

Hildegard von Bingen

A Psychoanalytic/Spiritual Perspective of the Creative Mind

Tennessee Williams, playwright, states “To create is sacred because it is all we know of God”.

Lee Krasner to Jackson Pollack, “Painting is not a matter of choice. You do it because you have to do it. That’s all.”

Michel Coste, sculptor of Joan of Arc Statue in Rouen, France, “A worthy piece of carving continues to give life long after its completion”

Hildegard von Bingen, visionary and prophet (1098-1180) states:

“The light that I see thus is not spatial, but it is far, far brighter than a cloud that carries the sun. I can measure neither height, breath in it. When I see it all anguish and sorrow leave me. My soul drinks this in as a fountain which remains full and unexhausted.”

I invite you to rethink with me Freud’s prejudice that visionary, prophetic and mystical, artistic people have diseased minds. There is a un-ease; even disinterest among psychoanalyst to openly discuss what role spirituality plays in the unconscious. While there is no difficulty in speaking about spirituality as a neurosis, I propose there is more to the spectrum like a rainbow of colors yet to be researched within the field. This spectrum includes the defensive uses of spirituality against early loss and defective object constancy as well as its covert masochistic and narcissistic aims to, spirituality as healthy, and adaptive, spirituality as a source of creativity, intuition and healing, spirituality as a source of inspiration, spirituality as a source of energy, love and wisdom and spirituality as a distinct, separate but connected world within the hearts and minds of all people, even among the doubters. As a psychoanalyst who was originally trained as a Pastoral psychoanalytic psychotherapist I liked to find ways to open up this discussion to build word bridges and word concepts to create an awareness of the full spectrum which

spirituality encompasses. What follows is a story of a woman who was listed at the turn of the millennium as one of the most influential figures of all time. Through her story I hope to weave psychological threads with spiritual fibers.

Hildegard Von Bingen, a 12th C. artist, visionary and prophetess writes about her “peculiar temperament”. (Baird, 1994) Hildegard took what she “saw” and created symbols out of her visions. Visions are pictures which the mind constructs from raw materials in the unconscious like a dream state along with other capacities of the human spirit, or wish fulfillment but rather than canvas and paint the life of the visionary points to transcendental beauty or truth toward transformation of the personality. One must look to see if the visions produce a life-enhancing quality. The visions empower with energy, clarity, and courage leaving the viewer physically, mentally or spiritually with new knowledge, strength and or direction. The psychiatric counterpart of visions may be called hallucinations. It seems to me the difference between one who is hallucinating and one who has visions may lie in the meaning and content. Visions are less bizarre; more organized and have meaning that others resonate with. Visionaries and prophets have practical messages that relate to reality. Dreamlike in nature, the central feature of visions is that they generate strong affective yearning to be with God and are experienced as an intuitive knowing, like a child knows his/her mother. In Hartman’s study of people who suffered nightmares since childhood he found that these people were very sensitive children with a strong artistic bent and creative potential. They demonstrate what he calls “thin boundaries of the mind, permeability between self and object, waking/sleeping, fantasy/reality, adult/child, human/animal which are relatively fixed for most people.” (Kakar, 1991) This thin boundary of the mind is at the root of this artistic sensibility. It seems to be that the prophetic, visionary and mystical mind has a genetic biological predisposition, perhaps reinforced by some early experience manifesting later as thin boundaries. Hildegard struggled with migraines, which predisposed her to “seeing light.” (Baird, 1994) Does this diminish the message of her visions? Throughout history many visionaries report feelings of being flooded by the light or entering the light. I will expand upon this question throughout the paper. What follows is a synthesis of the bio/social/cultural/psycho/spiritual approach to the creative mind.

There are many psychoanalysts who have written that Hildegard von Bingen, a visionary, artistic prophet, was a narcissistic, schizoid woman who withdrew into a world of images. In Jacob Arlow's paper, "The Consecration of the Prophet" he wrote that the mission of the prophet is to re-establish the emotional bonds with the world of reality because the prophet's message truly corresponds to a deep emotional reality waiting to be stirred in the soul of contemporaries. My psychoanalytic perspective will look at how Hildegard's weak, fragile and sickly nature became the bedrock from which she healed not only herself, but created a transcendent world view out of her unconscious that has unique and creative meaning today for those who seek to live the spiritual life. Her central themes speak of how being human offers conflicting realities between body and spirit. Hildegard's work danced between a joyful affirmation of the body and a melancholy horror of the flesh—and its master, the devil. Her vision of divine beauty, the feminine aspect of God, the predestination of Christ and Mary, a moral and aesthetic ideal of virginity and the hope of cosmic redemption are brought forth in her illuminations which were then put into musical form. Hildegard lived in a culture and during a time where women's voices were not heard: even worse, spiritual women were enclosed whenever possible behind the walls of the church to silence their visionary voices.

"In the third year of my life I saw so bright a light that my very soul trembled, but because I was still an infant, I was unable to say anything. Then in my eighth year I was dedicated to the spiritual life as an offering to God, and until my fifteenth I saw many things and I spoke of such things in a very simple way, so that those who heard me wondered where all this had come from-and from whom. And I too wondered at myself, because although I saw these deep things deep in my soul, I still retained outer vision, and I have never heard that said of any other human being. And so I hid that vision I saw within my soul as best as I could. Also, I was quite ignorant of many things in the outer world on account of the chronic illness I have suffered from the time of my mother's milk up to the present day; it weakened my body and worn down my spirits. I asked a certain

nurse of mine if she saw anything besides exterior things. When she answered 'nothing' I was seized by great fear, thereafter I did not dare disclose things to anyone.” (Baird and Ehrman,, 1994)

These are the words of Hildegard Von Bingen, written in the 12th C. She is known as the “Sybyl of the Rhine”.(Newman, 1998: Lachman, 1993) Hildegard was the only woman from the Medieval Age to be accepted as an authoritative voice on Christian Doctrine, the first woman to receive permission from a pope to write theological books, the only medieval woman who preached openly and died naturally at the old age of 82 rather than be burnt at the stake, beheaded or imprisoned for heresy, the author of the first morality play, a composer of over 70 original pieces of music, which are still in play, the first scientific writer to discuss sexuality and gynecology from a female perspective and the first Saint whose official biography includes a first person memoir.

This 12th C prophet and visionary overcame severe self doubt and chronic ill health to confront the hierarchal church to fulfill what she believed was what God called her to do from birth. For forty years she did not speak of her visions. Born into a noble family of Bermersheim in Germany, she enjoyed the inestimable advantages of high birth, wealth, and membership into a well-connected family with easy access to those in political power. When Hildegard was the age of eight in the year 1106 her own family offered Hildegard, the tenth child of the family, as a tithing to God, placing her with one of the first female anchorites of the church, Jutta of Sponeheim. Anchorites were the first women of the church who vowed to live their life solely with their creator, God, found through Jesus and manifesting life through the church. There was a burial ceremony to mark this commitment held at the monastery. Literally, when Jutta made this commitment a walled cell with one small iron window was constructed to the outside of the monastery where she lived initially in solitude to pray and fast. Similar to the early desert fathers this ascetic way of life was revered as an effort to realize all the possibilities of the flesh, ie., hunger, lust, An ascetic portrays a profound expression of

the doctrine of the Incarnation: the notion that Christ, by becoming human saves all that the human being is. By medieval standards Hildegard's parents giving her away as a tithing to the church was not considered a world-denying, hateful or abandoning act on their part but an act of love. This common practice to be given as a church offering carried with it the meaning of sacred, special, wealth and gift which we will see later in Hildegard's life provided the psychological foundation for her mission. Hildegard was given to the care of this woman Jutta, through the same type of Christ burial rite that Jutta had undergone several years previously. Hildegard never saw her family after this. She had been a sickly child, with a strange temperament and her family felt the best care for her would be found through the Benedictine monastery. Here she lived in obscurity with Jutta for thirty years in a small-enclosed cell attached to the Benedictine monastery of Mount St. Disibod. From Jutta she learned to read Latin. Monastery life was the place to be in the Middle Ages. There was food, medicine in its primitive forms, education and plenty of activity to fuel one's imagination. Artists, craftsman, workers from as far away as the Orient were working on the grand monastery at Disibonberg with all the sculptors and stonemasons surrounding her on a daily basis. Further education was eventually entrusted to the monk Volmar of St. Disibod who would become her life-long confidant, secretary and friend. As a teenager she (c.1112-1115) made her profession of virginity and received the veil from the Bishop of Bamberg, Otto. She lived and followed the Benedictine rule of prayer, hymns, fasting and life within a cloistered community. Only Jutta and her secretary, Volmar, knew of Hildegard's visions and "secretly" (Newman, 1998) wrote them down and brought her to the attention of Bishop Kuno.

In 1136 Jutta died. Hildegard was then elected abbess of eighteen women who since gathered at the monastery. Hildegard would be 49 before the visions started to become public. With the help and encouragement of Volmar, following the meeting with Bishop Kuno, she began writing down her visions in a book that took 10 years to write titled, *Scivias*. (Know Thy Ways) Long before her monastic vows, or public mission, Hildegard's spiritual awareness was founded on what she called "the Living Light." (Baird, 1993, Newman, 1998) In her official biography she reports that it was not

mystical longings or a precocious sense of vocation but rather a peculiar temperament where she saw “the reflections of the living Light.” (Hart and Bishop, 1990)

In her 43rd year in another vision she heard a resounding light say..



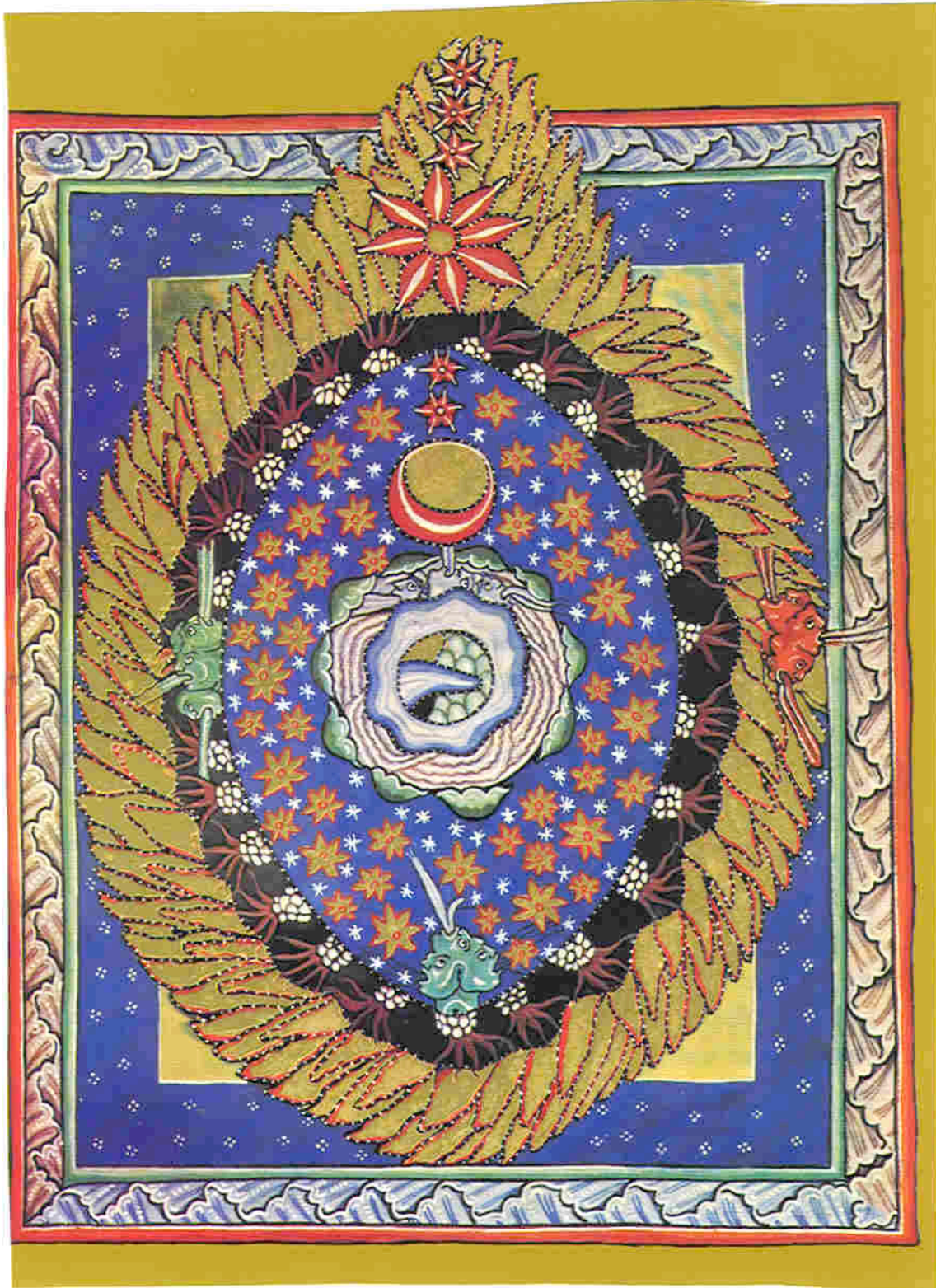
the Seeress

“O fragile human, ashes of ashes, and filth of filth! Say and write what you see and hear. But since you are timid in speaking and simple in expounding, and untaught in writing, speak and write these things not by a human mouth, and not by the understanding of human invention and not by the requirements of human compositions but as see and hear them on high in the heavenly places in the wonders of God...Heaven was opened and a

fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain and inflamed my whole heart and my whole breast not like a warming flame, as the sun warms anything its ray touch...these are not the invention of my heart or that of any other person, but as the secret mysteries of God I heard and received them in heavenly places. (Hart and Bishop, 1990)

Hildegard's mission was to unlock the mysteries of Scripture, to proclaim the way of salvation, to admonish prelates and priests and to instruct the people of God. She came to believe that the message of Scripture was a living force. "She now interprets her physical distress not as a cause for complaint but as the means by which this Living Light speaks to her. Her vision of the source of all health and restoration was shaped by her sense of weakness in her own body." (Newman, 1998)

Hildegard was reluctant to follow her voice. Writing and speaking were socially unacceptable for women in the middle ages. She wrote that with "*fear and tremble*" she became increasingly sick as the voice became louder and louder commanding her to write. A well known psychological fact states that holding secrets contributes to weakening of resistance's making one more susceptible to illness of mind and body spilling out into creating dysfunctional families, organizations and communities. Her physical health was directly related to her visions. As she began to write down her visions from her youth she gained her strength. Gifts are burdensome and through describing her experiences through writing she begins to make a bridge into the world to be tested by the larger community.



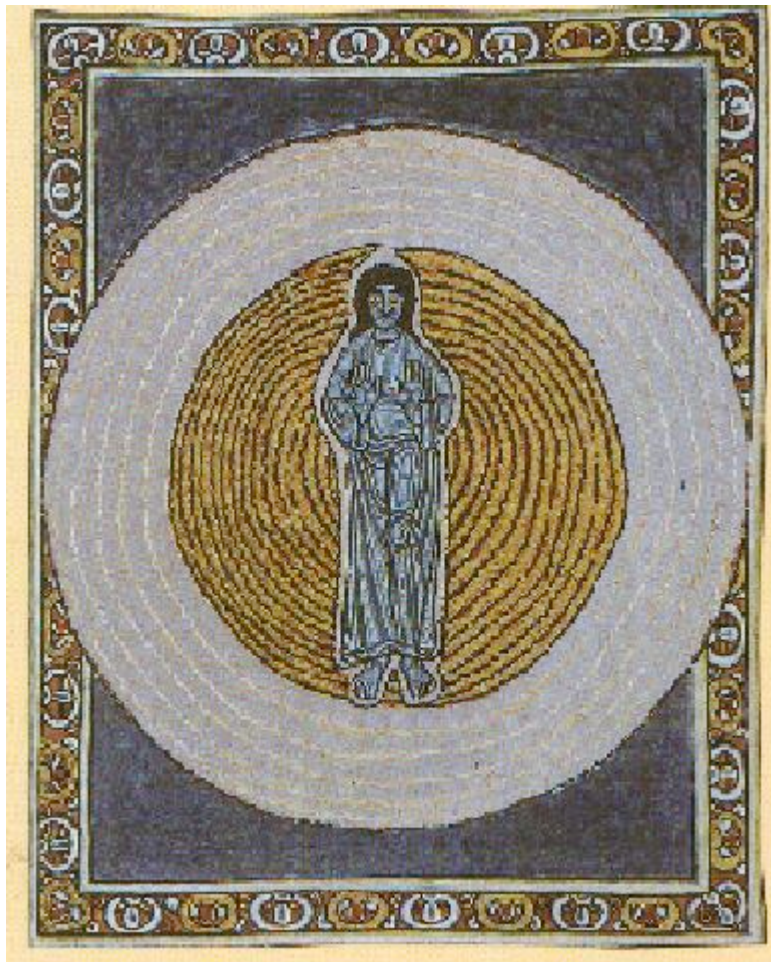
Vision of the Cosmic Egg—The Cosmos

This vision of the cosmic egg, depicted in loving detail represents the universe a symbolic, layered structure in which God sustains powerfully contesting forces in a delicate balance. She represents the form of egg as symbolizing the stages of human history.

Hildegard writes that the visions she did not see with her external eyes-nor heard with external ears. “*I see them more with my soul*” (Newman, 1998, Baird and Eharman, 1994, Lachman, 1993)

She sought out her own approval for her visions and approached her contemporary St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1146-47) whom she had never met personally but of whose writings she had heard. I will say more about Bernard later in the paper. She decided to write him and told him of her great admiration for him. She also told him that she had had a vision of him in “*dazzling light that brought tears to her eyes and left her full of confusion, blushing and timid.*” (Baird and Ehrman, 1994) Hildegard idealized Bernard’s position in the church as an approved spokesman. The role of idealization of Bernard is an important psychological underpinning to how she came to view her own visions. More will be said about idealization as we move from the 12th C. to the 21st C. Hildegard approached him with humility and asked him for prayer and advice about her visions. She wrote fifty-eight sentences summing up herself as an unworthy servant never having lived one hour free from anxiety due to the power of her visions. She explained how the visions were given to her even though she had no formal training, read only at an elementary level, yet had “*an inward understanding of the Psalter, the Gospels and other volumes.*” (Baird and Ehrman, 1994) She felt she was “*taught inwardly in my spirit. Hence my halting, unsure speech.*” (Baird and Ehrman, 1994) Bernard having heard rumors of this prophetess living in Bingen replied in a simple, non-judgmental manner by writing ‘*beloved daughter in Christ, Hildegard ‘We are happy about this grace God had given you and so you must respond to it with all possible humility and devotion.*’ (Baird and Ehrman, 1994)

His words pointed her back to her own interior world, which seemed to empower her with courage to trust her own experience as being authentic. She continued to reach out for approval for her work. In 1147 she began correspondences with Pope Eugene III, which resulted in his appointing a commission charged with examining Hildegard's teachings through her illuminations. It would be Bernard who was called upon to take Hildegard's visions to the Council of Trier. Pope Eugene read them aloud and her visions were voted on. The approval from the church authorities protected her from those whose power could declare she was mad; rather she was accepted as genuinely speaking the word of God. Her call, she declared is the same for all in that we are all called to living in the fullness of God and as we encounter many obstacles in life, everyone's journey is the journey of wisdom and not to contradict the nature and the love of God. *"Man, too, is God's handiwork, like every other creature. But man is also God's journeyman and the foreshadowing of the mysteries of God. (Vita, Bk2)*



Trinity In the Unity

Then I saw a bright light, and in this light the figure of a man the color of a sapphire, which was all blazing with a gentle glowing fire. And that bright light bathed the whole of the glowing fire and the glowing fire bathed the bright light and the bright light and the glowing fire poured over the whole human figure, so that the tree were one light in one power of potential. (Hart and Bishop, 1990)

This sapphire blue is like a circle within. All people are encircled by the mystery of God. The artist has depicted “Light” and “Fire” becoming concentric circles glimmering with gold and silver leaf and quivering lines suggesting the vitality and energy of the living God.

Hildegard’s visions were spiritual resources for the troubles of life. She quickly became the superstar of the Rhine but with it fame brought conflict.

After Hildegard became the Abbess of the Benedictine community she heard her voices command her to leave St. Disbodenberg and build a monastery at Rupertsberg, closer to the Rhine River which would give her easier access to preaching and teaching. Her request to leave the monastery was denied. Bishop Kuno did not receive Hildegard’s vision with joy. He was livid at the prospect of her leaving and did not agree to it because Hildegard was a source of revenue and a source of prestige for the monastery.

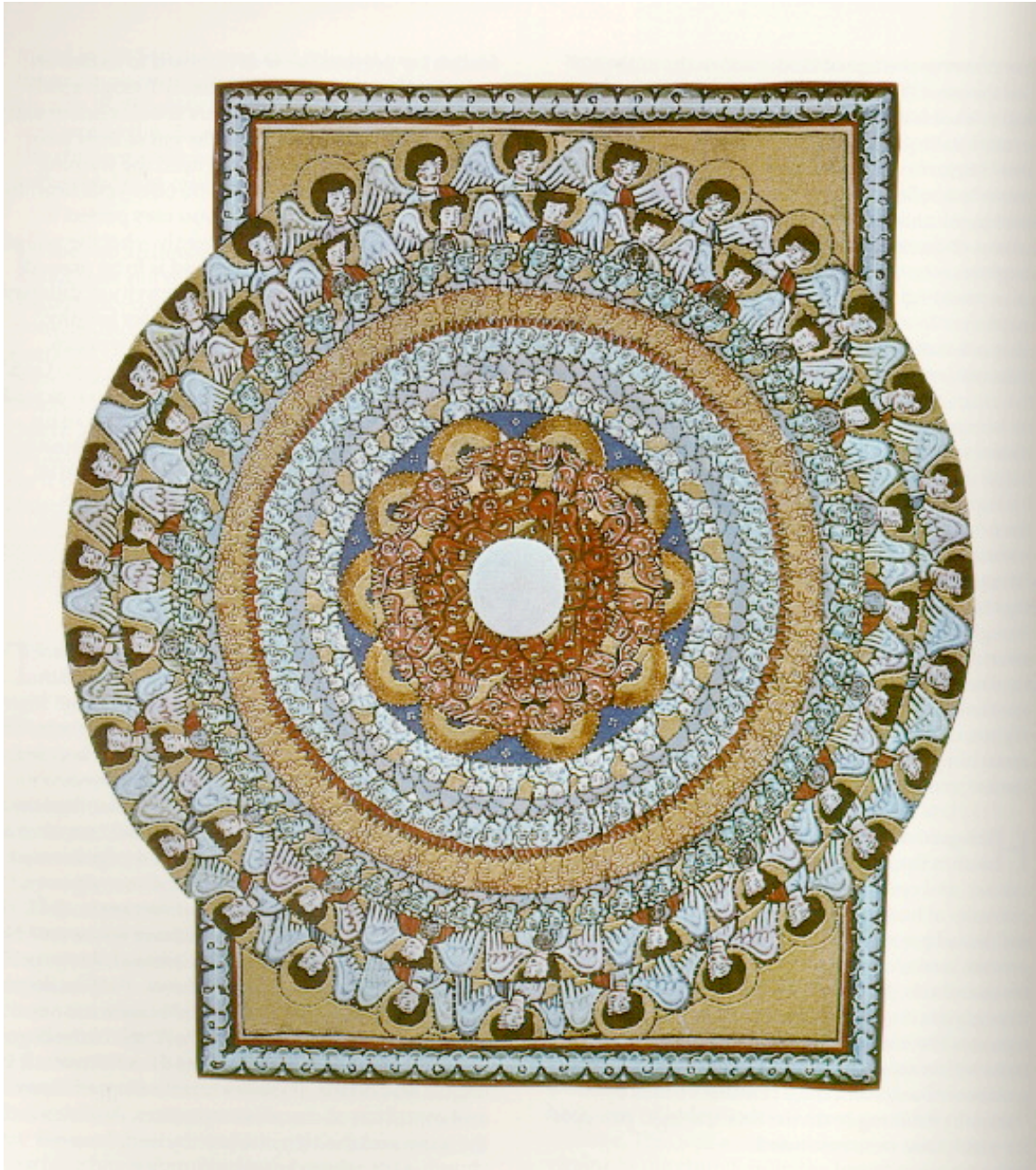
According to her memoirs “she was unable to rise or work until the resistance to God’s call had been overcome, which according to Godfrey, (her secretary upon the death of Volmar) was settled by a miracle. Kuno physically tried to lift the ailing seer from her bed but finding her ‘like a stony rock’ acknowledged that she was suffering no human illness but a divine chastisement and he grudgingly released her to depart.” (Newman, 1987, Newman, 1998) She was beginning to learn that when she did not respond to her visions she became ill.

With this relinquishment Hildegard instantly recovered. In 1150 upon receiving the title to the land she took eighteen of the nuns and went to Rupertsberg to build her own monastery. In 1151 the book Scivias was at last completed having taken ten years to complete with the illuminations. Her creativity continued to flourish. Rupertsberg became a house of science, art, music and the first Play of Virtues was her response to obeying her prophetic voice. This play dramatizes the conflict between choosing wisdom or choosing evil.



Body and Soul and Evading the Devil's Darts

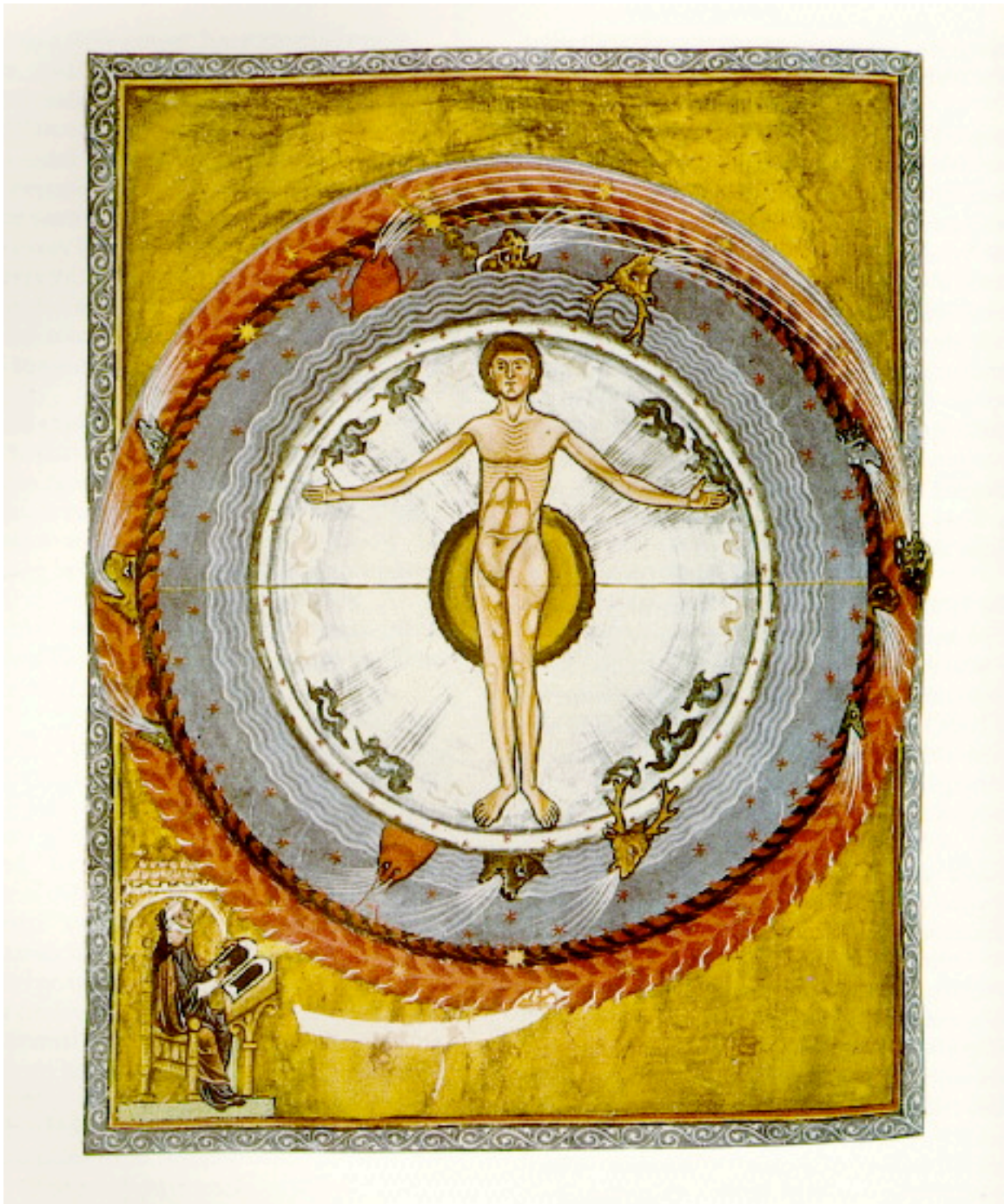
Therefore whoever has knowledge in the Holy Spirit and wings of faith, let this one not ignore My admonition, but taste it, embrace it and receive it in his soul. This image teaches on human nature and psychology and closes with a series of more exhortations. This image is the third of three images depicting every soul must choose between the sacred East, where the sun of justice rises and the bitter North where Satan rules his realm of darkness and cold. (Hart and Bishop, 1990)



Choir of angels

The nine choirs of angels and archangels signify body and soul, the cherubim and seraphim symbolize the knowledge and love of God, and the five middle orders represent the five senses. The void in the middle of the brilliant Mandela-like image of nine concentric circles represents the mystery of God's ineffable Presence in the center of all humanity.

Hildegard's images depict union of human and divine and union of body and soul. This is necessary for harmony. The Devil is the spirit who violates all harmony and is often depicted as fiery demons in her illuminations. Her own battle with chronic health problems spurred her on to look at nature for healing of body and mind. At the time she became a model of a woman rich in autonomy and rich in intellectual life. She quickly became a feminine role model for other women seeking to give voice to their own spirituality. She symbolized her life as a series of choices through the bright color green to depict vitality, which she called viriditas. Viriditas was more than color for Hildegard; "the fresh green that recurs so often in her visions represents the principle of all life, growth, and fertility flowing from the life-creating power of God"...the earthly expression of the celestial sunlight." (Newman, 1987, Newman 1998)

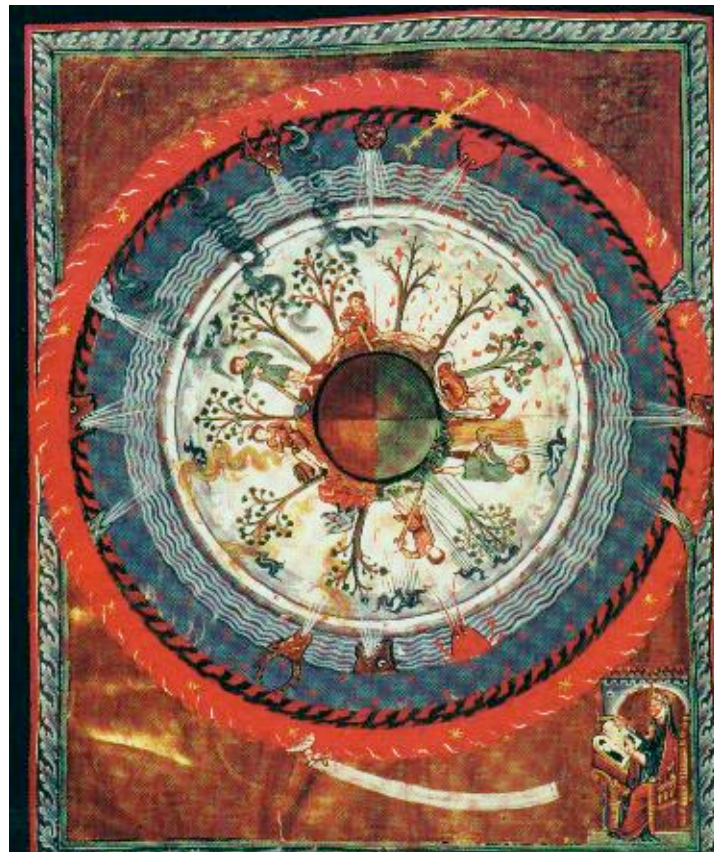


Man the Microcosm

“Man the Microcosm” ... comes from her book, “Book of Divine Works” (1163-1173)
This vision animated humanistic thinking from antiquity through the Renaissance and is best known today from the famous drawing by Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519). Here the human straddles the cosmos; the universe in its turn is embraced by an enormous,

overarching figure of Divinity. Man is God's most complete work living Body-Soul-Being and is shown as embraced and supported by the three-in-one Creator God declaring, "I am Life". (Hart and Bishop, 1990)

In 1178 when Hildegard was in her late 70's she was ordered to dig up a corpse of a man buried on her property. She disobeyed the authorities as she had given this man the promise of a Christian burial as an act of charity. When she refused to obey the Bishop of Mainz she was denied the Eucharist. In addition, she was prohibited from mass with music and singing. This scandal weakened Hildegard's strength to keep fighting. Her music was an expression of her earlier illuminations and she saw music as uniting the divine to earth, breathing in and out. She argued for the primacy of the heart. Eventually the Bishop gave in and shortly thereafter she died.



Psychoanalytic Understanding of Creativity, Prophets, Mystics and Visionaries

Bio/social/psycho/spiritual perspective

“May your eye live in God, and may the viridity of your soul never dry up.” Hildegard

“Suck on the sap of your unconscious and be forever green” Winnicott

Biological

It is well accepted among medieval scholars that Hildegard Von Bingen’s visions came from human pain. She wrote, *“one is able to be saved through the bitter price of pain. Beyond anger there is the deeper power of recycling, letting go and even letting sadness work for one.”* Dr. Oliver Sacks work on Migraine: Understanding a Common Disorder, considers Hildegard’s visions as recorded in Scivias to be “indisputable migraines” and expressive of the varieties of visual aura that is common to migraines. Frequently Hildegard speaks to the light she sees as *“more brilliant than the sun.”* Sacks sees her migraines are the psycho-physical response when “an individual confronts essentially unsolvable problems” (Newman, 1987, Fox, 1986) In a desperate effort to find a way out, it reorganizes its forces to view the world in a new way and comes out of this with a new sense of being. Hildegard was a woman who struggled as a cosmologist and theologian in a slumbering Church where patriarchal principle dominated and there was little hope for reform. Her deep intuitive love of both the Cosmic Christ and prophets would for centuries be ignored as the basis of Western spirituality. Her visions do provide, however, a unique example in which a physiological event, like her migraines, meaningless to most when unexamined, became in her consciousness the substrate of inspiration taking its form in art, music, poetry, drama and writings.

I don’t think classical diagnosis captures the essence of the prophet and visionary mind that is often associated with spiritually inspired writers, artist and musicians.

Psychoanalysts have traditionally advanced the view that prophetic inspiration is a neurosis. In visionary experiences of prophets scholars sought features of abnormal mentality. Abraham Heschel, warns that there are scientific hazards involved in the attempt to expose the subconscious life of historical figures. I do think however there is

value in studying historical figures whose natures were so pronounced that the “fruit of the work” (I John:16-17) remains into the 21st Century. Is it not possible for the field of psychoanalysis to take into account the possibility that there is a normal, healthy process of the mind that includes spirituality as an essential component of the unconscious?

Role of Loss

David Aberbach, MD author of “Grief and Mysticism” compares the process of grieving with the process of Mysticism. He writes that there have been psychoanalysts who make comparison between mental illness and mysticism but no one has written about the similarities between grief reactions and mystical experiences.

There can be no proof that mysticism is directly related to loss but perhaps we can look at common characteristics that are found in both the grieving process and the mystical process.

In Hildegard’s case she was given away by her family and separated from the other nine siblings at the age of eight never to see her family again. This may have heightened her later sense of abandonment and the subsequent search for the ‘*eternal thou.*’ (Newman 1998) Although raised by a surrogate mother, Jutta, we can speculate this separation from her birth mother, father and nine other siblings had a profound influence on the mind of Hildegard. We can see similarities among the lives of other Sainly people in relation to loss. St. Teresa of Availa’s life in the church began with the death of her mother when she was twelve. St. John of the Cross-whose father died a few months after his birth and St. Teresa of the Little Flower, lost her mother at the age of nine. Profound losses when mourned sufficiently determine the difference between “unconscious-denial-based unrealistic pathological hopefulness” (Searles (1977) v’s a deeper sense of reality in the present.

In the mystical process there is a parallel to the grieving process and this is the form of identification with the action sense of union with the lost person. “Union with the divine is a universal element in mysticism. Jewish Mysticism teaches “deveikut” cleaving with God; Christian Mysticism refers to Jesus’ words, ‘ Abide in me and I in you’ (I John 15: 4)

Some of the parallels between grief and mysticism include detachment, yearning and searching, along with transformation and returning to the company of men and women. The general aim of mysticism requires withdrawal, silence, meditation, purging passion and detachment. Developmentally Hildegard was still a child when given away to the church. Hildegard does not approach spirituality in the same manner as for example as St. Theresa of the Little Flower (1800’s) who entered contemplative life in her early 20’s. St. Theresa was consumed with uniting her suffering with Christ’s passion as she wrestled with tuberculosis. Out of this she created a doctrine accepted by the Church as “way of spiritual childhood through trust and absolute surrendering.” (St. Theresa) Hildegard grew up in the confines of religious life and developed a natural curiosity about health, herbs, femininity, sexuality, creation and the relationships of life around her. When Jutta died and she became abbess, the first thing she wanted to do was leave the confines of the Benedict monastery and create her own closer to the Rhine River. Proximity to the river gave her greater access to teach people and work on reforms within the hierarchical church. She used her visions as a path to greater freedom and authority for both herself and her nuns that she was responsible for.

This acute sensitivity to the theme of separation may be a contributing factor to the creative experience but the intensity of yearning throughout life does not explain the totality of the mystical, artistic and visionary mind. There are many strands that contribute to the motivational skein of the prophetic, mystical and visionary mind.

Cultural Considerations

To understand Hildegard we need to put her in the context of her history. The medieval period was a time when people turned to the church for answers for daily life. Making

pilgrimages to priests and visionaries for prayer, counsel and healing was common. Daily life held a great deal of trauma, hunger, disease, early deaths and brutal violence in war. Women were considered worthless and were to be subservient to their husbands in every way, sexually, emotionally, intellectually and physically. Mysticism pointed the way out of this earthly life to a life with the Divine, but also a path to deal meaningfully with suffering. Hildegard's life with the Divine pointed to a dimension of the mind that was egoless, self was not central but the will of God found through praise and celebration of the mystery and creator of all of life. As a religious leader, Hildegard challenged traditional societal views of women's roles. Female power that is combined with a surrendering to spiritual insight, which is then put forth into productive action, is often met with envy, suspicion, jealousy, fear and hostility. Hildegard exhibited personal power by living a life of self-control through writing about her visions. She asserted her own will based on her convictions, which ultimately gave her interpersonal power within the church, although illness and exhaustion was a frequent companion to her generative nature.

Idealization

In idealization, a person attributes qualities and values to another then elevates that person to a level of perfection. One cannot think of idealization without considering the intimate connection between idealization and narcissism. Idealization bears examination to determine what role it plays in relation to creativity or religious fundamentalism. For example, there are many examples of visionary, prophetic and artistic people who represent elements of idealization of self and of others:

- The wisdom of Gandhi came thru Hinduism along with the madness of his assassin.
- The Dali Lama graces us with compassion in Buddhism while Pol Pot promotes violence among his own.
- Ann Frank exemplified courage in Judaism and then there was the creator of the militant Jewish Defense League, Rabbi Meir Kehana whose vision promoted

hatred and revenge, resulting in Arab terrorist Nosair murdering Kehana, stirring more hatred.

- Christianity was the religion of Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton and Mother Theresa of Calcutta on one end and Adolf Hitler on the other.
- Rumi, “the mystic” (Underhill, 1999) Suffi breathed in a spirit full of elegant, beautiful, sensual poetry from his religious sect while not far away with similar Islamic roots Osama bin Laden led terrorist attacks on a global scale.

From an ego-psychological perspective, idealization continues throughout every person’s life. It is most dominant in the early stages of development. This can best be seen through the eyes of a child who look at parents with awe and wonder as if the parents are God. Hildegard approached Bernard with awe and wonder viewing him as the strong and mighty one. I knew of a person named Polly who tells the story that as a child she would sit on the floor in the evenings and watch her father create new and vibrant colors of paint for his business. He would take the tubes of deep, rich primary colors and mix them together first on a wooden palette creating shades of red, green or yellow never seen before. Through the eyes of a child, her father could have been Michelangelo preparing to paint the Sistine Chapel. Polly reflected often on her father’s life and imagined how his painting put color into people’s dull, drab and colorless worlds. Like Polly and her father, Hildegard and Bernard’s relationships contained powerful elements of viewing one another with perfection, and devotion. Bernard’s demeanor of humility didn’t allow her perfect judgment of him to pervade the relationship. Instead he pointed Hildegard back to her interior world and encouraged her to “*trust the grace God has given you.*” (Baird and Ehrman, 1994) This was quite a different response than Bishop Kuno, another potential father figure who ultimately created a great deal of distress for her entire life. Kuno, Abbot of Disibod, was the first high Church official to become aware of Hildegard’s gift. Hildegard lived at Disibod under his authority until the death of Jutta. When Hildegard requested to leave his monastery to form her own, Kuno was furious and very disapproving of her vision. But the real reason he objected was because he needed

her for his own purposes. She provided the monastery with revenue from the flock of pilgrims coming for council from Hildegard. The prestige of the whole Rhine Valley rested at Disibod. When Hildegard approached Kuno with the same kind of humility she had approached Bernard, Kuno took advantage of her vulnerability and mirrored that she was a frail woman of God and thus should remain at Disibod under his care. The split that was created and supported by Kuno was that he was all-powerful and Hildegard was vulnerable hence she needed to be submissive to his authority. Hence, Hildegard took sick to her bed. Eventually Kuno gave into her but their relationship remained a source of stress for Hildegard. She did not have Kuno's approval and he was an official of the church who easily would continue to make trouble for her. She left Disibod to form Mount St. Rupert. Submission to his authority went against her visions and became potential fuel to create a false self. Unable to be faithful to her true nature she had no other way out except to be sickly. In idealization when the good is projected by one person into another and the other accepts the projection without any acknowledgement of the strength and authority in the projector a dynamic is set up that has the potential for unhealthy dynamics to set in. So it was between Kuno and Hildegard.

Inspiration

It is striking to me how little psychoanalytic research has been done on the phenomena of prophets, visionaries and mystics found within the five major religions of the world. Jacob Arlow's classic 1951 paper quoted at the beginning of this paper is an essential study of the complexity involved and has inspired me to struggle with my own understanding of the dynamics of spirituality and religion in the hearts and minds of patients. Using Hildegard as a springboard, we have an opportunity to look within the unconscious mind and consider the role that spirituality and inspiration plays in the creative process. By studying Hildegard we see biological, cultural/social, and psychological processes of temperament, separation/individuation, the role of idealization and loss and the role of mentoring. What about the role of inspiration? Where does it come from and what role does it play within the mind? Merriam Webster defines inspiration as 1.) A divine influence or action on a person believed to qualify him/her to

receive and communicate sacred revelation. 2.) the action or power of moving the intellect or emotions.

There are different ways of becoming inspired. Groups of people inspire one another in creative pursuits. It was Hildegard's own nuns in the 20th C who rediscovered Hildegard's original music and illuminations. Her basic message reaches into the 21 C. with timeless inspiration: follow your voices, follow your dreams and open your heart to be vulnerable and risk but trust. Trust will lead the way and faith is the only compass you need. Hildegard's creativity is a manifestation of the power to create by participating with creation. Creating is a pulse in the universe: The very beat of the heart. This pulse is your pulse as well. This is as true today as it was 900 years ago. One characteristic of inspiration is the sense of timelessness around the message.

Hildegard's inspiration was rooted within her visions and supported by those she was connected intimately with, Jutta, Volmar, Gottfried, Bernard. Loving relationships support inspiration. In the case of Polly, her fascination with watching her father create anew moved her to find her own way of making people's world's more colorful through the power of working with people's lives. There is a scene in the Jackson Pollack movie on his life where he had been commissioned to paint his first mural for a philanthropist who was influential in the art world. He is shown sitting in front of the blank canvas. Moments, turn into hours, hours turn into days. Lee Krasner comes in to check on his whereabouts and in a frustrated voice says, "Paint. You're a great artist now paint." She walks away and Pollack continues to stare at the blank canvas. Finally, three weeks later he stands up and starts to paint and doesn't stop until the whole mural is finished. What happened in those moments? Was it the love and devotion of Lee that moved him? Was it divine intervention? Pollack was interviewed by Life magazine and questioned how he knew when his painting was finished. He answered simply, "How do you know when you are finished with making love?"

The work of Pitirim Sorokin, (1889-1968) a controversial figure in 20th C sociology and pioneer in the scientific study of unlimited love is helpful with the above questions.

Sorokin acknowledges the value in working with psychoanalytic principles of id-ego-superego but adds a concept to the psychic structure of the mind called “supra conscious” In the supra-conscious the ego disappears below and above the levels of biological, social/cultural/ and psychological consciousness to the level where there is no experience of ego or I in the unconscious. He says, “Dominated by the supra conscious an individual becomes its ego-less instrument lifted far above the limitations of the ego.” (Sorokin, 1982) People of different faiths for example use different terms with a similar manifestation. Hindu’s use the term, ‘purusha’ Yogis use. ‘Bhagavadgita’ Zen Buddhism uses ‘enlightenment’ Christian mystical theology speaks in terms of infused, unitive contemplation, Quakers speak of “inner light.” (Underhill, 1999)

All of the great scientists were mystics in the narrow sense of the word. Creators like Pascal, Newton, Kepler, Galileo, and DaVinci were all very intuitive in nature. Likewise the creative language found in the fine arts of music used consciously learned skills in cooperation with the supra conscious. When Mozart was asked about his writing he replied, ‘the thoughts come to me in a rush and they are the best of all. When and how, I do not know and cannot learn.’ “The crumbs spontaneously combine with one another until they assume a finished form in my head.” Beethoven says, “Every genuine creation of art is independent, mightier than the artist himself and bears testimony to the mediation of the Divine in him.” (Sorokin, 1982)

In summary, spirituality and creativity are unconscious processes with psychological threads to the primary objects of one’s early life. They are not ends unto themselves, but the beginning of each person’s unique, creative authentic self. Psychoanalysis ideally frees a conflicted person to have greater access to his or her own divine nature.

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