



*Angel in Chains* Odilon Redon, 1815

## **WRESTLING WITH AZAZEL--JUNG AND MODERN ART, A CRITICAL APPRAISAL**

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In placid hours well-pleased we dream  
 Of many a brave unbodied scheme.  
 But form to lend, pulsed life create,  
 What unlike things must meet and mate:  
 A flame to melt—a wind to freeze;  
 Sad patience—joyous energies;  
 Humility—yet pride and scorn;  
 Instinct and study; love and hate;  
 Audacity—reverence. These must mate,  
 And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,  
 To wrestle with the angel—Art.  
 Herman Melville

**“I am only prejudiced against all forms of modern art. It is mostly morbid and evil.”** (*C.G. Jung Letters* volume 1, Letter to Esther Harding 7/8/47, p. 469.)

Ever since I read this statement I was perplexed by Jung's vehemence. Writing two years after the catastrophe of WWII, with the understanding of evil as an autonomous substance (and not just a *privatio boni*), Jung piles morbidity and evil on modern art. Why such an intense reaction? This paper is my attempt at imagining an answer.

The above quote is by no means isolated. Jung found morbidity in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, stating that “even a layman would have no difficulty in tracing analogies between [it] and the schizophrenic mentality.” (CW15, p. 116) He considered art of Pablo Picasso as belonging to the type of schizophrenic art. (CW15, p. 137)

However, for all his self-conscious bias against modern art Jung was 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 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 ordinary painting where the artist preserved the integrity of the figure in space and time.” [*Analytical Psychology*, 1925, p. 54.]



**Figure 1** Marcel Duchamp, *Nude descending the Staircase, No. 2*, 1913

Jung was also able to study a Picasso cubist portrait perceptively:

“[It is as if] [a]ll of a sudden [Picasso] was struck by the triangular shadow thrown by the nose on the cheek. Later on, the cheek itself became a four-sided shadow, and so it went. These triangles and squares became nuclei with independent values of their own, and the human figure gradually disappeared, or become dissolved in space.” *Analytical Psychology*, 1925, p. 54<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jung bemoans loss of individuality as the figure dissolves into geometric collectivity. Perhaps, it is for him an artistic equivalent of emergence of mass man, a social cipher, easily influenced by propaganda. However, cubist portraits, as abstract as they are, preserve recognizable features [that is, individuality], or if they are types: a guitarist, a drinker, they retain their characteristic postures. Jung does not appreciate that they are formal ideas commenting on geometric structures of perceptions, engaging the viewer in reflection on the process of seeing.



**Figure 2** Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde*, 1910

Thus, we cannot say that Jung was ignorant or unappreciative of modern art. So, why would it be difficult for Jung to follow his own 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.* (CW 15, p. 105.) Why would it be difficult for Jung to stay in the attitude of not knowing, of not understanding toward modern art, a fruitful approach that he has taken toward any psychic material<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> As in this statement voiced at the end of his life in a letter to an English poet and art critic Herbert Read: “*What modern art-forms represent is questionable. It is certainly something which transcends any hitherto valid form of understanding.*” *C.G. Jung Letters* volume 2, Letter to Sir Herbert Read 9/2/60

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## Jung's 'Art Complex'

My initial attempt to address these questions lead to the paper: [Jung's "Art Complex"](#) (ARAS, Art and Psyche, 2009) presented during the first *Art and Psyche Conference* in San Francisco. Applying Jung's notion of modern painting as a projective test reflecting complexes of the viewer I read his remarks on modern art<sup>3</sup> through this lens, revealing his own "art complex." As the result of Jung's art complex his comments on art are a mixture of emotionally charged exclamations, brilliant insights, prejudices, contradictions, simplifications, pathologizing and confusion that is hard to sort out.

In his late reflections, Jung saw his creative life as a struggle with his inner daimon<sup>4</sup>: *"I have had much trouble getting along with my ideas. There was a daimon in me, and in the end its presence proved decisive. It overpowered me, and if I was at times ruthless it was because I was in the grip of the daimon* [emphasis mine] [MDR, Retrospect, pp. 356-7] His inner daimon, called at various times: spirit of the depths, Philemon, Ka, artist homunculus, provided

<sup>3</sup> [Jung's reflections on painting of Yves Tanguy, 1927] "We can therefore attribute to [modern art] a conscious or unconscious intention to turn the beholder's eyes away from the intelligible and enjoyable world of the senses and to enforce a revelation of the unconscious as a kind of substitute for the loss of human surroundings. This is also the intention of the association experiment and the Rorschach test: they are meant to supply the information concerning the background of consciousness, and this they do with great success. The experimental set-up of modern art is evidently the same: it faces the observer with the question "How will you react? What do you think? What kind of fantasy will come up?" In other words, modern art is less concerned with pictures it produces than with the observer and his involuntary reactions. CW 11, p. 398.

<sup>4</sup> Full quote: *"I have had much trouble getting along with my ideas. There was a daimon in me, and in the end its presence proved decisive. It overpowered me, and if I was at times ruthless it was because I was in the grip of the daimon. I could never stop at anything once attained. I had to hasten on, to catch up with my vision. ... I had no patience with people—aside from my patients. I had to obey an inner law which was imposed on me and left me no freedom of choice. Of course I did not always obey it. How can anyone live without inconsistency? ... A creative person has little power over his own life. He is not free. He is captive and driven by his daimon. ... Daimon manages things so that one comes through, and blessed inconsistency sees to it that in flagrant contrast to my 'disloyalty' I can keep faith in unsuspected measure... When the daimon is at work, one is always too close and too far. Only when it is silent can one achieve moderation."* [emphasis mine] [MDR, Retrospect, pp. 356-7]

him with visions, images and ideas that Jung-the psychologist wrestled with to build his psychology project. This ruthless presence acted with “a force of law in his psyche,” that Jung had to obey. At times he refused. This struggle is one of the reasons for Jung’s inconsistency in attitude and polarized views towards modern art. It seems that because art had a limited theoretical interest<sup>5</sup> for Jung it provided a ground on which his daimon would set out to defeat him. To compensate for his failure Jung would overreact with prejudice toward the subject.

To some extent Jung was aware of the suffering that the rejection of the artistic value of his own work entailed. In 1954 in response to Aniela Jaffe's letter 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.” (*C.G. Jung Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 189.)

During the period of the *Red Book*, Jung himself suffered the ecstatic inflation brought about by the vision of mysterious images. He resisted the temptation of the whispering voice to make ‘aesthetic<sup>6</sup>’ representation of his visions<sup>7</sup>. Jung felt

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<sup>5</sup> “The daimon of creativity has ruthlessly had its way with me. *The ordinary undertaking I planned usually had the worst of it—though not always and not everywhere.* By way of compensation, I think, I am conservative to the bone.” [Emphasis mine, MDR, p. 358]

<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, when Jung decided on the elaboration of his creative fantasies in the illuminated manuscript, he undertook conscious artistic embellishment of his initial sketches, while all along denying (or as modern politicians would say preserving deniability) that he was involved in an artistic endeavor. Eventually, Jung

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that becoming a poet would mean death sentence to his psychology project. 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 due and developing his poetic embryo, in order to stay firmly on (what he considered) the psychological path.

While Jung was constraining his own inner artist-daimon, when it came to others he considered art-making protection against psychic illness, a sort of tension releasing-valve. However, this was with a caveat--only the expressive process counts--the product of such expression he regarded worthless:

“[T]ry to awaken the hidden artist who slumbers in every man. Give him a chance to bring to light the pictures he carries unpainted within himself, to free the unwritten poems he has shut up inside him, and yet another source of psychic disturbances is removed. Even though the work he produces will hardly ever amount to anything technically and artistically, it

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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.” [MDR, p. 188.]

<sup>7</sup> Jung has to deny the suggestion of his anima voice that he is engaged in art in order to preserve the integrity of his psychology project. Jung is terrified of ‘being ground to pieces,’ 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 made 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. For Jung it was not an idle threat. Jung's friend and collaborator Franz Riklin, underwent his own artistic enantiodromia. Under the influence of Maria Meltzer, a Dutch psychiatric nurse at Burgholzli, he abandoned psychiatry and psychoanalysis about the time Jung had his own “confrontation with the unconscious.” Riklin became a student of Augusto Giacometti, the uncle of Alberto. Eventually, he established a career as an abstract painter exhibiting with the Zurich Dada group in 1919. In exchange with Erika Schlegel, the librarian of Zurich Psychological Club, Jung appraised Riklin's art: “his smaller work had a certain aesthetic value, his larger simply dissolved. He vanished wholly in his art, rendering himself utterly intangible. His work was like a wall over which water rippled. He could therefore not analyze, as this required one to be pointed and sharp-edged, like a knife. He had fallen into art in a manner of speaking. But *art and science were no more than the servants of the creative spirit, which is what must be served.*” [emphasis mine, *The Red Book*, p. 204] Shandasani comments that Riklin served for Jung as a kind of s doppelganger, “whose fate he was keen to avoid.” Jung believed that it was an actual woman (and not an anima figure) who stirred his friend from science toward art, and felt vulnerable himself. He was afraid of a similar fate, given that her voice had a strong impact on him. Obviously, it was a highly complex issue for Jung, since he actually believed that a man could become an artist because of a woman, and not from his own inner predisposition. Jung did not want to take a chance of calling his work art and becoming what he feared the most—a “misunderstood artist.”

has helped to cleanse and release his psyche.” [*Jung Speaking*, Kulturbund in Vienna, 1928, p. 45]

He could see the healing power of artistic expression for everyone but couldn't imagine that modern art could have a healing impact on its audience. As a direct consequence of this struggle with his daimon to develop psychology with soul<sup>8</sup>, Jung misunderstood modern art.

### **AZAZEL COMPLEX.**

Now after further reflection I have realized that regarding Jung's approach to modern art another factor is operating. On June 17, 1952, just after completing *Answer to Job*, Jung was interviewed by the Czech-British art historian J.P.

Hodin:

“I cannot occupy myself with modern art anymore. It is too awful. That is why I do not want to know more about it. ... When modern art came on the scene it presented a *great psychological problem for me....* Art derives its life from and expresses the conditions of our time. In that sense art is prophetic.” [emphasis mine] (*C.G. Jung Speaking*, Bollingen 1977, p. 221-4)

Modern art seems awful to Jung, as if he had forgotten that it is an accurate reflection of the horrifying times of European history. He contrasts his own artistic endeavors with the modern art and acknowledges that the art “presented a great psychological problem for [him].” Given his vision of art as a “*process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs*,” (CW 15, p.82), a prophetic

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<sup>8</sup> As I concluded in my essay on *Jung's 'Art Complex'*: “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 [of his work as art] was a fateful error. It was the error that eventually led 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 the 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 had followed the artist's way we might have had a soulful art but soulless psychology.” [S.W. p. 27-28]



function of art, it was crucial for Jung to see modern art as reflective of and compensating for the psychological condition of modern life. Jung's "great psychological problem" with modern art I call the "Azazel complex." Let me elaborate.

In *Answer to Job*, following the apocryphal Hebrew scripture the *Book of Enoch*, Jung imagines the origins of arts and sciences:

"The [fallen] angels, among whom Azazel particularly excelled, taught mankind arts and sciences. They proved to be extraordinarily progressive elements who broadened and developed man's consciousness... In this way they enlarged the significance of man to 'gigantic' proportions, which points to an inflation of the cultural consciousness at that period. An inflation, however, is always threatened with a counter-stroke from the unconscious, and this actually happened in the form of the Deluge." (CW 11, pp. 421-22)

The name *Azazel* (*ʾāzaz'ēl*) derives from the Hebrew roots *ʾāzaz* ("to be strong") and *ʿel* ("God") which has been translated variously as "God has been strong," "God strengthens," or "strong one of God." It can figuratively mean "impudence" or "impudent to God." Alternatively, the name may refer to the rugged and strong mountain cliff from which the goat was cast down. The scapegoat carrying the sins of community was exiled into Azazel's land. [*Wikipedia*, accessed 7/1/12]

Jung considered angels members of a strange order of soulless beings, representing "nothing but the thoughts and intuitions of their Lord," who "are precisely what they are and cannot be anything else." [MDR, pp. 327-328]



**Figure 3** A depiction of Azazel in his familiar form of a goat-like demon, from Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal* (Paris,1825).

Jung believed that fallen, exclusively “bad” angels, begot “inflation” similar to the megalomania that he observed in modern dictators. [MDR, p. 328] Fallen angels of the *Book Of Enoch* can be seen as archetypal ideas incarnating in human experience that lead humans to higher consciousness through development of arts and sciences. Jung thought that such a surge of archetypal energy leads to gigantic over-signification of the creative individual. He uses a curious expression: “an inflation of the cultural consciousness,” as if collective human importance was elevated excessively through creative expression.

I call this “inflation of the cultural consciousness” the “Azazel complex” and would argue that as a psychologist Jung was on the mission to deflate or criticize any cultural manifestations that unduly raised significance of the ego over the psyche as a whole. Jung would see modern artists as identified with the true creator--archetypal Azazel. It was not just the megalomania of tyrants but

even more so the notoriety and glorification of some modern artistic giants like Joyce or Picasso that became the target of Jung's deflationary mission. It is as if by diminishing the stature of modern artists Jung hoped to prevent another Deluge. He believed that hubris of consciousness, or taking "man' as the highest measure, would lead to the "universal catastrophe." [MDR, p. 328] Jung, particularly in his public essays, aimed at shrinking "giantism, hubris of modern consciousness." [ibid] True to the vision of Azazel Jung considers both science and modern art evil [*Jung Speaking*, 1952, Hodin interview, p. 223]. He judges them both guilty of the irresponsibility with which they bring to the world their own inventions and expression.



**Figure 4** *Angel in Chains* Odilon Redon, 1815

At times Jung's condemnation of the evil impact of art reaches a fever pitch, such as when, on the eve of WWII, after the Anschluss of Austria, when the

specter of Nazism hovered over Europe, Jung expressed these bitter remarks to the Protestant clergy in London:

“We have art galleries, yes—where we kill the gods by thousands. We have robbed the churches of their mysterious images, of their magical images, and we put them into art galleries. That is worse than the killing of the three hundred children in Bethlehem; it is a blasphemy.” [*The Symbolic Life*, 4/5/1939, “A seminar given to the Guilt of Pastoral Psychology in London.” CW 18, p. 274]

Jung is positively enraged by the modern iconoclasm of divine images, for splitting numinous images from their religious context, for separating art and religion.

Both as a psychiatrist and based on his own experience [‘confrontation with the unconscious’] Jung had acute awareness of power of archetypal possession in the “godless, destitute times”:<sup>9</sup>

“The contents that were formerly projected were now bound to appear as personal possessions, as chimerical phantasms of the ego-consciousness. The fire chilled to air, and the air became the great wind of Zarathustra, and caused an inflation of consciousness which, it seems, can be damped down by the most terrible catastrophe to civilization, another deluge let loose by the gods upon inhospitable humanity [allusion to the murder of Philemon and Baucis in *Faust*].” CW 12, 1944, p. 480

Jung imagined himself as a successor of that mythical couple and placed an inscription over the entrance to his Bollingen tower: *Philemonis sacrum, Fausti poenitentia*, or “Temple of Philemon, Repentance of Faust.” He took it upon himself to provide the sanctuary for gods in his life-work, and to educate the public to prevent the inflation of consciousness. Given his understanding that the archetypal contents inflating the contemporary ego-consciousness are to

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<sup>9</sup> As he called the period, after the great German poet Holderlin.

blame for the twentieth century horrors [as debatable as this notion is on the socio-political scale] Jung looked for allies among people who deal with creative symbolic process, for artists, to provide the symbols that would shift the zeitgeist:

“It seems to me of some importance, therefore that a few individuals, or people individually, should begin to understand that there are contents which do not belong to the ego-personality, but must be ascribed to a psychic non-ego. This mental operation has to be undertaken if we want to avoid a threatening inflation. To help us, we have the useful and edifying models held up to us by *poets and philosophers* [my emphasis]—models or *archetypi* that we may call remedies for both men and the times. CW 12, p. 481

Jung was disappointed that modern artists had not come up with unifying symbols, only with alienating fragments and ruins of meaning, beauty and value. In his view, modern artists were not aware that archetypal forms were expressing themselves through them. As he put it to Margaret Tilly, an English concert pianist, in 1956 regarding music: “I never listen to music anymore. It exhausts and irritates me... Because music is dealing with such archetypal material, and those who play it don’t realize this.” [C.G. Jung Speaking, p. 274]

### **MISUNDERSTANDING OF MODERN ART**

For Jung the most pronounced characteristics of modern art were subjectivity, abstraction, fragmentation and ugliness.<sup>10</sup> With his prejudiced and ‘conservative to the bone’ [MDR, p. 358] attitude towards modern art Jung did not understand aesthetics and the value of abstractions. He could see modern

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<sup>10</sup> “[Modern] art is a flight from the perceptible world, from the visible reality.... To the extent that it is a manifestation for the primary it may have a positive value. ... art that has all of a sudden lost its belief in beauty and looks only inwardly where there is nothing to be found but ruins, the mirror of our world: they all want to descend into the realm of the mothers without possessing Faust’s key. In my own way I try to get hold of a key and to open closed doors with it.” (C.G. Jung Speaking, Bolingen 1977, p. 221-4)

art as turning toward invisible reality, but did not consider this turn an *opus contra naturam*, the more prestigious designation, that he reserved for alchemy. In Jung's view modern artists' descent into the unconscious is not a conscious sacrifice but an escape into internal ruins without keys to open its doors.<sup>11</sup> Jung's alienation from modern art<sup>12</sup> is the psychological background responsible for seeing it as symptomatic expression. He frequently (see his essays on Picasso and Joyce, *CW 15*, and my commentary in the appendix here) makes an uncritical jump that conflates modern art with the art of his psychotic patients, both creating "schizophrenic expressions."<sup>13</sup> Reversing his usual amplificatory mode—

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<sup>11</sup> Jung sees modern art as turning toward invisible reality, which sounds conspicuously as *opus contra naturam*. Jung perceives the transition from the beautiful art to the 'art that lost its belief in beauty' as rapid decline. Modern artists descent into subjectivity is not a conscious sacrifice but an escape into internal ruins without proper tools to open its doors. Disregarding the issue whether metaphoric ruins really need the keys to enter, Jung forgets that by his own admission he has already questioned the compulsive need to "open all doors," (MDR, p.171) and misses the implication that the realm of mothers itself lies in ruins, and what could this image itself tell us about the unconscious in modernity.

<sup>12</sup> In a later letter to Hodin (9/3/1955) Jung humbly acknowledges: "Nor do I pretend to have very much to say about modern art. Most of it is alien to me from the human point of view and too disagreeably reminiscent of what I have seen in my medical practice." [*C.G. Jung Speaking*, Bolingen 1977, p. 221.]

<sup>13</sup> In a curious little 1932 article for the Belgian *Journal des Poetes* "*Is There a Freudian Type of Poetry?*" [CW 18, pp. 765-6] Jung states without much doubt:

"If a writer is sick, psychically sick, it is highly probable that whatever he produces will bear the stamp of his sickness. This is true with reservation, of course; for there actually are cases where the creative genius so far transcends the sickness of the creator, that only a few traces of human imperfection are to be seen in the work. But these are exceptions; *the general rule is that a neurotic poet will make neurotic poems.*" p. 765

Writing for the public interested in poetry Jung breaks his promise not to mix up the poet's personal condition with the work. It is a deliberate act to provoke the readers obviously partial to poetry, and make the point about the sick literature of modern times. Arguably, Jung's favorite poet Holderlin, writing most of his work from the mental asylum would be a notable exception. This is not just a passing comment.

Jung even develops a way of determining which artwork is neurotic, making himself an arbiter of what is true or great art:

"If the meaning of a poetic work can be exhausted through the application of a theory of neurosis, then it was nothing but a pathological product in the first place, to which I would never concede the dignity of a work of art. Today, it is true, our taste has become so uncertain that often we no

amplification of patients' material with famous works of art or mythology--Jung amplifies the work of Picasso using pictures by schizophrenics. It is instructive here to recall Edgar Wind's caution (from *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*): "logically and causally the exceptional is crucial, because it introduces the more comprehensive category ... [which] cannot be understood by amplifying the commonplace" (p. 238) Thus, it is clear that amplification of Picasso's work with pictures of schizophrenics will bring us no closer to understanding his work, while it serves as a clear expression of Jung's demeaning attitude towards the artist.

In the same way that initially as a psychiatrist he could not admit of having his own fantasies and had to project his anima into Miss Frank Miller (1925 *Analytical Psychology Seminars*, pp. 27-28), Jung cannot conceive that a modern artist can have the mental capacity to descend, without losing his mind, to bring up and express the forms found in the unconscious, the same forms that the schizophrenic patient is overwhelmed by. In this effort the modern artist seems closer to the psychologist working with psychotic material than to the psychotic patient expressive of and identified with it. However, it is easier for Jung to see modern art as symptomatic of the modern condition than symbolic of it. He claims the psychologist's superiority over the artist as the one who

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longer know whether a thing is art or a disease. I am convinced, however, that if a work of art can be explained in exactly the same way as the clinical history of a neurosis, either it is not a work of art, or the explainer has completely misunderstood its meaning. I am quite convinced that a great deal of modern art, painting as well as poetry, is simply neurotic and that it can, consequently, be reduced like an hysterical symptom to the basic, elementary facts of neurotic psychology. But so far as this is possible, it ceases to be art, because great art is man's creation of something superhuman in defiance of all the ordinary, miserable conditions of his birth and childhood. To apply to this the psychology of neurosis is little short of grotesque." CW 18, pp. 765-6.



possesses the Faustian key that opens doors to the unconscious<sup>14</sup>. Under influence of “Azazel complex,” Jung the psychologist, felt threatened by the modern art that on its own undertook exploration of the unconscious, and thus competed with his psychology project. Instead of seeing modern artists as fellow-travellers in the unknown territory, as potential collaborators, he sees them as competition, and devalues them as unconscious explorers.

Once Jung invented a technique of active imagination and developed the notion of the transcendent function, he perceived artistic experience as limited and incomplete.<sup>15</sup> It is as if because Jung envisioned active imagination as consisting of two distinct stages: first giving form to the unconscious processes (In German *gestalten*) and then providing symbolic understanding (*verstehen*), he assumed that art is only *gestalten*.<sup>16</sup> Modern art seen as an aimless undertaking is therefore clearly distinguished from the depth analysis which is teleological, aiming at symbolic understanding and individuation. Although Jung admits that modern artists have access to the creative unconscious, he considers them blind guides groping in the dark<sup>17</sup>. Jung does see that both art and analysis

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<sup>14</sup> It is as if he forgot that he owes the very metaphor of key to the realm of the mothers to another artist, the great romantic poet Goethe. So Jung is in a proud possession of the poetic key but does not grant modern artists and poets potential of developing a similar tool.

<sup>15</sup> “It is an artistic experience which, in the deeper meaning of human experience is incomplete: ... the vision is experienced artistically, but not humanly. By ‘human’ experience’ I mean that the person of the author should not just be included passively in the vision, but that he should face the figures of the vision actively and reactively, with full consciousness. ... A real settlement with the unconscious demands a firmly opposed conscious standpoint.” CW 7, 1917, p. 213.

<sup>16</sup> As I put it in my 2008 essay: “To preserve the originality and distinctness of his method from art-making he had to minimize arts’ 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<sup>1</sup>, and not for the sake of art.” (Jung’s ‘Art Complex’, p. 27)

<sup>17</sup> “[M]odern art leads us away from the too great scattering of the libido on the external object, back to the creative within us, back to the inner values. In other words, it leads us by the same path analysis tries to lead us, only it is not a conscious leadership on the part of the artist.” [*Analytical Psychology*, 1925, pp. 54]

attempt to explore the same source<sup>18</sup> but stops short of drawing a conclusion that could lead to the collaboration between art and psychology in their exploration of the unconscious. If Jung was able to consider the implications of this thought, he would be much closer to appreciating art not only as coming from the same source but as a manifestation of the creative source itself with artist as a co-creator and conscious elaborator and not just as a resource to be utilized by the superior analytical thought.

Jung acknowledges that modern art and depth psychology share the same object--*eidolon*, or image--however, again, he does not draw an obvious conclusion: image is psyche (CW 13, p. 50) and image is art, thus art and psyche must be closely related, as if art were psyche. This interpretation would allow for closer kinship between the two disciplines<sup>19</sup>, particularly since he believed that psyche had a religious function and that art could bring about religious symbols<sup>20</sup>.

Based both on his notion of creativity as one of the instincts (CW 8, “Biological Factors Underlying Human Behavior”) and on his own experience of creative fantasies in *The Red Book*, Jung believes that it is the unconscious which

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<sup>18</sup> Jung has acknowledged that both he as an empiricist and Rilke as a modern poet ultimately drew from the same spring, the collective unconscious [C.G.Jung, 1957, Letters II, pp. 381-2] and praised Rilke's poetry for: "much psychology ... hidden in [it]." [C.G.Jung, 1948, Letters I, p.483] It seems that Rilke is the only modern artist that avoided being diagnosed, and was actually appreciated by Jung who owned several volumes of his poetry.

<sup>19</sup> Depth psychology and art could then be considered as disciplines exploring images, part of imaginology (Michael Vannoy Adams designation for science of images).

<sup>20</sup> “Modern art, then, began first by depreciating these external values, by dissolving the object, and then sought the basic thing, the internal image back of the object—the *eidolon*. We can hardly predict today what the artist is going to bring forth, but always a great religion has gone hand in hand with great art.” [Analytical Psychology, 1925, pp. 56]

is the real artist<sup>21</sup>. It is as if the unconscious is a natural, spontaneous and compulsive artist, providing us with its synesthetic visions. Jung's idea of the unconscious-as-artist is guided by a particular notion of an artist—an artist as a visionary, attuned and guided by the unconscious and naturally skilled at expressing its imagistic responses. It is as if the competence and the conscious deliberation that goes into the rendering of image is taken for granted, the very skills that Jung (1932) considers, etymologically essential of art.<sup>22</sup> Jung's focus on furthering his psychology project makes the artistic rendition of an archetypal image invisible<sup>23</sup>. With the focus fixed on the depth of analysis, the artist becomes an anonymous figure who is akin to a dreamer or a patient channeling an archetypal image. The collective, creative matrix becomes a sole creator, and the individuality so important for Jung in psychological realm becomes negligible in the artistic domain.

### **JUNG'S HOLOSALGIA**

In general, Jung believes that modern art is a blind guide to the unconscious, although, in his late essay *The Undiscovered Self* (1956), he grants it ability in psychological education and considers it full of meaning:

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<sup>21</sup> “The mentality [of the Unconscious] is an instinctive one: it has no differentiated functions, and it does not ‘think’ as we understand ‘thinking.’ It simply creates an image that answers to the conscious situation. This image contains as much thought as feeling, and is anything rather than a product of rationalistic reflection. Such an image would be better described as an artist’s vision.” CW 7, p. 183

<sup>22</sup> Compare this view: “Art fails entirely in its educative purpose if people don’t see that it depicts the sickness of our time. That is why this art is neither enjoyable nor elevating but as you rightly say a ‘scream.’ But a scream is always just that—a noise and not music. Hence I shall hold unswervingly to the view that *modern art is much more correctly judged from the psychological rather than from the artistic standpoint* [emphasis mine]. ‘Kunst’ [art] comes from Konnen [ability, skill]; ‘stammering’ is not skill but only a miserable attempt to speak.” *C.G. Jung Letters* volume 1, From a letter to Walter Martens, 11/24/32, p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> The categories of imagination would be empty without artistic images that Jung habitually uses to exemplify the very idea of numinous images. The unconscious matrix, in historical dimension, is manifested, only through preserved works of art, through human culture.

“[T]hough seeming to deal with aesthetic problems, [modern art] is really performing a work of psychological education on the public by breaking down and destroying their previous aesthetic views of what is beautiful in form and meaningful in content. ... This tells us, in plain and universal language, that the prophetic spirit of art has turned away from the old object-relationship towards the—for the time being—dark chaos of subjectivisms. Certainly art, so far as we can judge of it, has not yet discovered in this darkness what it is that could hold all men together and give expression to their psychic wholeness. Since reflection is needed for this purpose, it may be that such discoveries are reserved for other fields of endeavour. [CW 11, *The Undiscovered Self*, 1956, pp. 303-4.]

Jung complains that modern art has not (yet) found a new form of human solidarity and expression of wholeness. He believes that only depth psychology can provide the reflection needed for wholeness. He does not have his usual patience regarding the emergence of symbols from the unconscious. For all his praise of modern art's prophetic spirit, he does not want to wait for the emergence of the unifying symbol from the chaotic subjective darkness, but wants to ‘deposit’ it through reflection. It is as if he believed that psychological reflection could penetrate beyond the prophetic spirit of art and detect “wholeness”. However, no reflection can discover its object, it can only posit its existence; the object still needs to emerge to be manifest.

This reflection is not reflection in a strict sense but (what I call) *holosalgia*, longing for wholeness [from Greek *holos*, or whole, and *algos*, or pain, sorrow or longing], that aims at wholeness prior to its emergence. In his approach to art Jung does not have the same humility and respect that he has toward patients’ material. He just applies the theory of opposites and claims that fragmentation calls for wholeness. But even then the wholeness will be

discovered only when manifested, not when posited.<sup>24</sup> He does not recognize that modern art's unintelligibility itself points to the symbol as the best expression of something that is not yet otherwise understood and he is upset that artists have not yet produced a symbol of wholeness and portray only chaos and fragmentation. If only Jung had ventured a bit closer toward modern artists he could see them as fellow wrestlers with inner daimons attempting on their own, without prior models<sup>25</sup>, to *truly enter* the unconscious to bring back symbols of transformation:

“The man, therefore, who, driven by his daimon, steps beyond the limits of the intermediary stage, *truly enters* the “untrodden, untreadable regions,” where there are no charted ways and no shelter spreads a protecting roof over his head.” [MDR, p. 344]

## APPENDIX A

### JUNG ON JOYCE-précis

*Ulysses: A Monologue*, CW 15, pp. 109-134; 1932/1934

To give an illustration of how torturous Jung's wrestling with Azazel can be, I will focus on Jung's monologue on James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Although Jung considered the book a significant '*document humain*' reflective of the spirit of the times, he experienced it as a 735 boring, soporific pages-long tapeworm [p. 112] of a scroll filled with a synesthetic sensory monotonous and random collection of happenings. Jung, “bored to tears,” [p. 114] describes himself as a long-suffering reader who resents the author who does not offer any respite from the relentless, “pitiless stream” of “suffocating emptiness” that “begins and ends in nothingness,” and consists of “nothing but nothingness.” [p. 110] Jung has a

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<sup>24</sup> Jung believed that the shift in the *Zeitgeist* is achieved through the symbols, that arise spontaneously from the unconscious: “the solution, seemingly of its own accord, appears out of nature. Then and only then it is convincing. It is felt as ‘grace.’ The solution ... is usually an unfathomable mixture of conscious and unconscious factors, and therefore a symbol... It represents the result of joint labors of consciousness and the unconscious, and attains the likeness of the God image in the form of mandala, which is probably the *simplest model* [emphasis mine] of a concept of wholeness, and one that spontaneously arises in the mind as a representation of the struggle and reconciliation of opposites.” [MDR, p. 335]

<sup>25</sup> Following no models, discovering everything alone, Jung identified in *The Red Book* as the essence of the modern condition in the age of death of the hero.

“hellish” experience reading the book; vexedly abandons it once, falls asleep a couple of times, but masochistically persists in plowing through it. He even projects his derision at Joyce, accusing him of “infuriating disdain” for such an “assiduous reader” [p. 113] as himself. Jung’s immense contempt for *Ulysses* reduces not only the book but also its author (“In every segment of the book, however small, Joyce himself is the sole content of the segment.” p. 114) to the level of primitive tapeworm:

“...the whole work has the character of a worm cut in half, that can grow a new head or a new tail as required, ..., fabulously procreative, ..., that can produce nothing but other tapeworms ... in endless proglottic proliferation” [p. 112, 114]

His intense emotional reaction indicates that a powerful complex has been triggered by this “hellish monster-birth” [p. 110] of a work. One could imagine Jung’s reading *Ulysses* as a Herculean labor of slaying the Lernaean Hydra, but instead of a monster worthy of his heroic effort he struggles with a lowly intestinal parasite, that does not bring him glory but severe mental indigestion. Jung makes tremendous, and oddly repetitive efforts to reduce the book to nihilistic nonsense and deflate its writer, as if terrified that acknowledging the book’s and its author’s importance would diminish himself. To be fair Jung is aware of his irritation [p. 113] and prejudice [p.115]. However, he traces his “ill temper” back not to his own complex but to Joyce’s solipsism, the “cold-blooded unrelatedness of his mind” and “contempt for the cultivated and intelligent member of the reading public.” [p. 113] As we can see Jung is identified with his complex and projects it on the author. One only has to recall how hard it is at times to read Jung’s work, and his own, often justified, fear of being misunderstood (*C.G. Jung Letters* volume 2, Letter to Sir Herbert Read 9/2/60, p. 589), to see that the book hits too close to home.

Jung attributes his prejudice to being a psychiatrist for whom “the tragicomedy of the average man, the cold-shadow-side of life, the dull grey of spiritual nihilism are ... daily bread,” only to consider *Ulysses* an “uncooperative” patient who “turns its back on [him],” “singing its endless tune” of nihilistic destructiveness. [p. 115-6] Subsequently, Jung-the-psychiatrist performs a mental status exam on this uncooperative patient, finding: “interminable ramblings of the insane,” “complete lack of judgment,” “atrophy of all values and feelings” “intensification of the sense activities,” “predominance of retrospective themes and resentments, a delirious confusion of the subjective and psychic with objective reality,” “solipsism,” “neologisms, sound- and speech-associations,” “abrupt transitions and hiatuses of thought.”<sup>26</sup> [p. 116] He concludes with the diagnosis of “schizophrenia,” stating that “even the layman

<sup>26</sup> In the light of this passage we can reconsider the meaning of Jung’s reverse amplification of modern art with the art of mental patients, particularly schizophrenics. Jung intended it to be an amplification to aid in understanding of more “complex” (pun intended) artistic expressions by its simpler forms. However, as the above segment reveals, it actually functions as a way of reducing modern art to “outside art” and diagnosing the modern artist as a patient.

would have no difficulty in tracing the analogies between *Ulysses* and the schizophrenic mentality.” [p. 116] The only feature that saves *Ulysses* from being committed to the mental asylum library is the absence of stereotyped expression and its “consistent and flowing” presentation. Once *Ulysses* is almost put in a straightjacket, a curious enantiodromia occurs in Jung-the- psychiatrist: “what seems to be mental abnormality may be a kind of mental health which is inconceivable to the average understanding; it may even be a disguise for superlative powers of mind.” [p.117]

Now Jung--the-psychiatrist can abandon his diagnostic efforts to classify the “author [as] a high-grade or a low-grade schizophrenic,” to ask a meaningful question: why does *Ulysses* exert such a powerful influence? [p. 117] It seems that only when Jung deflates the author’s importance, can he focus on the psychological meaning of the book. I will argue that this compulsive need to reduce the importance of artists, particularly modern artists, Jung’s contemporaries, is a sign of the Azazel complex. Let me clarify what I mean by this notion.

Only, after limiting the importance of the author can Jung engage the book itself. He finds *Ulysses* “no more a pathological product than modern art as a whole,” (Comfort of sorts; at least Joyce is in the company of fellow artists.) and proceeds to connect it to other artistic expressions of the modern era that he finds analogous to schizophrenia.

While in schizophrenic patients the estrangement from reality is created by the disease, “in the modern artist it is ... produced by a collective manifestation of our time, ... from the collective unconscious of the modern psyche.”<sup>27</sup> [p. 117] In the insane the distortion of beauty and meaning is a result of the fragmentation of the personality, but in contrast, in the modern artist it serves a creative purpose and helps him unify his artistic personality:

“The Mephistophelian perversion of sense into nonsense, of beauty into ugliness—in such an exasperating way that nonsense almost makes sense and ugliness has provocative beauty—is a creative achievement that has never been pushed to such extremes in the history of human culture, though it is nothing new in principle”<sup>28</sup>. p. 118

<sup>27</sup> At least, Jung finds different etiology for the modern artist than the disease.

<sup>28</sup> Jung amplifies the modern artistic period with other transition eras, like art under the monotheism of Ikhnotan (or Akhnotan) in ancient Egypt, or preserved in the Jewish tradition of infantile lamb symbolism in early Christianity portending transformation of the Roman Empire into the Christian Kingdom, or in the convoluted style of the late Baroque. Jung considers that “the rejection of the art and science of his time was not an impoverishment for the early Christian, but a great spiritual gain.” p. 118 Jung praises early Christians for their dramatic spiritual growth and, and I believe, for avoiding the temptation of Azazel’s inflation by rejecting the science and art. The late Baroque exemplifies for Jung “triumph of the spirit of science over the spirit of medieval dogmatism,” that creates great (perhaps inflated) personalities like Tiepolo. (p. 118)



It is instructive to compare this with a fragment from *The Red Book* where Jung describes how the spirit of the depths forced him to speak on its behalf:

“[It] took my understanding and all my knowledge and placed them at the service of the inexplicable and the paradoxical. He robbed me of speech and writing for everything that was not in his service, namely the melting together of the sense and nonsense, which produces the supreme meaning..., the path, the way and the bridge of what is to come. That is the God yet to come. *It is not the coming God himself, but his image that appears in the supreme meaning. God is an image...* “ pp. 228-229.

In his discussion of Joyce, the spirit of the depths, which is Jung’s inner mentor and the herald of the birth of the new God, becomes a Mephistophelian figure, a harbinger of destruction, still trapped within the Christian tradition. It seems that if Jung were to acknowledge that modern artists on their own came to the realization of the emergence of a spirit of the new era, they would threaten the primacy of depth psychology in divining such developments in the *Zeitgeist*.

Nevertheless, Jung reluctantly ascribes “a positive, creative value and meaning” to *Ulysses* and praises it, albeit sarcastically, for the lasting “destruction of the criteria of beauty and meaning,” for its “insults to all conventional feelings,” for “brutal disappoint[ments] of our expectations of sense and content,” for eliminating “any trace of synthesis and form,” for pointing out to readers how unmodern and medieval they are: “it is only modern man who has succeeded in creating an art in reverse, a backslide of art that makes no attempt to be ingratiating, that tells us just where we get off.” Jung finds this modern attitude justified by the prevailing medieval mindset of Europe, and regards modern artworks a necessary, if “drastic purgatives,” “a kind of psychological specific” p. 119[ or cure] for it: “We are still stuck in the Middle Ages up to the ears,” [thus] “nothing less than Joycean explosives are required to break through [our] hermetic isolation.” (p. 121) Consequently, he regards Joyce as a blind prophet who arose to “teach our culture a compensatory lack of feeling:”

“Like every true prophet, the artist is the unwitting mouthpiece of the psychic secrets of his time, and is often as unconscious as a sleep-walker. He supposes that it is he who speaks, but the spirit of the age is his prompter, and whatever this spirit says is proved true by its effects.” pp. 122-3

In this passage we can hear resonances with his own temptations of prophecy that he struggled with in *The Red Book*. He denies the artist any consciousness of prediction and attributes all agency to the spirit of the age. However, Jung soon contradicts himself, claiming that the book is written “in the full light of consciousness,” more purposive and directed than *Zarathustra* or *Faust*, and “bears no features of a symbolic work.” [p. 123] And thus it cannot be an unwitting mouthpiece of the spirit. Jung is challenged because he reached here

the limits of what he considered a symbol. He finds it shattering that in *Ulysses* “behind the thousand veils nothing lies hidden.”

Although Jung “sincerely hopes that *Ulysses* is not symbolic,” and pronounces that “there ought not to be anything symbolic behind the book,” he has to admit, in spite of himself the symbolic nature of *Ulysses*:

“[*Ulysses*] is a symbol of what makes up the totality, the oneness, of all the single appearances in *Ulysses* as a whole—Mr. Bloom, Stephen, Mrs. Bloom, and the rest, including Mr. Joyce. Try to imagine a being who is not a mere colorless conglomerate soul composed of an indefinite number of ill-assorted and antagonistic individual souls, but consists also of houses, street-processions, churches, the Liffey [Dublin’s river], several brothels, and a crumpled note on its way to the sea—and yet possesses a perceiving and registering consciousness!” p. 130

This notion of a symbol is different from Jung’s usual designation. It is a self as a collective all-inclusive conscious “monstrosity.” (p. 130) *Ulysses* includes both the fictional characters, the setting, all interactions within it and the writer himself: it is as if a living conscious soul of fictional Dublin together with the architect who conceived and constructed it, or as Joyce put it: “I am the light of homestead, I am the dreamery, creamery butter.” [p. 129] This symbol includes art, fiction, reality, psyche, artistic creation, presence, representation, life, concretization, consciousness, human, archetypal, unconscious and the artist. The book becomes a living being able to overwhelm the reader’s medieval mindset and plant the seeds of modern consciousness in him. It is a truly transformative work, a symbol of transformation that at the end infects Jung himself, who takes off his psychiatric coat, puts on the mantle of a lunar poet and sings a mocking paean to the glory of this self-conscious symbol of a book [this song, patterned on the final paragraph of the book, Mrs. Bloom’s monologue]:

“O *Ulysses*, you are truly a devotional book for the object-besotted, object-ridden white man! You are a spiritual exercise, an ascetic discipline, an agonizing ritual, an arcane procedure, eighteen alchemical alembics piled on top of one another, where amid acids, poisonous fumes, and fire and ice, the homunculus of a new, universal consciousness is distilled! You say nothing and betray nothing, O *Ulysses*, but you give us the works! Penelope need no longer weave her never-ending garment; she now takes her ease in the gardens of the earth, for her husband is home again, all his wanderings over. A world has passed away, and is made new.” pp. 131-132

It is as if after securing the deflation of Joyce and his work, Jung can relax and allow himself to play and join in the spirit of the work. At the end what matters is not the solemn meaning of the book but its aesthetic impact, the playful poetic spirit that Jung found in himself after the hours of torturous reading and heavy-handed criticism: the old attitude passed away and new has emerged.

**APPENDIX B****JUNG ON PICASSO, 1932, CW15**

It is highly disappointing to read Jung's essay on Picasso, particularly in the light of his earlier perceptive and insightful comment about the artist's work:

“Once I followed very carefully the course of Picasso's painting. All of a sudden I was struck by the triangular shadow thrown by the nose on the cheek. Later on, the cheek itself became a four-sided shadow, and so it went. These triangles and squares became nuclei with independent values of their own, and the human figure gradually disappeared, or became dissolved in space.”

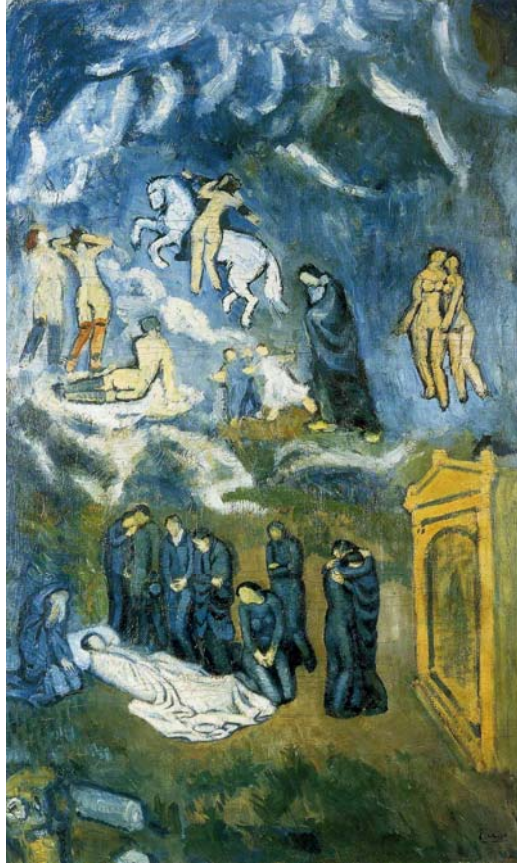
*Analytical Psychology*, 1925, p. 54

Jung only reluctantly agreed to write about Picasso for the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (November 13, 1932) on the occasion of the large exhibit of his works at the Kunsthhaus in Zurich, that was visited by 34,000 people in nine weeks (an enormous number at the time, an equivalent of blockbuster exhibits nowadays)<sup>29</sup>. Although the essay is overtly about the artist, Jung devotes most of it to his discussion of pictorial representations by his patients, as an amplification of Picasso's work. That move by itself reverses his usual amplificatory mode, when he amplifies unknown poems or dreams of his patients with famous works of art or mythology. Just think of it: using pictures of schizophrenics to understand artwork of a recognized genius. It is clear that amplification of Picasso's work with pictures of schizophrenics will bring us no closer to understanding of his work, while it serves as a clear expression of Jung's demeaning attitude towards the artist.

He sees “all pictorial representations of processes and effects in the psychic background [of his patients as] symbolic,” pointing “in a rough and approximate way, to a meaning that for the time being is unknown.” (CW15, p. 136.) Picasso's paintings belong for Jung to the same category of fragmented, cold

<sup>29</sup> In 2010, to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Kunsthhaus Zurich the museum has undertaken a recreation of its 1932 Picasso exhibit. [From a later review of the first exhibit]: “The 1932 exhibition was the first ever Pablo Picasso museum exhibit and the only one curated by the artist himself. It was huge display of 229 works and also a first ever blockbuster event attended by over 34,000 visitors in nine weeks. On November 13, 1932, on the last day of Picasso show, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published Jung's essay on Picasso that “caused international furore that has not subsided to this day.” [p.38] Jung's assignment of Picasso to the schizophrenic group of artists created a controversy and was immediately criticized by prominent Zurich artists and art historians. For instance, K.H. David writing on November 20, 1932 worried that “psychological comments of Dr. C.G. Jung [struck] a heavy blow against modern artists in general, of a kind that could shake their precarious position in relation to society even further.” Zurich artist and lawyer Hans Welti bemoaned that Jung had placed “misunderstood and dangerous [diagnostic] instruments in the hands of a layman.” [p. 40] And a Jewish-German art historian Max Raphael criticized Jung's “nebulous metaphysics” and condemned his “philistine, small-minded bourgeoisie” [p. 41] way of measuring modern art. Jung's words definitely had a powerful and lasting impact, since the 2010 catalogue for the exhibit devotes three out of eighteen pages to the critique of Jung's essay. [Based on Tobia Bezzola. *Picasso By Picasso. His First Museum Exhibition 1932*. Kunsthhaus Zurich. Prestel Verlag: Munich, Berlin, London, New York, 2010]

pictures as those of schizophrenics. He sees Picasso's paintings gradually becoming abstract as they come more from "inside' situated behind consciousness." (CW15, p. 136.) On the way, Jung offers a perceptive analysis of Picasso's Blue Period<sup>30</sup>.



**Figure 5** Pablo Picasso, *Evocation (The Burial of Casagemas)*, 1901

<sup>30</sup> It is significant that art critics pointed out that Jung misread Picasso's painting *Evocation* depicting "resurrection" and "ascension" of his friend Carlos Casagemas (who committed suicide on 17 February 1901) for the descent or nekylia of Picasso himself. This painting was inspired by the El Greco work [Bezzola, p. 39] "Burial of Count Orgaz." Of course, from Jungian perspective it is legitimate to read *Evocation* as Picasso's own fantasy, and all the characters as parts of the artist. However, the painting itself does not present descent but only lamentation over the corpse and the ascent of Casagemas. The Blue Period is definitely full of grief and sorrow. It is filled with lonely couples, sad mothers, feeling of loss and desolation. So at least on the feeling level the blue nigredo is present.





**Figure 6** El Greco, *Burial of Count Orgaz*, 1586

He imagines it as Picasso's descent into the underworld. In the form of Harlequin Picasso wanders through Hades bringing up to the canvas grotesque, earthy, primitive shapes, an "accumulation of rubbish and decay." (p. 139) Although Jung acknowledges that Picasso's *Nekyia* is a meaningful *katabasis eis antron*, a descent into the cave of initiation and secret knowledge, and finds that the artist expressed a motif of union of opposites, of light and dark animas, he believes that the artist is unconscious of this process. Jung is repulsed by the

figure of Harlequin which leads him to envision the artist's death and insanity. It is as if Jung's personal prejudice hindered deeper appreciation of Picasso.

As usual, when it comes to the analysis of works of art Jung starts with a caveat that he will not comment on the aesthetic value of the art but "shall restrict [himself] to the psychology underlying this kind of artistic creativeness"<sup>31</sup>, only to abandon it and freely speculate about the value of the art. Jung refers to his twenty years of experience with the "psychology of pictorial representation of psychic process," by which he must mean his own expressive explorations of *The Red Book*, and later of his patients'. This experience constitutes Jung's professional point of view from which to judge "this kind of artistic creativeness."

Jung proceeds with psychological analysis of "non-objective art." He imagines that such art comes from 'inside' and Picasso's images do not "refer to any object of outer experience at all" and emerge from the "unconscious psyche." This 'inside' for Jung corresponds to the collective unconscious "an invisible that cannot be imagined," but affects consciousness." He considers "all pictorial representations of [unconscious] processes" *symbolic*. Such symbolic representations point to (temporarily) unknown meanings and give Jung the "feeling of strangeness and of confusing, incomprehensible jumble." p. 136 Jung admits a crucial difference between the art of his patients and modern artists: "Because of their lack of artistic imagination, pictures of the patients are generally clearer and simpler, and therefore easier to understand than those of modern artists." pp. 136-7. Contrary to his usual predilection for complexity and obscurity, as in his exploration of alchemy, for which modern works of art would be a perfect foil, Jung prefers to analyze the simpler artistic forms of his patients.

Among the patients, Jung distinguishes neurotics and schizophrenics. Neurotics make pictures "of a synthetic character, with a pervasive and unified feeling-tone." Neurotics produce abstract artwork deprived of feeling but of definite symmetry and distinctive meaning. Jung sees abstractions as lacking 'the element of feeling,' a contrary to his view of abstraction from 1921, where he recognized "abstract feeling,"<sup>32</sup> as more distilled and elemental feeling. It is as if his art complex distorts Jung's understanding.

Schizophrenics' depictions confuse Jung with the lack and alienation from feeling. Jung does not distinguish between pictures alienated from feelings and the alienation from feelings of their authors, and implies that schizophrenics

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<sup>31</sup> It may be an artifact of English translation but the "this kind of artistic creativeness" is in itself a highly biased designation of Picasso's creativity, a disparaging remark that sets the stage for depreciation from the start. p. 135

<sup>32</sup> In the definition section of *Psychological Types* (pp.409-411) he defines abstraction as an aspect of differentiation ("individuation... is a process of differentiation" CW6, p. 448), as a "form of mental activity that frees this content from its association with the irrelevant elements," leading to the energetic devaluation of the object by introverting of libido. Each of the functions can be abstract, thus Jung sees abstract feeling on the same level as abstract thinking, characterized by intellectual, aesthetic and moral values.

make schizophrenic pictures. It seems that for Jung a schizophrenic does what a schizophrenic is. Pictures by schizophrenics convey “no unified, harmonious feeling-tone but, rather, contradictory or even a complete lack of feeling. It is hard to imagine the difference between the ‘lack of the element of feeling’ ascribed to the abstract art of neurotics and ‘complete lack of feelings’ of art of schizophrenics. To give Jung the benefit of the doubt here, and not attribute his judgment here solely to the art complex, one could imagine that the possible distinction lies in the difference between abstract pictures and figurative pictures that represent alienation. Jung analyzes formal features of schizophrenic pictures (just after claiming that aesthetics were not in the purview of psychological approach to art) and finds them fragmented, filled with ‘lines of fracture’ that he considers expressive of “a series of psychic ‘faults’ (in the geological sense) which run right through the picture.” p. 137 Contemplating such a picture Jung is left cold and disturbed by “its paradoxical, unfeeling, and grotesque unconcern for the beholder.” p. 137 We shouldn’t forget that Jung is not a casual observer, but by the time of this essay, he is someone who has sharpened his vision on alchemical obscurities and paradoxes. Conflicting with his analysis, Jung responds intensely to the source that he considered devoid of feeling. Unfeeling pictures of schizophrenics were quite effective in agitating and confusing Jung. Nevertheless, having established a category of schizophrenic art, Jung places Picasso in it: “this is a group to which Picasso belongs.” After numerous protests in the press for assigning Picasso to the schizophrenic group, Jung adds a footnote to the subsequent publication of his essay, designed to clarify the misunderstanding. However, the footnote itself does not clarify but further obfuscates the issue stating “the designation ‘schizophrenic’ does not ... signify a diagnosis of the mental illness schizophrenia but merely refers to a disposition or habitus on the basis of which a serious psychological disturbance can produce schizophrenia.” [f3, p. 137] Further he denies that he regards Picasso or Joyce as psychotics but asserts he “count[s] them among a large group of people whose habitus it is to react to a profound psychic disturbance not with an ordinary psychoneurosis but with a schizoid syndrome.” Based on Jung’s confusing statements and mystifying denials I argue that Jung was profoundly disturbed by Picasso’s ‘schizophrenic art,’ since it hit too close home [see the fragmented eye picture from the *Liber Secundus*] and he sought to distance himself from this art. He preferred to speak against the potential inflation coming from the Azazel complex.

To be fair Jung grants both neurotic and schizophrenic art symbolic content, although with an obscured meaning only. The distinguishing feature is the relationship of the artist to a [potential] beholder. The neurotic seems to search for meaning and its feeling, and makes conscious effort to communicate it to the observer. The schizophrenic seems the victim of the meaning of the symbol, and “is as though” “overwhelmed and swallowed” by it; he does not attempt to communicate with the beholder. Jung sees a schizophrenic artist as “dissolved into all those elements which the neurotic at least tries to master.” It seems that Jung tautologically applies his understanding of psychotic process, as identification with the archetypal, to his analysis of art, and finds psychotic



process in schizophrenic art, as if every schizophrenic patient's [artistic] expression carried his schizophrenic essence.

To make a wider case for schizophrenic expression both in art and literature Jung draws on his analysis of Joyce's *Ulysses*:

“nothing comes to meet the beholder, everything turns away from him; even an occasional touch of beauty seems only like an inexcusable delay in withdrawal. It is the ugly, the sick, the grotesque, the incomprehensible, the banal that are sought out - not for the purpose of expressing anything, but only in order to obscure; an obscurity, however, which has nothing to conceal, but spreads like a cold fog over desolate moors; the whole thing quite pointless, like a spectacle that can do without a spectator.” *ibid.*, p. 138

This creates a paradox. On one hand the artistic expression of schizophrenic patients is ennobled by this amplification, on the other both Joyce and Picasso are placed in the context of psychotic expression. Picasso is even in a worse predicament than Joyce because his work has not yet been discussed and already been prejudged and assigned a collective place in a dubious company. So much for Jung's praise of individuality. Moreover, Jung's literalization of art-is-nature metaphor, prevents him from seeing the incomprehensibility of art akin to alchemical “*obscurum per obscurius*”, or “*ignotum per ignotius*” (CW12, pp.35, 227) that he praised. Jung looks at artists' works the way he looks at the alchemical texts, finding in them psychological material akin to his patients'; however, he grants alchemy the prestigious status of *opus-contra-naturam*, which he denies to modern art.

Jung sees both neurotic and schizophrenic expression as full of secret meaning but has an easier time with understanding neurotic expression. As one reads the article it becomes obvious that Jung is driven by a wider agenda to make a point of what unconscious expressions of any kind are about:

“A series of images of either kind, whether in drawn or *written form* [emphasis mine], begins as a rule with the symbol of the Nekyia - the journey to Hades, the descent into the unconscious, and the leave-taking from the upper world. What happens afterwards, though it may still be expressed in the forms and figures of the day-world, gives intimations of a hidden meaning and is therefore symbolic in character.” p. 138

It is at this point that he brings in the discussion of Picasso, but only to illustrate his idea of Nekyia. So for Jung:

“Picasso starts with the still objective pictures of the Blue Period - the blue of night, of moonlight and water, the Tuat-blue of the Egyptian underworld. He dies, and his soul rides on horseback into the beyond.” p. 138

Jung focuses on the death of the artist and loss of his soul. We can see that Jung is projecting his own elements on the pictures, as we know that Jung's own Nekyia also involved a loss of the soul and descent into the cave. Perhaps Picasso's paintings that were triggered by mourning the suicide of his friend Carlos Casagemas touched some aspect of Jung's material and revived his struggle with the artist within, whom he had sacrificed for the sake of psychology. Jung frames the paintings into a mythic narrative and describes the artist meeting a mother, and a light and a dark soul. Darkening of the colors symbolizes entering the underworld of "deathstruck objects," guided by a 'syphilitic, tubercular, adolescent prostitute.' Jung defines a dead artist that he saw in the pictures as a "personality in Picasso that suffers the underworld fate," that 'is fatefully drawn to the dark' and "follows demoniacal attraction to ugliness and evil."<sup>33</sup> While this underworld scene is different from Jung's *Red Book's mysterium*, in his underworld descent Jung was forced to confront death, soul, his own ugliness and evil, such as when he imagined consuming the liver of a dead girl.

Jung does recognize that Picasso's art depicts the Zeitgeist, which Jung defines as follows:

"It is these antichristian and Luciferian forces that well up in modern man and engender an all-pervading sense of doom, veiling the bright world of day with the mists of Hades, infecting it with deadly decay, and finally, like an earthquake, dissolving it into fragments, fractures, discarded remnants, debris, shreds, and disorganized units. Picasso and his exhibition are a sign of the times, just as much as the twenty-eight thousand people who came to look at his pictures." p. 138

Jung deliberately portrays the spirit of the times in apocalyptic terms, besieged by Satanic forces creating a sense of doom. However, what emerges from the mists of Hades is not Christian Hell, but the repressed polytheistic world, a fragmented dismembered world of Dionysus-Zagreus. Doubtlessly, Jung is aware of Heracitus Fragment 103<sup>34</sup> in which Hades is identified with Dionysus, so the appearance of Dionysus points to the revitalization of declining Christian

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<sup>33</sup> The full quote is as follows: "When I say 'he,' I mean that personality in Picasso which suffers the underworld fate - the man in him who does not turn towards the day-world, but is fatefully drawn into the dark; who follows not the accepted ideals of goodness and beauty, but the demoniacal attraction of ugliness and evil." It seems that Jung deliberately wants to create disorientation and confusion. He wants the reader to believe that "he who dies" at the very beginning of discussion is Picasso himself. Jung does not mention that he speaks metaphorically, and the death he talks about is a metaphor for descent and only later Jung clarifies that it is only a part of Picasso personality that descends. Jung implies however, that Picasso performs a sacrifice by turning fatefully towards the dark, which in other contexts he would consider a courageous path towards individuation. p. 138

<sup>34</sup> "If it were not in honour of Dionysus that they walk in procession and sing a hymn to the phallus they would be acting most shamelessly. Hades and Dionysus are one, for whom they rave in frenzy."

Translation M. R. Wright.

culture. Jung misses an opportunity to seriously engage Picasso's art on its own terms and finds only what he had projected onto it<sup>35</sup>.

At this point Jung abandons even the pretense that he is talking about art, and directly talks about the neurotic psychic processes, although he amplifies them with high minded artistic references from Wagner's *Parsifal* and Goethe's *Faust*. Both Wagner and Goethe depict the encounter of their protagonists with bi-valent, complex feminine figures which for Jung personify the unconscious. Wagner describes the wise, multilingual, ugly grotesque Kundry and Goethe the fourfold feminine of Gretchen, Helen, Mary, and Eternal Feminine. They resemble Picasso's underworld personality encounters with a maternal figure, light and dark animas and a syphilitic adolescent prostitute. The fate of Picasso's personality number two corresponds to the transformation of Faust. Picasso emerges from the underworld as a tragic Harlequin, which Jung identifies as an underworld chthonic god, evidently a Dionysian figure<sup>36</sup>.

Picasso's primitive, earthly feminine shapes on the background of what Jung constructs as a resurrected soullessness of ancient Pompeii, are compared to Faust and Mephistopheles' visit on Walpurgis night to the witches' sabbath [the very motif that Jung also notices in Ulysses]. While Jung acknowledges albeit reluctantly that Picasso is undergoing a descent into ancient times, he demeans it and continually devalues it: "Picasso conjures up crude, earthy shapes, grotesque and primitive, and resurrects the soullessness of ancient Pompeii in a cold, glittering light - even Giulio Romano [evidently a despised artist] could not have done worse!" p. 139

It is as if Jung's assignment of Picasso to the schizophrenic group deprives Picasso's artistic expression transformative potential, and he like a schizophrenic patient becomes a victim of meaning. It seems that Jung wants to give an impression that Picasso's art offers nothing new since: "Seldom or never have I had a patient who did not go back to neolithic art forms or revel in evocations of Dionysian orgies' p. 139

Although Jung amplifies Harlequin's wandering through history to Faust's descent, he sees them as aimless. The landscape is scattered with 'deathstruck' objects, signs of decay and 'aborted possibilities of form and color, meaningless disintegration." In another frame of mind Jung could see these elements as powerful symbols of liminal space, of an open future, but here he abandons even speculation, and hardly dares to hazard a guess, retreating into the safety of his patients' material. Definitely it is not a Jung that we know from seminars of the

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<sup>35</sup> In general, whenever Jung speaks as a psychiatrist to the wider public he puts himself in a role of a teacher of the right approach to the psyche, which perhaps is more useful in commenting on the social-political issues (but even there he gets in trouble, such as with the German and Jewish issues). However, this stance in the artistic realm leads often to the pathologizing distortions of the subject.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Bishop in *The Dionysian Self* discusses this episode in context of Jung's struggle with Nietzsche, pp. 181-184.

same period, Jung who can speculate on any topic, coming with profound psychological understanding of it. I conclude that Jung is writing under the influence of an Azazel complex.

Two final paragraphs are full of confusion, mixing up of various narratives, piled amplifications, ‘aborted’ speculations, fragmentation and struggles with Nietzsche, and Picasso again is lost. It is as if only the incredible resourcefulness, or the “dazzling versatility” of Picasso stopped Jung from prophesying the oncoming doom of the artist, whom he would otherwise condemn to “brain breakdown” that for Jung was the fate of Nietzsche. Confronted with the unknown in Picasso’s work, Jung takes a known route, going back to his patients’ material. He creates an impression that the Nekyia of his patients (including himself) is a much more orderly process than the one he encountered in Picasso’s work:

“The Nekyia is no aimless and purely destructive fall into the abyss, but a meaningful *katabasis eis antron*, a descent into the cave of initiation and secret knowledge. The journey through the psychic history of mankind has as its object the restoration of the whole man, by awakening the memories in the blood.” p. 139

It is as if the descent by the way of Spanish duende was too confusing to Jung, who preferred the more orderly Nekyia of Northern psyches, exemplified by the descent of Faust. Northern descents aim at repairing the one-sidedness of modern man and lead to the awakening of *coniunctio* of “total man.”

“The descent to the Mothers enabled Faust to raise up the sinfully whole human being - Paris united with Helen - that *homo totus* who was forgotten when contemporary man lost himself in one-sidedness. It is he who at all times of upheaval has caused the tremor of the upper world, and always will. This man stands opposed to the man of the present, because he is the one who ever is as he was, whereas the other is what he is only for the moment.” p. 140

Jung believes that recognition, relating to and holding of the opposites of human nature allows for reemergence from disintegration and disorienting madness, to the psychic space where opposites come together:

With my patients, accordingly, the *katabasis* and *katalysis* are followed by a recognition of the bipolarity of human nature and of the necessity of conflicting pairs of opposites. After the symbols of madness experienced during the period of disintegration there follow images which represent the coming together of the opposites: light/dark, above/below, white/black, male/female, etc.” p. 140

Given the low opinion that Jung has of Picasso’s Nekyia Jung is quite surprised, when he finds a union of dark and light feminine among lines of fracture in one picture. However, despite originally claiming that there is absence of feeling in

schizophrenic art, he discovers brutal violent intensity in Picasso's paintings, by taking colors as expressing feelings. Jung considers the *coniunctio oppositorum* not the telos of the psychic development, but a stage that represents embracing of instinctual, moral and spiritual nature prior to transforming it into a living unity. He believes Picasso's psychic development reached this point, but finds it unstable since it "can lead at any moment to a standstill or to a catastrophic bursting asunder of the conjoined opposites." p. 140 Jung worries about the future of Picasso, since "Harlequin gives [him] the creeps." Harlequin reminds Jung of a 'motley fellow like a buffoon' from Zarathustra whose leap led to the rope-dancer's death, which Jung read as a premonition of Nietzsche's madness. So, the emergence of a tragically ambiguous figure of Harlequin from Picasso's unconscious, Jung speculates, can "burst the shell, and this shell is sometimes—the brain." p. 141. This gloomy, pathologizing essay on what purports to be Picasso ends on a dark foreboding note: modern art can lead to disaster for its practitioners. Jung misses a potential kindred spirit with whom he could collaborate on the subject of creative expression as seen by these (Picasso's) "Jungian" ideas:

"The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web."

"Everything you can imagine is real."

"Every act of creation is first an act of destruction."

"Every positive value has its price in negative terms... the genius of Einstein leads to Hiroshima."

"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."