**Signed In The Lower Left Corner**

***June 14, 1986***

Think of red. Visualize red. Flood your whole perceptual system with red. Taste, smell, hear red. No one can tell you what that feeling is, only you who have experienced red know red. The word *red* gives nothing. *Red* is only a sign that points to an experience that, if you've never had it, no amount of telling will ever give. Yes, red is for those who experience, and *red* is for those who read. In the same way, though you can experience an archetype, no one can tell you what an archetype is.

Imagine—feel, smell, hear and see in your mind a whole dandelion head of seeds, ready in a moment to float, to drift and fly everywhere/anywhere, to land, to sink into the earth and then to sprout and grow on again through another cycle. Imagine a seed and feel the force in it to seize air and light and water and earth and from these disparate parts to create a whole dandelion plant in its whole cycle of life.

In the same way, the archetypes are the seeds, the fundamental images at the core of our experiences, the images around and within whose forms the disparate parts of our lives cohere to form a whole. As the seed takes the elements of air and earth and water and light to create a dandelion, so the archetypes take the disparate elements of our lives and shape them into the flowers of daisy or dandelion, lily or rose that we are.

Imagine—you are reading an old science book with a diagram of a magnet in it that shows how the magnet is surrounded by invisible lines of magnetic force. The old book tells how you can make those lines visible by scattering iron filings randomly on a paper, by placing the magnet beneath them and then tapping the paper. As if by magic, the randomly fallen filings shift into a pattern that reveals the magnet hidden beneath the paper and the invisible lines, the warp of space that surrounds it. The archetypes are like that. They lie hidden in the depths. We are a sheet of paper scattered with random debris. Life jostles us; the debris forms into a pattern; the pattern reveals the archetype.

Imagine—you hold a test tube in your hand. The liquid in the tube is clear. Although nothing shows, the solution is supersaturated. Drop in a crystal—the right one for the right solution—and then the crystal begins to grow, secretly, invisibly pulling the chaotic atoms and molecules of its surroundings into the ever-growing crystalline system of which the supersaturated solution is only the source.

Our lives are supersaturated solutions that wait for the drifting atoms to precipitate into their crystalline forms. Our lives are fields of iron filings, which are shaped by forces of which we are unaware. Our lives are of the stuff of earth and air, water and light—the stuff that waits for the seed to fall, that waits to grow into a dandelion or a rose. The archetypes are the invisible patterns in us that wait to be revealed.

Paracelsus called the pattern that is waiting to be discovered in the individual person (he said there is one in every individual person, place and thing), called that pattern the Signature. You might choose for your goal in life that you learn your Signature because, whether you know it or not, you write your name on everything you see, you know, you make.

Astrologers see your signature spread out across the stars. Feel yourself stretched upon the sky; those are stars that are your eyes and fingers and bones and blood and life in time.

Chiromancers see your signature in your palm. Look into your hand; see your name in the lines of the organ that you use to grasp and hold and shape the world. Feel your hand stamp your name on everything you touch.

The fortune teller sees your signature in the cut of the Tarot cards. Touch the cards; step down into their pictures. You are a Fool or a Devil, you are the Lovers, you are a Hermit, Death, the Sun or the World.

We are artists. We may seek in our art to remove the veil from our deep, total selves; we may seek to find our signatures in our art. Why do we or don't we sign our work?

Some of us sign our work so that it may be quickly identified among the places, people and things of the outer world. Some of us do not sign our work because we believe our work came from a higher power—a place or presence that is in us but not of us. When that is the reason we do not sign our work, it is because we have limited our identity to less than our wholeness.

A work of art is a perceptual field. The work of art that you make is the materialization of your body's perceptual field. You should sign your work with your name, because the work is already the signature of your body.

You should not sign your work, because all the implications and associations that have been built up around the artist's autograph by dealers and collectors, by connoisseurs and scholars, will distort and distract from the experience of the perceptual field. To make a gray, squiggly distraction that is your signature in the lower left corner is only to make a redundancy, because the total work is your name.

As Vincent van Gogh said, “like every work of art, a self-portrait.” Would you sign your face?