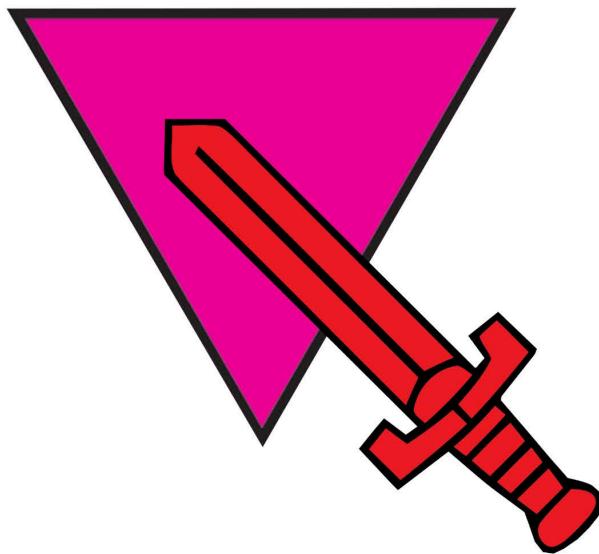


# CONTRA Matriarchy



SELECTIONS FROM  
JULIUS EVOLA



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*The Civilization of the Mother*

In order to undertake this kind of research successfully, it is necessary to provide a more exact typological characterization of the forms of civilization that followed the primordial one. First of all, I will discuss the notion of the "civilization of the Mother." The characteristic trait of this civilization is a transposition into the metaphysical of the view of woman as the principle and substance of generation; a goddess expresses the supreme reality, while every being, conceived as a son or daughter, appears next to her as something conditioned, subordinated, lacking life in itself, and ephemeral. This is the type of the great Asiatic-Mediterranean goddesses of life, such as Isis, Asherat, Cybele, Tanit, and especially Demeter (Ceres to the Romans), a central figure in the Pelasgic-Minoan cycle.

The representation of the solar principle as a child resting on the lap of the Great Mother, suggesting that it was generated from her; the Egyptian-Minoan representations of queens or divine women holding the lotus and the key to life; Ishtar, celebrated by one of the most ancient recorded hymns with the words: "There is no true god besides you," and who is often referred to as Ummu ilani, "the Mother of the gods"; the various allusions, often with cosmological transpositions, to an alleged primacy of the "night" principle over the "day" principle arising from her bosom, and therefore of dark or lunar deities over manifested and diurnal ones; the ensuing characteristic sense of the "occult" as destiny and as a fatalistic law from which nobody can escape; the priority, in some archaic symbolisms (often connected with the lunar rather than with the solar measure of time) of the sign or of the god of the moon over that of the sun (see for instance the primacy enjoyed by the Babylonian god Sin over Shamash) and the inversion whereby the moon was sometimes portrayed as a masculine deity and the sun as a feminine deity; the part assigned to the principle of the waters and to the relative cult of the serpent and of analogous entities; and also, on a different plane, the subordination of Adonis to Aphrodite, Virbius to Diana, some forms of Osiris (who was transformed from his original solar form into a lunar god of the waters) to Isis, Iacchus to Demeter, the Asiatic Heracles to Miliatas—all of these examples seem to point in the same direction.

Little statues of the Mother with child dating back to the Neolithic are found everywhere in the Southern Hemisphere, from Mesopotamia to the Atlantic. In the civilization of Crete, where the homeland was called "motherland" (*μετρίς*) rather than "fatherland" (*πατρίς*), which also exhibits a specific relation with the Atlantic-Southern civilization and with the substratum of even more ancient cults in the South, the gods were believed to be mortal; just like summer, every year they underwent death. In Cretan civilization Zeus (Teshub) did not have a father, and his mother was the humid soil; the "woman" was therefore at the beginning, while the god himself was a "generated" and mortal being and his sepulcher was shown from generation to generation on Crete's Mount Iouktas.

Conversely, the unchanging feminine substratum of every form of life was believed to be immortal. According to Hesiod's Theogony, when the shadows of Chaos are dispersed, the black goddess Gaia (*μέλατιν γαῖα*), a feminine principle, makes her appearance. Gaia generates her own male or bridegroom without a spouse, after producing the "great mountains," the Ocean, and the Pontus; Gaia's entire divine offspring, which Hesiod lists following a tradition that should not be confused with that of the pure Olympian stock, is portrayed as a world subject to movement, change, and becoming.

On a lower plane, and on the basis of traces that have been preserved until the earliest recorded historical times, it is possible to recognize in some of the Asiatic Mediterranean cults ritual expressions that characterize this inversion of values. Take, for instance, the Sacchean and Phrygian festivals. The Sacchean festivals, which were celebrated in honour of the great Goddess, culminated in the slaying of a person who represented the male regal figure.

The dismissal of the virile element on the occasion of the celebration of the Goddess was also found in a dramatic way in the castrations performed during Cybele's Mysteries: sometimes the priests who felt possessed by the Goddess would go so far as emasculating themselves in order to resemble her and to become transformed into the female type, which was conceived as the highest manifestation of the sacred. Moreover, from the temples of Astarte and of Artemis at Ephesus to Hieropolis the priests were often eunuchs. Consider the following: (a) the Lydian Hercules, dressed as a woman, who for three years serves the imperious Omphales, who was a type of the divine woman like Seramis; (b) the fact that those who participated in some Mysteries consecrated to Heracles or to Dionysus often wore women's clothes; (c) the fact that priests dressed in women's clothes would keep watch in the sacred woods by some ancient Germanic trees; (d) the ritual inversion of sex whereby some statues of Nana Ishtar in Susa and of Venus in Cyprus would display masculine features, and whereby women dressed as men and men dressed as women celebrated their cult; and finally (e) the Pelasgic-Minoan offering of broken weapons to the Goddess and the usurpation of the sacred Hyperborean warrior symbol of the battle-axe by Amazonian figures and southern goddesses—all of these instances represent the fragmentary, materialized, and distorted echoes, none of them any less characteristic, of the overall view according to which (as the feminine became the fundamental symbol of sacredness, strength, and life) the masculine element and men in general came to be looked down upon as irrelevant, innerly inconsistent, ephemeral, of little value, and as a source of embarrassment.

Mater = Earth, gremium matris terrae. This equivalence suggests a main point, namely, that in the type of civilizations with Southern roots it is possible to include all the varieties of cults, myths, and rituals in which the chthonic theme predominates; in which the masculine element appears; and in which not only goddesses but gods of the earth, of growth, natural fertility, the waters, or the subterranean fire are to be found. The Mothers presided over the subterranean world and the occult, conceived of in terms of night and darkness and in opposition to coelum, which also suggests the generic idea of the invisible, though in its higher, luminous, and heavenly aspect. Moreover, there is a fundamental and well-known opposition between the Deus,

the type of the luminous deities of the Indo-European pantheon, and Al, who is the object of the demonic, ecstatic, and frenzied cult of the dark southern races that lack any contact with what is truly supernatural. In reality, the infernal-demonic element, or the elemental kingdom of the subterranean powers, defines the lower aspect of the cult of the Mother.

In opposition to all this there is the "Olympian", immutable, and a cosmic reality bathed in the light of a world of intelligible essences (κόσμος νοητός), and sometimes dramatized in the form of gods of war, victory, splendour, or heavenly fire. If in southern civilizations (in which the feminine, telluric cult predominates) burial was the prevalent funerary rite, while cremation was practiced among civilizations of northern and Aryan origin, this reflects the above mentioned view; namely, that the destiny of the individual was not to become purified from earthly residues and to ascend to heavenly regions, but rather to return to the depths of the Earth and to become dissolved into the chthonic Magna Mater, who was the source of his ephemeral life. This explains the subterranean rather than heavenly location of the kingdom of the dead, which is typical of the most ancient ethnic strata of the South. According to its symbolical meaning, the burial of the dead was characteristic of the cycle of the Mother.

Generally speaking, it is possible to establish a relationship between feminine spirituality and pantheism, according to which ultimate reality is conceived as a great sea into which the nucleus of an individual merges and becomes dissolved like a grain of salt. In pantheism, personality is an illusory and temporary manifestation of the one undifferentiated substance, which is simultaneously spirit and nature as well as the only reality; in this *weltanschauung* there is no room for any authentically transcendent order. It is necessary to add—and this will be a key factor when assessing the meaning of later cycles—that those forms in which the divine is conceived of as a person represent a mixed and yet similar thing; in these forms we find a connection between the naturalistic relationship of generation and creation of man and the corresponding pathos of utter dependence, humility, passivity, surrender, and renunciation of one's will.

Strabo's opinion (*Geographia*, 7.3.4), according to which prayer was taught to man by woman, is very significant in this regard. I had previously suggested that the materialization of true virility is the inevitable counterpart of the feminization of spirituality. This motif, which will introduce further modifications of various civilizations during the Bronze or Iron Age, helps to characterize other aspects of the civilization of the Mother.

When we compare femininity with virility understood in material terms, such as physical strength, harshness, and violent affirmation, it is only natural that the woman, owing to her characteristics of sensitivity, self-sacrifice, and love—not to mention the mystery of procreation—was regarded as the representative of a higher principle; she was even able to acquire authority and to appear as an image of the universal Mother.

Thus, it is not a contradiction that in some instances, spiritual and even social gynaecocracy did not appear in effeminate but in violent and bellicose societies. Indeed, the general symbol of the Silver Age and of the Atlantic cycle was not a demonically telluric or a coarsely naturalistic symbol (as in the case of the cycle of the coarse prehistoric feminine idols), but one in which the feminine principle was elevated to a higher form, almost like in the ancient symbol of the Moon as a purified or heavenly Earth (*οὐρανή αιθερίη λ*), and as such, ruling over anything terrestrial; a spiritual or moral authority was therefore bestowed upon femininity that predominates over purely material and physical virile instincts and qualities.

We find this higher form in those regions where the entities that not only safe-guard natural customs and laws, avenge sacrilege, and punish misdeeds (from the northern women to the Erinyes, Themis, and Dike), but that also mediate the gift of immortality are portrayed as female. This form was usually characterized as Demetrian and it was associated with chaste symbols of virgins or mothers who conceive without a male partner, or with goddesses of vegetal fertility and crops such as Ceres. A true opposition exists between the Demetrian and the Aphrodisitic type. This differentiation may be associated with the opposition found in Far Eastern countries between the "Pure Land" inhabited by the "Western Woman" and the subterranean world of Emma-O; in the Hellenic traditions this opposition existed between the symbol of Athena and the symbol of the Gorgons whom she fights. The pure and peaceful Demetrian spirituality, portrayed as the moon's light, characterized the type of the Silver Age and, most likely, the cycle of the first Atlantic civilization; historically, however, it was not the original spirituality, but rather a product of an ensuing transformation.

Effective forms of gynaecocracy developed in those places where the symbol became a reality; traces of it can be found in the most ancient substratum of several civilizations. Just as leaves are not born one from another but derive from the trunk, likewise, although man produces life, it is woman who begets it.

The son does not perpetuate the race, but merely enjoys an individual existence circumscribed to the time and place in which he happens to live; real continuity abides in the feminine-motherly principle. Hence, as a consequence, the woman as mother was the center and the foundation of a people's or a family's laws and the genealogical transmission took place through the feminine bloodline. By transposition, if we go from the family to society at large, we arrive at structures of a collectivist and communist type. In reference to the unity of origin and to the maternal principle of which we are all the children, *aequitas* becomes *aequalitas*; relationships of universal brotherhood and equality are established; a sympathy reaching out beyond all boundaries and differences is affirmed; and a tendency to share whatever one possesses, which is considered to be a gift of Mother Earth, is encouraged. An echo of this motif is found in the fact that until recently, during festivals that celebrated chthonic goddesses and the return of men to the great Mother of Life (not without a revival of an orgiastic element typical of the lowest southern forms) all men felt themselves to be free and equal; caste and class distinctions no longer applied, but could freely be overturned; and a general licentiousness and pleasure in promiscuity

tended to be rather widespread.

On the other hand, the so called "natural law" and common promiscuity typical of several savage populations of a totemic type (Africa and Polynesia), up to the so-called Slavic mir, almost always point to the typical context of the "civilization of the Mother," even in those places in which matriarchy was not found and where, rather than mixed-variations of the primordial boreal civilization, we find remnants of tellurism inherent to inferior autochthonous races.

The communal theme, together with the ideal of a society that does not know wars and that is free and harmonious is found in various descriptions of the earlier ages, including the Golden Age and Plato's description of primordial Atlantis. But this, in my view, is merely due to mistaking a relatively recent memory with a more distant one. The "lunar" theme of peace and community in a naturalistic sense has little to do with those themes that characterized the first age.

Once we eliminate this misunderstanding and bring them back to their true setting (namely, to the second age of the Mother, or Silver rather than Golden Age), the above mentioned memories concerning a primordial, peaceful, and communitarian world close to nature and without conflicts and divisions, become very significant.

On the other hand, if we bring this order of ideas to its logical conclusion, we arrive at a morphological characterization of fundamental importance. In reference to what I have expounded in the first part of this work concerning the meaning of the primordial regality and the relationships between regality and priesthood, it is possible to see that the type of society ruled by a priestly class and yet dominated by "feminine" spirituality, which is characterized by the subordination of the spirit to priestly matters and the confinement of the regal function to a subordinated and material role—this type of society tends to be dominated by a gynaecocratic and lunar spirit or by a Demetrian form, especially if it is oriented toward the ideal of mystical unity and brotherhood. In opposition to a society articulated according to specific hierarchies and animated by a "triumphal" assumption of the spirit and culminating in regal superhumanity—this society reflects the truth of the Mother, but in one of its sublimated versions.

This version is in line with what probably characterized the best period of the Atlantic cycle, which was reproduced and preserved in the colonies that developed from the Pelasgic populations into the cycle of the great Asiatic Mediterranean goddesses of life.

Thus in myth and ritual, in the general views concerning life and the sacred, and in laws, ethics, and even social forms one finds specific elements. These elements can be found in the historical world only as fragments mixed together with other motifs, transposed to other planes, yet leading back, at least ideally, to the same basic orientation. This orientation corresponds to the Southern alteration of the primordial tradition and to the spiritual deviation from the "pole" that occurred, parallel to the change of location, in the mixed-variations of the original boreal stock and the civilizations of the "Silver Age." This is what must be held by those who accept the meanings of North and South—not only morphologically in relation to two universal types of civilization (it

is always possible to limit oneself to this minimalist view), but also as points of reference—in order to integrate into a higher meaning the dynamics and the struggle of historical and spiritual forces in the development of recent civilizations, in the latest phase of the "twilight of the gods."

### *Do We Live in a Gynaecocratic Society?*

Much has been written lately in Italy on J.J. Bachofen, a thinker of Basle and contemporary of Nietzsche, whose work of genius passed almost unnoticed in his lifetime, but is particularly studied today, especially in Germany. Bachofen mainly devoted himself to the exploration of the ancient civilisations of the classic and Mediterranean worlds, especially in their ethico-religious, symbolic and mythological aspects, and his fundamental idea in this area was that of an original opposition between heroic, 'solar', Olympian and virile spirituality and 'chthonic', 'lunar' and feminine spirituality. It is along these lines that he interpreted the religious conceptions, social systems, myths, symbols, and politico-legal forms of the ancient civilisations, noticing more and more the contrast and the interference between influences related to various forms of spirituality that can today be easily referred to distinct racial components of the archaic Mediterranean world: the 'solar' or 'Ouranic' civilisation, obviously related to Aryan races, and the 'chthonic' and feminine one, referred, on the contrary, to pre-Aryan or anti-Aryan races.

Bachofen's views, moreover, do not have only a retrospective value, they often offer important points of reference for understanding the most profound meaning of some aspects of our own modern civilisation, through often astounding relations of analogy. This is why we think that it may not be devoid of interest to develop a few considerations on this topic.

First of all, we would like to linger over the nature and the various aspects of this civilisation called by Bachofen the Mother's or gynaecocracy (from 'gyne' and 'krateia', that is to say: government by women) and that, to us, is identified with the anti-Aryan and pre-Aryan civilisation of the archaic Mediterranean.

The first distinctive feature of such a civilisation is 'tellurism' (from 'tellus', which, just like 'chthonos' 'hence the adjective 'chthonic" means 'earthly'). This civilisation considers the law of the earth to be the highest law. The earth is the Mother. Under the aspect of Divine Woman, of Great Mother of Life, it embodies what is eternal and unchanging. It remains identical to itself and inexorable, while all that it produces has a birth and a decline, has a purely individual finite and evanescent life. Stripped of any spiritual and supernatural virility, all that is force and manliness thus assumes an obscure, wild, in fact 'chthonic' and 'telluric' nature. And if 'telluric' generally makes one think of seismic phenomena, this association of ideas, to a certain extent, is sound. In the vision of the world in question, virility has for its prototypes divine figures such as Poseidon, also called the 'earthquaker', the god of chthonic subterranean and turbulent waters, analogically linked by the ancients to forces of passionality and instinct. More generally, the age or civilisation of the Mother is 'telluric', with reference to a sense of destiny, of necessity, of fatal evanescence, of life mixed with death, source of wild and irrepressible impulses.

To Bachofen, matriarchy, 'gynaecocracy', that of Demeter or of Aphrodite, in the latter of which the Divine Mother, unlike the ancient Demeter, had simultaneously sensual features, is the social consequence of this central view. Wherever the supreme principle is understood as a Great Mother (Magna Mater), the earthly woman, who appears as the closest incarnation thereof, comes to assume naturally a religious dignity and the highest authority. It is she who essentially appears as the giver of life, and, in relation to her, man is only an instrument. Under her motherly aspect, she thus embodies the law, she is the true basis and the centre of the family. As lover, under her Aphrodisian aspect, she is then again sovereign of the man who is merely slave of his senses and sexuality, merely the 'telluric' being that finds its rest and its ecstasy only in the woman. Hence the various types of royal Asian women with Aphrodisian features, above all in ancient civilisations of Semitic stock, and the queen-lovers from the hands of whom men receive the power and who become the centre of an extreme refinement of life, a sign of a civilisation essentially based upon the physical and sensual side of existence. But wherever the woman has 'Demetrian' more than 'Aphrodisian' features (the mythic Demeter mostly has a chaste motherly nature), she appears also as an Initiatrix in the ancient world, as the one that maintains and partakes of the highest mysteries. In a civilisation in which virility only means materiality, the woman, whether because of the enigma of generation or because of her subtle skills of devotion and charm, assumes religious features, and she becomes the point of reference of cults and initiations which promise a contact with the Mothers of Life, with cosmic spirituality, with the mystery of the bosom of the generative earth.

Two other characteristics of the type of civilisation in question ensue from this, namely the 'Dionysian' element and the 'lunar' element. The mystery of these elements, which can be mediated by a woman, cannot be the mystery of Olympian, Apollonian, solar spirituality, cannot be the one that is linked to the virile and heroic radiance of mortal existence, guided by the ideal of an existence that, according to the symbol offered by the solar and stellar natures of the sky, is free from any promiscuous admixture with matter and becoming and is subsisting and radiant light in itself.

This, by contrast, was the 'Ouranic' ideal (from 'ouranos', 'sky') that was specific to the other type of spirituality. The mystery of the Mother rather leads to something similar to a pantheistic dissolution. It is a formless liberation, achieved, not to say snatched, in disordered experiences in which the sensual element and the suprasensual one curiously mix and the 'telluric' side reasserts itself in the prevailing sense of the 'sacred orgy', in the mystic exaltation combined with any excess and all sorts of wild manifestations. Such was, in general, 'Dionysianism'.

This is why, in the ancient myth, Dionysos is always significantly accompanied by the Mothers of Nature, who assume mostly 'Aphrodisian' features ; historically, too, his cult was closely connected with the feminine sex and his most joyous and most enthusiastic proselytes were women.

In this connection, ‘lunarity’ has already been mentioned. The moon used to be called ‘celestial earth’. It was thus understood as a sublimation of the earthly, that is to say chthonic, element. It is light, not as radiant but as reflected light. It is light without a centre of its own; its centre, unlike the sun, lies outside of it, it is thus passive ‘feminine’ light – it is intimately connected with the formless spirituality of ecstasies and liberations that lies under the sign of Woman, while, on the other hand, it can be thought of a contemplativism, an abstraction or an understanding of abstract laws, instead of an essential ‘solar’ knowledge.

Now, it was a characteristic of the ancient civilisations of the Mother to confer on the Moon a pre-eminence over the Sun – in them, the Moon sometimes even becomes masculine in gender, the god Lunus, either to designate this primacy or to characterise the presumed negative side of virility. But what is also specific to the civilisation that we are analysing here is the idea of a primacy of Night over Day, of Darkness over Light. Darkness and Night are the motherly sacred element, the primordial and essential one: in the myth, Day is produced by Night, in which it dissolves again.

Two other aspects remain to be considered: the social promiscuity, or egalitarianism, and ‘Amazonism’. Bachofen, among his other merits, has that of bringing to light the ‘telluric’ and matriarchal origins of the so-called doctrine of natural right. The original premise of such a doctrine is precisely that all men, as sons of the Mother and beings also subjected to the law of earth, are equal, so that any inequality is an ‘injustice’, an outrage to the law of nature. Hence the connection that antiquity shows us between the plebeian element and its mother and chthonic cults and the fact that these ancient orgiastic and Dionysian feasts, which, together with the most extreme forms of licentiousness and sexual promiscuity, were meant to celebrate the return of men to the state of nature through the momentary obliteration of any social difference and of any hierarchy, were centred precisely on feminine divinities of the ‘telluric’ cycle, more or less directly derived from the type of the Great Mother of Life. As for ‘Amazonism’, Bachofen looked upon it as a variant of ‘gynaeocracy’. Wherever the woman does not manage to assert herself through her maternal religious element (‘Demetrian’), she tries to assert herself vis-a-vis man through a counterfeiting of the virile qualities of power and combativity.

Such are thus the fundamental features of the ‘Civilisation of the Mother’, characteristic, so to speak, of the pre-Aryan substratum of the ancient Mediterranean world. It was defeated by Apollonian, Dorian and Olympian Greece ; then, and even more completely, by ‘solar’ Rome, jealous guardian of the principle of paternal right and of the ideal of virile spirituality. However, since things are a process of constant renewal, the varieties of this ‘telluric’ culture manifest themselves again wherever a cycle ends, wherever the heroic tension and the constructive will vanish and decadent and debased forms of life and spirituality start to reappear.

Now, what is striking here is the correspondence of many aspects of contemporary civilisation to the civilisation of the Mother. In its external manifestations, this correspondence has already been noticed. “In the streets of Berlin, Paris or London,” as for instance A.Baeumler, a famous National-Socialist scholar, wrote, “all you have to do is to observe for a moment a man or a

woman to realise that the cult of Aphrodite is the one before which Zeus and Apollo had to beat a retreat... The present age bears, in fact, all the features of a gynaecocratic age. In a late and decadent civilisation, new temples of Isis and Astarte, of these Asian mother goddesses that were celebrated in orgies and licentiousness, in desperate sinking into sensual pleasure, arise. The fascinating female is the idol of our times, and, with painted lips, she walks through the European cities as she once did through Babylon. And as if she wanted to confirm Bachofen's profound intuition, the lightly dressed modern ruler of man keeps in leash a dog, the ancient symbol of unlimited sexual promiscuity and infernal forces". But these analogies can be much further developed.

Modern times are 'telluric', not only in their mechanistic and materialistic aspects, but also, and essentially, in several of their 'vitalist' aspects, in their various religions of Life, of the Irrational and of Becoming, precise antitheses of any 'classic' and 'Olympian' conception of the world. To Keyserling, many of the currents of the so-called 'world revolution' reveal a 'telluric' nature – that is to say irrational, mainly related to forms of courage, self-sacrifice, fervour and dedication without transcendent reference. In many cases, he is right.

With the advent of democracy, with the proclamation of the 'immortal principles' and the 'rights of man and citizen' and the subsequent development of these 'conquests' in Europe into Marxism and Communism, it is exactly the 'natural right', the leveling and anti-aristocratic law of the Mother, that the West has dug up, renouncing any 'solar' virile Aryan value and confirming, with the omnipotence so often granted to the collectivist element, the ancient irrelevance of the individual to the 'telluric' conception.

Dionysos reappears with modern romanticism : we have here the same love for the formless, the confused, the unlimited, the same promiscuity between sensation and spirit, the same antagonism towards the virile and Apollonian ideal of clarity, form and limit. Can the 'lunar' nature of the most widespread type of modern culture possibly be doubted? That is to say culture based on a pale and empty intellectualism, sterile culture separated from life, only capable of criticism, abstract speculation and vain mannered 'creativity': culture that has taken material refinement to the extreme and in which woman and sensuality often become predominant motifs almost to a pathological and obsessive degree.

And wherever the woman does not become the new idol of the masses under the modern forms of the movie 'star' and of similar fascinating Aphrodisian apparitions, she often asserts her primacy in new 'Amazonian' forms. Thus we see the new masculinised sportswoman, the garconne, the woman who devotes herself to the insane development of her own body, betrays her true mission, becomes emancipated and independent to the point of being able to choose the men that she would like to have and use. And this is not all.

In Anglo-Saxon civilisation, and particularly in America, the man who exhausts his life and time in business and the search for wealth, a wealth that, to a large extent, only serves to pay for feminine luxury, caprices, vices and refinements, has conceded to the woman the privilege and

even the monopoly of dealing with ‘spiritual’ things. And it is precisely in this civilisation that we see a proliferation of ‘spiritualist’, spiritistic, mystic sects, in which the predominance of the feminine element is already significant in itself (the main one, the theosophical sect, was purely and simply created and managed by women, Blavatsky, Besant and, finally, Bailey). But it is for a much more important reason that the new spiritualism appears to us as a sort of reincarnation of the ancient feminine mysteries: it is the formless escapism in confused suprasensual experiences, the promiscuity of mediumism and spiritualism, the unconscious evocation of truly ‘infernal’ influences and the stress laid on doctrines such as reincarnation, that confirm, in such pseudo-spiritualistic currents, the correspondence that we have already mentioned and prove that, in these misguided desires to go beyond ‘materialism’, the modern world has not managed to find anything that would connect it with the higher, Olympian and ‘solar’ traditions of Aryan spirituality.

Doesn’t psychoanalysis, with the preeminence it grants to the unconscious over the conscious, the ‘night’, to the subterranean, atavistic, instinctive, sensual side of the human being over all that is waking life, will and true personality, confirm again exactly the ancient doctrine of the primacy of Night over Day, of the maternal, of the Darkness over forms, supposedly evanescent and irrelevant, that rise from it to light?

It must be acknowledged that these analogies, far from being extravagant or arbitrary, are based on grounds that are broad and substantial and therefore gravely disturbing, since a new ‘Age of the Mothers’ can only be the sign of the end of a cycle. This is not, obviously, the world to which we belong and that is in harmony with the forces of our restorative revolution. However, infiltrations and deviations can be noticed even where they would be least expected. In Germany, we could mention Klages and Bergmann, thinkers who, though Aryan, still proclaim in a strikingly extreme way gynaecocratic and ‘telluric’ conceptions of life. In Italy, we will just pick out two cases. Here is what can be read on page 185 of a recently published ‘Inchiesta sulla Razza’ (‘Inquiry on Race’): “The furthest advance of humanity towards perfection is constituted by the woman. The woman really is the interpreter of the kingdom of pure spirits. She is purer and more perfect than man. And man feels an irresistible attraction towards her, the same attraction, but conscious, that a less pure being feels for the purest one”. On pp. 152-153 of another book, ‘Valori della Stirpe Italiana’ (‘Values of the Italian Race’), another layer of ‘gynaecocracy’ is added: “Around the woman, like the Holy Mother, the whole paradise revolves. Bosom of unnumerable lives, it is from the Mother that is born everything that lives in the world. From Night is born life, from Mother Earth that all is diffused. She is the living sacrament, just as the Bread implicitly contains the living God. The woman is thus the guardian and the symbol of race: its effects can be seen in all creatures, but it is in her that its fundamental substance is adored”.

The fact that, in Italy, within the reconstructive Roman and Aryan movement, ideas of this kind can be proclaimed, even as sporadic expressions, shows to what extent the confusion of values can sometimes be carried. The antitheses defined by Bachofen are of fundamental importance for

a right orientation. We have seen that the forms contained in the ancient civilisation of the Mother could allow us to identify accurately all that is crepuscular in the modern world. The values and ideals of the opposed solar 'Olympian' and virile civilisation can conversely give us, with as much accuracy, the directives for a true European reconstruction, on a really Aryan, Roman and Fascist basis, a point to which we may have the occasion to return.

From, "Revolt Against the Modern World"

*On the Primordial Nature of the Patriciate*

The Indo-Aryan civilization exemplifies one of the most thorough applications of the foregoing principles. In this civilization, the brähmana caste was not at the top of the social hierarchy by virtue of its material strength or its wealth, or even of its para-ecclesiastical organization; only the sacrificial rite, which was its privilege, determined its higher status vis-à-vis other castes.

By permeating those who performed them with some kind of dreadful and beneficial psychic power, the rite and the sacrifice allowed the brähmana to partake of the same nature as the evoked powers; not only would this quality abide in that person forever, making him directly superior to and revered and feared by others, but it would also be transmitted to his descendants. Having entered into the bloodstream as some sort of transcendent legacy, this quality would become the characteristic feature of a race that is activated in individuals by the rite of initiation.

The dignity of a caste was determined both by the difficulty and by the usefulness of the functions it exercised. Because of the above mentioned presuppositions, in the world of Tradition nothing was cherished more than the spiritual influences that the rite could activate through its necessitating action; nothing appeared as difficult as entering into a real and active relationship with the invisible forces that were ready to overcome the imprudent person who dared to confront them without possessing the necessary qualifications and knowledge. For this reason the brähmana caste, despite the fact that it was scattered throughout India, could evince the respect of the masses and enjoy a prestige that no tyrant ever enjoyed, no matter how well armed.

In China as well as in Greece and ancient Rome, the patriciate was essentially characterized by the possession and by the practice of those rites that were connected to the divine power emanating from the founder of a family. In China, only the patricians practiced the rites (yi-li), while the plebeians merely had customs (su). There is a Chinese saying: "The rites are not the legacy of ordinary people," which corresponds to the famous saying of Appius Claudius:

"Auspicia sunt patrum. "A Latin expression characterized the plebeians as gentem non habent: people who have no rites nor ancestors. This is why in ancient Rome the patricians viewed the plebeians' lifestyle and sexual coupling as similar to that of wild animals (more ferarum). Thus, the supernatural element was the foundation of the idea of a traditional patriciate and of legitimate royalty: what constituted an ancient aristocrat was not merely a biological legacy or a racial selection, but rather a sacred tradition. In fact, even an animal may have biological and racial purity.

After all, in the caste system the laws of blood, heredity, and endogamic restrictions did not apply only to the brāhmaṇa but to the other castes as well. It was not in this sense that the plebeian was said to lack ancestors: the true principle of the differentiation between patricians and plebeians was that the ancestors of the plebeian and of the slave were not "divine ancestors" (divi parentes) like the ancestors of the patrician stocks. No transcendent quality or "form" entrusted to a rigorous and secret ritual tradition was transmitted to them through the blood.

The plebeians lacked that power through which the members of the aristocracy could directly celebrate their own cults or be members of the priestly class (as was the case in the ancient classical world, in ancient Northern and Germanic races, in the Far East, and so on). The plebeians did not have the privilege of the second birth that characterized the ārya (the noble) and the Manudharmaśāstra does not hesitate to say that even an ārya is not superior to the śūdra until he has been born again.

The plebeians were not purified by any of the three heavenly fires that in ancient Iran were believed to act as the occult souls of the three higher castes in the empire. The plebeians also lacked the "solar" element that in ancient Peru characterized the race of the Incas. The plebeians' promiscuity had no limits; they had no true cult of their own, and in a higher sense they had no founding father (patrem cire non possunt).

Therefore the plebeians' religion could not help but have a collective and chthonic character. In India their religion was characterized by frenzied and ecstatic forms more or less connected to the substratum of pre-Aryan races. In the Mediterranean civilizations, the plebeians' religion was characterized by the cult of the mothers and by subterranean forces instead of the luminous forms of the heroic and Olympian tradition. The plebeians, who in ancient Rome were called "children of the Earth," had a religious devotion to the feminine deities of the earth. Even in China, the official aristocratic religion stood in contrast with the practices of those who were often called "obsessed" (ling-pao), and with the popular cults of a Mongolian and shamanic type.

We find the supernatural conception of the aristocracy also in ancient Teutonic traditions, not only because in these traditions every leader was at the same time the high priest of his people and of his lands, but also because claiming as an ancestor a divine being was enough to separate a family from all the others; a king was then chosen exclusively from among the members of these privileged families.

This is why the king enjoyed a different dignity from that enjoyed, for instance, by a military leader (dux or heritzogo) who was occasionally appointed in military situations on the basis of his recognized individual talents. It seems that ancient Norwegian kings celebrated the rites by themselves, without the help of the priestly class. Even among the so-called primitive populations those who had not been initiated were looked down upon by their own people and excluded from all the military and political privileges of their clan.

Before undergoing rites that were destined to transform one's innermost nature and that were often associated with hard trials and a period of isolation, a person was not considered to

be a true man but was rather seen as belonging to the same class as women, children, and animals. An individual became a member of the group of true men who control the community only through the new life awakened in him by initiation, almost as if he partook of a "mystery" or joined an order.

Once an individual partakes of this new life, which is almost "unrelated to the old one," he receives a new name, a new language, and new attributions. Thus, authors such as H. Schurtz have rightfully seen in this the germ of true political unity; this insight corroborates what I have said before concerning the plane proper to any traditional state, which is different from the plane typical of any unity built on merely naturalistic premises. These "virile groups" (in German, Männerbunde) to which one is admitted after a regeneration that truly confers manhood and differentiates a person from all other members of the community, enjoy power (imperium) and an undisputed prestige.

Only in recent times has aristocracy, like royalty, taken on a mere secular and political character. In the beginning, aristocracy and royalty were based on character, race, honor, valor, and faithfulness, on noblesse d'épée and on noblesse de cœur. In later times a plebeian view of the aristocracy arose that denied even the privileges of blood and tradition.

A typical example of the latter view is the so-called aristocracy of culture, or the aristocracy of intellectuals that arose as a by-product of bourgeois civilization. During a census taken in the reign of Frederick the Great, the head of an ancient German noble family humorously replied, "Analphabet wegen des hohen Adels," in reference to the ancient notion of the British lords who were considered "experienced in the law and learned, even though they may not know how to read."

The truth is that in the context of a normal hierarchical view, the principle that determined the precise ontological and essential differences between people and was at the basis of the notion of aristocracy and of its privileges was never "intellectuality" but rather "spirituality." The tradition was preserved, though in an attenuated form, up to the time of the knightly nobility where it was embodied in a somewhat ascetical and sacral aspect in the great medieval orders. At that point the nobility already had its main reference point in the sacred, not in but outside itself and in a separate class, namely, the clergy, although the clergy represented a spirituality that was still a far cry from the spirituality of the primordial elites.

The ritual and sacral element was the foundation of the authority of both the higher castes and of the father in the ancient patrician family. In Western Aryan societies such as Greece and Rome, the pater familias originally enjoyed a status similar to that of the priest-king. The term pater was synonymous with king (hence the words rex, ἄνωξ, βασιλεὺς; it conveyed the idea of a spiritual authority as well as that of power and majestic dignity. According to some views with which I totally concur, the state is an application on a larger scale of the same principle that in the beginning constituted the patrician family.

Therefore the Pater, though he was the military leader and the lord of justice of his relatives and slaves, in *primis et ante omnia* was the person entrusted with performing those traditional rites and sacrifices proper to every family, the rites and sacrifices that constituted its nonhuman legacy.

This legacy, which emanated from the founding father, was represented by fire (for example, the thirty fires of the thirty families surrounding the central fire of Vesta, in ancient Rome). This fire, which was fed with special substances and lit according to specific rituals and secret norms; was supposed to be kept burning at all times by every family as the living and tangible witness of its divine legacy. The father was the virile priest in charge of tending to the sacred family fire, but he was also one who must have appeared like a "hero" to his children, relatives, and servants; or like the natural mediator of every efficacious relationship with the supernatural; or like the supreme vivifier of the mystical force of the ritual, which was present in the substance of fire; or like the incarnation of "order," as Agni was to the Indo-Aryans; or like the principle that "brings the gods to us"; or like "the firstborn from order"; or like "the son of strength"; or like "he who leads us away from this world, to higher dimensions, into the world of the right action."

The Pater's main responsibility was to prevent the "fire from going out" so that it might continue to reproduce, perpetuate, and nourish the mystical victory of the ancestor; this responsibility to the fire was the manifestation of the "regal" component of his family, with the Pater being the "lord of the spear and of the sacrifice." In this way the Pater really constituted the center of the family; the entire rigorous constitution of traditional paternal rights flowed from this center as a natural consequence, and it subsisted even when the awareness of its primordial foundation was lost. In ancient Rome, anyone who like the Pater had the *ius quiritium* (the right to bear the lance and to perform sacrifices), also had the right to own land; his privileges could never be abrogated. He spoke on behalf of the gods and on account of power.

Just like the gods, he expressed himself through symbols and signs. He was immaterial. Originally, it was not possible (*nulla auctoritas*) to prosecute a patrician legally, since he was regarded as a minister of the gods, just like the king in recent times. If the patrician committed a crime in his *mundus*, the Curia would only declare that he did something wicked (*improbare factum*).

His rights over his relatives were absolute: *ius vitae necisque*. His superhuman character made it natural for him to sell and even to put to death his own children, at his own discretion. It was in this spirit that the articulations of what Vico rightly called "natural heroic rights" or "divine rights of heroic people" were formulated.

According to a patrician tradition the rite, which corresponded to a "Uranian" component, enjoyed primacy over other elements of the same tradition that were related to nature; this can be established from several aspects of the ancient Greco-Roman laws. It has rightfully been said that:

In antiquity what united the members of a family was something more powerful than birth, feelings and physical strength: it was the cult of the hearth and of the ancestors. This cult shaped the family into a united body, both in this world and in the next. The ancient family was more a religious than a natural association.

The common ritual constituted the true bond of the family's unity and often even of the gens itself. If an outsider was allowed to participate in the common rite, he thereby became an adoptive son who enjoyed those privileges that could also be taken away from a biological son guilty of neglecting the rite of his family, or from a son who was interdicted from participating in it. This obviously meant that according to the traditional idea, rite rather than blood had the power to unite or to differentiate people.

In India, Greece, and Rome, a woman had to mystically join her future husband's family or gens through the rite; the bride, before being a man's bride, was the bride of Agni or the mystical fire. Those who were allowed to participate in the cult proper of a patrician stock were thereby allowed to enjoy an ennobling mystical participation that conferred upon them some of the privileges of that particular stock, while at the same time they committed their future offspring to it. Consequently, it is possible to understand the sacred aspect of the feudal principle as it previously emerged in ancient

Egypt, since through the mystical "gift of life" emanating from him, the king gathered around himself a body of faithful subjects who were elevated to the priestly dignity. Analogous ideas can be found in Peru among the Incas, the "Children of the Sun," and to a certain extent, even among the Japanese feudal nobility.

In India one finds the idea—which should be reduced to the doctrine of the "sacrifices" in general—of a family line of male descendants (primogeniture) that is strictly related to the problem of immortality. The firstborn—who alone has the right to invoke Indra, the heavenly warrior god—is seen as the one whose birth frees the father of his debt to the ancestors; thus, it is said that the firstborn "frees" or "saves" (trayate) the ancestors in the world beyond. The firstborn, standing on the "battlefield" represented by this earthly existence, confirms and continues the line of influence that constitutes the ancestors' substance and that is carried on in the bloodstream as a purifying fire. It is significant that the firstborn is believed to have been generated in order to fulfill a "duty" to this ritual commitment that is not affected by human feelings or ties.

It is not impossible, therefore, that in some cases a family derived by adaptation from a superior and purely spiritual type of unity found in older times. For instance, Lao-tzu hinted that the family arose at the end of a relationship of direct participation, through blood, with the original spiritual principle. A similar idea still echoes as a residue in the priority acknowledged by several traditions of spiritual paternity over natural paternity, or of a "second birth" versus natural birth. In ancient Rome, for instance, we could refer to the inner aspect of the dignity conferred at the time of adoption, which was understood as an immaterial and supernatural filiation that was

believed to take place under the aegis of "Olympian" deities; at one point in time adoption was also chosen as the basis for the continuation of the imperial function. According to an ancient Hindu text:

That his mother and father produced him through mutual desire and he was born in the womb, he should regard as his mere coming into existence. But the birth that a teacher produces for him... is real, free from old age and free from death.

In this way natural relationships not only are secondary, but they may also be reversed; thus according to the same text, "the brāhmaṇa who brings about the Vedic birth of an older person and who teaches him his own duties becomes his father, according to law, even if he is himself a child."

Wherever the law of Patria Potestas was considered from a social and juridical point of view to be absolute and almost superhuman, such a law could enjoy this spiritual character only if it had (or if it originally had) such a justification in the order of spiritual paternity, and also if it was related to blood ties as the "soul" is related to the "body" within the organic unity of the family stock. I will not dwell further on these concepts; however, it is noteworthy that a body of ancient beliefs also postulates the idea of a unity that is not merely biological but psycho-spiritual as well. Thus the guilt of a family member was believed to affect the entire family; also, according to this idea, a family member may redeem another or carry out an act of vengeance on behalf of another, and so on.

In all of these aspects one finds repeated confirmation of the view according to which traditional institutions were ordered "from above" and were not based on nature but on sacred legacies and on spiritual actions that bind, free, and "shape" nature. In the divine dimension what counts is the blood (θεοὶ σύναψις) and the family (θεοὶ εγγενεῖς). The state, the community, the family, bourgeois feelings, duties in the modern (profane, human, and social) sense of the word—all these are human "fabrications," things entirely made up and existing outside the realm of traditional reality, in the world of shadows. The light of Tradition did not know any of these things

#### Man and Woman

To complete these considerations on traditional life, I will now briefly discuss the sexual dimension. In this context too we find that in the traditional worldview, realities corresponded to symbols and actions to rites; what derives from these correspondences are the principles for understanding the sexes and for regulating the relationships that are necessarily established between men and women in every normal civilization.

In traditional symbolism, the supernatural principle was conceived as "masculine" and the principle of nature and of becoming as "feminine." In Hellenic terms the "one" (τὸ ἅν), which is "in itself," complete, and self sufficient, is regarded as masculine. Conversely, the dyad, the principle of differentiation and of "other-than-self," and thus the principle of desire and of

movement, is regarded as feminine. In Hindu terms (according to the Sāṃkhya darsāna), the impassible spirit (puruṣa) is masculine, while prakṛti, the active matrix of every conditioned form, is feminine.

The Far Eastern tradition has expressed equivalent concepts through the cosmic duality of yin and yang, whereby yang, the male principle, is associated with the "virtue of heaven" and yin, the feminine principle, with the principle of the "earth."

Considered in and of themselves, the two principles are in opposition to each other. But in the order of the creative formation that I have repeatedly identified as the soul of the traditional world, and that was destined to develop historically in relation to the conflict between various races and civilizations, they are transformed into elements of a synthesis in which both retain a distinctive function. This is not the place to show that behind the various representations of the myth of the "fall" we often find the idea of the male principle's identification with and loss in the feminine principle until the former has acquired the latter's way of being. In any event, when this happens, when that which is naturally a self-subsistent principle succumbs to the law of that which does not have its own principle in itself by giving in to the forces of "desire," then it is appropriate to talk about a "fall".

On the plane of human reality, the diffidence that various traditions have nurtured toward women is based precisely on this belief; the woman is often considered as a principle of "sin," impurity, and evil, as well as a temptation and a danger for those who are in search of the supernatural.

Nevertheless, it is possible to consider another possibility that runs counter to the direction of the "fall," and that is to establish the correct relationship between the two principles. This occurs when the feminine principle, whose force is centrifugal, does not turn to fleeting objects but rather to a "virile" stability in which she finds a limit to her "restlessness." Stability is then transmitted to the feminine principle to the point of intimately transfiguring all of its possibilities. What occurs in these terms is a synthesis in a positive sense.

What is needed therefore is a radical "conversion" of the feminine principle to the opposite principle; moreover, it is absolutely necessary for the masculine principle to remain wholly itself. Then, according to metaphysical symbols, the female becomes the "bride" and also the "power" or instrumental generating force that receives the primordial principle of the immobile male's activity and form: as in the doctrine of Śakti, which can also be found in Aristotelianism and in Neoplatonism, though expressed in different terms. I have mentioned the Tantric-Tibetan representations that are very significant in this regard, in which the male "bearer-of-the-scepter" is immobile, cold, and substantiated with light while the substance of Śakti, which envelops it and uses it as its axis, is a flickering flame.

These meanings constitute the foundation of the traditional teachings concerning the human sexes. This norm obeys the principle of the caste system and it also emphasizes the two cardinal tenets of dharma and of bhakti, or fides: self-subsistent nature and active dedication.

If birth is not a matter of chance, then it is not a coincidence for a being to "awaken" to itself in the body of a man or a woman. Here too, the physical difference should be viewed as the equivalent of a spiritual difference; hence a being is a man or a woman in a physical way only because a being is either masculine or feminine in a transcendental way; sexual differentiation, far from being an irrelevant factor in relation to the spirit, is the sign that points to a particular vocation and to a distinctive dhanna.

We know that every traditional civilization is based on the will to order and give "form," and that the traditional law is not oriented toward what is unqualified, equal, and indefinite, or in other words, toward that impersonal mix in which the various parts of the whole become promiscuously or atomically similar, but rather intends these parts to be themselves and to express as perfectly as possible their own typical nature. Therefore, particularly with regard to the genders, man and woman are two different types; those who are born as men must realize themselves as men, while those who are born as women must realize themselves as women, overcoming any mixture and promiscuity of vocations. Even in regard to the supernatural vocation, man and woman must both have their own distinctive paths to follow, which cannot be altered without them turning into contradictory and inorganic ways of being.

I have already considered the way of being that corresponds eminently to man; I have also discussed the two main paths of approach to the value of "being a principle to oneself," namely, action and contemplation. Thus, the warrior (the hero) and the ascetic represent the two fundamental types of pure virility.

In symmetry with these types, there are also two types available to the feminine nature. A woman realizes herself as such and even rises to the same level reached by a man as warrior and ascetic only as lover and mother. These are bipartitions of the same ideal strain; just as there is an active heroism, there is also a passive heroism; there is a heroism of absolute affirmation and a heroism of absolute dedication. They can both be luminous and produce plenty of fruits, as far as overcoming human limitations and achieving liberation are concerned, when they are lived with purity and in the sense of an offering.

This differentiation of the heroic strain determines the distinctive character of the paths of fulfillment available to men and women. In the case of women the actions of the warrior and of the ascetic who affirm themselves in a life that is beyond life, the former through pure action and the latter through pure detachment, correspond to the act of the woman totally giving of herself and being entirely for another being, whether he is the loved one (the type of the lover—the Aphrodisitic woman) or the son (the type of the mother—the Demetrian woman), finding in this dedication the meaning of her own life, her own joy, and her own justification. This is what bhakti or fides, which constitute the normal and natural way of participation of the traditional woman, really mean, both in the order of "form" and even beyond "form" when it is lived in a radical and impersonal way.

To realize oneself in an increasingly resolute way according to these two distinct and unmistakable directions; to reduce in a woman all that is masculine and in a man everything that is feminine; and to strive to implement the archetypes of the "absolute man" and of the "absolute woman"—this was the traditional law concerning the sexes according to their different planes of existence.

Therefore, a woman could traditionally participate in the sacred hierarchical order only in a mediated fashion, through her relationship with a man. In India women did not have their own initiation even when they belonged to a higher caste: before they got married they did not belong to the sacred community of the noble ones (*ārya*) other than through their fathers, and when they were married, through their husbands, who also represented the mystical head of the family.

In Doric Hellas, the woman in her entire life did not enjoy any rights; before getting married, her *κύριος* was her father. In Rome, in conformity with a similar spirituality, a woman, far from being "equal" to man, was juridically regarded as a daughter of her own husband (*filiae loco*) and as a sister of her own children (*sororis loco*); when she was a young girl, she was under the *Potestas* of her father, who was the leader and the priest of his own *gens*; when she married, according to a rather blunt expression she was in *manu viri*. These traditional decrees regulating a woman's dependency can also be found in other civilizations; far from being unjust and arrogant, as the modern "free spirits" are quick to decry, they helped to define the limits and the natural place of the only spiritual path proper to the pure feminine nature.

I will mention here some ancient views that expressly describe the pure type of the traditional woman, who is capable of an offering that is half human and half divine. In the Aztec-Nahua tradition the same privilege of heavenly immortality proper to the warrior aristocracy was partaken of by the mothers

who died while giving birth, since the Aztecs considered this sacrifice on the same level as the one made by those who die on the battlefield. Another example is the type of the traditional Hindu woman, a woman who in the deepest recesses of her soul was capable of the most extreme forms of sensuality and yet who lived by an invisible and votive *fides*. By virtue of this *fides*, that offering that was manifested in the erotic dedication of her body, person, and will culminated in another type of offering—of a different kind and way beyond the world of the senses.

Because of this *fides* the bride would leap into the funerary pyre in order to follow the man whom she had married into the next life. This traditional sacrifice, which was regarded as a sheer "barbarism" by Europeans and by Westernized Hindus and in which the widow was burnt alive with the body of the dead husband, is called *sati* in Sanskrit, from the root *as* and the prefix *sat* (being), from which the word *satya* (the truth) comes; *sati* also signifies "gift," "faithfulness," "love."

Therefore this sacrifice was considered as the supreme culmination of the relationship between two beings of a different sex and as the sign of an absolute type of relationship, from the point of view of truth and superhumanity. In this context man provides the role of the support for a

liberating bhakti, and love becomes a door and a pathway. According to the traditional teaching the woman who followed her husband in death attained "heaven"; she was transformed into the same substance as her deceased husband since she partook of that transfiguration (which occurred through the incineration of the material body) into a divine body of light, symbolized among Aryan civilizations by the ritual burning of the cadaver.

We find an analogous renunciation of life on the part of Germanic women if their husbands or lovers died in battle. I have previously suggested that, generally speaking, the essence of bhakti consists of indifference toward the object or the means of an action, that is, in pure action and in a selfless attitude. This helps us understand how the ritual sacrifice of a widow (*sati*) could have been institutionalized in a traditional civilization such as the Hindu. Whenever a woman gives herself and even sacrifices herself only because of a stronger and reciprocated bond of human passion toward another being, her actions are still on the level of ordinary events; only when her dedication can support and develop itself without any other external motivation whatsoever, does she truly participate in a transcendent dimension.

In Islam the institution of the harem was inspired by these motivations. In Christian Europe it would take the idea of God for a woman to renounce her public life and to withdraw to a cloistered life; and even in this case, this was the choice of only a very few. In Islam a man sufficed to provide such a motivation and the cloistered life of the harem was considered as a natural thing that no well-born woman would ever criticize or intend to avoid; it seemed natural for a woman to concentrate all her life on one man only, who was loved in such a vast and unselfish way as to allow other women to share in the same feeling and to be united to him through the same bond and the same dedication. What surfaces in all this is the character of "purity," which is considered to be essential in this path.

A love that sets conditions and requires the reciprocated love and the dedication of a man was reputed to be of an inferior kind. On the other hand, a real man could not know love in this way other than by becoming feminine, thus losing that inner self-sufficiency thanks to which a woman finds in him a support and something that motivates and excites her desire to totally give herself to him.

According to the myth Siva, who was conceived as the great ascetic of the mountain peaks, turned Kāma (the god of love) into ashes with a single glance when the latter tried to awaken in him passion for his bride, Pārvatī. Likewise, there is a profound meaning in the legend about the Kalki-avatara, which talks about a woman who could not be possessed by anybody because the men who desired her and fell in love with her turned into women as the result of their passion. As far as the woman is concerned, there is true greatness in her when she is capable of giving without asking for anything in return; when she is like a flame feeding itself; when she loves even more as the object of her love does not commit himself, does not open himself up, and even creates some distance; and finally, when the man is not perceived by her as a mere husband or lover, but as her lord.

The spirit animating the harem consisted in the struggle to overcome jealousy and thus the passionate selfishness and the woman's natural inclination to possess the man. A woman was asked to commit herself to the harem from her adolescence to her old age and to be faithful to a man who could enjoy other women beside herself and possess them all without "giving" himself to any one in particular. In this "inhuman" trait there was something ascetical and even sacred.

In this apparent reification of woman, she experienced a true possession, an overcoming, and even a liberation because vis-à-vis such an unconditional fides, a man, in his human appearance, was just a means to higher ends; thus she discovered new possibilities to achieve higher goals. Just as the rule of the harem imitated the rule of the convents, likewise the Islamic law regulating a woman's life (according to the possibilities of her own nature, without excluding, but on the contrary, including and even exasperating the life of the senses) elevated her to the same plane of monastic asceticism.

To a lesser degree, an analogous attitude in a woman should be considered the natural presupposition in those civilizations, such as Greece and Rome, in which the institution of concubinage enjoyed a sort of regular character and was legally acknowledged as a way to complement the monogamic marriage and in which sexual exclusivism was overcome.

It goes without saying that I am not referring here to the harem or analogous institutions in mere materialistic terms. I have in mind what the harem meant to the pure traditional idea, and the superior possibility inspiring these institutions.

It is the task of Tradition to create solid riverbeds, so that the chaotic currents of life may flow in the right direction. Free are those people who, upon undertaking this traditional direction, do not experience it as a burden but rather develop it naturally and recognize themselves in it so as to actualize through an inner élan the highest and most "traditional" possibility of their own nature. The others, those who blindly follow the institutions and obey and live them without understanding them are not what we may call "self-supported" beings: although devoid of light, their obedience virtually leads them beyond their limitations as individuals and orients them in the same direction followed by those who are free. But for those who follow neither the spirit nor the form of the traditional riverbed, there is nothing but chaos; they are the lost, the "fallen" ones.

This is the case of our contemporaries as far as the woman is concerned. And yet it was not possible that a world that has "overcome" (to employ a Jacobin term) the caste system by returning to every human being his or her own "dignity" and "rights" could preserve some sense of the correct relationship between the two sexes. The emancipation of women was destined to follow that of the slaves and the glorification of people without a caste and without traditions, namely, the pariah. In a society that no longer understands the figure of the ascetic and of the warrior; in which the hands of the latest aristocrats seem better fit to hold tennis rackets or shakers for cocktail mixes than swords or scepters; in which the archetype of the virile man is represented by a boxer or by a movie star if not by the dull wimp represented by the intellectual, the college professor, the narcissistic puppet of the artist, or the busy and dirty money making

banker and the politician—in such a society it was only a matter of time before women rose up and claimed for themselves a "personality" and a "freedom" according to the anarchist and individualist meaning usually associated with these words. And while traditional ethics asked men and women to be themselves to the utmost of their capabilities and express with radical traits their own gender-related characteristics—the new "civilization" aims at levelling everything since it is oriented to the formless and to a stage that is truly not beyond but on this side of the individuation and differentiation of the sexes.

What truly amounts to an abdication was thus claimed as a "step forward." After centuries of "slavery" women wanted to be themselves and to do whatever they pleased. But so-called feminism has not been able to devise a personality for women other than by imitating the male personality, so that the woman's "claims" conceal a fundamental lack of trust in herself as well as her inability to be and to function as a real woman and not as a man. Due to such a misunderstanding, the modern woman has considered her traditional role to be demeaning and has taken offence at being treated "only as a woman."

This was the beginning of a wrong vocation; because of this she wanted to take her revenge, reclaim her "dignity," prove her "true value" and compete with men in a man's world. But the man she set out to defeat is not at all a real man, only the puppet of a standardized, rationalized society that no longer knows anything that is truly differentiated and qualitative. In such a civilization there obviously cannot be any room for legitimate privileges and thus women who are unable and unwilling to recognize their natural traditional vocation and to defend it (even on the lowest possible plane, since no woman who is sexually fulfilled ever feels the need to imitate and to envy man) could easily demonstrate that they too virtually possess the same faculties and talents—both material and intellectual—that are found in the other sex and that, generally speaking, are required and cherished in a society of the modern type. Man for his part has irresponsibly let this happen and has even helped and "pushed" women into the streets, offices, schools, and factories, into all the "polluted" crossroads of modern culture and society. Thus the last levelling push has been imparted.

And wherever the spiritual emasculation of materialistic modern man did not tacitly restore the primacy (typically found in ancient gynaecocratic communities) of the woman as hetaera, ruling over men enslaved by their senses and at her service, the results have been the degeneration of the feminine type even in her somatic characteristics, the atrophy of her natural possibilities, the suppression of her unique inner life.

Hence the types of the woman-garçonne and the shallow and vain woman, incapable of any élan beyond herself, utterly inadequate as far as sensuality and sinfulness are concerned because to the modern woman the possibilities of physical love are often not as interesting as the narcissistic cult of her body, or as being seen with as many or as few clothes as possible, or as engaging in physical training, dancing, practicing sports, pursuing wealth, and so on. As it is, Europe knew very little about the purity of the offering and about the faithfulness of the one who gives her all without asking anything in return; or about a love strong enough so as not to be exclusivist.

Besides a purely conformist and bourgeois faithfulness, the love Europe has celebrated is the love that does not tolerate the other person's lack of commitment. Now when a woman, before consecrating herself to a man, pretends that he belongs to her body and soul, not only has she already "humanized" and impoverished her offering, but worse yet, she has begun to betray the pure essence of femininity in order to borrow characteristics typical of the male nature—and possibly the lowest of these: the yearning to possess and lay claims over another person, and the pride of the ego. After that, everything else came tumbling down in a rush, following the law of acceleration.

Eventually, because of the woman's increased egocentrism, men will no longer be of interest to her; she will only care about what they will be able to offer to satisfy her pleasure or her vanity. In the end she will even incur forms of corruption that usually accompany superficiality, namely, a practical and superficial lifestyle of a masculine type that has perverted her nature and thrown her into the same male pit of work, profits, frantic activity, and politics.

The same holds true for the results of the Western "emancipation" of women, which is on its way to infecting the rest of the world faster than a plague. Traditional woman or the absolute woman, in giving herself, in her living for another, in wanting to be only for another being with simplicity and purity fulfilled herself, belonged to herself, displayed her own heroism, and even became superior to ordinary men. Modern woman in wanting to be for herself has destroyed herself. The "personality" she so much yearned for is killing all semblance of female personality in her.

It is easy to foresee what will become of the relationship between the sexes, even from a material point of view. Here too, like in magnetism, the higher and stronger the creative spark, the more radical the polarity; the more a man is a man, the more a woman is a woman. What could possibly go on between these mixed beings lacking all contact with the forces of their deepest nature? Between these beings for whom sex is reduced to the physiological plane? between these beings who, in the deepest recesses of their souls, are neither men nor women, or who are masculine women or feminine men, and who claim to have reached full sexual emancipation while truly having only regressed? All relationships are destined to have an ambiguous and crumbling character: the comradely promiscuities and morbid "intellectual" sympathies such as are commonplace in the new communist realism. In other words, modern woman will be affected by neurotic complexes and all the other complexes upon which Freud constructed a "science" that is truly a sign of our times. The possibilities of the world of the "emancipated" woman are not dissimilar: the avant-gardes of this world (North America and Russia) are already present, and give interesting and very meaningful testimonies to this fact.

All this cannot but have repercussions on an order of things that goes way beyond what our contemporaries, because of their recklessness, will ever suspect.

Demeter Archetypes and Aphrodite Archetypes, the Virgin, and Ultimate Nakedness So far we have examined the original polarity in abstract metaphysical terms. We shall now pass on to the form of actual divine figures and of appearances of gods and powers. As we said earlier, such

figures stood for arkhai or real beings in traditional antiquity. With them we are drawing near to the existential plane or actual human sexuality since in this new sphere the meanings of the sacred myth are linked to cults, institutions, and ritual acts.

To arrive at differentiated characterizations in the mythological field, however, we must be discriminating. We meet with a myriad of figures that almost always have a polyvalent character and that refract in highly varied meanings both because of their manifold aspects and because of exogenous historical reasons and the transmutation of mythical stories and different cults and civilizations.

The female principle in its manifold images and epiphanies can be classified under the signs of two basic types, which we shall call the Aphrodite type and the Demeter type, the everlasting archetypes of the human lover and human mother. They correspond to the “power of the divine”, hidé, or Shakti in their respective aspects of force in the pure state and of force that has received form from the eternal male and has become life that nourishes a form.

The Demeter type in the ancient Western world was witnessed as early as the late Paleolithic age, continued into the Neolithic age and took shape in the pre-Hellenic mother goddesses. It reappeared in a southern strip that began at the Pyrenees, passed through the Aegean civilization, Egypt, and

Mesopotamia, and reached pre-Aryan India and Polynesia. The theme of fertility is displayed most obviously as a naturalistic tradition of the idea of the Goddess conceived as life itself and the origin of life. It is expressed in the shapeless idols with protruding buttocks of the Paleolithic age; but also in the late chaste form of Hellenized Demeter, it can be seen in the most ancient naked goddesses, where the most extravagant representations consist of the many-breasted goddess and of naked female images standing or lying down with their legs spread apart to exhibit the sexual organ and to release and make flow the sexual sacrum, the magical energy, the mana of fertility of the primordial Genetrix or Mother.

Among some primitive peoples the same theme is mainly expressed in the stylized linear design of the womb and sexual organ, namely in the upside-down triangle, in which there is sometimes a line at the lower vertex to show the beginning of the vulvar cleft; this design acted as a symbol of a magical force intended to fertilize and, at the same time, to frighten and ward off those persons who were not allowed to draw near.

A similar meaning can be seen in the female act of *anasúrma* or pulling up her clothes and showing her sex, which also could frighten, as for instance when that act was used by the Lycian women to cause the threatening waves of Poseidon to retreat, and when in the Islamic cycle, together with the removal of her veil, it was used by the ancient moon goddess al-Uzzos to stop the emissary of the Prophet, who wanted to fell the trees that were sacred to her.

This is not the time to cite the manifold names of the Great Goddess or Magna Mater Genetrix, the image of the Demeter principle, but also very real power and force. She is Mother Earth. She is the Iranian Ardvî, whom Ahura Mazda called his “Water,” linked to a mythical river coming down from the heights. From that river springs forth the waters of the earth in their symbolic meanings of life-giving energies and forces of fecundity and fertilization. Here the wet principle constitutes the elementary substance of the Goddess, and a Neoplatonist etymology also emphasizes the other aspect of that principle when it derives the name of one of her manifestations in the shape of Rhea, from the word *rein*, meaning to flow.

For this reason we see goddesses of the Demeter type, such as the Argive Hera, and also of the Amazonian type, such as Pallas Athena, recover their virginity by diving into the water consubstantial with their original substance, renew them, and reintegrate their nature. The mysteries of Hera relate how she always emerges a virgin again from her ritual bath in the spring waters of Kanathos.

We should also bear in mind the link between the Roman cult of Vesta and spring water or flowing water; it alone was used as “living water” in certain purifying rites performed by the vestal virgins—*aqua vivis fontibus amnibusque hausta* (water drawn from the living springs and rivers). So Ganga, the Hindu Great Goddess, manifests in “liquid form” as the sacred river whose waters wash away all sins.

The supreme essential principle in the world of such figures is the Great Goddess, who, like Hesiod’s Gaia, procreates without a husband or by having herself fecundated by a husband who is at the same time her son. In this case her mate is subordinate to her and only instrumental. He is often a short-lived being who dies and arises again thanks only to the goddess (Tammuz and Attis in respect of Rhea-Cybele and Ishtar) because in her alone lies the true principle and spring of life. We are here on the borderline of those scissions and absolutes which make way for Demeter as gynecocracies (not necessarily in the form of social sovereignty by woman but, more generally, in the form of a preeminence of everything linked to her as mother) or those regressions that lead to the idea, cited earlier, of earthly immortality or the immortality of the Mother. It is within the framework of these absolutes that the female principle, connected mainly to the earth, can also assume the figure of a heavenly sovereign divinity, the Great Mother of the Gods; this is a transformation that we can see especially in the person of the Egyptian Isis. Isis, who was originally an earth goddess—in cosmic naturalistic symbolism, the black earth of Egypt, watered and fertilized by the streams of the Nile representing the male Osiris—is, in fact, introduced into the heavenly world and becomes “the Lady of the Sky” or “She Who Gives Light to the Sky” or “the Queen of All the Gods.”

In the same way, the goddess of the Elamites wears the tiara of sovereignty and holds in her right hand a cup, from which she gives mortals the vital intoxicating fluid to drink, and in her left hand a ring as a symbol of the unending circle of generation. When the Great Goddess passes on from being Mother Earth and takes on, in particular, the form of a moon goddess, we can see another expression of the basic meanings mentioned earlier. In fact, the moon is the planet that changes.

Being linked to the force at work wherever there is change, alteration, and transformation, it reflects in some way the very nature of the Waters and of cosmic (matter). Star of the night, lady of the night—in the moral transposition, “changeable and inconstant star”—by way of this connection the moon is associated with the divine female archetype; thus the sickle of the moon is also represented as an attribute of the Iranian Ardvī, who, we said, is the “Water” of Ahura Mazda.

Perhaps in the Hindu manifestations of the Great Goddess (in Kali, Bhairavi, Karala, and above all in Durga, all various forms of the wife or Shakti of the “divine male”) is seen the best expression of the Aphrodite principle of primordial womanhood as the dissolving, overwhelming, ecstatic, and unmeasurable force of sex, in opposition to Demeterian womanhood.

In the Mediterranean world such features belong mainly to the goddess Ishtar, goddess of love, together with many other goddesses, such as Mylitta, Astarte, Tanit, Ashera, and Anaitis. One fundamental characteristic ought to be examined here: the name of Durga, the corresponding Hindu goddess, means “the Inaccessible One,” but she is also the goddess of orgiastic rites. The Mediterranean goddesses cited just now often have the attribute of “virgins,” *parthénos*. Ishtar is a “virgin” but at the same time the “Great Whore,” the “Heavenly Prostitute.” Kali is deemed a “virgin” in the aspect of Adya-Kali; she is kumarirupa dharini.

Aphrodite goddesses who have lovers are thought of as virgins, and so are goddesses of the Demeter type who are mothers. Porne, Hetaira, and Pandemos were names that in the Aegean and Antolian world were compatible with their opposite, “virgin.” Shingmu, the Great Goddess, the Chinese Virgin Mother, is at the same time the patroness of whores. To move to another cultural field, the heavenly Islamic houris, who offer themselves continuously to the embraces of the chosen, are described as being always virgins again.

In a materialistic transposition, an echo of this idea can even be found in the Christian belief that Mary, besides having conceived as a virgin, remained so even after giving birth. This most profound meaning has been missed by those who explain it only in terms of the many connotations that the word “virgin” had in ancient times, for it designated not only a woman prior to sexual experience, but also an unmarried woman, a girl who had intercourse with a man out of wedlock, but shunned the bonds and vassaldom of wedded life.

Rather, emphasis is to be placed on the capacity of the “raw material” to receive and be impregnated with every form without wearying or being possessed in its ultimate root. Virginity is therefore deemed to be the quality of the “divine female.” It constitutes the “Durga” (inaccessible) aspect of the divine female and is also linked to the cold quality, which can exist alongside the gleaming and fascinating quality of the Aphrodite archetype and of the courtesan. In the most common representation of the sirens, who were said to be virgins as well as enchantresses, their lower part is shaped like a fish and is wet and cold.

A similar example is the female goddesses of the Amazonian type, whose chastity or virginity in the modern meaning of the word was often just a later accretion to ancient figures in an attempt to make them seem moral. Thus, for instance, it is known that Artemis-Diana and Athena, who were essentially conceived by the Hellenic world as virgins, were mother goddesses of the foregoing type when they were pre-Hellenic and Pelasgian divinities.

In this context the virgin goddesses and Ishtar herself, virgin and whore at one and the same time, could also be presented as goddesses of war and victory (the Venus Victrix, Ishtar invoked as the “Lady of Arms,” the “Arbiter of Battles”). In the following invocation addressed to her, one sees the duality of motifs: “Thou art strong, O Lady of Victory, who canst awaken my violent desires.”

Przylusky correctly called attention to the fact that the Great Goddess was also the goddess of fighting, because in such a case war is considered essentially under the sole aspect of action that destroys and slays. It is at such a level that Aphrodite takes to herself, as *areia*, the characteristics of a warrior goddess with the esoteric meaning of power or *shakti* or Ares-Mars. Here, therefore, emphasis is given to the ambiguity of a power that is at one and the same time a power of life and death; indeed it was said that Astarte is “Goddess Astarte, the life and safety of gods and men, and she who is also destruction, death, and annihilation.”

She is the shining moon goddess whose other face, however, is the “black” unfathomable goddess, the Mother of Darkness, Hecate of the underworld (the virgin Artemis also sometimes takes on the aspect of Hecate), Juno of the netherworld, the Lady of Pluto (Virgil), Ishtar, and Kali, “Dreadful Mother”; these are archetypes in which also converge the symbolism of derived figures, such as the virgins of battles and storms, the Nordic Valkyrie and the Iranian Fravashi.

Men seek to employ and arouse the goddess, as unchained power and the power of death, against their foes; then indeed she takes on the characteristics of a goddess of war and of the Promachos (champion) fighting like a lion with javelin and bow. And when this power leads to victory, the Virgin appears in the end like a goddess of victory too. Thus Durga is also the black virgin, krishna kumari, invoked as she who gives victory in battle.

There is a netherworld aspect to this which is interesting to observe, in the Roman *devotio*, for example, a gloomy rite in which a general offered himself of his own free will as avictim to the forces of the netherworld so as to unleash them against the foe. In the invocation proper to this rite, after the litany of luminous divinities including Mars, comes the name of Bellona, who is precisely a goddess of war in the sense we mentioned but is also identified by ancient writers with other forms of the Great Goddess.

We must also cite the Egyptian Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess of war, who rejoiced in bloody sacrifices and was said to copulate with the victors. On the moral plane, cruelty is attributed to the goddess in her Durga aspect in various mythical tales that have constellated around figures of this kind. The goddess takes delight in blood and death. This can be seen very clearly in Kali. But human sacrifices were offered in ancient times to the divine Virgin, Artemis Orthis, who was

called Taurian Artemis, at several places in Greece, at Sparta, Brauron, and elsewhere. After these sacrifices were stopped, a trace of them still remained at Sparta during the festivals of the goddess in the rite of the diamastigosis or whipping of adolescents so that their blood bathed her altar, for the virgin goddess loved blood.

In other Greek cities, too, the worshippers of Demeter whipped each other in turn. The festival of Cybele at Rome, inspired by the worship of the Great Goddess, was held from the fifteenth to the twenty-seventh of March, the latter date being marked in the calendar as the dies sanguinis or day of blood. On that day the priests of the goddess whipped and lacerated themselves, uniting their cries to the sound of the flutes and kettledrums.

Then, after a mysterious vigil, it was believed that the initiates copulated with the Great Goddess. The orgiastic rites dedicated to the goddess Ma, who was also a goddess of war, had the same character. In the same context, the performance of bloody sacrifices was often entrusted to priestesses; this was the case among the Gauls and in America. In an archaic Roman rite performed by the vestal virgins, sacred guardians of the flame of life, twenty-four dolls were thrown into the Tiber, yet it is the prevalent opinion that human victims originally were thrown instead of dolls.

We must distinguish the meaning of the nakedness in the Durga aspect of the goddess as opposed to the nakedness of the Demeter-Mother archetype, principle of fecundity. The first is the Aphroditic “ultimate nakedness.” The strongest and most expressive symbolic and ritual expression of this is linked to the sacred dance of the seven veils. The teaching of the mysteries included the symbolism of passing through the seven planetary spheres and freeing oneself little by little of the various determining and conditional qualities related to those spheres, which were conceived as being so many clothes and covering to be thrown away until a person reached the state of the “ultimate nakedness” of absolute and simple being, which is only itself when it is beyond the “seven.”

In this context, Plotinus cites those who ascend by degrees in the holy mysteries, laying aside their clothes and advancing in nakedness, whereas in Sufism a parallel exists in the tamzig or tearing of clothes during ecstasy. In the opposite realm, that of “nature,” the corresponding process is the stripping of the feminine power of all its forms until it appears in its elementary character or virgin substance prior and superior to all form. It is precisely that which is made perceptible by the progressive freeing of the woman from the seven veils until she is shown utterly naked, just as, in the Egyptian invocation cited earlier, Isis is desired to appear and as in the myth of Ishtar also, who descends to the netherworld and leaves a part of her ornaments and clothes at each of the seven doors through which she goes. This is the reverse of Uranic nakedness.

Ultimate female nakedness can also act in a deadly way: the sight of naked Diana killed Actaeon (“invulnerable and mortal Diana”)? while that of naked Athena made Tiresias blind. The prohibition or taboo of nakedness that is met with in certain traditions and customs, even among

primitive peoples, stems from earlier rituals. The sight of wholly naked images in the Greek mysteries corresponded to the highest grade of initiation or epopteia, and in the ritual of Tantric sexual practice, the woman to be used appears as the embodiment of prakriti, the divine female and primordial substance hidden beneath the numberless forms of manifestation. The naked woman represents this very substance freed of all form and in its “virgin and ultimate state.”

On the other hand, female nakedness is graduated in the rite; the use of a wholly naked woman is not permitted to everyone, but only to Tantric initiates of a high grade. Only these were allowed to see ultimate nakedness, to possess the naked Virgin without deadly peril or profanation. A similar meaning may be found in the paradoxical ritual union between an ascetic and a whore in the Mahavrata festival; as though for a woman reduced to her primal state, the inaccessible substratum of all form (the “prostitute”), the only fitting mate would be one who by asceticism had been reintegrated into his own principle or into the opposite primal state of transcendental manhood.

Symbolically connected to this is the Hermetic saying that the bride and bridegroom should remove their clothes and bathe thoroughly before entering their nuptial bed where the mysterium conjunctionis is performed.

But we shall deal with these ritual complexes later. We shall end now by indicating the specific feature that is highlighted in appearances of the Great Goddess as Varunani. This Hindu divinity, also known as Varuni or Sura, appeared as a goddess of the sky, of the waters, and of intoxicating drinks.

The word varuni in Pali designates actually either an intoxicating liquor or an enraptured or possessed woman, and Varuni or Sura in epic poetry is the “daughter” of Varuna, the male uranic god, who brings happiness and intoxication to the gods. In India the link between Varuni and intoxicating drinks is certain (so much so that, in some writings, to drink devi varuni, the manifestation of the goddess in liquid form, means to drink an alcoholic beverage). Sura is also one of the names of the Great Goddess in Iran.

Even in the hymns of the austere Shankara, the goddess is described with intoxicating drinks and holds up the goblet or is herself inebriated. In this divine archetype, therefore, the aspect of the female as the principle and cause of intoxication is established. And that intoxication can have the lower, elementary, Dionysiac, savage, and maenadic form or the higher form of a transfiguring, enlightening intoxication.

Christianity was obscurely fixed on this second aspect in the figure of the Virgin Mother who stands above, her foot on the sickle of the moon or even the serpent, which, as Nahash, symbolized in Hebrew esotericism the elementary, cosmic principle of desire. To that may be linked the division existing in the ancient mysteries of the Mother, wherein the lesser mysteries of Persephone of the netherworld, who is connected also to Aphrodite, were celebrated in the spring more or less at the same time as the various orgiastic, chthonic festivals, whereas the Great Eleusinian mysteries were celebrated in the autumn. We may also bear in mind the Aegean

goddess, Our Lady of the Waves and Stella Maris, in her twofold aspect of goddess who descends from the skies and goddess who appears from the nether regions, one the “goddess of doves” and the other the “goddess of snakes” and panthers.

As a last point, if we consider the cosmic substance or power in its aspect fixed to a given form in which it remains held in its fluid, fleeting, unrestrainable character, we have the Demeter principle in the form of female figures as “brides” tied to a god by the bonds of one single marriage or one single being; the substance then is no longer the “Virgin” or the “Whore” but is the divine wife as a “sealed fountain” who, when viewed on the moral level of the archetype, has the characteristics of chastity and faithfulness such as to hide her original nature (the Great Goddess as Hera). In the myth, the divine sexed couples paired in a relationship of relative harmony and equilibrium correspond to this ontological situation.

#### Male and Female Psychology

We said at the beginning of this chapter that from the structures of the mythology of sex it would be possible to deduce the general principles for a psychology of man and woman. This psychology would be normative and deductive rather than empirical and would examine the fundamental morphological traits beyond any possible variation, modulation, or distortion due to accidental or environmental facts of psyche and behaviour of the sexes.

We know that up to a relatively late period the Roman Catholic theologians were wondering whether woman should be acknowledged to have a soul; it seems that Augustine declared, “Woman is not made in the image of God.” The thesis that “women are not men” was discussed again in the sense that they cannot be true human beings but must belong to another species. A like theme is found in Islam, while in the traditions of the Far East it was taught that women were not found in the “Pure Earth” or so-called Western Paradise because women worthy of being welcome there would first have to be “reborn” as men.

The Council of Maçon debated the question whether on the day of the resurrection of the flesh, deserving women, before passing into the Kingdom of Heaven, ought not to be changed into men. Consider the link between these ideas and those in Plato’s *Timaeus*, where he poses the possibility that, owing to regression and to the identification of his spiritual principle with the sensitive and sensual element, a man might reappear on earth as a woman instead of going back to the uranic being whence he had come.

Taken as a whole, these ideas were more than mere historical curiosities. In our time Otto Weininger has taken up ideas of the same kind in his highly interesting application of the transcendental philosophy of Kant to the psychology of the sexes. The principles set forth in the preceding chapter may clarify the actual state of things. As she reflects the essence of the eternal female, each woman belongs ontologically to “nature” in the widest and “cosmic” but not simply material sense of the word (as in the Greek *physis* or nature).

By contrast, in each man, since he embodies the opposite principle, there is virtually present, besides "nature," that which transcends nature and is higher than and prior to the Dyad. If we say that woman lacks a soul, we have expressed nothing more than just that, but such a wording, of course, lends itself to ambiguity. If the word "soul" is taken in its original meaning of "psyche" or principle of life, it should signify in fact that woman not only has a soul but is eminently "soul." What by nature as "absolute woman" she lacks and what she cannot have as woman and not man is not a soul but a "spirit" (nous and not psyche).

By "spirit" we mean here the supernatural principle that Roman Catholic theology refers to when it speaks of "soul" and when it upholds the belief that, contrary to woman, man is made in the image of God. It has been said that "the spirit is the male principle in us, whereas sensuality is the female principle."

We shall come back to the question of sensuality. Meanwhile, the point we believe settled is that woman is a part of "nature" (in a metaphysical sense she is a manifestation of the same principle as nature) and that she affirms nature, whereas man by virtue of birth in the masculine human form goes tendentially beyond nature. Weininger seems to be more radical in asserting not only that woman has no soul but also that she has no ego or "being," and in declaring the decisive factor between masculinity and femininity to be the possession or lack of "being."

The whole of this has a scandalous and paradoxically misogynous character only because of another ambiguity of words. In fact, when Weininger speaks of ego, he means, following the philosophy of Kant, not the psychological but the transcendental ego, which is apprehended by intuition and is above the whole world of phenomena (in metaphysical terms one would say "above all manifestation," like the Hindu Atman); and when he talks of "being," all natural and empirical reality is non-being in the opinion both of Parmenides and the Vedanta.

Whether every man in actuality has such an ego and being is another question. In fact, it is rather obvious that by far the greatest number of men do not possess such a principle. But that man is ontologically linked to that principle, even though he has no clear awareness of it, and that, as Far Eastern traditions put it, it is the "Heavens" that produce men, are decisive factors for all male psychology and for the possibilities open in principle to man as man, whether he makes use of them or not.

Absolute woman not only does not possess that ego but would not know what to do with it if she did. As she is unable even to conceive of it, its presence would act in a highly disturbing manner toward any genuine expression of her most profound nature.

Furthermore, such an ontological status has no prejudicial effect on what women in some epochs and especially in the present may choose as the object of their mistaken claims; a woman can build up an ego that is "intellectual" and practical in the modern sense almost as well as a man by way of a layer placed on top of her deepest nature. The female quality of being consubstantial with "nature" has not prevented women in past civilizations from having access to functions of a sacred character, in connection with much more interesting callings than those for which

feminists in the West are fighting so hard.

When writing about the mysteries of the Mother, however, we remarked that the “cosmic” limit is not removed with that. Nowadays it is hard to accept this fundamental point of the ontology of the sexes. As we have almost no idea of the truly supernatural, so the type of the absolute man has almost disappeared. Borders that were clearly demarcated in other times have today become unstable through disintegration.

The symbolism of the Waters and lunar changeability, which are essentially related to the female archetype, also give us the key to the most elementary psychology of woman. But we must underline here a basic point of a general kind; the characteristics with which we shall deal now and hereafter do not concern a person as such; they are not “qualities of character” or “moral qualities” for which one or another female individual is responsible.

Instead, they are objective elements working in individuals almost as impersonally as the chemical properties inherent in a particular substance. It is effectively “nature proper” which acts in a more or less exact and constant manner. So let it be said once and for all that it makes no sense to formulate value judgments or to speak of “good” or “bad.”

Having made this point, it would be trivial to dwell on the fickleness, changeability, and unsteadiness of female character (and also of male character wherever man has something of woman in him) as the outcome of her “wet” (watery) and “lunar” nature. This “essential deduction” was already known to some authors of the Middle Ages. Thus a certain Cecco of Ascoli gave the following explanation for the lack of “steadiness” in women and for their shifting now here and now there like the wind: “Each of them, of course, is wet, and wetness does not keep its form”; and he links to the same cause another female trait with which we shall deal shortly: “Broken faith is in her by nature.”

Furthermore, we may also point to the prevalence in female psychology of the emotional part, which has passive, “lunar,” and discontinuous characteristics. As a physiological counterpart, the great changeability of woman’s expressions, which belong only to her surface, is the changeability of a mask without any deep counterpart, which would in any case be impossible. Here it is almost a question of movable surface waves that do not “penetrate” into the physiognomy, as happens in the male mask; in this there is more mobility than true expressiveness of character, linked to a greater neuromuscular ability to become excited; here we may think of how women blush and smile. It is for this reason, too, that the art at which women excel most is that of the theatre and that in every actor there is always something feminine.

In a wider context, it is necessary to consider what arises, for a woman, from the fact that she reflects the cosmic female according to its aspect as material receiving a form that is external to her and that she does not produce from within (*natura naturata* or *natura signata*—“natured nature” or “impressed nature”). This gives rise to the great suppleness, credulity, impressionability, and adaptability of the female psyche and woman’s natural disposition to accept and assimilate ideas and forms coming to her from outside, although a possible rigidity

may follow the reception of ideas due precisely to the passive way she has adopted them, which may appear under the guise of conformity and conservatism.

In this way, we can explain the apparent contrast inherent in the fact that female nature is changeable, yet women mainly show conservative tendencies sociologically and a dislike for the new.

This can be linked to their role in mythology as female figures of a Demeter or chthonic type who guard and avenge customs and the law—the law of blood and of the earth, but not the Uranic law. This aspect is reflected on the biological plane in Darwin's observation that the female tends to preserve and lead back to the average type of the species, whereas the male has a greater power of physio-anatomical variation.

Here we are faced with two opposed kinds of changeability. One of them, female changeability, springs from the material and plastic principle and has as its counterpart the force of inertia or static fixedness as soon as the material has been "shaped" (the Demeter aspect of the female, opposed to the Aphrodite aspect). The other, male changeability, is instead linked to the creative "seminal" principle, which is a principle of activity in a free and proper sense. The contrast between the two aspects of female nature, fickleness and inconstancy alongside conservatism, is therefore only an apparent one.

Of those modern writers who have tackled sexual psychology, Weininger is perhaps the only one who has risen above the level of banality. We can refer to him again for some other essential points. First, Weininger established an organic relationship between memory, logic, and ethics on the basis of the link between each one of them and the "transcendental ego." This concerns essentially the psychic structure of the absolute man.

"Being" tends to support its own unity in the world of "becoming." On the psychological plane this is revealed in the memory, which, as a synthetic function, opposes itself to the dispersion of consciousness in the fluid and instantaneous multiplicity of the contents of that consciousness; on the plane of the intellect, the same impulse is shown in logic, which has as its basis the principle of identity: A equals A.

The ideal of logic is to bring the unlike back to one. As such, both memory and a logical nature have a guiding ethical value because they express the resistance of being, its effort to stand upright, identical to itself, and to assert itself in the stream of inner and outer phenomena. According to Weininger, as the absolute woman is devoid of being, she could have neither memory, logic, nor ethics. Incapable of a logical or an ethical imperative, she would be wholly ignorant of the precise, vigorous, imperative nature of the purely intellectual function of judgment, which has a distinctly male character.

Bergson distinguished between two separate kinds of memory. One is the "vital" and is linked to "duration," or the flow of experience (this memory is connected to the subconscious and at given times throws up distant recollections unexpectedly and involuntarily; the same memory may

recall the whole content of a life instantaneously when death threatens). The other memory is determined, organized, and dominated by the intellect. Woman lacks this second memory owing to her “fluid” lunar nature, whereas she may be more generously endowed with the first kind than man. But the first memory lacks the ethical capability of which we spoke earlier, and it proceeds not by the presence but by the lack of a “transcendental ego.” We have to bear in mind two differing sides of logic.

We are not dealing with everyday logic, which woman, when necessary, knows how to use “instrumentally” with undoubted ability and ingenuity, even if the method is not straightforward but polemical and fleeting, like a guerrilla or a sophist.

Instead, we are dealing with logic as a love of pure truth and inward coherence, which leads to a strict and impersonal style of thought that constitutes a sort of inner imperative for the absolute man. Woman is almost incapable of this logic, and it does not interest her. She has as a substitute her intuitive and sensitive qualities, which are linked to the fluid element of life, the yin aspect, as opposed to the precise, steadfast, enlightened, Apollonian (but often also dry as dust) forms of *nous* (perception) and *logos* (reason), the male intellectual principle.

Weininger’s statement that the absolute woman is not aware of the ethical imperative has a greater weight. Woman, insofar as she is woman, will never know ethics in the categorical sense of pure inner law detached from every empirical, eudemonistic, sensitive, sentimental, and personal connection.

Nothing in woman that may have an ethical character can be separated from instinct, sentiment, sexuality, or “life”; it can have no relationship with pure “being.” It will almost always have a naturalistic character or will be a sublimation with a naturalistic content, as we shall see when we come to deal with the traditional ethics of the mother or female lover.

Apart from this, the question here is not of an ethical nature but, at most, of morality, which in woman is a superficial thing, received from the world of man and often only conformist. This is the way we should think, for instance, about female ideas regarding “honour” and “virtue” and many other qualities in “social ethics,” which are not true ethics but mere habits (of the Demeter woman as the guardian of habit).

Woman may even prize in man some qualities that have an ethical value: justice very seldom, but often heroism, the power of command and decision, and in certain cases even an ascetic disposition. But that feminine recognition is concerned not with the inner ethical element of such behaviour but with the personal quality that is sexually attractive in a particular man. In other words, these qualities meet with a response from the sexuality of woman and not from an ethical nature.

That telling lies is an essential characteristic in female nature has been acknowledged at all times and in all places by popular wisdom. Weininger relates this trait likewise to the absence of being in the absolute woman. In fact we can see in this a disposition that is a special, possible outcome

of the existential weakness of woman, a weakness that reflects that of her “raw material” or of (matter), which according to Plato and Aristotle is the principle of the “unlike,” nonidentical, alteration and “decline.”

Weininger observed that nothing is more baffling for a man than a woman’s response when caught in a lie. When asked why she is lying, she is unable to understand the question, acts astonished, bursts out crying, or seeks to pacify him by smiling. She cannot understand the ethical and transcendental side of lying or the fact that a lie represents damage to being and, as was acknowledged in ancient Iran, constitutes a crime even worse than killing. It is nonsense to deduce this trait in women from sociological factors; some people say that a lie is the “natural weapon” of the woman and therefore used in her defence for hundreds of years.

The truth, pure and simple, is that woman is prone to lie and to disguise her true self even when she has no need to do so; this is not a social trait acquired in the struggle for existence, but something linked to her deepest and most genuine nature.

Just as the absolute woman does not truly feel that lying is wrong, so in her, contrary to man, lying is not wrong, nor is it an inner yielding or a breaking of her own existential law. It is a possible counterpart of her plastic and fluid nature. A type such as D’Aurevilly described is perfectly understandable: “She made a habit of lying to the point where it became truth; it was so simple and natural, without any effort or affectation.” It is foolish to judge woman with the values of the absolute man even in cases where, by doing violence to her own self, she makes a show of following those values and even sincerely believes that she is following them.

#### Woman as Mother and Woman as Lover

We said earlier that in the sphere of manifestation and nature, the male is metaphysically the complementary correlative of the female, but beyond that, he also reflects the character of that which is higher and earlier than the Dyad. The outcome on the human plane is that, whereas all relationships based on the Dyad have an essential character for woman and fulfill the natural law of her being, the same is not true for man insofar as he is truly man.

Such relationships are the sexual ones in a strict sense, and the relationships between mother and son as well. It is not wrong to say that in every higher civilization man has never been deemed to be truly a man as long as he submits to the double bond of mother and wife and exhausts the sense of his own existence in that sphere. We mentioned earlier that in the very rites of passage or of puberty among primitive peoples the consecration of manhood and admission to a “society of men” were shown as a surpassing of that naturalistic sphere. Rachel said in the Bible, “Give me a son or else I shall die.” There are Buddhist texts that underline the “inexorable nature” of woman as regards motherhood and sexuality, of which she can never have enough.

Not so much as a person, but rather owing to a metaphysical impulse, woman will always tend to lead man back under the yoke of eros or domesticity.

In characterizing man and woman, Weininger was right to say that absolute woman is nothing but sexuality, whereas the true man “is sexual but something else as well.” We concur with that writer in seeing the profound symbolic meaning in the anatomical and bodily facts that the male sexual organs seem to be something limited, detached, and almost added on to the rest of man’s body from the outside, whereas the sexual organs of a woman go deep into her innermost flesh. As there exists in man a certain gap between himself and sexuality, he can “know” his own sexuality, whereas woman can be unaware of it and deny it, for she is nothing other than sexuality and is sexuality itself.

A Hindu name for woman is kamini or “she who is made of desire,” and that expresses the same meaning as the old Latin proverb “Tota mulier sexus,” “The whole of woman is sex.”

Among other things, there is a link between that and the provocative character often shown, without the least intention, by very young and “innocent” women and even by baby girls. We should note, next, in a not dissimilar context, a special and almost unconscious narcissism within every woman which lies in her feeling of the potential pleasure that she can constitute for man. This she can relish by imagining that pleasure, even outside of any real sexual relations.

Moreover, Ellis was right when he wrote that woman thrives on sexuality and motherhood, which make her proper being function. There is no correlative of this for man (let us add, unless he reaches in some way the higher dimensions of sexual experience); on the Aphroditic side, the counterpart in man may rather be a certain loss of manhood, even if we leave aside the occult question, with which we shall deal in the next section.”

On the Demeter side, the obscure and predominant desire of woman to be a mother does not meet in man a kindred elementary need to beget. Where such a desire exists in man, it belongs to a different plane, which is ethical rather than naturalistic (the idea of the continuation of the stock, family or caste, and so on).

What the Greeks called “heterity,” that is, being connected to another or being centred on someone other than oneself, is a characteristic proper to the cosmic female, whereas to have one’s own principle in oneself is proper to the pure male. At the psychological level that fact leads to qualities in woman which can be readily seen in everyday life: female life is almost always devoid of an individual value but is linked to someone else in her need, born of vanity, to be acknowledged, noticed, flattered, admired, and desired (this extroverted tendency is connected to that “looking outside” which on a metaphysical level has been attributed to Shakti). The practice of wooing, gallantry, and compliments (even insincere ones) would be inconceivable if separated from the obligatory basis consisting precisely of this inborn trait of the female psyche, which man has had to keep in mind at all times and in all places. Let us remark in passing that the values of female ethics are very different from those of male ethics, and this can be seen at once in the fact that a woman ought to despise a man for such fawning behaviour, which is often pursued just to possess her body; yet exactly the opposite happens.

The two basic capabilities of feminine nature are determined on a less frivolous plane, one corresponding to the Aphrodite and the other to the Demeter archetype, namely woman as lover and as mother. In both cases we have to deal with a being, a will, an attainment to self-confirmation that depend on someone else, either lover or child. This fulfills the being of woman at a profane level (but will continue to a great extent at the sacred level). From the viewpoint of moral obligation, her law and her possible ethics are determined within this framework.

We owe to Weininger once again a classical typological and existential description of these two fundamental capabilities of female nature. But, as with all of what that writer says about woman, here we must discriminate the real from the distorted, which springs from his unconscious misogynous complex with its rather puritanical basis. Indeed, Weininger sees the fundamental womanly capability in “prostitution,” to which he gives a deprecatory and degraded meaning. Instead, we are dealing here with the pure type of female lover and her corresponding Aphroditic calling, and professional prostitution does not enter into the question at all, unless in a very minor and conditioned way, for prostitution is often made necessary by environmental, financial, and social circumstances without being linked to an inner predilection for it.

At the most, we might talk hereof the type of ancient or Oriental courtesan or of the “Dionysiac” woman. Every true man knows at once that there is a contrast or antagonism between the real Aphrodite attitude of woman and the maternal attitude. At their ontological bases these two opposed types are reconnected to the two main conditions of the “raw material,” to its pure and dynamically formless state tied to and oriented toward a form and nurturing a form.

Now that this point has been cleared up, the differential characterization of Weininger can be accepted as accurate; it is the relationship with procreation and with the child that distinguishes the two opposite types. The “mother” type seeks man for the child, whereas the “lover” type seeks him for the erotic experience by itself (in lower forms, for “pleasure”). Thus the maternal type fits specially into the natural order of things—if we wish to refer to the biological myth, we can say that that type fits into the law and end-purpose of the species—whereas the pure “lover” type transcends this order in a certain way (a meaningful sign is the sterility often found in the types of the pure lover and the “prostitute”), and we would say that, rather than a principle that befriends and affirms the physical, earthly life, the lover type is potentially hostile to that life because of the virtual content of transcendency proper to the absolute display of eros.

Thus, although it may disappoint bourgeois morality, it is not as a mother but as a lover that woman can approach a higher order in a natural way, that is, not on the basis of ethics but merely by arousing a spontaneous disposition of her being. However, an ambiguity lies at the base of the statement that the maternal type should feel a strengthening of existence in coitus whereas the Aphrodite type should have a desire to feel herself destroyed, annihilated, and crushed by pleasure.

But this is wrong from two points of view: first because the “deadly rapture of love” as a wish to destroy and be destroyed in ecstasy is quite common in both man and woman in all strong and higher forms of erotic experience; and second because the aforesaid disposition of the lover concerns at most the superficial psychic layers of the Virgin or Durga substance of the Aphroditic woman, and the opposite is true on a more profound plane.

But whether a woman is of the mother type or the lover type, existential anguish, fear of loneliness, and the feeling of an uneasy emptiness if she does not possess a man are characteristic of her. The social and even financial conditions that often seem to form the basis of that feeling are actually circumstances that only favour its existence but do not cause it.

Instead, its deepest root is precisely the essential dependence of woman on another being, the feeling of “matter” and of Penia, who without the “other” and without “form” is nothingness and therefore, when left by herself, experiences the fear of nothingness. Weininger assigns to this metaphysical content also the frequent behaviour of woman in coitus: “The supreme moment in the life of a woman, when her original being and elementary pleasure are revealed, is the moment when she feels the male seed running inside her; she then embraces the man tempestuously and hugs him to her; it is the supreme delight of passivity ... the matter which, indeed, is formed and does not wish to abandon form but to keep it everlastingly bound to herself.”

The situation is the same for a woman nearer to the Durga type when, at the same moment, she does not embrace but is almost motionless and her face shows the feelings of an ambiguous ecstasy that have something of the inscrutable smile of some Buddhas and of certain Khmer heads. It is at that time that she receives something more than just the material seed and that she absorbs the virya, the magical manhood, the being of the male. It is here that we meet the aspirating quality, that “draining death which comes from woman” of which we spoke in company with Meyrink in connection with the occult side of every normal lustful coitus, a side that may find its symbolic manifestation and echo in the physical outward appearance.

What D’Annunzio said in his *Il Fuoco* (Fire) about one of his female characters—“as if the whole body of the woman had assumed the quality of a sucking mouth”—not only takes place on a subtle plane but in reality makes the erotic practice of fellatio seem the best expression of the ultimate essence of woman.

Actually, the ancient world had already recognized a special active participation of woman in coitus, and Aristotle talked of her aspirating the seminal fluid. This theory was taken up again by Fichstedt toward the middle of last century and is now acknowledged to be accurate as regards its physiological side; the existence is admitted of rhythmic contractions of the vagina and uterus, like an aspiration or suction, and of spasmodic automatic movements with their own special wavelike contractions based on particular slow rhythmic tonic waves and having, in fact, the function of absorption by aspirating or sucking. This bodily behaviour can be ascertained now only in highly sexed women, but the people of ancient times were right in deeming it to be a

general phenomenon. In fact, we believe that during the course of history a physiological atrophy has occurred in feminine sexuality.

In Oriental women, who are closest to the ancient type, this physiological behaviour in coitus is still almost normal and is joined to physiological capabilities that have become unusual in European women, who nevertheless must have possessed them in ancient times. We are dealing in this regard with a physical symbol or reflection of an essential significance. At this level of physical reflex, the comparison with sucking has a liminal expression in a fact that still remains physiologically obscure, namely the smell of sperm which sometimes is given off by a woman far from her genital parts shortly after coitus; a poet, Arturo Onofri, even went so far as to speak of a “spermatic smile.”

#### *The Ethics of the Sexes*

This final comment leads us to mention the problem of the ethics of the sexes, which we can only touch on briefly here for two reasons. First, according to traditional ideas, ethics do not constitute an independent sphere, as many people today think. If ethics are to have a real governing value, they must be based on the realm of the holy and the metaphysical. Second, we have already dealt elsewhere with sexual ethics considered according to this outlook. Therefore, we shall only skim this subject here, partly as an introduction to our examination of sexual forms that have been made holy.

All true ethics, which is to say traditional and not “social” or abstract and philosophical ones, are founded on the elevation, in a form as free as it is absolute, of the actual nature proper to each being. An element that is “naturalistic” in origin loses that character and takes on an ethical value when it becomes the content of a pure act of will. The formula of all ethics is summarized in the dictum “Be yourself” or “Be true to yourself,” wherein the self is to be understood as one’s own deepest nature or one’s own “idea” or the quality of one’s own type.

Now, if we have recognized the elementary characters of manhood and of womanhood in a “being by itself” and a “being that depends on another being,” it seems evident enough what the respective ethics of man and woman are; they will be the pure, unconditional assumption and development of those dispositions by the empirical individuals of one or the other sex.

As types of pure manhood who realize “being by itself,” we indicated the warrior and the ascetic, whose ideal genuine female counterparts are expressed in the lover and the mother. Taken in themselves, neither the Demeter nor the Aphrodite dispositions have any ethical worth or moral imperative; both confirm that woman belongs to mere “nature.” Though that is generally acknowledged with regard to the Aphrodite disposition, there is a marked tendency, entirely without foundation, to glorify the maternal disposition. We speak of the “sublime function of motherhood,” whereas it is hard to show what precisely is sublime about motherhood. The female of the human species shares this motherly love with the female of various animal species; that love is an impersonal, instinctive, naturalistic trait of woman devoid of any ethical dimension, and it can be displayed in clear contrast to ethical values.

Such a love does not in any way depend on higher principles, but rather is blind and can be unjust. A mother loves her child only because it is her child and not because she sees in it the embodiment of what is worthy to be loved. The absolute mother will be ready not only to give her own life (thus far there would be a naturalistic basis for an ethical attitude) but even to stain herself with crimes unforgivable from an ethical point of view to save or defend her child. The most thoroughgoing example of this type of mother is found in the tale “Imant and His Mother” by Aino Kallas: having learned that her son is risking his life in a plot against his master, she does not hesitate to betray all the conspirators on condition that the master undertakes to spare her son. All his companions are slain and her son is saved, but, of course, as soon as he learns the truth, he cannot help killing himself. The contrast between male ethics and maternal love is shown here in its crudest form.

A woman would have to sublimate her individuality and possess a heroic and sacrificial disposition for her natural tendencies as a mother and lover to take on an ethical character. When such is the case, it is a question no longer of blind love, instinct, or compulsion that leaves no opportunity for choice, but of a free act and a far-seeing love in which would remain woman’s natural dependency on another (here, the son) but which is also united with an ability to distinguish and with a positive will capable of transcending her naturalistic substratum, so far perhaps as to even desire the death of an unworthy son. Some Spartan, ancient Roman, Iberian, and Germanic types of mother can provide example of this first ethical potentiality of woman.

The second ethical potentiality of woman corresponds to the type of the lover and is realized in the “being dependent on another” and in living for another in a heroic and transfiguring environment in which man is desired as her own “master and husband” but is also venerated almost like a god; this capability overcomes all exclusiveness and all selfishness and turns her self-offering into an almost sacrificial act. She conserves the disintegrating, life-giving, and “demonic” potential of the absolute Aphroditic woman but frees it of its destructive and “sucking” side, as we mentioned earlier. In our book cited earlier, we dealt with institutions of the traditional world that presupposed this possible ethical change in woman as a person not of a Demeter nature but of an Aphroditic and Dionysiac one.

The perfection of this way is woman who wants to follow her own husband beyond the limits of her own nature, even into the flames of a funeral pyre (a custom mistakenly assigned only to India, for a similar custom, inspired by the same spirit, existed among the Thracians, Wends, ancient Germans, Chinese, and Incas).

We shall restrict ourselves in this book to this very sketchy outline of the ethics of the sexes. We will leave aside altogether the “problems” of woman and of sexual relations, as people think of them nowadays in relation to marriage, divorce, emancipation, free love, and so forth. These are all spurious problems. The only true problem is to what extent in a given society and epoch man can be himself and woman can be herself in an accurate approximation of their respective archetypes, and also to what extent the relationships of man and woman reflect the natural and unchangeable law rooted in the very metaphysics of male and female. This law is “reciprocal

integration and completion together with a subordination of the female principle to the male.” Everything else, as Nietzsche would say, is nonsense; and in the introduction we observed in what a state the modern Western world finds itself in relation to man, woman, and sex thanks to our so-called “progress.”

### *Christianity and Sexuality*

The sacred institution of marriage in Catholicism has a hybrid character because of the ethics chosen by that religion. We can see in Catholicism the outcome of the unruly interplay between principles and rules of two very distinct planes. Traditional religions based on a creationist belief have always recognized two laws. One of them concerns the fallen original “being.” In fact, when reproducing the biblical passage that speaks of the two becoming one flesh and leaving father and mother, Paul added, “This is a great mystery” (Eph. 5: 31–32). The precise word used here is “mystery” and not “sacrament” as written in the Vulgate. In Paul’s epistles there is a reference to the double status, male and female, and implicitly to the corresponding ways for man and woman in the words “Forasmuch as [man] is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor. 11:7), and also the mystery of the conversion or “redemption” of the female through the male principle (Shakti led back by Shiva), with the commandment that a man should love his wife as Christ loved the church, giving himself for it “that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”; this is followed by the words “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5: 25–28). But Paul’s epistles, in contradiction, also deny all higher capabilities of sexual experience that is taken as “fornication” and shamelessness, while marriage is deemed to be a mere makeshift. We also read, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”; and further on, “But if they cannot contain themselves, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7: 1–2, 9).

It was precisely this latter view which was taken as the basis of post-evangelical Christianity, for which sexual life in general is a sin. It is not lawful for Roman Catholics to have sex except in wedlock and only for the purpose of procreation. We know, however, that marriage as a regular “sacrament” and not as a generic blessing of the spouses only appeared at a late stage in Christianity (about the twelfth century) and that even more recently, the Council of Trent in 1563 imposed the religious rite for every wedding that was not to be viewed on the same level as concubinage. This sacramental, posthumous aspect has a purpose that is fundamentally secular rather than spiritual. As the idea of the sinfulness and simple “natural character” of sex remains and since sex is not acknowledged except as a means for procreation, marriage here is shown to be exactly what Paul has disparagingly conceded it to be, just a lesser evil, a “cure for the sickness of lust” for men and women who are incapable of choosing celibacy and succumb to the flesh; it was Saint Thomas who said that “the act of marriage is always a sin.” The canonical idea that marriage as a sacrament confers the grace needed to bless the lawful union of man with woman by perfecting natural love and giving it a character of indissolubility which was lacking

beforehand is therefore reduced to the mere form of a superstructure.

It is in no way a rite intended to establish or promote the deeper, transfiguring, sacred dimensions of sexual experience, because, as a principle, theology has condemned anyone who, even in wedlock, broadens this experience without having procreation as his essential goal and detaches himself from a practice of “chaste unions.” This involves the mistaken belief that eros and the “instinct for reproduction” should be one and the same thing. Moreover, we should bear in mind the disappearance, in a society controlled by this dogma, of everything that in the ancient family could impart to procreation the higher meaning referred to earlier, which is linked to familial and ancestral cults. In practice, the Christian point of view prevents sex from becoming a sacred ceremony, which leads to its repression and non-consecration because of the hybrid nature of this point of view. For it has laid down as a general rule, still valid in our times, that detachment from sex should be viewed in the light of ascetic transformation and not as a puritanical repression of the sexual drive.

Thus, the Christian religious rule has only bequeathed us social restraint and the simple mediocre and dull fettering of the human animal, which is devoid of any interest to us. Only with the marginal updating of Vatican Council II has the point of view of the church been modified somewhat and a certain emphasis given to sexual union in wedlock, although the same relationship to procreation has been kept.

The rule of celibacy of the priesthood in Roman Catholicism arises from a similar confusion. The type of the priest (secular clergy) has been confused with that of the ascetic (monk). Most traditional civilizations with long priestly dynasties separated these distinct roles. The continuity of blood acted as a natural upholder and carrier of the continuity of supernatural influence transmitted down through successive generations of a given stock. Moreover, a law intended for persons who live in the world and not for the ascetic must have been very like that expressed by Ibn Ata: “Men of devotion and austerity execrate because they are far from God; if they saw Him in everything, they would not execrate anything.”

A different attitude toward sex has only been adopted by certain decidedly heterodox and outlawed Christian doctrines or in a few random cases. In the first of these two categories we should call to mind the doctrines of the Americans, Beghards and “Brothers of the Free Spirit” (twelfth to fourteenth century), who drew from the idea of divine omnipresence conclusions about sex similar to those of the traditions referred to earlier. In such doctrines two religions were distinguished, one for the ignorant, the other for the enlightened who could reach such a state that they could see God acting in themselves and in everything. For him who attains such a state, sin disappears and the ascetic rule loses all meaning, for even the actions of the body glorify God and, whatever they may be, are felt to be carried out by God in human form. It was stated that the enlightened man who was free in spirit could not sin; it was even said that women were created to be used by those who live in such a state of freedom; moreover, even freedom from law was claimed, which went far beyond anything needed to surmount the Christian concept of the essential sinfulness and impurity of sex, for such a freedom would lead to

complete license. The following proposition is attributed to some followers of this belief: "He who is thus free cannot sin... and if his nature should be disposed to an act of love, he may lawfully do it with his sister or mother and at any place, such as altars."

But in such circumstances, we must distinguish what the enlightened actually professed in secret from what their orthodox foes slanderously attributed to them. From our research, we believe that this was mainly a matter of doctrine, or principles that were not necessarily put into practice.

As an example of random individual experience, let us use the one cited by Woodroffe concerning the outcome of an inquiry carried out in the eighteenth century in the Convent of the Dominicans of Saint Catherine at Prato because of the scandal caused by the mystical sensualism practiced there in secret. A declaration of the young abbess of this convent is meaningful: "As our spirit is free, it is only the intention that can make an action wicked. It is enough, therefore, to lift ourselves in our minds up to God, and then nothing is sinful." She added that to be united to God was to be united as man and woman; the everlasting life of the soul and paradise in this world consisted in the "transubstantiation of the union that man makes with woman." The "enjoyment of God" was reached by the act that united one with God, and this was effected "by the cooperation of man and woman, of the man in whom I recognize God." She concluded: "To practice that which we mistakenly call impurity is true purity, which God wishes and bids us to practice and without which we have no way of finding God, who is truth."

But we have now said enough on this subject, because in cases of this kind we are no longer dealing with sacred ceremonies in a formal and institutional framework, but with marginal experiences having a free and mystical background. We shall encounter them in other traditions as well. However, in this unusual case, we are struck by its likeness to the ideas that elsewhere have marked the ritual nature of marital practices free from the onus of sin.

We have already mentioned the collective rites of the Slavic Khlysti, which involved the sexual union of men and women, men being considered the embodiment of Christ, women the embodiment of the Virgin Mary; but it is obvious that the Christian element in these rites is a mere whitewash superimposed on survivals and revivals of previous heathen rites.

From "Ride the Tiger"

*The "Animal Ideal"*

#### The Sentiment of Nature

The transcendent dimension may also become active in reaction to the processes responsible for a steady erosion of many ties to nature, leading to a rootless state. It is evident, for example, that the stay-at home bourgeois lifestyle is increasingly and irreversibly affected by the progress of communication technology, opening up great expanses on land, sea, and air. Modern life takes place ever less in a protected, self contained, qualitative, and organic environment: one is immersed in the entire world by new and rapid travel that can bring us to faraway lands and landscapes in little time. Hence, we tend toward a general cosmopolitanism as "world citizens" in

a material and objective sense, not an ideological, much less a humanitarian one. At least the times of "provincialism" are over.

To see what positive effect such situations can have on the development on the differentiated and self-possessed man, it is enough to glance at the ideas of certain traditional spiritual disciplines. In them, the metaphysical idea of the transience of earthly existence and the detachment from the world have had two characteristic expressions, whether symbolic or actual: the first in hermit life, living alone in desert or forest, the second in the wandering life, going through the world without house or home. This second type has even occurred in some Western religious orders; ancient Buddhism had the characteristic concept of "departure," as the start of a non-profanе existence, and in traditional Hinduism this was the last of the four stages of life. There is a significant analogy with the idea of the medieval "knight errant," to which we might add the enigmatic and sometimes disconcerting figures of "noble travellers" whose homeland was unknown, who did not have one, or must not be asked about it.

Although our case is different from that of ascetics who remove themselves from the world, the situation of the latest technological civilization might offer the incentive for commitments of this kind. In a large city, in mass society, among the almost unreal swarming of face less beings, an essential sense of isolation or of detachment often occurs naturally, perhaps even more than in the solitude of moors and mountains. What I have hinted at concerning recent technology that annihilates distances and the planetary spread of today's horizons, feeds inner detachment, superiority, calm transcendence, while acting and moving in the vast world: one finds oneself everywhere, yet at home nowhere.

In this way, the negative can again be turned into positive. The experience increasingly offered, and often imposed on our contemporaries, of going to other cities, across frontiers, even to other continents, out side the sphere of a secure existence with its peculiarities can be banal, matter-of-fact, touristic, utilitarian, and in our day almost always is. Alternatively, it can be an integrated part of a different, liberated life, with a more profound meaning in the above-mentioned terms, but only if the proper capacity of reaction is present in oneself.

Given that the speed factor has an essential role in the modern, technical mastery of distances, a passing allusion could be made to the value of the experience of speed itself. It is well known that today it is used by many men, and even women, almost like alcohol, to obtain a physical intoxication that feeds an essentially physical I, needing distraction from unpleasant thoughts and drugging itself with strong emotions.

Like the machine itself, some situations of speed in the technologized world can have a virtual, symbolic, and realizable dimension, often involving risk: the greater the speed, the more it requires a superior lucidity, bringing into play a higher type of calmness and internal immobility. In this context the intoxication of speed can even change its nature; it can pass from one plane to another and have some traits in common with the type of intoxication of which I have spoken describing the state of integrated Dionysism. If this were the proper place, I could develop this

theme much further.

Returning to what was mentioned earlier, the expression "nomad of the asphalt," although scathing, is significant of the negative and depersonalizing effect on life of the destruction of natural ties in large, modern cities. Also in this regard, I am not concerned with those forms of revolt or protest that, with the idea of defending "human values," end up going "back to nature," starting from the antitheses between city and nature, between "civilization" and nature. That theme already belonged to the nineteenth-century bourgeois repertory. But today it occurs in the context of what we might call the "physical" primitivization of existence.

Here is one effect of that regression, through which in the course of his "liberation" Western man has come to feel ever less as a privileged being of creation, and ever more as one of so many natural species- as an animal. The defining and spread of Darwinism and evolutionism were already barometric indicators of this inner attitude. But apart from the domain of theories and science, in the field of ordinary, modern life, it has manifested in terms of behaviour, giving rise to what has been called the "animal ideal," especially referring to North America, where it was first realized.

The term applies to that ideal of biological well-being, comfort, optimistic euphoria emphasizing everything that is sheer health, youth, physical vigor, security, and material success, primitive satisfaction of hunger and sexual desire, athletic life, and so forth, whose counter part is the atrophy of every superior form of sensibility and interest. I have already treated this.

The kind of man who is thus elevated to the summit of "modern" civilization is evidently one who has developed only the aspects through which he belongs to an animal species. It goes without saying that this idea finds its counterpart in the nihilism that underlies many of today's predominant sociopolitical currents. Here I only want to emphasize the "back to nature" idea as an instance of the physical cult of the personality.

It is not a matter of mere forms, legitimate but banal, of organic compensation. It is no wonder that today's man feels a need for physical reintegration, relaxation of nerves, and invigoration of the body away from the environment of large, modern cities. For this reason, natural living, the culture of the body, and even certain types of individual sport may be useful.

Things appear otherwise, however, when people start to claim that some kind of spiritual factor is involved; that is, when it is thought that natural surroundings and physical strength make a man feel closer to himself than in the experiences and tensions of civilized life, and above all when it is supposed that physical sensations of well being and comfort have any profound significance, or anything to do with human integrity considered from a higher point of view.

Apart from that position, which leads to the "animal ideal" and modern naturalism, I deplore the general confusion of a "return to origins" with a return to Mother Earth and even to Nature. Although it has often been misapplied, that theological doctrine that holds that a purely natural state for man has never existed is still legitimate; at the beginning he was placed in a

supranatural state from which he has now fallen.

In fact, for the true type of man, it can never be a question of those origins and that "mother" wherein the individual cannot differentiate himself from his fellow men, or even from the animals. Every return to nature is a regressive phenomenon, including any protest in the name of instinctual rights, the unconscious, the flesh, life uninhibited by the intellect, and so forth. The man who becomes "natural" in this way has in reality become denatured.

Here I must return to an earlier point: a consequence of rejecting this view is the overcoming of the antithesis between city and nature in the behaviour that should be "natural" for the human type who concerns us. It is the attitude of him who feels in place as little in nature as in the city, for whom it is normal and honest in a higher sense to keep is distance with respect to both; he sees the need and pleasure of surrender, expatiation, and feeling in animal, physical terms as an evasion, a symptom of fatigue and internal inconsistency.

The body is part of the "person" as a definite instrument of expression and action in the situation actually lived; therefore it is obvious that one must also extend to it discipline and control, in order to assure completeness of being. This, however, has nothing to do with the cult of the physical personality, much less with the mania for sports, especially for team sports, one of today's most vulgar and widespread opiates of the masses.

As for the "sentiment of nature," in general, the human type that concerns us must consider nature as part of a larger and more objective whole: nature for him includes countrysides, mountains, forests, and

seacoasts, but also dams, turbines, and foundries, the tentacular system of ladders and cranes of a great modern port or a complex of functional skyscrapers. This is the space for a higher freedom. He remains free and self-aware before both types of nature-being no less secure in the middle of a steppe or on an alpine peak than amid Western city nightlife.

The counterpart of the "animal ideal" occurs when the sentiment of nature and landscape is made banal. This was already the case with idyllic nature, which was made into a myth in the period of the Encyclopedie and by Rousseau. Later, along these lines, there was the nature beloved by the bourgeois: Arcadian or lyric nature characterized by beauty and grace, by the picturesque, the restful, by that which inspires "noble sentiments"; nature with its brooks and groves, the romance of sunset and the pathos of moonlight; nature to which one declaims verses, weaves idylls, and evokes the poets who speak of "beautiful souls." Though sublimated and dignified, the mood immortalized by Beethoven's Pastorale is no different.

In the end, the phase of nature for the plebeians arrives, with the breakout of the masses, the common people everywhere with or with out their automobiles, the travel agencies, the dopolavori, and all the rest; nothing is spared. The naturists and nudists form the extreme of this phenomenon. The beaches-teeming insect-like with thousands and thousands of male and female bodies, offering to the glance an insipid, almost complete nudity-are another symptom. Still

another is the assault on the mountains by cable cars, funiculars, chair lifts, and ski lifts. All this is part of the regime of final disintegration of our epoch. There is no point in dwelling on it.

I prefer to clarify the function that authentic contact with nature can have for the active, impersonal attitude, starting with some notions along the lines of the Neue Sachlichkeit, which can only acquire a full significance in our differentiated human type.

Matzke said of this: "Nature is the great realm of things, which demands nothing of us, which neither pursues us nor asks for sentimental reactions, which stands mutely before us as a world to itself, external and alien. This is exactly what we need... this reality, always grand and distant, resting in itself, beyond all the little joys and the little sorrows of man. A world of objects, enclosed in itself, in which we ourselves feel like an object. Completely detached from everything merely subjective, from every personal vanity and nullity: this is what nature is for us. It is a question of restoring to nature-to space, to things, to landscape-those characteristics of distance and foreignness to mankind that were hidden in the epoch of individualism, when man projected his feelings, his passions, his lyrical ardour, onto reality to make it closer to him. It is a question of rediscovering the language of the inanimate that cannot manifest until the "soul" has ceased to impose itself on things.

This is the sense in which nature can speak to us of transcendence. Our attention automatically shifts from some principal aspects of nature to others that are more propitious for opening us up to the nonhuman and the non-individual. Nietzsche also spoke of the "superiority" of the inorganic world, calling it "spirituality without individuality." For a "supreme clarification of existence" he refers as an analogy to the "pure atmosphere of the Alps and ice fields, where there are no more clouds or veils, where the elementary qualities of things are revealed naked and uncompromising but with absolute intelligibility" and one hears "the immense, cIPHERED language of existence," "the doctrine of becoming made stone."

To return the world to a calm, stable, clear, and cool state; to restore to it its elementarity, its self-contained grandeur-this was also said to be the demand of the "new objectivity." Here prominence was justly given not to insensibility, but to a different kind of sensibility. Also for us, it is a matter of a human type whom nature no longer interests by offering him what is "artistic," rare, characteristic; he who no longer seeks in nature the "beauty" that merely feeds confused nostalgias and speaks to fantasy. For this human type, there can be no landscape more beautiful than another, but some landscapes can be more distant, boundless, calm, cool, harsh, and primordial than others.

He hears the language of things of the world not among trees, brooks, beautiful gardens, before oleographic sunsets and romantic moon light, but rather in deserts, rocks, steppes, glaciers, murky Nordic fjords, the implacable, tropical sun, great ocean currents-in fact, in everything primordial and inaccessible. It naturally follows that the man with this sentiment of nature relates to it more actively-almost by absorbing its own pure, perceived force-than in a vague, lax, and rambling contemplation.

If for the bourgeois generation nature was a kind of idyllic Sunday interlude of small-town life, and if for the latest generation it is the stage for acting out its vacuous, invasive, and contaminating vulgarity, it is for our differentiated man a school of objectivity and distance; it is something fundamental in his sense of existence, exhibiting an absolute character.

At this point one can clearly speak of a nature that in its elementarity is the great world where the stone and steel panoramas of the metropolis, the endless avenues, the functional complexes of industrial areas are on the same level, for example, as great, solitary forests as symbols of a fundamental austerity, objectivity, and impersonality.

With regard to the problems of inner orientation in our epoch, I have always valued ideas present in traditional esoteric doctrines. This also applies to what I have just said. The liberation of nature from the human, the access to it through the language of silence and the inanimate seems congenial to one who would turn the objective, destructive processes of the modern world to his own advantage. But the direction is no different from that which schools of traditional wisdom, like Zen, knew through a real cleansing and transparency of the glance or an opening of the eye, an enlightening revelation of the consciousness that has over come the fetters of the physical I, of the person, and his values.

The result here is an experience that already belongs to a different level from that of ordinary consciousness. It does not exactly concern the matter of this book, but it is still interesting to point out its relation ship with the vision of the world centred on free immanence, which was mentioned in an earlier chapter (in which a fleeting allusion to Zen itself was made) and which I now reconsider as the limit of a new realism. Ancient tradition has a saying: "The infinitely distant is the return."

Among the maxims of Zen that point in the same direction is the statement that the "great revelation," acquired through a series of mental and spiritual crises, consists in the recognition that "no one and nothing 'extraordinary' exists in the beyond"; only the real exists.

Reality is, however, lived in a state in which "there is no subject of the experience nor any object that is experienced," and under the sign of a type of absolute presence, "the immanent making itself transcendent and the transcendent immanent." The teaching is that at the point at which one seeks the Way, one finds oneself further from it, the same being valid for the perfection and "realization" of the self. The cedar in the courtyard, a cloud casting its shadow on the hills, falling rain, a flower in bloom, the monotonous sound of waves: all these "natural" and banal facts can suggest absolute illumination, the satori.

As mere facts they are without meaning, finality, or intention, but as such they have an absolute meaning. Reality appears this way, in the pure state of "things being as they are." The moral counterpart is indicated in sayings such as: "The pure and immaculate ascetic does not enter nirvana, and the monk who breaks the rules does not go to hell," or: "You have no liberation to seek from bonds, because you have never been bound."

The extent that these peaks of the inner life can be attained, in the framework already indicated, remains undetermined. I merely wish to point out a convergence of themes and a direction.

*“Feminism and The Heroic Tradition”*

From, The Ring, June 6, 1933

Proceeding from the premise that the qualitative and differentiated is to be regarded as perfection, and the quantitative and formless as imperfection, certain quarters have already tried to prove that the much-vaunted occidental culture does not mean an evolution, but rather a decline, an involution.

Today, various tragic events have finally dissuaded most from the myths of cheap optimism, enabling us to feel the truth of this seeming paradox. For centuries the western world has been subject to a terrible process of levelling. Its political forms of manifestation - from liberalism and democracy to the Bolshevik mass culture- are only special and already external phenomena. Not only are the differences of caste and inner dignity, to which our ancient traditions owe their greatness, undermined today: a similar regression process sets as an ideal for the future, after completed levelling between man and man, also the levelling between sex and sex. From the same anti-aristocratic and anti-hierarchical striving that can be seen in so many signs of decay in the modern world, the feminist phenomenon emerges, but the most acute expression of which is to be found in the two countries that, like the two scissors of a single pair of pliers, stretch around our Europe from East and West unite: Russia and America. Indeed, the Bolshevik equality of woman with man in every social, legal, and political respect finds its full counterpart in the emancipation that woman had already achieved across the ocean through feminism.

A comparison will help us. In order to grasp the inherent aberrations inherent in such modern twists, while at the same time identifying the values that might lead to normality again, we shall briefly refer to the outlook on life common to all major Aryan cultures, particularly the classical, Graeco-Roman, and Norse-Roman worlds was.

The cult of form- of form as a law of order and distinction - was at the heart of such a view of life. The world is cosmos and not chaos in that, like a perfect organism, it is made up of a number of well-differentiated and irreplaceable parts and functions.

"Truth", the ultimate goal of such parts is not to return to the state where they were one through the dissolution of their individuation, but: to be more and more themselves, to express their own nature more and more precisely, up to the realization of absolute individuations, which as a prerequisite for the greatest variety and determinateness of the universe. In this way, the basis for a hierarchical order in the family, the gens, the city, and finally in the empire itself, was formed, a hierarchy that did not develop through violence and oppression, but spontaneously, out of the recognition of the natural differences between people, sexes and races.

In its empirical immediacy, of course, no being is just itself.

Opposite natures emerge and clash within him. However, such a state of mixture was regarded as an imperfection; the goal of ethics and even asceticism was traditionally to overcome it up to the setting of types that are only and completely "themselves": like living ones, designed by an artist from formless matter statues. As far as the genders are concerned, man and woman present themselves as two types- and whoever is born a man should complete himself as a man, whoever as a woman should complete himself as a woman, through and through, in the physical and in the mental, with Overcoming any confusion. On the spiritual plane, too, man and woman should each tread their own path, which must not be left without confusion and contradiction.

In the world we take for granted, where there was the freedom native to heights and that inner boldness without which life is a dirty business and meaningless- but in such a world the essential characteristic of manhood was inner contentment and domination, the " Being in itself", a purity formed from power – and two major paths were pointed to this goal: the path of action and the path of contemplation. The two basic types of pure masculinity were expressed in the warrior or hero and in the ascetic. Symmetric to such types there are two for femininity. Woman realizes as such, rising to the same level as man stands as warrior and ascetic, inasmuch as she is lover and mother. Like active heroism, there is also passive heroism. The heroism of absolute assertion is opposed to the heroism of absolute devotion - and one can be as luminous as the other when experienced with purity, somewhat like a ritual offering. It is precisely this duality of the heroic that determines the difference between the paths to perfection for man and woman. The attitude of the warrior and the ascetic, the first of which asserts itself through pure action, the other through a masculine seclusion in a life that is beyond life corresponds in woman to the heroism of impetus, which makes her utterly different surrenders, surrenders for another and is there for another, be it her husband (lover's type, corresponding to that of the warrior), be it her son (mother's type, corresponding to that of the ascetic), and in such relation the higher meaning of their own life, their joy and - in borderline cases - their salvation. The ever more determined realization of these two separate and distinctive directions of the heroic, eliminating all that is feminine in man and masculine in woman, to the point of perfecting an absolute woman over an absolute man—this is the traditional, normal law for the genders.

We need hardly indicate how such views contrast with the levelling and humanitarian principles which have in recent times dominated morality, law, the social order, even the ideal of knowledge and creativity of Western man. On this basis, the spirit and face of modern feminism can also be understood.

Indeed, it was unthinkable that a world which had 'overthrown' caste and, to use Jacobean jargon, 'restored to every human being his or her dignity and rights' could have retained a sense of gender equality. The "emancipation" of women had to follow that of slaves and the glorification of status and tradition, ie. the ancient pariah. And abdication was mistaken for conquest.

After centuries of "enslavement," woman wanted to become free and exist for herself.

Feminism, however, was unable to give woman a different personality than mere imitation of males can give. As such, her claims are nothing but a mask for the new woman's thorough distrust of herself: that is, her inability to be and count for what she is - as a woman and not as a man. Feminism is based on the premise that woman as such has no value, that she can only be valid insofar as she becomes man as much as possible and claims the same prerogatives.

Therefore, feminism is a symptom of degeneration in the strictest sense of the word. And where traditional ethics demanded that man and woman become more and more themselves, expressing with ever more daring imprints what stamps one man and the other woman - we see that the modern movements strive for levelling, for one State that is actually not beyond, but on this side of sexual individuation and differentiation.

On the other hand, what feminism had in mind on the practical level was the homunculus created by the banks, offices, markets and the other luminous centres of modern life. It was therefore not difficult for feminism to prove that women, too, have more or less the same intellectual and practical faculties that justify the rights, autonomy and "superiority" of the new male type that has become a shadow of itself.

The man, on the other hand, let things take their course, he even helped, pushed the woman into public life, into offices, schools, workshops and the other pernicious affairs of modern society and culture. This was the final levelling impetus.

And in a world where the boxer, cowboy, and Jewish banker have taken the place of the ascetic and warrior as the highest male type, the spiritual emasculation of modern materialized man often seems meaningless to the old primacy of the aphrodisiac woman over the sensually versed to have brought the man working for her back to life.

On the other hand: the varieties of sexual corruption and exasperation accompanied by just as much superficiality, or the degeneration of the female type even in its physical characteristics, the atrophy of woman's natural potential, the stifling of her inwardness. Hence the garçonne type, the masculine, sporty girl; empty, incapable of any impetus beyond herself, yes, finally, even incapable of sexuality itself: since in the modern woman the possibility not only of motherhood, but even of love, ultimately does not arouse such an essential interest as making oneself beautiful otherwise, themselves with clothes – or with something like that few clothes as possible - adornment, the physical training, the dance for the sake of the dance, and so on.

It is easy to foresee where the relationships between the two sexes must lead on this basis, also in material terms. In love, as in the magnetic and electric, the creative spark is greater and livelier, the more determined the polarity, ie. the differentiation of the sexes, is: the more the man is really man and the woman is really woman. In the world of the "evolute" and "emancipated" woman there may well be the promiscuity of an ambiguous camaraderie, of faint "intellectual" sympathies, or a new banal communist naturism: but no longer love taken in that deep, elemental sense in which the ancients recognized in her a cosmic elemental force.

Just as social egalitarianism has abolished the earlier masculine, living relationships between warrior and warrior, prince and subject, so too will feminist egalitarianism increasingly lead to a tastelessly distorted world. The vanguard of such a world - Russia and America - is already in place and gives us the most significant warnings.

But everything is connected, both in decay and in rebirth. When speaking of the decadence of the modern woman, it should not be forgotten that the man is ultimately responsible for such decadence. Just as the plebs could never have broken into all spheres of social and cultural life if kings and aristocrats had really been able to hold sword and scepter in their hands, so in a society run by real men the woman would never have had the path of today can and want to embark on feminist degeneration.

Therefore, the true reaction should be directed less against the woman than against the man. Woman cannot be expected to become true to her nature again as long as man knows and glorifies only the caricature of himself. In defiance of every outward appearance: sex is only true and unconditional in spirit. The reintegration of modern man in the tradition-bound sense, ie in the sense of aristocratic superiority, ascetic and martial dignity, Doric-Aryan purity, is equivalent to the reintegration of the male type itself and - even if it is only carried out in an elite - turns out to be indispensable A prerequisite not only for our political reconstruction, but also for the reestablishment of proper gender relations, the eradication of feminist heresy in the name of a new "heroic" style and the return of woman to her natural possibilities of fire, light and liberating devotion.

#### *Matriarchy in J.J. Bachofen's Work*

Johann Jakob Bachofen could be described as a 'revelation' of the most modern European culture. A contemporary of Nietzsche (he was born in Basle in 1815 and died in 1887), he belonged to the same spiritual circles which gave birth to Nietzsche's 'Birth of Tragedy' and E. Rohde's 'Psyche'. His work attained virtually no recognition in his own life-time. The general public did not come into contact with it, while the 'specialists' in ancient history and archeology hatched a sort of conspiracy of silence against it, because of its opposition to the methods and conceptions which they held dear.

Today Bachofen's work has been widely rediscovered and acclaimed as pioneering and masterly. A first re-edition of selected writings by Bachofen in three volumes was published in Leipzig in 1926 by C.A. Bernouilli under the title 'Urreligion und antike Symbole'; a second, enriched with a wide-ranging introductory essay, was edited by A. Baumler in 1926 and bears the title of 'Der Mythos von Orient und Okzident'.

Mastering the knowledge of archeology and philology of his time, Bachofen devoted himself to a distinctive interpretation of the symbols, myths, cults and forms of right of the most ancient times, an interpretation which is particularly important because of the great number of ideas and points of reference which it offers to those who wish to penetrate an almost unsuspected dimension of the world of our origins, and to grasp a sort of spiritual secret history of the ancient civilisations hidden behind their apparent histories, all of which amounts to a supreme instance

of what is called ‘critical historiography’. Considering this, the fact that in Bachofen some deductions and some details are inaccurate, that some presentations are flawed by excessive simplification and that, since his time, the science of antiquity has gathered a great deal of other material, does not prejudice the essential value of his works and does not entitle any of our contemporaries to consider his main works, the fruit of profound and complex studies and of happy intuitions, as ‘outmoded’. Bachofen, today, is as little ‘outmoded’ as Fustel de Coulanges, Max Muller or Schelling. In evaluating authors of this sort, it is the authors who has come after them who need to keep themselves in better form, since, although their spectacles, that is to say, their critical and analytical instruments, are undoubtedly more perfect, their inner sight seems to an equal degree to have become more myopic, and their researches, often losing their way in a soulless and opaque specialism, no longer reflect anything of the power of synthesis and of the certainty of intuition of some masters of the last century.

What is interesting in Bachofen, in the first place, is his method. This method is new and revolutionary compared to the usual scholastic and academic way of considering ancient civilisations, ancient cults, and myths, because it is ‘traditional’ in the higher sense of the word. What we mean by this is that the way in which the man of any traditional civilisation, which is anti-individualistic and anti-rationalistic, is more or less the way by which Bachofen has sought to discover the secret of the world of our origins.

The fundamental premise of Bachofen’s whole work is that symbol and myth are testimonies, which any complete historical science must take into serious consideration. They are not arbitrary creations, projections of whim and poetic imagination : they are on the contrary ‘representations of the experiences of a race in the light of its religious sense’, obeying a very precise logic and law. Moreover, symbol, tradition, and legend must not be considered and evaluated according to their ‘historicity’ in the narrowest sense of the word ; it is this misunderstanding which has prevented us from so far gaining the most precious knowledge. What must be addressed is not their problematic ‘historical’ meaning, but their certain meaning as ‘facts of the spirit’.

Wherever the recorded event and the ‘positive’ document no longer speak to us, the myth, the symbol and the legend meet us, ready to introduce us to a more profound, secret and essential reality, a reality of which the outer historical and tangible face of the ancient societies, races and civilisations is only a consequence. Because of this, they themselves are often the only ‘positive’ documents which have remained from the past.

Bachofen rightly notices that history as such can never be grasped: an event can thus leave traces, but its inner meaning escapes us, it is taken away by the current of time, so that it is incomprehensible and unknowable to us except to the extent that it has been specified by tradition and myth. In the development, the transformation, the opposition and even in the contradiction of the traditions, symbols and myths, we can in fact identify the most profound forces, the spiritual and metaphysical ‘primary elements’ which were at work in the primordial cycles of civilisation and brought about their most decisive upheavals. This opens to us the way

to a metaphysic of history, which is also an integral history, a history in which the most important dimension, the third dimension, is specifically highlighted. Bachofen's interpretation of the inner history of Rome on the basis of its myths and legends is one of the most convincing examples of the importance and of the fertility of such a method.

Secondly, Bachofen's work has a special importance both on the plane of the 'morphology' or 'typology of civilisation', and on that of the 'science of the races of spirit'. Starting from the various forms which the relations between the sexes formerly assumed, Bachofen's research demonstrates the existence of some typical and distinct forms of civilisation from which derive various central ideas linked in their turn to various visions of the world, of destiny, of the after-life, of right, and of society. Such ideas almost have the value of 'archetypes' in a platonic sense ; they are formative forces connected by relationships of analogy to the great forces of things. In individuals, they appear also in various modes of being, in various 'styles' of soul, feeling, acting and reacting.

This is the special science which Bachofen initiated. However, he did not completely manage to get rid of the 'evolutionist' fixation which prevailed in his day. So he was led to believe that the various forms identified by him in the sense that we have just mentioned formed a sort of succession of stages in the progress of human civilisation in general. If the higher morphological and typological meaning of his research is not to be prejudiced, this limitation, naturally, must be removed.

The world considered by Bachofen is basically that of the ancient Mediterranean civilisations. The chaotic multiplicity of cults, myths, symbols, juridical forms, and customs they exhibit boil down in Bachofen's works to the effects, in varied forms, of two fundamental antithetical ideas: the Olympian-virile idea and the telluric-feminine idea. Such polarity can also be expressed by the following oppositions : civilisations of the heroes and civilisations of the Mothers, solar idea and chthonic-lunar idea, paternal right and matriarchy, aristocratic ethic of difference and orgiastic-communist promiscuity, Olympian ideal of the 'supreworld' and pantheist mysticism, positive right of the Imperium and natural right.

Bachofen discovered the 'gynaecocratic era', i.e. the era in which the feminine principle is supreme. To this era corresponds an archaic phase of the Mediterranean civilisation, linked to Pelagic peoples as well as to a group of peoples of the South-East and Asiatic basin of the Mediterranean sea. Bachofen correctly noted that, according to the sources, all the varied but concordant elements refer, for such peoples, to the central idea that, at the origin and at the peak of any thing, there must be a feminine principle, a Goddess or divine Woman, incorporating the supreme values of spirit; compared to her, not only the masculine principle, but also those of personality and of difference must seem secondary and contingent, subject to the law of Becoming and disappearing as opposed to the eternity and the immutability peculiar to the cosmic Great Mother, the Mother of Life.

This Mother is sometimes the earth, or sometimes the law of nature, conceived of as a force by which the Gods themselves are compelled.

Among her other aspects, accordingly, there would be various differentiations: she is both Demeter as goddess of agriculture and organised earth and Aphrodite-Astarte as principle of orgiastic ecstasies, Dionysian wantonesses, ‘hetaeric’ (from the Greek word ‘etera’, not from ‘ether’) dissoluteness, whose analogic correspondence is the wild swamp or forest.

The main character of this cycle of civilisation consists specifically in its limiting to the naturalistic-material domain everything which is personality, virility, difference, in its putting under the feminine sign (feminine in the broadest sense), the spiritual domain, often so as to make it a synonym for pantheist promiscuity and an antithesis to everything which is form, positive right, heroic vocation of a virility which is no longer material. Outwardly, the most concrete expression of this type of civilisation is matriarchy, and, more generally, gynaecocracy. Gynaecocracy, that is the sovereignty of Woman, reflects the mystical value which is attributed to her in such a conception of the world. Moreover, it can also have as a counterpart, in its lowest forms, the egalitarianism of the natural law, universalism and communism. At the root of communistic promiscuity lies the idea of the insignificance of everything which is difference, the equality of all individuals vis-a-vis the cosmic Matrix, the maternal and the ‘telluric’ (from ‘tellus’, earth) principle of the nature whence any thing and any being proceeds and within which it will dissolve again after an ephemeral existence. Of this nature were the orgiastic feasts in which was formerly celebrated the return to the Mother and to the state of nature, and in which all social distinctions were temporarily abolished. The masculine principle does not have an existence of its own, it is not self-sufficient. On the material plane, it only amounts to an instrument of generation, it is subjected to the bond of woman or it is obscured by the Demetrian brightness of the mother. On the spiritual plane, it is only through a Dionysian ecstasy dominated by sensual and feminine elements that it can grasp the sense of what is eternal and unchanging and gain an intimation of immortality – an immortality which, however, has nothing to do with the heavenly one of Olympians and heroes. And also on the social plane, the male, who only knows the violent law of force and struggle, feels through the woman the existence of a higher, quieter and supra-individual order, feels this ‘Demetrian mystery’ which, in one form or another, was in Antiquity the base and support of the matriarchal law and gynaecocracy.

In clear opposition to these views, there is, in the ancient Mediterranean world, the cycle of the Olympian-Ouranic civilisation. Here, the centre is no longer constituted by symbols of the Earth or of the Moon, but by those of the Sun and heavenly regions (‘Ouranic’ from the Greek word ‘Uranos’); not by the naturalist-sensual reality, but by the immaterial one; not by the maternal womb, and not even by the phallic virility which is its counterpart, but by the Ouranic virility linked to the symbol of the Sun and the Light; not by the symbols of Night and the Mother, but by those of Day and the Father. The supreme ideal in such a civilisation is embodied precisely by the ‘Ouranic’ world, by which is meant that of the bright, unchanging, detached, birthless entities, as opposed to the inferior world of the beings who are born, become, and pass away,

according to a rule of life always ephemeral because always mixed with death. This is the highest point of reference, the religion of Apollo and Zeus: it is the 'Olympian' spirituality, it is the immaterial virility, it is the 'solarity' of gods free from the bondage of the woman and the mother, possessing instead attributes of fatherhood and dominion. The traces left by a tradition of this nature in Hellenic speculation are more or less known to everyone: as conceived by the Greek philosophers, the notions of *nous* and of 'intelligible world' are directly derived from it. Bachofen, however, highlighted many of its other expressions. Patriarchy, especially in its patrician forms, derives from no other basis. The impulse to go beyond the 'telluric' (physical and phallic) virility towards a heroic or spiritual virility, the integration of everything which is form and difference instead of its devaluation, the contempt for the naturalistic condition, the overcoming of natural right by positive right, the ideal of a formation of oneself in which the state of nature and its law of the Mother and of the Earth is surpassed by a new order, which is under the sign of the Sun and of the symbolic exploits of Heracles, Perseus and other heroes of the Light, all derive from this type of civilisation.

This is the fundamental conception of Bachofen. It provides the key to an order of researches likely to be extended to fields far wider than those considered by the thinker of Basle, since, as we have pointed out, Bachofen used this conception only in order to identify approximately the conflicts, the upheavals and the transformations peculiar to the secret history of the ancient Mediterranean world. In Hellas, and in opposition to more ancient, aboriginal forms linked with the telluric-maternal cult, the light of the heroic-Olympian spirituality first appears; here, however, the 'civilisation of the fathers' did not last long. Altered by processes of involution, not having been sustained by a firm political organisation, it was swept away by the re-emergence of cults and forces of the previous Pelagic-Oriental period, which, at first, it appeared to have overcome. Its idea seemed to have been transmitted to Rome and to have prompted there a far wider development, the history of which continues to Augustus. At the time of Augustus, Rome seemed about to establish a new universal era by bringing to completion that mission, specifically Western according to Bachofen, for which the civilisation of the Delphic Apollo had proved to be insufficient.

Since those are the main traits of Bachofen's metaphysic of the ancient Mediterranean history, it is appropriate to indicate its other possibilities, once the 'evolutionist' framework is dispensed with. Bachofen noted that, against the substratum of a more ancient world, suffused with a 'civilisation of the Mother', the opposite civilisation, virile and paternal, developed to supplant and defeat it, even though, at a later point, at the closing of a cycle, at least in some countries, it was swept away again. All this was regarded by Bachofen as a sort of automatic development in a single family of peoples. The opposition of the two civilisations as he describes it refers therefore essentially to that existing between two evolutionary and progressive stages of a single process, without his inquiring into how the one was derived from the other.

But this problem needs to be posed, ethnologically. What has been learned from the sum total of researches in various other domains gives a certain margin of credibility to the idea that the most ancient, pre-Hellenic Mediterranean civilisation, characterised by the cult of the Woman, of matriarchy, and of social or spiritual gynaecocracy, was linked to pre-Aryan or non-Aryan influences, while the opposite vision of the world, solar and Olympian, had specifically Aryan origins. This was intimated by Bachofen himself in his relating of the first civilisation to the Pelagic populations and in his noticing that the most characteristic cult in the Heroic-solar world, that of Delphic Apollo, had Thracian-Hyperborean origins, which amounts to saying Nordico-Aryan. His evolutionist prejudice, however, prevented him from getting to the bottom of these positive data. While carrying out a work of genius by referring the residual fragments which have reached us of the gynaecocratic civilisation to the archaic unit to which they belong, he failed to proceed in a similar manner with regard to the solar and Olympian elements which emerged and asserted themselves in the ancient Mediterranean world, which would have led him to notice the existence of an Olympian and paternal civilisation, just as archaic, of different ethnic origin.

In the Mediterranean, the purest forms of this second civilisation are, compared to the other, more recent. They are more recent, however, only in a relative sense, in that in the Mediterranean world they only appear at a given moment, not in the absolute sense, which would entail that they had not existed previously and could only ever come to birth by way of successive 'evolutionary stages' within one and the same group of peoples. Rather, the opposite could be true, that is to say that many forms derived by Bachofen from the cycle of the Mother (in its higher, 'lunar' and 'Demetrian' aspects), could be considered not so much as really intrinsic to the civilisations in which they are found, but more as forms of involution of some branches of the solar tradition, or as products of interferences between this tradition and the opposite one. This corresponds, among other things, to the teachings about the 'four ages' passed on by Hesiod.

However, we cannot focus here on this argument, given that it does itself not form part of Bachofen's researches and that, moreover, it has already been dealt with by us in other works (1). Nevertheless, Bachofen's own work constitutes an extremely useful preparation for further investigation, which, on the basis of the traces constituted by symbols, rites, institutions, customs, and juridical forms, deriving respectively from the civilisation of the Mother and from the Heroic-Solar one, would want to identify the opposing influences, of the 'race of the body' and of the 'race of the spirit', which were at work in the ancient Mediterranean world, including its Greek and Roman elements. Given the new material which has been gathered in the meantime, such research could achieve very interesting results ; and in addition, it would also be possible to undertake it, on the basis of the same root ideas, with respect to other civilisations, European and non-European.

In regard to Bachofen's views on the specifically morphological and typological plane, we must notice that this thinker did not stop at the consideration of two terms of an antithesis, 'solar' and 'telluric', a virile Ouranic-paternal principle and a telluric-maternal principle, but also considered intermediary forms which he related to the terms 'Demetrian' (or 'Lunar'), 'Amazonian', 'heroic', and 'Dionysian'. We thus have, all in all, seven points of reference, according to which not only types of civilisation but also typical modes of being could be defined, so as to enable us to speak of a 'solar' or 'lunar' or 'telluric' or 'Amazonian' or 'Dionysian' or 'heroic' man. We ourselves, in the aforementioned works, have sought to develop, on these bases, a special typology. This is, once again, a new field of the science of the spirit, to the explorers of which Bachofen's views can provide precious points of reference.

Finally, it has to be pointed out that researches of this kind are not only of retrospective interest in the context of the reconstruction of a secret history of the ancient world, but could also prove to be very useful to all those who strain to discover the true face of the present times and to formulate a diagnosis and a prognosis of the whole of Western civilisation. Bachofen, at some points in his works, sensed the existence of cyclical laws, by force of which, at the end of a given development, some involutive and degenerative forms almost represent a return of primitive stages left behind by the whole development. Now, the worrying degree to which contemporary Western civilisation shows and reproduces the main traits of an 'epoch of the Mother', of a telluric and 'aphrodisian' epoch with all its consequences, has been noticed, not without reference to Bachofen, by more than one writer. Baumler wrote this, in the introduction to the already mentioned selected writings of Bachofen: "In the streets of Berlin, Paris or London, all you have to do is to observe for a moment a man or a woman to realise that the cult of Aphrodite is the one before which Zeus and Apollo had to beat a retreat... The present age bears, in fact, all the features of a gynaecocratic age. In a late and decadent civilisation, new temples of Isis and Astarte, of these Asian mother goddesses that were celebrated in orgies and licentiousness, in desperate sinking into sensual pleasure, arise. The fascinating female is the idol of our times, and, with painted lips, she walks through the European cities as she once did through Babylon. And as if she wanted to confirm Bachofen's profound intuition, the lightly dressed modern ruler of man keeps in leash a dog, the ancient symbol of unlimited sexual promiscuity and infernal forces" (2). But these analogies can be much further developed.

Modern times are 'telluric', not only in their mechanistic and materialistic aspects, but also, and essentially, in several of their 'vitalist' aspects, in their various religions of Life, of the Irrational and of Becoming, precise antitheses of any classic or 'Olympian' conception of the world. Keyserling, confirming this analysis, has thought he could speak of a telluric character – that is to say irrational, mainly related to forms of courage, self-sacrifice, fervour and dedication without transcendent reference – shown by this modern mass movement which has been called, generically, 'world revolution'. With democracy, Marxism and communism, the west has thus re-assumed, in secularised and materialised forms, the ancient concept of natural right, the leveling and anti-aristocratic law of the chthonic Mother, which stigmatises as unjust any difference ; and the power often granted on this basis to the collectivist element seems to bring back into force

the ancient irrelevance of the individual peculiar to the ‘telluric’ conception.

Dionysus reappears with modern romanticism: we have here the same love for the formless, the confused, the unlimited, the same promiscuity between sensation and spirit, the same antagonism towards the virile and Apollonian ideal of clarity, form and limit. Even Nietzsche, who extolled Dionysus, is a living and tragic proof of the modern lack of understanding for that ideal, as witnessed by the telluric nature of so many of his conceptions. Moreover, after having read Bachofen, it is not difficult to observe the ‘lunar’ character peculiar to the most widespread type of modern culture: the culture based on a pale and empty intellectualism, the sterile culture separated from life, only capable of criticism, abstract speculation and vain aesthetising creativity: a culture which, here again, is closely connected with a civilisation which has taken material refinement to extreme forms (in the special terminology of Bachofen, we would say: aphrodisian) and in which woman and sensuality often become predominant motifs almost to a pathological and obsessive degree.

And wherever the woman does not become the new idol of the masses under the modern form, not of goddess, but of movie ‘star’ or some similar fascinating Aphrodisian apparition, she often asserts her primacy in new ‘Amazonian’ forms. Thus we see the new masculinised sportswoman, the garconne, the woman who devotes herself to the unilateral development of her own body, betrays the mission which would be normal to her in a civilisation of virile type, becomes emancipated and independent and even bursts into the political field. And this is not all.

In Anglo-Saxon civilisation, and particularly in America, the man who exhausts his life and time in business and the search for wealth, a wealth that, to a large extent, only serves to pay for feminine luxury, caprices, vices and refinements, has conceded to the woman the privilege and even the monopoly of dealing with ‘spiritual’ things. And it is precisely in this civilisation that we see a proliferation of ‘spiritualist’, spiritistic, mystic sects, in which the predominance of the feminine element is already significant in itself (two women, Blavatsky and Besant, for example, set up and managed the so-called Theosophical Society). But it is for a much more important reason that the new spiritualism appears to us as a sort of reincarnation of the ancient feminine mysteries: it is the formless escapism in confused suprasensual experiences, the promiscuity of mediumism and spiritualism, the unconscious evocation of truly ‘infernal’ influences and the stress laid on doctrines such as reincarnation, that confirm, in such pseudo-spiritualistic currents, the correspondence that we have already mentioned and prove that, in these misguided desires to go beyond ‘materialism’, the modern world has not managed to find anything that would connect it with the higher traditions of Olympian and ‘solar’ character (3).

Psychoanalysis, with the preeminence it grants to the unconscious over the conscious, to the ‘nocturnal’, subterranean, atavistic, instinctive, sexual side of the human being over all that is waking life, will and true personality, seems precisely to refer to the ancient doctrine of the primacy of Night over Day, of the Darkness of the Mothers over forms, supposedly evanescent and irrelevant, that rise from it to light.

It must be acknowledged that these analogies, far from being extravagant or amateurish, are based on grounds that are broad and substantial and therefore gravely disturbing, since the reappearance of the ‘gynaecocratic era’ can only mean, to us, the end of a cycle and the collapse of the civilisations founded by a superior race. But many of Bachofen’s views, just as they enable us to identify these symptoms of decadence, show us also the points of reference for a possible reaction and reconstruction. Such points of reference can only be constituted by ‘Olympian’ values of a new anti-gynaecocratic and virile civilisation. And this is what Bachofen has recovered for us, in the ‘Western Myth’: the formative idea, the ideal, which would define what is the most specifically western in the story of civilisation. As we have explained, for Bachofen it was Rome which, after the attempt of the Apollonian Hellades, would have assumed this ideal, and asserted a ‘civilisation of the father’ on universal bases; but only by way of a tragic struggle against forces which, little by little, were to flow back and reassert themselves again and again in first one then another domain of Roman life and civilisation.

Whoever can sense the deep truth of this view of Bachofen’s can see a new and extremely interesting field of research opening: that of the identification and discovery of a Olympian-paternal (in the superior sense) Humanity. But after the havoc which a silly and inflated rhetoric has worked upon the name of Rome, after that which an academically dull and soulless erudition and historiography have done to make us forget everything bright and perennial which appeared in the original Humanity and formed its true mission, how is it possible to restore to serious view the importance which such research, and, therefore the work of Bachofen itself and in its entirety, could have for us?

However, all this notwithstanding, what may not be possible today because of a complex of factors, some merely contingent, may be possible tomorrow, in a quieter period. One of the greatest merits of Bachofen is that he has restored the dignity of the virile and Olympian civilisation, thereby contributing to a means of correction for the many ideological distortions and misplaced evocations of modern times.

#### Rome and the Sibylline Books

In any consideration of the secret history of Ancient Rome, the examination of the so-called Sibylline Books constitutes a task whose importance cannot be overstated. To become aware of this, naturally, one requires adequate principles, and in the first place one must hearken back to the idea that the constitution of the Roman world was not homogeneous: contrary forces crossed and collided within it. Though it drew enigmatically from civilizations and races that were essentially part of the Pelasgian pre-Aryan Mediterranean cycle, Rome came to manifest an opposite principle. In Rome, the virile, Apollonian and solar element opposed itself, in various forms, to that of the promiscuous-feminine, telluric, lunar element of the previous world—an element which, in the end, had succeeded in overwhelming Olympic and heroic Hellas itself.

Only this overview permits one to comprehend the profound sense of all the most important upheavals in the ancient life and history of Rome. That which was specifically Roman in Rome was constituted by an incessant battle of the virile and solar principle of the Imperium against an obscure substratum of ethnic, religious, and also mystical elements, wherein the presence of a strong Semitic Pelasgian component is incontestable, and in which the telluric-lunar cult of the great Goddess Mothers of nature played an exceedingly important part. This battle had alternating epochs. The pre-Roman element, subjugated at an early time, successively enjoyed a revival in subtler forms, and in strict dependency with cults and forms of life which were decidedly Asiatic-Meridional. It is in this ensemble that one must study the essence and the influence of the Sibylline Books in Ancient Rome: they constitute an extremely important conduit for the subterranean action of corrosion and of denaturalization of the Aryan Roman world in its last phase—at that point, that is, in which the counteroffensive felt itself near to its dreamed goal.

Not only the generic element of Asiatic-Semitic decomposition there enters significantly and almost nakedly in play, but also another, properly and consciously Judaic element. The tradition refers the origin of the Sibylline Books to a female figure and to the king of a foreign dynasty: the texts are offered by an old woman to Tarquinius Superbus, that is to the last dominant figure of the Roman Priscian epoch to derive from the pre-Roman and Pelasgian lineage of the Etruscans. These books were collected in the temple of Capitoline Jove itself. Entrusted to a special college—the duumviri who subsequently transformed into the quindecimviri sacris faciundis—they became a species of oracle from which the Senate requested counsel. In 83 they were lost in the fire that destroyed the Campidoglio. Their reconstruction was attempted through research into the best known sacred places of the Sibylline religion, and the new text became the object of successive revisions. Naturally, in this new phase, it must have been rather easy to infiltrate these texts through the more or less spurious material that was collected. The texts were kept exceedingly secret. Only the college hitherto named could see them and directly consult them. As we know from the horrible death of M. Atilius, communicating anything of them to outsiders was considered a misdeed, and brought an inexorable punishment.

If we leave aside those books commonly called the Hebrew Sibylline Books 75 (Orac. Sibyll., III, IV, V), we know nothing specific about the content of the Sibylline Books: we know only certain effects that they produced, which however can furnish us the essence of the matter. The material, “objective” basis of an “oracle,” is in fact that which is least important to it. This material is indeed nothing but a basis, a support: it is an instrument which, in special circumstances, permits certain “influences” to express themselves, even as, on another level, various phenomena are brought about by the presence of a medium or by a state of trance. Thus, when considering the first Sibylline Books, it is less interesting to know what formulae and sayings they might have contained, than that “line of thought” which betrays itself through a series of responses which issued from them, often through various case-by-case interpretations of identical texts. It is this line of thought which permits us to know with exactitude the true nature of the influence connected to the oracle.

Now, we see that this oracle almost always acted so as to distance Rome from its traditions, and to introduce exotic and modifying elements, cults which subversively catered to the plebs above all—that is, to the element which in Rome was maintained by an unconscious coalescence with the precedent Italo Pelasgian civilization, as opposed to its solar and Aryan core. Used ever to calm the people in moments of danger, of calamity, and of uncertainty, the Sibylline Books and their responses should have indicated the aptest means to guarantee the benevolence and complicity of divine powers from on high. Yet never did the responses have as consequence the reinforcement of the Roman people in its antique traditions or in the cults which most characterized its sacral patriciate; they always ordered the introduction or adaptation of exotic divinities, whose relation to the cycle of pre- and anti-Roman civilizations of the Mother is, in the vast majority of cases, exceedingly visible.

The contents of one of the oldest Sibylline responses, which dates to 399, on the occasion of a plague, can be considered as an overall symbol of the sense of the denaturing that gradually began its work. The oracle wanted the Romans to introduce the lectisternium and the supplicatio correlated to this. The supplicatio consisted in kneeling or prostrating oneself before the divinities, embracing or kissing their knees or their feet. As much as this rite might seem normal, or at the least only a little excessive, to whomever is inured to the forms of religion which replaced ancient paganism, nonetheless this usage was unknown to the ancient Roman: he knew no Semitic servility before the divine.

He prayed, invoked, and sacrificed manfully, on his feet. This is already an index of a profound transformation, of the passage from one mentality to another.

In 258, Demeter, Dionysus and Kore were introduced into Rome by the Sibylline Books. This is the first great phase of the spiritual offensive: it conducted the two great terrestrial Goddesses of nature with their orgiastic companion, symbol of every confusion and anti-virile mysticism, into the world that Priscian Rome had built through its destruction by arms of races and power centres which themselves had already incarnated finished, spiritually-infused forms. In 249, ever through the will of the Sibylline Books, Dis Pater and Proserpina, that is precisely the nether-telluric divinities, the most typical personifications of that which opposes Olympic and Apollonian ideals, entered Rome. These were followed, in 217, by an Aphroditic divinity, Venus Erycina, and finally, in 205, in the most critical moment of the Punic Wars, we see enter, so to speak, the Matriarch of this entire cycle, she who could call herself the personification of the entire Pelasgian-Asiatic and pre-Roman spirit—Cybele, the Magna Mater.

All these divinities were entirely unknown to the Romans: and if the plebs, regalvanized in its most spurious substrate, was seized by an often frantic enthusiasm for them, the senate and the patriciate in the initial days did not fail to show their repugnance and their awareness of peril. Whence the strange incongruity that while Rome with every pomp went to take the simulacrum of Cybele from Pessinus, yet it prohibited the Roman citizens from taking part in this goddess' ceremonies and orgiastic festivals, which were presided over by Frigian eunuch priests. But, naturally, this resistance was but brief in its duration. It had the same destiny as the prohibition

against Dionysm and Pythagorism. And again in 140 the Sibylline Books introduced yet another figure from the terrestrial feminine cycle, Venus Verticordia or Aphrodite Apostrophia.

The collective transformation leading to all this, had already been noted by Livy (XXV, 1) who, referring to the period around the year 213, wrote verbatim, “Religious forms, the better part of them come from abroad, so agitated the citizenry, that either men or the gods seemed of a sudden altered. The Roman rites were by then abolished not only in their secret forms or in the domestic cult, but also in public; and in the Capitoline Forum there was a crowd of women who neither sacrificed nor prayed any longer according to the tradition of the fatherland.” So it was that, the more widely Roman power extended itself, the very forces it conquered abroad began to wage a second war on an invisible plane, through this work of corrosion and denaturalization—war in which these forces brought ever more visible and resounding successes.

We arrive thus at the period of the so-called Hebrew Sibylline Books, which appear to have been compiled between the first and the third centuries. A goodly part of their text is known to us.

Schührer uses the expression “Jewish propaganda under a pagan mask (*jüdische Propaganda unter heidnischer Maske*)” with respect to them—opinion which is shared by a Jewish scholar, Alberto Pincherle, who recognized in these texts an explosion of Jewish hatred against the Italic races and against Rome. A maneuver of mystification is here repeated in a more tangible and indisputable form—one that already the ancient oracles had applied insofar as they sought to justify themselves, through the Sibyls, by means of Apollo. Through the relations of the Sibylline religion with the Apollonian cult—relations which are anything but limpid—the oracles, which had been introduced into Rome by the Etruscan king, snatched up, so to speak, a higher title of authority, by pampering the Apollonian vocation of the Roman race. And this until the time of Augustus, who, feeling himself to be the initiator of a new Apollonian and solar era, ordered the revision of the Sibylline texts so as to extrapolate from them all spurious passages. Naturally, matters proceeded quite differently, and the tree made itself known by its fruit: that oracle introduced precisely the most anti-solar series of divinities into Rome.

The same alibi was attempted by these new Sibylline Books: here one finds a pure Judaism which dresses its ideas up to make them seem like the authentic prophecy of an exceedingly ancient pagan Sibyl, so as to obtain a corresponding credence in Rome. Whereupon one arrives at the incredible paradox, that many in the Roman milieu took this very tradition of apocalyptic images as wisdom, when it was exclusively the expression of Jewish hatred against the Romulean city and against the Italic peoples.

These oracles can be conceived of as a pendant of the Johannine Apocalypse.

But the Apocalypse, in the Christian religion, was interpreted on a universalistic, symbolic, and teleological plane, so that the Jewish thesis, which originally stood at the centre, was almost erased. In the Sibylline Oracles this thesis instead remained in its original state. The prophecy of the pseudo-Sibyl was turned against the races of the Gentiles: it predicts the vendetta that Asia will bring against Rome, and the punishment, more sever than the law of the talon, which will

strike the lordly cities of the world. It is worth our while to document a few passages which characterize this anti-Roman hatred: “However many riches Rome has received from tributary Asia, three times as many will Asia receive from Rome, and it will deduct from Rome penance for the violence that has been done; and however many men of Asia become servants in the residences of the Italians, twenty times as many miserable Italians will work for their wages in Asia, and every one will be the debtor to dozens” (III, 350).

“O Italy, to you shall come no foreign Mars [to succour you], but the wretched blood of your own people, not easily destroyed, shall devastate you who are renowned and brazen. And you, lying amidst the still hot ashes, unforeseeing in your soul, will give yourself over to death. You shall be mother of men without goodness, you shall be the nurturer of brutes” (III, 460-470).

And here follows an entire film of disasters and catastrophes, described with sadistic complacency. The references to Judaism become ever more distinct toward the end of the third book and the beginning of the fourth. Prophecy becomes history in IV, 115: 90

“Also to Jerusalem will come a wicked tempest of war from Italy which will raze the great temple of God.” But in catastrophes of every kind the Romans “must recognize the wrath of the celestial God, for they have destroyed the innocent people of God.” Rome, also the ancients, were perhaps perfectly aware that it was Babylon’s yearned-for collapse which was described with Grand Guignolesque 91 hues similar to those of the Johannine Apocalypse, because it, together with Italy, had murdered many of the faithful saints and the genuine people (that is, Israel) amongst the Jews. Lactantius, for example, writes (Div.

Inst., VII, 15, 18): *Sibyllae tamen aperte interitum esse Romam locuntur et quidem iudicio dei quod nomen eius habuerit inuisum et inimica iustitiae alumnnum ueritatis populum trudidarat.*

In IV, 167 et seq. the text continues, “Alas, O wholly impure city of the Latin soil, O Maenad that adores vipers, you will be sedated as a widow upon your hills, and the river Tiber will weep for you, her consort, that you possess a homicidal heart and an impure soul. Know you not of what things God is capable, and what he is preparing for you? But you say: I alone am, and no one will destroy me. And now instead the everlasting God will destroy you and all your own, and there will be no trace of you in that land, even as it was before the great God invented your glories. You remain alone, O wicked one; immersed in the flaring fire, you will dwell in the wicked Tartarian region of your Hades.” Against the condemned Romulean city and the Italian land stands the “divine race of blessed heavenly Jews” (248).

### Book III (703-5)

94 repeats: “But the men of the great God live all of them around the temple, delighting in those things that will be given them by the creator, the judge, the only sovereign... and all the cities will proclaim: how he loves these men, the Immortal God!” The passages 779 et seq. reproduce almost to the letter the noted prophecies of Isaiah, and the messianic and imperialistic Jewish dream takes shape, which has as its centre the Temple: the “prophets of the Great God” will take

up the sword after the cycle of catastrophes and of destruction, and they will be the kings and the executioners of all peoples. These new prophets, all descendants of Israel, are destined to be “the leaders of life for the entirety of humankind” (580).

It is a singular contrast to the fact that, while on one hand, as has been mentioned, the authors of these writings attempt a pagan alibi—meaning they wish to give to their prophetic expressions the authority proceeding from the antique Roman Sibylline tradition—nonetheless in the fourth book (1-10) they completely betray their true positions. In this passage the Sibylline Books contain indeed a lively polemic against the rival pagan Sibyls, and she, into whose mouth one had placed the expression of hatred’s hopes and of the chosen people’s vendetta, suddenly claims to be prophetess not of “the liar Phoebus,” not of the Apollonian god “that foolish men called a god and wrongly a prophet, but of the great God”—of the God who does not tolerate graven images; the which manifestly means Jehovah, the god of Mosaism.

With which—as one might say in Hegelian language—the negation comes to negate the negation, so as to bring to light the essential fact of this entire “tradition.” The “liar Phoebus” that the God of Israel would supplant is in reality the false Apollo: for, even if the Sibylline religion makes reference to Apollo, it does not mean the pure divinity of light, the symbol of the solar cult of Hyperborean (Nordic-Aryan) origin, but it means rather the Dionysized Apollo, who is associated with the feminine element; and this element above all uses his revelations as an organ, exhuming the principle of the ancient Demetric Pelasgian gynecocracy. That which remains is therefore the continuity of an anti Roman influence, which clarifies itself ever more, and which in the period between the first and the third century comes uncontestedly to depend on, or at least to make common cause with, the Semitic-Jewish element, in relation to which it assumes the extremest forms and, so to speak, finally reveals the terminus ad quem, the final aim of this entire fount of inspiration: “O wholly impure city of the Latin soil, Maenad that loves vipers, immersed in the flaring fire, you will dwell in the wicked Tartarian region of your Hades.”

#### *Faces and Mush*

One of the episodes which most characterize the spirit of Bolshevism was the so-called Vavilov affair.

Professor Vavilov is a Russian biologist who wound up in Siberia, together with some colleagues—not for properly political reasons, but for the simple fact that he is an exponent of “genetic” theory. Geneticism is that current of biology which admits a preformation in man—that is, dispositions and characteristics which are congenitally man’s (based on so-called “genes”), and which do not derive from external things.

This theory has been declared “counter-revolutionary.” Marxism indeed would like everything in man to be the result of his environment, and, in particular, of economic-social forces and conditions. It is on the basis of such a view that communism seriously believes itself capable of giving life to a new human being, to collective proletarian man, who is freed “from the

individualistic accidents of the bourgeois era.” Such an assumption would be frustrated however if one had to admit that man has an interior form, that there exist persons with a nature proper to them, with their own quality and, if you please, their own destiny, rather than being the atoms of a mass ready to undergo an external mechanical action and to produce, in consequence, any type of collective desired. A timely campaign, conducted by a biologist of Marxist orientation, Lysenko, therefore brought to light the dangerous germ of heresy which is contained in the theory of geneticism—even if it be simply anthropological—and professor Vavilov was forced down the road to Siberia, the place where one “reeducates” spirits in Russia today.

“Behaviorism,” together with the views of Dewey, are among the theories most expressive of the North-American mentality. “Behaviorism” has it that anyone may become whatever he wants, given only a congruous pedagogical and technical process. If a given person is what he is, if he has given gifts—if he is, let us say, a thinker, or an artist, or a statesman—this does not depend on his particular nature, and does not speak to any real difference. Anyone else can become as he is, only if such a one wants it and knows how to “train himself to it.” This is, evidently, the truth of the self-made man, who from the plane of practical success and of social climbing, proceeds to extend himself into every domain, thereby corroborating the egalitarian dogma of democracy. Indeed, if such a theory is true, one can no longer speak of real differences between human beings, of diversity of nature and of dignity. Anyone can presume to possess virtually everything that another is; the terms superior and inferior lose their significance; every sentiment of distance and of respect becomes unjustified; all roads open to everyone, and we really are in the regime of “liberty.” Thus we find ourselves before a fundamental viewpoint in which Bolshevism and Americanism meet in a significant way. Just as the Bolshevik-Marxist theory, the American expresses intolerance toward everything which has a character in man, an internal form, a quality which is its own and imitable. A mechanistic conception is likewise counterposed to an organic conception: for whatever one can build up, commencing almost from nothing, cannot ever have anything other than a “constructed” character.

There is surely the appearance of activism and individualism in the American viewpoint which might lead one astray here. But practically speaking one sees the meaning of these things in the Americans themselves. They are the living confutation of the Cartesian axiom, “I think, therefore I am,” because “they do not think, and yet they are.”

Infantile, “natural” even as a vegetable is natural, the American psyche is perhaps yet more formless than the Slavic; it is open to every form of standardization, from that of the culture of Reader’s Digest to the varieties connected with conformism, to manipulated public opinion, to advertising, to the *idée fixe* of democratic progress. It is on the basis of this background that the theory above mentioned must be understood. The counterpart of “I can be that which anyone is” and of pedagogy in its egalitarian function, is a qualitative regression: man becomes internally formless.

This formless man, however, is that which both communism and also Americanism want—leaving aside the differences of these two, which do not touch on the essential. The two views of which we have spoken have both a symbolic value as well as an aggressive efficacy. They are the trenchant contradiction of the traditional ideal of the personality, and they strike at those foundations which the man of today could still use as defence and reaction against the chaos of his civilization.

In fact, in an epoch wherein not only the idols have collapsed, but also many ideas and many values have been prejudged by rhetoric and by an internal insincerity, only a single way remains open: to seek within oneself that order and that law, which outside oneself have been rendered problematic. But this means also: to be able to rediscover in oneself a form and a truth, and to impose it on oneself, to realize it. “Know oneself to be oneself”—this was already the watchword of classical civilization.

“That our thoughts and our actions are our own, and that the actions of everyone belong to him”—so wrote Plotinus, and from the Roman-Germanic world up to Nietzsche the ideal of an internal form, of fidelity to that which one is, was maintained, in opposition to every disorderly tendency.

Does all of this fall perhaps only within the domain of individual ethics? We would not say so. If we search for the prime causes of the present disorder, departing from those raging in the economic-social field so far as to preclude almost any possibility of healthy equilibrium, we find these causes in a mass betrayal of the traditional ideal. One does not know and one does not want to know any longer what one is; therefore neither the place which suits one in the whole, the fixed framework within which one might, without letting oneself be distracted, develop one’s being and one’s possibilities and realize one’s own perfection, such as to truly confer a sense and an inferiority to one’s own life and to actuate at the same time one’s corresponding part in a hierarchically ordered world. Is it not perhaps even along this road that the “economic era” has been determined on the one hand by the paroxysm of the most unrestrained capitalism, and on the other hand by a livid hatred for class? Is it not perhaps thus that we have arrived at a world composed predominately of maniacs and sociopaths, where not “being,” but arriving at this or that position, is important? But if matters stand in this way today—and little though one might wish to reflect on it, one cannot fail to recognize it—is it not then perhaps deception and self-deception to place one’s hope in the power of some system or other, before one initiates a detoxification and a rectification of one’s own internal sphere of attitudes, of interests, and sense of life?

Certainly, this by now cannot be demanded from the many, nor all at once.

Orienting the best, however, is always possible. It is possible to demonstrate that at that point wherein one no longer has a proper way, wherein one cedes rather to the fascination of external forms of growth, of affirmation and of production—at that point one opens oneself to the forces which make the Marxist and democratic doctrines true, even on the biological plane. One thus

validates the Marxist work of atoms, of mass and of mush rather than of men and of faces.

Everyone must decide this on his own: whether to arrest himself, to rediscover the basis for a right force in his proper mode of being and in his proper equilibrium, or else—even while believing he is doing quite the contrary—to give a new lure to a collectivizing process which flares up nowadays every which place. But this decision is also requisite, if one's ideas and efforts in these political struggles might acquire a real basis, a form and a prestige—so that the structures might finally be determined which ought to exist between men and masters of men.

From “Ride the Tiger”

*Dissolution in Modern Art*

When speaking of modern art, the first thing to mention is its “intimate” quality, typical of a feminine spirituality that wants nothing to

do with great historic and political forces; out of morbid sensitivity (sometimes brought about by a trauma), it retreats into the world of the artist's private subjectivity, valuing only the psychologically and aesthetically “interesting.” The works of Joyce, Proust, and Gide mark the extreme of this tendency in literature.

In some cases, the trend with “pure art” as its slogan is associated with the above specifically in the sense of a pure formalism of expressive perfection; the “subject” becomes irrelevant, so that any intrusion of it is deemed a contamination. (Benedetto Croce's aesthetics, if it were not so insipid, could be cited here.) In these cases an even greater degree of dissociation is present than in the fetishism of the artist's own interiority.

There is no point in speaking of the current desire to hold on to a “traditional art.” Today no one has any idea of what can rightly be called traditional in a higher sense. We find here only academicism and the withered reproduction of models, which lack—and must needs lack—any original creative force. It is a variety of the “regime of residues”; the so-called great art relegated to the past is merely the stuff of rhetoric.

In the opposite, avant-garde trend, value and meaning are reduced to those of a revolt and an illustration of the general process of dissolution. Its works are often interesting, not from an artistic point of view but rather as indices of the climate of modern life. They reflect the critical situation already alluded to in speaking of European nihilism, but give rise to nothing constructive, permanent, or durable. We should note amidst the chaos of styles the cases of rapid retreat from the most advanced positions: almost all those avant-gardists who were most revolutionary in an existential situation that was originally authentic have accepted a new academicism, a new conventionality, and the commercialization of their work. Equally typical is the subsequent turn, on the part of some of these artists, in an abstract, formal, and neoclassical direction, which is an evasion that puts an end to the relentless tension of their former, more authentic, revolutionary phase. One could speak here of an “Apollonianism,” in the admittedly arbitrary sense in which Nietzsche used the term in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Nonetheless, from the differentiated man's point of view the process of dissolution found in the most extreme art (I will address music later), with its atmosphere of anarchic or abstract freedom, may actually have "a liberating value, as opposed to much of yesterday's bourgeois art.

Aside from this, after the exhaustion of expressionism as a shapeless eruption of dissociated, psychic contents, and after the exhaustion of dadaism and surrealism, if their attitudes had persisted we would have witnessed the self-dissolution of modern art, which would have left an empty spiritual space. In a different epoch, it is precisely in that space that a new "objective" art might have taken shape, in that "grand style" to which Nietzsche referred: "The greatness of an artist is not measured by the beautiful sentiments that he arouses—only girls can think along these lines—but by the degree to which he approaches the grand style.

This has in common with great passion the disdain of pleasure; he for gets to persuade, he wills... To make himself master of the chaos that one is, to force his own chaos to become form, mathematics, law—that is the grand ambition. Around such despotic men a silence is born, a fear, similar to what is felt at a great sacrilege."

But to think this way in the present world is absurd: our epoch lacks any centre, any meaning, any objective symbol that could give soul, content, and power to this "grand style."

Similarly, in the field of fiction what is of interest today belongs to the documentary genre, which, with more or less expressive power, makes us aware of the state of contemporary existence. Only here, and in a few cases, is subjectivism overcome. But in the majority of literary works, in short stories, dramas, and novels, the regime of residues persists, with its typical forms of subjective dissociation. Their constant background, rightly called the "fetishism of human relationships," consists of the insignificant, sentimental, sexual, or social problems of insignificant individuals, reaching the extreme of dullness and banality in a certain epidemic type of American novel.

Having mentioned "social problems," I must also squelch the claims, or more accurately, the aesthetic and artistic ambitions, of "Marxist realism." The Marxist critic condemns the "bourgeois novel" as a phenomenon of alienation, but as I have already said, the intent of giving a social content or interpretation to the narrative, specifically mirroring the dialectic evolution of classes, the impulse of the proletariat, and so on, is merely a simian parody of realism and the organic integration of a divided and neutral culture. Here one kind of dissociation is replaced by another more serious one: that of making the socioeconomic element an absolute, detached from the rest. "Social" problems are, in themselves, of as little interest and importance as those of personal relationships and fetishist sentimentalities. None of these touches the essence; they fall far short of what might be the object of fiction and of a high art in an organic civilization. The few fictional writings brought to a difficult and artificial birth under the sign of "Marxist realism" speak for themselves; they are coarse material forced into a straitjacket by the demands of pure propaganda and "communist edification." One cannot speak here either of aesthetic criticism or of art, but rather of political agitation in the lowest meaning of the term. However,

the present world is such that even where there was a demand for “functional art,” for a “consumer art” (Gropius’s expression) that was not “alienated,” it was obliged more or less to end at the same level. The only sector that was preserved was perhaps architecture, because its functionalism does not require reference to any higher meanings, which are nonexistent today. When a Marxist critic like Lukacs writes: “In recent times art has become a luxury item for idle parasites; artistic activity, in its turn, has become a separate profession with the task of satisfying those luxury needs,” he sums up what art is practically reduced to in our day.

This *reductio ad absurdum* of an activity sundered from every organic and necessary context parallels the other forms of internal dissolution that are present today, and as such facilitates the radical revision that the differentiated human type is forced to make concerning the importance of art in the earlier period. I have already mentioned how, in the climate of the present civilization and its objective, elementary, even barbaric tendencies, many people have discarded the notion of the period of bourgeois romanticism that art is one of the “supreme activities of the spirit,” revealing the meaning of the world and of life.

The man whom we have in mind can of course agree with this devaluation of art today. The fetishizing of art in the bourgeois period, connected with the cult of the “creative personality,” the “genius,” is alien to him. Even when it comes to some of the so-called great art of yesterday, he may feel no less distant than certain men of action today, who pay no attention to appearances, not even for “recreation,” but are interested in other things. We may well share and approve this attitude—based, however, on the higher realism of which I have spoken, and on the sentiment of the “merely human” that is the constant basis of that art, in all its pathos and tragedy. It may even be that a differentiated man finds himself more comfortable with certain very modern art, because in itself it represents art’s self-dissolution.

Incidentally, this devaluation of art, justified by the latest consequences of its “neutralization” and the new, active realism, had some general precedents in the traditional world. Art in a traditional and organic civilization never occupied the central spiritual position that the period of humanist and bourgeois culture accorded to it. Before the modern era, when art had a true, higher meaning, this was thanks to its preexisting contents, superior and prior to it, neither revealed nor “created” by it as art. These contents gave meaning to life and could exist, manifest, and act even in the virtual absence of what is called art, in works that sometimes might seem “barbaric” to the aesthete and the humanist who have no sense of the elementary and primordial.

We can draw an analogy with the attitude toward art in general that the differentiated man, looking to a new freedom, can assume in this period of dissolution. He is very little interested in, or preoccupied with, the current “crisis of art.” Just as he sees no valid, authentic knowledge in modern science, similarly he recognizes no spiritual value in the art that has taken shape in the modern era through the processes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter; he sees no substitute for the meanings that can be kindled by direct contact with reality in a cool, clear, and essential climate. Upon objective consideration of the processes at work, one has the distinct feeling that art no longer has a future: that it is relegated to an ever more marginal position with

respect to existence, its value being reduced to a luxury, in accord with Lukacs's criticism quoted above.

It is helpful to return for a moment to the particular realm of modern fiction, where one deals with works that are corrosive and defeatist, so as to anticipate the same possibility of misunderstanding as in the case of neo-realism. Clearly, my position has nothing in common with judgments based on bourgeois points of view; thus the accusation of the divided and neutral character of art must not be confused with moralizing, or with the censuring of art on the part of current petty morality.

In the artistic works in question, it is not a matter of those "existential testimonies" pure and simple, to which one can apply this saying about Schoenberg: "All his happiness lay in recognizing unhappiness; all his beauty in forbidding himself the appearance of beauty." It concerns a particular art that directly or indirectly works to undermine any idealism, to deride any principles, to attack institutions, to reduce to mere words ethical values, the just, the noble, and the dignified—and all this without even obeying an explicit agenda (hence its difference from a corresponding literature of the Left, or the use and political exploitation of that literature on the part of the Left).

We know which groups raise an indignant protest against a similar, popular type of art. This is not the correct reaction, in my view, because it disregards its potential significance as a touchstone, especially for the differentiated man. Without anticipating coming chapters, I shall just say here that the difference between depraved and mutilated realism, and positive realism, lies in the latter's affirmation that there are values that, for a given human type, are not mere fictions or fantasies, but realities—absolute realities. Among these are spiritual courage, honour (not in the sexual sense), straightforwardness, truth, and fidelity. An existence that ignores these is by no means "realistic," but sub-real. For the man who concerns us, dissolution cannot touch these values, except in extreme cases of an absolute "rupture of levels." One must nevertheless distinguish between the substance and certain expressions of it, and also recognize that, on account of the general transformations of mentality and environment that have already happened or are in process, these expressions have already been prejudiced by the conformism, the rhetoric, the idealistic pathos, and the social mythology of the bourgeois period; thus their foundations are already undermined. Whatever is worth saving in the field of conduct needs to be liberated in an interior and simplified form, needing no consensus, and sound enough not to lean on any of the institutions or value systems of yesterday's world.

As for the rest, it may as well collapse.

Once this point is settled (and it was already explained in the introduction), one can recognize that the corrosive action exercised by contemporary literature rarely touches on anything essential, and that many of its targets are not worth defending, cherishing, or regretting.

Those scandalized, alarmist, and moralizing reactions stem from an undue confusion of the essential and the contingent, from the incapacity to conceive of any substantial values beyond limited forms of expression that have become alien and ineffective. The differentiated man is not scandalized, but adopts a calm attitude of understatement; he can go even further in overthrowing the idols, but then he asks: "And now what?" At most, he will trace an existential line of demarcation, in the direction that I have repeatedly indicated. It does not matter that this corrosive and "immoral" literature does not obey any higher goals (though it likes to pretend that it does), and is only of value as evidence of the somber, tainted, and often filthy horizons of its authors. The evidence remains valid: it defines a certain distance. Times like these justify the saying that it is good to give the final push to that which deserves to fall.

From our point of view, a reactionary "re-moralizing" of literature appears inauspicious, even if it were possible, in the sense of a return to the style of Manzoni, and in general of the nineteenth-century specialists in the theatrical presentation of concepts of honour, family, homeland, heroism, sin, and so on. One has to go beyond both positions: that of the moralizers, and that of the proponents of this corrosive art whose transitional and primitive forms are destined to exhaust themselves, leaving for some a void, and for others, the free space for a higher realism. And these considerations should make it plain that my former accusations of divided and indifferent art are not to be interpreted as the desire to give art a moralizing, edifying, or didactic content.

#### *Modern Music and Jazz*

There is another particular area worth paying attention to, because it reflects some typical processes of the epoch, and examining it will lead us on to some general phenomena of contemporary life. I am speaking of music.

It is obvious that, unlike what is proper to a "civilization of being," the music of a "civilization of becoming," which is unquestionably the modern one, must have developed in a peculiar way to enable us to speak of it as a Western demon of music. The processes of dissociation behind all modern art naturally play a part here, so that in the latest phases of music we find self-dissolving situations just like the general ones spoken of above.

It is no oversimplification to say that the most modern Western music has been characterized by an ever more distinct separation from its origin, whether in melodramatic, melodious, pretentious, heroic romanticism (most recently in the line represented by Wagnerism), or in tragic pathos (we need only refer to Beethoven's usual ideas). This separation has been realized through two developments, only apparently opposed.

The first is intellectualization, in which the cerebral element prevails, with an interest focused on harmony, often leading to a technical radicalism to the detriment of immediacy and sentiment ("human con tents"), resulting in abstract rhythmic-harmonic constructs that often seem to be ends in themselves. The extreme case of this is recent twelve tone music and strict serialism. The second is the physical character found in the most recent music.

This term has already been used for a music, mostly symphonic and descriptive, that returns in a certain sense to nature, removing itself from the subjective world of pathos, and is inclined to draw its principal inspiration from the world of things, actions, and elementary impulses.

Here the process is similar to the intolerance for intimist, academic studio painting during the rise of early impressionism and *plein air* painting. This second musical tendency had already begun with the Russian school and the French impressionists, having as its limit compositions such as Honegger's *Pacific 231* and Mossolov's *The Iron Foundry*.

When the second, physical current met with the first, super intellectualized one, this meeting came to define a most interesting situation in recent music. One need only think of early Stravinsky, where an intellectualism of pure, over-elaborated rhythmic constructions blossomed into the evocation of something pertaining less to psychology, or to the passionate, romantic, and expressionistic world, than to the substratum of natural forces. One can see *The Rite of Spring* as the conclusion of this stage. It represents the almost complete triumph over nineteenth century bourgeois music; music becomes pure rhythm, an intensity of a sonorous and tonal dynamism in action. It is "pure music," but with an additional Dionysian element, hence the particular reference to dance.

The predominance of dance music over vocal and emotional music has also characterized this current.

Up to this point, such a process of liberating dissolution in the realm of music might have a positive aspect from our point of view. One could well approve of a revolution that has caused Italian operatic music of the early nineteenth century, and German as well, to appear out of phase, heavy, and false, and likewise even symphonic music with high "humanist" pretensions. The fact is, however, that, at least in the field of "serious" concert music, the next phase after the revolutionary stage mentioned above consisted of abstract forms dominated by technical virtuosity: forms whose inner meaning recalls what I have interpreted as an existential refusal or diversion, taking it beyond the plane of dangerous intensity.

Here one can refer to Stravinsky's second period, where dance music gave way to a formal music that was sometimes parodic, sometimes neoclassically inspired, or else characterized by a pure, dissociated sonorous arithmetic that had begun to appear in the preceding period, producing a timeless spatialization of sounds. One also thinks of Schoenberg, considering his development from free atonal music, often in the service of an exasperated, existential expressionism (the existential revolt being expressed here as the atonal revolt against the "common chord," a symbol of bourgeois idealism), to a phase of dodecaphony (twelve-tone system). This development in itself is very significant for the terminal crisis of modern music. After the chromatic limit had been reached, from a technical point of view, step-by-step from post-Wagnerian music to that of Richard Strauss and Alexander Scriabin, atonal music abandoned the traditional tonal system, the basis of all preceding music, transporting, so to speak, the sound to a pure and free state, almost as if it were an active musical nihilism. After

that, with all twelve tones of the chromatic scale taken without hierarchical distinction and in all their unlimited possibilities of direct combination, the twelve-tone system sought to impose a new abstract law, beyond the formulae of common-practice harmony. Recently, music has experimented with sounds created by electronic technology, which transcend traditional orchestral means of production. This new territory also incurs the problem of finding an abstract law to apply to electronic music.

One can see in the extremes of dodecaphony reached in Anton von Webern's compositions that the trend can go no further. While Adorno could state in his *Philosophy of Modern Music*: "The twelve-tone technique is our destiny,"<sup>1</sup> others have justly spoken of a musical "ice age."

We have arrived at compositions whose extreme rarefaction and formal abstraction depict worlds similar to that of modern physics with its pure algebraic entities or, on the other hand, that of some surrealists.

The very sounds are freed from traditional structures and propelled into a convoluted system where the complete dissolution into the form less, with skeletal and atomically dissociated timbres, is contained only by the pure algebra of the composition. As in the world created by machine technology, the technical perfection and force of these new musical resources is accompanied by the same emptiness, soullessness, spectrality, or chaos. It is inconceivable that the new twelve-tone and post-serial language, with its foundation of inner devastation, could express contents similar to those of earlier music. At most, this language can be conducive to exasperated, existential expressionistic contents such as surface in Alban Berg's works. The limit is crossed by the so called *musique concrete* of Pierre Schaeffer, with its "organization of noises" and "montage" of environmental and orchestral sounds. A typical case is that of John Cage, a musician who declares explicitly that his compositions are no longer music. Going beyond the disintegrations of traditional structures through serial music and leaving behind Webern and his school, Cage mixes music with pure noise, electronic sound effects, long pauses, random insertions, even spoken ones such as radio transmissions. The goal is to produce disorientation in the listener in the same way as dadaism, so that one is hurled toward unexpected horizons, beyond the realm of music, and even of art in general.

If we look instead for the continuing role of dance music, we shall not find it in the "classical" symphonic genre but in modern dance music, specifically in jazz. It is with good reason that the present epoch, besides being called the "age of the emergence of the masses," the "age of the economy," and "the age of omnipotent technology," has been called the "Jazz Age." This shows that the extension of the trend in question now goes beyond esoteric musical circles and saturates our contemporaries' general manner of listening. Jazz reflects the same tendency as early Stravinsky, in terms of the pure rhythmic or syncopated element; apart from its elements of song, it is a "physical" music that does not stop at the soul, but directly arouses and stirs the body.

This is quite different from the earlier European dance music; in fact the very gracefulness, impetus, movement, and sensuality permeating those dances—for example, the Viennese or English waltz, and even the tango—are substituted in jazz by something mechanical, disjointed, altogether primitively ecstatic, and even paroxysmal through the use of constant repetition. This elemental content cannot be lost on anyone who finds himself in great European and American metropolitan dance halls, amidst the atmosphere of hundreds of couples shaking themselves to the syncopation and driving energy of this music.

The enormous and spontaneous spread of jazz in the modern world shows that meanings no different from those of the physico-cerebral “classical” music, which superseded nineteenth-century bourgeois melodrama and pathos, have in fact thoroughly penetrated the younger generation. But there are two sides to this phenomenon. Those who once went crazy for the waltz or delighted in the treacherous and conventional pathos of melodrama, now find themselves at ease surrounded by the convulsive-mechanical or abstract rhythms of recent jazz, both “hot” and “cool,” which we must consider as more than a deviant, superficial vogue. We are facing a rapid and central transformation of the manner of listening, which is an integral part of that complex that defines the nature of the present. Jazz is undeniably an aspect of the resurfacing of the elemental in the modern world, bringing the bourgeois epoch to its dissolution. Naturally, the young men and women who like to dance to jazz today do so simply “for fun” and are not concerned with this; yet the change exists, its reality unprejudiced by its lack of recognition, since its true meaning and possibilities could only be noted from the particular point of view employed by us in all of our analyses.

Some have included jazz among the forms of compensation that today’s man resorts to when faced with his practical, arid, and mechanical existence; jazz is supposed to provide him with raw contents of rhythm and elemental vitality. If there is any truth in this idea, we must consider the fact that to arrive at this, Western man did not create original forms, nor utilize elements of European folk music, which, for example in the rhythms of southeastern Europe (Romanian or Hungarian), has a fascination and an intensity comprising not only rhythm but also authentic dynamics. He instead looked for inspiration in the patrimony of the lower and more exotic races, the Negroes and mulattoes of the tropical and subtropical zones.

According to one of the scholars of Afro-Cuban music, Fernando Ortiz, all the primary elements of modern dance actually have these origins, including those whose origins are obscured by the fact that they have come through Latin America. One can deduce that modern man, especially North American man, has regressed to primitivism in choosing, assimilating, and developing a music of such primitive qualities as Negro music, which was even originally associated with dark forms of ecstasy.

In fact, it is known that African music, the origin of the principal rhythms of modern dances, has been one of the major techniques used to open people up to ecstasy and possession. Both Alfons Dauer and Ortiz have rightly seen the characteristic of this music as its polyrhythmic structure, developed in such a way that the static [on-beat] accents that mark the rhythm constantly act as

ecstatic [off-beat] accents; hence the special rhythmic figures that generate a tension intended to “feed an uninterrupted ecstasy.”

The same structure has been preserved in all so-called syncopated jazz. These syncopations are like delays that tend to liberate energy or generate an impulse: a technique used in African rites to induce possession of the dancers by certain entities, the Orisha of the Yoruba or the Loa of the Voodoo of Haiti, who took over their personalities and “rode” them. This ecstatic potential still exists in jazz.

But even here there is a process of dissociation, of abstract development of rhythmic forms separated from the whole to which they originally belonged. Thus, given the desacralization of the environment and the nonexistence of any institutional framework or corresponding ritual tradition, any suitable atmosphere or appropriate attitude, one cannot expect the specific effects of authentic African music with its evocative function; the effect always remains a diffuse and formless possession, primitive and collective in character.

This is very apparent in the latest forms, such as the music of the so called beat groups. Here the obsessive reiteration of a rhythm prevails (similar to the use of the African tom-tom), causing paroxysmal contortions of the body and inarticulate screams in the performers, while the mass of the listeners joins in, hysterically shrieking and throwing themselves around, creating a collective climate similar to that of the possessions of savage ritual and certain Dervish sects, or the Macumba and the Negro religious revivals.

The frequent use of drugs both by performers of this music and by the enraptured young people is also significant, causing a true, frenetic “crowd mentality,” as in beat or hippie sessions in California involving tens of thousands of both sexes.

Here we are no longer concerned with the specific compensation that one can find in syncopated dance music as the popular counterpart and extension of the extremes reached, but not maintained, by modern symphonic music; we are concerned with the semi-ecstatic and hysterical beginnings of a formless, convoluted escapism, empty of content, a beginning and end in itself. Hence, it is completely inappropriate when some compare it to certain frenetic, collective, ancient rites, because the latter always had a sacred background.

Quite apart from similar extreme and aberrant forms, one can still consider the general problem of all these methods that provide elemental, ecstatic possibilities, which the differentiated man, not the masses, can use in order to feed that particular intoxication described earlier, which is the only nourishment he can existentially draw from an epoch of dissolution. The processes of recent times tend precisely toward these extremes; and whereas some of the present youth merely seek to dull their senses and to use certain experiences merely for extreme sensations, others can use such situations as a challenge that demands the right response: a reaction that arises from “being.”

### *Marriage and the Family*

Social factors present a closer connection with those of private life and mores, when one considers the problem of relations between the sexes, marriage, and the family as they are today.

In our time, the crisis of the family as an institution is no less salient than that of the nineteenth-century romantic idea of homeland, and is largely an effect of processes that are irreversible, being tied to all the factors that characterize existence in recent times. Naturally, today's crisis of the family also arouses preoccupations and moral reactions, with more or less hopeless attempts at restoration that can offer nothing but conformism and an empty and false traditionalism.

Here, too, I see things in a different way and, as in the case of the other phenomena already considered, must coldly recognize the reality of the situation. We have to face the consequences of the fact that the family has long since ceased to have any higher meaning, or been cemented by living factors that go beyond the merely individual. The organic and, to a certain degree, "heroic" character that its unity presented in the past has been lost in the modern world, just as the institution's residual veneer of "sacrality" bestowed by religious marriage has disappeared, or nearly so. In reality, in the great majority of cases the modern family is presented as a petit bourgeois institution determined almost exclusively by conformist, utilitarian, primitive, or at best sentimental factors. Above all, its essential fulcrum has disappeared, which was constituted by the primarily spiritual authority of its head, the father: that is shown by the etymological meaning of the word *Pater* as "lord," or "sovereign." At this rate one of the principal goals of the family, procreation, is reduced to the mere mindless propagation of one's bloodline: propagation, moreover, that is promiscuous, given that with modern individualism any limitation of conjugal unions by stock, caste, and race has collapsed, and given that, in any case, it no longer has as counterpart the most essential continuity, that is, the transmission of a spiritual influence, a tradition, and an ideal heritage from generation to generation. Yet how could it be otherwise? How could the family continue to have a firm, binding centre, if its natural head, the father, is so often estranged from it today—even physically, when the practical mechanism of material life takes him away from it, in a society that is intrinsically absurd? What authority can the father have, especially in the so-called upper classes, if he is reduced to a money making machine, a busy professional, and the like?

Moreover, this often holds for both parents, owing to the emancipation of the woman and her entrance into the world of the professions and work. Even less conducive to the climate within the family or to a positive influence on the children is the alternative, the "lady" who devotes herself to a frivolous and mundane existence. In such a situation, how can the erosive and disintegrating processes not work against the unity of the modern family, and how can the claim of a "sacred character" of the institution not be counted among the mendacious hypocrisies of our society? The interrelation between the disappearance of the preexisting principle of authority and the unleashing of individualism, already revealed in the political realm, is also manifested in the realm of the family. The decline of any prestige of the father has resulted in the estrangement of the children, the ever more clear and severe gap between new and old generations. The

dissolution of the organic links in space (castes, bodies, and so on) corresponds to a dissolution in time, in the breaking of the spiritual continuity between the generations, between fathers and sons. The detachment and estrangement in both cases is undeniable and ever increasing, being exacerbated by the ever more rapid and confused rhythm of existence in today's world. Thus it is significant that such phenomena are particularly severe in the upper classes and the remains of the ancient nobility, where one would have expected the bonds of blood and tradition to persist. It is more than a humorous remark that parents are "an unavoidable evil" for "modern" children.

The new generation wants its parents "to mind their own business" and not to meddle in the lives of their children, since they "don't understand" (even when there is absolutely nothing to understand); and it is no longer just the boys who make such a claim: the girls too have filed a similar protest. Naturally, all this intensifies the general rootless condition.

Therefore, the privation of any higher meaning of the family in a materialistic and dispirited civilization is also one of the causes of the extremism of the "burnt-out generation," and of the growing criminal activity and corruption among the youth.

Given this state of affairs, whatever its principal cause—whether this cause lies in the children or the parents—procreation itself assumes an absurd character and cannot maintain its validity as one of the principal reasons of being for the family. Thus, as I have said, in ennumerable cases today's family owes its existence merely to a force of inertia, conventions, practical convenience, and weakness of character in a regime of mediocrity and compromises. Nor can one expect external measures to bring about a change. I must repeat that familial unity could only remain firm when determined by a supra-personal way of thinking, so as to leave mere individual matters on a secondary level.

Then the marriage could even lack "happiness," the "needs of the soul" could be unsatisfied, and yet the unity would persist. In the individualistic climate of present society no higher reason demands that familial unity should persist even when the man or the woman "does not agree," and sentiment or sex leads them to new choices. Therefore, the increase of so-called failed marriages and related divorces and separations is natural in contemporary society. It is also absurd to think of any efficacy in restraining measures, since the basis of the whole is by now a change of an existential order.

After this evaluation, it would almost be superfluous to specify what can be the behaviour of the differentiated man today. In principle, he can not value marriage, family, or procreation as I have just described them.

All that can only be alien to him; he can recognize nothing significant to merit his attention. (Later I will return to the problem of the sexes in itself, not from the social perspective.)

The contaminations in marriage between sacred and profane and its bourgeois conformism are evident to him, even in the case of religious, indissoluble, Catholic marriage. This indissolubility that is supposed to safeguard the family in the Catholic area is by now little more than a facade.

In fact, the indissoluble unions are often profoundly corrupted and loosened, and in that area petty morality is not concerned in the least that the marriage is actually indissoluble; it is important only to act as if it were such. That men and women, once duly married, do more or less whatever they want, that they feign, betray, or simply put up with each other, that they remain together for simple convenience, reducing the family to what I have already described, is of little importance there. Morality is saved: One can believe that the family remains the fundamental unit of society so long as one condemns divorce and accepts that social sanction or authorization—as if it had any right—for any sexually based cohabitation that corresponds to marriage. What is more, even if we are not speaking of the “indissoluble” Catholic rite of marriage, but of a society that permits divorce, the hypocrisy persists: one worships at the altar of social conformism even when men and women separate and remarry repeatedly for the most frivolous and ridiculous motives, as typically happens in the United States, so that marriage ends up being little more than a puritanical veneer for a regime of high prostitution or legalized free love.

Nevertheless, the issue of Catholic marriage deserves some additional theoretical and historical consideration to prevent ambiguity.

Naturally in our case it is not the arguments of “free thinkers” that turn us against this kind of marriage.

Earlier I mentioned the contamination between the sacred and the profane. It is worth recalling that marriage as a rite and sacrament involving indissolubility took shape late in the history of the Church, and not before the twelfth century. The obligatory nature of the religious rite for every union that wished to be considered more than mere concubinage was later still, declared at the Council of Trent (1563). For our purposes, this does not affect the concept of indissoluble marriage in itself, but its place, significance, and conditions have to be clarified.

The consequence here, as in other cases regarding the sacraments, is that the Catholic Church finds itself facing a singular paradox: proposals intending to make the profane sacred have practically ended up making the sacred profane.

The true, traditional significance of the marriage rite is outlined by Saint Paul, when he uses not the term “sacrament” but rather “mystery” to indicate it (“it is a great mystery,” taken verbatim—Ephesians 5:31-32). One can indeed allow a higher idea of marriage as a sacred and indissoluble union not in words, but in fact. A union of this type, however, is conceivable only in exceptional cases in which that absolute, almost heroic dedication of two people in life and beyond life is present in principle. This was known in more than one traditional civilization, with examples of wives who even found it natural not to outlive the death of their husbands.

In speaking of making the sacred profane, I alluded to the fact that the concept of an indissoluble sacramental union, “written in the heavens” (as opposed to one on the naturalistic plane that is generically sentimental, and even at base merely social), has been applied to, or rather imposed on, every couple who must join themselves in church rather than in civil marriage, only to conform to their social environment. It is pretended that on this exterior and prosaic plane, on

this plane of the Nietzschean “human, all too human,” the attributes of truly sacred marriage, of marriage as a “mystery,” can and must be valid. When divorce is not permitted in a society like the present, one can expect this hypocritical regime and the rise of grave personal and social problems.

On the other hand, it should be noted that in Catholicism itself the theoretical absoluteness of the marriage rite bears a significant limitation. It is enough to remember that if the Church insists on the indissolubility of the marriage bond in space, denying divorce, it has ceased to observe it in time. The Church that does not allow one to divorce and remarry does permit widows and widowers to remarry, which amounts to a breach of faithfulness, and is at best conceivable within an openly materialistic premise; in other words, only if it is thought that when one who was indissolubly united by the supernatural power of the rite has died, he or she has ceased to exist. This inconsistency shows that Catholic religious law, far from truly having transcendent spiritual values in view, has made the sacrament into a simple, social convenience, an ingredient of the profane life, reducing it to a mere formality, or rather degrading it.

This is not all. Together with the absurdity proper to democratizing the marriage rite and imposing it on all, there is an inconsistency in Catholic doctrine when it claims that the rite, as well as being indissoluble, renders natural unions “sacred”—which represents one incongruence associating with another. Through precise, dogmatic premises, the “sacred” is here reduced to a mere manner of speech. It is well known that Christian and Catholic attitudes are characterized by the antithesis between “flesh” and spirit, by a theological hatred for sex, due to the illegitimate extension to ordinary life of a principle valid at best for a certain type of ascetic life. With sex being presented as something sinful, marriage has been conceived as a lesser evil, a concession to human weakness for those who cannot choose chastity as a way of life, and renounce sex. Not being able to ban sexuality altogether, Catholicism has tried to reduce it to a mere biological fact, allowing its use in marriage only for procreation. Unlike certain ancient traditions, Catholicism has recognized no higher value, not even a potential one, in the sexual experience taken in itself. There is lacking any basis for its transformation in the interests of a more intense life, to integrate and elevate the inner tension of two beings of different sexes, whereas it is in exactly these terms that one should conceive of a concrete “sacralization” of the union and the effect of a higher influence involved in the rite.

On the other hand, since the marriage rite has been democratized, the situation could not be otherwise even if the premises were different; otherwise, it would be necessary to suppose an almost magical power in the rite to automatically elevate the sexual experiences of any couple to the level of a higher tension, of a transforming intoxication that alone could lift it beyond the “natural” plane. The sexual act would constitute the primary element, whereas procreation would appear absolutely secondary and belonging to the naturalistic plane.

As a whole, whether through its conception of sexuality, or through its profanation of the marriage rite as something put in everyone’s reach and even rendered obligatory for any Catholic couple, religious marriage itself is reduced to the mere religious sanction of a profane,

unbreakable contract. Thus the Catholic precepts about the relations between the sexes reduce everything to the plane of a restrained, bourgeois mediocrity: tamed, procreative animality within conformist limits that have not been fundamentally changed by certain hesitant, fringe concessions made for the sake of “updating” at the Second Vatican Council.

So much for clarifying the principles of the matter. In such a materialized and desecrated civilization and society as the present ones, it is then natural that the very barriers against dissolution that the Christian conception of marriage and family provided—however problematic it might have been—have become less and less, and that as things now stand, there is no longer anything worth being sincerely defended and preserved. None of the consequences of the crisis as seen in this realm, including all today’s problems surrounding divorce, free love, and the rest, can be of much interest to the differentiated man. Upon final analysis, he cannot consider the overt individualistic disintegration of marriage as a worse evil than the line followed by the communist world, which, having liquidated the fads of free unions cultivated by early revolutionary, anti-bourgeois socialism, tended ever more to substitute the state or some collective for the family, while vindicating the “dignity” of the woman only as worker side by side with the man, and in terms of a mere reproductive mammal. In fact, in present-day Russia decorations as lofty as “Heroine of the Soviet Union” are being contemplated for fruitful women—even unmarried comrades—who have given at least ten babies to the world, which, if they desire, they can even rid themselves of by handing them over to the state, which supposes it can educate them more directly and rationally to make them into “Soviet men.” It is known that a comment in Article 12 of the Soviet constitution has essentially inspired such a view of the female sex: “Work, in other times considered as a useless or dishonourable labour, becomes a question of dignity, glory, a question of valour, heroism.” The title of “Hero of Socialist Labor,” equalled by the “Hero of the Soviet Union,” is the counterpart of the title just indicated bestowed upon the reproductive woman. These are the happy horizons offered as the alternative to the “decadence” and “corruption” of bourgeois capitalist society, where the family is dissolving amid anarchy, indifference, and the so called sexual revolution of the younger generation, along with the disappearance of any organic link or principle of authority.

In any case, these alternatives also lack any significance. In this epoch of dissolution it is hard for the differentiated man to become involved in marriage and family in any way. It is not a matter of ostentatious anti-conformism, but a conclusion drawn from a vision consistent with reality, in which the imperative of an inner freedom remains.

In a world like the present, the differentiated man must be able to have the self at his disposal, all his life long. It is not for him to form any ties in this realm, any more than ascetics or mercenaries in another epoch would have done. It is not that he is unwilling to assume even graver burdens: the problem refers instead to that which, in itself, is devoid of any meaning.

This saying of Nietzsche is well known: “Nicht fort sollst du dich pflanzen, sondern hinauf. Dazu helfe dir der Garten der Ehe” (Do not plant for the future but for the heights. May the garden of marriage help you in that). It refers to the idea that today’s man is a mere form of

transition whose only purpose is to prepare the birth of the “super man,” being ready to sacrifice himself for him, and to withdraw at his arising. We have already done justice to the craze of the superman and this finalism that postpones the possession of an absolute meaning of existence to a hypothetical future humanity. But from the wordplay of Nietzsche’s saying, one can deduce the endorsement of a concept that marriage should serve to reproduce not “horizontally” (such is the meaning of *fortpflanzen*), simply breeding, but rather “vertically,” toward the summit (*hinaufpflanzen*), elevating one’s own line. In fact, this would be the only higher justification of marriage and family.

Today it is nonexistent, because of the objective existential situation of which we have spoken, and because of the processes of dissolution that have severed the profound ties that can spiritually unite the generations.

Even a Catholic, Charles Peguy, had spoken of being a father as the “great adventure of modern man,” given the utter uncertainty of what his own offspring may be, given the improbability that in our day the child might receive anything more than mere “life” from the father. I have already emphasized that it is not about having or not having that paternal quality, not only physical, that existed in the ancient family and that grounded his authority. Even if this quality were still present—and, in principle, one should assume that it could still be present in the differentiated man—it would be paralyzed by the presence of a refractory and dissociated material in the younger generation. As we have said, the state of the modern masses is by now such that, even if figures having the stature of true leaders were to appear, they would be the last to be followed. Thus one should not deceive oneself about the formation and education still possible for an offspring born in an environment like that of present society, even if the father were such in a more than legal sense.

The objection that such a position could provoke is certainly not that it involves the danger of a depopulation of the earth, because there is more than a sufficient pandemic and catastrophic reproduction of common humanity, but that thus the differentiated men would renounce the assurance of a lineage that would carry on the heritage of their ideas and way of being, leaving the masses and the most insignificant classes to breed their ever more numerous progeny.

One can overcome this objection by dissociating the physical generation from the spiritual one. In a regime of dissolution, in a world where neither castes, traditions, nor races exist in the proper sense, the two types of generation have ceased to be parallel, and the hereditary continuity of blood no longer represents a favourable condition for a spiritual continuity. We might refer here to that spiritual paternity to which the traditional world accorded priority over solely biological paternity, as when speaking of the relationship between teacher and student, initiator and initiate. This extended to the idea of a rebirth or second birth as a fact independent of any physical paternity, and which created in the person concerned a more intimate and essential tie than any of those that could unite him to the physical father, the family, or any naturalistic community and unity.

This, then, is the special possibility that can be considered as a substitute: it goes back to an order of ideas analogous to the principle of the nation, when we said that a naturalistic unity entering crisis could only be replaced by a unity determined by an idea. To the “adventure” of physically procreating beings who may become isolated, “modern” individuals good only for increasing the senseless world of quantity, one can then oppose the action of awakening, which those who do not spiritually belong to the present world may exert on suitably qualified people, so that the physical disappearance of the former does not leave an unfilled void. Besides, the few differentiated men existing today rarely find themselves sharing their inner form and orientation on account of sharing the same blood or stock, through heredity. So there is no reason to suppose that things should go otherwise for the next generation.

However important the task of assuring oneself a spiritual succession is, its practicability depends on circumstances. It will be realized if and where it can be, without one having to search frantically and, least of all, resort to any kind of proselytism. Above all in this realm, that which is authentic and valid is accomplished under the guidance of a higher, inscrutable wisdom, with the external appearance of causality, rather than through a direct initiative “willed” by any individual.

#### *Relations Between the Sexes*

I have taken care to distinguish the social problem of the family and marriage from the personal problem of sex. Once again, it is a matter of a separation that, neither normal nor legitimate in a normal world, except in special cases, imposes itself when the world is dissolving. So we come to consider the relationship between man and woman in itself.

Here too, I will first consider the positive aspects that, at least potentially, are offered by certain processes of dissolution, to the extent that what is dissolved belongs to the bourgeois world and, moreover, suffers from distortions and obscurities in sexual matters, due to the predominant religion of the West.

I turn first to that characteristic complex caused by the interference between morality and sexuality, as well as that between spirituality and sexuality. The importance that has been attributed to sexual matters in the field of ethical and spiritual values, often to the point of making them the sole criterion, is nothing less than aberrant.

Vilfredo Pareto spoke of a “sexual religion” that in the nineteenth century, with its taboos, dogmas, and intolerance, accompanied religion as usually understood. It was particularly virulent in Anglo-Saxon countries, where it had, and in part still has as its worthy companions, two other brand-new, dogmatic, secular religions: humanitarian progressivism and the religion of democracy. But, apart from this, there are distortions concerning a much wider field. For example, one of them concerns the very meaning of the term “virtue.” It is known that *virtus* in antiquity and even during the Renaissance had the meaning of a force of the soul, of virile quality, of power, while later its prevalent meaning became sexual, so much that Pareto could coin the term “*virtuism*” itself to characterize the said puritanical religion.

Another typical case of the interference between sexuality and ethics and of the distortion of them is the notion of honour. It is true that this primarily concerned the female sex, but the matter was no less significant for that. For a long time it was held, and still is in certain social strata and regions, that a girl loses her “honour” not only when she has free sexual experiences outside of marriage, but even when she is a victim of rape. A similar absurdity even inspired the theme of some “great art,” the grotesque extreme of this perhaps being reached by Lope de Vega’s drama *The Best Judge Is the King*, in which a girl, having been kidnapped and violated by a feudal lord, loses her “honour”; but she quickly regains it when the king has the rapist executed and has the girl marry her fiance. A parallel absurdity is the idea that a man loses his own “honour” if his wife betrays him, whereas, if anything, the opposite would be true; in adultery, it is the woman, and not the man who loses “honour”: not by the sexual fact itself, but from a superior point of view, because where marriage is something serious and profound, the woman in marrying freely binds herself to a man, and through her adultery she, first disgracing herself, breaks this ethical tie. So, incidentally, one can see how foolish it was of the bourgeois world to let the blow land on the betrayed husband. It would be equivalent to ridiculing one who suddenly discovers a thief, or a leader when one of his followers breaks his oath of fidelity and betrays him—unless one wants the defence of “honour” to engender in the husband the quality of a jailer or a despot, which is certainly not compatible with a higher ideal of virile dignity.

Even from such banal examples we can clearly see the contamination suffered by ethical values through sexual prejudices. I have already indicated the principles of a “greater morality” that, being dependent on a kind of interior race, cannot be damaged by nihilistic dissolutions: these include truth, justice, loyalty, inner courage, the authentic, socially unconditioned sentiment of honour and shame, control over oneself. These are what are meant by “virtue”; sexual acts have no part in it except indirectly, and only when they lead to a behaviour that deviates from these values.

The value that was attributed to virginity by Western religion, even on a theological plane, relates to the complex mentioned earlier. It is already evident on this plane through the importance and the emphasis on the virginity of Mary, the “Mother of God,” which is altogether incomprehensible except on the purely symbolic level. But it was also attested on the moral and normative plane by many opinions recognized as “probable” by Catholic moral theology (that is, recommended because prevalent and defended by thinkers of a particular doctrine, although not unequivocally binding). For example, it would be preferable for a girl to kill herself rather than allow herself to be violated (an idea that even led to the recent “sanctification” of a certain Maria Goretti), or that it would be permissible for her to kill the assailant, if she could save her own anatomical integrity thereby. A similar sentiment is defended in the same terms by the casuistry of moral theology that, when for the salvation of a city the enemy had required the sacrifice of an innocent, she could be sacrificed and the city could consent to surrender her—not, however, if a girl were demanded in order to be raped. So we can see that the sexual taboo was given a greater emphasis than life itself, and many more examples of this could easily be provided. But when, with a regime of interdictions and anathemas, one is so preoccupied with sexual matters, it is

evident that one depends on them, no less than if one made a crude exhibition of them. On the whole, this is the case in Christianized Europe—and all the more so since positive religion lacks both the contemplative potential and the orientation toward transcendence, high asceticism, and true sacrality.

The realm of morality has become contaminated by the idea of sex, to the extent of the complexes mentioned earlier.

Although all this abnormal order of things is not of recent date, the characteristic fact of the bourgeois period is that it assumed the principal, dissociated, and autonomous characteristics of a “social morality”—precisely with the “virtuism” of which Pareto accuses it, which to a certain extent was no longer subject to religious morality. Now, it is exactly this morality with a sexual basis that is the principal object of the processes of dissolution in recent times. We hear of a “sexual revolution” supposed to remove both inner inhibitions and repressive social taboos. In fact, in today’s world “sexual freedom” is being affirmed ever more, as a current practice. But we have to consider this in more detail.

I must emphasize above all that the direction of the processes at work is toward a freeing of sex, but in no way a freeing from sex. Sex and women are instead becoming dominant forces in present society, an evident fact that is also part of the general phenomenology of every terminal phase of a civilization’s cycle. One might speak of a chronic sexual intoxication that is profusely manifested in public life, conduct, and art. Its counterpart is a gynocratic tendency, a sexually oriented preeminence of the woman that relates to the materialistic and practical involvement of the masculine sex: a phenomenon that is clearest in those countries, like the United States, where that involvement is more excessive.

Since I have dealt with it on other occasions, I shall not dwell on this subject here, limiting myself to the collective and, in a certain way, abstract character of eroticism and the fascination centred on the latest female idols, in an atmosphere fed by countless means: cinema, magazines, television, musicals, beauty contests, and so on. Here the real persona of the woman is often a quasi-soulless prop, centre of crystallization of that atmosphere of diffuse and chronic sexuality, so that the majority of “stars” with their fascinating features have as persons quite poor sexual qualities, their existential basis being close to that of common, misguided, and rather neurotic girls. To describe them someone has aptly used the image of jellyfish with magnificent iridescent colours that are reduced to a gelatinous mass and evaporate if brought out of the water into sunlight—the water corresponding to the atmosphere of diffuse and collective sexuality.

As for our concerns, my principle is not simply to deplore the fact that all the mores of the past based on sexual prejudices are ever more losing their force; and it should not surprise us that what seemed corruption yesterday is now becoming normal in much of contemporary society.

The important thing would be to take advantage of the changed situation in order to affirm a healthier conception of life than that of bourgeois morality, by freeing ethical values from their sexual connections. What was said of the contamination suffered by that morality’s interference

with the concepts of virtue, honour, and fidelity, can already indicate the right direction. We must recognize that continence and chastity have their proper place only in the framework of a certain type of asceticism and in the uncommon vocations corresponding to it, as was always thought in the traditional world. Contrary to puritanical opinion, a free sexual life in the case of persons of a certain stature can tell us nothing about their intrinsic value—history is rich in examples of that. What they allow themselves should be measured solely by what they are, by the power that they have over themselves.

Relationships between men and women, with regard to living together, should be clearer, more important, and interesting than those defined by bourgeois mores and sexual exclusivism, which understands the significance of female integrity in mere anatomical terms. In principle, the processes of dissolution at work could favour many similar rectifications, if one has a particular human type in sight. However, if one refers to the majority, those possibilities remain entirely hypothetical, because here too, the necessary existential premises are lacking.

Today's situation is such that increased freedom in the realm of sex is not connected to a conscious reacquisition of values that accord little importance to "important" sexual matters and oppose the "fetishization" of intersexual human relations, but is caused by the general weakening of any value, of any restraint. The positive advantages that might be drawn from the processes at work are then only virtual, and should not delude us about the actual—and future—tendencies of modern life.

Aside from the atmosphere of a diffuse, pandemic, erotic intoxication, "sexual freedom" can lead to banal relationships between men and women, to a materialism, a petty immorality, and an insipid promiscuity where the most elementary conditions for sexual experiences of any interest or intensity do not exist. It is easy to see that this is the effective outcome of the proclaimed "sexual revolution": sex "free of complexes" that becomes a general current of mass consumption.

The aspects of the crisis of female modesty are another part of this. Beside the cases in which almost full female nudity feeds the atmosphere of abstract, collective sexuality, we should consider those cases in which nudity has lost every serious "functional" character—cases which by their habitual, public character almost engender an involuntarily chaste glance that is capable of considering a fully undressed girl with the same aesthetic disinterest as observing a fish or a cat. Furthermore, by adding the products of commercialized mass pornography, the polarity between the sexes is diluted, as seen in the conduct of "modern" life where the youth of both sexes are everywhere intermingled, promiscuously and "unaffectedly," with almost no tension, as if they were turnips and cabbages in a vegetable garden.

We can see how this particular result of the processes of dissolution relates to what I have said of the "animal ideal," as well as the correspondence between the East and the West. The primitive, erotic life so typical among American youth is not at all far from the promiscuity of male and female "comrades" in the communist realm, free from the "individualistic accidents of bourgeois

decadence,” who in the end reflect little on sexual matters, their prevalent interests being channelled elsewhere into collective life and class. We can consider separately the cases in which the climate of diffuse and constant eroticism leads one to seek in pure sexuality, more or less along the same lines as drugs, frantic sensations that mask the emptiness of modern existence. The testimonies of certain beatniks and similar groups reveal that their pursuit of the sexual orgasm causes an anguish aroused by the idea that they and their partner might not reach it, even to the point of exhaustion.

This use of sex deals with negative forms and quasi-caricatures that may, however, refer to something more serious, because the pure sexual experience also has its metaphysical value, the intensity of intercourse being able to produce an existential rupture of planes and an opening beyond ordinary consciousness. Along with the sacralization of sex, these possibilities were recognized in the traditional world. Having dealt with this in *Eros and the Mysteries of Love*, I shall only include here a brief reference as it concerns the differentiated man.

As I have said, the present situation excludes the possibility of integrating sex in a life full of meaning within institutional frameworks. So we can only think of certain cases in which, despite everything, favourable conditions exceptionally and sporadically converge. Certainly, the romantic bourgeois idea of love as a union of “souls” can no longer have any place for the man in question. The significance of human relationships can only be relative to him, and he can no more seek the meaning of existence in a woman than in family and children. In particular, he must put aside the idea, or ambition, of human possession, of completely “having” the other being as a person. Here too, a sense of distance would be natural, and could indicate a mutual respect. The positive use of the greater freedom of modern conduct and of the modern transformation of the woman can be seen in relationships that, without being superficial or “naturalistic,” have an evident character, grounded on the social and ethical side in loyalty, camaraderie, independence, and courage. The man and woman always remain conscious as two beings with distinct paths, who, in the world in dissolution, can over come their fundamental, existential isolation only through the effect of pure sexual polarity. If there is no need to “possess” another human being, the woman will not be a mere object of “pleasure,” a source of sensations that are sought as means to assert oneself. The integrated being has no need of such assurances; at most he requires “nourishment.” That which can be gained from the polarity just mentioned, if adequately used, can provide one of the principal materials to feed that special active and living intoxication of which I have repeatedly spoken, above all when discussing the Dionysian experience.

This brings us to the other possibility, that offered by the regime of sexuality that renders it in a certain way autonomous, and detached.

As we have seen, the first possibility is “naturalistic” degeneracy. This contrasts with the second possibility, which is that of the “elementary”: the assumption of the sexual experience in its elementarity. One of the themes of *Eros and the Mysteries of Love* was shown in the words: “Since psychoanalysis has emphasized the sub-personal primordialism of sex by applying a

degrading inversion, it is necessary to oppose it with a metaphysical perspective.”

On the one hand, I have examined to this end certain dimensions of transcendence that exist in latent or hidden forms in profane love itself, while on the other hand I have gathered from the world of Tradition many testimonies about the use of sex in the sense indicated, when I spoke of how higher influences could transform the general rule of union between men and women. If, however, we do not want to deal with mere concepts, but with their practical application, today I can only refer to sporadic, unusual experiences open only to the differentiated human type, because they presuppose a special interior constitution that survives in him alone.

Another presupposition regards the woman: it is that the erotic, fascinating quality widespread in today’s environment is concentrated and almost “precipitated” (in a chemical sense) in certain female types precisely in terms of an “elementary” quality. Therefore, in a sexual relationship with a woman, the situation I have often considered would reappear—that is, a dangerous situation that requires a self-mastery, the surpassing of an inner limit by anyone who intends actively to attempt it. Despite a certain exasperation or crudeness due to the different environment, the meanings originally connected to the polarity of the sexes could reappear in this context, if not yet suffocated by the puritan religion of the “spirit,” and if they were not enfeebled, sentimentalized, and made bourgeois, but also not primitivized or simply corrupted. These significances are found in many legends, myths, and sagas of very different traditions. In the true, typical, absolute woman, they recognized a spiritually dangerous presence, a fascinating and even dissolutive force; this explains the attitude and the precepts of that particular line of asceticism averse to sex and woman, as if to cut off their danger. The man who has not chosen either to renounce the world or to be impassively detached from it can face the danger and even derive nourishment from the poison, if he uses sex without becoming a slave to it, and if he is able to evoke the profound, elemental dimensions in a certain transbiological sense.

As I have said, in the present world these possibilities are the exception and can only offer themselves by happy chance, given their presuppositions, and also under the unfavourable circumstances of the dullness often presented by the woman as current civilization has made her. An “absolute woman” cannot in fact easily imagine herself in the guise of an “up-to-date” and “modern” girl. More generally, she cannot easily imagine the necessary feminine qualities mentioned earlier as compatible with those required for relationships that, as we have said, should also have a character of freedom, clarity, and independence. As a result, an entirely unique form of woman would be necessary, a seemingly paradoxical form, because in a certain sense she should reproduce that “duality” (inner duality) of the differentiated male type; which, despite certain appearances, is far from the typical orientation of modern woman’s life.

In reality, the entrance of the woman with equal rights into practical modern life, her new freedom, her finding herself side by side with men in the streets, offices, professions, factories, sports, and now even in political and military life, is one of those dissolutive phenomena in which, in most cases, it is difficult to perceive anything positive. In essence, all this is simply the renunciation of the woman’s right to be a woman. The promiscuity of the sexes in modern

existence can only “relieve” the woman to a greater or lesser degree of the energy with which she is endowed; she enters freer relationships only by regressing, because they are primitivized, prejudiced by all the factors and the practical, predominating interests of modern life. So the processes at work in present society, with woman’s new status, can satisfy only one of the two requirements, that of clearer, freer, and more essential relationships, beyond both moralism and the erosive quality of bourgeois sentimentalism and “idealism,” but certainly cannot satisfy the second—the activation of the most profound forces that define the absolute woman.

It lies outside of the scope of this book to consider the meaning of existence not only from the man’s point of view, but also from the woman’s. It is certain that in an epoch of dissolution the solution for the woman is more difficult than that for the man. One should bear in mind the already irreversible consequences of the error through which the woman believed herself to win a “personality” of her own using the man as a model: the “man,” in a manner of speaking, because today’s typical forms of activity are almost all anodyne, they engage “neuter” faculties of a predominantly intellectual and practical order that have no specific relation to either sex, or even to any particular race or nationality, and are exercised under the sign of the absurdity that characterizes all the systems of contemporary society. It is a world of existence without quality and of mere masks, in which the modern woman in most cases simply takes care of the cosmetic aspect, being so inwardly diminished and displaced, and lacking any basis for that active and essentializing depersonalization of which I have spoken, regarding the relations between person and mask.

In an inauthentic existence, the regime of diversions, surrogates, and tranquilizers that pass for today’s “distractions” and “amusements” does not yet allow the modern woman to foresee the crisis that awaits her when she recognizes how meaningless are those male occupations for which she has fought, when the illusions and the euphoria of her conquests vanish, and when she realizes that, given the climate of dis solution, family and children can no longer give her a sense of satisfaction in life. Meanwhile, as a result of diminished tension even man and sex can no longer mean a great deal to her; they cannot be her natural centre of existence as they were for the traditional absolute woman, but can only be of value as one ingredient of a diffused and externalized existence, no more important than fashion, sport, a narcissistic cult of the body, practical interests, and so on. The destructive effects so often produced in modern women by a mistaken vocation or warped ambitions, and also the force of circumstances, enter into the equation. Thus, when the race of true men is also nearly extinct, and modern man has little left of virility in a higher sense, there is little point in the saying about the true man’s capacity to “redeem,” to “save the woman within woman.” There is more of a danger that a true man today, in many cases, might find appropriate another maxim, that spoken by the old woman to Zarathustra: “Are you going to women? Don’t forget your whip!”—if it could be applied with impunity and fruitfully in these progressive times. The possibility of restoring to sex, even sporadically, its elementarity, its transcendence, and perhaps even its danger in the context mentioned, appears very much prejudiced by all these factors.

In summary, the general picture that today's society presents in the field of sex reflects in a particular way the negative aspects of a period of transition. The regime of residues, influenced in Latin countries by Catholic and bourgeois conformism, and by Puritanism in Protestant countries, still possesses a certain force. Where only the outer inhibitions have been removed, sexual life frequently assumes neurotic forms.

In the opposite case of the younger generation's completely emancipated behaviour, without complexes, the tendency is toward an insipid naturalism and primitivism in sexual relations. At the same time the general climate prevails of a fascination with sex and the predominance of woman as its object, without any effective differentiation, often to the point of regression, of the absolute types of femininity and virility. In particular, the emancipated feminine element becomes dimmed when involved in the social mechanism. Finally, there are the marginal cases of an exasperated use of sex, often associated with drugs, by a youth that is existentially traumatized and at risk, in the context of a chaotic search for surrogates for a firm sense of existence.

Thus in the current situation, for the type that concerns us, the prospect of the use of more profound sexual possibilities in freer and clearer relationships between men and women can only occur in rare, unexpected cases. Apart from this, considering the current processes and their effects, the only ones of value to him are those disintegrating ones that may help to separate the realms, and which articulate the principles belonging to a higher law of life than the preceding sexual morality.

Lacking anything better, he takes stock of the free space that is opened when important sexual and erotic matters are rendered less important, though not discounting what they can offer on their own level.