of Wagner, D.H.Lawrence, or T.S. Eliot we find them infinitely inferior - both ethically and in terms of their lasting explanatory value - to the products of their artistic inspirations. The same is so when we compare Mondrian`s art with his theosophical belief-system; in general, for most of modern Western Civilization`s history, aesthetic theories have been far inferior to the art produced within the same cultural contexts.

In the Romantic Movement of British poetry – in Wordsworth and Coleridge, Blake, Byron, Shelley, and Keats for example, and in some Modernist movements – from Baudelaire to Surrealism, from Impressionism to Constructivism or Brecht however, something nearer a just balance is attained. But contrast the profundity of Mozart`s music with the quality of his musical criticism! (Not that the little he practiced of the latter in his letters, is not wonderful in its own terms.) To move further back in history: compare the tragic poetry of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides with Aristotle`s theory of tragedy, profound in its limitedness though the latter is! And in general, contrast the depth of perennial astonishment to be experienced in the religious motifs, myths, poetry, and art of Ancient Egypt, Greece, and the Levant with the dogmatism, the moribund timidity, and the dull moralistic restrictiveness of most Judeo-Christian theology.

Excluded from consideration above has been the specialized development of aesthetic theory within Western philosophy from Kant to Lukács, or from Schiller (in his *Aesthetic Letters*), to the Frankfurt School. I am concerned here with the reflection upon particular aesthetic experience, usually (but not exclusively) by the actual artists themselves. In fact it is striking how subtle some specialized aesthetic theories have become over the last two centuries in the West; perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that in other civilizations from Mediterranean Antiquity to the Orient, art has been practised and its techniques etc. have been handed on through example, direct instruction, and personal apprenticeship - so that for example, the Japanese notion of *ma*, meaning the use of pausing and timing (98), had until recently been virtually unphilosophized though the concepthad been central to all the major arts and cultural forms in

Japan for centuries. The modern West has undergone an unprecedented intellectual specialization and division of labour, with the concomitant development of highly abstract metatheoretical reflections upon every sphere of life-experience and activity. The intellectual ruminations upon art in other civilizations have usually lagged far behind the greatest instances of their artistic output; but this, as argued here, is still often the case in the modern West too.

Artistic inspiration is, in the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, "in line with the open-endedness of reality, the darkness of the void which can be filled with either the joy of creation or the coldness of eternal night..... It is a 'lived moment' because, in an almost mystical fashion, the mind can experience the not-yet of the future..... as in the mystical tradition, this moment links the individual with the supra-individual, because in the darkness of the lived moment there is the possibility of encountering the objective possibility of the world - an anticipation of concrete utopia..... 'ontological anticipation', 'pre-appearance', 'anticipatory illumination' (are terms that express) Bloch`s belief that it is somehow possible to experience a kind of foreglow of future possibilities ..... Great works of art display *Vor-Schein*; they communicate a rich otherness which is both attractive and rooted in real possibilities in the world; and great images of religion have the same capacity. Only free human praxis can determine whether, to what extent and in what form *Vor-Schein* will actually become concretised."(99)

This, like the trance-flights of Eskimo shamans, is the basis of poetry, something which many see as having become progressively eroded from the consciousness of modern humanity as it has developed. This is from a piece by Pamela Constantine called *Poet `s Work*:

"The poet`s is an intelligence which should shine, not labour. His flow of thought is not from man-made springs, but from the mysterious lambent world which once glowed distantly within the consciousness of all, but which now, as a result of prevailing mechanistic thinking, remains real only to the dedicated few for whom the search for imaginative truth is crucially important: the essence of our homeland which we can only fully inhabit again by greater subtlety in our nature.

"The harsh lands of scientific attitudes are all about us - attitudes which are ironcast from the ore buried completely in earthbound thinking. To such a world, the warm, caring human being is an alien, denied access to those healing springs, to the spiritual levels of his own real nature. Of the few who intuitively recognize the existence of that realm of greater light filled with significance for the human

being, it is the poets who must hold on to the golden thread by which again glistening reminders of the finer dimensions of self can be made known to the being rooted in earth.

"The subtler levels must be reclaimed, indwelt, celebrated, if we are ever to come home and prosper as divinely-based human beings, for such is our true continuum. For many it will be a long, hard journey, not in terms of time but in terms of human endurance and suffering, to refine from years of perforced dwelling in an alien environment. For there must first come a clarification of the nature whereby the finer self may move through the hardened condition of modern humanity to bring about refinement from within..... A touching of the lost human beingness, where Love is.

"It is poet`s work. It is what poets have always done. But the task today has been made indescribably harder by centuries of deepening domination by the scientific outlook which, by its very nature, fails to take any account of human feelings, longings or destiny, and so insidiously creates a dehumanized race.

"Such poets find their sustenance in the works of their kindred of the past, who did not in their day capitulate to advancing secular dominance but continued to listen to the voice of their own being, fed by those shining springs descending from bright Uplands. A poetical clasping of hands takes place in contacting these, our peers of other times, who in inspired moments were able to perceive the beloved Land within whose greater brightness lies humanity`s real state of being.

"To that Land we must return; for the crass, cruel results of the scientific mentality so evident all around us indicate that this is the critical moment - this very moment - to dedicate ourselves to that inner movement which steadily grants a resurrection of the grounded nature to sweeter, more elevated fields of endeavour, experience and expression.

"This inner movement of the reawakening human spirit seeking out its true, more illumined ground, is the real renaissance of our kind. And it is the poet most deeply attuned to this profound, generally lost, measure of awareness who, by lonely dedication and creative application, has held to the true route of human destiny, and who must now light up the way."(100)

The author follows this with four quotations:

“We need an ecology of the soul. Without it, all our efforts to save humankind would be pointless. When science and rationality cannot help us, there is only one thing that can save us: our conscience and our moral feelings."

Mikail Gorbachev

Poets are the Hierophants of an unapprehended Inspiration, compelled to serve the power which is seated in the throne of their own soul." Shelley

"Poets alone have lived. We but exist.” Sisirkumar Ghose

"Let a man in a garret burn with enough intensity and he will set fire to the world." Antoine de Saint Exupery

Great art and poetry follow the pattern of Eskimo shamanism described by Eliade:

"But in addition to these seances demanded by collective problems (storms, scarcity of game, weather information, etc.) or by sickness (which, in one way or another, likewise threatens the society`s equilibrium), the shaman undertakes ecstatic journeys to the sky, to the land of the dead, "for joy alone.” He has himself tied, as is usual when he prepares for an ascent, and flies into the air; there he has long conversations with the dead and, on his return to earth describes their life in the sky. This fact shows the Eskimo shaman`s need of the ecstatic experience for its own sake and also explains his liking for solitude and meditation, his long dialogues with his helping spirits, and his need for quiet.

"The Eskimo usually distinguish three dwelling places for the dead: the sky, an underworld immediately below the earth`s surface, and another deep underground..... The shamans have perfect knowledge of all these regions, and when a dead person, fearing to take the road to the beyond alone, abducts the soul of a living person, the *angakok* knows where to go to look for it.

"The descents to the underworld or ascents to the celestial paradise that figure among the exploits of Polynesian, Turko-Tatar, North American, and other heroes belong in this class of ecstatic journeys in forbidden zones ..... ”(101)

These are crucial aspects of shamanism that remain in great poetry, art, and music, making it subversive, awe- inspiring, spiritually terrifying, at the same time as being infused with light, love, and peace - think for example of Shelley, Max Ernst, and Mozart. As Eliade writes:

" .... their ecstatic capacities enable them to undertake any journey “in spirit" to any region of the cosmos. They always take the precaution of having themselves bound with ropes, so that they will journey only "in spirit"; otherwise they would be carried into the sky and would vanish for good."(102)

Is this Ulysses with the Sirens, before he was on the Island of the Dead? And is it Orphism - the spirit striving to escape from the Rack of Life, the Wheel of Necessity - which goes into Christianity: the life of the spirit/soul after death, the Resurrection of Christ etc.? Eliade continues:

"The shaman`s deliverance from the ropes with which he is tightly bound constitutes, with many others, a parapsychological problem into which we cannot enter here. From the point of view that we have adopted - that of the history of religions - deliverance from the ropes, like many other shamanic "miracles," signifies the condition of "spirit," which the shaman is considered to have obtained through his initiation.

"Such exploits, undertaken for no apparent motive, to some extent repeat the initiatory journey with its many dangers and especially the passage through a "strait gate" that remains open only for an instant. The Eskimo shaman feels the need for these ecstatic journeys because it is above all during trance that hebecomes truly himself; the mystical experience is necessary to him as a constituent of his true personality.”(103)

All these points bear upon, describe, the essence of the creative artist, certainly within Western Civilization from the Greeks up till modern times, and probably for other civilizations too. This is another way of seeing how ‘great art’ "brushes history against the grain" in Western Civilization, to use Walter Benjamin`s phrase. Precisely as everything to do with shamanism becomes ‘disenchanted’;- is lost, buried, pushed aside in the historical development of Western ‘rationality’, of economic productivity and technology, that is, in ‘progress’, so the shamanistic powers of great art have if anything increased. Of course epochs see them wax and wane in the different media, genres, forms etc., but on the whole there is a secular increase in their powers. It is for this reason that Western Civilization has such ambiguous, schizophrenic responses to art - at once admiring and adulating, but also resenting, disrespecting, and holding it suspect. As this (technological, rational, scientific, bureaucratic, alienated, reified) civilization comes to be based less and less on the experiences and understandings of shamanism, nevertheless, paradoxically people`s thirst for them remains, indeed increases, becoming - in the appropriate, separated-off

sphere, actually obsessive sometimes, as with the nineteenth century Bayreuth cult of Wagnerism. Adorno`s association of the latter with the twentieth century pop music industry, for which he saw it as a kind of precursor, was meant negatively, critically. But the association need not have been negative: Wagner was a shaman, as were Jim Morrison, Jimmi Hendrix, and countless other post-Second World War rock stars.

Graham Townsley writes in his thesis on the Yaminahua of Eastern Peru:

"Dreams give humans access to the spirit world, but in an uncontrolled way. Drug-induced visions, directed by ritual procedures and chanting, give humans controlled access to the spirit world. The fact that the experience of these visions is very comparable to that of dreaming but, unlike dreaming, is susceptible to conscious and volitional control gives convincing support to the Yaminahua assumption that through these visions men can intervene in the spirit world and, through the spirit world, influence the apparent world. This idea of the power of vision is central to Yaminahua shamanism."(104)

This is undoubtedly the essence of ancient Greek epic, lyric, and tragic poetry; and of modern European Romanticism and Surrealism. Beethoven`s remark to the effect that "he who divines the secret of my music is saved", follows the same notion. Townsley continues:

"The idea ..... that dreams and visions allow one to "see" the spirit world not only provides the rationale for shamanism but also gives a certain legitimacy to the form of mythic narratives ..... There are myths of origin, giving explanations for the characteristics of the world and the things which inhabit it; there are also myths which merely recount exploits of the mythical ancestors as entertainment or as moral tales.

"Like origin myths the world over, these myths recount events that are conceived to have taken place in a primordial chaos in which the things of this world had not yet taken on the fixed forms that they have now. Trees spoke, men transformed themselves into animals, everything in the world was animate, conscious and interacted with everything else. Although things had partially formed typological characteristics, these differences - the differences between species - did not prevent them from sharing a common space of interaction and communication. Everything was mutable and nothing fixed. lt was the time of the mythical ancestors, the "old ones living long ago", the "dawning-spirit-

people”. Through the events recounted in these myths, the world`s order emerged from flux.

"This mythic time is spoken about as if it existed in the past, but this past is not strictly speaking a past in the ordinary chronological sense. When it occurred in chronological terms, which for the Yaminahua are generational terms, is of no interest to them. It is past in the causal sense of origins - the "dawning” of things. Any question about the nature of things or their classificatory characteristics will be ultimately answered by the Yaminahua with a myth recounting how they came to be as they are. The Yaminahua, of course, believe their myths to be true accounts of origins.

"It would appear, however, from the uses to which shamans put myths in the course of their ritual practice, that the primordial chaos which they describe is conceived, in some sense, to be still present. It does not appear to have definitely ended with the institution of the world as it is but to have been merely overlayed by the fixed, formal appearances of things. It is this time of the “dawnings" which still exists in the non-apparent flux of the spirit world."(105)

This is the visionary spiritual power of great art. Like Eliade`s ‘sacred time’, which can be paralleled with Benjamin’s ‘messianic time’, this is the quality that Aesthetics constantly wants to call ‘eternal’, ‘divine’, ‘immortal’, ‘transcendent’ etc. in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, Mozart, or Shelley.

The relationship between the spirit-world and the everyday world can be seen in its purest form in instrumental music, where (in itself) there are no words, no physical or dramatic actions, no plot, no visual dimension, and no explicit meaning. No aspect of the everyday world appears in pure music except for raw sound - not the physical environment, not the realm of human actions, thought, or language, nor the spheres of theory, belief-system, or ideology. If there is action, movement, or emotion, it is all expressed within or through musical metaphor, which is exceptionally open to subjective interpretation, highly relative and contextual in terms of meaning, highly variable from individual to individual, cultural context to context, occasion to occasion. The world of pure music seems nevertheless sometimes to borrow directly from life - its passions, conflicts, experiences, and moods, and at other times to escape completely, to subsist in a pure, separate, and detached world, utterly different and removed from the rest of life. In all these respects, it resembles greatly the phenomenon of shamanism, and much light is shed upon both phenomena by examination of each in the light of the other.

The importance of this ‘human shamanistic spirit-world’ is difficult to define and specify, though to describe it as very great, is to make a huge understatement. Different ways of attending to it, or neglecting or ignoring it, will obviously have great significance to ‘normal’ social reality. But this is not just a base/superstructure issue, to be conceptualized as an interaction between material life and the spheres of ideas and imagination. It relates to the entire condition of at least ‘modern man’, who came into being between 100,000 and 40,000 years ago, and probably on a different level, to earlier humans too. The dimensions of symbolic culture, consciousness, and visionary imagination are part of the entire biologicaI-cum-social identity of the human race, not to be conceived of as either purely ‘material’ or ‘ideal’, in any meaningful sense. They are part of the unique way that humanity innovates, explores, adapts, an develops itself within its environment on the Earth, the ways in which it imagines, probes, dreams, experiments, and learns reflexively from its experiences in all activities from hunting to war (or the attempt to avoid it), to the kinds of physical and visual environment it creates or chooses to live in, from management of the family to political organization, from the development of science to the adoption of moral values.

The complexity of and variation in ever-changing modes of relationship, interaction, and influence between experience of the ‘spirit-world’, and modes of practical activity, are far too great to allow of precise, general theoretical formulations concerning their forms and nature. It is really within this wider context of all humanity`s existence, from whenever it developed those features of language, culture, consciousness and mind which we regard as definitive of it, that the narrower kinds of concern raised by Marxism, mostly in regard of modern societies and of relatively recent civilizations – the base/superstructure relation, the socio-political implications and significance of differing kinds of art etc. - should be located.

Certain self-styled ‘materialist’ theories try to relate the ‘typical experience’ of individuals to ‘material conditions’ of various kinds: class situation, economic circumstance, position within a system of production, relationship to the means of production for Marxism; similar are gender and sexuality for feminism and theories of sexual identity; suffering of particular illnesses or physical disabilities, membership of ethnic group or nationality, living in particular geographical or political regions are of crucial importance for other world views; and so on and so forth. An assumed ‘typical experience’ is thought to mediate between ‘material reality’ and ‘consciousness’, or specific forms of expression of this consciousness, such as art, music, or literature.

But although such theories may focus on some real influences upon individuals, each of them, or even all combined only address some of the myriad and infinitely complex mutually interacting influences affecting an individual`s mind and creativity. They obscure understanding when they dogmatically presume any particular influence is the only, or the most important, one. They cause even more serious misunderstandings however, if they discourage recognition that two individuals in identical material circumstances - for example, two workers on identical machines in the same industry at the same time and place receiving the same wage; or two people suffering the same illness - may, for infinitely complex reasons, 'experience' the 'reality' in utterly different ways. (Just as individuals of different gender, age, ethnicity, and health and from utterly different times, civilizations, and situations may share extraordinarily similar perceptions and orientations of spirit and feeling: for example Lao Tzu and St. Francis of Assisi; Sappho and Shelley; Archilocus and Nietzsche.) Personality inclinations, beliefs, learning, and traditions, among other things, ensure that individuals experience the same 'reality' in very different ways; the variable operations of memory, fantasy, mental association, and creative transformation, in any case inevitably ensure there is no single, 'direct' way of registering any given reality. And beyond all this, two individuals - let us say two middle-aged women on equal incomes walking in the same shopping centre on the same rainy afternoon in the same suburban town in Belgium - even if they should choose to creatively express this same 'experience' aesthetically, and make some kind of symbolic form out of it, will select, focus on, recreate, or invent, different facets of even that same 'reality'.

No art, in any unambiguous sense 'reflects reality', as the meanings of neither of the terms 'artistic reflection' nor 'reality' are unproblematical. There can be no basis, other than a dogmatic one, for any absolute dualism between 'realism' and 'imaginative invention', between the concrete and the abstract, the objective and the subjective, the external and the introspective, between confronting reality and escaping it. Homer expressed his experience of life (and communed with his spirits), through the narration of traditional epic poems about the Trojan Wars and the journeys of Ulysses, as if he had been witness to them; Van Gogh expressed his experience of life through painting the sunflowers and an all-night cafe that he saw in Arles. Robert Tressell expressed his in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, Brecht his in *Mother Courage*.

Yet so-called materialistic theories can point to certain important connections, whilst it needs always to be remembered that without any conceptualizations at all we are faced only with an 'infinitely complex reality'; if we wish to think at

all, we cannot avoid some simplification, totalization, and reduction. The knack is to use a theory as a heuristic tool and move on; to try many theories to see what partial truths they yield; and to avoid fetishizing any particular theory, or investing in a system of concepts rather than in the effort to understand an ever-elusive truth.

This book does not seek to construct a comprehensive theory of shamanism or art, either for any particular society or for human society in general. Nor does it believe such an objective is possible or desirable. Throughout, it assumes a pluralistic, tentative, modifiable, and experimental approach to theoretical knowledge; it assumes paths can be explored and backed out from profitably, that contradictory perceptions are possible, and that any book is a 'Swiss ch eese', i.e. inevitably full of holes and spaces. And whilst by no means 'Foucauldian', it prefers a heterogeneous view of power in society, of infinite 'capillaries of power' flowing in all directions, including horizontally and vertically; for not only is there no single, central point of power in society, which is not in any case a fixed quantum but rather proliferates infinitely from and between multiple and diffuse sites, but there are infinite varieties of power in human existence, only a few of which are usually considered by the social and political sciences.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this book to criticize the plethora of 'political' theories of art - socialist, feminist, ethnicity-based etc. - it will be noticed throughout that there are fundamental implicit disagreements with many assumptions of these theories, notwithstanding the fact that the author is strongly in support of genuine efforts to enhance the rights, happiness and security of all human beings; to create equality, equity, and justice in human society. But such theories are often so weak in their grasp of the human creative spirit, of aesthetic imagination, of spiritual transcendence, that their implications frequently work against universal justice and freedom in spite of their intentions.

Most of all however, it is the feigned innocence of the selective organization - and narrowness - of their visions that so many theories adopt (which makes possible a false appearance of comprehensiveness, logical coherence, and scholarly rigour), which mitigates against any emancipatory potential that might be contained in their insights. It is a pretence that underlying assumptions areneutral, and self-evidential, which ignores the point that 'moral capital', or knowledge as symbolic power, are fields of meaning and symbol which strive to influence and mobilize actors, whilst concealing the special interests of those who use them. 'Capital rooted in defining certain values as correct', i.e. dogma masquerading as virtuous objectivity, is always noticed somewhere else. The

partiality, selectiveness, and bias that are inherent in all theoretical frameworks of analysis - the invisible construction of the world in the very words chosen – are rarely noticed in the theorists themselves, who thereby confuse ideas as partial, simplifying abstractions from infinitely rich and complex, dynamic, contradictory realities, with reality itself; in other words conceptual reification. Everything besides themselves is ideological, spun by hollow subjects pursuing their miserable interests; only Bourdieu, or Foucault, or Habermas, or Terry Eagleton, or Germaine Greer, stand loftily above the webs of deceit in their profundity; and by God none of the trash written by anyone else will appear in print if they can help it. Academic debate seems always to require a contest between 'positions' - someone else`s theory always has to be wrong in order to bolster one`s own - of a kind that sweeps out of sight a book such as this one, that is *trying to say something*, but not everything. The preclusion of other voices, including sometimes those saying something similar to themselves but in different ways, so often underlies theories of culture, even as they loudly assert the need to recognize 'difference', 'pluralism', the 'marginalized', etc.

In any field of enquiry it is a question of which questions are asked, why *they* and not others are selected as proper, and the ways - in terms of nuance and emphasis - in *which* they are asked; and it is the *kinds* of answers that are deemed fitting: all these lie beyond but all round the apparent choices between actual answers to the questions; they 'set the agenda' in the broadest possible senses conceivable, and embroil enquiry in invisible, unannounced assumptions and values of all kinds. What seems to be a wide-ranging debate and controversy in sociology, for example, involving every shade of position across various spectra, including that ranging from 'conventional' to 'radical', actually always occurs within a pre-set terrain such as this. Thus for example, it has been said that modern sociology arose from the clash of classical liberalism with conservatism in nineteenth century Europe. If this is so, the whole terrain of sociological thought, from structural functionalism to Marxism to postmodernist sociology to ethnomethodology, is the product of a highly partial, peculiar, and specific - however rich and valuable - glimpse at that mind-bogglingly complex, emergent reality called 'society'.

The problem is not resolved by the facile observation that sociology arose in the minds of bourgeois European males, so that the solution is to tack on (or substitute) a perspective that is feminist, non-White, Third World, and proletarian-peasant-indigenous. For this completely misunderstands that even among nineteenth century bourgeois European males an infinite number of alternative sociologies might have taken root (and indeed quite a number did try

to be born, but were ignored or suppressed). To recognize that sociology emerged in the minds of bourgeois European males in no way implies it is *the* (privileged) worldview of (all, or 'typical') bourgeois European male(s), nor points in itself to what a proletarian non-European female sociology would have been or should be. Still less does it allow us to assume there is one such view or kind of view to be found; an even larger infinity(!) of kinds of sociological perspective could be the possible product of these other social contexts. The variety of theoretical worldviews possible for any knowing subject, is constrained, yet infinite, as the selection occurs from within a multi-dimensional conceptual world - not merely from a two-dimensional, nor a one-dimensional linear spectrum (such as is given in the 'left-right' metaphor), and still less from a dualistic either-or choice such as the male/female dichotomy. Recent discussions of 'gendered' as opposed to 'ungendered' social theory are so much nonsense; one had hoped the world had learnt the lesson that there is no single 'proletarian' knowledge to contrast with a unique ‘bourgeois' knowledge; no definitive 'Aryan science' that slugs it out with a 'Jewish science'.

It has become obvious that not merely Marxism, but any attempt at an overriding, all-encompassing theory of history, or endeavour to discover the 'basic laws' or 'essential processes' at work in 'history', is misconceived. Very simplistically expressed, this is for three kinds of reason:

(1) The very concept of 'history' or 'society' has become newly problematised. lt is not clear what empirical referent the terms refer to; where each begins or ends and other realities (particularly 'nature‘) begin or end; what kind of a thing 'history' or 'society' is. Hans Blumenberg terms the old view 'historical substantialism':

" .... theoretical success is made to depend on the establishment of constants in history.... This anticipation of what knowledge has to accomplish seems to me problematic: Constants bring a theoretical process to an end, where on different premises it might still be possible to inquire further. This (is) the shutting down of the theoretical process by substantialistic premises..... No *a priori* statement whether there are substantial constants in history can be made; all we can say is that the historian`s epistemological situation cannot be optimized by the determination of such stable elementary historical quanta."(1 06)

(2) It has become clear that no sphere of reality, whether it be biological life, evolution, atomic processes, or galactic processes, even if we already have a good sense of what the reality is that we seek to explain, is explicable through

one kind of theory or worldview alone, even on an approximating level. Realities must be looked at through multiple perspectives; any single framework taken alone or understood as providing exclusive access to an absolute truth about phenomena, gives a fundamentally flawed explanation of reality. A very good example is that provided by Tim Ingold in his essay *Optimal Forager or Economic Man* (107). Neither theory, ecological determinism nor rational choice, the one quintessentially biologistic, the other incorrigibly economistic, provides a satisfactory overall explanation of hunter-gathering societies; yet both help understand behaviour in these societies in distinctly useful ways. The same applies to, for example, Marxism and Weberianism for industrial societies.

(3) Human 'history' and 'society' have a particular problem which is connected with the facts of human consciousness, of 'free will' etc., as we, human beings, are part of what we are studying in these areas. This is the Hegelian 'partial identity of subject and object.´ Analysis is ultimately inseparable from prognosis, or ethical-political recommendation; a perspective on 'history' is inseparable from an implicit or explicit 'project' of/for 'history'. It is obvious that the complexities ensuing from this recognition, in their multiple interactions with the complexities ensuing from the first two points, engender a state of affairs where absolute historical certainties about phenomena of the past, present, or future, about for example 'Greek Civilization', 'The Cold War', or 'The Ecological Crisis and the 21st Century', could only be held by fools.

For various modes of interpretation in the 'sociology of culture', especially the Marxist, artistic creation is essentially a process whereby certain 'talented' individuals - 'geniuses' perhaps, whose appearance admittedly cannot be, or has not yet been, well-explained in terms of numerical distribution across historical time, nation, social group, sex, age, etc. — explore and express through certain forms, genres, or modes of expression, ideas and sensibilities that are essentially structured, determined, shaped, or conditioned by the experience of a whole society, or the interests of a particular social group or class; or within the worldview of a nation, within which the artist has been socialized, or lives and works. Though this approach explains and elucidates a certain amount of what is going on in this process - one of the most perplexing, complex, and important of human phenomena - it does not finally satisfy. Its inability to explain the nature of, reasons for the appearance of, and distributions of 'talent' or 'genius', seems somehow to be linked to its incapacity to explain why artistic works transcend the moments of their creation, why they can be important to people from contexts so different from those of their origins, why different observers or hearers can grasp them, intuitively and intellectually, in such differing ways and

attribute to them such different imports (and yet agree on their importance!). Great artists seem to throw their works into the air of immortality, for the appreciation of all humankind, for as long as it is likely to exist.

If such considerations point on the one hand to universal qualities of aesthetic creativity and appreciation, and on the other to the extraordinary extent to which individuals experience qualities of art in subjectively varying ways, these aspects would appear absolutely to contradict and annul, or at least reduce, the value of explanations arrived at though the 'sociology of culture'.

Attempts to explain the emergence of 'great' artists within any particular socio-historical context all too often situate conceptually the mysterious, or at least unexplained, phenomena in terms that make them seem familiar and obvious *after the event*; this tames their wildness and appears thus to have explained them. For example, Austrian-Hungarian society produced several 'great' composers over a two-hundred year period: why? Because of its social, economic, political, religious, and cultural structures, in particular its musicality. But whyand how does a 'musical culture' produce great composers, and why just a few and no more? Why did Austria develop such a 'musical culture' in the first place, through which certain social phenomena and experiences could be expressed? Realization that these kinds of question have not yet been answered by sociology, psychology, or the other cultural sciences is enhanced when we distinguish them from a set of completely different kinds of question concerning the societal causal base of given musical forms, genres, etc. and of attitudes to, ideas about, music, and concerning the social structuring and conditioning of audiences and audience reception to music, their aesthetic tastes etc. - questions which have nothing to do with the appearance of genius itself, or with what the 'miraculous' artistic creativity of great composers - of Mozart or Schubert - actually is.

It is as if one has to admit that 'cultural studies' has brought us to accept that these questions have not yet been answered, and that what is required now is some new clarification of what the issues are; this may include some suggestions as to where answers might in time be found - in what spheres of enquiry, from biology and psychology to brain science to Complexity Theory, as well as sociology, aesthetics, and the study of mythology, religion, and creative-revelatory trance states.

An inter-disciplinary approach is surely needed to understand what is really involved in the notion, widely held but with only partial clarity, that art brings to

people a *Geist* which they can then strive to make manifest in the material and moral world of society, economy, and polity. Thomas Mann described this *Geist* brilliantly, though very abstractly in his 1928 essay *Kultur und Sozialismus*, as "the inwardly realized state of knowledge achieved already and in fact by the summit of humanity."(108) This is a restatement of Schiller`s ideal of freedom attained through beauty - a theme that runs deep in the British Romantic poets, and which is taken into the romantic-humanist strand of Marx`s thought (concerning the unalienated, all-rounded individual), and developed further in Herbert Marcuse. These reflections allow us perhaps to focus on a crucial facet of shamanism and art, in all kinds of human society: the idea that real, practical activity can and should be informed by spiritual or aesthetic vision.

It is difficult to make generalizations about what influence the world of the individual`s imagination has upon 'real' everyday life. Whether we think of a child hearing adventure stories every night at bed-time, or an adult watching a film every other evening on television, or a group of villagers singing old songs each evening in a local pub, the implications of their contents for individual`s conduct in the concrete world can vary from nothing at all, to almost any conceivable influence. Ghandi claimed the poetry of Shelley had profoundly influenced his life development, Hitler claimed the same of Wagner. But only rarely does a war film, or a story about murder, lead an individual to commit a murder; only rarely does pornography lead a viewer or listener to commit rape or some lesser indecency. How does the sublime beauty of an Ingres nude, the fantasy-sound of a Debussy piano piece, orthe examination of a psychopathic megalomaniac`s mind in a Shakespeare play, or the uncompromising passions of lovers in a Verdi opera affect the life of individuals? When the question is asked in this direct way, it serves to warn against any too simple notions concerning 'political art', i.e. what art could induce people to live better and improve society, as well as against simple anthropological assumptions about the significance or functions of art, even in the case of, for example, a ritual shamanistic ayahuasca session within a native society of the Amazonian rainforest.

X

In the work previously quoted, Townsley continues:

" ....the time of “dawnings”, whose transformations and powers continue to reside in the spirit world..... underpin shamanic activity, whose whole rationale is provided by this conception; shamans claim to be at one with these powerful transformations (they transform themselves into jaguars, they speak with vultures, they travel to underwater realms and to the land of the dead, etc.) and to be able to harness their power to create events in the apparent world - principally to be able to remove illness or create it. It is *yoshi* (the spirits) which make this possible because, amongst other things, they bear the traces of their mythic origins; to know the myth is to have the possibility of understanding them and gaining power from them.

"To the Yaminahua, therefore, and above all to Yaminahua shamans, origin myths are of great importance. They indicate the origins of things and by doing so reveal their inner essences, the essences which still exist as *yoshi*. They tell truths about the nature of things in the spirit world and by doing so open it out to human knowledge and intervention.”(109)

Here is disclosed the essence of Surrealism: in the magical transformations and movements between different realms of Lautréamont, the Surrealists’ hero, or in the magical contingency of events in Breton`s *Nadja* . Townsley continues: "...origen myths .... indicate the origins of things and .... so reveal their inner essences... and by doing so open it out to human knowledge and intervention." The mysterious creativity of Surrealist art is exemplified in the bringing together of disparate objects in chance encounters, as in Lautréamont`s famous line about a tuning fork and a dissecting table, and the dreaming into existence of new realities in Max Ernst - all of which is like Renaissance Neo-Platonic magic, the precursor of a scientific grasp of nature`s truth, which allows intervention and creation. Shamans deal with their communities` problems with nature - for example storms, scarcety of game, illness. Townsley quotes Eliade: "knowing the origin of objects ..... is equivalent to acquiring a magical power over them by which they can be controlled."(110)

Myth, dream, and drug-induced vision all have the same kind of narrative logic; so do visionary poetry, art, and music. All are characterized by unconscious condensation, transformation, and ambiguity, to use Freudian terms. As Townsley writes:

"Vision and dream ..... reveal .... the truth of events in the apparent world, both about what is happening in the present and about what will happen in the future .... Given that it (the spirit world) is so important .... myths outline its contours, dreams give intimations .... the need for a specialist in this realm, somebody who can understand its secrets and harness its powers, is inevitable."(111)

As Keith Aspley puts it vis-a-vis the Surrealist artist:

"...the association of the unassociable, which was the original criterion for the successful surrealist image, is achieved with a remarkable spontaneity and naturalness, not just by Miro in his gouaches but also by Breton in his verbal counterparts .....

"Breton .... by his implicit appeal to the creative response of the reader, and by leaving an impression that his art has indeed become a verbal alchemy, has come very close to the realisation of Rimbaud`s dream (of inventing a poetry accessible to all the senses)."(112)

Schubert`s song *Nacht und Traume*, and Shelley`s poem *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, addressed to the "awful presence of some unseen power", are extreme examples of Romantic art that evoke the secrets and power of this spirit world. Breton`s statement that "the work of art is valuable only in so far as it is vibrated by the reflexes of the future," echoes this.(113)

In the fundamental transitions undergone by human societies, from hunter-gathering nomadic forms, to small farming communities, thence - where it has occurred (though none of these transitions is automatic or inevitable) - to larger-scale, stratified civilizations, certain common features can be observed even though such transitions have happened quite independently, and in different precise ways in different ecological and historical circumstances. The transitions are relatively rapid, synergistic, positive feedback processes - 'qualitative leaps' analogous to the saltations of biological evolutionary theory - that allow transformations in human existence to new levels of complexity, new configurations of productive activity, political organization, culture, and mind. Often, particular forms of these structures are established in the early, formative

phases of their development, so that crucial characteristics of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Andean civilizations arose at early stages of their emergence, to become deeply ingrained in spite of major subsequent societal changes. Thus, the basic motifs of Egyptian cosmology and mythology were formed at the moment of Egyptian unification, and subsequently retained efficacy and power for millenia. The *ayllu* - the basic unit of the Andean agricultural community - was formed about 200 BC and has remained the bedrock of Andean civilization to this day.

The basic particular spiritual orientations of the major world civilizations were shaped in their formative periods in this way, though nevertheless certain tendencies in common to them all can be observed. It is clear for example, that in both the ancient Chinese and Andean civilizations, the precursor forms of spirituality were the forms of shamanism that characterized regional paleolithic societies probably for millenia, and then the Neolithic societies into which they developed for a shorter period of time, before complex civilizations evolved. In both cases, though in distinct and different ways, we can see how a complex relationship between the shaman and a 'political' leader, chief, or headman of a hunting-gathering or farming community, evolves into a new complex relationship between an emperor-god and a priesthood. Both the Chinese kings and subsequent emperors, and the supreme Incas were divine, mediating between human reality and the supernatural; they embodied in their beings and activities the health of their civilizations` relationship to the rest of the cosmos - ensured both symbolically and practically that human interactions and the social metabolism with nature in material production were ecologically sustainable and survival-oriented (for example, the Pharoah`s religious-symbolic and practical control over irrigation). They had access to the heavens (as with the 'legitimate' Chinese Emperor`s 'Mandate of Heaven', belief in the Inca as the sun-god, or as with the Pharoah also in subtely-varying ways over time), and the earth or underworld, and to the gods and spirits harboured in these regions - sometimes indeed were the main god themselves - and were the keys to their civilizations` health and well-being; economically, in war or peaceful relations with other peoples, as well as spiritually or psychically. In these ways they obviously appear as counterparts to the shaman in 'primitive' societies. They retained, in new and in some respects more complex forms, the shamanistic vocation of communicating with ancestors, spirits, demons and other supernatural beings and forces.

Such is the essential spiritual reality in which art developed, in all civilizations where this general pattern prevailed. Before art is conceived of as a distinct

sphere of human activity, it expresses, embodies, and functions within this shamanistic reality. After, when it is recognized as a progressively more and more distinct sphere, up till and including modern occidental civilization where for many, but still not all people and institutions it has come to be seen as wholly autonomous from religion, utilitarian function, or tradition, it may still actually reveal, when the surface is scratched, the essential characteristics of shamanism within.

The basic creative-visionary mode that is harnessed in its most primordial form in shamanism, seems to be intrinsic to the human condition, inherent in the human psyche and the nature of human society in general. That is, a visionary state, often but not always induced by intoxicants or hallucinogens, brings into play structures and processes beyond the control of the individual`s consciousness. These can be variously interpreted in neurophysiological, psychoanalytical, or mystical terms. Shamanism seems, from archeological, anthropological, historical and other evidence to be the basic form in which this reality has been harnessed, probably from the origins of *homo sapiens sapiens* and perhaps even earlier in pre-modern man; and then onwards throughout paleolithic and into Neolithic cultures, on into more complex social systems or civilizations.

The cave paintings of Lascaux in the Dordogne and of Altamira in the Pyrenees from 17,000 years ago, as with the prehistoric Bushmen rock paintings in Namibia, indicate the close association of big game hunting with intense shamanistic magical power. One could speculate that the importance of hunting increased during human evolution from *homo erectus* onwards, through archaic *homo sapiens*, to modern *homo sapiens sapiens* (which emerged about 135,000 years ago), and became more skilled and organized, more selective, and more dangerous. Ever larger and more ferocious animals were taken on, which required greater awareness of environmental resources and their annual cycles, thus making hunting more productive and efficient, and sometimes perhaps more sustainable also; so that shamanism must have grown in importance throughout prehistory. No doubt it also related to plant species also, especially those gathered for food and other uses; just as later, from neolithic societies onwards, shamanistic spirituality related ever more strongly with fertility of the earth and solar, lunar, astronomical, astrological, seasonal and other cycles. In agricultural civilizations religious cults focused on particular domestic species of plant, as with maize in Mesoamerica and the Andes, or species of animal, as with the bull and the ram in ancient Egypt.

A basic feature of shamanism is that the visionary individual gets 'out of his mind', or his or her spirit leaves his normal physical reality, prior to creative-imaginative, inspired ecstasy. At some stage in life Eskimo and Siberian shamans experience a sense of shamanistic vocation, which is followed by a quest - often in the form of a physical journey - to find his appropriate animal-master, or other spirit, and to locate his creative powers. The discovery is preceded by some kind of breakdown, literal or metaphorical, or psychic disintegration, which is followed by a reintegration or refinding of the self on a new level of wholeness, a new creative-visionary awareness, able to connect with powers that can direct visions. This schema is very evident in the biographical experience of many artists in most post-shamanistic societies; i.e. the individual`s sense of mission, accompanied by a feeling of being lost or of tragedy, followed by crisis then self-discovery. It is the experience of an individual, often exceptionally solitary, meeting his or her muse, feeling an unequivocal inspiration, or certainty of creative destiny. It is echoed in the conception of R.D. Laing that schizophrenia and psychosis in modern society are processes whereby certain – often peculiarly sensitive - individuals who cannot accept a 'false‘ integration into a 'false‘ normality, break down and embark upon a voyage, as if across a turbulent river, at the other side of which, if they reach it, they reemerge as a newly whole, more deeply self-aware, 'true' self. Though this conception would be banal or even dangerous if applied directly in psychiatric social policy, it does tap into a fundamental truth about the human condition. (Profound theories of human experience sometimes diverge from the kind of practical knowledge that should guide growth in human welfare.)

It is however important to distinguish between what the Greeks called 'divine madness' and simple insanity; for although there are similarities between them and overlapping or homologous features in common to them - such as, for example, frenzied, hyperintensive experience, mixing of sensations and judgements from different senses, disembodiment and estrangement of self - they are ultimately different. Ordinary madness precludes visionarycreativity, whilst 'divine madness' holds back (or tries to hold back) from the absolute brink of real madness. Similarly, the inspired intoxication of the Bacchanalian artist is different from mere boorish drunkenness; and when Alexander the Great took on the powers of Dionysus through drinking wine he was more than a mere aggressive drunkard. Joseph Campbell gives this from the *Rig Veda* VIII:

> Wisely have I partaken of the sweet food that stirs
> Good thoughts: best banisher of care.
> To which all gods and mortals,

Calling it honey, come together.

We have drunk Soma; we have become immortal.
We have gone to the light: we have found the gods.
What can hostility do to us now?
And what the malice, O Immortal One, of mortal man?

O you glorious, freedom-giving drops!
You have knit me together in my joints, as straps a car.
May these drops protect me against breaking a leg,
And save me from disease.

Like fire kindled by friction, do inflame me!
Illumine us! Make us rich!
For in the intoxication that you render, O Soma,
I feel rich. Now entering into us, make us really rich as well.

Campbell comments that:

"Soma ..... was poured into the fire in the form of the juice of the plant soma as a drink fit for the gods; but the same intoxicating brew was poured also into the warrior`s own gullet, where it ignited the warrior courage of his heart ina manner all its own ....

" ..... the greatest Soma drinker of them all, the god of battle, battle courage, battle power, and battle victory, hurler of the many-angled bolt..... Indra, like the sun, whose long arms flung the bolt by which the cosmic dragon Vritra was undone."(1 1 4)

The nineteenth century European idea of the divinely inspired artist, living somehow beyond ordinary influences and concerns, and outside of normal structures and roles, very peculiarly autonomous and separate from craftsman, priest, or monarch, has become an object of ridicule for much twentieth century sentiment. However, if discarded of its exaggerated language of reverence, its sometimes precious sense of specialness, and its sometimes effete notions of ultra-sensitivity, the romantic conception of genius grasped some very profound truths about artistic creativity in human society. It recognized the sense in which creative inspiration is often, if not usually, experienced as a kind of seizure, within which forces, processes, voices or whichever metaphors are preferred seem to act or speak through the artist, who seems somehow to be a

vehicle for purposes beyond his conscious control, expressing more than he is consciously aware of at the moment of creation. It grasped that such 'visions' leap out of, transcend, not simply the immediate circumstances of their authors, but in some difficult-to-explain way the concrete realities in which they live. It sensed that creative individuals could not be tutored, beyond gaining access to necessary techniques, to become creative, and that though more likely perhaps to emerge in some social circumstances than in others, the essence of artistic creativity was a characteristic whose appearance in time and place could not be predicted; thus it should be nurtured with care wherever it appeared, and valued as a 'blessing' to humanity, i.e. as essential to human life but impossible to engineer into existence, unlike most other aptitudes and skills.

The twentieth century backlash against the 'romantic idealization' of the artist, within modernist as well as other discourses, has often 'thrown the baby out with the bath water' about this. The 'classicism' of much Modernist poetics for example, has denigrated and shown suspicion towards the Romantic notion of overflowing spontaneity in creation, the poet as vehicle of the Muse, except in the Surrealist idea of 'automatic writing'. It seems to be part of that world which T.S. Eliot calls an "undisciplined squad of emotions." (It is striking that such ideas are taken for granted in the worlds of rock or jazz music, by contrast.) But in fact the oscillation between spontaneity and control, unconscious versus conscious structuration, between pure imaginative inspiration versus rational, intellectual organization, creative flow and ordered reworking, Apollo and Dionysius, is probably inherent in all poetic creation, though the emphasis alters from period to period, context to context, individual to individual. The oscillation and distinction between the two modes is anyway fundamental to the division of the human brain into right and left hemispheres.

The insistence of T.S. Eliot for example, that a poet is more a craftsman than a god - prophetic, visionary, or oracular (though his actual poetry defies his dogma) - loses that sense of mystery in all creation, cosmic or artistic, which metaphorical hyperboles of divine creativity conveyed. And it loses the sense, present in earlier modern distinctions, between craftsman and artist (though one may welcome the rejection of the elitism often inherent in such distinctions), and the idea that aesthetic creativity is open-ended, indeterminate; that it expresses ideas and experiences that are new, or in new ways, beyond the ordinary, in a way that is different from the skilled work of the carpenter or furniture maker, however fine the latter may be. And if the makers of ancient Greek pottery, of Chinese lacquered furniture decorated with animals and flowers, or the masons

who worked on the facades of medieval European cathedrals, should be regarded as great artists, it is because they were not merely skilled craftsmen.

So that the romantic conception of genius held within it a fairly valid anthropological core; it might help one see the 'mysterious', visionary, 'inner' quality of aesthetic creativity in the various forms and roles it takes on in different societies. In 'primitive' societies it is the shaman who bears this role, quite obviously, and he probably did so from the origins of modern man up till neolithic societies began to differentiate a complex division of labour, state, and class structure. In Stone or Bronze Age civilizations it is borne by the complex of god-king-priesthood-craftsmen. Joseph Campbell speaks of "the priestcraft of art" in ancient Egypt:

"The subtle lore of the greatest capital city of Old Egypt can be understood in its proper force only when it is realized that those by whom it was developed were a priesthood of practicing creative artists ....

"And since the royal projects, both for the pharaoh himself and for those of his court whom he favoured with funeral plots and tombs near his own, were infinitely numerous, the greatest art school of the ancient world until the brief period of Athens in its prime was developed from the heart and tongue, so to say, of the master of the diligent, perfectly competent master craftsmen of Ptah.

"The mummy-god was thus, indeed, a god not only of creation, but also of creative art. The Greeks identified him with Hephaistos. He was the god who had fashioned the world, and the secrets of his craft, therefore, were those of the form and formation of the world. Would it be too bold to suggest, then, that the knowledge of the nature of creation rendered in his mythology must have derived its depth from the actual creative experience and knowledge of the priesthood by which it was conceived?"(115)

In civilizations where the autocratic union of religion and politics begins to dissolve, as in the city-state civilizations of ancient Greece, there are poets, pottery painters, musicians, mystics associated with oracular cults, and sometimes divine rulers such as Alexander the Great, who was a reincarnation of Osiris and Dionysius, and who communed with his divine self-being when intoxicated with wine, as did also the Indo-Aryan conquerors of India circa 1500 BC. The nineteenth century European artist usually strained to divorce his creations from religious ritual or useful function, but this did not really affect the

intuitively sensed spiritual vocation of the artist as a sort of visionary in the midst of the community.

An essential aspect of shamanism, which develops into the responsibilities of the priests in civilizations like Egypt (or the Incaic Andes), and then into the philosophies of Pythagoras and Plato in ancient Greece, concerns an understanding of the stars and other celestial bodies. This involves interpreting their movements and conjunctions as signs of deeper processes in ideal realms of the cosmos - astrology; it involves also eschatalogical, cosmological, and cosmogonic interpretations on the basis of astronomy, for example precessions of the Spring Equinox from Aries to Pisces, or Pisces to Aquarius, or the coincidence of the years in different calendrical systems. These became linked to periodic cycles or ages of birth-destruction-rebirth. In the Neo-Platonist Plotinus, the sense of shamanic magic re-emerges as a summoning up of forces once again: "The Gods must come to me, not I to them."(116)

Religion leads into Neo-Platonic magic in Ptolemy also, with his belief in a transcendence of the spheres to reach the ideal realm, which is associated with "metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls from one body to the next. This process involved passing beyond the spheres, and the new forms were to some extent molded by the conjunctions of stars and planets at the point of birth."(117) This is surely an evolution from the essential character of shamanism, described thus by Michael Harner: "The shaman penetrates the Underworld or Sky (and) transcends the physical universe."(118)

These conceptions stem back to a death-rebirth idea which is perhaps the most basic 'spontaneous idea' (using Joseph Campbell`s term) among humankind, going right back to the origins of shamanism and its associations with hunting, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years ago. In Platonic philosophy, Orphism, the Dionysian cult, and then in Christianity, the life-death-rebirth idea is united to that of the soul or release of the spirit out of the material body - reconnecting the two ancient ideas found in Ptolemy in another way. Thus, in earliest shamanism, throughout millenia of Egyptian religion, and then in Greek religions (including Christianity) and philosophy, the two archetypal ideas/experiences are found.

XI

There is a complex, contradictory process at work within Homer`s epics, concerning the values which the poet affirms. As also in Hesiod, there is a very basic paradoxical co-existence of, or contradiction between, two distinct conceptions of the divine, and of the relationship between the spheres of nature and supernature. On the one hand the gods are beings whose motivations are essentially the same as those of humans. Though their powers and activities invite awe and fear, they are hardly worthy of deep respect or spiritual veneration. Apart from their immortality, they are as imperfect as humans.

On the other hand they are the authors and enactors of a cosmic destiny, of a divine plan and purpose: they are worthy of piety and worship, and of faith in their transcendent fulfilment of the requirements of justice. Obviously these dual conceptions play out developmental processes of social evolution, and of ethical awareness, but not in any simplistic sense that assumes the inevitability of human moral 'progress' in a linear history or the relentless advance of superior religious consciousness. For on one level, this conceptual conflict might be said to reflect an 'eternal', untranscendable aspect of the human condition, which is well expressed, or mirrored, aesthetically and mythically by a realm of capricious gods steeped in immensely amplified human lusts for power, status, wealth, ambition, revenge, sexual gratification, food, drink and so on, intermingled with intimations of the divine values and majestic experiences of truth, beauty, honour, love, duty, and justice.

George Thomson shows that in the *Iliad* values of loyalty to a chief or king are ascendant, against a background of decreasing kinship obligation. Lists of boats are still reflecting kinship, realities of battle reflect the ascendant values.

C. M. Bowra argues that Homer is consciously transcending the limited value-system of the royalty whose traditions he must perforce serve, at least superficially. (Similarly, Thomson considers that the aristocracy Homer had to please would not have wanted him to include the rebellious myth of Prometheus, which explains its absence in Homer.) These ruling values are xenophobic: principles such as honour in dealing with others, respect for human life, behaving with dignity and integrity, apply only to the 'in' community, 'us', the Greeks. According to Bowra however, Homer shows his heroes to be straining towards greater universality, towards absolute virtues. Homer`s own values were put back, imaginatively, into the mythical past of Mycenaean civilization, when the 'blood of gods still ran in men`s veins.'

E. R. Curtius shows that more than merely ideal values of individual conduct are affirmed in Homer, whether they be applicable only to the Greeks, or to all people. There is an existential struggle working its way through the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, concerning the individual`s striving for a dynamic, harmonious balance between the values of thought and of deed, between knowledge and action; the ideal hero is part sage and part warrior, both practical man of action and spiritual metaphysician. Curtius suggests that Dumezil`s Indo-European tripartite structure of priest, warrior, and farmer lies beneath this; the Homeric Greeks, uniquely among Indo-European civilizations, expressed their core value-conflicts and heroic ideals in terms of the warrior-aristocrat.

But there is also at the core of Homer a will to overcome divisions, to unite and integrate the faculties, activities, and values associated with each of these three roles - an almost Jungian anticipation; a Lukácsian yearning to prevent social and psychic fragmentation. Could it also be that Homer does not want to lose the ancient requirement of ‘primitive’ societies, that the shaman be both a wise, visionary wanderer by night, and also an effective leader, good hunter, and a generally strong, competent man of action, by day?

The Dithyramb, a kind of lyric, was the prototype of the choral ode and the origin of Athenian tragedy. The Dithyramb was a choral ode sung and danced to by fifty satyrs in honour of Dionysus at spring rituals of initiation, fertility, and sacrifice - all combined together as the representation of "cyclic death and rebirth of the Earth and the World," in the words of Gilbert Murray. Tragic drama grew from Arion`s or Thespis`s supposed first insertion of dialogue between the dithyrambic chorus and its leader who becomes two, then three actors. This relates to Nietzsche`s view of Athenian tragedy as neither a naturalism nor a realism, as in origin neither social nor political in the conscious sense, but as religious. As he writes in *The Birth Of Tragedy* :

"We are thus bound to scan the chorus closely as the archetypal drama, disregarding the current explanations of it as the idealized spectator, or as representing the populace over against the noble realm of the set. The latter interpretation, which sounds so grandly edifying to certain politicians (as though the democratic Athenians had represented in the popular chorus the invariable moral law, always right in face of the passionate misdeeds and extravagances of kings) may have been suggested by a phrase in Aristotle, but this lofty notion can have no influence whatever on the original formation of tragedy, whose purely religious origins would exclude not only the opposition between the people and

their rulers but any kind of political or social context. Likewise we would consider it blasphemous, in the light of the classical form of the chorus as we know it from Aeschylus and Sophocles, to speak of a 'foreshadowing' of constitutional democracy, though others have not stuck at such blasphemy. No ancient polity ever embodied constitutional democracy, and one dares to hope that ancient tragedy did not even foreshadow it."(119)

Though Nietzsche indulges here in his childish disdain for democracy, for which disdain he gives no good reason, and fails to see the importance of democracy (however limited) to Athens`s self-understanding, its destiny and greatness, his point about the essentially religious nature of Athenian tragic drama can be well taken. As he continues:

"The Greek has built for his chorus the scaffolding of a fictive chthonic realm and placed thereon fictive nature spirits. Tragedy developed on this foundation, and so has been exempt since its beginning from the embarrassing task of copying actuality. All the same, the world of tragedy is by no means a world arbitrarily projected between heaven and earth; rather it is a world having the same reality and credibility as Olympus possessed for the devout Greek. The satyr, as the Dionysiac chorist, dwells in a reality sanctioned by myth and ritual. That tragedy should begin with him, that the Dionysiac wisdom of tragedy should speak through him, is as puzzling a phenomenon as, more generally, the origin of tragedy from the chorus. Perhaps we can gain a starting point for this inquiry by claiming that the satyr, that fictive nature sprite, stands to cultured man in the same relation as Dionysiac music does to civilization. Richard Wagner has said of the latter that it is absorbed by music as by lamplight by daylight. In the same manner, I believe, the cultured Greek felt himself absorbed into the satyr chorus, and in the next development of Greek tragedy state and society, in fact all that separated man from man, gave way before an overwhelming sense of unity which led back into the heart of nature. The metaphysical solace (with which, I wish to say at once, all true tragedy sends us away) that, despite every phenomenal change, life is at bottom indestructibly joyful and powerful, was expressed most concretely in the chorus of satyrs, nature beings who dwell behind all civilization and preserve their identity through every change of generations and historical movement."(120)

How better could we see that great art is a sophistication of the shaman`s visions, song, mythical narrative; his confrontation with gods, demons, ancestors, heroes, and his exploration of celestial and netherworld mysteries!

Athenian tragic plays, Lillian Feder contends, are "based on traditional myths. Employing well-known plots and characters, these dramatists interpreted them to express their individual conceptions of man involved in a struggle to understand himself, his fate, and his place in human society and the universe."(121)

It seems obvious that the life and death of Christ partakes of the Greek model of tragic drama, with its heroism, suffering, and predestined fate, just as there are parallels between Dionysus and Christ, as also between Orpheus and Christ - Orphism and Dionysus being at the centre of overlapping and mutually interacting cults. For Christianity the central tragic drama was the life and passions of Christ.

Both the epic hero (Achilles, or Odysseus) and the tragic hero (Oedipus, Agamemnon, or Antigone) "have qualities of excellence, of nobleness, of passion; they have virtues and gifts that lift them above the ordinary run of mortal men and women..... The overwhelming part about tragedy is the element of hopelessness, of inevitability..... Tragedy is the disaster which comes to those who represent and who symbolize, in a peculiarly intense form, those flaws and shortcomings which are universal in a lesser form..... the greater the person, so it seems, the more acute is their tragedy."(122)

Aristotle speaks also of "the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement ..... "(l23) Both kinds of hero are perhaps projections of the shamanistic temperament - given over to extremes of passion and despair (enantiodromia), possessing flaws due to psychic fissures and contradictions in their characters. These flaws represent however the other side of a bold, adventurous, innovative, Promethean disposition - the very characteristics that the psychology of creativity reveals as archetypical of the inspired poet or artist, the 'genius' with a 'cyclothymic personality', and also of the trickster, *ukuku*, Coyote etc., of shamanism; light and dark in equal measure, in vice and virtue, creativity and destructiveness, as respected social leader or instructor but also as a mistrusted, nonconforming misfit, exile, marginalized figure - rewarded, praised, and admired for his strengths and virtues but also punished for his transgressions and for his overleaping of constraints, as are Prometheus or Don Giovanni.

XII

In his book *The Tree of Life. Symbol of the Centre*, Roger Cook writes:

"Eliade has shown how all aspects of mankind`s 'mythical behaviour' reflect an intense desire to grasp the essential reality of the World. This is particularly evident in man`s obsession with the origins of things, with which all myths are ultimately concerned. The centre is, first and foremost, the point of 'absolute beginning' where the latent energies of the sacred first broke through; where the supernatural beings of myth, or the gods or God of religion, first created man and the world. Ultimately all creation takes place at this point, which represents the ultimate source of reality. In the symbolic language of myth and religion it is often referred to as the 'navel of the world', 'Divine Egg', 'Hidden Seed' or 'Root of Roots'; and it is also imagined as a vertical axis, the 'cosmic axis' or 'axis of the world' (Axis Mundi) which stands at the centre of the Universe and passes through the middle of the three cosmic zones, sky, earth and underworld.

"This idea of the cosmic axis and the 'centre of the world'..... is embodied primarily in three images, which are to be found in a great variety of forms throughout the world. These are the Pillar or Pole, the Tree and the Mountain .....

"The point where the Axis Mundi pierces the square base of the Mountain is at the centre of a flat spiral. This represents the long and difficult initiatory path which leads towards the centre. The myths, legends and fairytales of the world stress that many difficulties must be overcome ..... in order to arrive at the centre .....

"Ascents and descents into sky and underworld are a central feature of shamanism. This is the name given to the religion of those peoples whose spiritual life centres around a shaman - a particular type of religious ecstatic, who combines the roles of mystic, visionary, healer, artist, poet and magician. Shamanism has its own symbolic structure, which it retains even when it combines, as it has often done, with other religious forms (including Buddhism and Christianity). The evidence of the painted caves suggests that it was the religion of the hunters of Palaeolithic times. In modern times, its purest form has been found in the polar regions, and especially among the tribes of Siberia and

Central Asia. It spread from these regions to other parts of Asia, to Oceania, and across the Bering Straits to the Americas. The shaman is vitally important to his community, though set apart from it: for he is in direct communication with the spirit world, which he enters regularly in religious ecstasy and trance. In this condition he attains to the 'centre of the world', for it is only through this centre that he can penetrate the spirit world.

"Thus, when the need arises, the Altaic shamans of Siberia perform their ritual ascent to the sky world: this is done from time to time for every family..... the shaman places a young birch tree, stripped of its lower branches, at the centre of a specially constructed skin tent or *yurt*. The roof of this represents the vault of the sky, through which the few remaining branches protrude. Nine notches are cut into the trunk of this tree; these represent the nine heavens through which the shaman will pass in his ritual ascent. A light-coloured horse is then chosen for sacrifice; on the soul of this horse the shaman will ride throughout his celestial journey. Next, the shaman invokes the spirits inviting them to enter into his drum. On this drum, the shaman will also ride, for it is prolonged drumming that summons and concentrates the energies he needs to enter the spirituial world. This drum is the shaman`s single most important possession. lts wooden frame is understood to have ben made from a branch that the supreme god, Bai Ulgen, let fall from the Cosmic Tree. It is up this tree that it will carry him..... in the course of which, in mounting ecstasy, the shaman symbolically climbs the birch. As he raises himself by degrees upon its notches, he sings:

I have climbed a step,
I have reached a plane,

and then, on ascending further,

I have broken through the second ground,
I have climbed the second level,
See, the ground lies in splinters.

He then continues to climb, with various stops on the way, during which he relates extraordinary adventures and episodes concerning the various beings that he meets. Thus, he passes from heaven to heaven, through to the ninth or even to the twelfth. When he has gone as high as his power permits, he meets and converses with Bai Ulgen, receiving predictions concerning the weather and the

future harvest. After this, the culmination of his ecstasy, he collapses exhausted, remaining motionless and speechless for some time. Eventually he wakes, rubbing his eyes, and greets those present as though after a long absence."(124)

This discloses the essence of shamanism in primitive and tribal societies, and its primordial legacy for all 'subsequent' forms of society. In Aristotle, as discussed elsewhere, we get a sense of how shamanism was transmuted into poetry in the course of Greek civilization`s history up to his time.

The Siberian shaman climbs the world-tree in his mystical visionary ascents, which is symbolised by the central pole of his tent. Above this pole is the North Star; thus the stages of visionary trance are linked to a primordial growth - of the cosmos, of life as a whole (biosphere and organic evolution), humanity, and the self; and all are linked to the celestial levels. This experiential reality is echoed in the celestial spheres of Aristotle`s cosmology, and the spheres of heaven in Dante`s *Divine Comedy*. The idea of the shaman`s flight - expressed for example in an Eastern Peruvian *ayahuascero `s* explanation of ayahuasca as acting by letting the body die while the soul flies around, is carried into Plato`s idea that the soul that sees truth as it leaves the realm of the flesh - which includes the realms of emotions, passions, and desires - behind, taking on Orphic mysticism and leading into Christian mysticism. Temples, spires, pyramids etc. in holy architecture of all religions maintain this idea too, as do religious mythologies associated with great mountains. The harmony of shamanistic knowledge, which is linked to music and pyramidal building for the Ufaina of Colombia, is symbolised in architectural form and relations in the houses of shamanic communities among, for example, Amazonian native societies. This is echoed in the Pythagorean relatedness of music, mathematics, and truth: it persists through Greek civilization and reemerges in the Renaissance, in Alberti etc. The relationship between spiritual truth, numbers, and the celestial movements is the essence of all astrology, while the link between these and architecture underlies the Egyptian pyramids, pre- Columbian civilizations generally, Stonehenge, and also the construction of ordinary houses in myriad other archaic and ancient cultures.

Shamanistic visions, wanderings into celestial or demonic realms to meet mythical or ancestral heroes, spirits and demons, to experience dangers and anxieties of hell, or beatific paradises and spiritual harmony; these could be regarded as symbolic or magical resolutions to contradictions in experience, or in the social structure of the community. So, modern youth subcultures and

countercultures resist through rituals, express their yearnings through the erotic fantasies of music and dance, speak through gesture and costume, dream wish-fulfilments into their appearance, as 'primitive' peoples paint their bodies with elaborate patterns and beautiful colours, or as art plays or struggles with reality, turns it inside out, dreams transcendence of contradictions in experience, sets reality into symbolic explosions, gives expression to what is denied or suppressed in reality, and allows no simplistic dualism between the ‘real' and the ‘imaginary'. If the 'real world' is to change, the imagination must be inspired; if the 'imaginary world' is inspired, reality will change.

Durkheim`s approach to religion has some bearing upon the analysis of shamanism here, in that he saw certain universal characteristics that pertained to all religions, and thought that by studying its 'earliest', 'simplest‘, and most 'primitive' forms one could gain insight into those elementary forms that were elaborated upon or transformed in the differentiations and developments of history, but not wholly lost. In these elementary forms one could see the essence of religion, which involved the essence of society, and hence the essence of humanity and human existence. There is a similar paradigm at work in the present analysis of shamanism.

The persistence of the shaman in the roles of priest, philosopher, poet etc. in more complex societies is a theme in this work that parallels James Frazer`s ideas of taboo and ritual killing as the "primaeval rock rising from a smooth-shaven lawn", the persistence of the "dark crimson stain" on the "web of thought", in civilization, with its veneers covering primitive passions. Frazer had an idea that the individual "primitive philosopher" is a human type that carries through to the philosophers and scientists of modern civilization, someone who is responsible for the social evolution of mentality and sensibility (rather like Shelley`s poets who are the unaknowledged legislators of the world). This parallels my theme that the shaman is a particular psychic type, perhaps genetically distributed as a minority throughout any human group, or gene-pool; and is a 'survival' in modern societies with an increasingly unclear role as society declines in organic integration. This is in the spirit of Frazer`s speculative imagination, his preparedness to take a broad view of the whole forest (of human history), and his view of historical development as analogous to biological evolution in that it moves generally from common origins, from simple to more complex, into increasing differentiation of social types.

It might be appropriate here to suggest a very tentative hypothesis concerning a possible genetic basis to the 'shamanistic impulse' in certain individuals. The

relationship between biology and psychology, genetics and culture, is a hugely complex issue which cannot be discussed here; furthermore I am not a geneticist, so my suggestions must be taken loosely and provisionally, my hope being no more than to point towards a real issue for consideration. The hypothesis is that a certain proportion of individuals in any given social group hold a complex of genetic material which ensure or allow their possession of 'shamanistic creativity.' The survival and adaptation of a social group is threatened if this proportion rises above a certain level, or if it falls below a certain level, as without the innovation in ideas, sentiments, and beliefs emanating from the shaman the group would stagnate, though if the associated unruly and rebellious characteristics were to become too widespread survival would also be threatened. Perhaps there is a statistically regular distribution of genes and genotypes holding a propensity towards the shamanistic creative character, which has to be drawn out by the natural environment and by society, within groups, but also for whole societies andfor humanity as a whole. This is something that should be considered both in respect of the distribution of shamans in 'primitive' societies, and in the distribution of artists in more complex societies - without at all of course neglecting the structuration of opportunities for creative development within social structures.

XIII

Aesthetic-mystical visions should not be allowed to inform political theory, strategy, or tactics of human and natural emancipation directly. Visions are visions; politics may have its ‘optimistic will’ inspired by them, but it must be driven by intellect and reason (and also of course, feeling). Thus ‘freedom’, ‘universal justice', for whom, how? The complex interlocking of class/national/ethnic/gender processes especially, are very vulnerable to disastrous partiality of perspective if reason is ignored in their analysis: ‘vulgar Marxism’, nationalism, racism, and radical (nihilistic) feminism are the likely political and theoretical outcomes if the subtleties of real social processes are submerged or obliterated by unmediated visions.

The spheres in which the poetic faculty on the one hand, and the rational faculty on the other, can act appropriately must be clear, for emancipation. Most importantly, politics should avoid all ‘essentialisms’ - the simplification of the multiplicities of patterning due to class, sex, nation, or ethnicity, and the absorption of the innate uniqueness of human individuals, as well as the consequences of quite other diverse and contingent factors, into dualistic, stereotyped, Manichean polarities: men/women; oppressor/oppressed class; oppressor/oppressed nation or ethnic group.

This over-simplifying yes/no belongingness to a single identity, or to several, restricted identities - essentialist identity politics - does not underpin a politics of emancipatory transformation of social relations and institutions at all, but rather implies a re-instigation or another instigation of old or new oppressions and dominations, whether concretely real, or symbolic, or even purely gestural.

Global capitalist industrial development has not produced what classical or 'vulgar' Marxism anticipated - solidarity between working classes and peasantries of different nations (in the many senses of this word, including tribe, indigenous group, etc.), nationalities, ethnic groups, or cultural identities. Though it did not presume uniformity in theory, in practice it usually did not respect diversity. However, there were elaborate Marxist theories of nationality and Socialism which did not assume diversity would disappear, though these - such as Lenin`s and those of the Austrian Marxists - were rarely applied. This

was so not only in the U.S.S.R., but also for example, in Nicaragua. It was a major historical mistake, as seen in retrospect, that Socialists made in believing that the Socialist dimension of revolutionary change would ensure a rational application of its theory of nationalities.

The Frankfurt School, whilst Gramsci was writing in an Italian Fascist gaol, though unbeknownst to one another, sought to deepen Marx`s essential insights in the light of the failure of Western European proletarian revolution; and in the light of the new, immense power unleashed in fascism - whose mass mobilizations and intensity of commitment could not after all be explained in terms of capitalism`s or the bourgeoisie`s 'last ditch stand' - and in the light of the 'deterioration' or 'bureaucratisation' of the Bolshevik Revolution; that is, in the light of multiple implosions of the visionary hope contained in Marxist Socialism.

Lukács`s theory of reification of proletarian consciousness - the process by which the mechanized, rigid, externally dictated labour-process of capitalism is transferred into forms of consciousness and culture via the scientization of all method and the fetishism of commodities, led Lukács to the conclusion that utopian, visionary, revolutionary culture must espouse realism: forms of art that rendered the totality of human history, the individual self and his or her experience. But for Benjamin or Adorno the complete opposite was rendered necessary by the very reification that Lukács had analysed so powerfully in his *History and Class Consciousness* of 1923. The fragmentation of society, self, and experience required modernist, experimental techniques to explore it; to probe towards an harmonious totality the artist, the proletariat, and humanity as a whole would have to struggle through and weld form out of contradictoriness, fragmentation, ambiguity, confusion, and anxiety. No integrated totality could be presumed upon: as worms must wriggle in darkness through earth and stones as best they can, in uncertainty, to reach the daylight, so is our struggle. It is not a previously mapped out path, a scientifically pre-given truth of Marxism. (This is what Gramsci was simultaneously grappling with in his analysis of a new, pluralistic, multi-subject of Socialist Revolution, a spontaneous dance of myriad groups, communities, and individuals, rather than a uniform onslaught of a monolithic, proletatian 'mass'. If Socialism could be achieved at all without an almost self-torturing doubt and questioning on the part of all individuals (all are 'intellectuals´ for Gramsci), eschewing all cosy simplifications, both he and Adorno or Marcuse would say it would only be a bastardised version of it, like Stalinism.)

The contradictions of the past cannot be assumed to accrete, be passed on in neat accumulations of needed and potential resolutions: new generations, the *Blitzkrieg* of fascism, may actually experience or ensure rupture, amnesia. In this, there is a concordance with Nietzsche`s rejection of Marxian-Hegelian dialectically developmental history. The parts of the whole of global society, though certainly making an objective totality, may not inter-relate experientially, nor in a causally logical way, such that the world moves as one history, which is a progress: no matter how contradictory, uneven, or complex classical Marxism may have admitted it to be. Thus, in authentic art difficulty, paradox, partiality, and infinite ambiguity are of its essence. While Lukács shadows Thomas Mann, Bloch can embrace German Expressionism, Benjamin joins arms with Kafka, and Adorno can do the same with Schoenberg or Berg. It is as if the Frankfurt School thinkers seek harmonious totality - in theory and experience, of the self, society, and the universe - but do not presume it exists now, or ever can. They will not smoothe out all contradictions, jagged edges, awkwardnesses etc., dishonestly. They will not presuppose the possibility that all can be resolved into unity, that essence and appearance can be unified. They will not assume all can be ironed out and answered in a Marxist aesthetics of realism, nor in the inevitable 'becoming' of proletarian self-consciousness. They will embrace the reality of fragmentation and conflict on all planes, even though they yearn for, and support, the shamanistic impulse to search for and summon up harmony and unity. This is indeed the shamanistic calling that seeks to mediate conflict, to manage, resolve and transcend contradiction, to direct and harmonize the forces and energies of the cosmos without evading or cringeing before anything. As Nietzsche put it, this is:

" .... a formula of supreme affirmation born out of fullness, of superfluity, an affirmation without reservation even of suffering, even of guilt, even of all that is strange and questionable in existence ..... This ultimate, joyfullest, boundlessly exuberant Yes to life is not only the highest insight, it is also the profoundest..... Nothing that is can be subtracted, nothing is dispensable ....

"Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems; the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility..... that is what I call dionysian ..... "(121)

Twentieth century Modernism, or the Avant-garde, for the most part followed Nietzsche`s injunction to distrust all commonsensical dictates that claim their foundations in reason or morality. They welcomed above all the disintegration of the 'naturalistic' or 'realist' representational image, and also the traditional European ethical-spiritual-aesthetic conception of sublime beauty. They rejected

earlier realisms and definitions of form as mere conventions of European civilization, that did not penetrate 'reality' at all, but rather confirmed prejudice, preconception, and comforting familiarity. They also doubted the existence of a single, certain reality, which is perceived in a single, given way. From the Impressionists` involvement with the psycho-physics of vision, to the interest of many twentieth century avant-garde movements in the theory of Relativity, they saw both reality and its apprehension as problematical, the problematic themselves being most worthy subjects of artistic exploration and recreation. And finally, with a subversive ironic vehemence they seemed to proclaim that if the malaise of *fin-de siecle* bourgeois Europe, followed by the insane mutual slaughter of the First World War, followed then by the catastrophes of capitalist economic crises and the collective psychoses of fascism - if these had ensued from the mature rationality, grasp of reality, and much-vaunted moral, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic principles of three or four centuries of Western Civilization, then they should be buried, and new ones invented. And these common avant-garde impulses were deeper than the diverse political positions adopted by the various movements - from anarchism to revolutionary or reforming socialism, from conservatism to fascism, or to apoliticality.

Overarching theories that purport to explain the essence, origins, and future possibilities of human culture, consciousness, and mind no longer seem possible at our point in history. This perception is well-expressed in the slogan that 'no model is the only possible model.' The range and complexity of issues and ideas even within each of the very many sub-disciplines concerned, from the various branches of paleontology to anthropology, from archeology to sociology, from evolutionary biology to philosophy, is too enormously large for any one mind to master. Theories like those of Marx, Nietzsche, or Freud no longer seem feasible, whilst the efforts of these three themselves, though Herculean and still very potent with suggestion and insight (even their glaring errors and inadequacies are rich in intellectual stimulation), no longer convince many people as general solutions. This is interesting, for in biology, and in physics or cosmology, the broad thrusts of Darwin`s or Einstein`s thinking do still in some ways stretch around the problems of life and matter, the organic and inorganic worlds, respectively. This does not mean that Darwin for example, understood or elucidated the actual mechanisms behind the evolution of living things; but his general conception of life as developing and differentiating into ever new species, whilst others disappear due to pressures of competition with other living things and due to the general requirement to adapt to constantly and unpredictably changing environmental conditions, remains valid even to post-Darwinist, or even in other respects to non-Darwinist, perspectives. In general,

advances in twentieth-century biology have vindicated Darwin, no matter how 'Darwinism' has fared, and in spite of the many controversies within and against it.

It is also interesting that general theories of human culture and consciousness after Darwin have either not engaged with his breakthrough in organic evolutionary theory directly - as did Marx, as well as the major 'founding fathers' of modern Sociology such as Durkheim and Weber - or have done so unconvincingly. Thus in the first case Marx, Weber, and Durkheim each in their way respect Darwin, but they bracket off his theory from human history and culture, as it were - as if the latter were not open or amenable to biological analysis or provide the outer framework - the rest of living nature - within which human development occurred and still occurs, but according to different 'laws', or even different kinds of 'law', from those that pertain to human history and society. These are the 'laws' of historical materialism for Marx, the 'rules of sociological method' for investigating 'the social' as *'sui generis'* for Durkheim, or the appropriate methods for understanding and explaining 'social action', for Weber. In the cases of Nietzsche and Freud, their utilization of the concepts of the 'body' and the 'instincts' in order to link the findings of cultural philosophy and psychology respectively, to biology, though they represent admirable efforts to do what sociology, for example, as a discipline has notably not tried to do, are nevertheless among the weaker and less durable parts of their thinking.

This points to the fact that scientific enquiry into the essence and origin of what is distinctively 'human', is far less clear in its findings as yet than the sciences of the essence and origin of life, or those of the essence and origin of the universe. Certainly, when one looks at the breakthroughs in 'complexity theory' as presented in the book by M. Mitchell Waldrop, it is striking how much more this new approach has illuminated the 'emergent structures' of the physical universe and of life than it has those of human consciousness, culture, or civilization.

Marxism failed to produce a distinct, viable, and qualitatively new kind of civilization as did Christianity, for example, at the end of the Roman Empire. On the contrary, the collapse of Communism and the Marxist Left generally, elsewhere, resembles nothing so much as the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Marxism produced very powerful critiques of society, of knowledge, of art and literature, but few new forms of these which had vibrancy and survival power. Thus, in spite of great moments, it did not finally produce, or inspire the production of, a large, sufficiently powerful body of art, literature, film, or music, to replace what it subjected to brilliant, if one-sided, critique. It did not

produce new philosophy, in the sense of new worldviews, new ethical values, new conceptions of the human being and human existence, with anything like the vigour and clarity of its critiques of past and present forms of knowledge. (Though of course there are great exceptions, such as the work of Lukács, Bloch, Marcuse, Adorno, Benjamin.) It was hopelessly poor in creating new equivalents to existential metaphysics, religion, traditions of spiritual experience, myth, etc. etc. And it did not produce, except for short periods of euphoric creative social dreaming such as the Paris Commune of 1871 (chiefly in the mind of Karl Marx!), the first years of the Bolshevik and Cuban Revolutions, periods of radical Maoism in China (however negative these periods may now appear in historical retrospect), the 1968 movements in the West, or the period of Sandinista rule in Nicaragua - examples which are nevertheless open to much debate - viable forms of society, or ones superior to those they replaced in terms of overall human happiness, dignity, creativity, or justice (difficult though these qualities are, of course, to evaluate).

It is certainly the case that the creative artist, like the modern urban bohemia from within which he or she so often emerges, is a part of bourgeois society, inasmuch as the material conditions of its existence are made possible by large-scale cities, casual labour, and a social structure more porous than those of former periods or many other civilizations. Furthermore its experiential conditions are to some extent sustained by ideologies of individualism, of self-creation, etc. etc. Bohemia is in some senses the 'other side', or 'underside', of both bourgeois and working class respectability. But the insistence of Christopher Prendergast in a talk on Radio 3 (11/1/97) about Puccini`s *La Boheme*, and about bohemia in nineteenth century Paris, that bohemia represented no real alternative or challenge to the bourgeoisie, that its resistance to clear identification or conformity is largely a kind of illusion, a kind of safe indulgence for young bourgeois men who can easily escape when the stimulation palls, is a rather dry, academic, and intellectual statement, that ill-becomes one who has a 'safe' salaried post in a respectable academic institution. It seems very much the view of someone who has not dared danger, has never thrown himself and his life into imaginative creation either permanently or for a short, 'safe' period, and does not know life on that psychological and practical 'edge of reality'. Yet he seems dimly to envy those who do, and seeks to belittle them by denying them either courage, or integrity, or originality. His view is similar to that criticized by Ian Heywood in his *Social Theories of Art. A Critique*: that of a sociology of art that causes the values given to art by those in the art-world to evaporate, as they are explained away by cynical analyses purely in terms of

material and status interests, though such reflexivity is never applied to the production of these sociological theories themselves.

These views are perhaps best understood as alternative versions of that same contradictory perception of the shaman/marginalised artist/bohemian - fascination, need for him, but at the same time rejection and displaying contempt for him - which is explored in various contexts throughout this study. It does not grasp the real, subjective experience of Puccini`s *La Boheme* - a realm of uncompromising, tragic emotions and idealism of love, of feelings of extreme love in the face of the abyss, of commitment to metaphysical freedom and beauty, even in disregard for material security or 'normal' concerns about status or success (at least as perceived by the protagonists themselves!) It is only 'after the event', or from outside, that the scenario appears ‘mythical‘, as making up no more than a 'trope'. The sense of throwing all into the vision of love and art, of keeping faith with a belief in social and spiritual transfiguration, is something the shaman experiences, wherever bohemia is. If bohemia is 'bounded by cold in the north, hunger in the west, love in the south, and hope in the east', it is those who have felt this place - in all periods of history - who can perhaps bear better witness to its experiential reality than those describing it ironically and cynically from the 'safe,' warm, pious ground outside it. *La Boheme* is only the mirror-image of bourgeois society in the sense that the fragility of love and beauty, the tragedy inherent in a life devoted to their pursuit, 'reflects' ordinary reality: but *La Boheme* in fact relates to bourgeois normality only as much as the night-time supernatural world into which a shaman dreams, corresponds to the day-time reality of nature and society. The risk of living where spring can be very brief and easily cut short, but where the buds are ecstatically beautiful and true - as is art created out of life on the open-ended edge of imagination - is not an indulgence nor a cosy delusion fantasised by the ‘normal bourgeois male.’ It is part of a modern, visionary, celestial flight and a hellish, hallucinatory descent that is central to survival. For as in all periods creative visionaries are not easily reconciled with the world (of either nature or society), and it is these difficulties of reconciliation, of profound conflicts with both internal and external realities, which are at the root of certain individuals` restlessness; and thus their inclination - among others that are not so beneficial, which may indeed be destructive both to themselves and their communities - to make innovations or prophecies essential to their communities` survival, through change, development, readaptation. Spiritual restlessness, intellectual curiosity and questioning, aesthetic experimentalism and explorativeness; these are the shamanistic counterparts to the dynamic innovatoriness in the physical world of the chief or leader, the warrior or adventurer, the hunter or experimenter with

new crops, the craftsman or metallurgist. Scientists and engineers partake of both spheres, as also do practical innovators in morality and ethics, including sexual mores, though in a wholly different way.

Edmund Spenser is an excellent example of a poet whose self-definition is structured in the politics and culture of a particular epoch of a particular nation - the Elizabethan court of sixteenth century England - but whose deep character is that of an archetypal shamanistic prophetic bard, who praises and advises the chief in his community, though his advice may not be heeded. To quote Gary Waller:

"*The Faerie Queene*..... is a poem expressly dedicated to the praise of the Queen, her Court, and the cultural practices by which the Elizabethan regime established and maintained its power. Spenser accepts his role as that of the Orphic bard, praising, warning and celebrating the society that not only rewarded but in a real sense created him... The Faerie Queene is 'Art become a work of State', asserting that despite the material world`s unpredictabilities, the ideals of the regime are without contradiction and that when its norms are transgressed, chaos will result. The poem is offered as a microcosm of this truth."(126)

The Faerie Queene is a poem whose style, content, approach, and theoretical underpinning have evolved from the weedling, favour-seeking, sycophantic context and role of poetry in the earlier sixteenth century English court - a precious, dissembling world of effete, fawning, aristocratic gentlemen engaged in self-seeking strategies to gain power, pleasure, wealth, and esteem. It is saturated in the traditions of European poetics, from Homer and Virgil to Ariosto and Sidney, as seen through a chauvinistic, English Protestant humanism. But if this were all there were to Spenser, his poetry would only be of interest to the historical sociologist.

It is of course the extreme beauty of his dream visions, his portrayals of nature, fecundity and fertility, and of sensual love (which set Keats`s poetic imagination on fire), the power of his magical celebrations of the goddess-queen ("Great Lady of the greatest Isle, whose light/Like Phoebus lampe throughout the world doth shine"), the depth of conviction behind his ethical-spiritual vision of a cosmic order behind, and expressed in the nation and court of the Queen, that leap beyond his time, to any and all humanity. It is a great instance of a shamanistic vision of essential truth, of advocacy of correct behaviour, and of fortitude, regardless of the ambivalences, doubts, and contradictions that creep

into this vision as it unfolds. Spenser`s deep understanding of Sidney`s words in the latter`s *Defence of Poetry* : "our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is", though "our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it", concerns a contradiction apparently eternal to the human condition: the human ability, especially in ecstatic shamanistic visions, to perceive perfection and wonder in reality, which contrasts cruelly with the limited ability of human beings fully to realize such visions in their concrete worlds of human fallibility, ubiquitous error, and restricted options.

A condition met with in a particular form in the hierarchical court of Queen Elizabeth 1, and conveyed in a virtuous allegory of religious bigotry and imperialism, pertains nevertheless to the general reality of human experience; just as the psychology of power in Macbeth, or the ultimate questioning by Hamlet of the meaning of life, penetrate - or so it still seems - into fundamental truths about any and all humanity. Or, in the same way, that the sixteenth century poetry of Wyatt or Donne often explores the painfulness of 'love`s inconstancy'; no matter how constricted by contemporary values their musings may be, this is not in essence a 'gender-specific' matter, nor one pertaining to particular social conditions - as both men and women have always at times experienced, and probably always will experience, the misery of not having their love for another person returned (as well as, at other times, causing the same misery in others).

In respect of all these issues, the essential point is that the power and beauty of *The Faerie Queene* is not diminished by a critic`s observations of its contradictions, metamorphoses and promiscuity of meanings, as when Waller says that "the poem is, in fact, a rambling, open-ended, disrupted work."(l27) (Though these comments are not intended to imply a denigration of Waller`s powerful critical analysis.) It is inconceivable in any case that such an enormously long poem, written over many years, could possibly achieve an ideologically and stylistically unified and coherent whole, whenever and by whomsoever it was written (including therefore a 1990`s Marxist-feminist-Deconstructionist!). And it is a virtue surely, for anyone to be open enough continuously to question previously held certainties, constantly to revise his intellectual and ethical positions, as Spenser evidently does in the constant crises and anguishes of his life, which are breathed into his poem.

And it goes without saying, surely, that the nationalistic chauvinism and expansionist savagery, especially in Ireland, that Spenser endorses in Queen Elizabeth`s government, are not qualities whose virtue we would wish to see transcending his times! It is the whole of humanity, unreservedly and equally,

that for our age must become the focus of poetic power; not just one segment of it, as was the case for all poets of the sixteenth century, inevitably and anywhere in the world.

XIV

The primitive shaman`s communication or dialogue with, or inspirational influence from, a spirit or species-master or ancestor, develops into the Greek poet`s Muse, a person`s genius in the widest ancient sense of the word, or his demon in the Socratic and Stoical senses of that word. For the Romantic poet it is again a Muse outside, and a genius within, but with changes in the senses of both words; for the Dadaist it is Universal Chance, for the Surrealist the collective or individual unconscious; and of course for all monotheistic religions it is the individual`s soul which has a divine connection with God. For mystics of all kinds, from Meister Eckhart and Martin Buber to Buddhists, the self attunes to or dissolves into the Eternal Ether or Absolute, while for Taoists the individual spontaneously aligns himself with, and to, the Tao.

The different stages of social development - paleolithic, neolithic, civilizations with their own various stages – each constitute new configurations of the human. Each is based on the same 'biological basis' - though there may have been some genetic evolutionary change over the last six thousand years this has been less important than cultural change (although the latter may itself have complex feedback effects on genotypes). None should be pictured as more 'biologically natural' than the others: each one rests upon both the biological potential of the human species - physiologically, behaviourally, mentally – but also represents different cultural and psychological modes of being human.

The notion of an underlying ‘shamanistic character' or 'shamanistic consciousness' that persists through the different cultural forms, transformed and re-expressed in new terms - is therefore a complex one that must grapple with the difficulties of a realistic philosophical anthropology. By no means do I imagine I have resolved the central problems and contradictions in this notion: to do so would require solving some of the greatest problems of knowledge in modern times.

One can easily imagine a group of hunter-gatherers, in any environment - for example Arctic snow or tundra - having arduously to move from camp to camp, following seal, musk-ox, caribou, or fish. One man in the group is old, and cannot pull his full weight in the journeys, nor participate very helpfully any

longer in the hunt. But in the evening, sitting in a tent with a lighted fire, after eating and drinking, he starts singing, raising magical powers with sounds in an air of certainty and confidence, with an aesthetic sense of order and perfection in his magical chanting. Then his presence is felt as important, his contribution quite as valuable as the results of practical tasks, even indispensable. He influences the next day`s hunt, and the weather; perhaps he is a head-man himself or influences a head-man concerning any number of issues regarding the group, on the basis of his visions.

But most importantly he pulls the group together morally and spiritually; the moment his chanting starts they feel drawn into a magical-aesthetic spell, or into the supernatural realm of wonder, power, vision, ecstasy, intensity, wholeness, oceanic completeness, absoluteness. Suddenly they are not a few feeble specks in a wild, enormous, hostile, bizarre world; they are fused into the totality, parts of the universe, which has become luminous, warm, and meaningful.

The artist in the modern world still does this for society. By observing a Netsilik Eskimo shaman`s role in his community, and imaginatively projecting the basic phenomenon into a modern concert - whether rock, jazz, classical, or folk - or a recitation of poetry by Homer, Neruda, or Yevtushenko, we can understand each one better, in the light of the others. Images, myths, sounds, and words together comprise culture, cosmology, ideas, and feelings, through which groups of people exist. Without these, groups cease to exist.

The Marxist view that art in modern class societies either promulgates the status quo or acts as the prophet of emancipation, functioning either to manipulate ideologically or to critically enlighten - or, within a contradictory mixture, to do both - is in a sense a sub-proposition of the more general notion that art in all societies, since its Upper Paleolithic shamanistic origins, is a uniquely human kind of symbolic activity that helps create, maintain and modify social bonds in extremely complex and subtle ways. It has always underpinned social cooperation, defined the boundaries of social groups, and helped in the construction of new social relations important to economic, political, and religious processes; it has helped open up, express, and communicate new understandings and modes of experience of both the human and the natural worlds, helped evoke and express new modes of feeling about society and the cosmos. It has always been, and still is, implicated both in maintaining existing social structures and forms of consciousness, but also in transforming them, through the expression and communication of metaphorical meanings and aesthetically satisfying forms. Art is constitutive and empowering, at the same

time as it reinforces or imposes a given society`s systems of equilibrium or domination. Art *criticism* concerns itself with the issues of which social group it communicates with and helps to define, and to what end - social conservatism or radical transformation - and with which subtleties of thought and feeling it should express and mobilize.

Finding a special, magical significance in words when they are chanted, sung, or accompanied by even the simplest musical instruments, would seem to be a very basic, universal, if not genetically endowed and innate characteristic of human beings. Perhaps it arose with shamanism itself, in developmental stages in *homo erectus*, archaic *homo sapiens*, and through into modern human beings. Anthropologically it seems to be universal today, and all children display an obviously instinctual attention to sung words, rhymes and such like, imitating and learning them with a seemingly instinctual, rather than learnt, alacrity. Words in these contexts, from oracular utterances, religious or other incantations, to nursery rhymes, take on a magical significance, so that 'getting the words right' takes on great importance. Infants are very 'conservative' about the words in rhymes and favourite stories, always insisting that the first words they learnt to a tune are the 'right' ones. 'Primitive' societies likewise tend to maintain traditional words to magical chants and runes even when they have become obsolete in normal speech, and when their literal meanings have long since been forgotten. The use of Latin in the Roman Catholic liturgy, and Old Church Slavonic in the Russian Orthodox Church are rather like this for many practicing Catholics and Russian Orthodox Christians today, as is the original language of an opera, which for many listeners should not be translated, even if it cannot be understood. It becomes part of the religious or aesthetic-mystical experience of the Church service or of the operatic work of art: enigmatic, pluralistic in subjective meaning, atmospheric in multiple resonations and mystery. (This view of opera libretti has been drowned out in recent years by accusations of 'elitism'.) The entire phenomenon is part of the imaginative, shamanistic complex of inner creation, communication, magical reception and appreciation.

On a mundane psychological level the shamanistic experience is a sort of periodic, agitative shaking out of the anxieties and depressions which build up over time in the individual psyche. This is probably a phenomenon general to the human species, though obviously it will be shaped, manifested, and understood in different ways in different cultures and individuals. The excitation, and sometimes frenzy or ecstasy experienced in the shamanistic session, both by the shaman him or herself and the other participants, is often induced by drugs, alcohol or other intoxicants working together with the collective and disciplines

involved. The specifically shamanistic process is similar to drama festivals, concerts, and other artistic rituals and performances of societies which have moved beyond shamanism per se, but which retain its essence in these later forms. It is also similar, on a much less focused, more diffuse, and less venerated level, to social occasions in which alcohol or drugs are consumed in many forms of society, when people appreciate that part of the pleasure involves 'getting things out of oneself', and 'getting out of oneself´ for a short period of time, whichleaves the individual more cheerful, at one with him/herself; leaves him or her with a sense of having cleared the cobwebs from the brain, setting the priorities of life into the right hierarchies again. (Just as the shaman`s visions, as communicated to the participants in the session, involve coming to terms with, negotiating with, and interpreting the cultural and psychological meanings borne by spirits, forces, apparitions etc. This is the shamanistic dimension reflected in modern ideas of 'getting high', 'flying', 'getting out of our heads'.)

There is a clear sense among the Yaminahua in eastern Peru that after a shamanistic ayahuasca session the subject feels calm, relaxed, clear-minded, even 'cured' - as well as possibly having had more specific problems of a mental or physical nature sorted out. This bears similarity with a Sudanese *Zar*, in which women experience a release from variously comprehended demons or life-problems; with Aristotle`s idea that catharsis is induced by tragic drama; with aesthetic interpretations of the functions and purposes of art in many cultures; and with the widespread, more mundane understanding of the virtues of social occasions in which intoxicants are enjoyed.

The phenomenon bears an analogical relationship to another probably universal process of the human psyche. This is the phenomenon described and analysed most effectively by R.D. Laing, especially in his book *The Divided Self*. According to Laing the schizophrenic experience is a losing of oneself, a putting out into a river in one`s small boat, a falling into complete 'ontological insecurity'. If the sufferer succeeds in crossing the river, reaching the other side, he may refind his self in a far more healthy form than before, may come to be at one with his 'true' self, when in fact, all too often, the state of 'normality' experienced before the breakdown was living a lie, an inauthentic reality, an adjustment to the 'false' self as required by oppressive social forms. The recovery from schizophrenia may therefore for Laing be an emancipation, a new start, atranscendence, even a mystical awakening to deeper reality. This also bears an obvious analogy with the transcendence, or 'going beyond', brought about by the deep experience of art, and also links up with the analogy between creative inspiration, the ‘divine madness' of the ancient Greeks, and real insanity - which

as discussed elsewhere are not the same, but nevertheless have some features in common, especially a sense of intense frenzy, whether of artistic inspiration and visionary flight, or of real madness.

According to Julian Jaynes, in civilizations like that of the Incas, individuals` bicameral minds were coordinated through the convergent hallucinations of the many individuals making up an hierarchical autocracy; not a totalitarian police-state but based rather on collective obedience to a dead chieftain or a statue-god. I shall quote from Jaynes:

"(Later) the wide use of visual writing for communication indicates, I think, a reduction in the auditory hallucinatory control of the bicameral mind. Together, they put into motion cultural determinants which, coming together with other forces a few centuries later, resulted in a change in the very structure of the mind itself.

" ..... I have endeavoured..... to examine the record of a huge time span to reveal the plausibility that man and his early civilizations had a profoundly different mentality from our own, that in fact men and women were not conscious as we are..... that instead each person had a part of his nervous system which was divine, by which he was ordered about like any slave, a voice or voices which indeed were what we call volition and empowered what they commanded and were related to the hallucinated voices of others in a carefully established hierarchy.

" ....the astonishing consistency from Egypt to Peru, from Ur to Yucatan, wherever civilizations arose, of death practices and idolatry, of divine government and hallucinated voices, all are witness to the idea of a different mentality from our own.

"From the royal corpse propped up on its stones under its red parapet in Eynan, still ruling its Natufian village in the hallucinations of its subjects, to the mighty beings that cause thunder and create worlds and finally disappear into heavens, the gods were at the same time a mere side effect of language evolution and the most remarkable feature of the evolution of life since the development of *Homo sapiens* himself. The gods..... *were* man`s volition. They occupied his nervous system, probably his right hemisphere, and from stores of admonitory and preceptive experience, transmuted this experience into articulated speech which

then 'told' the man what to do..... such internally heard speech often needed to be primed with the props of the dead corpse of a chieftain or the gilded body of a jewel-eyed statue in its holy house ..... "(I 28)

By comparison, in the anarchic, fluid state of a primitive community, the shaman, in a controlled trance-state, or an ayahuasca-influenced hallucinatory state, leads or shapes the form and content of the trances of the others engaged in a visionary ritual, all others entering into visions coordinated with, and through, his own.

It might be worth noting here some conclusions of Marlene Dobkin de Rios in her classic study *Hallucinogens*. She writes:

"It was believed that an infusion made from..... powerful hallucinogens allowed Indian sorcerers to transport themselves into the presence of their ancestors and to work themselves into a state of ecstasy.

"As with the case of the Aztec use of mushrooms, the nobles of conquered tribes who were to be assimilated into the Empire were often given coca by the Inca.

"In the Inca capital of Cuzco, special sacrifices of coca were made. Supplicants approaching the altar were required to have coca in their mouths. During all Inca religious festivals, the leaves were thrown to the four cardinal points, or else burned on the altar. As with other hallucinogens, coca was used by the Inca to divine the future. The Inca consulted divine powers before undertaking most important activities, and he called upon coca to help make his decisions."(129)

Dobkin de Rios indicates how this royal, state shamanism was the heir of a shamanism that was related to hunting, ritual, poetry and vision, in primitive society:

"The people ..... used ayahuasca to help them hunt. Taking advantage of the properties of this hallucinogenic vine, the adult men of the community re-created in their visions the most minute, difficult movements and activities of the animals they stalked and hunted. Their visions enabled them to learn, once again in the conscious mind, the aspects of animal behaviour which they knew almost at a subliminal level, so that in future hunts they could be at one with their prey to hasten their victory. The mystical bond thus established between the hunter and the animals he hunted would be strengthened by whatever substance enabled him to increase and heighten his perceptual capacities. This is not to say that a

hunter in the tropical rain forest, for example, took *ayahuasca* and rushed out to the hunt; such a hunter would be disoriented and would probably just stumble in the underbrush. If, however, we recognize the use that was and still is made of hallucinogens in learning experiences, then we can see as adaptive the heightening of awareness of one`s enemies and of potential prey, insofar as they increase man`s ability to survive in hostile environments.....

"To Ronald Siegel, the data suggested that hallucinogenic plant ingestion could be set back in Paleolithic times, at least 40,000 years before present. During this period, human beings hunted and followed large beasts of prey. Depending upon their geographical location, these people were omnivorous in their eating habits. It is possible that hallucinogenic plants had great influence on the social life of such human beings.

"Another important theme, one of crucial importance to the historian of hallucinogenic use, concerns the cultural patterning of visionary experience. Whether we consider the rain forest dweller taking ayahuasca to see his culture`s heroes or creatures of his environment, or the Fang using *iboga* to see the Bwiti, we do learn how a most subjective experience, hallucination, can be culturally patterned and structured.

"There seems to be good evidence that in a society where plant hallucinogens are used, each individual builds up a certain expectation of drug use which, in fact, permits the evocation of particular types of visions ..... what is at issue here is the cultural patterning of categories of visions - that is, how do one`s expectations that a given kind of vision will occur make it, in fact, occur?"

Dobkin de Rios considers how the cultural core of early societies may lie in hallucinogenic visions:

"People experience their membership in a culture at the deepest levels of awareness accessible through drug-induced experiences. Plant hallucinogens in traditional society can be said to have a thoroughgoing influence on the individual`s unconscious..... we can argue that cultural identity is learned and reaffirmed by psychic productions under drug experiences in many traditional societies of the world."(130)

The following could apply very well to the ayahuasca-induced hallucinogenic patterns that are woven into textiles by the Shipibo of Eastern Peru; and also to

the primordial origins of the notions and experiences of divine music and prophecy, as well as many other themes considered in this book:

"Such hallucinogenic substances (as the fly agaric mushroom) do seem to change the retinal image and permit the appearance of the geometric forms and patterns which are almost always reported in the wake of LSD-like-substance ingestion. In effect, these illusions may be the physiological structures in one`s own visual system, including lattices, cones, cylinders, and other geometrics, suddenly amenable to observation under the effects of the drug.

"Whether large or small, plant spirits or spirit helpers are believed to be dominated by drug-using shamans, who call upon these entities to cure or to bewitch. The shaman may call upon such forces to protect his community. At times, such spirit forces have been considered more powerful than man and have been viewed as a means of communicating with the realm of the supernatural, rather than experienced as forces which could be controlled ..... we see thefrequently observed phenomenon of shamanic transformation into animal familiars..... sent abroad to do the shaman`s bidding, in order to rectify evil or to redress harm that has touched the life of the shaman`s client..... The shaman often descends to nether worlds to consult with ancestral spirits or else travels to celestial realms where he returns with special chants and auguries of future happenings.

"Often the drug-related theme of death and rebirth, or what...has (been) called the "life emerging from death" motif, is found in Paleoindian societies. The hallucinogenic experience is often perceived as the death of the ego and the rebirth or resurrectionn of the individual. In this manner, the shedding of the serpent`s skin may be matched with the death of the former social role of the individual and the emergence of another.

" ..... this relationship between human beings and spirits of drug plants may mirror the magician`s psychic need for ontological security to permit him to control the world in which he lives. The forces or powers of a person`s unconscious may, in other words, be projected outward to the forces of nature to enable the drug-using shaman to believe that his world is an understandable and charted one..... "(131)

Marlene Dobkin de Rios then broaches the issue that has been central to my enquiry:

" ..... revealed knowledge is highly valued in traditional societies, especially those where hunting and gathering are the main economic activities. Hierarchies of intermediaries who intercede between man and the supernatural may be viewed as diluting and lessening the impact of the experience of supernatural forces. By using plant hallucinogens, human beings can strengthen the bond that exists between themselves and their gods. Yet as societies grow in complexity and enter into hierarchical orderings and segmentation, drug use and the value placed on direct, mystical knowledge of the divine undergo change.

"We might expect that in simple, undifferentiated societies, when drug plants are available their use would tend to be for communal goods and ends..... with the advent of intensive agriculture and the ensuing social structural complexity and segmentation, elite segments of urban society usurp and manipulate hallucinogenic plant use. They do so both for socially defined commonwealth benefits and to control others. Access to specific states of consciousness is as much a part of sumptuary laws as access to fine material goods ..... It may very well be that man`s ability to bewitch and to cause his enemy`s death, which is believed to be part of the power that comes from hallucinogenic plant use, can be perceived as dangerous to members of stratified or state-level society. We know that the concept of state society generally means the total control over legitimized power, with all other attempts at power being subject to regulation. If a peasant shaman in a state society were permitted to continue using drug plants that were believed potent enough to bewitch a state ruler or administrator, legitimate power might be viewed as in jeopardy. It is possible that in the history of Western civilization, ancient oracular use of hallucinogens disappeared because of this threat to central authority .....

" ..... hunting and gathering societies ..... with a shamanistic religious orientation make far more use of hallucinogens than do Old World agricultural societies ..... Nonetheless, it can be argued that the passage of time and the lack of documentary evidence may hide a history of ritual hallucinogenic use in Old knowledge does occur, as appears to have happened in stratified societies like the Inca, this knowledge becomes much more volatile. It is quick to disappear in the face of subsequent culture change, such as conquest or colonial rule.

" ..... In those societies of the world where ..... people have held that only firsthand experience is the true way to knowledge, such plants have been recieved with great acclaim and awe. As soon as hierarchical functionaries

intercede between human beings, proposing doctrines concerning the supernatural and access to it, such plants.... fall from popular use .... When (they) are used as vehicles of direct access to the supernatural, they convey to each human being his own, personal vision of the supernatural while at the same time reaffirming the society`s collective vision of truth and knowledge .... the drug user believes that he or she can see, feel, touch, and experience the unknown - which is nevertheless filtered through a cultural screen of expected visionary experience."(132)

XV

It is possible to think of Chinese landscape painting as a sophistication from the essence of Chinese shamanism. Much Chinese poetry and painting, associated as they are with wine-induced visions, are a creative development from an ancient shamanism, and from shamanistic incantation, that were connected with fighting, hunting, and magical flight:

> I sieze upon wine as banners and drums, and make of my pen a long lance;
>
> Heaven-born strength comes to men like the Silver River rushing down.
>
> On the inkstone hollow from Duan Brook, I grind my ink thick;
>
> Under the flitting candlelight, my pen crisscrosses as if flying.
>
> In a moment I roll up the scroll and take again my wine cup,
>
> As though all across ten thousand *li* had been cleared of dust and smoke!
>
> (133)

When one looks at a detail from the middle coffin of Lady Dai from tomb M1 at Mawangdui, near Changsha, Hunan province, of the Western Han dynasty c. I68 BC, it suggests a most basic Taoist affinity with, if not the actual origin of, Chinese landscape painting. The swirling clouds of *qi* vapour, holding within them strange protective spirits, some of them devouring snakes which are signs of evil: are they not precursors of the mists and mystical spaces of Sung dynasty landscape painting, with its sacred mountains, streams, and other rustic places, emerging half-revealed as the mysterious forms of nature? Such representations as those on the coffin of Lady Dai, like the most sophisticated calligraphy and later landscape painting, were addressed to the spirits, however variously the latter were conceived. If tomb paintings and inscriptions are messages to the ancestors, the art of painting, according to Ching Hao (AD 900-960), lies in grasping ultimate reality and not merely the illusion of form.

In the class of the *divine* there appears, according to Ching Hao, no trace of human effort in a painting; the artist`s hands spontaneously produce natural form. In the *sublime* , an artist first fathoms the universe and the nature and

circumstances of all things. Then in a style appropriate to the subject, the forms flow spontaneously from his brush. In the *marvellous*, there is an unusual and unexpected representation which may be contrary to the real scenery or object, and yet it possesses the truth. This is owing to the master of the brush creating a painting without thought.

Laurence Sickman(l34) has shown that old Chinese ideas were adapted to the thinking of landscape painters in the tenth century AD. For as Coomaraswamy(135) put it:

"Oriental art is not concerned with Nature, but with the nature of Nature." From the earliest times maintains Sickman, the artist of eastern Asia never lost his character as a magician, who by magic - his 'art' - penetrated beyond appearances, grasped the essential spirit and held it captive in the thing he made. In the beginning, in the animistic phase, artists did this as sorcerers, Sickman says. By ritual and dance, and by the magic designs on vessels that held offerings to the ancestors, they evoked the creative power of nature and partook of it. Later on, magicians became artists who worked in the spirit of the Tao. Painters showed the power of nature in operation so that the initiate might, by gazing at the picture with understanding, share the artist`s communion.

For one major theoretical Chinese tradition, landscape painting was supposed to achieve the unity of the objective and the subjective, showing both the object as it exists in reality and the image that exists in the painter`s mind. There is here a profound sense that art is a communication with spirit - the artist with that of nature, the observer with that of the artist`s painting - which can be viewed as a civilized sophistication of the primordial essence of shamanism in general, and Chinese shamanism in particular.

In the mind of the creative Chinese artist there emerges *xieyi* , which means "sketching the idea." This, more than realistic depiction, is what many traditional Chinese critics have considered to be truly important in painting. *Deyi*, meaning "getting the idea" of the image in the artist`s mind, becomes the chief point to grasp when looking at a painting. The viewer has to see beyond the image to the implied meaning. Only by "comprehending the idea", or *huiyi*, can one appreciate the best paintings in the Chinese art tradition.(l36)

Arthur Cotterell(137) shows that Taoism emerged as part of the evolution of pre-dynastic shamanism into popular religion and magic in dynastic China. Cut off from the services of the learned diviners and ritualists who resided in the great

households, the ordinary people had to rely on adepts versed in sympathetic magic. These sorcerers (*wu*), male and female, eased the lot of the hard-pressed tillers of the soil by placating malignant spirits and invoking aid from those more kindly disposed. Details of an early ceremony of exposure survive; it suggests that the drops of sweat shed by the sorcerer, dancing within a circle under the blazing sun, were expected to induce drops of rain. The psychic powers of the *wu* also enabled contact to be made with the departed, though their abilities in this direction were apparently ignored by the palace. In opposition to Confucian ethics, Taoism drew upon the primitive strength of these thaumaturges, whose shamanism was later reinforced by invaders from the northern Steppes, and in the process the philosophy of Lao Tzu (born 604 BC) and his followers was eventually subsumed within Taoist religion. During the crisis which overtook the early empire after AD 220 Taoism gave solace to the peasantry as an indigenous religion of personal salvation. The hold that chthonic deities of the countryside had over the minds of the rural masses was already evident at the beginning of the Shang dynasty, when Tang in vain tried to change the title of the god of the soil.

Taoism always had a tendency towards a romantic, pantheistic, shamanistic, visionary return to the Origins, to the Great Time of the ancestors; like the *Angelus Novus* of Walter Benjamin`s *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, the Taoist might be thought to face backwards towards the past, which is paradise. From there blasts a wild, windy storm which engulfs the *Angelus Novus* in the present, though Benjamin`s tragic, indeed violent, view of history is very different from Taoism in other respects.

Jessica Rawson(138) has written how a complete contrast to normal hierarchical society and religion was provided by Taoism, which viewed the natural world, especially mountains, as the home of immortals. Counterbalancing the Confucian life of the court and the ordered society, there always remained an alternative option to the Chinese: a return to nature and the spontaneity associated with the natural world. Thus, as well as the cultivated official, there emerged the stereotype of the wild or mad recluse, or artist. These hermits would retreat to the countryside to be near the mountainous peaks, the gateway to immortality. Here, amid the rocks, a slit or crevice was to be found which led into another world. But the paradise beyond was not an otherworldly paradise filled with angels, as believed in by the Western world; it was a land with a calmer, better life, a more archaic version of the life of the present.

This idealisation of a pre-class, pre-state society - whether paleolithic or neolithic - as an anarchistic community to be contrasted with the inauthenticity, the artificiality, and the oppression of civilized class society and its state, is merged with a mystical dream of a Golden Age in a pure, pristine nature. A similar experience is found in Western traditions, of an idyllic grove, a *locus amoenus*, or a paradise island; and whether in ancient Greek Arcadian pastoralism or in Shelley`s poem *Epipsychidion* , it is essentially a shamanistic-romantic visionary flight of imagination that is being experienced.

Jessica Rawson(l39) considers a famous description of such an earthly paradise in the writings of the poet Tao Yuanming in the *Peach Blossom Spring* . The latter tells of a fisherman who goes upstream for some considerable distance until he reaches a peach grove. At the far end of the grove he finds the base of a mountain, and here he follows a stream through a crevice and enters a cave. Then he emerges from the cave into a new world.

After a few dozen steps the cave suddenly opens out into a broad and level plain where well-built houses are surrounded by rich fields and pretty ponds. Mulberry, bamboo, and other trees and plants grow there, and the criss-cross paths skirt the fields. The sounds of cocks crowing and dogs barking can be heard from one courtyard to the next. Men and women are coming and going about their work in the fields. The clothes they wore are like those of ordinary people. Old men and boys are carefree and happy.

There is a strong connection between the shamanism and spirit world of the pre-dynastic state and culture of Chu on the one hand, and Taoism, which developed later, on the other. The wooden guardian figure with a long protruding tongue, crowned by antlers made of dry lacquer, from the Eastern Chou period in the British Museum, comes from the Chu state, 4th century BC. Figures like this with monstrous faces, long tongues and antlers, were placed as guardians in Chu tombs in southern Henan and northern Hubei provinces. In the most sumptuous tombs, such as that of the Marquis Yi of Zeng, there was a bronze sculpture of a bird with antlers, probably intended to hold a drum. This kind of composite animal is strongly shamanistic. Jessica Rawson has shown that the state of Chu was reknowned for its complex views of the spirit world as recorded later in the Han period text, the Shan haijing (Classic of the Mountains and Seas). Wooden guardian figures in the tombs of the fourth century BC seem to embody its descriptions of strange spirits.

Yu Weichao(l40) discusses how in the state of Chu, texts such as the fourth century BC poetry gathered together in the *Chu ci* (*The Elegies of Chu*), reveal the interest of the inhabitants of the southern area in *wu*, that is, priests who acted as intermediaries between mankind and the spirit world. The term *wu* is sometimes translated as 'shaman', but Yu Weichan suggests that the use of a term more commonly applied to quite different cultures is perhaps misleading. The *wu* are described in the *Chu ci* as interceding with spirits and gods. In addition, long journeys through the universe are described:

> I bade heaven`s porter open his barrier,
> And stand by his gate awaiting my arrival.
> I summoned Feng Long; I made him ride ahead
> And ask the way to the Palace of Mystery.
>
> Passing through the Bright Walls I entered the House of God,
> Visited the Week Star and gazed on the Pure City.
> In the morning I set off from the Court of Heaven;
> In the evening Wei-lu came in sight below.
>
> I marshalled in order my ten thousand chariots
> And moved slowly forwards in splendid procession.
> Eight dragons drew my car, coiling and curvetting;
> Over it a cloud-banner flapped upon the wind.(141)

Also to be found in Chu are traces of other religions and philosophical ideas, especially those associated with the school known as Huang-Lao, which represented an amalgam of interest in the legendary Yellow Emperor and in Lao Tzu,to whom the foundation of philosophical Taoism is credited. Little was known about this school until a cache of manuscripts on silk was discovered in 1973 in tomb M3 at Mawangdui, in Hunan province. These manuscripts revealed the strength of this school of thought in the area of the former Chu state. Such ideas, according to Yu Weichan, contributed to the rise of Taoism, in the meaning of that word as referring to those folk religious beliefs that developed into a series of concepts of the afterlife, and of the deities who were believed to direct both the underworld and the celestial spheres.

Further evidence for the role of Chu in the gradual development of a new concept of the afterlife, including the paradises of the immortals, comes from another find at Mawangdui, a banner painting found in the tomb of the wife of the Marquis of Dai, dating from the second century BC. This banner is literally a

picture of the universe as conceived at that date in the territory of the ancient Chu state. At the centre of the silk banner stands the tomb owner, Lady Dai, supported on a stick and attended by servants. Below her is the underworld with its strange monsters, and above her are the heavens, with the moon and the sun. Large dragons prance beyond the gates of heaven.

The influence of the powerful state of Chu does not seem to have abated with the overthrow of its capital in 223 BC. This is nowhere more evident than in the finds from Mawangdui, which date from the century following the downfall of Chu. If, as is generally accepted, the coffins and banner painting at Mawangdui are products of changes in Chinese attitudes to the afterlife which became linked with religious Taoism, it is likely that a number of the features of religious Taoism were already germinating in the influential state of Chu during the preceding centuries. Although Taoism probably acquired features from many other parts of ancient China also, there is early evidence for a number of them in the state of Chu.

Arthur Cotterell`s account in his *China. A History* , of the emergence of ancient religion in the early dynasties of Chinese civilization, from 'primitive' neolithic or even paleolithic beliefs and rituals, indicates that not only Taoism, but also state Confucianism can be seen as an evolution, and hierarchisation, of 'primitive' shamanism. The king, or Son of Heaven, was both a leader or headman and a shaman in one person, when seen in terms that belong to earlier, pre-class societies. Similarly, the earliest forms of science and technology in Chinese civilization can be viewed as developments from shamanistic magical belief-systems and explanations for natural events. More broadly, Cotterell`s account shows that popular religion and magic among the Chinese peasantry in Chinese civilization, evolved from ancient shamanism. Popular religion and magic fed in turn into what was to become Taoism, merging with a highly sophisticated philosophy that was essentially egalitarian, humane, trustful of the cosmos, and nature-loving. The complex of beliefs and spiritual sensibilities known as philosophical Taoism, had at their core an inclination to attune to the inscrutable yet magnificent Tao, the moving, changing, growing, mystery of nature. And it was this experience which was absolutely of the essence of later Chinese landscape painting, especially in the Sung, Yuan, and Ming dynasties.

Behind the funeral megalomania of the Shang kings, entirely typical of the Bronze Age, argues Cotterell, stood a body of religious ideas and cultic practices which were later transformed by Confucianism into the state religion of China. For the continuity of the Shang and Early Zhou eras, through into the remainder

of Chinese history down till the abolition of the empire in 1912, lies in the rites of ancestor worship performed by a priest-king.

Shang religion was bound up with divine justification of the Shang state. It was believed that Shang Di, the high god of Heaven, conferred benefits on his descendents in the way of good harvests and victories on the battlefield, and that through divination the advice of the king`s immediate ancestors could be sought about actions most pleasing to the supreme deity. Hence the worry of Pan Geng lest his people dally in an unlucky capital. By the reign of Di Xin there were few days in the year when the ruler was not occupied with one sacrifice or another that he had to offer to his ancestral spirits. It was from these rituals that he obtained answers to the problems which beset him. The Shang monarchy rested on a constant communion between the living and the dead.

All earthly power emanated from the One Man, the king who was Son of Heaven; only he possessed the authority to ask for the ancestral blessings, or counter the ancestral curses, which affected society. Political power was inextricably linked with spiritual power, and the ruler by his harmonious relation with the spiritual realm, ensured the welfare of the state - a concept that became in Confucian theory the basis of the right to enforce obedience. The unworthiness of a monarch would always be reflected in the attitude of Heaven, just as "the earth shook" and "rivers dried up" during the last years of both Jie and Di Xin. In this context later imperial interest in seismology is readily explained; the scientist Zhang Heng devised for the palace the first known practical seismograph in about AD 130.

With the passing away of the feudal courts through imperial unification in 221 BC, ancestor worship ceased to be the preserve of a ruling aristocracy and gradually permeated every class of society. At last the humblest peasant perceived himself as a member of an extended kinship group, which encompassed the dead, the living, and the yet to be born. He was not only grateful to his ancestors for what his own family enjoyed, but was responsible to them for improving the lot of the next generation.

The idea of feeding the dead, however, was a widespread prehistoric legacy and not peculiarly Chinese. On the edge of Hades, the Odyssey tells us that Odysseus performed similar rites to attract the shade of the seer Tiresias. Having "cut the throats of sheep over a trench so that the dark blood poured in," Odysseus "sat on guard, sword in hand, and prevented any feckless ghosts from approaching

the blood before Tiresias came." In ancient China it was looked upon as a very serious matter if the ancestral spirits were unable to "eat blood" (*xieshi*) because of their descendents` political impotence. That is why, after the Shang deposition of the Xia dynasty, arrangements were put in hand for the maintenance of sacrifices to the deceased members of the Xia royal clan.

When the Shang was replaced by the Zhou dynasty the ceremonies performed by the Son of Heaven continued without interruption. The *Book of History* is quite emphatic about the transfer of the Mandate: it states that Wu "presented a burnt offering to Heaven and worshipped towards the hills and rivers, solemnly announcing the successful completion of the war." To all intents and purposes the ritual remained the same, especially as the Zhou adopted the Shang name for Heaven. Expedient as this decision was, the Zhou rulers could not shake off entirely a feeling of insecurity in respect of the earlier Shang rulers` ancestors. They invested the supreme deity with greater power, more universal qualities, but an apprehensiveness is still evident in the *Book of Odes*. Although Shang Di`s bounty sustains 'the multitudes,' the peace it brings is only preserved by unrelenting human effort.

Worship of the Earth was also a duty initially reserved for the ruler. The earthen altar platforms at Zhengzhou and Anyang were probably built for royal ceremonies intended to aid harvests. Emperors were required to turn the first furrow of the spring ploughing.

In essence, a shaman raises spirits - of animals and plants, demons, gods, ancestors, heroes, or more generalised, abstract forces and powers - through incantatory recitations and chants, tries to steer their powers or move with them to his own or his community`s advantage, and flies among the spirits to discover the causes of both good and bad things in the worlds of both nature and culture. Chinese landscape painters, for all their aristocratic sophistication, recreated a spirit-world within nature, on bamboo, silk, or paper. Such a generalization stands, I think, in spite of the very varied attitudes and theories that prevailed among Chinese landscapists, both over time and between the different types of artist that existed at any one time in the history of Chinese civilization. They and the viewers of their paintings - not rooted to a fixed observation point as are the viewers of much Western, especially Italian Renaissance, painting, which is based on 'scientific' perspective and a single vanishing point – move and fly around in their worlds of imagined nature.

Calligraphy, poetry, and painting are interconnected arts in China - the Three Wisdoms - which are all rooted in a magical notion of addressing the spirit-world. It is in connection with this magical notion that I believe the central claims of this essay can be validated.

Landscape painting in the Chinese tradition is an exploration of supersensible spirit through perception of the sensuous realities of nature. Like much Western landscape painting - especially that of fifteenth century Flanders, and later Romantic nature painting - it is pantheistic; the divine, or spirit, is nature, as it is for Dirc Bouts, Gerard David, Patenir, Constable or Turner. It is not a mirror-like naturalism; it is the painter`s mind that creates the spiritualized nature of the painting. And again, as with fifteenth century Flemish realism, though details of nature in a Chinese landscape painting may be exact or accurate, the whole is similarly distilled, archetypal, reconstructed, generalised. For both fifteenth century Flemish and much Chinese landscape painting, nature is presented in a manipulated spatial composition. Formal, artistic, and psychological considerations all weigh heavily; powerfully real-seeming images have a compelling internal artistic sensibility that moulds and shapes their illusionism. Nature is fact, symbol, and ideal all at once; a landscape painting is a convincingly real vision of nature`s depths as well as a personal, individual, human vision of nature.

Yet the transcendental meanings that are found in the nooks and crannies, the forms, lines, shapes, and movements of nature are those of the Tao, not merely an expression of the painter`s subjectivity. Thus, as for the Western painters mentioned above - who were either pantheistic Christians and/or Romantics - the spirit of the painter communes and connects with that of the universe of nature in the act of painting landscape, which in turn communes and connects with that of the sensitized, perceptive viewer of the painting. It is this complex dialectical interaction between mind and nature, between the spontaneous creativity of the artist and the spontaneous, creative processes of the Tao in nature - addressed by Shelley thus:

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn`s being

- that seems very much to be a development, or reappearance within these different civilizations, of the essential characteristics of a primordial shamanism. These essential characteristics, as discussed in Mircea Eliade`s book *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, have probably been present in all human societies at the paleolithic and neolithic 'stages' of culture; they have developed

further in very different ways in the different forms of complex civilization that have evolved from these earlier 'stages'. The creative-ecstatic trance of shamanism became the essence of a great and wonderful tradition of landscape painting in traditional China. As in the West, the development of the idea of 'natural beauty' occurred in tandem and in interaction with 'artistic beauty'; neither concept exists within the culture of shamanism in pre-civilized societies. But a distinct complex of phenomena associated with creative-ecstatic, mystical trance-like experience exists in both 'primitive' and 'civilized' societies. The aestheticization of this essential experience in the latter, retains the most fundamental of the earlier features; perhaps they are intrinsic and unremovable from the human psyche and from human culture of any sort. Similarly, the fundamental shamanistic derivation of human strengths from the spirit-world, and the obtaining of useful and powerful knowledge from it, is retained in the spiritual guidance, sustenance, and education (to use some, always unsatisfactory, words) that can be derived from an aesthetic experience of Chinese landscape painting.

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