



II INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MYTHS

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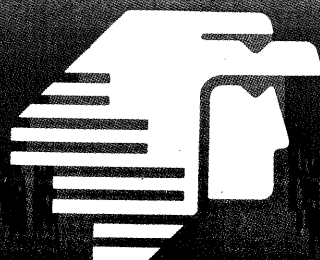
**XXX NATIONAL CONGRESS ON
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THE SIX FACES OF THE FEMALE ENIGMA.

-A research about femininity in Greek myths-

- 1) - «These things never happened, but they are always present»
(Sallustius Crispus Caius).

The mythical production is susceptible to many interpretations and it can be read in different ways: forgotten history or an unthinkable world? (Cantarella E., 1983). In the course of ages the controversial opinion is dragging on among historians, anthropologists sociologists, writers and all the scholars who have devoted themselves to the meaning of the myths and on the method of studying them.

In the psychoanalytic ambit Freud himself (Freud S., 1899; 1907; 1913; 1915; 1931; 1934) researched in mythology the representation of what he was discovering in the mind, establishing a connection between the psychic processes and what there is in the mythical production (Anzieu D., 1970; 1980). The myth was assumed as a historical and anthropological confirmation of the psychological truths found from the facts observed during treatment. The myth better than the clinical history can call the attention to some common aspects of the personality development and it lets us understand that many scientifically studied problems

in psychology were seen by poets before the historical time (Baldaro Verde J., 1987).

All that led to research on a historical and social function or on an explanation of the natural and unknown phenomena developed by myths, but it also led to a research about the inner meaning of mythological events. From that inner meaning they would assume that characteristic of universality and actuality that still keeps them alive. As Sallustius (Sallustius C.C. in Rochefort G., 1960) said «these things never happened» yet: they «are always present», or it would be better to say: they «have always been present» in the human mind!

In myth there is a process of removal that invites us to dive into its inner and latent contents to discover the other thing that the appearance doesn't say (Abadi M., 1978). So the analysis of myths would allow us to point out the conflictual thematics more frequently recurring in the human mind. These conflictual thematics would find their own expression (Ferenczi S., 1924; Rank O., 1909, 1914, 1924; Roheim G., 1973; Pellizzari G., 1984).

Myth can be explained as a representation of interior processes (Klein M., 1963), and can be considered a metaphoric form of an unconscious truth (Imbasciati A., 1981).

As regards the specific interest about female problems the study of femininity as presented by myth, would symbolize a means of a possible research about unconscious phantoms concerning the female being: in female myths is there therefore the myth of each female?

Generalising what Eve Cantarella (Cantarella E., 1985) said about the myth of the infer roman goddess Tacita we can say that myth not only is «the story of one woman but the story of all women».

Our work is based on this perspective: it is a part of a larger research about female characters in Greek mythology (Cena L., 1986), of which we have already published some other parts (Imbasciati A., Cena L., 1987; 1988). The research was conducted using the principles of psychoanalytic interpretation, taking into consideration about 700 stories of female figures in Greek mythology (Grimal P., 1951; Graves D., 1955; Tripp E., 1970).

The manifest story of myths was examined as a dream and the interpretative aspect was elaborated in the resarch of the inner thematics about femininity. But unlike the maiority of these mythical studies we based our research on the principles of the kleinian schools and the theory of personality concerning the «Relations of Objects». That permitted a more suitable approach to the female issue. The psychanalytic interpretation was compared and integrated by hystorical-litterary and hystorical-social sources (Pomeroy S.B., 1978; Campese S., Manuli P., Sissa G., 1983; Arrigoni G., 1985; Cantarella E., 1981, 1985). We selected area of Greek mythology for its rich tradition of the source that we have received and for the continuity and greater similarity of this culture to our Italian culture.

In this article we present a part of the work, still unpublished, concerning the female aspects relative to the divine, the Greek goddesses. Particularly, are sketched out

any elements derived from the analysis of the six main mythical female characters made up of the divinities named "Olimpic": Hera, Aphrodite, Athena, Artemis, Hestia, Demeter. These divinities represent the many aspects of the female entity, as if the female figure were divided into single persons differentiated by the psychic experiences that it evokes in the male and female mind and personality structures that may be symbolised.

The six female divinities must be considered, therefore, collectively as the six faces of the female enigma.

The "femininity" so demonstrated reveals itself enigmatical, not simply because it concerns the unconscious, but because it alludes to primeval and terrifying phantasm from which it seems to create in the mind. Our study, really, is based upon the research about early psychic and fetal life and about the origin of the symbol-formation's process understood like original cognitive structure. The study of the thought processes is based on their genesis. Bion (Bion W., 1962, 1963, 1965, 1970) explained that under the cognitive, rational and conscious processes, there are many other unconscious processes: behind every conscious thought there is a chain of unconscious processes. Different functional levels always more articulated and developed are progressively superimposing but the first of them persisting actively with the following, and even their persisting is an indispensable condition for the development of second levels. In the infant the diacronic development synchronically repeats itself in the working of every adult thought process. So the study of the primary psychic

processes throws light on all the mental structure. Our study intends to analyse the myth trying to discover the primary psychic processes to obtain indications about the global development of the mind in the very first years of life. That research is based on the <<Protomentale theory>> of the inner Objects, as was elaborated by one of us in several studies, from the volumes: "Il Protomentale " (Imbasciati A., Calorio D., 1981), "Sviluppo psicosessuale e processi cognitivi" (Imbasciati A., 1983a), "Freud o Klein? La femminilità nella letteratura psicoanalitica post-freudiana" (Imbasciati A., 1983b), "Istituzioni di psicologia" (Imbasciati A., 1986).

2) - The Olympic Goddesses.

The six female goddesses considered "Olimpic" by the Greek tradition are: Hera, Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, Hestia and Demeter. The mythological sources set them on Olympus mountain where the gods live, presiding over the world. The family of the Olympic gods is made up of Zeus, Hephaestus, Hermes, Apollo, Ares, Poseidon, Hera, Demeter, Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, Hestia.

From the analysis that we led on the mythical production every one of the six goddesses seems to represent a particular aspect of the female personality, as if the woman would had been split into different persons -a lost mosaic in form of woman's face (Rich A., 1976)- according to how she is considered in her different existential manifestations.

2.1) - Aphrodite: The Lover.

«...She is Ade, she is an imperial force, delirious madness, desire, without end, and grief. She is everyting; And what god is not her prey?...» (Sophocles, Cfr. Nauck, fr.55; in Stella A.L., 1956, p.238).

«(Aphrodite)...falls from her breast the quilted shawl where she keeps all her magic; therein is the passion and the desire. and seductive, words that deceive the spirits, even the wisest ones (with this) all are subdued, Immortals and men born to die...».

(Homer, Iliad XII, v.215, 198-199; in Stella A.L., 1956, p.241).

The significance of Aphrodite, born of sea form, is the pervasiveness of the sea, which brings life everywhere and to everything, truly, even in the geographic position of Greece and the Greek Islands. In this version Aphrodite has no mother. She is the daughter of only a father as is the Goddess Athena (but in a different way). Thus we have the inner personal experience of omnipotent masculinity.

Aphrodite is unlimited love personified, womanly beauty felt as the fountain of life, as strength of union and creativity. The vicissitudes of this goddess sometimes seem to appear manifested as inner masculine experience forces toward woman and the female sexual attraction inherent in at woman. In other times these vicissitudes seem to appear manifested as a inner feminine experience in putting to use her real sexual and vital power of woman over man. The divinity of sexual love is indicative of the meaning of the

word "divine," which the greeks attribute to the erotic experience. Also in other religions sexuality is made divine by man feeling this state of erotic consciousness as a particular situation, transcending the daily experience, symbolizing a meeting with the deity. The erotic experience, in fact, indicates a particular state of consciousness which can reach almost a mystical state (Bonaparte M., 1952).

Sexuality with importance placed on the physical relationship, constitutes one of the human situations in which primitive fantasies are greatly awakened and more specifically sexual fantasies begin to form sexual behavior, or the sexual experience, is the conscious epitomy of a complex structure of interior fantasies which, in the synchronic sexual experience, shows the reactivation of the diachronic childhood development of these primitive fantasies. In this way sexuality constitutes a particular case in the development of the symbolization process (Imbasciati A., 1983a). This signifies that all Greek and other mythologies are based upon erotic-sexual events, that is, on sexual situations, which give life to human events.

Aphrodite is legally married to ingenuous Ephestos even though she is more notoriously coupled with Ares; which signifies that sexuality must marry ingenuity and wisdom, two forms which both give birth to life. Sexuality, however, often finds itself coupled with belligerent fury, suggesting that man looks for sexual happiness in the role of a wise craftsman of life, but he also tries to find sexual happiness in illegal ways -that is wrong ways- assuming the role of a belligerent, overbearing warrior.

In these two unions we can see a two-faced Eros (Imbasciati A., 1978). On the one hand in his creative, constructive and procreative aspects he is the expression of the reparative process (referring to the Kleinian psychoanalytic theories), taking form in strict relationship with the development of symbol-poiesis, intelligence and the ability to tolerate frustration and separation: those aspects which can be represented by ingenuity and wisdom. A mature sexuality is therefore justly coupled with these virtues, as Aphrodite is the legal wife of Ephestos. On the other hand, we know that eroticism is intrinsically aggressive, and often takes on a maniacal aspect: which serves to hide under the appearance of Pleasure, creativity and love, the underlying aggressivity, and masks with the semblance of life the strength of death; Eros conceals Thanatos inside himself. In our minds this union is personified in the mating; of Aphrodite and Ares. However, as stated in the myth, this union is illegal and is therefore revealed to the gods with the help of Helios. This symbolizes that the ingenuity and wisdom personified in Ephestos (we mean to say insight) can bring to light -Helios- that the union of sexuality with aggressiveness is not the correct union. This union can survive, as Aphrodite and Ares will continue their secret relationship, and in this way the human mind will continue to unite sexuality and destruction: however known to the gods! And the gods judge deciding that this union is not chaste.

The myths of Aphrodite stress the value of female physical beauty in the love relationship and therefore the

profound meaning of the female body in the human mind, postfreudian psychoanalysis pointed out how the image power of the female body extracts the origins of primary phantasms in the presence of the the maternal image. These are based on the consideration of the body as the holder of every desirable wealth. The human mind and the development of its ability to think find their foundations in the relationship with the mother's breast and body, sexuality -male and female- takes origins from the animation of these relationship with the mother (Imbasciati A., 1979). For infants of both sexes the mother's body has a function which promotes mental life: it is a gift offered and used, but not possessed. This condition is the matrix of dependence elaboration of in alternating PS<->D described by Bion. On one side maniacal defenses, negation of one's own needs, and the existance of the OTHER, can evolve. Schizoparanoic defenses of splitting and projection with persecution and fragmentation can also evolve. On the other hand dependence can be remedially worked out, promoting the establishment of the principle of reality and the arising of thought, in the sense of separateness and identity.

The destiny of mind-development towards life or death is dependent upon the elaboration of these primary processes. The origin of these primary processes can be found in the relationship with the female maternal body. For these reasons we retain that the female body can represent the place in which the adult can find the foundations of his mind. In the erotic encounter the male can relive the primary processes which bring his mind towards

symbol-poiesis identity, creativity, and bonds; in this way he can relive mortal defenses, even if in the past they destroyed him. But the woman also can find both kinds of inner personal experience of maternal origin in the sexual encounter with the man, however in a more complex way in that they are displaced, partially in the partner's body, and partially in her own body. For these reasons in man and in woman the sexual encounter can be a moment in which these inner personal experiences are relived and either promote or destroy mental development. In the dimension of the love relationship and in the explicitness of sexuality we can see the fundamental ways in which the mind functions (Imbasciati A., 1983a).

It is in this light that we intend to look at numerous sexual events of the Greek Myths, and in particular those of the Greek goddesses. Aphrodite offers a good example. For reasons of space we cannot describe here the interior vicissitudes which can be found in Aphrodite's love adventures: we will leave this specification for another time when we look at all the female figures in Greek Mythology. Instead, here we shall mention the representation of the union of the goddess -the gods in general- with mortals. Devereux reveals how the myths which mention the union of the gods (maternal imago) with mortals are of particular interest in that replacing the mother by a goddess, the phantasm of incest is separated from reality, therefore making it tolerable and permitting a more detailed elaboration (Devereux G., 1984). The mythical heroes fear love-making with the Goddesses for reasons of impending

disaster. Anchise ends his life struck by lightning, impotent, or lame; or according to another account, he becomes blind.

Aphrodite, according to Homer, seducts many Gods and mortals alike, and often her seduction is the origin of disaster. The most famous of all is the myth of Paride. In the myth, the disastrous consequences of the seduction acts seem to represent the interior proceedings which are present in the seduction itself. In fact, these seductions represent the lie of love, moreover Eros' hidden antithesis hides Tanathos' destructivity.

Aphrodite is also known for her anger toward anyone offending her or not honouring her adequately: the female divinities are provident, but be careful not to offend them or compete with them! Greek mythology is full of these examples. Aphrodite cruelly punished the Lemnian women for ignoring her worship by giving them a bad odour. This symbolic punishment in the form of a bad odour highlights the importance of the sense of smell in sexuality, but above all represents the great human need to "honour" sexuality. In this "honouring" we can see symbolized the consideration that man must attribute to the power of Eros' bonds to life and to the social institutionalization of this power. The latter will codify at the level of social custom that which each human being must inwardly elaborate so that sexuality can be a real experience of life and creativity.

2.2) - Hera: the Wife.

<<...wise Chronos fills me, more than any other, with honour because I was born before any other, because I am called your consort, and you are the god of all men...>> (Homerus, Iliad, IV, v.59; tr. Romagnoli, in "Mitologia greca", Stella L.A., 1956, p.197).

Hera represents the marriage institution intended as sexual regulation (in function with sexual order), protection of property and safeguarding of children. Hera is the guardian of the sacred, attributed with the legitimate union of husband and wife, and is the symbol of monogamy characterized by fidelity. She is in perpetual dialectic antagonism to Eros' exuberance which has no limit or rule. Hera's royalty is expressed by her protection of women in childbirth, oaths, obligations, and the laws of love, by means of the marriage institution. Her royalty is also symbolized in the absence of adultery. Hera represents the aspects attributed to the wife with her merits and defects, power and law, and the ability to be also a bit shrewish! She is famous for persecuting Zeus' lovers. As for mortal lovers of the goddess, also the condition of female mortal lovers of a god, causes more unhappiness than happiness (Devereux G., 1984). Hera's jealousy doesn't strike only Zeus' illegitimate coupling, but extends also to the offspring. This is significant in reference to Hera's anger when Zeus created Athena by himself, without the aid of a woman. This episode seems to represent that sexuality must be the expression of bonds, and therefore of identity and separation, with consequent renouncement of omnipotence. Contrarily sexuality continues to conserve in itself the illusion of omnipotence,

that is the illusion of being able to do everything by oneself: not only Zeus created Athena, but this same angry Hera created Hephaestus and Tifone by herself without the aid of a man.

In other terms the "wife" personifies the inner law governing Eros in the eternity of the marriage law: all this in the good or bad of anger! Woman, in the role of wife, serves as a mirror for man and woman alike, enabling them to regulate the greed of a sexuality without limits. The myth states that this is more valid for the male: Zeus must account to Hera for his adventures. However it is also valid for woman: Hera's anger falls on her offspring, or on the other hand, woman feels in her bosom the retortion for having broken the rules of love. In Kleinian prospective we know in fact that the sense of guilt for feminine sexuality contains in itself a greedy or envious attack on the mother,

This sense of guilt brings about a persecuting retortion in the form of typically feminine anxieties which concern the internal part of one's own body and one's own creativity.

2.3) - Demeter: the primeval mother.

<<...the germs did not come out from the clod of the ground any more; the Goddess kept them hidden... vainly the oxen carried the plough along the fields and vainly a lot of barley was sowed in the drills. The Goddess said that she would never come back to Olympus and she would not let the fruits ripen, before seeing her dear daughter again...>>

(Inno Omerico a Demetra, I, vv.305 tr.Romagnoli, in Stella L.A., 1956, p.337).

The most fundamental aspect of the female mother figure is incarnated in the divinity of Demeter.

She isn't the mother as much as she is the wife of the father and a real figure that protects the rights of the son (this is Hera), but the mother in her exclusive and total maternal function, as she appears to enfants, primitively, magically, misteriously, confusedly and frequently fearfully. This is the figure of the "ancient mother", as described by all the mythologies, of all cultures. Some authors suggest that in myths also Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena and Hera go back to primitive pre-ellenic divinities: therefore the histories seem to refer to that mother-line or gynocratic organization developed in the mediterranean area during the pre-ellenic era (Bachofen J.J., 1861; Magli I., 1978; Boulding E., 1976; Briffault R., 1927; Thomson G., 1949; Pestalozzi U., 1954; Marconi M., 1945; Thomas C.G., 1973).

In the mediterranean area and in some zones of Asia, with the introduction of agriculture, during the neolithic age, and also later during the Minoan civilization, before the accession of the Mycenean Kingdoms, the society would have been characterize by matriarchal power. Before the Neolithic era, man lead a nomadic life, continuously moving to hunt and the woman contributed by providing the food by picking berries and roots. With the first organization of life in villages, that is with the passing from nomadic life to sedentary life, while the man was continuing to dedicate

himself to hunting, the women dedicated themselves to agriculture, becoming able in agricultural techniques and the principal suppliers of food: they became more competent and obtained power.

For this reasons in the social and religious institutions, approximately between 12000 and 16000 A.C. a change would have taken place in a matriarcal sense.

But in the different areas of the Earth, humanity reached the Neolithic age at different times: in Europe, in particular, the proto-agricultural civilization is placed between V and IV millenium; it has left traces in the Greek regions and islands, in Sicily and along the Southern coasts of the Adriatic area.

Female power, was thus characterized, in accordance to this hypothesis, the social and religions institutions at different times and sometimes very far one from the other.

In the religious rites fertility rites appeared, that can be found themselves narrated in the greek myths and leave traces in the Eleusinian Mysteries: the women also became holders of mysterious powers. The female divinities had the upper hand with the Mother Goddess, that in the mediterranean religion becomes the superior divine figure. The myths of Demeter, tied to agricultural rites than rities of other olimpic divinities, recall these ancient events.

The superiority of one female figure in religion however don't necessarily involve the existence of an actual female power, although elements have been found which show with certainty a considerable liberty and high social

position of women during the Minoan age (Cantarella E., 1984).

The existence of matriarchy in such a remote antiquity cannot be demonstrated, but it cannot even be excluded with certainty. According to Devereux, the real difficulty in this controversial problem isn't the historical reality of existence of primitive matriarchy. The real problem is the origin of this latent element in many myths: the existence of the primitive power of the Goddesses might be the representation of that matriarcal organization to which every human being is subject in the first period of his life. This universal stage of the ontogenesis would influence the creation of these myths (Devereux D., 1984). So once again ~~the Myth reveals not so much the real history, as the~~ internal history of every human mind. Demeter moves away from characters of all Olympic divinities: her history says that she wandered about the Earth and also in the after-life. The Demeter cult joins her to Mother-Earth (that ought to be represented instead by Gea, that is by a more primitive maternal-divinity).

If we consider analogy with infantile development, in this representation we can read a primitive splitting of maternal image that originates a rich and muddled phantom.

In the greek language, the name of Demeter means "Mother-Earth". The second part of this name means Mother, the first part means means cereal or earth, that is the zone of the surface of the Earth that is cultivated (Monagham P., 1981): these are the attributes that the greek man considered female: Hesiod considers the woman as earth and

water, in Aristotle she is material where life is established.

So Demeter is unformed matter, earth and water, matrix of life; she is also food. In this superimposition attribution we could perceive the superimposed phantom of a mother-uterus-placenta and of a mother-food, that are typical of a new-born child.

But Demeter is also the phantasm of the identifying relationship and at the same time being a separate individual independent of the mother with the daughter as effectively it is lived by male child and particularly by the female child.

Demeter's myth is right on the relationship with Persephone, her daughter. Persephone is abducted by Ade and is abducted from her mother. Demeter will search for the daughter anxiously; at the end will find her again and will establish a compromise solution: Persephone will spend six months of the year in the Underworld with Ade and the other six months out during the alternate seasons of Winter and Spring-Summer. The cult joins Demeter both to the most primitive goddess and to the daughter. Both the divinities are jointed to the fruitful seasons and expectating seasons.

In this representation we can pick up many inner superimposed and condensed events. First Persephone abducted by Ade represents the girl that at puberty is taked by the dark power, underground of ethero-sexual love and therefore she must detach herself from her mother. This separation seems to mark a withering of her richness and mental

fruitfulness: while Demeter is again searching for Persephone the fields wither and they don't produce any more fruit.

The finding of the daughter seems to symbolize as the girl, after losing her first losing that detaches her from her mother, in the end she can find her mother again. The final compromise of the myth seems to represent that the girl, in the end, can reconcile her heterogamic-love with the motherly link. The reconciliation is marked by fertility: the woman's motherly and creative-love, is marked by preserving a link with the mother, in the girl's femininity identity that is living as separate from the mother's identity but at the same time the same as the mother's identity. So at the same time the Greek cult distinguishes and unites the mother and the daughter: so a woman lives her ability to procreate spiritually and carnally.

Such are the phantasms that animate anew in the female mind during pregnancy. Such was those of the child-girl's mind and young-girl's mind: in the most crucial moments of the elaborations of these experiences she must confront to feel herself confused and at the same time to feel herself separated from her mother. In the Greek myths this is symbolized by some confusion between Demeter and Persephone and at the same time it is symbolized in their configuration as separated characters. So the girl must identify herself and in the meantime distinguishes herself from the mother. She finds herself living the experiences of her mother showing the maturity of a woman: this is represented by the reconciliation that Demeter establishes with Ade and

Persephone. The ripeness maturity of the woman is marked by establishing the cycle of the seasons: it represents as fertility side by side with the expectation of apparently dead season, that is for the girl the acceptance of the years when she can't generate as her mother, but she must wait trustfully for own springtime.

But the alternate cycle represents also the passing of time and the "passing of the hand over" from the mother to the daughter about her female motherly function. Such an aspect is marked when Demeter worried, after have refinded her daughter, asks her: " Did you taste any food in the Underworld?". To taste a fruit -pomegranate- together means to share the sexual pleasure with a man: the girl -Persephone- become a woman and the mother must accept this event because it is inevitable in a normal psycho-sexual development and for this matter she hasn't lost her daughter. But the myth also says that Demeter will be able to do this only if she will relive the the inner experienced lived that she had with her helping mother Rhea. This event symbolizes an inner phantasmatic life that the woman must elaborate when, owing to old age, she must renounce her female function in favour of her daughter, who has now become a woman. These feelings are those that all mothers pass through experience in their bodies during the menopause age. For a positive elaboration of this crucial moment of her life, the woman needs her inner image of a helpful mother: a mother who has "passed the hand over" of the life to her and has taught her how to hand this over to her daughters.

So the myth of Demeter that is olímpic and underground goddess symbolize the occult events of the relationship with the mother and particularly simbolizes occult events of the inner femininity as acquisition of maternal power: these are experiences of the human mind and particularly of the female mind.

2.4) - Athena: A Father's dream.

<<... (Zeus) generated from his head the indomitable, potent Athena...>> (Esiodo, Teogonia, v. 924, in Stella L.A., 1956, p. 132)

<<... from her father's head she powerfully and shining jumped out...>> (Apollonio, Rodio, Argonautiche, IV, v. 1310).

The personification of Athena is complex: she is created by Zeus, born from the head of her father, as the birth of a thought, to become the symbol of wisdom and victory. She is a victory obtained with the power of intellect, not with strength, in absolute and immobile solemnity. In fact, Athena is a warrior; but she is never represented in a fighting situation, and never seems to need arms even though she wears them: her magestic presence or the piercing glance of her clear eyes is sufficient to conquer her enemy and make peace.

The figure of Athena seems to incarnate an omnipotent recurring fantasy in the male mind: that of taking; possession of the female prerogative of procreation and independently creating a more superior offspring than woman is normally able to create. In fact, Zeus cannot bear the anxiety of his wife, Metis, giving birth to a child. He

fears that this child, fruit of a mysterious power over which he has no control (Metis is wisdom personified) will dethrown him. Zeus, therefore swallows the pregnant Metis, and then gives birth by himself to wisdom in the form of an ever-faithful daughter, exclusively possessed by him so she can never be taken from him. She is daughter, and not son, signifying simultaneously the possession of a feminity, and of his own masculine supremacy over his female child. Moreover she is a daughter with great androgynous power, which signifies again the hermaphroditic omnipotence. Athena is warrior as a man and simultaneously protectress of the feminine activities: spinning, weaving, embriodering, and olive-picking. She presides over the arts and literature, and personifies philosophy. Athena is born for the negation of dependence on the opposite sex. She continues this personification: in fact has no need of man. Her virginity is not the result of renouncement nor of proud vindication (see Artemide), nor lack of desirability: Athena's beauty is dazzling, even blinding whoever dares to admire her (Tiresia): she simply has no need of man. She is even able to procreate by throwing down to the ground a piece of her dress touched by the seed of Hephaestus.

Athena is therefore the negation of human dependence on passion and she is the affirmation of the dream of fartherly omnipotence.

In some aspects the myth of Athena is analogous to Walkira's North-European mytology. The "daughter of desire" has the task of bringing to completion the deeds which her father, Wotan, desires, but which "the law" prohibits him

from doing. In this way Athena accomplishes the task of realizing Zeus' desires independently, whether or not he takes the trouble to realize them, equally, she realizes these desires in absolute fidelity. Thus, Athena protects the Hero! Even if she is an untouchable virgin, Athena is never hostile to the opposite sex, on the contrary, she protects man in his deeds. With this characteristic the figure of Athena embodies the masculine dream of a daughter who can simultaneously be protectress, that is mother, to the man who created her. Therefore this man, being her father, finds himself freed from the dependence on a mother. However, the myth of Athena can also represent a typically feminine fantasy. The girl-child can envy, hate, and attack the mother who created her not only according to the envious dynamics which the infant of either sex addresses to the mother's breast, but more specifically for the envy which the girl-child lives confronting the mother's female capacity with her own procreative incapacity. For this envy the girl-child can add the negation of her vagina, and all that is particularly female in nature, preferring to construct for herself the fantasy to have been created by only a father. This girl-child identifying herself with such a father feels herself to be a faithful continuer of the father's deeds. The price of this identification with the father will be the renouncement of man as a love-object: Athena is indifferent towards man (male).

The myth of Athena can be interpreted as the collective construction of an image which represents simultaneously masculine and feminine fantasies. This myth therefore tells

us about vicissitudes of the human mind of both sexes. In both sexes this vicissitudes have the same starting point: envy of maternal procreation: although consecutively these vicissitudes take a different phantasmatic course.

In this omnipotent dream there is another interesting aspect of the myth worthy of noting. Athena carries on her shield the head of Medusa, killed by Perseus. Medusa has the ability to petrify with her glance. Some authors (Zucchini G., 1981) have interpreted this representation referring to the Bionian theory of the origin of thought: the capacity to think, the function K of Bion, is personified by Athena, and is born out of the possibility of defeating the antithought, the function -K, which is personified in the glance of Medusa. In this perspective the myth of Athena brings us far back in the development of the human mind, to the first protomental origins in the stage of new born life (Imbasciati A., Calorio D., 1981). Therefore the myth proposes a figurative abstraction of a remote human experience.

2.5) - Artemis: the Adolescent.

<<...not even Aphrodite is able to entice the goddess of the golden arrows, to love Artemide loves her bow and arrow, hunting ferocious beasts in the mountains, she loves the lyre, dances, cries which reach to the heavens, she loves the cities of good people, and thick forests...>> (Inno Omerico ad Afrodite I, vv.15-19, tr.Romagnoli, Stella A.L., 1956, p.178).

This goddess represents the refusal of love, of maternity, of sexuality, disguised as the virginal idol of chastity and disguised as fantasy in order to gain the upper hand and control the maternal procreative capacity. Artemide the virgin huntress, is head of a feminine society, all virgins, united by the bonds of solidarity of their condition (virginity) with death as the punishment for whoever violates or abandons this society. She seems to represent the adolescent, with her exasperated problems in connection with parents, lost in a group identity which resembles Meltzer's description of a band of delinquents (Meltzer D., Harris M., 1986).

The myth tells us that Artemide, Apollo's twin, when she was first born helped her mother, Leto, to give birth to her brother. From this time Apollo remains tied to his sister in a perennial alliance which seems to function as reciprocal control of sexuality. Apollo defends his sister from any masculine aggression and Artemide keeps watch over her brother to make sure he has no adventures, taking vengeance on his eventual lovers. The function of helping her mother to give birth which is a maniacal fantasy of infant revenge, becomes a main function of Artemide in relation to all women in child-birth. Artemide can induce the pain of child-bearing, and can also take away the life of those giving birth if she is offended by them; she has the ability to kill children (see Niobe's children) as deer on the mountain, and he is said to have stricken with her arrow whoever dies a sudden death.

Artemide's association with her brother seems to be a transformation in a reactive sense, of an incestual bond. Her participation in maternity is ambiguous: the omnipotent aspect is quite evident (Artemide enables her mother to give birth), sadism and vengeance are slightly veiled from the maternal procreative capacity. These sadistic characteristics justify virginity persecuted to the bitter end. Virginity can, in fact, be interpreted as horror for sexual relations. This horror comes from the persecuting anxieties which are brought about by intense sadistic fantasies directed against both parents. The arrows with which Artemide is armed can represent an internal image of a persecuting phallus. The penis, symbolizing parental union, is hated and attacked in childhood fantasy. This penis becomes transformed projectively into a deadly weapon feared and therefore used in a counter-attack on the exterior. In childhood adolescence this is the dynamic which gives form to sadism. Sadism furthermore, as represented in Artemide, is later on transformed assuming the "legal" aspects of a punishment for whoever has broken the rules of sexual behaviour.

This reactionary behaviour directed against sexuality betrays an aggressive impulse: sexuality itself is full of this aggressive impulse, according to a situation which is fairly typical in female adolescence. Sexual fantasies become a vehicle and concealer of more ancient aggressive and infantile fantasies. This sexuality is obviously feared and the sexual approach of the male is felt inevitably as an attack: this attack gives origin to a counter-attack.

Whoever approaches Artemide with sexual intentions becomes regularly and cruelly killed.

Fear of sexuality is hidden by the institutionalization of the values and rules of behavior. In this way virginity is idealized and counter-persecuting aggression is used for protection of sexuality itself and the fruits of sexuality. However here, above all, original phantasms are revealed: Artemide's slaughter of the children is well known. Often such us, interior dynamic, which is the expression of primitive infantile fantasies, is reactified in female adolescence. Consequently the sense of one's own womanly identity becomes compromised. The female adolescent then has need to sustain her own identity within the identity of a group of female adolescents. The companions with whom Artemide lives represent in a kind of feminist association the group support of the adolescent Ego.

As known in ancient Sparta, sexuality was institutionally full of aggressive phantasms and for this reason rigidly controlled. The adolescent girl was protected by Artemide. She came out from under this protection with initiation rites after puberty. These initiation rituals gave her the ability to marry. In these rites the girls sacrificed to the goddess their babyhood toys (Cantarella E., 1981). In this rite we can see the necessity to insure at a social level the spirit of the girl: (that) her sadistic fantasies are only infantile games, and can therefore be abandoned: in this way she is no longer afraid of the sexual encounter.

In all other aspects (the myth is much more detailed than we are able to go into at this time) Artemide can be interpreted as the figure which represents the inner personal experience of the adolescent girl.

2.6) - Hestia: the keeper of the home.

«...and she sits in the middle of the home to receive the
omenta. In all the Numens' temples she obtains honours
and more than other Numen the mortals evoche her!...»
(Homerus, Iliade, IX 336-340, in Pomeroy S.B., 1978, p.8).

Hestia, keeper of the domestic hearth, is the assexual woman and therefore not mother, but at the same time carries out all the maternal functions of protection and nutrition. She seems to embody the stability of the good primary objects.

Such a representation seems to derive from the splitting of the female figure: the primary safety of the good object is obtained hv splitting from the mother-figure the sexual and creative attributes. These attributes with their presence evoke envy, guilt, and persecution in the soul of the infant and in the unconscious of every man.

Hestia's virginity is not like the untamed and belligerent virginity of Artemide. The myth transmits the idea that it is natural for a similar female figure, such as Hestia, to be virgin. In this representation there is a regression to the primary breast.

With this primary breast absolutely no relationships conceivable, especially a sexual relationship. This myth

represents the regression to a differential entity existing only in its function of maintaining the warmth of life. Hestia is the continual, indispensable and even neglected presence. In fact, glorious deeds of this goddess are never told. The primary maternal object is also neglected: only if it is missed is it noticed. Death is the punishment for extinguishing Hestia's fire: Hestia's presence is eternal, closed within the household walls. Hestia is described as immobile on mount Olympus in her representation of an abstract principle (Grimal P., 1955) more than the personification of a goddess, which signifies again the absence of personalizing the primary maternal Object.

3) - The female enigma.

The six Olympic divinities therefore seem to embody in different ways six different aspects which the human mind, masculine and feminine, can imagine the woman: they are six different images of only one being; they are six women in the place of one. Perhaps we can think that this female image-scanning as the function of making the phantasms which are awakened in the consideration of the female figure less dangerous: this is the obscure enigma of our origins; not only biological but also of our own proto-mental existence. On the other hand the function of the myth is to make acceptably comprehensible to the conscience the undefined forms (we mean to say shapelessness) of the primary phantasms: the psychic mechanism of splitting, described by Melanie Klein, is a part of the physiology of the mind. (Klein M., 1932).

Woman is an enigma (many have said before and after Freud) and the Sphinx is female. Psychoanalysis deciphers these phantasms and makes rationally comprehensible that which is irrational. The myth is a kind of natural and ancient psychoanalysis, with the catharsis which the myth exercises in its collective function.

Greek Theatre teaches us this!

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