

Paleolithic works of art

Formulated in terms of FREUD's theories, the work of art emerges as a conscious utterance and thus also represents part of the psychic processes determined by the secondary process.¹⁰⁷ The artist has a representational intention, a kind of plan of what he wants to show in the work—and the work provides clues to the associated content such as objects, themes and scenes.

In the action-relieved sphere of artistic action, however, the primary process that is always running along is also activated in a specific way. It delivers visible entries into the work of art that are unconscious and therefore initially or permanently withdrawn from the artist's conscious control. The primary process-like and unconscious part in the pictorial expressions must be recognised and extracted. This is analogous to the interpretation of dreams, which tries to grasp the manifest dream content (secondary process, conscious) and the latent dream thought (primary process, unconscious).¹⁰⁸

The Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) covers a period of about 600.000 to 12.000 years BP. All the works of art examined in the following come from the Upper Palaeolithic (approx. 45.000 to 12.000 years BP). Let us begin the following interpretations with one of the oldest paintings in the world.

The hunting scene from Sulawesi

The following cave painting from Sulawesi has been described as part of the oldest hunting scene in the world. This highly developed wall art does not come from Europe, but from Indonesia. It is also older than all the works from Franco-Cantabrian cave painting and therefore cannot be attributed to European influence.¹⁰⁹ It is to be regarded as almost paradigmatic, because the artwork summarises the decisive prenatal themes:

The animal in figure 21 is, according to the discoverers, a Celebes warty pig or Sulawesi warty pig (*Sus celebensis*).¹¹⁰ It has a shoulder height of about 60 cm, and already the discoverers speak of the extent to which the scene has been fantasmatically distorted. The discoverers write about the depiction of the pig:

107. Cf. LAPLANCHE & PONTALIS (1991), keyword: "primary process, secondary process".

108. Cf. LEUSCHNER & HAU (1995), p. 617ff. who investigated the influence of non-conscious visual stimulation on manifest dream content.

109. Cf. AUBERT *et al.* (2019).

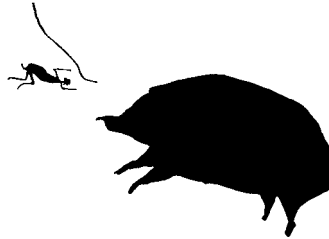
110. Cf. AUBERT *et al.* (2019), p. 2, where the authors write that "aspects of this imagery may not pertain to human experiences in the real world." Cf. also the website "ultimateungulate" and its data, https://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Sus_celebensis.html.



a



b



c

Fig. 21: (a) *therianthrope and giant pig, cave of Leang Bulu' Sipong 4, Sulawesi, Indonesia, c. 43,900 BP*; (b) *general view without cave relief*; (c) *reconstruction by FRENKEN*

“Pig 1 measures 123 × 58 cm. The painting is badly weathered. Much of the body area, and some of the head and mouth, are missing owing to at least two temporally distinct phases of erosion and flaking of the cave-wall surface. In the time that separated these periods of weathering, three narrow-fingered hand stencils were created in the upper body area of the pig. No canine tusks are evident, but the animal is apparently portrayed with a row of premolars and molars in the maxilla and mandible; the teeth are sharp and thus possibly relatively unworn—perhaps indicating that the pig was a relatively young adult. No sexual characteristics are evident.”¹¹¹

According to the authors, part of the painting on the neck of the animal represents three hand stencils. I have neglected this in my reconstruction (figure 21 c), mainly because I cannot see the details correctly. The possible placental symbolism of hand stencils is nevertheless discussed later in this paper. Aubert et al. write that the hand stencils are much younger than the rest of the painting and at most 17,800 years old.¹¹² The omission of this detail in the above reconstruction thus comes even closer to the early original version.

111. Cf. AUBERT *et al.* (2019), p. 9.

112. Cf. AUBERT *et al.* (2019), p. 3.

The dentition of the animal is not visible in the illustrations. The description speaks for a rather young and strong animal. In the scene there are of course uncertainties in recognising the strongly eroded figures in dark red colour.

The rotation to the horizontal in figure 21 a comes from the BBC page.¹¹³ However, the detail is meaningful: if one turns the pig and the human as they were painted in the cave, the impression of floating is clearly created.

The reconstruction allows the following interpretations: The human with animal tail is small and is in front of the huge pig. A tail is not recognisable. The differences in size are grotesquely exaggerated. A curved line has been placed in the immediate vicinity of the human, which because of the strong curvature can perhaps be understood as a lasso, less convincingly as a spear. Aubert et al. even write that this lasso may once have been connected to the animal's head.¹¹⁴

The interpretation of the unconscious layer now depends on the theoretical starting point: If one takes into account the usual oedipal and also pre-oedipal views, the result is probably that the large pig stands for a parent-*imago*, which is confronted with a self that is experienced as small and thus childlike. The lasso would possibly be interpreted as a penis symbol. In this respect, the scene, if it were to be interpreted psychodynamically, would take on a sexualised tinge.

Prenatal psychology now assumes another unconscious layer: A fetal being is virtually floating in front of a huge animal in red. The animal stands for the placenta, the lasso for the umbilical cord, the man for the fetus. Some elements of the depiction become clearer in prenatal psychological terms: the floating of the figures, the red colour, the design in the cave. The animal depiction would also be more sexually prominent as a primitive form of the mother-*imago* with placental characteristics.

In my opinion, this scene shows a conflation of an adult self that wants to paint a pig and its unconscious early experience with the placenta in pictorial condensation. On the panel, the memory of the prenatal period is literally transformed into a social ritual, be it magical or to be understood as part of the hunt. It should be noted that the pig has no tail, but the human does. Presumably, the human being in this scene appropriates characteristics of the animal in a fantasmatic-artistic way.

The similarities between this mural from Sulawesi and the incomparably more famous shaft scene from Lascaux are striking. Both depict fantasies in which large animals play a central role. The Sulawesi scene, however, is more prototypical, simpler and depicts early events more directly than the Lascaux scene, which has been superimposed many times. And the painting from Sulawesi is more than 24.000 years older than the shaft scene from Lascaux.

Aubert writes nothing about the presence of a penis in the Sulawesi rock painting. He answers a question about this by saying that there is no penis to be seen.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, in my opinion, there is evidence for the presence of a representation of the penis. The lowest line of the human figure (*theriaonthrope*) ends in an area that is not completely

113. Cf. BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50754303>.

114. Cf. AUBERT *et al.* (2019), p. 10.

115. Personal reply from AUBERT dated 29.7.2023 by email.

flaked off. Therefore, one can take the position that the painted line is not to be interpreted as part of the lower outline, but as an erect penis. However, it sits quite high and could therefore even symbolise an umbilical cord. This would result in the following reconstruction:

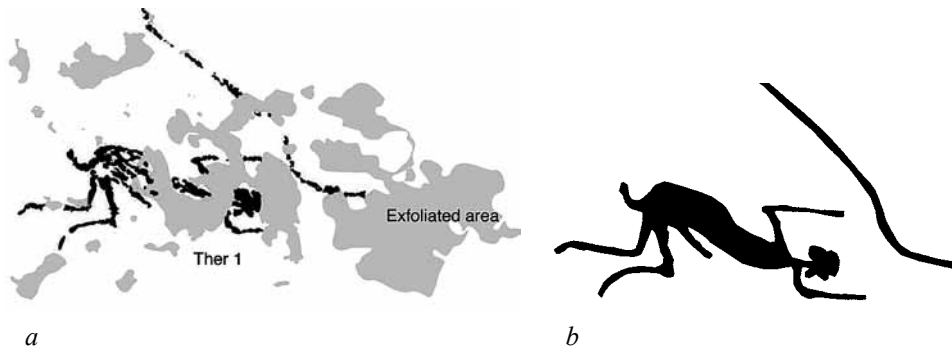


Fig. 22: (a) illustration of the human figure in Leang Bulu' Sipong 4, Sulawesi, after AUBERT (2019), p. 10, grey = weathered area; (b) reconstruction by FRENKEN

Since AUBERT inspected the depiction and all interpretations are ultimately based on his images and reconstructions, the version in figure 22 should be seen as a possibility, not as a conclusive true version.

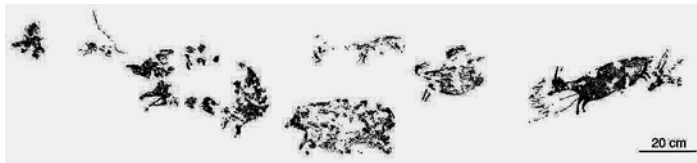


Fig. 23: hunting scene, red colour, general view, Leang Bulu' Sipong 4, Sulawesi

Figure 23 shows the entire “hunting scene” from Sulawesi. I would like to point out that on the left one can see the individual psychological fantasy, so to speak, in which a human being is alone confronting (fighting?) the animal. Here, moreover, the symbolism of the prenatal primal scene is designed. On the right, on the other hand, the hunt is depicted as a social ritual: several people are in a relationship with each other and hunt the cattle. This can be understood to mean that a social ritual was invented in the culture, namely hunting. On both sides of the depiction, the animals are fantasmatically enlarged, but the pig is considerably more so. The enlargements point to the enormous unconscious part of the artistic treatment. Within the framework of the prenatal approach that has been expanded here, the picture almost paradigmatically condenses the themes of prenatal time, psyche, culture and social invention.

The adjacent scene in figure 24 shows eight human-like creatures, described by the scientists in MAXIME AUBERT's team as therianthropes, i. e. humans with animal charac-

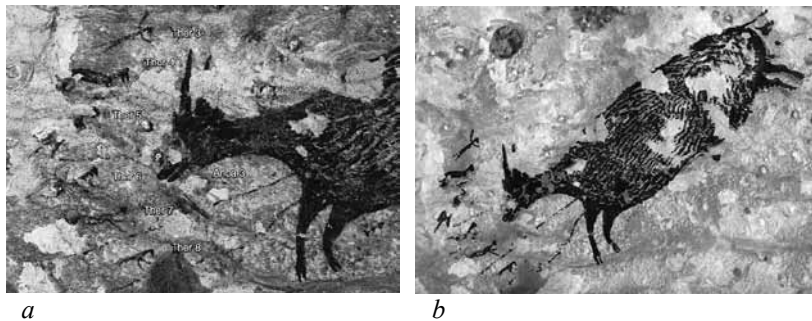


Fig. 24: (a) *Therianthropes and wild cattle (anoa) in the world's oldest hunting scene, Leang Bulu Cave' Sipong 4, Sulawesi, Indonesia, ca. 43,900 BP*; (b) *electronically processed image*

teristics (mixed creatures). These humans are hunting an anoa (*Bubalus depressicornis*), a wild cattle endemic to Sulawesi. In painting, the animal is also depicted as huge, the mixed creatures as tiny by comparison. Anoa's are wild cattle with a maximum shoulder height of 106 cm; the males weigh a maximum of 300 kg. Every adult human being towers over this animal by far. The depiction therefore does not represent a hunting scene in a realistic way, but is phantasmatically altered. The overstuffed animal becomes a huge sacred beast to be hunted down.

The depictions of humans, for their part, bear animalistic traits. The Palaeolithic is obviously an epoch in which man deals with the animal in an extreme way. It is his prey, but he obviously also identifies with it, adopting imitative animal traits. Numerous representations of humans in Ice Age caves have animal heads or wear animal masks. They are often described and interpreted as “shamans” or “sorcerers”.¹¹⁶ This fits in with the fact that animals are the predominant figurative theme in Palaeolithic cave art. This testifies to the extreme cathexis of the animal in this epoch. The cave painting from Sulawesi shows people connected to the giant animal by leashes. In connection with prenatal psychological considerations, we have here a representation of fetuses connected to a huge placenta by an umbilical cord—the almost perfect reflection of the ontogenetic primordial situation. The idiosyncratic early experiences become rituals with the help of symbolic representation and processing. Art itself has this ritual function and enables social inventions. The symbolic wall painting is such an invention, just like hunting itself, which served to secure subsistence but also had a symbolic value.¹¹⁷

Birth and pregnancy themes

In my opinion, the theme of pregnancy is included in numerous Palaeolithic representations, albeit mostly in a distorted or symbolic form. The body of an animal probably represents the body of the mother. It must be assumed that naturalistic versions of the

116. Cf. CLOTTES (2016), p. 11.

117. Discussion in DEMAUSE (1989), p. 279ff.

event seem frightening and were therefore fantasmatically altered. One is reminded of the religious theme of the “Birth of Christ”, which never shows a Son of God about being born and his mother, but in each case the already delivered Jesus, who does not look like a newborn—i. e. bloody and exhausted – but like a much older baby. The Mother of God also never looks like a woman who has just given birth.

Some Paleolithic plaques, i. e. works of portable art, seem to deal with the theme of pregnancy and birth.

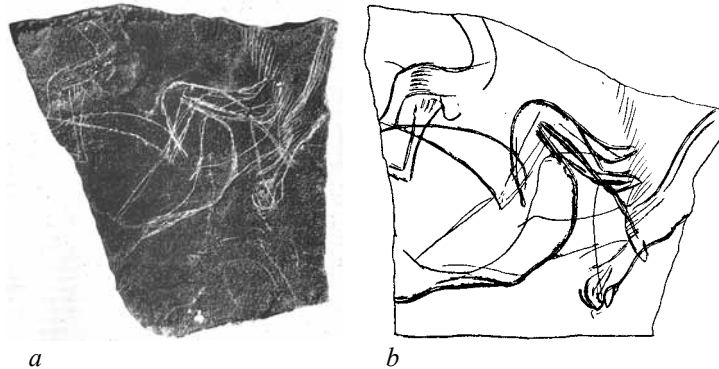


Fig. 25: plaque with anthropoid carvings, sandstone, Trois-Frères, Magdalenien; (a) photo; (b) redrawing

The redrawing obviously does not quite correspond to the photograph, nevertheless the statement that this plaque from Trois-Frères deals with a birth theme seems justified (figure 25). The spatial orientation of this plaque is, by its very nature, not fixed. It is a depiction of an obese figure with an unidentifiable gender or a pregnant woman. I interpret the depiction as a birth scene, the double line on the belly as an attempt to show the physical changes. Presumably the exit channel and other details (amniotic fluid?) may be depicted. The structure on the far right could represent the leg of a bison. Then the furry underside of the bison’s neck would also be depicted.

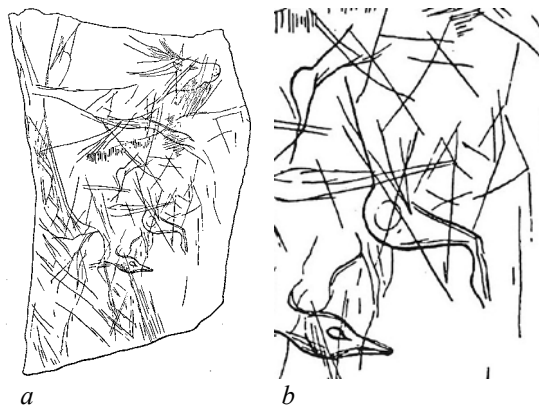


Fig. 26: (a) incised plate, Fontales; (b) detail from (a)

The engraved plate from Fontales (figure 26) shows two female silhouettes, one of them with a circle in the lower pelvic area. This probably symbolises the birth that has taken place or perhaps the early pregnancy. The picture also shows the head of a deer with antlers, which is interpreted later in the book as a placenta symbol.

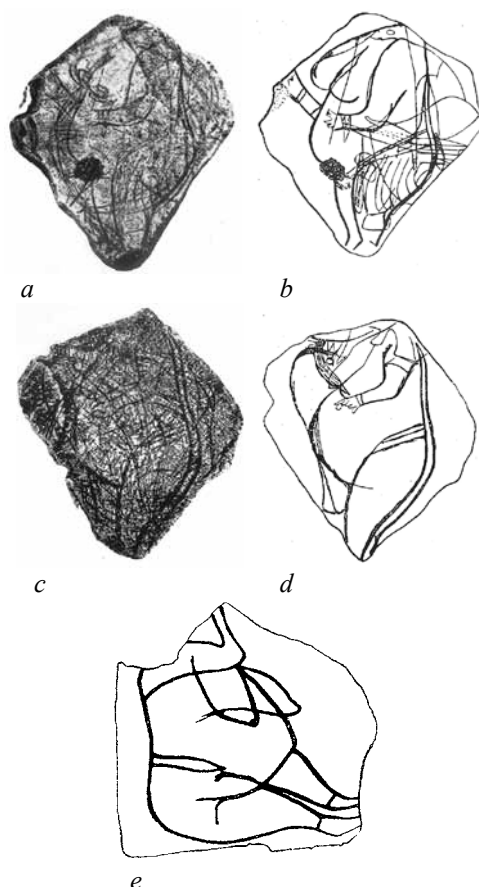


Fig. 27: (a–e) ivory plaques, photographs and redwings, La Marche, Magdalenian¹¹⁸

The three women depicted from La Marche (figure 27) appear heavily pregnant and thus about to give birth.



Fig. 28: engraved drawing, Gabillou, Magdalenian¹¹⁹

118. Cf. dating MUSÉE DE PRÉHISTOIRE DE LUSSAC-LES-CHATEAUX (2020), p. 14.

119. Cf. for dating DAVID *et al.* (1952), p. 118.

The rock carving from Gabillou (figure 28) shows a woman in a reclining position, presumably in a birthing posture. One can see a vaginal opening.

Man in the animal body

In the following, representations are analysed in which the human being or important parts of his body were designed in front of the animal body. The interpretative idea is that the depiction shows the human body *within* the animal body. I usually interpret such pictures in the sense of the so-called “X-ray picture” of children’s drawing.¹²⁰ There, too, non-visible but existing things are visually represented in a realistic sense.

The theme of a human body being contained within an animal body is encountered twice in the Cougnac Cave, namely in the so-called *Great Frieze*.

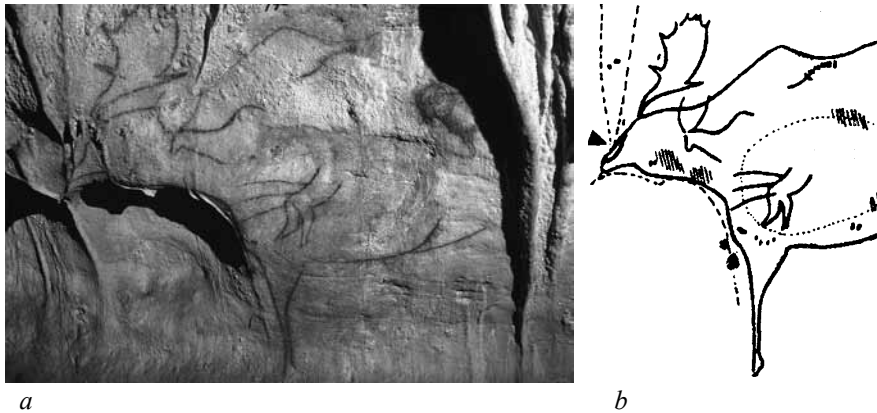


Fig. 29: (a) wounded man and giant deer, Cougnac cave (Lot), Solutr en, 25.000–20.000 BP)¹²¹
(b) redrawing of (a) by LORBLANCHET (1997) with indication of recognisable inner bulge

In the giant deer (*Megaloceros*) from Cougnac, the underside of the neck coincides with an inward bulge of the rock face (figure 29 a). Here, as in many other examples, one can see an artistic condensation: The motif of the animal is not only applied to the cave wall by simple drawing/painting, but rather peculiarities of the three-dimensional cave wall are used to execute the relief-like representation of the animal. On the right side of the giant deer, a vertical concretion could represent the hind leg. Caldwell lists a total of 108 places in the Franco-Cantabrian caves where natural formations of the cave relief were used for artistic designs.¹²² In most cases, animals were designed and thus became

120. Cf. RICHTER (1987), p. 53 for a general introduction, further p. 59 and 61. Cf. also SCHUSTER (1993), p. 21 for a different interpretation. He also uses the term “Transparentbild” (transparent image).

121. Dating according to LORBLANCHET (1997), p. 285. Cf. also BAHN (1998), p. 168; cf. also the illustration in ARCH OLOGISCHES LANDESMUSEUM KARLSRUHE (2009), p. 234.

122. Cf. CALDWELL (2012), p. 16–22; Cf. also BROT (2012).

an integral part of the cave. If it is to be shown here, using prenatal psychological assumptions, that we are dealing here with the fantasy of an animal body as a mother's womb, it must be added that the theme of the cave is also shaped by fantasies about the maternal womb. The artist in the cave is, as it were, inside the maternal space, just as the fetus is when it feels the abdominal wall and placenta. This constellation is decisive in the artistic-ritual reactualisation of prenatal experiences.

In this giant deer, incompletely sketched, is a headless human being with three spears stuck in him. This human is drawn on a part of the cave wall that curves inwards.¹²³ The outlines of the deer are all red, only those of the human are black. The proportions are extreme: the human being here actually has fetal dimensions, so to speak. The prenatally determined fantasy content refers to a suffering human being within an animal. As an objection to this interpretation of the three-dimensional aspect of the picture, one can argue that here the human being is merely depicted spatially in front of the deer. This would have the consequence that the deer standing further back in perspective would have to be interpreted as much larger. And in addition, a tiny wounded man would somehow be depicted hovering in front of the giant deer. That, too, is an implausible reading.¹²⁴ So the interpretation remains plausible that the deer's interior is the theme here.

The wounding by spears remains strange, for this makes it clear that the person was not killed by the deer, but by other people, either enemies or members of one's own group. Therefore, no fight with the animal is depicted here, rather dying is associated with the animal.¹²⁵ The placement of the human on an inwardly curved piece of the cave wall also supports the interpretation that a spatial interior was depicted here. This peculiarity of cave architecture was incorporated into the composition. Symbolically, the "suffering fetus" is thematised here. The phantasmatic rebirth is a magical attempt at a solution to the frightening problem of death. Dying is shifted into the interior of a phantasmatically exaggerated animal, making rebirth possible.

Just as a note at this point, the small red deer inside the giant deer should be mentioned. Later in this book, a small deer inside a large animal is interpreted as a placenta symbol. The *Megaloceros* would thus also contain a foetal human and a small deer symbolising the placenta in the famous representation of the giant deer from Cougnac. A representation comparable in every element follows here when the speared human in the mammoth is discussed, a representation in the same frieze. Only the animal further to the right (ibex? sheep?) has so far eluded a more concrete symbolic interpretation.

At this point, a few methodological considerations should be introduced. The above painting (actually more of a drawing) appears in the illustration to be a work from one cast, executed by one person. However, it is by no means certain that this is the case with murals in general. Lorblanchet explains, using the example of Cougnac, that cer-

123. Cf. LORBLANCHET (1997), p. 150.

124. The term "reading" here does not refer to a linguistic text, but to visual ways of looking at things. Cf. for example, on this, pictorial hermeneutic uses from the field of objective (structural) hermeneutics: HEINZE-PRAUSE & HEINZE (1996), p. 94ff.

125. Cf. RAUER (2019), p. 319ff.

tain strokes in the same motif are more than 5.000 years apart.¹²⁶ The dating is done by chemical analysis of the pigments (direct dating). Thus, a certain section of a mural is sometimes not the work of a single artist, but of several. Generations of artists can be assumed who, on the one hand, have accumulated picture motifs on the wall and, on the other hand, have renewed the old pictures. This raises the question of whose psyche (and whose unconscious) can be reconstructed in these cases. Unlike, for example, my interpretation of some of Hieronymus Bosch's panels, where the artistic action of an individual was clearly reconstructed, considerably more caution is required here.¹²⁷ However, one can, indeed must, conceive one's scientific object to be reconstructed in a more abstract way. After all, it is not only individuals who have prenatal experiences, but all human beings. That is why it is still legitimate to a certain extent to speak of "the artist"—bearing in mind that this is partly to be understood as a *façon de parler* and that it is actually the unconscious parts of the psyches of different people from different generations that become thematic. In addition, one can imagine that an artist who comes across the picture of a predecessor at a later point in time will himself grasp the theme in a regressive-artistic way and will be stimulated to make appropriate extensions to the picture. This is why, in my opinion, overpaintings and added topoi can also be interpreted. This methodological extension is important, since collective contexts always dominate the creation of cultural symbols in the end anyway. Thus, at the beginning of the creation of symbols, the sometimes ingenious creative achievement of an individual may be the basis. But this artistic achievement subsequently becomes part of the social space, is adopted and transformed by other individuals in the course of generations. Finally, a symbol is "successful", repeated and handed down.¹²⁸ In my opinion, one can still assume that certain unconscious contents are thereby further thematised, but the artist of a later generation does not necessarily have to artistically and regressively carry out the psychological performance that was still central to the creation of the symbol.

In any case, it can be assumed that the unconscious and thus also the prenatal contents are concretely encoded in the symbol, in the work of art, and can be decoded by the viewer. This decoding process—that is, the decoding of the hidden contents—naturally also works differently for different viewers. In particular, the individuals who belong to the artist's culture are naturally in a special position. The "initiated" are now those who already have the crucial information about the work. We today are certainly not "initiated" and therefore have a fundamentally different decoding context than we had back then. One can now either assume that the decryption of such content is no longer possible at all. Or one can assume that at least partially such a process is possible and that an understanding of the artwork is possible to a certain degree. I assume the latter. Moreover, I assume that even the individuals of that time were not able to fully understand the work; even the artist does not know all the connections of meaning in his own work, of course, because his unconscious made a great contribution to it. In this respect,

126. Cf. LORBLANCHET (1997), p. 273.

127. Cf. FRENKEN (2016), p. 241–266.

128. Cf. in more detail FRENKEN (2016), pp. 99–104 ("Aspects of the symbol").

we can interpret these works differently today than was possible then. And this difference between then and now must be thematised methodically.

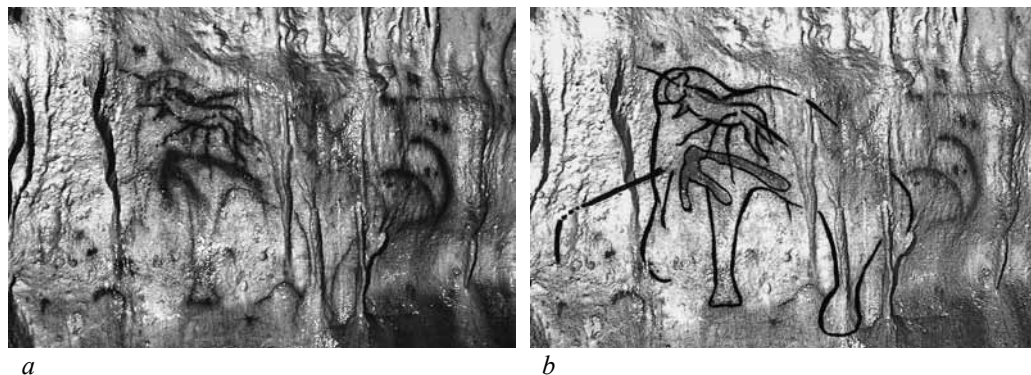


Fig. 30: (a) wounded man and mammoth, Cougnac cave (Lot), Solutr en, 25.000–20.000 BP; (b) redrawing of (a) by FRENKEN

Another representation from Cougnac (figure 30 a) again shows a man wounded by spears, drawn in black, this time within the silhouette of a red mammoth.¹²⁹ The entire depiction is located in an area of inward curvature of the cave. The proportions do not appear as extreme as in the previous illustration. One of the spears is stuck in the navel area of the human. Inside the mammoth is a red structure painted opaque. It probably represents the suggested silhouette of another, smaller mammoth, but this time in compact red. The spear in the navel area connects the wounded human with this red structure—a symbolisation of fetus and placenta. As in the previous depiction, the theme is the connection between dying and the animal. This theme is to be distinguished from the struggle with the animal. Possibly the sintering in the middle of the large mammoth is to be interpreted as a consciously (or even unconsciously) chosen part of the representation. The tapering shape of this figure could symbolise another umbilical cord. RAUER points out that in the Upper Palaeolithic the mortally wounded person was never depicted in red, but always in black.¹³⁰ The spiritual connection of death and (re)birth is thus represented in distributed roles: The red stands for the life-giving mother-imago (mammoth), the black for the dying of man (self-imago, based on fantasies of the suffering fetus).

In this representation, the two red mammoths stand once for the mother’s womb and once very directly for the placenta. Another reading would be to interpret the small red mammoth as the fetus of the large mammoth.

In this context, it should be mentioned that the archaeological investigations of the Cougnac cave have revealed that Magdalenian visitors held rituals in this Gravettian

129. PORR (2002) p. 83 interprets more cautiously, discussing alternative interpretations of the “strokes” around the human body based on theories of shamanism. Cf. also BIEDERMANN (1984), p. 93.

130. Cf. RAUER (2013), p. 99.

sanctuary without leaving any new images. Stone Age cult caves were visited for thousands of years.¹³¹

In the Palaeolithic, there is ample evidence that certain animals evoked female associations. In LEROI-GOURHAN'S estimation, female symbolism in connection with certain animals is apparently more easily recognisable than male symbolism in yet other animals.¹³² Thus LEROI-GOURHAN describes regular, drawn transformations between bison and woman¹³³, evidence of the transfer of phantasmatic elements from the female or maternal sphere to animals. Such clear evidence is missing in the case of the presumed male symbolism. In any case, I generally question that a certain animal always symbolises a certain social object. This clearly applies to all Paleolithic art, but sometimes also to a cave or even a single ensemble of images. The horse, for example, can symbolise female-maternal, infantile, fetal and maybe also male-paternal objects, as will be shown. For the last object variant, however, an example is missing in the sample presented here, although LEROI-GOURHAN did assume a male symbolism with regard to the horse.

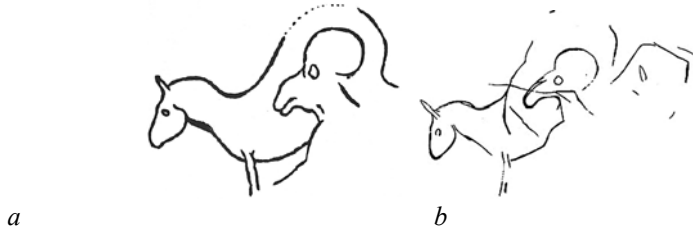


Fig. 31: human head in body of a horse, wall carving, Les Combarelles, Magdalenian (?)¹³⁴; (a) redrawing after Müller-Karpe; (b) redrawing after Barrière

Figure 31 a shows the redrawing of MÜLLER-KARPE (1977), figure 31 b on the right that of BARRIÈRE (1997). One can see clear differences, and it also makes a meaningful difference whether a line is shared by horse and human (BARRIÈRE) or is only attributable to the horse (MÜLLER-KARPE). The more recent and more complex redrawings are by BARRIÈRE, and they also appear more authentic. In any case, special caution is necessary in the interpretation. However, it is true for both drawing reconstructions that an anthropoid head was depicted inside the body of a horse. The split line even makes the relationship between horse and human artistically more intense. As is so often the case, it is not simply a human face that is depicted, but one that bears animal-like features. I interpret the design as belonging to the theme of rebirth.

131. Cf. LORBLANCHET & BAHN (2017), p. 270.

132. Cf. LEROI-GOURHAN (1982), p. 163.

133. Cf. LEROI-GOURHAN (1982), p. 163, who refers to engravings from Peche-Merle (Figs. 373–377).

134. The dating of the murals in Les Combarelles is complicated; probably Magdalenian, cf. PLASSARD (2005), p. 10ff., p. 65ff.

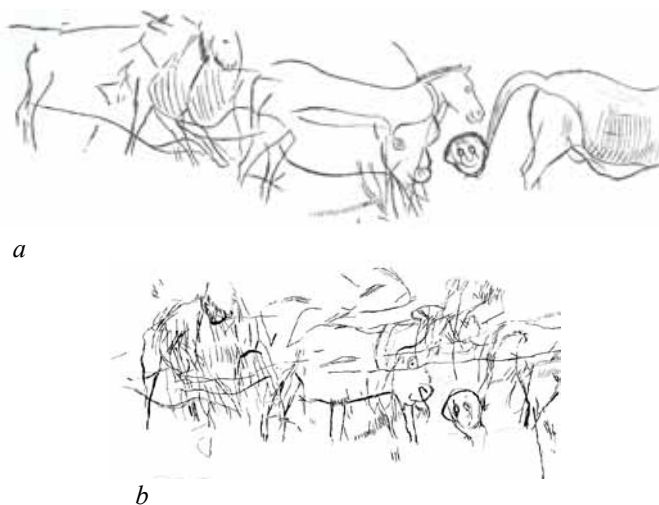


Fig. 32: human head in herd of horses and bison, wall carving, *Les Combarelles*;
(a) redrawing after MÜLLER-KARPE; (b) redrawing after BARRIÈRE

The admonition to be careful with interpretation also applies to figure 32. A human head is seen at the end of a horse's tail. The horse's body contains a kind of tectiform sign. A bison head is turned towards him out of (or in front of?) the trunk of a horse. I assume that rebirth is also the theme here. The head at the end of a cord-like structure also calls up the placenta-umbilicus *gestalt*.¹³⁵

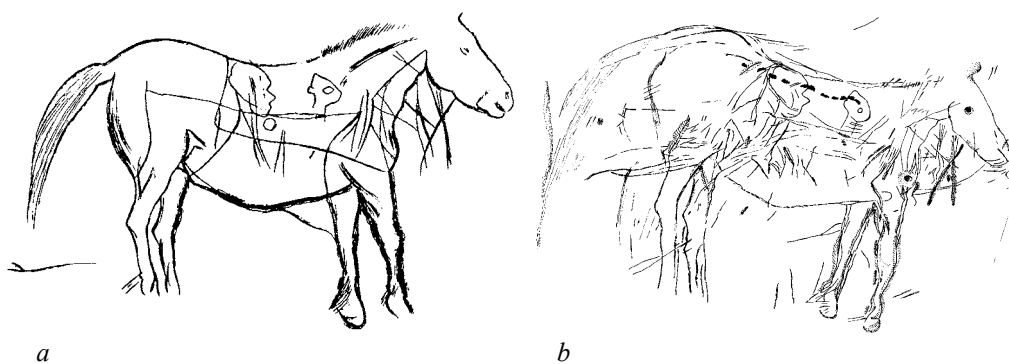


Fig. 33: human heads in animal bodies, *Les Combarelles*;
(a) after MÜLLER-KARPE (1977); (b) after BARRIÈRE (1997)

In the horse's body of figure 33 there are two human heads. This is reminiscent of the design from Marsoulas.¹³⁶ Here again the theme of rebirth is evoked. The two human heads look different: larger and more human on the left, smaller and more animal-like on the right. Both are connected by a dashed painted line (figure 33 b). This could be the

135. Cf. on the connection between head depictions and placenta symbolism: FRENKEN (2016), pp. 90–98.

136. Cf. FRITZ & TOSELLO (2007 a), p. 22.

simultaneous symbolisation of mother and child (or fetus). In reality, this relationship would certainly not take place in the body. Thus, in an illogical or primary-process-like way, pre- and postnatal life have been mixed and pictorially condensed.



Fig. 34: complex image of humans and animals, *Les Combarelles*;
(a) after MÜLLER-KARPE (1977); (b) after BARRIÈRE (1997)

It is worth mentioning the vulva object in connection with a female figure (in Müller Karpe's version on the far right, figure 34 a). This will be discussed again later.¹³⁷ At this point I refer to the involvement of the sexual-fatasmatic realm of the psyche. The ensemble is obviously in front of an animal body (because of the recognisable tail it is probably a horse). It is about fantasies of people inside of or with animal bodies, which is also reminiscent of rebirth fantasies.

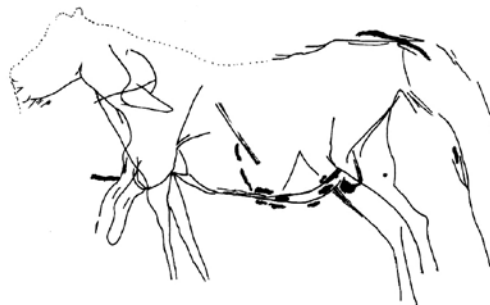


Fig. 35: woman inside the body of a horse, *Les Combarelles*

137. Cf. FRENKEN (2023), p. 116.

In figure 35 one recognises a headless woman inside a horse. The proportions, however, are greatly exaggerated, i.e. the depiction of the adult-looking woman seems conspicuously small, but possibly pregnant. So here, too, birth fantasies are addressed, considering the shape and placement of the woman. The depiction is also similar to the images of the headless man in a giant deer in the Cougnac cave.¹³⁸

Animal in the animal body

The theme “animal in the animal body” is especially important when the mother and child in the picture are recognisably not of the same species, because then fantasies and probably rebirth aspects seem to be quite clear. But even if the same animal species is addressed, it would remain to be pointed out that the theme of pregnancy would be depicted and would have attracted the attention of the Stone Age people. From Trois-Frères comes the example of a rock carving showing a perinatal theme:

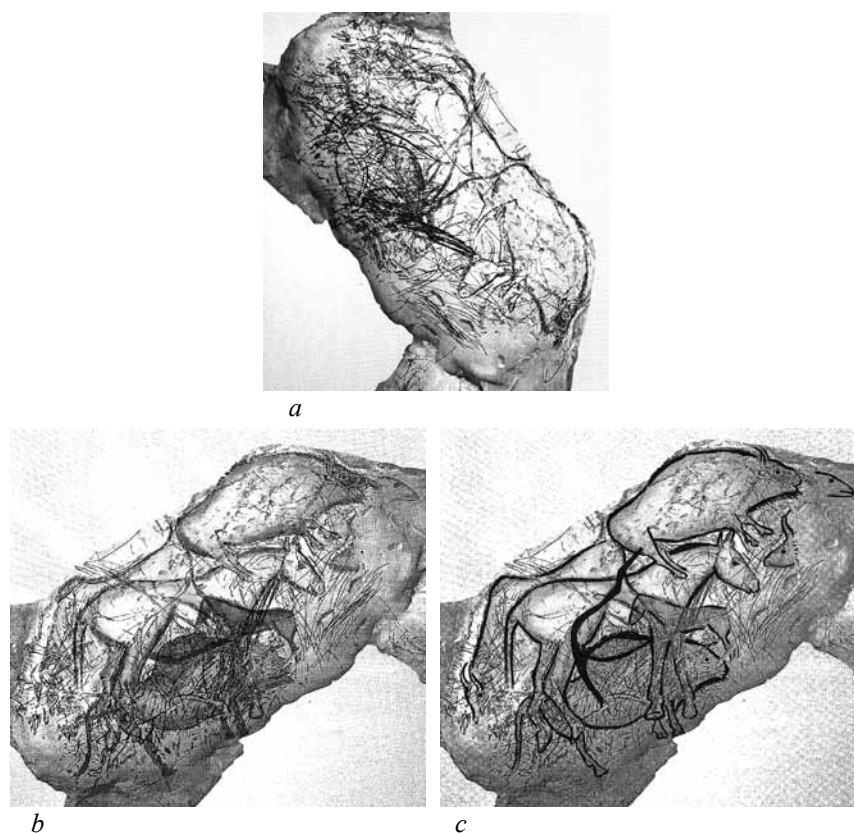


Fig. 36: horses and bison, rock carving, Trois-Frères, Magdalenien;
(a) redrawing; (b, c) emphasis by FRENKEN

138. Cf. FRENKEN (2023), p. 121.

The incised drawing from Trois-Frères (figure 36 a) came into my focus of attention while searching for a placental symbol, where I coloured the recognisable animals. I first saw centrally a horse facing to the right, also the heads and began to colour the animals differently for better interpretability. Figure 36 b shows the result. The large horse partially contains a much smaller horse that turns to the left. Near the two horses three large bison and at least two started bison or their heads are visible. In addition, there is another bison on the large horse, of which only the back line is visible (figure 36). It remains unclear whether it is to be assumed in front of or behind the large horse. Figure 36 c tries again to make the animals clearer with thicker boundary lines and accentuated eyes. In any case, the horse is surrounded by at least five or six bison.

The picture is not to be analysed in detail. One can recognise the depiction of a mare with a swollen belly. One can see a pregnant horse in the middle as the main subject of the depictions. I assume that the little horse is supposed to symbolise her fetus and possibly also her later foal. Several bison are spatially arranged around the mother. I see this scene as a fantasy, because in reality there are no bison circling horses. On the right side there are more animal heads, one of which seems to be a reptile. In this respect, this image belongs here: it shows a pregnant horse as a mother-imago and bison as supernatural animals that enable rebirth.



Fig. 37: large bison with small animals, rock carving, Trois-Frères

The rock carving from Trois-Frères (figure 37) shows a large bison and inside its body two comparatively small animals. The authors Bégouën and Breuil consider the bison to be female and the small animals to be deer-like.¹³⁹ They describe that the horns of the left animal are poorly drawn and assume the depiction of a Pyrenean chamois (*Rupicapra pyrenaica*) or a Saiga antelope (*Saiga tatarica*). I would like to add my view to this interpretation.

The animal on the left without a visible tail has cloven hooves and its skull is clearly shortened. Therefore it looks like an antlerless deer. The antlers could also be corroded. Saigas have a snout similar to a trunk, and this is not at all evident in the animal depicted. The chamois interpretation, however, cannot be dismissed out of hand. The animal

139. BÉGOUËN & BREUIL (1958) p. 74.

on the right probably also has cloven hooves, at least on the back. It has a short tail. In this respect it would be a deer-like animal (perhaps a small red deer). Its skull, however, is long and looks very much like that of a horse. So I see in the animals on the left a small deer and on the right a hybrid of deer and horse with deer-like legs and tail and a horse's head. So much for the realism of the depiction.

Let us turn to the unconscious image level. I assume that the female bison represents the mother-*imago* and the mixed creature a fetus or the self-*imago*. The deer-like animal behind could represent the placenta, a "being" symbolically necessary for the development of the fetus. Perhaps the horns are corroded. The ensemble thus symbolises the supernatural pregnancy and the subsequent rebirth.



Fig. 38: horse in bison, Le Gabillou

In figure 38 one sees a small horse in front of or inside a huge bison. I interpret this image as reflecting an imaginary prenatal situation: the horse is to be fantasmatically (re)born by the bison. Around the horse are several strokes, two of which are in turn bordered by small strokes at the ends. This symbol could suggest the relationship of two objects, with the small strokes symbolising objects and the long stroke symbolising the connection or specifically the umbilical cord. Drawing intimacy is shown in the fact that one leg line of the bison matches that of the horse. Does this symbolise emotional closeness?



Fig. 39: horse in bison, Les Combarelles; (a) after MÜLLER-KARPE (1977); (b) after BARRIÈRE (1997)

Figure 39 virtually repeats the previous motif. What is striking in each case is the unnatural difference in size between the huge bison and the tiny horse. Next to the rebirth, the mother-imago (bison) and the small fetal-infantile self-imago (horse) are thematised, as so often.

Drawing proximity of the animals results additionally from the touching of bison and horse leg but also because of the second horse's head in the vulva region (or anus region). Both speak for the emotional intimacy of horse and bison, a fantasmatic reality that nothing in zoological reality corresponds to.

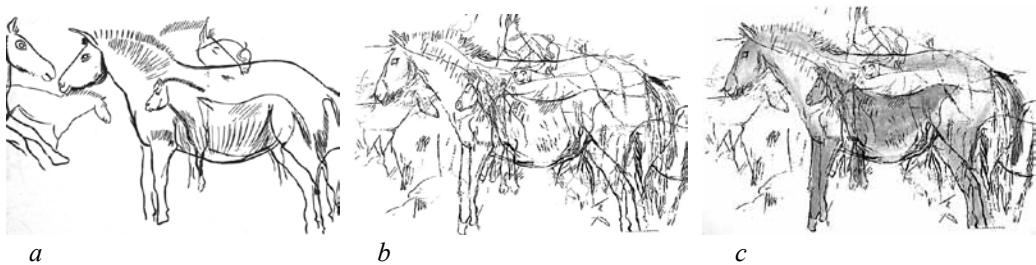


Fig. 40: *small horse in large horse, Les Combarelles*: (a) after MÜLLER-KARPE; (b) after BARRIÈRE; (c) emphasis of (b) by FRENKEN

As in figure 36, there is also a smaller animal within the larger animal belonging to the same species (figure 40).¹⁴⁰ Here, too, in my opinion, the theme of pregnancy is addressed. Equally interesting and clearly more fantasmatic are the cases in which the small animals are contained within species-different large animals.



Fig. 41: (a) *deer in bison, Gabillou*; (b) *deer in horse, Altmira*

In figure 41 a one sees a small deer in a large bison. This deer could of course simply symbolise a fetus, but in the next chapter it is argued that the deer's antlers should be understood as a symbolic placenta. Then it would also be possible that the placenta is represented here. A prenatal situation seems to me to be represented in any case.

140. Cf. illustrations in Gittins & Petitt (2017), p. 111, Bahn & Vertut (1988), p. 159.

Figure 41 b shows a deer inside of the body of a horse. This painting shows the horse as a mother-imago. The pale deer seems to be not real, yet.

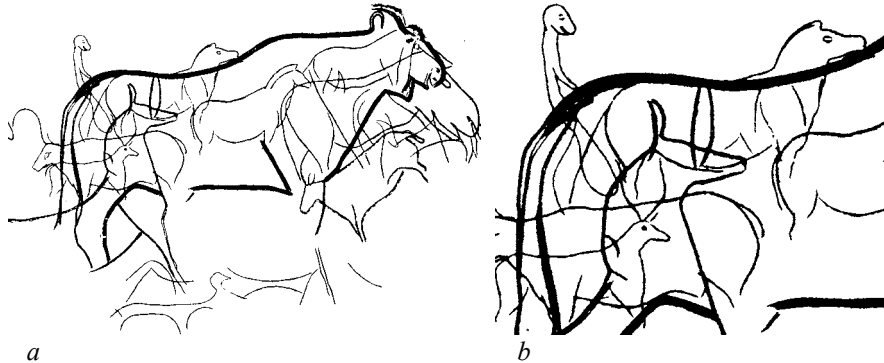


Fig. 42: (a) horse and other animals in lion body, rock carving, Los Casares cave;
(b) detail of (a)

Figure 42 shows one of the rare examples of a predator, a lion, acting as the surrounding body. Inside are horses and deer. Here too, according to my interpretation, pregnancy is symbolised. This physiological state provides an essential condition for the creation of such images. However, it could also be symbolised that a predator like the lion eats animals. These are then really inside him. However, eating does not change the size of the animals, and lions do not swallow prey whole. In this respect, the oral hypothesis loses weight.

The anthropoid figure on the lion's hindquarters should be mentioned. The upper half of the body of this creature, which carries the anthropomorphic head, protrudes directly from the anus or rather the vulva region. The sexual region of this creature and that of the lion are drawn to coincide. The lower half of this creature's body is merely designed as a loop. Sexuality or birth are also symbolised here. The depicted horse immediately in front shows the fantasmatic theme of birth in an artistic doubling. It is probably no coincidence that this figure with anthropoid features of the upper body region is partly inside the lion, partly also outside. Very symbolically, distinguishable body regions of the being are associated here and likewise with the areas of residence inside and outside an animal: the more human part of the being is outside; the almost geometric, more simply designed part inside. Within the framework of prenatal psychological considerations, the human conditionality of its psyche is shaped here.

A large deer is combined with various small animals in figure 43. The graphic effect of containing an animal in an animal, however, does not seem to result from any kind of agglomeration. According to my interpretation, the horse and the small deer are spatially contained within the deer. The antlers and their carrier as a placental symbol will be discussed later in this work. Here, both the horse and the small deer are depicted in the deer's body, which is obviously the scene of rebirth. Possibly the small deer here symbolises the placenta, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Other animals are visible, including a rhinoceros.



Fig. 43: horse and deer inside the body of a male deer, rock carving, Los Casares cave



Fig. 44: horse and seal, Cosquer cave, Solutrean or older¹⁴¹

In figure 44 a seal is shown in front of or inside a horse. In reality, the animals are likely to meet extremely rarely. Here the seal as an aquatic animal symbolises the fetus, which is carried by the horse. The horse is to be understood as the mother-imago. The stocky seal body and especially its head tend to look childlike-fetal. In my opinion, a line is to be interpreted as an umbilical cord symbol. If one follows the attempts to establish hunting magic interpretatively, the stroke would be seen as a weapon.

Plaque from Enlène

In the Enlène cave in the French Pyrenees, a plaque was discovered whose redrawing was at first thought to be evidence of prenatal fantasies of the Palaeolithic.¹⁴² Unfortunately, this view has not been confirmed. For methodological reasons, however, it seems useful to me to present the interpretation of this plaque here.

141. Cf. LORBLANCHET (1995), p. 314.

142. Cf. BÉGOUËN & BREUIL (1958), p. 106. The article indicates that the plaque was considered a find from the Trois Frères cave.