

## **Beauty as a synchronous Object: between “Superior Object” (mind) and “Lower Object” (body). Primary aesthetics and sociability**

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### **Abstract**

We propose to indicate how the experience of Beauty in multiple circumstances is to be linked to the experience of primary aesthetics and its unconscious values of duration, absoluteness, eternity, infinite irreplaceability.

**Keywords:** beauty, body, primary aesthetics, psychosome, affect

In the time of so many direct and indirect experiences, I have asked myself many questions about the conception of beauty: if it has an aesthetic or internal value and what is the link between the two; whether it is subjective or objective; if it is more related to somatic (hormonal; health of internal organs, and skin) or psychic factors. I wondered if the value of beauty is born in what myth and science have defined as the "narcissism" of self-compensation; or in the relationship with the other. And what a difference of factors there is between beauty that arouses excitement, overwhelm, and that which emanates and requires contemplation. Therefore also what beauty creates attraction, aspiration, identifying solidarity and even refreshment and care; and which instead arouses envy and competition, hostility (or punishment): when beauty produces isolation and possession; or when it is associated with the sharing and enhancement of the group, which identifies itself, includes it and elects it as its symbol. Surely the Myth is a basis for answering these questions, primarily the Greco-Roman one.

The goddess of beauty and love, Aphrodite, born from the foam of the sea (ἀφρός) in which Cronus has dispersed the genitals of his father Uranus god of the sky to avenge his mother Gaea (1), is from her conception connected with ineffability divine, the vicissitudes of mating and generation and is at the origin of the New World after the sunset of the Old. It is part of the elements, of matter, of the cosmos, as well as of the human body and of the events that animate it. Like the other gods of Olympus she is connected on the one hand to belonging to the divine and inaccessible; on the other, to human frailty and anthropomorphic proximity. The goddess has complex origins according to the times and places of her cult and her representation: the literary, mythological and historical iconic testimonies (sculpture, painting and iconography of ceramics) describe Aphrodite (gr. Ἀφροδίτη) as the "Greek divinity of love, also understood as the attraction of the various parts of the Universe to each other; it symbolizes the natural instinct of fertilization and generation and in this respect she is similar to the Babylonian Istar and the Phoenician Astarte. The Greeks connected the name of A. with the sea foam (□□□□□), from which she would have originated, but it is actually of obscure origin." (Treccani Encyclopedia of Ancient Art). Her

"most widespread aspect is that of the goddess of love, fertility, flourishing love, so gardens, spring, myrtle and roses are sacred to her" [...] "symbol of instinct and strength vital of fertilization and generation ... she is called Antheia (Ἄνθεια) and linked to the myth of Adonis, symbol of the flowering and withering of vegetation, life and death. " Due to the loss of Adonis, the goddess crosses the infernal threshold in search of her beloved and is thus assimilated to Persephone, goddess of the cycle of seasons and death.

In the association of beauty with love, common to various cults and myths, the goddess is humanized and full of charis, surrounded by her handmaids, the Graces (Χάριτες) and the Hours (ῥῶραι). Later Hellenistic art stigmatized her image as a subject of decorative love and beauty. But Aphrodite is also associated with universal and heavenly love: the beauty of love is combined with the attraction and cohesion of the parts of the universe. Local variations enhance the various factors of her vital force: the harmonious order of the cosmos, the fertility of the Earth and the sea, sexuality and generation; pure and sensual love. Aphrodite is golden (χρυσῆ) and celestial, Urania (οὐρανία) a symbol of pure and ideal love; Areia (Ἄρειά), warrior with Ares, and mother of Phobos, Deimos and Harmonia. She's Ciprea; Ericina; Citerea, from the names of the cities that honor her cult (island of Cyprus; Erice; island of Kythera). But also Aphrodite born from the sea: Pontia (Ποντία), Pelagia (Πελαγία), protector of the sea and sailors.

In the evolution of sculpture, the goddess has multiple forms: modest, or naked and tending towards sensual and languid love, or cloaked and married. In the mature age of Phidias's art, Aphrodite's mature beauty is represented in her body lying in the womb of her mother Dio, among other Olympic divinities (Parthenon, East Pediment, British Museum). In all traditions she is fruitful, she protects the creation of the land of the sea and of life. In vascular iconography she holds a branch, a crown, a scepter, a flower in her hand; or wear the cloak of the bride; or she competes with the other goddesses, or together with them fight against the Giants. She is alone, or is she a lover; bride (2); or goddess in the Olympic forum; or veiled for lost love. The goddess is full of love and capable of instilling love and desire in anyone who comes into contact with her. But she can also embody the ideals of stability and is at the origin of the founding of cities and the deeds in wars (the latter cult will be common in Latin assimilation with Venus). Aphrodite, united with Eros, protects virginal purity, marriage, wives, women who fight against injustices (Phaedra; Medea) and even the hetaras, prostitutes, offer her vows. She is the wife of Hephaestus, Vulcan, the fire of work and refinement; but she can betray him with Ares and with Hermes, with whom she generates the beautiful Hermaphrodite, Ἑρμαφρόδιτος, who makes the nymph Salmace fall in love, who obtains from the gods to blend in with the body of the beloved. And she can have other loves, even unhappy ones, such as Adonis, hit to death by Ares.

In the Homeric narration Aphrodite gives in exchange to Paris who has chosen her for her beauty between the two rival goddesses Hera and Atena, that Elena, the most beautiful woman in the world, falls in love with him. Her proximity to human love makes her take sides in war and represent its interests with Zeus. The goddess is a witness and messenger of disputes between gods and men; it is connected to human anxieties, it travels them to the world divine purifying them, or resolving them, or she can punish them from the Olympus of which she belongs (in the myth of Cupid and Psyche the jealous goddess sent her son Eros/Cupid to strike Psyche with an arrow of love making her fall in love with the man more ugly in the world; but for a mistake the arrow turns against Eros/ Cupid himself and the union of the two will even be legitimized by Zeus/Jupiter). Often her presence is at the basis of unspeakable conflicts, such as the ten-year siege of Troy, which summons the entire set of Olympus and places it at war alongside one or the other belligerent, or protected hero, or abandoned. Or Aphrodite can be a tender mother worried about her son Cupid. A recent analysis of the myth (5) can be reported:

*Let us recall the myth, first reported by Themistius: Aphrodite was desolate seeing that her son Eros was not growing up. He remained that profile of desire that he had to represent, a lovable cherub with the plump forms of an eternal child. She was told that the only way to make Eros grow was to associate with him a brother, partner but also a rival, sufficiently differentiated to provoke a continuous dynamic of desire. Thus appeared Anteros. Since then, love was defined by an uninterrupted struggle between a narcissistic love, which aims at the reunion of previously separated beings - we remember the allegory of Aristophanes in Il Banchetto, The Banqueters - and a mutual love but which recalls the insurmountable otherness of two beings who love each other. Where Eros is the servant of fusion, the only solution considered to make the effect of lack effectively disappear, Anteros works to summon discord in order to prevent the confusion of beings from occurring, thus ensuring the call for a healthy differentiation of beings despite the love. The dialectic finally found would give rise to a continuous awakening of the libidinal dynamic, without which the action of Eros would risk strongly resembling that of Thanatos ... Therefore the work of Eros, to complete the dynamic of desire, would require action discordant and untying of an intervening Anteros. The dynamics of psychic life therefore benefits from this subtle alliance. Excess bonding like that of untying would lead to the same deadly consequences. And the premature disappearances of some great creators throughout the cultural history of humanity testify to this with sufficient evidence ...(3)*

### **From Aphrodite, Venus**

In Latin culture Aphrodite only partially overlaps Venus. The term *venus*, originally neutral, is related to *venia* which means "favor", "grace", then "forgiveness"; and with *venenum*, magical charm, and has a propitiatory character. His cult is assimilated with local cultures (see the Etruscan *Turan*) and later with the divinization of the imperial

family and of the same origins of Rome, derived from the birth of Aeneas, son of the coupling of Anchises with Venus.

Roman culture in some ways less multifaceted than Greek and more pragmatic, has transformed over time the concept of the goddess of beauty and love. The great poet Lucretius who captures her driving essence of life dedicated his Proemio to her to *De rerum natura*, invoking her as the origin of the living universe. Beauty, life, fertility, movement, harmony, desire, birth, order: the whole living world from the celestial vault to the earth to the waters of the sea originates and ends in the goddess of beauty who moves love. Venus is instinct, and Eros, fecundity and sonship of life, star, planet "that always seems burning with the fire of love" (Pg. XXVII 95), the brightest object in the sky after the sun, surrounded by cloudiness. The ritualistic and mysterious element of the cult of Aphrodite, which the English scholar Dodds has identified (3) as a profound matrix of the "irrational" religiosity that underlies the coherence of the rational apparatus of Greek culture, is attenuated in the later periods of Roman times in favor of the transformation into a more stable and formalized symbol, connected with conjugal love and the organizing values of social culture.

### **Sunset of the anthropomorphic Pantheon**

The Pantheon sets; divine Beauty encounters many vicissitudes and will seek, in the religious and less religious eras of subsequent cultures, to revive in different ways the ancient heritage of its sacred origins.

The passage from the pagan and anthropomorphic social culture to a culture based on monotheistic religiosity transforms the sacred myth of Beauty. Then the advent of the Christian era will give moral and religious meanings to beauty and even associate it with the original guilt of seduction and the sin of love aimed at pleasure instead of procreation. Only later with the classical Renaissance; then with the elegant rays of the refined eighteenth-century European Enlightenment; and in the nineteenth century with the flourishing positivist research that will reconstruct the disciplinary fields of the human and social sciences, beauty and grace will regain a place of honor. Together with the new secular values, historical ones reappear; and together, those of popular traditions. In the fairy tale story, in legend and in popular literature, which inherited the values of the religious tradition in new (or older) ways, the idea of beauty coincides with virtue and ugliness with wickedness. This component testifies to the medieval didactic heritage present in the fairy tale, but at the same time this is connected to the imaginative sources of a literature derived from the types of ancient fairy tales and pagan theater, before the religious and moral metaphor of medieval origin. The ancient conception of beauty, which contained dualism and multiplicity and founded them in divinity, gave way, at the end of paganism, to its dualistic representation of vital ideal and demonic power, it is true. But in the wake of that religious dualism, earlier more unitary and anthropomorphic original conceptions have continued to live on through popular culture.



is located at the point of contact between external and endogenous stimuli. The skin, and its health and beauty, transmits complex information to both.

### **Beauty and dream**

There are various authors who have paid attention to the beauty and centrality of the body, some in more "carnal" ways, treating, if we can say so, the carnality of the psyche and the psychism of the body, as the value of the unity of the subject; or rather the sensory content of the dream narrative (Ferro, 2014), which has had an honorable tradition of study in Italy (see the extensive recapitulation of 2003 by F. Riolo, which explores the complex sides of the dream and its analytical narration; the numerous researches on the physiology of sleep and dreams by M.Mancia; the study of the function of the dream within the group in the tradition of Bionian studies (see C.Neri, A.Correale, P.Fadda, *Lecture Bioniane*; Marinelli, 2000; Neri, 1995-2017); the description of the dream as "crossroads between emotional and sensory information and conscious thought" (Moccia, 2009); and finally Solms' studies on the neurological organization of the dream process).

### **Somatopsychic beauty**

The confusion between the two terms somatic and psychic was treated at bottom, albeit in scattered ways and not systematically, as an inherent interchangeability in the original indistinction. For example, Bion's *protomental system*, which underlies the life of groups, assigns to the events deriving from its influence an intermediate nature between psychic and somatic, perhaps similar to that with which the Freudian drive is endowed, which however alternates, being able to present themselves within the apparatus in one or the other form indiscriminately (as psychosis or somatosis). A second example in a similar field is given by the researches of Carla De Toffoli (see in *Transiti*, 2014). The author insisted from various angles on the nature of somatic memory and its capacity to produce memories, traces and implicit procedures of sensory experience: somatic memory contains inscribed events and is also productive of active signals, representations, information and actions. De Toffoli returned to the theme several times, emphasizing in particular the non-hierarchy of the mind and body bond, and making use of various examples, including the metaphor of the use of language, that is traced back to the original expressions of sounds and words that contained the immanent unity of meaning and communication, before the temporal distinction assigned them a fracturing distinction between past and present, before and after, and between more important and less (2000). We could venture that in this conception for which bodily intimacy and the *psychosome* contain a proper processing system (of impressions, emotions and sensory memories) that is not hierarchical compared to the cortical one, it is thought by the author as a set of evolutionary functions and independent production processes? The question of the nature of emotional and sensory transformations had been studied by G.C. Soavi (1989); and will be further explored by the author in research extending also to the

field of *procedural memory* and the exploration of other aspects of the mind-body relationship; and mind-brain (Neri, 1995).

From a particular partially similar perspective, which is not easy to isolate from the complexity of the theoretical building, we can speak of the beauty of the body treated by Bion in the *Memoirs of War* (1997) and in the *Autobiography* (2005). There he seems to extract memory, teaching and life from a catastrophic somatic experience that occurred in war (the wound, agony and death of Bion's very young soldier colleague, who asked him to listen to his extreme memory of his mother, while his lungs separated by the explosion took his breath and life away). Bion will keep the memory of that perturbing and traumatic memory throughout his psychoanalytic work and his life. He will return to retell that event over time, each time changing it and modifying its representation: as if intending in doing so to convey the feeling of the volatility of physical and psychic matter, its permanence, its inexorable and physiological mutation and the vital continuity, inscribed in the ability of the group to sustain and pass on its memory.

### ***Caducity***

"No! It is impossible that all these wonders of nature and art, that the delights of our sensitivity and the outside world should truly end in nothing. To believe it would be too foolish and nefarious. In one way or another they must be able to persist, evading any destructive force" (Translated by A.) Freud writes in *Caducity*. Some authors wanted to link his considerations on ephemeral life and on the "need for eternity" to "snatch an exception for what is beautiful and perfect", to his pessimism of those years, due to the destructive experience of the beginning of the War World, and the risks of precariousness of the psychoanalytic movement, in which Jung, the favorite disciple, marked the first break in those same years.

Freud's writing is always clear and elegant; we know how he tended to exclude the contribution of affection and considered its disturbing or perturbing influence on the transference and countertransference of the care relationship; on the experiences of abduction (see the memory of the "memory disorder on the Acropolis - "So does all this really exist? [...] Too good to be true [...] a sense of guilt or inferiority that can be translated: "I am not worthy of such happiness, I do not deserve it"; Freud, 1936); and on the experiences of perturbation of rationality (see in particular the value assigned by Freud to listening to music (in Cain, 1982, "Freud, *absolument pas musicien*"). Affect is never directly treated by Freud, or is intended as a disturbing factor; but its traces abound and on all occasions they point to its complexity resonating copiously, through keeping at a distance, with the various themes treated by him. His disciples and heirs will take affect into consideration more and more after him.

### **Note on the relationship of Beauty with health and disease**

Just as, in the sexual act, the pulsional reticulum organizes the progressive pulsating rhythm of sensations to orgasmic climax - so too, in psychosomatisms, the reticulum of pathogenic stimuli would organize itself in concentric series of successive apices determining the disease of an organ/target struck (Greenacre). According to this brilliant and perspicuous intuition, it could be said that the target organ weakened by psychosomatism contains the "facilitated ways" (Freud *Project for a scientific psychology*) of a cyclical process that repeats itself, or that grows as it evolves.

Thus the cohesive force of attraction of the instinctual and sensory reticulum would be the same as that which brings together pathogenic factors and pleasure factors - such as can be easily seen in the compactness of the tissues, the skin is an immediate example, or in the toning of organs that in a given momentarily or permanently, they are adequately supplied with good oxygenating blood circulation; and on the other hand we can see the sudden change of organs that progressively lose cohesion and vitality. The procedure of attraction of elements by the process is the same: the result produced is cohesive, or disintegrating, depending on the central inspiration. The central inspiration, deriving from the CNS, is reversible, plastic, but the processes are identical, at least as long as a new somatized factor produced by the pathological process does not pervert the work of the system itself. The most obvious example in this sense is given by the passage of the neoplastic cell from the degenerative process produced by the persistence or multiplication of a pathological functioning, to an irreversible somatotic functioning; or also simply as seen in the passage from the (functional) inflammatory process of a tissue to its (organic) lesion of different origin. At the level of psychic functioning there would have been upstream or downstream of the process a quantitative conversion of the pulsional quotas, from balanced with a prevalence of vital circulation, to destructive with a tendency to make the transformation irreversible. Psychic functioning has adapted to the irreversible somatotic model and follows it: their mutual influence can determine a spiral trend.

The possibility for a subject (psychic and somatic) to forge the central inspiration towards positive and productive circulation, is not one-way, it is systemic, has occasional or periodic qualities, which are subjected to single circumstances. For example, the same face, the same body, even after very short intervals, can gather and fill the entire endowment of beauty, or ugliness (of health or malaise), on the basis of the prevalence, momentary or stable, of a circulation healthy, or unhealthy. The factors that determine the process that orientates the life of the sensory networks so that they become stable and lasting, functioning as elective "facilitated ways", derive from an accumulation of previous experiences, which have provided a model of functioning: I would say a sort of internalized psychosomatic trust, which is the basis for the reproduction of the process, as a causal productive cycle. The reciprocity of the factors involved, a sort of *alpha* somatic function more connected to the body than to the mind, or better conceived as a function of the bodily self (Ciocca) in which the psychic self is established (Winnicott), or connected to the body understood as a matrix and model of functioning of psychic life (Ferrari) creates



different aggregations at different levels of the various factors between them, which come into play in the process of cohesion or loss of cohesion of health and balance. The idea of these references can help us conceive the place of beauty and its link with the experience of health and disease. The experience, either internal turned towards the self, or internal turned towards the external object that evokes it, situates beauty as a central, synchronous, intermediate object between the "Upper" Object (mind) and the "lower" Object (body) (Camassa): the beauty of the body would be an objective bridge of subjectivity that is recognized in a shared external factor (or in an object relationship, or in a narcissistic relationship).

### **The primary affects of Beauty**

Therefore, we will try to indicate, starting from the affects, the presence of the primary contact contained in the experience of beauty and aesthetic emotion. If we succeed, we will have been in resonance with extraordinary authors. For example, a sensitive author, Di Benedetto, who in a contribution on the emotions connected with the experience of the garden, describes the entrance into a garden of any shape and size, as an immediate reactivation of the oedipal memory and primary vital aesthetics and the its budding mating (2010). In a resonant field, the fine author Castarède (2020) through persuasive suggestions assigns to musical listening the memory value of the primary voice and the evocation of the original sounds of the body.

Here, starting from the mythological re-enactment, we have oriented ourselves to indicate how the affect connected to the experience of primary aesthetics can rise again in all those circumstances in which the experience of beauty can be configured as a container of that aesthetic, recalled through the inscriptions of the somatic memory as an absolute unit of experience, which contains and produces vital contents.

Beauty would not be a mediating object, in the sense described by C. Vacheret in the numerous studies on the group, where it is indicated how the "object" of mediation facilitates its catalytic function of the primary elements within the group. Nor would it be an object derived from the Winnicottian transitional area, which preserves within itself the subjective experience of the other when it relates to him. Rather, this beauty that gives access to the joy of the remote past by developing as a means to it within a relationship, or brief encounter (instant of experience), would be the container of a profound somatopsychic aesthetic that has entered the reciprocal relationship of container/content, or exchange "between mucous membranes", to re-propose the metaphor of the interpsychic passage used by Bolognini (2019), and which puts the syncretic qualities of the primary exchanges in communication and tension among them.

Why *beauty* and not another object?

Presumably because its attraction is multiple and originated from multiple sources, and like the Oedipal icon it has the power to console and satisfy: even if it is timed (ephemeral), it contains the continuity of living matter; and unconscious temporality,

in which the instant and eternity coincide with absolute qualities. A privilege of art, and psychoanalytic art, which also explores psychic genealogies and the intertwining of their buds.

### **Narcissism, the goal of Beauty**

Sometimes one might think that if Narcissus had been female in the myth, his love for his image would have been completely different. It would have contained the (feminine) longing for the (masculine) object as the referent of pleasure (narcissistic or objectual) that confirms beauty, and its androgynous perfection. Narcissus, on the other hand, must conquer beauty to enhance his own representation of himself, to the point of creating a bond with himself, cohesive and that excludes the feminine, or rather takes it into himself. "Man uses his mind to get to the sexual body. The woman, on the other hand, uses the body to reach the mind": this was a suggestive statement that I hold in a lucky memory of conversation with Antonio Ciocca at the time of our editing of a book on the body self in anorexias (20013). In this statement there is the idea that the two narcissisms are different and this helps us to conceive the vastness of psychoanalytic research on this point left open, like many others, by Freud's tradition, which Kohut then transformed into a challenge. The challenge involved various levels, indeed it posed a completely new treatment of the theme of narcissism, modified the conception and chronology of the original narcissistic needs, the nature of their experience and psychic and pre-psychic functioning. Less radically Green (2002) had spoken of "narcissism of life" and "narcissism of death", which had already been of help to move the deep plot of the Freudian conception. And Winnicott, the original inexhaustible creative rescuer analyst, had shifted attention to the needs of body narcissism. Again, Relational Psychoanalysis has worked deeply on this complex intertwining, shifting the analytical investigative attention from the evaluation of the object relationship, its establishment and its processes, or lack of processes, to the field of subjective enhancement. In the latter case, the Freudian narcissism of subjectivity, or subjectivization, comes out oxygenated and oxygenating for the work relationship. So either with Green's "life narcissism", or corporeal with Winnicott, or primary vital cohesion with Kohut, and relational pleasure first with English Independents and then with American relational analysts, in all cases the dimension of Freudian narcissism it is not treated as monopolar, one-way (and deadly), as anti-relationality and pure psychic inaccessibility. Of course, we know how the question of quotas, of the quantities involved, underlined by Bion (who will tripartite psychic personality into neurotic, healthy and psychotic, on the distributive and combinatorial basis of the constitutive psychic factors) has a value for Freud, together with the temporal one of psychic development. But it should also be emphasized that Freud from the very beginning assigned a similar value to narcissism assigned by him to negation (1925): if the subject does negation, he negates something that has been perceived by him. The absolute and exclusive

uniqueness of narcissism without evolution is "virtual". However, his dimension is susceptible to movements and probably tripartite, as in Bion, as it contains the dialectical possibility in itself of developing the further dimensions, which the authors after him devotedly developed and treated. Thus Freud's narcissism was dimensioned and resized according to the quality, quantity, chronology of development, and according to its economic function, as well as its structural one.

The point of interest for the research that remains is the magnitude of the field of attention to the different languages and profound idioms of the developing subject, depending on the mixture of the various factors over the evolutionary time, from narcissistic to objective or tending towards objectivity. From the narcissism that animates the original precariousness to what the subjectivating shaping does; from the problem of the subjective endowment of resources, to that of its possible expansion through the value of experience and the use of its models - in all cases the discrimination between the narcissistic solution and the attitude to rehash that tends towards object development is like a beacon that must illuminate many miles of navigation (of development and analysis). Attention to the languages and *idioms* of the unconscious (Bollas) is essential to learn the distinction. They contain deeply embedded (Rouchy) extracts of psychic elements from time to time more and less evolved, more and less partial or whole. They are lexical elements that have drawn their meaning and their function from roots and mixed eras, possibly fluctuating between flexible and readjustable chronological belonging, or hesitating frankly stochastic evolutionary functions (such as the machine that suddenly does not repeat an expected functioning and produces one that does not provided by its system). Their identification means accepting that there are in a subject or even in a network of subjects, comings and goings of "narcissistic" and "object" positions that are continuously mixed, or composed by mixing acts and figures of different nature. New creatures could be born, from parents so "hermaphrodite": perhaps not so frightened as to have to defend themselves, or not so rigorous as to be ashamed. The ideal of Beauty, narcissistic or otherwise, like the anthropomorphic work of Aphrodite between inaccessible and Olympic divinity and anthropomorphic ally, becomes accessible. Usable pieces of good and beautiful objects - *calòscagathòs*. We should say that beauty is a goal of narcissism, or rather the hope of giving content, anchoring and consistency to the object fragility contained in narcissistic beauty.

Beauty as an object that follows the vicissitudes and destinies of the body and depends on it, but nevertheless transcends it for its link with the continuity of the self and the primary eternity of time and memory, it almost seems to be able to form its own existence, linked together to transience and immortality, and to their luminous trail. Made earthly, Beauty, with all its erotic load attributed by myth (Eros, the infant son of Aphrodite who wounds with the arrow of love, but lacks access to adult male development) is between hybridization and eternity, and could lose his transcendent value. But its dialectical guarantor (Anteros, the brother god of Eros who by giving discord makes Eros mature), enclosed in the divinizing walls that isolate the "jet set"

from the masses, the higher place on the modern meritocratic scale, to which those who can have the exclusive right taking possession of the most beautiful, divine women - gives absoluteness through the rite of sexuality to genealogical perishability: the goddesses. Goddesses don't age, or they transmute in their own and younger bodies. The goddesses possess the immortality of the unconscious. And with the goddesses, their icons. (From a clinical case) *An intelligent analysand who was near the end of his analysis, dreamed on the anniversary date of the woman/goddess he had managed to involve years earlier, but who had left feeling overwhelmed and conflicted, dreamed that Belèem or Madonna, I do not remember, was his woman and he was very proud of her. However, interviewed by Barbara Durso among the greats of the jet set, he admitted he was terrified at not having anything to offer such sublimity.* After all, the patient just wanted to say how much pain he felt to leave, by now in his thirties, the maternal home according to him deprecated and alone (widow) which he considered divine and inaccessible.

### **A Geisha**

I had the amazing opportunity to have a conversation in a traditional Japanese town with a Geisha. I asked her after a few initial exchanges if she conceived that the pleasure she offered with her work was her own pleasure, or what difference she found between these two. She thought, with an amiable look and an absorbed smile, for a few minutes, perhaps to put a polite distance between us, between my request and her answer. Then she said in an intense and clear tone, that some are born marked by a generous star and can only give beauty and pleasure. They cannot ask for themselves, because the current of pleasure is already direct and because it is attributed to the exclusive goal of producing and giving beauty; otherwise its purpose in the order of the assigned places would end. "The pleasure of giving pleasure; and the beauty of giving beauty ", they procure the pleasure and beauty of profound bodily unison. Pleasure will produce new beauty and new pleasure, and time will always renew them in its continuous cycle. She smiled, then her face was serious, and we took our leave.

In front of such a refinement of formation, of presence, of culture, in front of such celestial beauty, feeling tiny, I found myself thinking confusedly in several directions.

One was, going back to the beginning, the Greek goddess, Aphrodite, as well as the divine and earthly goddess/Geisha, who combined pleasure and the right to life in the extended and anthropomorphic Olympus. A Mediterranean and pre-Asian goddess. In the land of the Geisha, however, the goddess lives in the *hortus clausus* of the house dedicated, formed in a very ancient cultural tradition.

I thought of the narcissistic pleasure compared to the object one, the passion, the comings and goings of their currents, active and passive, and against the tide. Freud, Kohut, ferrymen and rulers of pleasure, of its evolution, of its subtraction, heroes lined up in war against loss, on both sides beyond pleasure and on this side.

But on the other hand, I was also thinking of something rudimentary, primordial: what is the place of each one, if we see it reflected in the anthropological mirror of existence, in the great biological, ethological and human frailty evolutionary cycles? The individual lives in the time of the cosmos the time span of his earthly existence, correlated with the space-time environment, and with environmental and phylogenetic transmission. How can it be conceived that in such a complex and vast congeries each individual can represent himself that he has received a mandate, and that he is in his own place? Or how can everyone manage to find one? And does the fate of Beauty have an assigned place? Maybe yes, in exchange for another, to be returned, such as transience, or ugliness, or other opposites. Since its emergence would create disorder in the homeostasis of totality, it would require fences and lineages and eternity to renew itself, enemies and wars to measure oneself. In the large group of the universe there is no place for stasis. Only, perhaps, the hypo-stasis of Beauty in the Platonic cave. And space for its bearers, and conductors. Sherpa. All seekers of that spark that makes beauty and pleasure appear (interest, intention, curiosity, project) before its epiphany is blinding, incomprehensible, its confusing practice, before anyone appropriates it, and will be punished for eclipsing his alignment in the group. Humans have always been ready to bring together and modulate the space and time of pleasure and beauty to ensure the individual contribution to its beneficial and passing presence among the values of the universe. Anyone who is not equipped to do so falls ruinously into the deceptive abyss of impossible desire. The Geisha, she, is assisted by the time of continuity, by the small and closed space, by the economic link, which attenuate the sublimity and perform the ritual. Desire dwells.

### **Beauty of the Mona Lisa**

However the West has also found its social solutions, and will find many other through the technology of virtual presence, and the experience of presence/absence. The most universal and universally loved solution is the beauty of Leonardo's Mona Lisa, which contains the smile of the ineffable and mystery. But why do I ask, does everyone, everyone in the world, love the Mona Lisa? so much so that it is difficult to really see her image too many times already seen and moreover disturbed by the presence of the crowd at the sight on the Louvre wall. Perhaps - I reflected during a trip to Paris on the occasion of the visit to the Leonardo recent exhibition, made urgent together by the strikes and the imminence of the coronavirus lock-down - that painting deals of course with Beauty and art, and the sublime hand of the painter known to Freud for the elaboration of the original mourning and of his coming into the world, which had contemplated the loss.

But it concerns the Presence even more. You look at the painting, you immerse yourself in its divine and profound view. But it is not known if there is, if it can be said that there is, the presence. The Mona Lisa, whoever she is. The face and the first part of the bust are present at the glance, at the drawn line: and together they

immediately disappear. We don't know, looking and looking again, if the object is there. If its epiphany is certain. Perhaps "due to the propensity of the object not to survive" (5) the object or the sight of the object appear "precarious", they tend to disappear or regress, abandoning the overwhelmed subject to lack or an opaque relationship, in front of its power that goes beyond sunset or sunrise.

Finally, studying the group, the institutions that represent it, contain it and regulate it, even if differently named by the different models of psychoanalytic research, is nothing other than corresponding with an expected Freudian need. Civilization knows and judges its children, one by one, and prefers them to lose them, it loses them in order to prefer them. Only in this way will they learn from experience and pain that the law of the group, which has remote roots in the cruelty of the Primitive Horde and masters the apparatus of violence, is so sensitive and detailed as to punctually identify every hidden truth in crossing the threshold. It, the threshold, was negotiated to make the group exist. It is not known whether mating and loneliness will be able to exist after the mandatory alignment in the group. The evolutionary movement of the group is the guaranteeing witness of its cohesion and continuity. It is the **Civilization** and Its Discontents.

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## Notes

1. There are several myths relating to the birth of the goddess; the best known are handed down by Hesiod and Homer. Hesiod makes Aphrodite spring from the seed of Uranus, god of the sky, husband of Gaea, whose genitals had been thrown into the sea by his son Cronus to avenge his mother Gaea, whose monstrous children, Titans, Cyclops and Hecatonchirs, Uranus had sunk in the center of the Land. From the copious blood of castration that fertilized Gaea the Erinyes, infernal divinities, would have been born; the Meliadi nymphs, protectors of the flocks; the Giants, with immense brute force that upsets nature with earthquakes and hurricanes.

According to Homer's version Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus and the ocean nymph Dione and is born from the sea from a shell. The birth of the goddess is however connected to the great original forces of the universe. Particularly in the version of Hesiod that connects it to the birth of the world created by Gaea, the first personification of creation. Gaea, before generating Uranus king of the sky and marrying him to rule the Creation, had generated from herself Pontus the sea, and with him she had generated Taumante the father of the Harpies; Forco, the stormy sea; Class, which personifies the dangers of the stormy sea; and Eurubia, personification of the stormy violence of the sea. After all, the uncertainty of her birth seems to increase the power of its original and mysterious indistinction.

2. Under the entry *cèsto*, the Treccani Vocabulary reports that the “Girdle, which Greek and Roman brides wore on their wedding day, was considered a special ornament of the goddess Venus, and therefore also called a basket or girdle of Venus”.

3. The quote of the myth and the commentary are taken from the Chapter *L’élan vital menacé*. In *L’adolescent et sa musique*. "The threatened vital momentum". In: *The teenager and his music*. Italian edition edited by Giorgia Morgese, *L’adolescente e la sua musica*. Borla, Rome, in press.

4. Among the most relevant scholars of the literature on anthropomorphic deities of ancient Greece, Eric R. Dodds in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, carried out extensive studies on the Orphic world of the Greeks which indicate it as a relevant component of that civilization, based on domination of logos and enlightened reason. At the center of his investigation is the temporary loss of the, normal consciousness, and the experience of clouding derived from the Homeric tradition: madness as a divine gift and influence of the dream world in conscious life. See the reading sheet of the Italian edition of GMMargagliotta, which highlights the author's intention to re-compose, after the advent of the discovery of the unconscious, and of the fear of progress as an unknown force, a different panorama compared to the traditional rational sovereignty of Greek culture.

5. Winnicott's quote is reported by D. Mellier in his book *La vie psychique des équipes, La vita delle équipes*, Borla, Roma, 2020, where the topic of modern pathologies and in particular of "psychic precariousness" is also dealt with, in which the object tends to disappear or regress, it does not have a recognizable presence, and in which the psychic system of the subjects who suffer does not recognize suffering nor express a request for help - which will be the institutional team that will have to identify and mature by working in the inter-institutional interstices.

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