

ABSTRACT

The Archetypal Artist:

Reimagining Artistic Expression at the Crossroads of Fate and Free Will

by

Mary A. Wood

Art serves many purposes in Western society; however, its most profound contributions are largely being forgotten. Today's artists are confronted by two dominant trends; the first proposes that anything may be called art, that everyone may create "art." The second trend would restrict art to an increasingly elite realm of insiders and specialists. Both directions, however, rely upon the marketplace for validation.

Against the background of these two trends, this dissertation utilizes depth psychological, archetypal, mythological, philosophical, historical and neuroscientific perspectives to reimagine the nature of artistic expression, and ultimately its value. Primary areas of inquiry concern whether art and artists have a "mission" in the contemporary world, and how forces once called "fate" interact with what is commonly known as "free will" in the lives and work of artists.

In our current "culture of control," the concept of free will is generally unquestioned. Our insistence on the existence of free will acts as an apotropaic device against forces out of our control, the forces of fate. Today, psychologists and neuroscientists are posing fresh challenges to the notion of free will. These challenges impact the arts in powerful ways; as this dissertation asks: if the artist does not "freely" create his/her work, then how does the creative process actually work? Why does it even exist? Answers to these critical questions of creative processes are offered.

C.G. Jung writes about the insistent demands upon the artist of the autonomous “daimon” or “genius.” Inspired by philosophers from Plato to Henry Corbin, archetypal psychologist James Hillman proposes that “images” themselves direct the image-maker—it is *their* expression and *their* needs that supersede those of the artist. Image making thus becomes an act of soul-making not only for the artist, but primarily for psyche/soul.

This inquiry seeks to reawaken the artist to these insights, to the mythological roots of art (mythopoesis), and ultimately to the most meaningful and critical aspects of his/her vocation.

Key words: Art, Creativity, Soul-making, Free Will, Daimon, James Hillman, Jung