

On?”

Around 1920, C. G. Jung wrote in *Psychological Types* (C. W. 6): “Anarchism, regicide, the constant increase and splitting off of a nihilistic element on the extreme Left, with a programme absolutely hostile to culture – these are phenomena of mass psychology, which were long ago adumbrated by poets and creative thinkers.” (§322) In writing these words, Jung himself was a creative thinker adumbrating (*ad*, toward + *um-bra*, shadow: foreshadowing) what is appearing now in mass psychology: pre-emptive war, violence, terrorism, global disaster, hostility to culture, not only from the “Left” but also from the “Right.” A nihilistic – tending toward nothingness, destruction, death – element is increasing and seems unconnected to the rest of collective – and often individual – awareness. It feels to me that the world is dying, being killed or at least negated by slowly mounting, quietly unrelenting forces. Yet people come into this MacDonal’d’s restaurant, hungry for lunch, apparently unconscious of imminent destruction, which I myself don’t like to think about for very long.

I go to read some more in Jung now because, like Marvin Gaye, I am wondering what is going on. Marvin Gaye, an outstanding musician with soul and sensitivity to his time, was killed by his father, a minister as I recall, for preventing the father from beating the mother. Who has any words that can talk about that death? Silence may be better. But I have to go to a musician, poet, or creative thinker; I need help to keep on living. I go back to the beginning of the section from which I quoted Jung’s sentence.

In Section V, Jung is considering a poetic work of Carl Spitteler, *Prometheus and Epimetheus* (published in 1881) as it shows the conflict of the “forethinker” and the “afterthinker” as “a struggle between the introverted and extra-verted lines of development in one and the same individual, though the poet has embodied it in two independent figures and their typical destinies.” (§276) The two figures who appear in Spitteler’s work are thus distinct yet, at the same time, inseparable parts of an individual. Each represents a one-sided attitude toward the world. For Prometheus, objective reality is soul, the stream of living experience, what Jung sometimes calls “the contents of the unconscious.” For Epimetheus, objective reality is spatial things, the flux of changing materials, what Jung sometimes calls “the things of the outside world.” The two attitudes are non-independent of each other; they depend on each other in order to exist. For “outer” is meaningless without “inner,” just as “experienced world” is impossible without “experiencing subject,” even though our current prejudice draws us to believe that the world exists on its own, without subjectivity.

Now I go up to the counter and order “asian salad,” as I too am hungry, and have to wait here until my car is repaired. I use a plastic bowl, cover, and utensils, that soon will go to some dump and leak their plastic into the ground, or will be incinerated and leak their plastic into the air. I have just contributed to global poisoning, by staying here and writing on my laptop about world problems. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in a little café in Paris, a lot classier than this place, and less involved in global damage. He had it good.

Meanwhile, Prometheus and Epimetheus each in turn are trying to get the ego on his side. I have read this work of Jung’s several times during the last twenty years, while in Maine, and, now in Portland for a few days, I am back at this book again. I



Joan Miró—*Ciphers and Constellations, in Love with a Woman*, 1941

had thought I would be reading just paragraphs 318-370 in preparation for teaching Asian Studies next trimester, but I have somehow gotten involved in other pages. That line about the nihilistic element drew me in.

So, consciousness has two attitudes: “the Promethean, which withdraws the libido from the world, introverting without giving out, and the Epimethean, constantly giving out and responding in a soulless fashion, fascinated by the claims of external objects.” (§310) When either one of these alone wins the energies of the ego, “enantiodromia” sets in. Jung defines the term, in Section XI of this book: “enantiodromia” is a “running counter to.” (§708) He says that, in the philosophy of Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic thinker from whom we have only fragments, the term is used to “designate the play of opposites in the course of events – the view that everything that exists turns into its opposite.” (§708) Jung then quotes some of the fragments of Heraclitus: “It is the opposite which is good for us. . . . Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre. . . . The bow (βίος) is called life (βίος), but its work is death. . . . The way up and the way down are the same.” (§708)

In copying these sentences from Heraclitus, I encounter a warning on my laptop screen that my battery is about to die and that I must plug my computer into some electrical power source. I see no outlets on any wall here. This is no Starbucks. I ask a counter person, a food server, “a manager in a blue shirt” as she calls herself (I recall reading that MacDonal’d’s has stretched the term “manager” to include any supervisor of any area, so that its laborers cannot join labor unions or demand labor rights), if I might plug in an extension cord for my laptop. She says, “Oh, yes, set it up right here,” and points to the little table closest to the food counter, where, actually, upon entering this place this morning, I had imagined going for access to power. My cord

now goes to a wall outlet inside the work area. I am at this moment connected into the cooking place. Jean-Paul Sartre did not have the ability or the need to plug into a power source; moreover, readers of his 800-page *Being and Nothingness* complained that he did not have an eraser. Now it's my turn to have things, Jean-Paul. The other side does emerge in the course of time.

But, I ask myself, what in our times has been building up as a counterposition (now that I have a position here at the food counter), and what conscious position of our times might be about to lose energy or die?

One conscious position that has to go is the uncritical "scientific" assumption that all is matter – that everything is made up of atoms, and that genes, as molecular complexes, cause us to be what we are. Even our thoughts, memories, and feelings are considered, in this viewpoint, to arise ultimately from atomic, genetic, or molecular sources in our ancestors, our environment, and our drugs. This viewpoint is an exaggerated extraverted attitude, inasmuch as it reduces objective reality to matter in space, as though spirit and soul were only functions of material conditions and nothing in their own right. A corollary to "all is matter" is the opinion that having money will solve all our problems. But how long can we seriously hold this view? Or, as Jung writes: "What is rationally correct is too narrow a concept to grasp life in its totality and give it permanent expression." (§319) But this current assumption is not even rationally correct.

A counterposition is gaining energy. In its extreme, it appears to be death of the world. We are on our way towards being cooked and flooded by global warming. We are involved in extremely costly violence in Iraq. A father kills a son. A friend died; I will die. Does this death mean the end of spirit and soul? When the material conditions are destroyed, do individual personality and cultural accomplishment cease to exist?

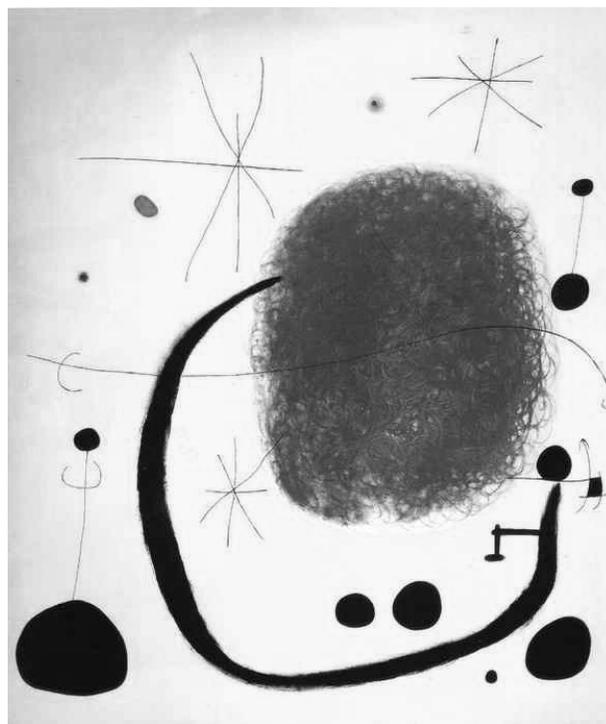
Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) studied the flux of awareness for most of his life. As a philosopher, he repeatedly turned his attention to the flow of living experience, the thoughts, feelings, sensations, hopes, hunches, memories, and so on, that he had, as some instances of what we have. He came to recognize that "the world" is indeed the world that is given in appearances to awareness. The world is inseparable from subjective experiencing of the world, in the widest sense of "subject." Appearances or "phenomena" are not concrete things, but rather abstract "things," in the widest sense of "thing." Moments of appearing occur in time, and appearances of some sort are given to us all the time, but they are not spatial, concrete things. Rather, through them, spatial concrete things appear to us, as real, as existing beyond us. We know ourselves in the same manner, through appearances of ourselves to ourselves.

Appearances occur from moment to moment; notice what is appearing to you now and how it is given. Practice that noticing for a while and you will find that soul, spirit, the flow of awareness, the flux of consciousness, does indeed exist as itself, as irreducible to any of the concrete things it makes present. The discovery of the actual and inexorable existence of what Jung calls "the contents of the unconscious" (what we were not noticing) does not mean that matter no longer exists. Rather, the discovery is an emergence of an opposite but now much needed attitude that, as Heraclitus says, "is good for us." For it is a

variance, an opposite tension, an attunement of a bow that is "called life . . . but its work is death."

The opposites are "distinct yet inseparable" – I take this phrase from Husserl, not from Jung. In describing phenomena of awareness, Husserl finds it necessary to distinguish concrete parts of real, sensate things that are given in experience from abstract parts of appearances themselves, such as the appearing moments of experiencing. He calls the former "relatively independent parts" and the latter "non-independent parts." Mutually non-independent parts are distinct, yet cannot exist without each other, just as, for example, color and visual extension cannot exist without each other. Try to see, or even just imagine, some color, even a vague one, existing without some extension it exists *in*. Similarly, try to see or imagine some visual extension without some kind or degree of color *in* it. Now you have an example of mutually non-independent parts, or aspects of phenomena, that need each other in order to exist. They are "only distinct, however, not separated," as Husserl says in describing moments of time. (*The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, §41)

The way up and the way down are mutually non-independent; one cannot exist without the other existing too. They are parts of a whole, a continuum that they help make up. Nevertheless, it is serious business to distinguish them. Extraversion is not introversion; matter is not spirit; a dead battery is not a power source. Yet one leads to the other. I would not have found the power outlet in the kitchen area had my laptop battery not died. I would not have written this article if I had not been seriously alarmed about our situation in the world. We might not recognize how important it is to notice the flow of our awareness and to persist in our attention to subjectivity were destruction of the world not threatened. Our conscious position may well be wrong and, at the very least, it is inadequate without its counterposition, *without which it cannot exist*. We might want to notice and distinguish what is killing us ■



Joan Miró—*The Gold of the Azure*, 1967