LEONARDO THE TRICKSTER

MIKHAIL BAKHTIN VS. SIGMUND FREUD ON CREATIVITY AND RENAISSANCE

Carnival turn-abouts

The purpose of this essay is to try to decipher a famous childhood recollection of Leonardo da Vinci about Kite:

> **"This writing distinctly about the Kite seems to be my destiny, because among the first recollections of my infancy, it seemed to me that, as I was in my cradle, a Kite came to me and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me several times with its tail inside my lips."[1]**

I will analyze two rival -- art historical and psychoanalytic -- interpretations of this recollection by Leonardo, and also some sociological data about sodomy in Renaissance Florence that became available only recently. I will try to solve the mystery of the Kite on the grounds of aesthetics, and I will base my analysis primarily on the concept of the Renaissance created by Mikhail Bakhtin in his monograph "Rabelais and his world" (1940). This is the first attempt to apply Bakhtin's method of research and interpretation to the visual arts. Bakhtin stressed such features of the Renaissance as:

1. **Carnival not only being a possibility of mocking everybody and everything during special time of the Carnivals but being also the underlying basis of the whole Renaissance culture: "The Renaissance is, so to speak, a direct 'Carnivalization' of human consciousness, phi-**

losophy and literature"[2]. Only later on "in the seventeenth century … generalization, empirical abstraction, and typification acquired a leading role in the world picture"[3];

2. **Polyphony or simultaneous coexistence of everything with everything as if in space, not in time[4]. Instead of the Medieval -- narrow, vertical, and extratemporal -- model of the world, with its absolute top and bottom, its hierarchical system of *ascents* and *descents*, a new Renaissance model gave the leading role to the "*horizontal lines*"[5]. Bakhtin stressed that *sublimation* is connected with the Medieval vertical model of the world – with its "fear and all gloomy seriousness", and "this is why the material bodily lower stratum is needed, for it gaily and simultaneously materializes and unburdens. It liberates objects from the snares of false seriousness, from illusions and *sublimations* inspired by fear"[6];**
3. **Ambivalence of the "double images" or "turnabouts" uniting two poles of *the becoming* and *the end* of a metamorphosis in one simultaneous self-sufficient continuum, for example, in the image of Pregnant death and in all conceivable variations of "two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born"[7];**
4. **A new type of individuality, which connects with the world not as a part with a whole, but as a whole with the whole; and in this "two-bodied whole" of the world, there cannot be any "naturalist atomization of reality, of an abstract and tendentious approach"[8] of the bourgeois ego. This means that man "receives at his birth the seeds of every form of life", "he may choose the seed", "he grows and forms it in himself", and "man can become a plant or an animal, but he can also become an angel and a son of God."[9]**

The Carnival quality is here the all-embracing and ambivalent integrity of the world with all its incompatible opposites and incomparable extremes – all the sides of the sphere with a man who for the first time in the history of civilization seeks to take a central position in the

world. Polyphony and ambivalence are the guaranties of the free incompleteness of the world where in the dialogue of top and bottom, front and back, face and buttocks, life and death, "everything descends into the earth and the bodily grave in order to die and to be reborn"[10]. Carnival had not yet separated itself as a definite style, genre, attitude and accent of the carnivalesque, burlesque, grotesque, parody and satire, but it was the most centripetal force of the parental culture, the new heuristic principle[11] applicable to all the sides of reality, either joyful or tragic.

"Mother Vulture"

The controversy about Leonardo's recollection started with Sigmund Freud and his essay "Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood" (1910)[12]. The main conclusions by Freud are:

1. **The Kite signifies Leonardo's "pleasure-giving" mother. The tail signifies both the mother's nipple and the coda, the penis, via the intermediary signifier of a "cow's udder," which resembles both a woman's breast and a penis. The beating of the tail inside the mouth signifies fellatio and passive homosexuality[13]. Mistakenly translating *Nibbio* as Vulture, Freud treats Leonardo's Kite as a Vulture of Egyptian mythology, a mother-goddess being an Androgyne and so possessing both male and female attributes and capable of self-impregnation or Immaculate Conception[14];**
2. **Leonardo's record of a Kite is "a phantasy transposed to his childhood"[15] or a *typical* "screen memory" projecting the present instinctual urgencies of the individual into his past. This fake memory signifies Leonardo's suppressed erotic attraction to his mother, which has its source in the "infantile trauma" of being an illegitimate child, abandoned by father until a certain age and so excessively loved by mother[16];**
3. **Because of pathology/"obsessional neurosis,"[17] Leonardo became a genius and an "ideal homosexual" ("it is doubtful whether Leonardo ever embraced a woman in passion"[18]). His homosexuality was an ideal one because Leonardo has sublimated his "id", and sublimated it so much that he had also inadvertently sublimated his very art by the "*instinct***

to research." So the results of such hypothetical sublimation were his partly suppressed sexuality and completely and finally suppressed art. Freud writes:

> **"We … took our mother's nipple into our mouth and sucked at it. The organic impression of this experience – the first source of pleasure in our life – doubtless remains *indelibly printed* on us; and when at a later date the child becomes familiar with the cow's udder whose function is that of a nipple, but whose shape and position under the belly make it *resemble* a penis, the preliminary stage has been reached which will later enable him to form the *repellent* sexual phantasy."[19]**

Here we have two main principles of signification according to Freud: (1) Indelibility of signifier – one cannot help but associates the breast with the udder, and the udder with the penis; (2) Association by external resemblance. But if Freud is right, and such external resemblance is substantially significant and indelible; then all farmers should be sexual (and homosexual) maniacs.

Freud bases his analysis on a circular principle of subconscious self-identification ("likeness", "substitution"[20]) of ego with the pleasure-giving object, yet Leonardo himself warned artists against automatic duplication of self-resemblances in their creations[21]. Arguing from the self-identification of Leonardo with his mother, Freud interprets Leonardo's mother as, maybe, his own mother or as some extra-sensitive, hysterical and sentimental woman of the petty-bourgeois class, to which Freud belonged. He says that Leonardo's words about the tail of the Vulture, striking within his lips, "may be translated: 'My mother pressed innumerable passionate kisses on my mouth'", and that Leonardo was "being kissed by her into precocious sexual maturity", so that "the erotogenic zone of the mouth was given an emphasis"[22]. But if one wants to see what peasant women, like Leonardo's mother, were like in the Renaissance, he could take a look at the rough, heavy and humble peasants of Peter Bruegel the Elder.

The Freudian method is based on his denial of all ambivalence and his tacit compliance with some established hierarchical norm. If there are no faults and peculiarities detected by

Freudianism in the personality of an artist, then everything is interpreted directly (plus for plus and minus for minus): if an artist is drawing the smiley faces of women, then his mother is/was nice. But if it detects some contradictions in dissected personality, then it looks for some "disguised motives", and replaces positive signifiers with the negative ones: if an artist is drawing the smiley faces of women, but is not reported to have had sex with women, he has an earmark of this or that complex. Furthermore, if an artist is caught in anything irregular and non-uniform, then all the "sublime" sides of the artist's personality would be misconstrued (inverted or overturned); and the imposed opposite meaning will be hypertrophied, with the least possible pathological charge of narcissism: Leonardo's vegetarianism together with kindness to animals conceal his repressed sadistic feelings. Then all the tragic sides of an artist's personality would be hypertrophied even further into pathological cases of misogyny, misanthropy, cannibalism and sadism: the depiction of the Deluge by Leonardo conceals his desire for the death of all Humanity and so on.

In the history of art, the psychoanalytic interpretation of Leonardo is almost a dominant one. Sir Kenneth Clark wrote in his classical study on Leonardo (1967) that Leonardo propounds "unanswerable riddles" [23], suitable only for the "psychologist". In reality, Sir Clark literally repeated not just "psychological", but Freudian claims about Leonardo's "miscarriage of will" which he called "a disease of the will"[24] and "indifferent inhumanity"[25]. He wrote that Leonardo's homosexuality "explains the element of frustration which even those who are most conscious of his greatness are bound to admit", and tells that this is the domain of the psychologist, not the art critic.[26]

In his well-known essay "Leonardo and Freud: an art-historian study" (1956), Meyer Schapiro protested against the organic/physiological/reductionist extremes of the Freudian

position and proved that *some* of the Freudian associations were not correct, but he himself based his method on similar principles. Schapiro suggested three readings of the symbol of the Kite:

1. **The Kite designates a member of avian species Leonardo has studied; tail is significant because of its special role in flight; the Kite concerned Leonardo's "ambition";**
2. **Record on the Kite is similar to the will-known "literary pattern"[27] speaking both of some representative of animal or insect kingdom in relation to the infant's mouth (ants filling the mouth of King Midas, bees settling on the lips of Plato). Use of the Kite-allegory emphasizes Leonardo's ambition;**
3. **The Kite designates Leonardo's "pecking-pain-giving-mother" by association with Leonardo's fable on Envy: "We read of the Kite that, when it sees its young ones growing too big in the nest, out of envy it pecks their sides, and keeps them without food."[28]. Leonardo's ambition disguised his neurosis connected by Schapiro again with Leonardo's mother.**

All the above interpretations of Schapiro's (a) concern only Leonardo's instincts and his knowledge and imitation of the established cultural patterns; (b) lead again to the Mother-complex and Neurosis-hypothesis. Schapiro's thesis of a "pecking-pain-giving-mother" just cosmetically revises the Freudian thesis of a "pleasure-giving-mother". He says: "A psychologist could infer from his interest in this bit of natural history [Leonardo's allegorical natural history] that Leonardo did not forgive Caterina his illegitimacy and her willingness to abandon him to a stepmother"[29].

To "fixation upon mother", Schapiro added one other, more appropriate kind of "fixation"[30] upon canon and tradition, so that Leonardo could have differed from the other High Renaissance artists only by the quantitative features, *by more at* perfection, *more at* tradition, *more at* hierarchical compliance, *more at* school. And Schapiro totally dropped the homosexuality of Leonardo – the so-called "break-through" made by Freud.

So Schapiro falls under the same fallacy of monovalence as Freud. Freud offers sublimation, but does not believe in any form of the sublime – civilization, morals and religion, as well as in the ability of an individual to cope with Freudian complexes. Schapiro offers the coherence of art-historical development, but if an artist is, according to Schapiro, a monovalent part of the whole, which is external in its totality, then this artist will never be able to get out of his narrow horizon and create something significant for his historical continuum as a whole. When Leonardo does not fit into the Procrustean Bed of dogmatic art history, then Schapiro is more then willing to give him up for mutilation by psychoanalysis:

> **"The aggressive feelings of Leonardo are better illustrated by the *unconstrained fantasies* of violence in both his writings and pictures and by his misanthropic taste for the ugly, the deformed and caricatural in the human face than by his vegetarianism and his release of captive birds."[31]**

Schapiro's approach also shows that just historical, art-historical or any unilateral approach does not help in the understanding of how the unique phenomenon of Leonardo differs from the templates and canons of his epoch.

In his monograph, "Leonardo da Vinci: Psychoanalytic Notes on The Enigma" (1961), K. R. Eissler rebuts Schapiro's argumentation against Freud and supports the Freudian interpretation of Leonardo's Kite. Eissler criticizes his contemporary for forcing "the historical prototypes" (to be "a medium of tradition") on the individuality of an artist, and revitalizes the importance of conflict and spontaneity in artistic creativity. But instead of Schapiro's paradigm of canon and imitation in the form of "traditional tale" and "reality pursuit"[32], Eissler revives again the very old Freudian tale of latent narcissism – *unconscious* imitation of tradition and auto-imitation.

By overusing Freudian law of overdetermination and joining Schapiro in more "appropriate substitutes" of Freud's solutions, Eissler enhanced Freudian "subject's external vicissi-

tudes"[33] and "genitality" with even more generalized instinctual template of "orality". He talks about Leonardo's impulse to devour and his fear of being devoured ("Leonardo's personal world must have had a strongly cannibalistic flavor and one of his fears must have been that of been devoured"), about Leonardo's "terror and fright", "trauma" ("he feared lest he be traumatized by the hostility of nature and his human environment"), about Leonardo's sadism ("man and his moral values are comprehensibly experienced in terms of oral sadism"[34]).

In Leonardo's drawings of violence and destruction, Eissler sees the decomposition of personality and "a chain of identical actions of wanton and destruction"[35]. Leonardo-Cannibal devours the whole world "to take with him to his grave everything he has loved despite everything"[36]. For Eissler, the more chaste your morality – the more beastly your suppressed desire: "Here the full contempt of the man who is *orally fixated* is expressed, it serves to deny equivalent wishes in himself"[37]. Finally, Eissler's verdict is that geniushood is a special case of pathology -- "neurotic or psychotic or perverse or even criminal"[38].

James Saslow (CUNY) in his book "Ganymede in the Renaissance" (1986), totally supports the Freudian hypotheses of Leonardo's infantile trauma, "atrophy of sexual life", misogyny, "anxiety about all submission to physical drives, whether heterosexual or homosexual"[39], sublimation of the two conflicting sexual opposites within the "desexualized"[40], quasi-qualitative, "undifferentiated whole"[41], and "overpowerful instinct for research." He represents Leonardo as a disqualified, desexualized, depersonalized, atrophied, and indifferent individual.

In her book "Art and Psychoanalysis" (1993), Laurie S. Adams (CUNY) follows the same line of phallic/vagina substitutions, narcissism and neurotic decomposition of personality in respect to Leonardo. She equates his genius or being not like others to pathology, his vegetarianism to his guilt and cannibalism, his anatomic studies to sadism and his "creating a ter-

rifying painting of Medusa, maternal figures against a background of the dark, jagged rocks on the paintings" to "*vagina dentata* horror."[42]

Father Ermine

To solve the mystery of the Kite, it is useful to show how Leonardo uses other and similar signifiers, for example, the one of Ermine, the heraldic symbol of Lodovico Moro[43], one of Leonardo's benefactors whom Freud claims to be a "substitute for Leonardo's father" and who left Leonardo, so that Leonardo allegedly copied irresponsibility towards his creations (children) and inability to bring almost all paintings to final conclusion[44] from both of his "fathers"[45]. While Freud is convinced that "there is not a line in Leonardo's notebooks which reveals any criticism of the events of those days, or any concern in them,"[46] Leonardo wrote on il Moro, calling him "a plant with its roots in the air to represent one who is at his last":

> **"Those who trust themselves to live near him, and who will be a large crowd, these shall all die cruel deaths; and fathers and mothers together with their families will be devoured and killed by cruel creatures."[47]**

In his allegorical "Studies on the Life and Habits of Animals", Leonardo introduces the first meaning of Ermine as a symbol of purity and moderation, well-known from old bestiaries and similar to the one given by Niccolo Machiavelli (a close friend of Leonardo) in his allegories on a thousand animals[48], but adds the words transforming the moderation into its opposite of ostentatious moderation:

> **"The ermine out of moderation <u>never eats once in the day</u>; it will rather let itself be taken by the hunters than take refuge in a dirty lair, in order not to stain its purity." [49]**

"Never eats once in the day" hints that Ermine eats a lot, so that any moderation is essential only when the quantity of consumption is substantial. This symbolism combines the external and trivial level of signification used by il Moro himself, with the other, ambivalent and pro-

vocative level of signification. Leonardo also writes about Ermine and Galeazzo, a legitimate heir of Milanese dukedom, whom il Moro, his uncle, had imprisoned and poisoned:

> **"Ermine with blood Galeazzo, between calm weather and a representation of a tempest. Il Moro with spectacles, and Envy depicted with False Report and Justice black for il Moro."[50]**

So Leonardo's portrayal of il Moro destroys the traditional meaning of Ermine symbol.

Similarly, in a letter to Piero Soderini, the ruler driven from Florence by the Medici, Niccolo Machiavelli puts the political ambivalence of his time in this way, quite opposite to the heraldic expressions of nobility:

> **"To give reputation to a new ruler, cruelty, treachery and irreligion are enough in a province where humanity, loyalty and religion have for a long time been common. Yet *in the same way* humanity, loyalty and religion are sufficient where cruelty, treachery and irreligion have dominated for a time, because, as bitter things disturb the taste and sweet one cloy it, so men get bored with good and complain of ill."[51]**

So Freudians should finally choose between two traditional lines of their argumentation: the first line is Leonardo's alleged indifference to his time, and to good and evil in general; and the second line is Freudian exaggeration of Leonardo's ascorbic interpretation of his time, and good and evil in general. After all, it is inconsistent to represent Leonardo as indifferent to and passionate about these questions at the same time.

Freud just cannot bear the opposites of Leonardo's life and character, the multiplicity of his personalities. To Freud, Leonardo's "feminine delicacy", exterior "peacefulness and his avoidance of all antagonisms" in combination with the severity of Leonardo's secret insights, and the mercilessness of Leonardo's creations, enterprises and features are the proof of Leonardo's "indifference to good and evil" and "repudiation of sexuality."[52] Here, "frigidity" means literally the moral, aesthetic, religious and philosophical frigidity of Leonardo. But Freud could have taken Machiavelli, with his exterior "peacefulness" and "avoidance of all antagonisms", and compared them with the severity of Machiavelli's secret insights, merci-

lessness of enterprises and theories with the same result of confusion over ambivalence. Moreover, all these proofs from Leonardo's cruel tricks and frightening jokes, and the just unexplainable presence of jokes and tricks all over the place, and in the very serious researches and theoretical postulations, collapse when we find the same things in the writings of Machiavelli. Actually, Leonardo's humorous writings in his notebooks are the most frustrating part for the Freudians "as scarcely worthy of so great a mind."[53]

Machiavelli also wrote a parody on the natural history of animals (being actually a parody on the evils and vices of his time), indecent comedies and bawdy Carnival songs. Explaining the ambivalent way of thinking and writing, Machiavelli wrote in a private letter:

> **"Anybody who saw our letters, honored friend, and saw their diversity, would wonder greatly, because he would suppose now that we were grave men, wholly concerned with important matters, and that into our breasts no thought could fall that did not have in itself honor and greatness. But then, turning the page, he would judge that we, the very same persons, were *light-minded, inconstant, lascivious, concerned with empty things*. And this way of proceeding, if to some it may appear censurable, to me seems praise-worthy, because we are imitating Nature, who is variable; and he who imitates her cannot be rebuked."[54] (Ital. – IAD)**

It is essential that Machiavelli's letters of, as well as his jokes and parodies, were of the double nature. Serious letters bore within them the bawdy and lascivious jokes of the Carnival. And his bawdy and lascivious Carnival songs, parodies and jokes bore within them all the frightening and severe knowledge about his time[55]. So in a Carnival song, Machiavelli writes: "May fear leave you, may enmities and rancors, avarice, pride, and cruelty; in you may the love of just and true honors rise up, and may the world return to that first age."[56]

Furthermore, some of Machiavelli's jokes are of the same frightening quality: "I saw a lion that had cut his own claws and pulled his teeth too through his own counsels, not good and not sagacious…,"[57] as if the overall optimism of the Renaissance is essentially based on the shocking combination of opposite extremes[58]. One can define this ambivalent method with Leonardo's prophecy "Of Sawyers":

> **[Of Sawyers] "There will be men who will move one against another, holding in their hands a cutting tool. But these will not do each other any injury beyond tiring each other; for, when one pushes forward the other will draw back. But woe to him who comes between them! For he will end by being cut in pieces."[59]**

Pleasure attacks pain, and pain attacks pleasure, but they do not change the great and the humble harmony of the ambivalent life of a Trickster. He who cannot see the mutual interdependence of two opposites, and so comes between them, is a dogmatic, who will be cut into two parts of real pain and illusory pleasure, which have lost their gauge of counterexample. In his "The Golden Ass," Machiavelli also wrote on this rotation of the contraries in the all-embracing Carnival of life, "and it is and always has been and always will be, that evil follows after good, good after evil."[60]

In the same way, Freudians, from one side, and art historians, from another, cannot blame Leonardo exclusively for his tragic insights and apocalyptic visions, calling them "sadistic", if we are to find the same ambivalent combination of the Universal Death and Rebirth, Destruction and Creation in Machiavelli's Carnivalesque writings: "Oh, strange events such as never have happened before in the world! Every day many children are born through sword cuts in the womb."[61] Freudian (and especially, Eissler's) representation of Leonardo's *"Profetie"* as "aggressive-sadistic", "lugubrious", "terrifying", with "gloomy spirit" and "over-all weirdness"[62], is not convincing, being based on the premise of exclusivity, weirdness and the neurotic unfit of Leonardo, i.e., his genius. If there were two people sharing the same opinions, then we cannot reduce the characteristics of one of them to his organic peculiarities.

Then another problem arises -- how to discern Leonardo from Niccolo. If the views they share constitute a tradition, tendency and canon, then in distinguishing between their individual contributions, how can we rely on historical tendency alone? Art historians often use the qualitative method – the better the artist is, the more of the definite tendency he expresses. As

if the better the artist is, the more unilateral he is, and as if one tendency is, by definition, incompatible with another tendency. And on this point, Kenneth Clark, as well as Schapiro, agree with Freudians, who call Leonardo the paradigmatic case of one-sided, egoistic, lost, disintegrated, so to speak, unilateral personality. Contrary to this, the Renaissance method of a "saw" tells us that Leonardo and Niccolo differed precisely in the scope of the contraries each of them had embraced and in the focal clarity of simultaneous presence in each of the contraries.

When art historians have difficulty in the discrimination of individual features of artists within one type, then to the method of exaggeration (genius as a megaphone of some canon), they apply the method of reduction, falling into the Freudian fallacy of organic peculiarities. So Sir Kenneth Clark explains Leonardo's mirror writing (for his notebooks, Leonardo was copying the ordinarily written text from its reflection in a mirror) by his left-handedness. But one can rebut this with the fact that his left-handedness does not explain Leonardo's omission of all punctuation, and his amalgamating several words to form one, or his cutting one word into parts.

Also, the traditional Art historical method fails when we find in Leonardo's writings some places where he directly opposes the canon of the painting, traditional of his time. For example, Leon Batista Alberti, who formulated this canon in his treatise "On Painting" (1435-6), rejects the ugliness and seeks the beautiful and "the mean"[63], so that the parts of body, ugly to the eye, should be covered with draperies[64]. Contrary to this, Leonardo teaches to "mingle direct contraries so that they may afford a great contrast to one another, and all the more when they are in close proximity; that is, the ugly next to the beautiful, etc." For Leo-

nardo, it is not a passion for the grotesquely ugly (as Schapiro is convinced), but the way to "*vary [contraries] as much and as close together as possible*."[65]

While Alberti writes about the mirror reflection of nature[66]; Leonardo speaks against any passive imitation of nature: "The painter who draws merely by practice and by eye, without any reason, is like a *mirror* which copies every thing placed in front of it without being conscious of their existence"[67], so that "the painter strives and competes with nature."[68] Alberti writes on the canonic "agreeable and pleasant attractiveness" [69] and appropriate functionality in "Istoria", whereas Leonardo writes that being a good painter is to depict everything that exists and in any combination of opposite elements[70]. So that he can be interested in pleasurableness and symmetry, on one side, and extremity and marginality, on the other side, destroying all norms of conventional functionality. In his painting "Battle at Anghiari," Leonardo depicts already "inhuman" and "unnatural" state of *pazzia bestialissima*, so that even horses fight each other with their teeth, just as he writes in some "screenplay" of the battle in his notebooks [71]. In the "screenplay" of the Deluge, he writes, "…others strangled themselves with their own hands, others seized their own children and violently slew them at a blow…"[72]

Alberti argues for the "single beauty" created by similarity of size, function, and kind[73], and suggests to "weep with the weeping, laugh with the laughing, and grieve with the grieving,"[74] but Leonardo writes on the ambivalence, as if a "twin" character of every pair of opposites[75], and that they tend to reunite in some whole of a "double beauty" "to escape … imperfection."[76] Alberti writes, "it would not be suitable to dress … Mars or Jove in the clothes of a woman"[77], but Leonardo is famous for his sexual ambiguous images, so that "separate [are] united."[78] Leonardo has expressed not only extremes opposing each other. He has not

only united opposite images in one painting, but he has combined the opposites in one and the same image. Not only the double-natured mutants on the pages of his notebooks, but all his creations have this double nature – they are ambivalent and polyphonic, they intermix the incomparable kinds and incompatible functions, showing things from front and back simultaneously. We might say that Leonardo created so few paintings precisely because he could never realize his screenplays fully under the conditions of the dominating artificial canon.

Leonardo's concept of double-images was directly connected with his scientific optic theory of "image within image," as if one unilateral mirror is placed in front of the other mirror to show the world from all sides: "The whole [is] in every smallest part of it; and all the objects in the whole, and all in each smallest part; each in all and all in every part"[79]. So that "*Man is the image of the world*"[80], and every image includes the entire Universe, with all its different qualities and rivaling opposites. Every image in Leonardo's paintings realizes its lost or hidden unity of all its tragic and comic doublets. The lower ascends, and the higher descends in this grandiose Carnival of the Universe. Machiavelli also wrote on the deceitfulness of the mirror and on revelation by double or circular mirrors: "I see, not with your mirror, where nothing is seen but prudence, but with that of the many, which is obliged in political affairs…"[81]

In his "A Lady with An Ermine", a portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, the mistress of Lodovico Sforza, Leonardo depicts the courtesan in the garment of Madonna with Child -- Divine, not earthly *Ma Donna* – a red dress and a blue cloak. And she holds in her hands not the divine infant, but a beast. It is not the portrait of the courtesan, and it is not a parody of the Madonna. It is the courtesan mirrored in the Madonna, and the Madonna mirrored in the courtesan, because you cannot understand one without another. And this double-image unites

the ultimate bottom and the ultimate height, provoking you to transcend the one-sidedness of any sublimated superiority and the one-sidedness of any illusively liberating debasement.

Leonardo wrote: "Disgrace should be represented upside down, because all her deeds are contrary to God and tend to hell."[82] In "A Lady with An Ermine", it is her red dress and blue cloak of the Madonna that become a pivot for the turning of the image "upside down." Bakhtin compared double-images with the two inverted figures (suits) on playing cards:

> **"The specificity of the structure of the Carnival image is that it embraces and unites within itself both poles of becoming and both members of antithesis: birth-death, youth-senility, top-bottom, face-buttocks, praise-abuse, assertion-negation, the tragic-the comic, etc., while the upper pole of the heterogeneous (or double) image is reflected in the lower one according to the principle of suits on playing cards. It could be said, that antagonists meet with each other, look into each other, are reflected in each other, know and understand each other."[83]**

Here are the three levels of Leonardo's signification in his "A Lady with An Ermine":

1. **Ermine signifies an animal devoid of any human significance (a "rigid designator");**
2. **(a) Ermine signifies purity and moderation in old bestiaries (a heraldic symbol);**
   (b) Heraldic Ermine signifies il Moro in the context of his social and personal life (a personal symbol);
3. **Ermine is a beast given birth to by Cecilia Gallerani (Ermine-infant instead of Christ-infant) – her illegitimate child from il Moro – a bastard.**

The first level gives us a commonplace signification, which does not mean much. The second one is a level of allegorizing where some of the important natural qualities of the Ermine are intentionally omitted, or repressed by other signifiers, alien to this animal and forcedly imported into the meaning of the Ermine. So that the true nature of the Ermine is disguised under artificial covers. Such symbolism is conventional and loses any significance in any other, different context (for example, in another epoch or in another country). The third level is disallegorizing. It shows the Ermine again as an animal, but in combination with all the previous contexts. All the conventional signifiers become the sides of one integral sphere of the universal understanding of the Ermine as a beast, a creature, in comparison and contrast

with a man, a creator. Il Moro as the Ermine loses his disguise of alleged purity, which he wanted to establish by comparing himself with the Heraldic Ermine, and reveals himself as a true beast. The Ermine migrates through the contexts of existence, incapable of becoming their creator. Here the universal Ermine-signifier retains the social and personal applications of the conventional Ermine-signifier.

The first level of signification corresponds to the words, which Leonardo writes in an ordinary fashion, for example, geographic names. The second level corresponds to the inverts – to all these enigmatic allegories, or rather allegorisms written in his notebooks by mirror-ill-writing. These allegories are intentionally over-allegorized (for example, Envy is represented by more than twenty allegorisms[84]. These allegorisms radically differ from Leonardo's paintings, which are very concise. Here, the principle of the allegory – disguise – is driven to the extreme manifestation. It seems that these allegorisms collect all the existent allegories on some particular theme. These different allegories represent objects under the cover of praise or abuse. Allegories-inverts are conventional and are each attached to its own specific, foxed context. When all the allegories are combined, the ambivalent double-meaning is born. It is the third and last level of signification. The Leonardesque smile is an indication, a hint and a warning that Leonardo's creations could not be understood in a direct mirror-like-understanding of the hierarchical uniformity. That is from the point of view of one kind, one size and one function[85].

Thievish and Mischievous Ganymede

The Freudian stigma of homosexuality as a pathology, and Leonardo's homosexuality as an anomaly both collapse if we find the same attitudes and ways of life shared by many others, for example by Machiavelli who discussed in his letters the implications of his own son's (Lo-

dovico's) intimacy with a younger boy[86]. The Freudian diagnosis of neurosis, built on the exclusive relationships of Leonardo with his pupils, especially on buying them gifts[87], fails, when it is discovered that in the Renaissance Florence, it was a usual practice for an admirer to give his adolescent lover luxurious gifts[88].

Michael Rocke says in his book "Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence" (1996) that in this small city of only around 40,000 inhabitants, during the period of the special Officers of the Night, as many as 17,000 individuals or more were incriminated at least once in sodomy, with close to 3,000 convicted"[89]. Over 13,000 individuals were denounced or denounced themselves[90]. Rocke calls sodomy in the 15th century Florence "the competitive, sometimes violent pursuit of boys by men"[91], and says that *Vice contra naturam* developed male sociability and confraternity, occupational solidarities to patron-client relations, neighborhood ties, and networks of friends[92]. Rocke defines specific features of the Renaissance pederasty in this way:

1. **Sodomy was not limited to some social "minority"[93]. There existed a strict hierarchy of roles; adult males did not have sex together.[94] Rigid hierarchy defined the roles as such – the "active role" of an adult as an anal inserter or even fellator, and the "passive role" of an adolescent boy[95]. The roles were not exchangeable (no reciprocal homosexuality and mutual penetration)[96]. The passive role was feminine and dishonorable, but limited to the biological period of adolescence.[97]**
2. **Those who continued to be sodomized in older age, were liable to ridicule and harsh punishment. Masculinity was not compromised, because boys who were sodomized did not necessarily stay homosexuals, or established their active virile stand by becoming sodomites themselves[98]. Also, the restriction of the "womanly" role to adolescents did not jeopardize the "manly" gender identity of the adult sodomites. Homosexuality could have turned into bisexuality, and vice versa.**
3. **There appeared a social group of "inveterate" or habitual sodomites, who never took a wife[99]. For these sodomites, erotic relations with boys represented a conscious and long-term alternative to marriage. Ten of the 18 unmarried men over the age of 40 in the *catasto* sample [tax records] were implicated in sodomy with more than one partner between 1478 and 1502[100]. In some cases, sodomites had a permanent boy – "bardassa"[101] (slave). Some times, Florentine homosexuals created long-term unions as if surrogate male families[102].**

One can add to Rocke's analysis, that Florentine sodomy was of the Carnival quality. It cultivated virility through preliminary experience of femininity. It allowed for gender-ambiguity. And this ambiguity was ambivalent – the males did not lose their virility in their

homosexuality, but at the same time acquired a unique experience of being feminine. But, most of all, pederasty was a basis for creating the sublime images of angels, expressing what was called by Rocke "the beauty and erotic appeal of adolescence"[103]. Cherub has inevitably transmuted into Amor (or Cupid), and in the letters of Machiavelli, who was a womanizer, Love is a boy[104].

In 1449, the government issued a threat of announcing the accused sodomites at the legislative councils, but if a person voluntarily turned himself in, confessed his sexual relations, and named his partners, he was guaranteed full immunity from prosecution[105]. The period 1470s and 1480s was the only period in which self-accusations were regularly noted in extant registers; an average of some forty people denounced themselves for sodomy every year[106]. One can conclude that having already the anonymous accusation of homosexuality in 1476, Leonardo was seeking to leave Florence in 1482 for Milan. He wrote:

> **"Nothing is so much to be feared as Evil Report. This Evil Report is born of life."[107]**
> **"Do not reveal, if liberty is precious to you; my face is the prison of love."**
> **"When I did well, as a boy you used to put me in prison. Now if I do it being grown up, you will do worse to me."[108]**

In 1496, in Florence, Savonarola, the head of the Dominican convent, organized groups of teenage boys who patroled the streets and ridiculed sodomites in the true Carnival spirit of frightening tragicomedy. Savonarola was executed, but sodomy remained. In a letter of 1513, Machiavelli told his friend, Francesco Vettori, a real anecdotal story from the life of Florentine sodomites: how a sodomite, Giuliano Brancaccio, sodomized a boy and promised to pay him, but called himself by the name of his friend, Fillipo Casavecchia, and gave his address. When the boy tried to get his money, Fillipo was afraid to pay the boy. Finally, Fillipo inferred that it was Brancaccio who had done to him "that rascally deed." So, Fillipo summoned one of his friends, and taking the boy, they came to Brancaccio, and the boy recognized

him by his voice. Machiavelli wrote: "And in Florence in this Carnival nothing else is said than 'Are you Brancaccio or are you Casa?' And the story was well known under the whole heaven"[109]. The question "Are you Bancaccio or are you Casa?" was funny because both Brancaccio and Casa (Fillipo Casavecchia) were sodomites, one, probably, younger than the other, and were lovers at some time. In another letter to Vettori, Machiavelli wrote: "Fillipo and Brancaccio have with you become one soul in two bodies, or rather two souls in one body, in order not to make a mistake."[110]

Salai, a Leonardo's pupil and a life-long beloved, came to the home of Leonardo in 1490, when he was ten. Rocke writes: "In the 1478-1502 survey there are 133 confessed relations that involved partners whose recorded ages ranges from ten to eighteen"[111]. According to Rocke, Leonardo should have been in the group of habitual or inveterate sodomites. But the evidence that Leonardo was an actual, not a latent homosexual is more deeply rooted in Leonardo's own principles of life and experience. Leonardo was averse to any form of inner latency. For him, knowledge is experience, and experience concerned all sides of life at once, reassembling them, refracting them until the macrocosm and the microcosm will unite in a pupil of an eye. He says: "Oh! What a difference there is between the imaging quality of such light in the dark inner eye and actually seeing it outside this darkness."[112] And if Leonardo had been a misogynist, he would not have been able to depict a woman so perfectly as he did. If Leonardo had been indifferent, he would not have been able to paint his "Battle at Anghiari". If Leonardo had been asexual, his creations would not have been so seductively sexual. He wrote [On Truth], "dissimulation is of no avail … Nothing is hidden under the sun … the mask is for lying and falsehood which conceal truth."[113]

Latency is an unconscious self-deception, a mechanism of automatic forgetting and allegorizing. An *ego-syntonic* individual sees the world through the veil of Alberti (the veil of hypothetical positive science and artificial partial conventions). Freudians confuse the latency or lethargy of an egoist with the self-control and ambivalent reaction of a trickster. Leonardo was a person and an artist, who passionately repulsed any linear approach of others toward himself, because he suffered from canonic and schematic labels more than other men of his time: a social label of being a bastard, an artistic label of a craftsman at a beckon call of the patrons, an intellectual label of a philosopher not taken seriously because of not knowing Greek, etc. And his highest tricksterism consisted in the art of preserving his inner integrity, notwithstanding the aggressiveness of any decomposed and unilateral environment, with all its partialities and prejudices.

Leonardo wrote on a veil of the Trickster as a temporary state of conceiving and bearing the creation. So that a creator stays veiled not in order to separate himself from the world, but, on the contrary, in order to embrace more of its polyphony, and later to influence the world as if he, the artist, is a god. His veil is a measure of protecting his pregnancy. His repulsion of any linear approach is his Immaculate Conception from all sides of reality, fighting with each other[114]. In Freudian sublimation, the real, but latent, is substituted with the manifest, but illusive, while Leonardo would always return to reality – to real passion, real experience, real image and real man.

As with artistic canon, Leonardo used the canon of the sexuality of his time that was more suited to his life of a bastard and a servant of dukes when everything collapsed around him. He refracted his epoch in his sexuality as well as in his paintings. He experienced it fully, so that he was capable of transcending the limits of the modes of sexuality, available to his epoch.

His homosexuality, or *Vice contra naturam,* was his challenge to nature, and one of the realizations of his own Immaculate Conception. Hermaphrodite impregnates himself. But if everything is in everything else, according to Leonardo, then self-sufficiency is the self-sufficiency of everything and everybody. For Leonardo, to love means to recover this connection. To love means to bring somebody, your lover, to a state or a stage of this recovery; and nothing is sinful in this recovery. True lovers unite in all sides of their life, physically and intellectually, and in all events of everyday life[115].

Contrary to the Freudian charge of Narcissism, viz., that Leonardo's pupils were for him "only substitutive figures and revivals of himself in childhood -- boys whom he loves in the way in which his mother loved him when he was a child,"[116] -- Leonardo's relations with Gian Giacomo de' Caprotti, whom he called Salai (Little Satan), and who was a "Thief, liar, obstinate, glutton,"[117] were far from being ideal. But Leonardo's relationship with Salai reached a level other than the usual sodomy in Florence. Homosexuals created surrogate families, but in these "pseudo-families", boys were treated as subordinates[118]. More common homosexual relationships were similar to Ovid's description of Orpheus' life after he had finally lost Eurydice:

> **"Orpheus kept himself clear of women and love and its risks. Women, of course, loved him, expressed in one way or another their interest, but he refused them, preferring the random spasms of passion with adolescent boys in whom no one invests sentiment, knowing they'd grow, change, and in any event forget him as promptly as he would forget each one of them…"[119]**

Machiavelli described how similar Brancaccio and Casa had behaved themselves with their boys:

> **[About Casa] "I see him gesture and now shift himself toward one side, now toward the other; I see him sometimes shake his head at the halting and modest answers of the boy; I see him, as he speaks with him, taking now the function of the father, now of the teacher, now of the lover; and that poor boy remaining doubtful of the end to which he wants to bring him; and now he**

> **fears for his honor, now trusts in the gravity of the man, now has respect for his elegant and mature bearing."[120]**

Machiavelli actually spoke to his friend, Vettori, how Vettori, Brancaccio and Casa had spent time together having dinner with some boy and girl. And Machiavelli described his own friend in these words: "I see you, Mr. Ambassador, … having an eye on both that boy, the right however, and the other on that girl…"[121] In another letter he gave Mr. Ambassador some advice:

> **"These do not know that he who is held prudent by day will never be held crazy by night, and if anyone is thought a man of substance and effective, whatever he does to refresh his spirit and live happily will bring him honor and not blame; and instead of being called a bugger or a whoremaster, it will be said that he is tolerant, ready, and a good companion."[122]**

One can say, that Leonardo had taken Salai because he was a boy who would not reject *Vice contra naturam*, and whose family would not oppose it. But Leonardo had a relationship with Salai for twenty-five years and left him half of his vine garden, where Salai had previously built his house[123]. He made Salai a painter and sent him as his representative to high officials[124]. Leonardo suffered and endured Salai, a "thief and liar", and finally brought him up, recovered him, and one can say, saved him from the violent pursuit of the sodomites who just used their boys. So Leonardo differed from his friend Machiavelli precisely in the depth and responsibility of his relationships.

Raptor, the Bird of Prey

To solve the enigma of Leonardo's childhood recollection of a Kite, one should take into consideration the three levels of Leonardo's signification. All commentators so far have analyzed only some of the levels, while dropping other levels. The result has been the controversy between the psychoanalytical and the art historical accounts, and the incompatible interpretations within each account as well. For Freud, Leonardo's mother is a pleasure-giving-mother, while for Schapiro, Leonardo's mother is a pecking-pain-giving-mother. After Shapiro's im-

proving on "pain-giving", psychoanalytics have noticed the hostile quality of the verb *percuotere* ("to strike", "to beat") which Leonardo used in describing what the bird did to him[125].

But nobody from this circle of scientists and specialists seemed to notice that a mother never strikes her infant with her nipple when she suckles him. This is so because a mother's nipple does not move itself when an infant sucks from it. While in fellatio (Freudian *breakthrough*), something aggressively penetrates from the outside and strikes within the lips. This percussive (*percuotere*) movement could be accompanied by the suckling of the person who is penetrated, but it is not necessary. That is why Leonardo wrote that a Kite struck him with its tail, but not that he, Leonardo, sucked his tail.

Moreover, Leonardo wrote: "a Kite opened my mouth with its tail". A mother does not open the mouth of her infant with her nipple, except maybe when the child is sick and unwilling to suck. Usually, infants aggressively take the nipple themselves. The very description of an event that "a Kite came to a cradle" gives an impression that it was an event, something not ordinary, but very extraordinary. Here, Schapiro's interpretations appear in their full light. This recollection signifies something intimately and at the same time fatally important – something that determined Leonardo's destiny.

It is nothing of a revelation when Schapiro tells us that Leonardo connects his childhood recollection of a Kite with his study of avian birds and aviation; and that Leonardo finds the roots of his scientific interests in his intimate childhood recollection of a Kite. Because Leonardo himself tells us about this: "This writing distinctly about the Kite seems to be my destiny…" "The writing distinctly about the Kite" appears in his other records on this page, devoted to the scientific study of the Kite's flight. Schapiro tells us that there is nothing special about this record – just birds that fly and just an artist who wants to become famous by solv-

ing the mystery of their flight. Schapiro cares only about two levels of Leonardo's signification – the natural history level and the allegorical history level.

On the first level, the Kite signifies a real bird. On the second level, the Kite signifies, or rather symbolizes, some human quality (like the heraldic ermine). Schapiro tries to prove that Leonardo was conscious only of the first two levels of signification. Schapiro offers the second-level signifier precisely as some instrument for emphasizing or exaggerating the ego-syntonic pretences, as a cover or a disguise functioning in the definite hierarchical context. Here the allegory conceals the true nature of a real man, who "imports" some quasi-quality, and the true nature of a real beast, which "exports" some quasi-quality.

The heraldic or allegorical symbol could become a personal symbol, or gain some personal connotation. This happens to two Kites in Leonardo's notebooks. But, again, the allegory of the Kite-invert will mutate and fluctuate from context to context, from epoch to epoch, from individual to individual, from country to country. Its meaning will be unstable and unreliable, until finally, the cover-allegory will fail in establishing its meaning and will be forgotten. The conventional character of inverts also explains the fact that they are easy to use in any context as some kind of tokens, with their value dependent on the situation. They compose some allegorical, quasi-symbolic and trans-historical meta-language which is used without personal, historical or any responsibility as commonplace templet, pattern, mould or cliché, banality or stereotype. These are dead symbols that have lost their impact on reality. Freud went shopping as far back as Ancient Egyptian history, while Schapiro was satisfied with the Hellenistic period.

This record of Leonardo is striking in its simplicity. It does not appear to be over-allegorized, like Leonardo's experiments with allegorizing. It is as simple as his other per-

sonal records directly corresponding to the real events of his life. At the same time it differs from other personal records by this word "destiny". The word "destiny" clearly demonstrates that the Kite is the central point of the different signifiers, a double-image. One can solve the riddle of Leonardo's double-image only when he unites the macrocosmic, the most universal meanings of the Kite, with the microcosmic, the most intimate meanings of the Kite. This record is as simple as Leonardo's best paintings, and precisely because it is of the same quality as his best paintings.

It is probable that Leonardo knew about the historical templates of destiny-signifiers which Schapiro is talking about, and which were connected with the mouth of the illustrious infant. Maybe, this idea was also what he was playing around with. But what opened his mouth and struck him inside his lips was not his mother's nipple. Here again the other Kite-signifier comes up – that of Envy:

> **"We read of the Kite that, when it sees its young ones growing too big in the nest, out of envy it pecks their sides, and keeps them without food."[126]**

Schapiro comes to the conclusion that Kite-envy is a woman. But Leonardo is very precise in the signification of gender in his "The life and habits of animals". When the gender is ambiguous, he writes: [On Chastity] "The turtle-dove is never false to its mate; and if one dies the other preserves perpetual chastity, and never again sits on a green bough, nor ever again drinks of clear water"[127]. It is as if allegorical Natural history has given an excellent opportunity to arbitrarily play with gender signification. When gender is supposed to be stressed – in the cases of the heterosexual monogamous families – he writes: [On The Viper] "She, in pairing opens her mouth and at last clenches her teeth and kills her husband."[128] Comparing Leonardo's childhood recollection of the Kite with his "The Life and Habits of Animals", one

can conclude that the sexual nature of the Kite in Leonardo's records is either not signified or ambiguous.

Freud was rather imprecise when he made a direct reference from the androgynous "Vulture" acting upon the Leonardo-infant, to the real mother of Leonardo, unambiguously female. The break-through of the Renaissance consisted in the actual realization of all modes of sexuality and all sides of human nature – unambiguously feminine, unambiguously virile (as that of Machiavelli), and ambiguously homosexual (both feminine and masculine as if androgynous). The Androgyne created a separate mode of life, being special not only in its sexual features (Ficino, Bruno), and based on the philosophy of Androgyny. And so the Renaissance surmounted mere allegorical fantasizing about the Androgyne by alchemists.

The Renaissance was built on the foundation of already universally elaborated allegories. The essence of the Renaissance Titanism consisted in disallegorizing the quasi-divine allegories of the cosmos -- in the realization of what had seemed like a dream before and the materialization of what would seem later an illusion. This means that Leonardo did not "allegorize the allegory" of the Madonna, The Virgin Mary, into the allegory of his mother. But rather he would devote his entire life to the concern with Immaculate Conception, and would almost always draw androgynes. So he disallegorized the allegory of the Virgins conceiving immaculately as if they were androgynes, and actually transformed them into androgynes. Furthermore, he disallegorized angels, Bacchus, St. John and others and actualized their latent androgyny. And his personal life would also be *contra naturam* as if androgyny. In other words, he was interested in creating real androgynes in the virtual worlds of his paintings, and in living the life of androgyny, but not in masking his mother, a humble peasant woman, as androgyne, as if for one of the il Moro masquerades or pageants.

In both Leonardo's references to the Kite, the Kite is something or somebody connected, in the first case, with Leonardo's early years with his family, and, in the second case, with the life of some family. The Kite, as well as the Vulture, is a bird of Prey, a Raptor. But in contrast with the Vulture, the Kite does not feed on carrion. Freud was absolutely right when he connected a bird -- l'uccello -- with a penis. Machiavelli gave the same reference in a letter, mentioned above, where he told to his friend Vettori a Carnival joke about Florentine sodomites. It is interesting that Machiavelli consciously used the allegorizing and then the sudden disallegorizing as a means of making a story funny and not less real. He starts his story:

> **"An amusing thing has happened, or rather, to call it by its proper name, *a ridiculous metamorphosis*, and worthy to be set down in ancient writings. Because I do not wish anybody to feel hurt, I shall relate it to you hidden under allegories. Giuliano Brancaccio for example, eager to go *bird-hunting*…seeing the weather dark… each sign for believing that all the birds would wait…-- took a fowling net, a little bell on his arm, and a good bird-swatter… He found *a little thrush*, which with the bird-swatter and the light and the bell he stopped, and cleverly brought it into the depth of the thicket… Detaining his bird there, and finding its disposition generous, and kissing it many times, he straightened two feathers of its *tail*, and at last, <u>as many say</u>, put it in the bird-basket hanging behind him."[129]**

The bird, Uccello, signifies here an accessible boy; the tail signifies a penis; the bird-catcher or the bird-hunter, a raptor, signifies a sodomite. Machiavelli uses allegories actually not for disguising what he is talking about, because these references were well known, and pederasty was widespread. But he fills the commonplace allegories with such precise and characteristic details of real life that allegories finally get disallegorized, and transformed into the ambivalent double-images. Machiavelli says:

> **"But because the wind compels me to come out from under cover, and *allegories are not enough*, and this metaphor no longer serves me, Brancaccio wished to know… etc."[130]**

And he goes on by giving the details of the anecdote about the famous question "Are you Brancaccio or are you Casa?" This example shows how the double-image absorbs all the allegorical disguises, only to focus them again in the individual center of the world, in one destiny-

event, both universally and intimately significant. In this Carnivalesque event, all veils are drawn off in the boundary or ambivalent re-veil-ation. This event transforms the allegorical – "ridiculous" – metamorphosis into the real, cosmic metamorphosis where the personal destiny is to be changed.

Rocke says that sodomites were called in Florence the Owls[131]. But Machiavelli signifies sodomites with all the names of Raptors, the Birds of Prey:

> **"…Our Filippo is like a *Vulture*, which when there is no carrion in the region, flies a hundred miles to find some, and when he has his crop full, he sits on a pine and laughs at the *eagles*, *hawks*, *falcons and like* who, since they eat delicate foods, are for half the year almost dying of hunger. So Magnificent Ambassador, let one squawk and the other fill his crop…"[132]**

Here it is important to see that Machiavelli discriminates between two kinds of Raptors – those who hunt for carrion, that is poor boys prostituting on the streets, and those who "eat delicate foods", and "for half the year are almost dying of hunger". The eagles, hawks and falcons are those of the upper classes, who would refer to themselves as the proper divine Raptors of the Greeko-Roman mythology. In Ovid, Gods could have metamorphosed into any animal form and any form, but usually they took the disguises of birds, in order to travel over great distances: Appolo as a Crow; Mercury as an Ibis[133]; Phoebus as a hawk[134]; and Jove as an Eagle[135]. During the Renaissance, not the references suggested by Schapiro, as to the mouth of the illustrious infant, but the other references were much more actual -- as to the Rape of Ganymede by Jove-Eagle[136]. Or, in other words, here the human illustrious infant also got his initiation by mouth, but in a radically different way.

Saslow remarks that Leonardo never depicted the Rape of Ganymede, which was a very popular theme for the Renaissance artists. He says that the Rape of Ganymede meant some-thing intimately painful for Leonardo, but Saslow complies with the nipple-udder-penis-

hypothesis of Freudianism, while the failure in its historical and social foundations would become evident after Rocke's research on Florentine pederasty.

First of all, homosexuality in the Renaissance was an androgynous-like ambivalent combination of the effeminate and masculine features. It did not compromise virility, while supplementing it with some kind of male fertility. Vasari indeed depicted Leonardo as a virile man: "In him was great bodily strength, joined to dexterity"[137]. So Leonardo stayed virile and contrasted his virile fertility against the fertility of women giving birth to men who were worse than beasts, bastards. Second, there were no strict borders between homosexuality and bisexuality. So Leonardo designed a bordello[138]. It is doubtful that he was admitted there just for scientific field research. Third, in the Renaissance, a homosexual developed not from sucking a mother's nipple to sucking a penis as a passive homosexual, as Freud envisages it; but rather, from being sucked or fellated in one's teenage years to sucking or fellating in one's virility years.

The event that Leonardo is describing probably corresponds to the age of 4, when the child still sleeps in his cradle, but his memories are already quite conscious. The Kite who opened his mouth and struck with its tail inside his lips was a sodomite from a circle of relatives, friends of the family, or neighbors. It happened in the house of his father, where Leonardo, as Schapiro stressed, was taken much earlier than Freud thought. Somebody used the boy whose position in the family was ambiguous. This man was not a Vulture feeding on carrion, but was from a flock of the eagles, hawks, falcons, *and Kites*, who, as Machiavelli explained to us, ate the delicate food, and for half the year almost died of hunger.

It is improbable that it was an adult, if Rocke is right, and role reversal was impossible in the homosexual relationships of the Renaissance, so that a boy was passively fellated, and an

adult was active both in penetrating and sucking. Rocke says that "adolescents perhaps had slightly more freedom to experiment and to exchange roles, and among adults there were rare exceptions to the norm, usually viewed with horror or disgust."[139] So a Kite who opened Leonardo's mouth and struck Leonardo several times with its tail inside his lips was "a thrush", sodomized already by Brancaccio or Casa. Leonardo called him not the thrush, but the Kite because when Leonardo made his record, the thrush had already metamorphosed into the Kite, thus transforming the sodomized boy into the sodomite. The Kite here is a double-image, first of all, in a sexual sense – it is a fellated sodomite transgressing the norms of Renaissance homosexuality and premeditating modern interactive homosexuality. In the Renaissance, again, such transgression and experimenting was allowed only for a specific age – the age of the actual metamorphosis from the passive fellated boy to the active fellating sodomite.

But Leonardo's Kite is a double-image in all the other senses offered by his interpreters. His Kite unites all the religious and mythological, social and historical allegories, and brings them to a new level of conceiving the universal as the most intimate. The double-image of the Kite means: To fellate and to subsist; to fly and to penetrate into everything, to transgress all the limits of time and space; to understand everything by uniting with everything through the literal emanations spreading from you and revitalizing everything in the world; to subsist on the world and then to impregnate the world with something that only you could originate and do it contra naturam; to impregnate the world and to be the bearer of the fetus.

The Kite of Leonardo is a double-image of the pain and pleasure of life, of tears and laughter over the awful and ridiculous inverts grimacing from the slick mirrors of il Moro, Borgia and Freud, over his own maybe sinful or maybe blessed protest against the norms of nature and society, and the dogmas of religion and science.

The Kite rises to the sky, and a man flies with it. The man flies not away from the earth to the sublime aether, but over the earth, to see and love it from all its sides.

[1] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2 (New York, 1970) 414
[2] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Trans by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA, 1968), 273
[3] Ibid., 115
[4] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Poetics of Dostoevskii* (Moscow, 1963), 38-39
[5] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 403
[6] Ibid., 376
[7] Ibid., 26
[8] Ibid., 448
[9] Ibid., 364
[10] Ibid., 435
[11] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Poetics of Dostoevskii*, 224
[12] Freud followed with the novel "*The Forerunner; the Romance of Leonardo da Vinci*" by the Russian poet Dmitri Merezhkovsky (1902) projecting on the Renaissance the decadent motifs of the inhuman genius with demonic weaknesses, indifference to good and evil and the dominance of scientific interests finally suppressing art. It was Merezhkovsky who initially interpreted Caterina in Leonardo's records as his mother and suggested a fatal connection between mother and son.
[13] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, The standard edition, vol. 11 (London, 1968), 85-87
[14] The translation of *Nibbio* as Vulture is wrong, but one could still ask Freud, if Leonardo was a Vulture child (with no father), and only female Vultures exist, then why was Leonardo himself not female?
[15] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 82
[16] Ibid., 135
[17] Ibid., 105 and 131
[18] Ibid., 71
[19] Ibid., 87
[20] Ibid., 100
[21] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 293-294
[22] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 107 and 131-132
[23] Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Baltimore, MD, 1967), 153 (Sir Kenneth Clark was a director of the National Gallery of Great Britain and a main oracle on Leonardo)
[24] Ibid., 147
[25] Ibid., 159-160
[26] Ibid., 59
[27] Meyer Schapiro, Leonardo and Freud: an art-historian study*, Renaissance Essays*, *Library of the History of Ideas*, Ed. by Paul O. Kristeller and Philip P. Wiener (Rochester, 1992), 310
[28] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 315
[29] Meyer Schapiro, Leonardo and Freud: an art-historian study, 315
[30] Ibid., 324
[31] Ibid., 333
[32] K. R. Eissler, *Leonardo da Vinci: Psychoanalytic Notes on The Enigma* (New York, 1961), 15-17
[33] Ibid., 19 and 22
[34] Ibid., 260 and 265-266

[35] Ibid., 265
[36] Ibid., 273
[37] Ibid., 263
[38] Ibid., 285
[39] James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London, 1986), 89
[40] Ibid., 85
[41] Ibid., 90
[42] Lourie S. Adams, *Art and Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1993, 37-38
[43] Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 54
[44] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*., 67
[45] Ibid., 122
[46] Ibid., 69
[47] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 350
[48] Machiavelli, The Golden Ass, *The Chief Works and Others*, trans. by Allan Gilbert, Vol. 2 (Durham, NC, 1965), 768
[49] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 321
[50] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 349-350
[51] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 897 In this very ambivalent way, the notorious il Moro, overjoyed with the birth of his first legitimate child, ordered all the bells of Milan to ring for six days. Cesare Borgia, another benefactor of Leonardo borrowed artillery from the duke of Urbino, and then turned them against the lender.
[52] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 69
[53] Ibid., 70
[54] The letter was to his friend Francesco Vettori, Florentine Ambassador to the Supreme Pontiff in Rome, and in this letter, Machiavelli had also expounded his astute thoughts on the political disposition in Italy Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 961
[55] His satires on the courts of princes and their fashionable society depicted them as a theatre of the absurd, Ibid., 863-868
[56] Ibid., 880
[57] "The Golden Ass", Ibid., 767
[58] Leonardo's other friend in Florence, a sculptor Gian Francesco Rustici, had a more simple way of making frightening jokes. He kept a porcupine, which had the run of the house; it amused him when his guests, stabbed under the table, yelped in pain, Robert Wallace, *The World of Leonardo* (New York, 1967), 147 This joke is similar to Leonardo's joke of fixing on the back of a lizard, wings, eyes, horns and beard, taming it, and showing it to his friends to make them "fly for fear", Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (New York, 1959), 206
[59] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 357
[60] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 763
[61] Ibid., 738
[62] K. R. Eissler, *Leonardo da Vinci: Psychoanalytic Notes on The Enigma*, 260-261
[63] Leon Battista Alberti, *On painting*, trans. by John R. Spencer (New Haven and London, 1966), 73
[64] Ibid., 76
[65] *Leonardo da Vinci on Painting*, *A lost Book (Libro A)*, trans. by Carlo Pedretti (Berkeley, CA, 1964), 80
[66] Leon Battista Alberti, *On painting*, 64
[67] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 18
[68] Ibid., 332
[69] Leon Battista Alberti, *On painting*, 75
[70] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 253
[71] Ibid., 303
[72] Ibid., 307-308
[73] Leon Battista Alberti, *On painting*, 72-73
[74] Ibid., 77
[75] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 352-353
[76] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 287
[77] Leon Battista Alberti, *On painting*, 74
[78] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 368
[79] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 41
[80] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 291

[81] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, vol. 2, 895
[82] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 359
[83] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Poetics of Dostoevskii*, 238
[84] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 353
[85] Leonardo was also fond of creating double-images as some *objets d'art* – art objects blending two or more incompatible objects into one double-object (frightening lion opening his breast full of lilies; a charming lyre in the form of horse's skull transformed into bizarre horrible one-eyed creature, etc). But again, Freudianists cannot claim the organic exclusivity of this double making, for in the Renaissance, this caprice of producing double-effects belonged not only to Leonardo (Gian Francesco Rustici, mentioned above in connection with his porcupine, had dinners where the food, though excellent, was molded into *macabre* or disgusting forms, Robert Wallace, *The World of Leonardo*, 147). But Leonardo united extremes in a consistent and ultimate manner.
[86] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford, New York, Oxford, 1996), 114 and 121
[87] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 103
[88] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence*, 166 and 179
[89] Ibid., 4
[90] Ibid., 60
[91] Ibid., 169
[92] Ibid., 148
[93] Ibid., 146
[94] Ibid., 95
[95] Ibid., 110
[96] Ibid., 95, 93 and 98
[97] Ibid., 13
[98] Ibid., 100
[99] Ibid., 146
[100] Ibid., 128-129
[101] Ibid., 106
[102] Ibid., 170 and 108-109
[103] Ibid., 116
[104] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 945
[105] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Flor*ence, 52
[106] Ibid., 52
[107] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 359
[108] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 414
[109] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, Vol. 2, 939-941
[110] Ibid., 936
[111] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence*, 98
[112] *Leonardo on Painting*, Ed. by Martin Kemp (New Haven and London, 1989), 23
[113] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 1, 357
[114] *Leonardo on Painting*, Ed. by Martin Kemp, 19-20
[115] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 299
[116] Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 100
[117] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 438
[118] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence*, 103
[119] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, Trans. by David R. Slavitt (Baltimore and London, 1994), 197
[120] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, vol. 2, 936
[121] Ibid., pp. 936-937
[122] Ibid., p. 935
[123] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2,.469
[124] Ibid., 403-404
[125] K. R. Eissler, *Leonardo da Vinci, Psychoanalytic Notes on The Enigma*, 19: R. R. Wohl & H. Trosman, A Retrospect of Freud's Leonardo, *Psychiatry* 18 (1955), 36
[126] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. by Jean Paul Richter, vol. 2, 315
[127] Ibid., 321

[128] Ibid., 324
[129] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, vol. 2, 939
[130] Ibid., 939
[131] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence*, 109
[132] Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, vol. 2, 935
[133] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, Trans. by David R. Slavitt, 94
[134] Ibid., 108
[135] Ibid., 199
[136] Ibid., 199
[137] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 190
[138] Robert Wallace, *The World of Leonardo*, 79
[139] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence*, 95