

Looking Back

When people say that I am wise, or am a sage, I cannot accept it. Once there was a man who drew a hatful of water from a stream. What does that amount to? I am not this stream. I am at the stream, but I do nothing. Others are at the same stream, but most find that they have to do something. I do nothing. I never presume that I am the one who has to see to it that cherries grown upon the branches. I stand there, in wonderment, at what nature can do.

There is a fine old story about a Rabbi, to whom a student came and asked, "Teacher, in earlier days there were men who saw the face of God. Why are there no such men now?" The rabbi answered, "Because nowadays no one can bend down low enough." One must stoop a little to draw water from the stream.

The difference between myself and most others is that for me the "dividing walls" are transparent. That is my peculiarity. For others they are often so opaque that they see nothing behind them and are therefore of the opinion that there is nothing there. To some extent I can see the processes going on in the background, and from this I have my inner certainty. He who does not see these processes does not have this certainty and cannot draw conclusions — or cannot trust his own conclusions. What it was that first enabled me to perceive this stream of life I do not know. Probably it was the unconscious itself. Perhaps it was the early dreams. They have determined my path from the beginning.

This knowledge of the processes in the background prefigured my relation to the world from an early age. Essentially, this was already true in my childhood as it is today. As a child I felt lonely, and I am so still today, because I know things and must hint at things that other people apparently do not know and for the most part do not want to know. Loneliness does not come from having no one around oneself, but from being unable to communicate the things that are important to oneself, or from holding views that others find incredible. My loneliness began with the experience of my early dreams, and reached its climax during the period when I was working on the unconscious. When a man knows more than others, he becomes lonely. But loneliness is not necessarily inimical to companionship, for no one is more sensitive to companionship than the lonely person, and companionship only thrives when each person remembers his individuality and does not identify with others.

It is important to have a secret, and an intimation of things unknown. This fills life with something impersonal, a numinosum. He who has not experienced this has missed out on something important. A man must feel that he is living in a world that in a sense is full of secrets, that there are things in the world that happen, and which can be experienced, that remain inexplicable, that there is more to life than what we expect. The unexpected and the incredible belong in this world. Only then is life whole. For me the world has from the beginning been infinite and incomprehensible.

I have had a lot of trouble coping with my ideas. There was a daimon in me, and in the final analysis its presence has proved decisive. It was always ahead of me, drawing me on, and if I was

thoughtless and reckless it was because I was in the grip of the daimon. I could never stop once I arrived at something. I had to hurry on, to catch up with my vision. Since my contemporaries, understandably, could not perceive my vision, they saw only a fool rushing ahead.

I have offended many people, for when I saw that they didn't understand me, that was the end of my connection with them. I had to move on. I had no patience with people — apart from my patients. Always I had to follow an inner law that was imposed on me and left me no freedom of choice. Mind you I didn't always follow it. How can we live without inconsistency?

For many people I was directly related to them only in so far as they were in contact with my inner world; but then it might happen that suddenly I no longer existed for them, as there was nothing more that bound me to them. With considerable difficulty I had to learn that people continued to exist even when they no longer had anything to say to me. Many awakened in me a feeling of vivid humanness, but only when they appeared within the magic circle of psychology; in the next moment, when the spotlight shone its beam elsewhere, there was nothing to be seen. I could become intensely interested in many people, but as soon as I saw through them the magic was gone. So I made many enemies. But a creative person is not free but is enthralled by his daimon and driven by it.

Humiliatingly, a power wrests the heart from us
For each heavenly being demands sacrifice
But if any is withheld
Never has this led to good. (Hölderlin)

I feel a great sadness in this lack of freedom. Often it has seemed to me that I am on a battlefield. Now you have fallen, my good comrade, but I must go on! I cannot, I simply cannot stay! “For humiliatigly, a power consumes our heart.” I care for you, indeed I love you, but I cannot stay! This is a heart-rending moment. I am myself the sacrifice — *I cannot* stay. But the daimon manages things so that one comes through, and blessed inconsistency sees to it that, in flagrant opposition to my “disloyalty,” I can maintain my loyalty in unexpected measure.

Perhaps I might say: I need people more than others do, and at the same time much less. When the daimon is at work, one is always too close and too far. Only when it is silent can one preserve moderation.

The daimon and the creative have ruthlessly had their way with me. The ordinary course that I had planned usually came to naught, though not always nor completely. But I also feel that I am conservative to the bone. I fill my pipe from the same tobacco jar that my grandfather used, and still keep his alpenstock, crowned with a little gemshorn, that he brought back from Pontresina, where he had been one of the first guests at the *Kurort*.

I am satisfied with how my life has evolved. It has been rich and has brought me a great deal. How could I ever have expected so much? So many unexpected things have happened to me. Much might have been different had I myself been different. But it was as it had to be; for everything came about because I was who I was. Much happened because I planned it, but this did not always work to my advantage. But most of the time things developed naturally and by

destiny. I regret the many mistakes that resulted from my obstinacy, but had I not been obstinate I could not have reached my goal. So I am disappointed and not disappointed. I am disappointed with people and disappointed with myself. I have learned wonderful things from others and have accomplished more than I expected from myself. I cannot come to any final judgment because the phenomenon of life and the phenomenon of man are too vast. The older I become, the less I understand or perceive or know about myself.

I am astonished, disappointed, pleased with myself. I am troubled, depressed, enthusiastic. I am all this and cannot add it all up. I am incapable of determining value or lack of value with any definitiveness; I do not have a final judgment about myself and my life. There is nothing I am certain of. There is nothing I am firmly convinced of, really not about anything. I only know that I was born and exist, and it seems to me as though I have been carried along. I exist on the foundation of something I have no knowledge of. In spite of all the uncertainty I feel a solidarity with all that exists and a continuity in my way of being.

The world in which we are born is brutish and cruel and at the same time of divine beauty. Which of these outweighs the other, meaninglessness or meaning, is a matter of temperament. If meaninglessness were predominant, the meaningfulness of life would vanish more and more with each step in our development. But that is not the case — or so it seems to me. Probably, as with all metaphysical questions, both are true: life is, or has, meaning and meaninglessness. I hold out the anxious hope that meaning will predominate and win the battle.

When Lao Tse says, “All are clear, I alone am clouded,” he is articulating what I feel at my advanced age. Lao Tse is an example of a man of superior insight who has seen and experienced value and valuelessness, and who at the end of his life prefers to withdraw into himself, into the eternal unknowable Meaning. The archetype of the old man who has seen enough is eternally true. At every level of intelligence this type appears, and is always of the same character, whether it be a peasant or a great philosopher like Lao Tse. Such is old age and its limitation. And yet there is so much that fills me: plants, animals, clouds, day and night, and the eternal in man. The more uncertain I become about myself, the more there grows in me a feeling of kinship with all things. In fact, it seems to me as though that alienation that for so long has disconnected me from the world has now been transferred into my own inner world, and has revealed to me an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself.