

Tjeu van den Berk

JUNG ON ART

THE AUTONOMY OF THE
CREATIVE DRIVE

SAMPLE
CHAPTER

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Art originates from 'hidden memories'

It would never occur to an intelligent layman to mistake a pathological phenomenon for art, in spite of the undeniable fact that a work of art arises from much the same psychic conditions as a neurosis. This is only natural, because certain of these conditions are present in every individual whether in the case of a nervous intellectual, a poet or a normal human being.

(Jung 1922/1978: 67)

In the hallucinations of his mediumistic niece, Jung encountered for the first time a “world behind the conscious world”, the “hidden memories” (cryptomnesia) of a person. He realized that these memories not only constitute the reservoir of a somnambulist, but that creative processes, in everyone, exist by the grace of impulses which, independent of our will, arise from the unconscious. This is particularly true for the artist! The ego-consciousness regards them as “abnormal”. Nonetheless, creativity exists by the grace of an “unrestrained” spirit.

Jung's discovery of the unconscious via cryptomnesia

In 1900, after having completed his education at the University of Basel, Jung started his first employment as an assistant doctor at the renowned Burghölzli psychiatric clinic in Zürich. At the time, he did not have his doctorate, but he had material for doctoral research. That material consisted of the accounts he had written about the spiritist séances wherein his niece, Hélène Preiswerk (1881–1911) (see plate 1), was a medium. Jung had attended these meetings, as had his mother. Several men and women in Jung's family on his mother's side had mediumistic gifts, Jung's mother in particular.

He finished his doctoral thesis one and a half year later and graduated on 17 July 1902. In his dissertation, he used an empirical methodology in order to find plausible explanations for the fact that his niece heard voices, received insights and acted out personalities during the séances.

On the face of it, paranormal phenomena do not easily lend themselves to empirical research. Nonetheless, Jung regarded these phenomena as his first

unshakeable evidence of the existence of something like the unconscious in the human psyche. In 1925 he conducted seminars on the history of analytical psychology and he began his first seminar almost immediately with the following account: "In 1896 something happened to me that served as an impetus for my future life. (...) The thing that started me off in my interest in psychology was the case of a fifteen-and-a-half-year-old girl. (...) This girl was a somnambulist, and it was discovered by her sisters that she could obtain extraordinary answers to questions put to her when she was in a sleeping state. (...) I was impressed with the fact that, notwithstanding appearances, there must be a hidden life of the mind manifesting itself only in trance or in sleep. (...) During the trance several personalities would manifest themselves and, little by little, I found I could call up by suggestion one personality or another. (...) I said to myself, however, that there must be some world behind the conscious world, and that it was this world with which the girl was in contact. I began to study the literature of spiritism but could find no satisfaction there. Then I turned to philosophy, always seeking for a possible clue to these strange phenomena."²⁰

It was in psychiatry where he eventually found constructive knowledge about "some world behind the conscious world". Because he encountered a similar kind of hallucinating mind in the psyches of his patients. After his doctorate, he pursued the matter further. The following ten years were marked by feverish and ingenious research into the relationship between the unconscious and this 'paranormal' mind. His first masterpiece on the subject was published in 1912: *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*. The hallucinations of a medium are again central in this work. In this research he definitely chose his own direction. At this point Freud broke with him.

According to Jung, there was only one teacher who had a formative influence on him during those years: the Swiss professor of psychology Théodore Flournoy (1854–1920). He was a leading scientist. In 1892 he was offered the first Chair of Psychology at the University of Geneva. Jung often visited Flournoy in Geneva on his free days. He appreciated his advice. Flournoy was a major support to him, in particular during his crisis with Freud. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* nothing equals the warm-hearted gratefulness he expressed towards Flournoy. "Flournoy's ideas were completely in line with mine and they stimulated me. I adopted his concept *imagination créatrice* because it interested me significantly."²¹ For Jung it was a fortunate coincidence that Flournoy's book was published in 1900, since it also included an account of the paranormal gifts of a medium.²²

In his dissertation, Jung explored the functioning of his niece's psyche in trance. He postulated that, among other things, she was subjected to 'cryptomnesia'.²³ He

20 Jung 1926/1989: 3–4.

21 Jung 1962/1997: 378–379.

22 See Flournoy 1900. Jung was so enthusiastic about the book that he asked Flournoy to allow him to translate it into German. Flournoy, however, had already given the rights to someone else.

23 See Jung 1902/1957: 81–84.

adopted this concept from Flournoy, who had given it scientific status as well as a name. The phenomenon of cryptomnesia opened a decisive perspective in Jung's reflections on the unconscious. The term is composed of two Greek words: *kruptos* – hidden – and *mnèmè* – memory. What happens in cryptomnesia, meaning 'hidden memory', is the following: one remembers something without realising that it is a recollection. One is convinced that it is an original thought or intuition. For example, a musician hears a popular folk tune in his youth and this tune becomes a motif in one of his symphonies. However, he is unaware of this connection and thinks he has created something original. Through someone's persuasive investigation it is not only ascertained that the tune already existed, but it is furthermore established that as a child he certainly heard it. Nonetheless, the composer is unaware of any 'malevolence'. Douwe Draaisma, an associate professor of the history of psychology, succinctly described it thus: 'Cryptomnesia means to store the message and to forget its source.'²⁴

The fact that these 'hidden memories' resurface leads us to the conclusion that they continued to exist in an unconscious dimension of the psyche. Jung saw this as evidence of the existence of the unconscious! In his view, cryptomnesia has strong evidential value. The subject never ceased to interest Jung. Three years after the publication of his dissertation, in 1905, he wrote a separate article on cryptomnesia; he again discoursed on this phenomenon in his *Tavistock Lectures* in 1935; and again in 1946; and in 1961, shortly before his death, he finished a lengthy text in which he once more extensively discussed this psychic phenomenon which he considered of major significance.²⁵ I will include three telling examples of cryptomnesia.

The first example Jung personally discovered in Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. He was proud to have found an occurrence of cryptomnesia in this work of art. He refers to it at least four times in his work.²⁶ Because of its simplicity it provides strong evidence. In the chapter 'On great events', Nietzsche narrated Zarathustra's stay on 'the Isles of the Blest'. One day a ship dropped anchor before one of these islands, called 'smoking mountain'. Nietzsche writes: 'and its crew went ashore in order to shoot rabbits.' Around noon, when the captain and his crew were reunited, they suddenly saw a man floating towards them through the air whilst shouting: 'It is time! It is high time!'²⁷ That man is Zarathustra.

When Jung read *Also sprach Zarathustra* for the first time in 1899, he became aware of the déjà vu-like character of the 'captain', the 'shooting of rabbits' and the 'man flying through the air'. At first, he could not locate this feeling. He thought about it for several days, until he remembered that he had read something

²⁴ Draaisma 2005: 3.

²⁵ See Jung 1905/1957: 95–106; 1935/1977: 15; 1946/1954: 110; 1961/1977: 198–202.

²⁶ Jung 1902/1957: 82–83; 1905/1957: 102–103; 1961/1977: 200; 1988: 1217–1219.

²⁷ Nietzsche 2005: 113.

similar several years before in the extraordinary stories written by the physician Julius Kerner. It was a sailors' story, published in 1686. It reads: 'The four captains and a merchant, Mr. Bell, went ashore on the island of Mount Stromboli to shoot rabbits. At three o'clock they mustered the crew to go aboard, when, to their inexpressible astonishment, they saw two men flying rapidly towards them through the air.'²⁸ Everyone realises immediately, remarked Jung, that those similarities can not be coincidental, but we also understand straight away that Nietzsche had no intention to plagiarise. Moreover, the 'shooting of rabbits' is not even meaningful nor does it embellish the story.

The prospective doctor decided to write a letter to Nietzsche's sister to ask for clarification. At the time Nietzsche had become mentally ill. She confirmed that she and her 12-year-old brother had indeed read the extraordinary stories by Kerner. Then it all became clear to Jung. This story was stored in Nietzsche's unconscious. And when the firemountain island of Zarathustra's descent into hell came to his mind, suddenly the 'hidden memory' of the Stromboli story also arose. Nietzsche, however, had no conscious recollection of the sailors' story. Jung even thought that if he had had any recollection of it, he would never have enacted the story of a captain who shoots rabbits!

The second example, in my view even stronger than the first, is narrated by Jung in the text he wrote in 1961, shortly before his death. It is the story of a professor who, during a walk, had a serious conversation with his pupil: "Suddenly he notices that his thoughts are interrupted by an unexpected flow of memories from his early childhood. He cannot account for it, as he is unable to discover any associative connection with the subject of his conversation. He stops and looks back: there at a little distance is a farm, which they had passed a short while ago, and he remembers that soon afterward images of his childhood began to surge up. 'Let us go back to the farm,' he says to his pupil; 'it must be about there that my fantasies started.' Back at the farm, the professor notices the smell of geese. Instantly he recognises it as the cause of the interruption: in his early youth he had lived on a farm where there were geese, whose characteristic smell had formed a lasting impression and caused the reproduction of the memory-images."²⁹ Jung realised that the 'accidental' recognition of cryptomnesia in this story must be a regular event in daily life. Even if we do not consciously retrace our footsteps, the unconscious will inhale the 'odour'.

I derive the third example from *Poetry and Truth* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). He describes an incident which he experienced as a hallucination and which evidently contains an element of cryptomnesia. It happened during the period in Goethe's life when the 22-year-old poet decided to end a love affair with the 20-year-old Frederica Brion. He visited her one more time: 'Those were painful days, whose memories had not remained with me. When I held out my hand to her from my horse, the tears stood in her eyes, and

28 Quoted in Jung 1961/1977: 200.

29 Jung 1961/1977: 199.

my heart was heavy. I rode along the footpath towards Drusenheim, and here one of the most singular forebodings took possession of me. I saw, not with the eyes of the body, but with those of the mind, my own figure coming towards me, on horseback, and on the same road, attired in a dress which I have never worn; it was pike-grey with some gold about it. But as I shook myself out of this dream, the figure had entirely disappeared. It is strange, however, that eight years afterward, I found myself on that very road, on my way to pay one more visit to Frederica, wearing the dress of which I had dreamed, and that, not from choice, but by accident. Whatever one may think of such matters in general, in this instance my strange illusion helped to calm me in this farewell hour. It softened for me the pain of leaving forever lovely Alsace, with all that it had brought me, and now that I had at last put behind me the painful strain of parting, I regained my peace of mind and had a pleasant journey.³⁰ A beautiful example of cryptomnesia. Goethe had stored this dream-experience in his creative mind – apparently it was not suppressed – and it reappeared at this important moment without him realising it. 'By accident' and 'not from choice' he is again dressed in the dream-costume from eight years before. It is only at the end of his life that he understood the enigmatic logic of these events.

Implications of cryptomnesia for art

What, according to Jung, are the implications of these examples of cryptomnesia? In the first place, the conviction that not only can contents of human consciousness disappear into the unconscious, but they can resurface without one being aware of it. Jung identified many kinds of such contents: desires, impulses, intentions, affections, observances, intuitions, etc. All this material can be unconsciously stored, either fully or partially, temporarily or permanently.³¹ On all kinds of occasions it can again disclose itself to our consciousness. Most of the time we remain unaware of this. Jung wrote about how he once told a friend that apparently he had recently ended an unhappy relationship with his girlfriend. When his friend, astounded, asked him how he knew, Jung answered that during the past ten minutes he had heard him whistle three tunes (of which one was: *Abandoned, abandoned am I!*) which had made it quite obvious. His friend had not even been aware that he was whistling these tunes!³²

Sometimes we accidentally notice some 'intruders from the unconscious', but it is apparent, said Jung, that our unconscious must 'swarm' with these 'strange intruders'. We do not know where they come from and most of the time we are not even aware that they are present! We are ignorant of the hundreds of associations and combinations we create each day. "By far the greater part of the psychic elements in us is unconscious. Our consciousness therefore finds itself

30 Goethe 1913, Vol. 2: 48.

31 See Jung 1961/1977: 203.

32 See Jung 1905/1957: 97.

in a rather precarious position with regard to automatic movements of the unconscious that are independent of our will.”³³

Second, Jung thought that these examples suggest a close connection between cryptomnesia and creative processes. He was convinced that the so-called surprising novelties of an artist, his originality, can for an important part be explained by cryptomnesia. An artist’s ‘hidden memory’ functions optimally, even though he usually does not realise it.³⁴ Just like the professor in the example, his stream of daily thoughts will suddenly be interrupted. He receives what is called inspiration. This happens because his ‘nostrils’ are wide open and he unconsciously smells all significant odours. When images, forms, sounds, etc. resurface through cryptomnesia, they are at the same time ‘strange’ and ‘original’. But strangeness and originality are not far apart. Jung wrote: “Strangeness and original creation are (...) closely allied to one another, if we remember the numerous witnesses in *belles-lettres* to the ‘possessed’ nature of the genius.”³⁵ Subsequently, if it is true that the personal unconscious contains forbidden feelings, desires and thoughts, it means that a work of art can be experienced as liberating or taboo-breaking when the artist allows the release of forbidden material.

It is common to speak of ‘possession’ when thinking of artists. But possession is not an exclusive characteristic of artists nor is it extraordinary. In fact, the professor was also unconsciously ‘possessed’ by experiences from his childhood. Nonetheless, it has become a specific term with respect to artists, exactly for the reason that works of art come across as ‘strange’ and ‘original’. There are artists who are surprised that they somehow unconsciously understood the ‘signs of the times’. Hence, they must have the feeling that they are ‘somehow’ driven by a demon or a muse! In the case of the professor, Goethe ‘in love’ and the whistling friend, the unconscious obviously ‘knew’ what was desired.

Whether an artist is aware of it or not, according to Jung, the creative process always operates in such a way that it unconsciously drives the artist. When trying to give words to this experience, one usually says that one is driven by ‘higher powers’. However, it is actually the ‘powers from below’ which are operating, arising from the unconscious.

33 See Jung 1905/1957: 98.

34 “What poet or composer has not been so beguiled by certain of his ideas as to believe in their novelty? We believe what we wish to believe. Even the greatest and most original genius is not free from human wishes and their all-too-human consequences” (Jung 1905/1957: 99): In 1946, Jung wrote: “For, in the last resort, we are conditioned not only by the past, but by the future, which is sketched out in us long beforehand and gradually evolves out of us. *This is especially the case with a creative person who does not at first see the wealth of possibilities within him, although they are all lying there already.* So it may easily happen that one of these still unconscious aptitudes is called awake by a ‘chance’ remark or by some other incident, without the conscious mind knowing exactly what has awakened, or even that anything has awakened at all. Only after a comparatively long incubation period does the result hatch out” (Jung 1946/1954: 110, italics mine).

35 Jung 1902/1957: 82.

Is the 'insane' mind a source of creativity?

Jung frequently established how powerless the mind is against the violence of unconscious impulses when 'hidden memories' manifest themselves. Each day, he recognised this in his psychotic patients. It was wondrous to observe that when their brains sometimes sank into almost complete twilight, unimpaired fragments of 'hidden memories' could suddenly surface. Jung gave several examples. There was a woman who could, for hours uninterruptedly, portray in great detail all the porters she had met during her life (including their families, children and the design of their room): if people had consciously asked her to perform this task she would not have been capable of this achievement. Jung stated: "The work of genius is different in the way that it fetches up these distant fragments *in order to* build them into a new and meaningful structure."³⁶ The mentally disturbed person is not capable building fragments into a new and meaningful structure. But the artist is. Nonetheless, the layer of the psyche from where the 'porters' resurface is the same layer that generates a work of art.

In his 1905 article on cryptomnesia, Jung noticed how close the relation between 'abnormal' and 'normal' psychic phenomena is and asked the question: Does the genius have similar traits as the insane? Are art and insanity perhaps related to each other? With respect to this issue, Jung took a position which he would essentially never change, even though he had to pay a high price for it. Most of the time, however, critics did not understand his real intention. For example, in 1932 he stated: "Picasso's psychic problems, so far as they find expression in his work, are strictly analogous to those of my patients."³⁷ His critics not only overlooked the word 'analogous', but furthermore could not grasp that Jung absolutely did not say that Picasso was a schizophrenic, nor understand that he certainly did not say that his paintings were psychiatric products.

What Jung intended to say was the fruit of his depth-psychological insights, which he had already formulated in 1905. In his article on cryptomnesia he wrote about the relationship between insanity and art. He asked himself: "What kind of people seek new combinations? They are the men of thought, who have finely differentiated brains coupled with the sensitivity of a woman and the emotionality of a child. They are the slenderest, most delicate branches on the great tree of humanity: they bear the flower and the fruit. Many become brittle too soon, many break off. Differentiation creates in its progress the fit as well as the unfit; wits are mingled with nitwits – there are fools with genius and geniuses with follies, as Lombroso has remarked."³⁸

At present, no one risks referring to Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909). He has an exceptionally bad scientific reputation. Lombroso was the founding father of the positivistic movement in criminology. He was stigmatised because of his opinion

36 Jung 1905/1957: 105 (italics mine).

37 Jung 1932/1978a: 135.

38 Jung 1905/1957: 99.

that there exists something like a ‘born criminal’ and that one can determine someone’s nature, for instance, by the size of the skull. It did not make a difference that it gave Lombroso a reason to treat prisoners humanely (essentially they were not to blame!) or that he adjusted his theory by including social factors. Lombroso became taboo. However, in 1905, the professor in medical law and psychiatry at Turin still had a worldwide reputation. Lombroso was compulsory literature for every student of psychiatry. Jung did not indicate which work by Lombroso he had in mind in his 1905 article. That was unnecessary. Every reader knew: *Genius and Insanity*, published in 1882. In that book, as well as in others, Lombroso elaborated upon his view that artistic genius is a form of inherited insanity and that products of insane people are similar to those of artists. He collected a large amount of work created by psychiatric patients.

What did Jung discover in Lombroso’s work? Although he never adhered to his positivistic trend in psychiatry, Jung always stayed sensitive to empirical facts. He placed this material within his own analytical context. In one of his speeches as a student, in May 1897, he called Lombroso “the renowned anthropologist and psychiatrist”. He referred to him as an example of a grand empirical psychologist and quoted his “classical confession”: ‘I pride myself on being the slave of facts.’ This appealed to Jung. Nevertheless, unlike Lombroso, he would never be content merely with sensorial facts and emphasised that the psyche knows its own ‘facts’. Moreover, Jung always avoided metaphysical speculation. And for this reason he felt at home with Lombroso, particularly because as an empiricist he had spoken in favour of a “belief in spiritualism”.³⁹

Jung did not want to have anything to do with a ‘floating’ spirit. He would never separate psychical phenomena from their physical component. “Psychology, though formerly counted a discipline of philosophy, is today a natural science and its subject-matter is not a mental product but a natural phenomenon, i.e. the psyche. As such it is among the elementary manifestations of organic nature, which in turn forms one half of our world, the other half being the inorganic.”⁴⁰

In his *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*, published in 1912, Jung referred to Lombroso and inserted an elaborate quote from his work. This quotation is important with respect to our subject: the relationship between psychiatry and art. It is taken from *Genius and Insanity*. According to Jung, Lombroso described in this passage “the pathological fantasy concerning two insane artists”. Lombroso wrote: ‘One of these artists was endowed with a true artistic sense. He painted a picture in which he was just in the act of creation; the world came forth from his anus; the membrum was in full erection; he was naked, surrounded by women, and with all insignia of his power.’⁴¹ The manner in which Jung analysed this information and adopted it within the context of

39 Jung 1983: 35.

40 Jung 1946/1954: 89–90.

41 Quoted in Jung 1912/1944: 117.

his own psychology is of great importance to us. In the following I will expand upon this. Lombroso would hardly have recognised himself within this depth psychological vision.

As was mentioned above, *Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido*, just like Jung's dissertation, deals with hallucinations. The hallucinations were experienced by an American student of Flournoy. She relayed her paranormal fantasies under the pseudonym Miss Frank Miller. Flournoy translated the English survey into French and published it in 1906.⁴² This article formed Jung's point of departure for his first *magnum opus*.

In one of Miss Miller's hallucinations, her great hero, the Aztec Indian Chiwantopel, played a main role. This great warrior became involved in a great drama, ending with his decomposition. Whilst he was decaying into dirt and shit, a smoking volcano erupted and an earthquake took place. How is it possible, Jung wondered, that this potent, heroic spirit was so closely affiliated with the 'out-of-the-way regions of the body' which fart and defecate? In other words, why did all this filthy piss and shit occur exactly at this point in Miss Miller's fantasy? Which psychic mechanism was at work here? Jung wrote: "In order to understand this [i.e. Miss Miller's 'out-of-the-way regions of the body' – fantasies] we have to realise that when something is produced from the unconscious, the first thing to come up is the infantile material that has long been lost to memory. We have, therefore, to adopt the points of view of that time, when this material was still on the surface. So if a much venerated object [here Chiwantopel] is related by the unconscious to the anal region, we have to conclude that this is a way of expressing respect and attention, such as the child feels for these forbidden functions. Naturally traces of this infantile interest still linger on in the adult."⁴³

How should we understand Jung's words? To begin with, we ascertain that this case (again) concerns a case of cryptomnesia. The "infantile material that has long been lost to memory" resurfaces as 'hidden memories'. Miss Miller was unaware of this. She could not imagine that this 'filth' came forth from her. However, Jung established that for a child anal processes are normal. He gave multiple examples of the importance a child attaches to the process of defecation. It is of great productive value, especially because for many children defecation and reproduction are closely linked. "The child thinks: that is how things are produced, how they 'come out'".⁴⁴ Furthermore, Jung showed how many fairy tales and myths, especially in religious stories, include elements which are connected to 'the anal'. "The toilet is well known as the place of dreams where much is created that would later be considered unworthy of this place of origin. Lombroso recounts a

42 Flournoy's article is entitled: 'Some facts of the subconscious creative imagination' (see Jung 1952/1956: 446).

43 Jung 1952/1956: 189. I quote from the edition published in 1952: it is almost the same formulation as the one in the 1912 edition, but Jung improved the final sentence in the 1952 edition (see Jung 1912/1944: 116).

44 Jung 1952/1956: 190.

pathological fantasy..."⁴⁵ What follows is the Lombroso quotation about the painting of the insane artist cited above.

On the painting one sees the artist creating the world from his anus. Once more, we must acknowledge that it concerns cryptomnesia. 'Normal' adults almost completely censure the lust and assertiveness they experienced during the anal phase of their lives. But neither in the medium Miss Miller nor in the pathological artist does this censure function. The artist portrayed the process of creation analogous to the way he defecated as a child, and in the same way Miss Miller erupted a volcano in Chiwantopel.

"A much venerated object is related by the unconscious to the anal region." This is what it is about. In our childhood we were still *conscious* of these anal processes and experienced them as 'creating something', 'achieving' and 'being creative'. But as we grew up, also because of culturally defined feelings of shame, these experiences disappeared into the unconscious where they live a dormant life. But as a result of some strong 'impulse' the censure is broken and the 'hidden memory' becomes a fact.

Time and time again the unconscious is *triggered*. Anal drives are attracted by the painting, memories of youth by the smell of geese, songs by heartache, a children's story by Zarathustra, a grey mantle by the beloved. This core mechanism is activated during the creative process of the artist. With respect to each theme, the *open mind* of the artist gives the unconscious all space to stage 'hidden memories' in sound, speech or image.

At this point it is important to ascertain that, even though the mechanism of 'hidden memories' plays a role in a mentally disturbed person as well as in an artist, Jung thought that there is *no direct causal relationship* between mental illness and an artist's fervour when he is in the process of creating. A mental ailment in itself is not a breeding ground for the creation of art and being a genius is not per definition coupled to a mental illness. In this respect, there can be no doubt about Jung's view. Central in all these different examples is the phenomenon of cryptomnesia. At numerous moments the unconscious brings 'hidden memories' into the conscious spotlight. On all these occasions we notice that the censure of the conscious is played down in one or way or another. The source of the memory remains hidden! This phenomenon is present in the professor, the lover, the artist, the mentally ill, the hallucinator and the genius. In all these examples, consciousness is deceived and has a great sensitivity and receptivity. The reason is that all of them somehow have an *unrestrained consciousness*. This means that art and insanity in themselves are *not* related to each other. However, both the artist and the person with a mental illness have a kind of unrestrained consciousness and the floodgates to the unconscious are open so that 'hidden memories' arise more easily.

This does not imply that there are (have been) no mentally ill artists. Lord Byron (1788–1824), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Vincent van Gogh

45 Jung 1952/1956: 190.

(1853–1890), and the Dutch authors Gerrit Achterberg (1905–1962) and Maarten Biesheuvel (b. 1939) are certainly mentally ill according to the present criteria. But it needs to be acknowledged that they are artists *despite* their mental illness, not because of it.⁴⁶ We also know that some artists used opium and cannabis to loosen the control of their consciousness. The poets Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) and Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891) are famous examples. One can accept that drugs facilitated the creative process; but it did not necessarily improve or cause the quality of the creative process itself, the poetic echelon of their poems. Without a doubt, one can be a great artist without being mentally ill or without using opium. When a psychiatric patient knows how to create a work of art, and there are many examples of this, the reason is that he or she is an *artist*. What is created is not a psychiatric product but an artistic product.

In 1932, Jung said in a lecture: “it would never occur to an intelligent layman to mistake a pathological phenomenon for art, in spite of the undeniable fact that a work of art arises from much the same psychological conditions as a neurosis. This is only natural, because certain of these conditions are present in every individual (...) whether in the case of a nervous intellectual, a poet or a normal human being.”⁴⁷ Certain psychical conditions are always present. Of course, Jung said in the same lecture that one can subject an artist to medical treatment and study for instance his neurotic fantasies. In this way one can research Nietzsche’s brain: “But what would this have to do with *Zarathustra*? Whatever its subterranean background may have been, is it [the work of art] not a whole world in itself, beyond the human, all-too-human imperfections, beyond the world of migraine and cerebral atrophy? (...) In order to do justice to a work of art, analytical psychology must rid itself entirely of medical prejudice; for a work of art is not a disease, and consequently requires a different approach from the medical one.”⁴⁸

It is likely that artists in general, because of their predisposition to relax control of their consciousness, are more mentally vulnerable and more open to mood changes than persons without this predisposition. When an artist suffers from a psychosis now and again, it will scarcely foster the process of art. Research on the creative episodes of the composer Schumann ascertained that he hardly composed anything during times of severe depression.⁴⁹ In our present time, he probably would have had much less hindrance of these mood disorders through the use of anti-psychotics. However, there is the question of whether this would have caused a loss of his creativity. Because these medications resist the release of the control of our consciousness! What would Schumann have done if a medicinal treatment had led to a flatness in his creativity?

Therefore, Jung refused to consider a direct relationship between insanity and art. He even considered it dangerous for art to stigmatise the artist as neurotic and

46 See Kortmann 2000. Some information in this paragraph is derived from this survey.

47 Jung 1922/1978: 67.

48 Jung 1922/1978: 69, 71.

49 See Kortmann 2000: 561.

was suspicious towards neurotics who present themselves as artists. In 1926, he said in a lecture at London: "Disease has never yet fostered creative work; on the contrary, it is the most formidable obstacle to creation."⁵⁰ When he republished these lectures in 1946, strongly improved and with additions, he added certain thoughts (which I partially quoted in the preface). If one fails to distinguish between the creative and the insane person, Jung wrote: "the creative individual immediately suspects himself of some kind of illness. While the neurotic has lately begun to believe that his neurosis is an art, or at least a source of art. These would-be artists, however, develop one characteristic symptom: they all shun psychology like the plague, because they are terrified that this monster will devour their so-called artistic ability. As if a whole army of psychologists could do anything against the power of a god! True productivity is a spring that can never be stopped. Is there any trickery on earth which could have prevented Mozart or Beethoven from creating? Creative power is mightier than his possessor. If it is not so, then it is a feeble thing, and given favourable conditions will nourish an endearing talent, but no more."⁵¹

But what exactly did Jung mean when making the above mentioned statement "that Picasso's psychic problems, so far as they find expression in his work, are strictly analogous to those of my patients"? Are art and insanity not suspiciously alike in this statement? To begin with, Jung does not say that Picasso is mentally ill. After he was heavily criticised because of these words, he unambiguously stated: "I regard neither Picasso nor Joyce as psychotics."⁵² Jung is saying that an artist can use certain 'psychic problems' as *themes* for his work. For certain (contemporary) reasons, one can depict the schizophrenic or split human personality on canvas. In other words, the artist can elaborate upon morbid themes. This does not imply that the work of art itself is a morbid product, nor that it was a morbid mind which portrayed these themes. Again, this does not imply that Picasso could not have had a morbid mind. But that does not have anything to do with his art. Furthermore, Jung rightly ascertained that the psychic problems which Picasso depicted are "strictly analogous to those of my patients". Picasso's paintings occasionally bring us eye to eye with the "modern" split human person.

The collective unconscious and cryptomnesia

One important idea is missing in the 1905 cryptomnesia article: the "collective unconscious". In Jung's theory, it became the psychological reservoir of the artist. He was already developing this key concept in those years. Nonetheless, there was a surprising complication regarding the idea of cryptomnesia.⁵³ The reason is that

50 Jung 1946/1954: 115.

51 Jung 1946/1954: 115.

52 Jung 1932/1978a: 137, f. 3.

53 In Chapter 4, I will elaborate upon the collective unconscious. Here I will outline this phenomenon only in its relationship to cryptomnesia.

cryptomnesia exists by the grace of a *personal* unconscious (the composer personally heard a tune as a child and has forgotten it); if Jung wanted to prove that images which could not possibly stem from the personal unconscious can arise into consciousness, he had to demonstrate that these images could not be the result of cryptomnesia.

The famous story of Jung's discovery of the collective unconscious took place in those years. It is the story of the 'Solar Phallus Man'.⁵⁴ The severely mentally ill Emile Schwyzer was admitted into the Burghölzli clinic in 1901. In his delusions – Schwyzer thought he was God – he thought he could move the 'Solar Phallus'. By shaking his head up and down, he propelled the wind, which caused an upward movement. In 1902 Jung became interested in the hallucinations of this man. In his view, this man could not know that his hallucination was related to a universal mythological image. He was keen to prove that Schwyzer had not previously seen an image of the Solar Phallus in a magazine or in a painting nor had read something about it.⁵⁵ Hence, he could not have stored the image of the Solar Phallus in his personal unconscious. Subsequently, there had to be a collective unconscious from which such images originate spontaneously.

Taking everything into consideration, this, too, is a case of cryptomnesia, although with a collective nature. It is a collective storage of messages, whereby the memory of its source is lost collectively. Jung historian Sonu Shamdasani wrote in *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*: 'In essence, what Jung was proposing was a radical extension of Flournoy's concept of cryptomnesia. He was claiming that it wasn't only memories of impressions gained during one's lifetime that reappeared in unrecognised forms, but also memories of the race. This concept forms an important stage in the development of his thinking. It could be termed 'phylo-cryptomnesia'.⁵⁶ Shortly before his death in 1961, Jung wrote that "really new thoughts and creative ideas can appear which have never been conscious before. They grow up from the dark depths like a lotus, and they form an important part of the subliminal psyche."⁵⁷

At the end of this chapter one question becomes pressing: What is the reason that at a certain moment *this* 'hidden memory' arises rather than another? The answer to this question determines the subject of the next chapter. The answer is: Because *this* memory is *imbued with more affect* than another and is therefore

54 See Bair 2003: 171–190.

55 I am well aware that this whole episode is only briefly and superficially mentioned here. An exceptional amount is written on its historical and theoretical importance. I am concerned with only one aspect of this hallucination: its character of collective cryptomnesia.

56 Shamdasani 2005a: 218. 'Phylo' (not to be confused with 'philo' = loving) is derived from the Greek *phulon* = tribe, dynasty, species. 'Phylo-genesis' means *the development of a species*, for example that of the human species. 'Onto-genesis' means the development of one particular being within that species, from ovum to adulthood. Therefore one can speak of an onto- and a phylo-cryptomnesia. The first describes the 'hidden memories' of a particular human individual, the second describes those of the whole human species.

57 Jung 1961/1977: 198. Subliminal literally means 'underneath the threshold' of consciousness.

more forceful. Why did Jung's friend unconsciously whistle his songs? Because his feelings of 'abandonment' were so forceful that they could not be suppressed. They arose unbidden; one has to say, with compulsion. This strong affect plays a role in all the examples cited. Strong experiences from one's youth (the professor), strong experiences of love (Goethe), a thrilling children's book (Nietzsche): they all have a strong libido.

Jung called this compound of strong affects searching for an outlet a 'complex'. Complexes can have different natures, including an artistic nature. During his years at the Burghölzli, Jung became famous for his complex theory. For a while, his psychology was called 'complex psychology'. I will elaborate upon this key concept in the next chapter.