



*Philemon and Other Figures, C.G. Jung*

## Jung's "Art Complex"

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“That is art,” said the woman within Jung.

He replied, “No, it is not art! On the contrary, it is nature”

(*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1961, p. 186).

On the face of it, Jungian psychology with its emphasis on image seems to be uniquely suited to interact and dialogue with art as a kindred endeavor involved in exploration of and relationship with images and psyche. However as recent assessment suggests this has not been the case. As Francesco Donfrancesco put it poignantly at the 2003 IAAP conference in Cambridge:

Analytical psychology, when not ignoring art, has assumed towards it a generally dismissive attitude of patient and ill-disguised superiority. ...Analytical psychology has often colluded with dominant ideology in devaluing the cognitive power of images. ...Progress has been deemed to lie in going beyond images, leaving them behind to arrive at concepts. Reducing artistic output to symptoms of unconscious processes, exercising itself on works of art as ‘in corpore vile,’ analytical psychology has belittled them by constraining them to fit the categories it employs, instead of exposing to transformation its own categories and its own language.  
(2003, p. 655).

This conference is an important and timely effort to address and correct these matters and prepare ground for change in the relationship of Jungian psychology to art. It is useful to remind ourselves about the essentials so well expressed in our conference motto: “It is as if we did not know, or else continually forgot, that everything of which we are conscious is an image, and that image is psyche” (Jung, 1967/1983, para. 75). Of course we as psychologists are bound to forget it and proceed as if being conscious of the image stayed with

us throughout. It is hard to maintain continuous awareness that we experience only through images, in images, and as an image (Hillman, 1975). It is hard to accept that this never-ending, pure exhibit of sensuous, glorious, stimulating, luxurious, disturbing, overflowing overabundance that we call by the mundane term “experience,” is there to be perceived and appreciated and not immediately covered by ideas and concepts. I imagine if psychologists were artists it would be easier to maintain this fleeting awareness. Perhaps if psychologists had stayed with the image as the artist does we would preserve it alive longer. How different would our psychological attitude be if we approached the images as an artist does?

It is part of our Jungian tradition to go back to the source—to Jung himself both to find an inspiration for the future challenges and to reflect on and critically evaluate the path that he himself took when discussing similar matters. If we follow the index to the *Collected Works* for the entries related to art, artists, poetry, creative process, etc., we find a variety of conflicting opinions, that are occasionally inspiring, sometimes confusing and often disappointing.

On one hand Jung sees artistic experience as incomplete, devoid of deeper meaning (1953/1977, para. 342), on the other he grants art an essential role in balancing culture: “art represents the process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs” (1966/1972, para. 131). Sometimes Jung takes “art as a form of dream” (1925/1989, pp. 51-56), sometimes analysis is an art form (1953/1977, para. 502). He considers “a work of art is clearly not a symptom but a genuine creation,” and believes that “a creative achievement can only be understood on its own merit” (1960/1981, para. 702). Sometimes the unconscious is an artist



**Figure 1** *Nude Descending the Stairs, Marcel Duchamp*

(1953/1977, para. 289), at other times the artist is a translator of the primordial image for the contemporary times (1966/1972, para 130).

However modern art, in contrast to analysis, is a blind guide to the creative source within. Jung is openly biased against modern art:

In a letter to Esther Harding (7/8/47), Jung says, “I am only prejudiced against all forms of modern art. It is mostly morbid and evil on top [of that]” (Jung 1973, p. 469). Nevertheless, in spite of self-proclaimed prejudice against modern art, Jung is capable of profound analysis of modern painting:

There was once exhibited in New York a painting called the Nude Descending the Stairs [by Marcel Duchamp]. This might be said to present a double dissolution of the object, that is in time and space, for not only have the figure and the stairs gone over into the triangles and squares, but the figure is up and down the stairs at the same time, and it is only by moving the picture that one can get the figure to come out as it would in an ordinary painting where the artist preserved the integrity of the figure in space and time. The essence of this process is the depreciation of the object (1925/1989, p. 54).

As you can see this collection of quotes presents a wide spectrum of highly ambivalent comments. They do not fit easily into a consistent perspective on art. Let’s look now into Jung’s more formal writings on art to see if we can find some more coherence there. His most explicit discussion of art involves poetry found

in his lectures “On the relation of the analytical psychology to poetry” in 1922 (1966/1972a), and “Psychology and literature, in 1930 (1966/1972b). In both of these presentations Jung attempts to define a proper place for psychology regarding poetry, or art in general. Poetry is used here as “prima materia” in the service of elaborating, defining and refining Jung’s psychology project. It is worthwhile to follow his major points.

Jung asserts that only the phenomenology of artistic creation is open to psychological inquiry. The essential nature of art has to be left to aesthetic investigation. Jung warns against the simplistic psychoanalytic reductionism of a work of art to the personal and family complexes of the artist. This approach reduces art to neurosis but does not further the understanding of the work of art. The proper psychological approach to art investigates only its meaning and not its personalistic determinants. Jung realizes that to do justice to poetry psychology has to relinquish its pathologizing prejudice, and turn away from searching for the meaning of the work in the personal life of the poet and focus on the artwork itself (1966/1972, para. 100).

Jung’s guiding metaphor for the work of art is a plant, which leads him to understand art as a natural process:

Personal causes have as much or as little to do with a work of art as the soil with the plant that springs from it...The plant is not a mere product of the soil; it is a living self-contained process which in essence has nothing to do with the character of the soil. In the same way, the meaning and individual quality of a work of art inhere within it and not in its extrinsic determinants. One might almost describe it as a living being that uses man only as a nutrient medium, employing his capabilities according to its own

laws and shaping itself to the fulfillment of its own creative pattern (ibid, para. 107-108).

The poem as plant metaphor sounds so deceptively self-evident that it is easy to miss its radical character. However, it is an extreme view: art is nature not culture. For Jung this view is not an unfounded conjecture but a simple conclusion. He deduces this position both from his experience of artistic creation and from the idea that the archetypes are natural organs of the collective unconscious. So the real creator is not an artist but the unconscious. By seeing art as a natural, instinctual process Jung disposes with the problem of an artist as a maker. In this view the poem is akin to a vegetative tyrannical force growing through and often in spite of the artist. For Jung it meant something autonomous and transpersonal, the plant serving as metaphor for the other to animal/human life: a work of art is not a human being, but is something supra-personal (ibid, para. 108). Jung imagines artistic creation as a natural process of growth driven by a complex (ibid, para. 115).

As Jung discusses the relation of psychology to art two voices emerge that I will designate: Jung-the-psychologist and Jung-the-poet. Jung-the-poet arrives at the edge of the recognition of the mystery of creation and questions the nature of his psychology project:

What can analytical psychology contribute to the mystery of artistic creation?... Perhaps art has no 'meaning,' at least not as we understand meaning... Perhaps it is like nature, which simply is and 'means' nothing beyond that. Is 'meaning' necessarily more than mere interpretation—an interpretation secreted into something by an intellect hungry for meaning? Art, it has been said, is beauty, and 'a thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' It needs no meaning, for meaning has nothing to do with art. Within the

sphere of art, I must accept the truth of this statement (ibid, para. 121).

You can hear how cautiously he treads on this territory of meaning; how carefully he gauges his steps. He even imagines meaning as an appetite of intellect, a departure from his usual stance of meaning as an attribute of the self. He is open to question the nature of meaning itself. This allows us a glimpse of a truly interdisciplinary territory between art and psychology, obscure and somewhat confusing, but full of mystery and potential. Unfortunately, Jung cannot sustain the tension of this unknown territory and explore these questions in depth. Instead, Jung-the-psychologist takes over, demarcating the boundary between art and psychology: “[But in psychology] we must interpret, we must find meanings in things, otherwise we would be quite unable to think about them. We have to break down life and events, which are self-contained processes, into meanings, images, concepts, well knowing that in doing so we are getting further away from the living mystery” (ibid, para. 121). Jung-the-psychologist dissolves the overreaching problem of Meaning into multiple little questions of particular meanings and concepts, away from the living mystery of image.

Jung psychologizes the artistic process with confidence and objectivity. He does recognize the necessity of the immediacy of creative flow in which the artist and the artwork are in participation, without self-consciousness. Nevertheless, being protective of psychology he takes the cognition away both from art and from immediate experience and privileges psychology with its unique access to meaning while participating in values delivered by immediate experience and artistic creation. He relocates the artistic process to the category

of immediate experience and away from the opus contra naturam, the more prestigious designation, that he reserves for alchemy, which is bad chemistry, poor poetry and terrible art. Unfortunately, the idea of an alchemy of art does not occur to Jung-the-psychologist:

As long as we ourselves are caught in the process of creation, we neither see nor understand; indeed we ought not to understand, for nothing is more injurious to immediate experience than cognition. But for the purpose of cognitive understanding we must detach ourselves from the creative process and look at it from outside; only then does it become an image that expresses what we are bound to call “meaning.” What was a mere phenomenon before becomes something that in association with other phenomena has meaning, that has a definite role to play, serves certain ends, and exerts meaningful effects. And when we have seen all this we get the feeling of having understood and explained something. In this way we meet the demands of science (ibid, para. 121).

It is as if Jung thought that immediate experience is separate from mental activity and believed that cognition harms immediate experience. Only detachment guarantees that the image expresses meaning. In isolation a single artistic phenomenon is meaningless. The meaning arises from the context of associations that provide value, purpose and efficacy. As a result of this mental process the ego gains a sense of understanding something. Detachment imparting meaning and understanding leads to a scientific method. However, it is actually Jung’s imaginative retrospective analysis that abstracts cognition from immediate creative experience and privileges “meaning” as separate from the image.

Nevertheless, for all his emphasis on the scientific method Jung-the-psychologist cannot silence his poetic voice:

Whoever speaks in primordial images speaks with a thousand voices; he entralls and overpowers, while at the same time he lifts the idea he is seeking to express out of the occasional and the transitory into the realm of the ever-enduring (ibid, para. 129).

As if taken over by the enantidromia of art over science, Jung-the-poet delivers this spectacular tribute to art and an artist:

The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking (ibid).

Jung-the-poet ends his reflections with an Orphean praise: “Art represents the process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs” (ibid, para. 132). Certainly, it is more than we can say about psychology (which is a relative newcomer on the historical scene while art has been fulfilling this regulatory function for centuries.)

In his 1930 essay Jung-the-poet is able to revise some of the previous statements of Jung-the-psychologist and moves poetry/art away from the simply natural, immediate experience, or “perception,” towards creative imagination. Jung grants the poet not just the intuitive ability to capture primordial experience but capacity for mythical imagination and corresponding knowledge that allows him to communicate his vision. He perceives the limitation of psychology and

implicitly acknowledges an interdependence of both fields: “The psychologist can do little to elucidate this variegated spectacle [of creative expression] except provide comparative material and a terminology for discussion” (ibid, para. 152).

He grants that great poets (like Dante or Goethe) can bring the collective unconscious into their living experience and in the process create works that affect the whole culture: “Whenever the collective unconscious becomes a living experience and is brought to bear on the conscious outlook of an age, this event is a creative act which is of importance for a whole epoch” (ibid, para. 153).

In the end, Jung offers an invaluable guidance for the proper psychological approach to art:

We [must] let a work of art act upon us as it acted upon the artist. To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it shaped him. Then we also understand the nature of the primordial experience. He has plunged into the healing and redeeming depths of the collective psyche, where man is not lost in the isolation of consciousness and its errors and sufferings, but where all men are caught in a common rhythm which allows the individual to communicate his feelings and strivings to mankind as a whole (ibid, para. 161).

Unfortunately, Jung does not follow his own advice. It is my conviction that if only Jung were able to bear in mind his credo consistently, we would have a very different relationship between analytical psychology and art. We have heard the struggle between two sides of Jung, the psychologist and the poet, wrestling with the daimon art. I will now look at Jung’s biographical notes about his experience of art to see what has shaped him and how his inner psychologist and artist parted ways.

Jung's psychological development to this point is well known, so let me sketch his aesthetic journey to provide the background for what evolved. As a child, Jung had a number of aesthetic experiences, memorable enough to narrate in his eighties. In my explorations I would approach the material following Jung-the-poet's guidance for the proper attitude towards art: "We [must] let a work of art act upon us as it acted upon the artist. To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it shaped him" (ibid, para. 161).

In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961), Jung appears to be a boy sensitive to the qualities of light and color. Even as an infant he was profoundly affected by natural beauty. In his recollections the beauty and glory of nature and the well-being of a baby are joined together. It is as if beauty is a natural, unmediated quality, directly influencing experience. Images of glistening waves of the lake and the pleasure of the expanse and splendor of the waters would infuse young Carl with the life long desire to live by the lake that Jung later actualizes into his lakeshore residence at Bollingen. His spinster maternal aunt, Gusteli was Jung's early art guide and critic. It is through her mediation that Jung consciously perceived the Alps in magnificent reds and golds. His father showed seven-year-old Carl the glorious green sunset painted by dust from the eruption of the Krakatoa volcano. Jung presents himself as a child sensitive to colors and natural splendor, being particularly impressed by the unusual hues of the landscape.

Jung recounts two childhood memories explicitly regarding art, both involving a feeling of transgression. Young Carl sneaked into a dark room of his father's parsonage to admire two paintings: one a mirror copy of Guido Reni's

David and Goliath, and the other a landscape of the early nineteenth century Basel. He said “Often I would steal into that dark, sequestered room and sit for hours in front of the pictures, gazing at all this beauty. It was the only beautiful thing I knew” (1961, p.16). Later at the age of six he was taken by his aunt to the Basel Museum. He was enchanted by the unsurpassed beauty of antique statues. Morally offended, his aunt reproached Carl:



**Figure 2 David and Goliath, Guido Reni**

‘Disgusting boy, shut your eyes; disgusting boy, shut your eyes!’ Only then did I see that the figures were naked and wore fig leaves. I hadn’t noticed it all before. Such was my first encounter with the fine arts. My aunt was simmering with indignation, as though she had dragged me through a pornographic institute (1961, p. 16).

Again art, beauty and transgression go together. However, Jung’s aunt’s moral judgment allowed him to see: prior to her indignation he was in a participation mystique with the beauty of a sculpture, seeing it whole without consciously distinguishing its particular features. In these early manifestations of Jung’s attitude toward art we can see the germs of his future conviction that nature, art and beauty go together, and that moral judgment is separate from the appreciation of art. It is as if without verbal responses, the viewer is lost in the

picture, so having a moral opinion about the artwork serves as detachment, protection against losing oneself in the participation mystique with the art object. It did not help his art appreciation that as a gymnasium student Jung was removed from a drawing class because of “utter incapacity” (Bair 2003, p.30). He experienced the class as a “soulless copying” and claimed that he could draw only when inspired (Hannah 1976, p. 41). As a university student Jung was “crazy about Holbein

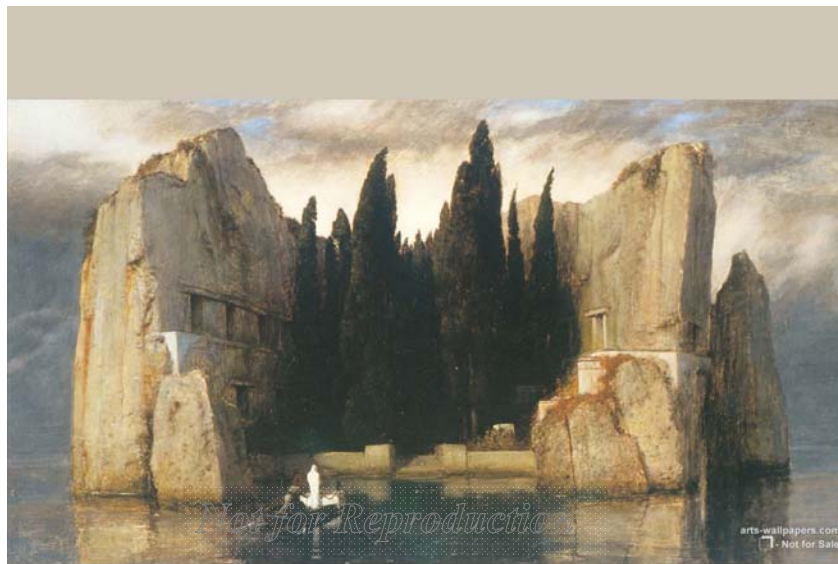


**Figure 3** *Noli Me Tangere, Hans Holbein*



**Figure 4** *French Ambassadors, Hans Holbein*

and Bocklin



**Figure 5** *Island of the Dead, Arnold Bocklin*



**Figure 6** *The Plague, Arnold Böcklin*

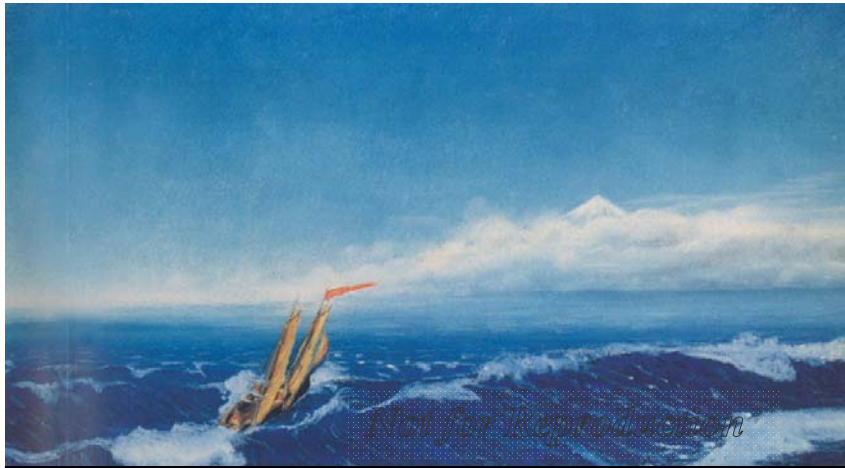
and the old Dutch painters, and collected engravings” (Bair 2003, p. 79). While studying with Pierre Janet in Paris in 1902, Jung enjoyed visiting the Louvre and



**Figure 7** *Landscape, C.G. Jung*

spent hours watching painters copy the *Mona Lisa*. Jung painted landscapes himself and depicted towns from memory (Bair 2003, p. 80). As Jung put it himself in a 1952 interview: “At one time I took a great interest in art. I painted myself, sculpted and did wood carving. I have a

certain sense of color” (1977, p. 221).



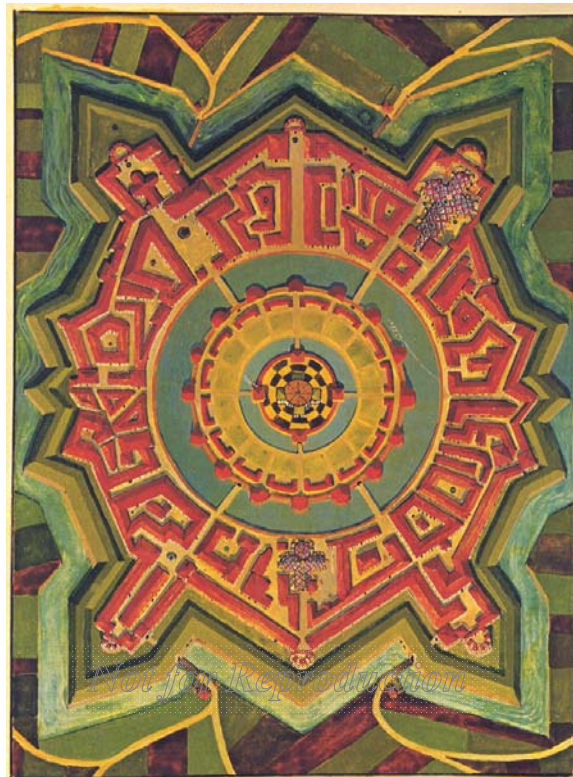
**Figure 8** *Below the Harbor, C.G. Jung*



**Figure 9** *Landscape, C.G. Jung*



**Figure 10** *Lake Zurich, C.G. Jung*



**Figure 11** *Untitled, C.G. Jung*

After his separation from Freud, between the years 1912-18, Jung entered a “period of inner uncertainty” and a “state of disorientation” (1961, p. 170). He found himself “suspended in mid-air” and felt compelled to develop a new attitude towards his analytic work. He abandoned his past theory of dreams and approached them phenomenologically, by paying close attention to the dream images themselves. When reflecting on his work that provided him with “the key to the mythology...to unlock all the gates to the unconscious psyche” Jung heard a voice questioning his attitude (ibid, p. 171). Thus began a long series of dialogues with psychic others that lead Jung to create and develop his original psychology project. This inner whisper put into question Jung’s accomplishments and lead to the realization that both Western culture in general and he individually had lost “the myth in which [he was] living.” This “dialogue with himself” made Jung uncomfortable and he stopped thinking. He reached a dead end. (See Wolfgang



**Figure 12** *Atmavictu, C.G. Jung*

Giegerich’s 2000 account of this subject.) At this point Jung still perceived the inner voice as himself and had not granted it full autonomy.

In the months preceding WWI, Jung was plagued by horrific visions of rivers of blood flooding Europe and fantasies of bodies placed in crematory ovens alive. His house was haunted by ghosts. He thought that he “was menaced by a psychosis” (ibid, p. 176). When the war finally arrived he realized that his “own experience

coincided with that of mankind in general” and he set out on the path to explore his own psyche (ibid, p. 176). Not knowing where to start, in desperation, he submitted himself to “the impulses of the unconscious” and he found himself drawn to play “childish games” (ibid, p. 174). In spite of the humiliation it entailed, he persisted on building a miniature stone village with a castle and a church “as if it were a rite” (ibid, p. 174). This activity released a stream of fantasies and provided an “inner certainty that [he] was on the way of discovering [his] own myth” (ibid, pp. 174-5). Jung learned to value such play and throughout his life, whenever he felt at a loss, he painted or sculpted which provided a rite d’entrée for a stream of fantasies leading to his major psychological works (ibid, p. 175). During these years Jung lived in a constant state of tension, “helpless before an alien world” of the psyche (ibid, p. 177). However, he possessed “demonic strength” that allowed him to withstand the “assaults of the unconscious,” and had an unwavering conviction that he was obeying a higher will. He found that by translating emotions into images he obtained inner tranquility. He faithfully formulated the fantasies in their own style. He conceived his “voluntary confrontations with the unconscious as a scientific experiment which [he himself] was conducting,” but later realized that “it was an experiment that was being conducted on [him]” (ibid, p. 178). This experiment was not a dispassionate, detached endeavor but a dangerous,



**Figure 13 Stone, C.G. Jung**

terrifying necessity; never more so when the inner voice compelled Jung either to understand his dreams or to shoot himself (ibid, p. 180).



**Figure 14 Stone Sculpture, C.G. Jung**



**Figure 15 Snake Swallowing Fish, C.G. Jung**

Among the fantasy figures that initially personified themselves in Jung's psyche were Elijah, a Black Snake and a blind Salome. Jung thought that Salome

was blind because she did not see the meaning of things. At that time Jung was biased against feminine figures, and he thought that feminine blindness was not an expression of inner sight as he usually granted blind masculine figures (see an



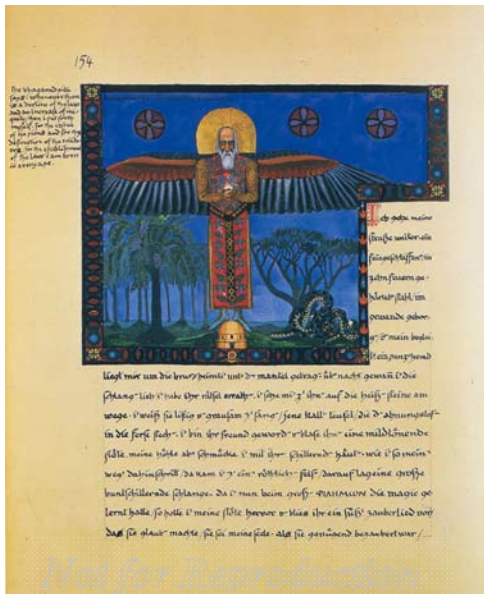
**Figure 16 Snake, C.G. Jung**

old blind man in the *Visions Seminars*). Elijah was a wise old prophet representing knowledge and intelligence. Although on the intellectual level Jung thought of them personifying Logos and Eros respectively, he was able to realize that it was “more meaningful to let the figures be what they were...namely events and experiences” (ibid, p. 182). Elijah evolved into a winged Gnostic magus Philemon, Jung’s imaginal guru who taught him the reality of the psyche.

Later, Philemon became relativized by the emergence of yet another figure, whom I call Ka. In ancient Egypt the ‘king’s ka’ was his earthly form, the embodied soul. In my fantasy the ka-soul came from below, out of the earth as if out of a deep shaft. I did a painting of him, showing him in his earth-bound form, as a herm with a base of stone and upper part of bronze. High up in the painting appears a kingfisher’s wing, and between it and the head of Ka floats a round, glowing nebula of stars. Ka’s expression has something demonic about it – one might also say Mephistophelian. In one hand he holds something like a colored pagoda, or a reliquary, and in the other a stylus with which he is working on the reliquary. He is saying, ‘I am he who buries the gods in gold and gems.’ Philemon had a lame foot, but was a winged spirit, whereas Ka represented a kind of earth demon or metal demon. Philemon was the spiritual aspect, or ‘meaning’.

Ka, on the other hand, was a spirit of nature like the Anthroparion of Greek.... Ka was he who made everything real, but who also obscured the halcyon [kingfisher] spirit, Meaning, or replaced it by beauty, the 'eternal reflection' (ibid, pp. 184-185).

One can see how Jung privileges “meaning” over beauty although both are



**Figure 17 Philemon, C.G. Jung**

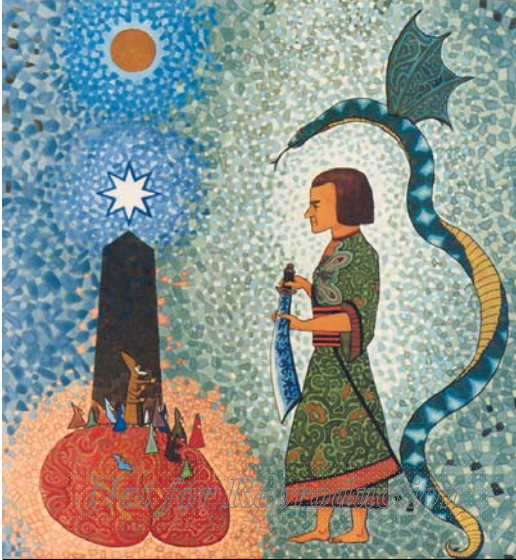
parts of the same process. Jung forgets his insight that it is more meaningful to let the figures be what they are and tends to see them as abstractions. It is as if Jung’s overvaluing of masculine wisdom and meaning (expressed in figures of Elijah and Philemon), and undervaluing Salome lead to the relativization of Philemon and the emergence of Ka, to direct

Jung to the value of expression and beauty and see meaning in or through them. However, Jung misses the compensatory aspect of the process. Instead of reevaluating his own attitude by sticking to the provided images, Jung continues to assert his habitual stance. Ka appears to Jung as having demonic, Mephistophelian expression



**Figure 18 Philemon and Other Figures, C.G. Jung**

(an intimation of Mercurius), parallel to Jung’s own “demonic strength” in wrestling with the unconscious. Although Jung sees Ka as obscuring



**Figure 19 Knight with Sword, C.G. Jung**

meaning with beauty, the text does not justify this assertion. In its own words Ka is a provider of value (gold and gems) for the divine and makes everything real. Ka builds the shrine (pagoda) for the gods to dwell. It would be more accurate to say that Ka makes invisible visible, by giving it form and value, which makes meaning possible. In Jung's painting (which is

unfortunately unavailable at present) the kingfisher's wing is prominently displayed on the top (hardly a concealment) and Ka is seen as a stone/bronze statue—a form of artistic expression. If anything Ka seems to be a daimon of art that has compelled Jung to engage in the artistic expression. Ka makes meaning by creating images, while Philemon makes meaning by telling stories about images. The psychic firmament of scintillae spreads between them.



**Figure 20 Dream Figure, C.G. Jung**



**Figure 21** *Untitled, C.G. Jung*

It is in the context of the emergence of Ka that Jung heard an inner voice calling his endeavor art. This encounter made such an impression on Jung that he recounts it twice—in 1925 (1989) and in 1958 (1961).

In the seminars of 1925 (1989, pp. 42-45) Jung narrates his initial dialogue with the anima figure this way:

While I was writing [down my visions] once I said to myself, 'What is this I am doing, it certainly is not science, what is it?' Then a voice said in me, 'That is art.' This made a strangest sort of impression upon me, because it was not in any sense my conviction that what I was writing was art. A living woman would very well have come into the room and said that very thing to me, because she would not have cared anything about the discriminations she was trampling underfoot. Obviously it wasn't a science; what then could it be but art, as though those were the only two alternatives in the world. That is the way a woman's mind works.

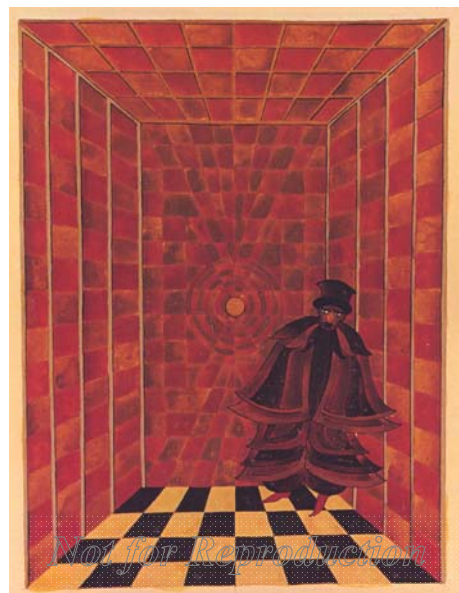
One can hear in Jung's tone his feeling of superiority over this feminine voice. His emotion does not let him notice that the very thing that he is accusing the other of is his own thinking in opposites. It is the way Jung's ego mind works.

The anima just says that what he does is art. It is Jung's ego that brings on oppositional thinking. All he says is a result of his angry, fear based reaction to her comment. Obviously, the anima's voice strikes a chord with Jung and he is afraid of its persuasive power. That chord I call Jung's "art complex".

He continues:

Inasmuch as [what I was doing] was manifestly not scientific, I might have taken it for art, but I knew perfectly well that this was a wrong attitude. With a secret conviction that this was art, I could easily have watched the course of the unconscious as I would watch the cinema. If I read a certain book I may become deeply moved by it, but after all, it is all outside myself; and in the same way if I had taken these dreams and fantasies from the unconscious as art, I would have had from them only a perceptual conviction, and would have felt no moral obligation toward them....My anima could easily have worked me up to the state of believing that I was a misunderstood artist, privileged to cast aside reality for the sake of pursuing these alleged artistic gifts (ibid, p. 45).

Jung has a strong defensive reaction to the anima's opinion. There is no openness here to the voice of the other. Jung's mind is made up in advance. Possessed by his "art complex" he goes on and on trying to shake off any insinuation that he may be an artist. Contradicting what he otherwise believed about critically considering the position of the other,



**Figure 22 Figure, C.G. Jung**

Jung reacts from his “art complex” out of fear of being perceived as an artist and



**Figure 23** *Untitled, C.G. Jung*

a misunderstood one at that. The way Jung thought of psychology included a moral dimension and thus his identity as a “psychologist” had been more acceptable to him than that of an artist. Ironically, “being misunderstood” became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Jung is paranoid about the anima’s intentions, and is terrified of “being ground to pieces,” but not by virtue of what he does but by how his activity is

categorized. It is as if Jung was afraid that if he accepted the anima suggestion that he make art, he would end up like a mad visionary artist, lost in his own fantasy world, unable to communicate with others but convinced of his own truth.

More than three decades later Jung narrates to Jaffe a slightly different version of this encounter with the anima (1961, pp. 185-7).

I once asked myself, ‘What am I really doing? Certainly this has nothing to do with science. But then what is it?’ Whereupon a voice within me said, ‘It is art.’ Obviously what I was doing wasn’t science. What then could it be but art? ...I said very emphatically to this voice that my fantasies had nothing to do with art, and I felt a great inner resistance. ...Then came the next assault, and again the same assertion: ‘That is art.’ This time I caught her and said, ‘No, it is not! On the contrary it is nature.’

The major difference in these two accounts is Jung's adamant assertion that his visions are nature. It seems that not only "woman's mind" works in alternatives. Jung himself follows her example; he just chooses different opposites. Jung ends his anima-dialogue with a the statement asserting the dominance of the ego: "In the final analysis the decisive factor is always consciousness, which can understand the manifestations of the unconscious and take the position towards them" (ibid, p. 187). Jung assigned to the anima a position of conveying images of the unconscious and consulted her when his emotions were disturbed. She reluctantly obliged and responded with the image that would vanquish the sense of oppression and transformed emotional energy into interest in the image. He stripped his artist's soul of its power, and let his ego set the rules of the engagement. At the same time he believed he was fulfilling his ethical obligation towards the image. Actually, Jung "fell pray to the power principle," the very condition what he himself envisioned would happen if he failed to consider images ethically (ibid, p. 193).

Despite his adamant opposition to designating his activity as art, Jung was compelled to write his fantasies down in the Black Book and then elaborated them artistically in the Red Book. Eventually, he abandoned this aestheticizing tendency believing that such outpouring of fantasy "needed firm ground underfoot, and that [he] must ... return to ... reality [which for him] meant scientific comprehension" (ibid, p. 188). Further he said "My science was the only way I had of extricating myself from that chaos... I took great care to try to understand every single image, every item of my psychic inventory, and to

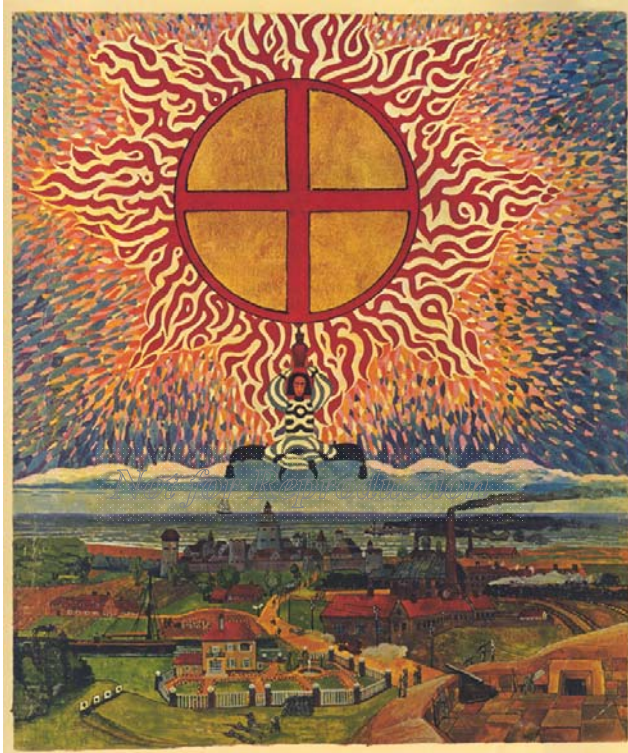
classify them scientifically...and...to realize them in actual life,...and to convert insight into them into an ethical obligation” (ibid, p. 192).

Given Jung’s personal equation, scientific understanding was the only way open to him to develop a psychology with soul. The danger of succumbing to the inner world of his images was real to him and he feared he would get lost in his fantasies the way Nietzsche perished in the “quintessential horror of irreality.” The belief that he was doing scientific work offered Jung a protection against this horror of fantasy, that the art would not have provided (ibid, p. 189). By pinning down butterflies of the soul, describing their habits and classifying them by species, he was creating a science of psycho-logy, the logos of the soul.

While Jung believed that the artistic attitude towards the images had not entailed an ethical obligation, his own approach to images reveals that there were some images towards which he felt more morally obliged than towards the others. The figures of Elijah and Philemon—who for Jung represented wisdom and meaning, and were for him forerunners of the concept of the Self—carried more weight than the homunculus of Ka, or his artistic soul.

It is significant that following the rejection of his anima voice Jung experienced a fantasy of the loss of his soul. He understood that the soul was withdrawing into the unconscious, the land of the dead. His house became haunted with the crowds of the dead. However, his science did not provided him with a handle or guidance for how to cope with this material. He could survive this assault of the collective unconscious only through engaging his poetic, artistic side. The apotropaic act of writing of *The Seven Sermons to the Dead*

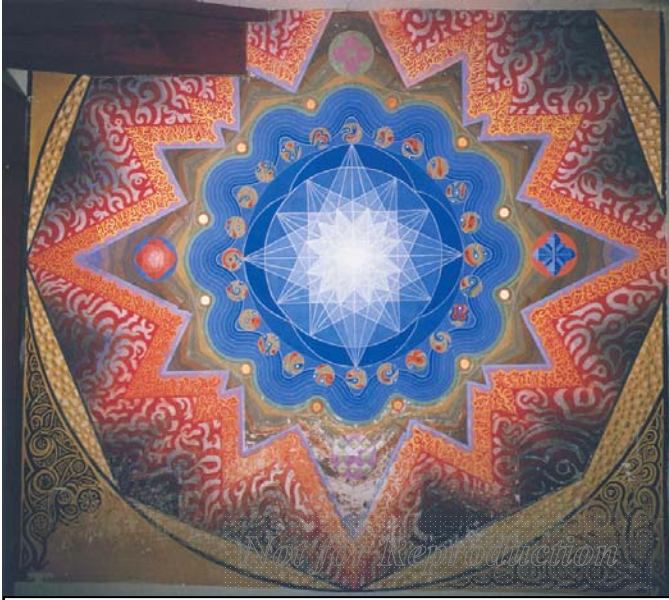
exorcised the spirits. He began painting mandalas daily and found them expressing his psychic transformations.



**Figure 24** *Untitled, C.G. Jung*



**Figure 25** *Mandala, C.G. Jung*



**Figure 26** *Mandala in the Tower, C.G. Jung*

Over the years the anima persisted in trying to convince Jung about the artistic value of his fantasies. At the end of WWI when Jung was a commandant of a POW camp, she sent him a “dangerously persuasive” letter that highly irritated him. It seeded doubt in Jung’s mind “whether the

fantasies [he] was producing were really spontaneous and natural, and not ultimately [his] own arbitrary inventions” (ibid, p. 195). It is as if giving aesthetic appreciation to his fantasy process meant for Jung devaluing it rather than enriching it. He categorized it as a scientific experiment and any suggestion that there was artistic value in it, threatened to turn what Jung believed was a natural expression of the unconscious into an arbitrary egoic fabrication and as such put his whole psychology project into question. He was so disturbed by the anima voice that his next mandala lost its symmetry. Paradoxically, after rejecting the artistic value of his mandalas, Jung concretized the value of his paintings and “guarded them like precious pearls” (ibid, p. 196).

Although it is self-evident that artistic expression has sustained Jung during his dark times he could not bring himself to recognize that fact. He clung to his designation of the process as a scientific experiment and conceptualized his experience from that perspective. As a result, Jung developed his technique of

engaging the psyche—active imagination. However, to preserve the originality and distinctness of his method from art-making he had to minimize art's cognitive and semantic component. He had to emphasize the process and not the product of his effort. It allowed him to focus on the soul and its expression as images for their/its own sake, and not for the sake of art.

Given his “art complex” Jung had to resist his anima voice in order to engage his creative material fully. Defining himself as a scientist-psychologist working on the natural lava that erupted from his psyche gave him enough courage and libido to make it his life work. As art it would not carry for him the same interest, conviction and significance as psychology did. In retrospect it is easy to side with Jung's anima voice. However, what was at stake here was the relationship of psychology to the soul. How Jung had dealt with material was not an issue for him but how it was categorized. If Jung engaged the material the way he understood an artist did, he might not have been able to claim the soul as the quintessence of the work as fundamentally as he did. It is as if the “art complex” compelled Jung toward psychology with soul. In this context I believe that the rejection of the anima's designation was a fateful error. It was the error that eventually lead to the recognition of the autonomy of the soul and engagement with the images for their own sake and not the sake of the product or the ego. It took Jung decades to fully grant fantasy a prominent position in the psyche. Paradoxically, Jung's limitation allowed the soul to claim the center stage and make itself present in psychology. If he followed the artist's way we might have had a soulful art but soulless psychology.

Jung's view of art has become a part of the analytic process itself, concretizing into a living legacy for the following generations of Jungians:

Although my patients occasionally produce artistically beautiful things that might very well be shown in the modern 'art' exhibitions, I nevertheless treat them as completely worthless when judged by the canons of real art. As a matter of fact, it is essential that the artistic products of my patients should be considered worthless, otherwise my patients might imagine themselves to be artists, and the whole point of the exercise would be missed. It is not a question of art at all—or rather it should not be the question of art--but something more and other than mere art, namely the living effect upon the patient himself. (1954/1977, para. 104)

Jung was arrogantly dismissive of modern “art.” Regarding the matter of artistic value, he does what he usually warns analysts against, i.e., imposes his own psychology on the patient. It is his “art complex” that makes him paranoid about honoring the artistic value of his patients' expressions. He fears that including the appreciation of the artistic aspect of the process would be detrimental to the analysis itself. Nevertheless, Jung was able to recognize the power of artistic representation within the analytic process:

[This process of artistic depiction] invests the bare fantasy with an element of reality, which lends it greater weight and greater driving power. And these rough-and-ready pictures do intend to produce effects, which, I must admit, are rather difficult to describe. ... A patient needs only to have seen once or twice how much he is freed from a wretched state of mind by working at a symbolical picture, and he will always turn to this means of release whenever things go badly for him. ... The patient can make himself creatively independent through this method. ... By painting himself he gives shape to himself (ibid, para. 106).

Paradoxically, this very recognition of the mysterious power of artistic process lead Jung to refuse its separate value. It had to be a part of active imagination in order to be contained and used for the purpose of psychic transformation, as a part of analytical psychology. Otherwise it would threaten the psychology project as a scientific discipline, or even worse--it could lead to its designation as an artistic discipline. If one could individuate through painting oneself who would need psychology. Reflecting forty years later on this period Jung says,

It was then that I dedicated myself to service of the psyche. I loved it and hated it, but it was my greatest wealth. My delivering myself over to it, as it were, was the only way by which I could endure my existence and live as fully as possible (ibid, p. 192)

While Jung had dedicated himself consciously to the soul he felt compelled to do so as well. His fantasies became prima materia for a lifetime of work of “distilling within the vessel of [the] scientific work the things [he] experienced and wrote at that time” (ibid, p. 199). Because of Jung’s devoted work from which several generations of Jungians have benefited we can go back and re-claim the artistic value of the image that he had to forgo.



**Figure 27 Bollingen Tower**

Not being able to appreciate the artistic aspect of his fantasies, Jung would have to live in them. He would build a tower at

Bollingen that he envisioned as a house of Philemon and

Baucis. Over the door he placed the

inscription: *Philemonis sacrum-*

*Fausti poenitentia*, Latin for

“Shrine of Philemon—Repentance

of Faust.” Philemon and Baucis

were a poor old couple who

welcomed divine strangers. They

and their abode were destroyed in

Goethe’s Faust. As an architect

Jung found it more prestigious to

imagine himself as a follower of his

“proavus, or ancestor, Goethe”

rather than being possessed by a homunculus Ka. In a letter to Paul Schmitt (5

January 1942), Jung stated,

I have taken over Faust as my heritage, and moreover as the advocate of Philemon and Baucis, who, unlike Faust the superman, are the hosts of the gods in a ruthless and forsaken world (1973, pp. 309-310).

Undoubtedly, he identified his guru Philemon as a part of this ancient couple, but

was unconscious of Ka’s role in his architectural endeavor. It is as if Jung has

been identified with Ka—a temple builder for the divine spirit.



To some extent Jung was aware of the suffering that the rejection of the artistic value of his work entailed. In a 1954 response to Aniela Jaffe about Herman Broch's novel *The Death of Virgil*, Jung writes:

I was jealous of Broch because he has succeeded in doing what I had to forbid myself on pain of death. Whirling in the same netherworld maelstrom and wafted to ecstasy by the vision of unfathomable images I heard a voice whispering to me that I could make it 'aesthetic,' all the while knowing that the artist in words within me is the merest embryo, incapable of real artistry. I would have produced nothing but a heap of shards which could never have been turned into a pot. In spite of this ever-present realization the artist homunculus in me has nourished all sorts of resentments and has obviously taken it very badly that I didn't press the poet's wreath on his head (1975, p. 189).

It is Jung's perception of his embryonic artistic talent that prevented him from claiming the artistic value of his expression. He preferred to suffer denying his artistic daimon its laurel. He had the demonic strength to endure it—we as Jungians do not need to. We can use his artistic sacrifice, that lead to the development of psychology with soul, to re-engage the daimon art. As usual we can be lead in our exploration of the territory between art and psychology by Jung himself:

the psyche does not trouble itself about our categories of reality; for it, everything that works is real... In psychic life, as everywhere in our experience, all things that work are reality, regardless of the names man chooses to bestow on them. To take these realities for what they are—not foisting other names on them—that is our business (1954/1977, para. 111).

I will end with the paraphrase of Jung: "To the psyche, [art] is no less [art] for being named [nature or science]." Art is psyche.

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