



**GODDESS OF THE JEWELLED WEB
THE TRANSMISSION OF THE TRANSPERSONAL IN VISIONARY ART**

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Abstract: Via an inter-discourse between established concepts and liminal mythologies, tentative explorations are made on how visionary art transmits and perpetuates symbols of transpersonal experiences into culture. By using the concept of memes, cultural units that are transmitted through imitation and replication, we explore how visionary art facilitates and communicates liminal experiences with transformative impact upon established realities.

Keywords: transpersonal, memeplex, archetype, rhizome, visionary art.

**DEUSA DA REDE DE JOIAS
A TRANSMISSÃO DO TRANSPESSOAL NA ARTE VISIONÁRIA**

Resumo: Por meio de um interdiscurso entre conceitos estabelecidos e mitologias liminares, são feitas tentativas de exploração de como a arte visionária transmite e perpetua símbolos de experiências transpessoais na cultura. Usando o conceito de memes, unidades culturais que são transmitidas por meio de imitação e replicação, exploramos como a arte visionária facilita e comunica experiências liminares com impacto transformador sobre realidades estabelecidas.

Palavras-chave: transpessoal; memeplex, arquétipo, rizoma, arte visionária.

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By connecting traditional esoteric conceptions of 'collective consciousness' and 'egregore', the author proposes an information theory-based paradigm from which to value visionary art as a vital and continually evolving aspect of human culture, with the potential to inspire and transform the individuals and societies that engage with it.

Since visionary art distinguishes itself by claiming sources in altered states of consciousness (ASOC), such as those commonly cultivated by spiritual practices, it is here proposed that an inter-discourse across various fields and disciplines of psychology and anthropology and religious studies is useful in the exploration of the 'consequential truth' of transpersonal experiences and 'visionary art production' in human life, whatever their ontological basis outside of subjective and intersubjective qualia.

Lies breathed through silver?

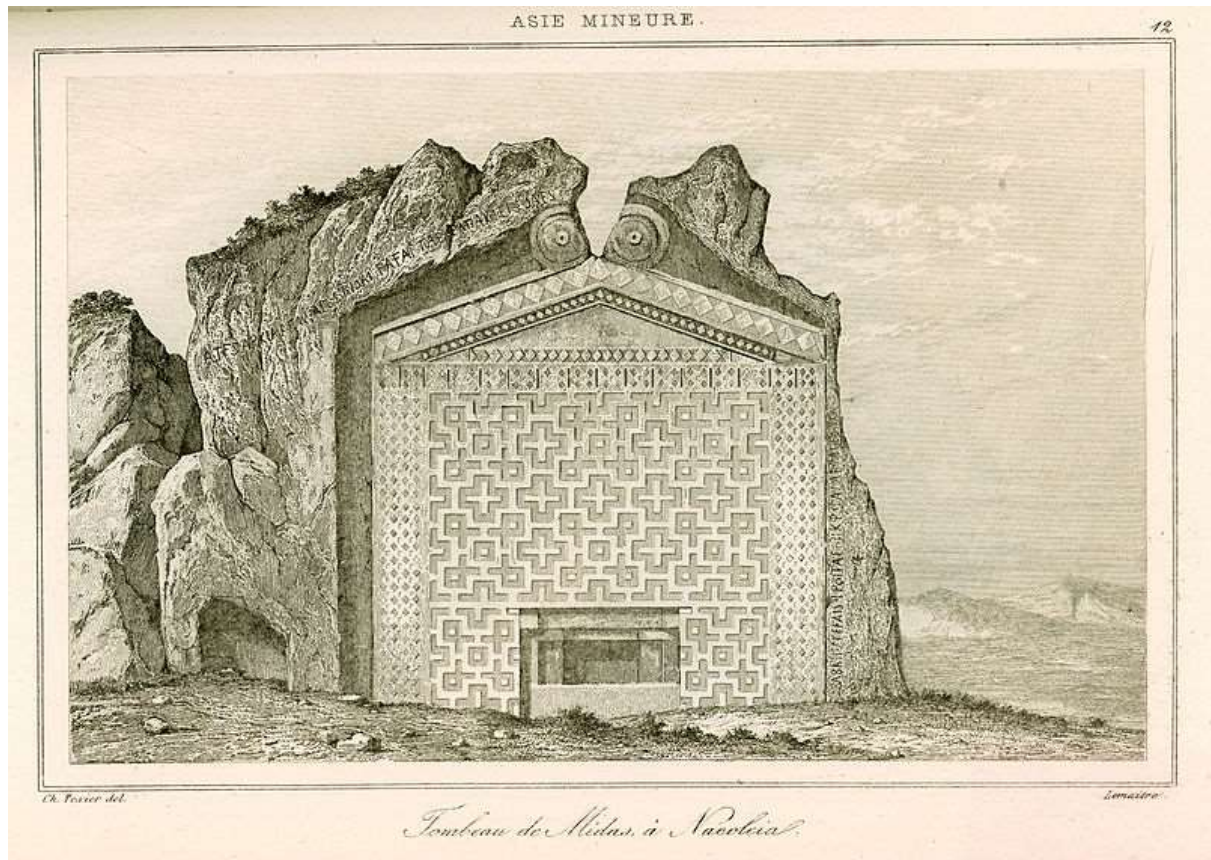
On the night of the 19th of September 1931, during a conversation on the subject of creative writing between J.R.R Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and Hugo Dyson at Magdalen College, Oxford, Lewis is claimed to have said that myths are but "lies and therefore worthless, even though breathed through silver" (CARPENTER, 1978, p. 43). Tolkien found this statement lacking depth and was prompted to write a rebuttal in the form of the poem "Mythopoeia".

“...man, sub-creator, the refracted light
through whom is splintered from a single
White to many hues, and endlessly combined
in living shapes that move from mind to mind.
Though all the crannies of the world we filled
with elves and goblins, though we dared to build
gods and their houses out of dark and light,
and sow the seed of dragons, 'twas our right (used or misused).
The right has not decayed.



We make still by the law in which we are made.”

MYTHOPOEIA – J.R.R. TOLKIEN



Depiction of King Midas' Tomb, Bodrum, Turkey

C.S. Lewis was vexed by an ancient question – whether the arts have any philosophic utility or relationship to ‘Truth’. This is an old debate going back at least to the Greek Philosophers, with Plato (c. 429-347 B.C.E.) and Aristotle offering various perspectives on art that broach the same general question upon arts' utility in life and ontology.

Plato seemed to appreciate the fundamental relationship between music and number (DAVIS, 2010, p. 252). Plato's Republic VII.XII reads: "As the eyes, said I, seem formed for studying astronomy, so do the ears seem formed for harmonious motions: and these seem to be twin sciences to one another, as also the Pythagoreans say". The implication is harmonious music is an expression of an underlying rational reality.



Whereas visual arts often come off the worse. For Plato painting is a “likeness of the visible” (eikasia tôn horōmenōn), hence; mimesis, a basic theoretical principle in the creation of art, “imitation”, though in the sense of “re-presentation” rather than of “copying” (LESZL, 2006, p.113-197).

According to Plato, all artistic creation is a form of imitation: that which really exists (in the “world of ideas”) is a type created by God; the concrete things man perceives in his existence are shadowy representations of this ideal type. So the work of artists is imitation of Truth, twice removed, mimetic art (hē mimētikē) produces work (ergon) that is far (porro) removed from truth (aletheia) (LESZL, 2006, p.113-197)

Platos' emphasis on mimesis has echoed through generations however, with Vasari "painting is just the imitation of all the living things of nature with their colors and designs just as they are in nature." (Vasari, 1550). Shakespeare, in Hamlet's speech to the actors, referred to the purpose of acting as being “...to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature.” (SHAKESPEARE, 1599, p.17–24)

In Xenophon, Memorabilia III 10, 1-8, the painter Parrhasius, interrogated by Socrates, agrees with him that painting is a “likeness of the visible” (eikasia tôn horōmenōn) and insists that all that can be imitated (apomimeisthai, mimēton) is the look, not the character, of persons. At the end he is persuaded that character can also be imitated, but only insofar as it “appears through (diaphainei) the face and the bearing” of the person.

However, a higher function to the arts is occasionally alluded to, 'the divine madness of the oracles'.

(Socrates) “...there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles.” (PLATO, ION)

Here we may not forget the general disdain by which Plato regarded the meta-simulcras of art; mimetike is treated as a prostitute who consorts with the vicious part of the soul in view of pleasure (PLATO in Republic X). But other philosophers such as Aristotle suggested that more than visible nature is expressed in



art, via occasional and potentially beneficial fidelity to an underlying psychological order of life.

As Aristotle wrote in *Metaphysics*, Book X, Chapter 3, 1053a:

[...] it is, therefore, a different thing to produce or to represent a conception of sight and a conception of practical wisdom; for, to speak generally, the productions of art are more properly called works than representations.

This tension of views when understood can be seen to have played down through Western Canon to the present times. Plato does not deign to elevate mimetic arts to 'techne', but what of 'psyche' or 'daemonic' (*δαιμονικ*) forces?

Verdenius (1972) attempted to show that for Plato art can get "an idealistic character" (p. 15), namely *Republic III*, 397d, where "a poet can also be an 'imitator of the good'" (p. 15) "which gets its likeness from its being a representation of Beauty" (p. 18). On this basis he says that "art is not confined to the limits of its visual models. True art is not solely mimesis of the visible, but it strives to transcend the material world and evoke the higher real. "In true art likeness does not refer to commonplace reality, but the ideal Beauty." (pp. 10-11). Thus, an artist, by skillfully selecting and presenting his material, may purposefully seek to "imitate" the action of life and express via affinity (*sungeneia*) something not strictly mimetic.

The reign of quantity in the contemporary arts

*Philosophers had been humbled in the presence of the positivistic scientists.
(FOWLIE, 1953, pp. 87-88)*

What we shall explore is the possibility for an integral foundation for 'sacred art' or 'visionary art' which reframes such artistic production in its relationship to transpersonal experiences rather than the relationship to the Iconography of established cult symbolism. In other words, via an interdialog to open up the possibilities of an integral foundation for visionary art – whilst honouring positivistic



and material paradigms, to honour the phenom of transpersonal experiences and altered states of consciousness (ASOC).

Art striving for an existential veracity, or 'truth', will be put upon a difficult and confusing road riddled with forking and branching pathways; between positivist and nominalist systems tending toward rationality (as in 'ratio', to measure), and on the other extreme something akin to decor, the enjoyment of a sensory object.

Positivism refers to any system that confines itself to the measurable and replicable data and excludes metaphysical speculations. Nominalism is the doctrine that universals or general ideas are mere names, without any corresponding reality. Only particular objects exist. Properties, numbers, and sets are merely features of the way of considering the things that exist, and do not pertain to the 'thing in themselves'. This paradigm has been broadly and persistently challenged by various waves of philosophers and psychologists as too 'quantitative', relegating 'quality' or qualia to epiphenomena (GUENON, 1945).

Nonetheless, due to the ascendancy of technology, nominalism has maintained a strong fortress. Sir Karl Popper repeatedly emphasised that definitions are not important, but rather that solving problems is: the key aim of (capital-S) Science (Popper.1999). The use and veracity of quantification is in plain, practical sight in our everyday lives; everything from hot water from our taps to telecommunication satellites orchestrating the internet.

Nominalism and positivism tend to Atomism – the quest for evermore fundamental elementary units through which the behaviour of the overall system may be built up from and thereby understood. This leads us to the high abstractions of mathematics and physics. We can loosely class such approaches under the 'Apollonian', the rational, orderly, and self-disciplined aspects of human nature. The expression of such Apollonian traits in the visual arts comes through such things as geometry, systems of harmonic ratio, perspective and so on.

If art only acquires 'truth' and value through the application of such principles, then art would hold on for dear life to 'Scientific Truth' and seek to express this understanding through the celebration via clever spectacles of technical means; the creation of aesthetic structures achieved through cutting edge engineering principles.



RIEDI, Franz. Tensegrity II (Buckminster Fuller), 2008. Drawings & Works on Paper 71 x 98cm

From such a perspective of techné, there is nothing to really be done in the painting arts, because no two-dimensional image may achieve a meaningful or functional mimesis, mimicry – isomorphism or correspondence to ‘truth’ as nominalist and atomist approaches would have it.

Painting being something qualitative, cannot reproduce the original with a mathematical or quantitative correspondence by which the same number of parts which are to be found in the original are to be found in the painting. (LESZI, 2006, p. 245-336)

Metaphysic and mythic ‘truths’ are not truths in the scientific sense, therefore the depiction of the Bible, or the Greco-Roman classical pagan worldview are really no more than cartoons depicting narratives that are themselves mixtures and assemblages of cultural lore, oral and written tradition, fantastic scenarios, and moral/ethical/political value systems.



The question may then circle back around to C. S. Lewis's confoundment, and subsequently ask if bearing upon metaphysics or sophiology through art, is simply being quaint, sentimental, or giving up on the hard problem of scientific truth and rather, working more a kind of propaganda of one's chosen worldview.

The consequences of the failure of a coherent framework for metaphysics in the arts results in the contemporary emphasis upon:

- Art of 'The Technological Society' (ELLUL, 1967). Early-adoption prowess with engineering approaches at the forefront, and the notion of the Spectacle (DEBORD, 1983).
- Idiosyncrasy, individualism, eccentricity, novelty, outrage, controversy (DEBORD, 1983).
- Cult of personality. Fixation upon the figure of the 'crazy artist' or 'genius', exceptional colourful or profound personality.
- Mimesis par-excellence. Photoreality. Subscription to 'realism' and traditional academic approaches of craftsmanship and representation.
- Inward-looking explorations of art-theory. Art aware of itself as divorced from 'veracity to truth' and resigned to increasingly baroque edifices of self-referential 'art theory' and 'art speak' and 'art arcanum'.
- Pornography, eroticism – artistic production in service of sexual commodification.
- State art – propaganda.
- Kitsch/zombie-aesthetics (ALDERWICK, 2008, p.88–92.).
- Fan art Imagery and productions leaning upon established pop cultural lore produced by centralised cultural production.
- Decor - Home decoration and wall paint, interior design.

What of liminal totems and archetypal symbols. Mytho-genic ikons and tokens? The field of art that pertains to humanity's concept of the sacred involves the static unchanging traditions of received forms, such as the precise ratios and armatures and formal symbolic arrangement of recognised cultic iconography (Christian ikon painting, Tibetan Thangkas, Balinese temple forms, recognised deities



of the Hindu Pantheon etc). Such forms are slow to change and may be replicated without any direct 'numinous' or spiritual experience of the art practitioner. But we must also acknowledge the role of transpersonal experiences, ASOC, cognitive diversity and lived experience in the development of sacred art - where the individuals' own lived experience - 'the divine madness of the oracles' - comprises the primary drive and material of the artistic expression. 'Visionary art' is sacred art in its dynamic, idiosyncratic and mutable contemporary forms.

A dynamic vision of archetypes

The collective unconscious...appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious. We can see this most clearly if we look at the heavenly constellations, whose originally chaotic forms are organised through the projection of images. This explains the influence of the stars as asserted by astrologers. These influences are nothing but unconscious, introspective perceptions of the activity of the collective unconscious. (JUNG, 1970, Para. 325)

Jung did not accord with John Locke's idea that humans are born 'tabula rasa' (JUNG, 1931/1991, p. 136) and proposed the idea of 'archetypes' in his studies of mythology, religion, and culture, and developed the concept as a means of understanding the recurring patterns of myth and symbolism that appear in human experience.

In "Concerning the Archetypes with Special Reference to the Anima Concept" (1936) In *Collected Works 9, Part I: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (p. 136) Jung wrote:

Their presence gives the world of the child and the dreamer its anthropomorphic stamp. They are the archetypes, which direct all fantasy activity into its appointed paths and in this way produce, in the fantasy-images of children's dreams as well as in the delusions of schizophrenia, astonishing mythological parallels such as can also be found, though in lesser degree, in the dreams of normal persons



and neurotics. It is not, therefore, a question of inherited ideas but of inherited possibilities of ideas.

Carl Jung never was exactly clear as to whether the archetypes of the collective Consciousness – for instance The Great Mother, the Wise Old Man, the Shadow, the Tower, Water, and the Tree of Life – are solely genetically encoded or belonging to a transcendent ‘Platonic’ dimension. Instead, Jung invoked a ‘collective unconscious’.

The hypothesis of the collective unconscious is ... no more daring than to assume that there are instincts. (JUNG, 1936, p. 91)

The theory of Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious has been immensely useful in providing a framework to discuss ASOC in relation to psychotherapy, art, mythology. ‘Transpersonal experiences’ have often been regarded as forms of psychosis. but later scholars and fields within psychotherapy have attempted to attest for the integrative, healing, and information-generating nature of transpersonal experiences (GROF, 1979).

Anthropologist Victor Turner saw Carl Jung’s archetype as a way of understanding the symbolic and ritual dimensions of human experience, and he used this concept to explore the transformative power of ritual and the liminal experience:

It is in the figure of the shaman that the role of ‘visionary experience’ and cultural symbols are brought together. Turner notes that this figure "represents an unusually high degree of cognitive complexity and ambiguity and is able to move with relative ease between different symbolic orders" (TURNER, 1970, p. 148).

The shaman acts as an intermediary between the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels of reality, between the individual and the collective unconscious. In his visions, he experiences the symbolic archetypes of his own culture and those of other cultures with which his own culture is in contact". (TURNER, 1970, p. 54)

Turner wished to emphasise the dynamic nature of archetypes (Jung’s ‘complex’) in his later work :



Archetypes are not just remnants of past experiences but are alive and continually present, shaping our actions, thoughts and feelings in the present. They are not simply individual phenomena, but also collective, social, and cultural. They are the deep structures of the human psyche that organise our experiences, giving them meaning and direction. (TURNER, 1982, p. 19).

Memetic theory

A fluid paradigm to the world of ideas, even sacred totems and archetypes, can be explored via the lens of Memetic theory. Richard Dawkins proposed a darwinian evolutionary theory of ideas in his book, 'The Selfish Gene' (2006), whereby we may view the proto-stuff of 'ideas' in an analogous way to genes, as units of natural selection. An organism mates, reproduces its genes, the offsprings however may contain small or great variations, and some of these variations will be beneficial because they have 'fitness' to the environment it lives within. This environmental terrain (the overall conditions, organisms and elements involved) defines which of the genetic variations go forward to reproduce and which ones are eliminated.

By 1998 the term 'Meme' had entered the English language and first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary, defined as follows; Meme (mi:m), n. Biol. (shortened from mimeme ... that which is imitated, after GENE n.) "An element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp. imitation".

In meme theory, human beings constitute nodes that are connected by fluid, changing lines of communication - each human node/body/brain/mind is thus a transducer (sender-receiver) of memes. Memes however do not 'jump' from one mental host to another host- rather they reproduce a pattern in the mind. It is a form of propagating mental information. This invokes William Burroughs maxim "*Language is a virus.*" Though the primary means is language, memes also express through imagery, symbols, music, and moral and behavioural principles.



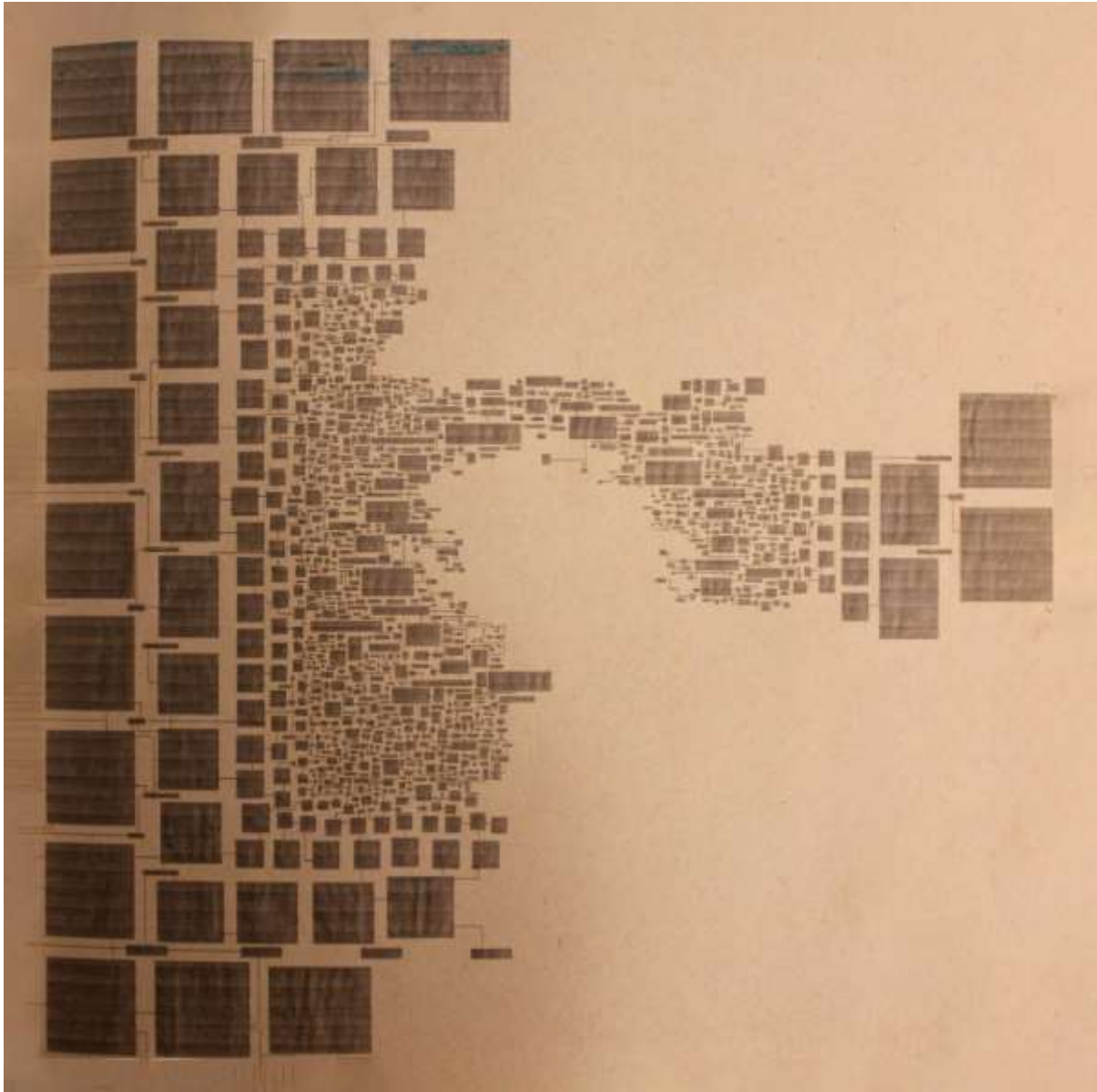
Pia Linz, Box Engravings, 2004. Gallery of Contemporary Art - House of Art of České Budějovice

If the meme/idea is weak, it will be subsumed by other more dominant memes. It may mate or recombine with other ideas producing hybrids in a kind of dialectic process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Through day-to-day conversation, versions of reality are spoken to one-another and so compared, dismissed or



validated, and adjusted. The versions of reality are shared and adjusted both passively and actively (e.g. watching television, going to church, reading a newspaper or book). The unspoken baseline reality assumptions that are implied in everyday talk also substantiate the subterrain of the memes, which are often beyond our ability to perceive and directly comprehend.

Memetics is speculation - a thought experiment more than established scientific truth or fact of nature. Neural correlates of memes have been proposed but so far nothing of the sort has been observed. Memetics may be nothing more than a kind of scientific homily, a genetic metaphor for 'culture', following the tendency for humans to analogise their present models of life, mind and reality to their latest technology or scientific models. It is nonetheless an extremely compelling and powerful metaphor since it adds a dynamic and darwinian selective process to the churn of ideas and symbols in culture.



Daniel Mirante, *Bureaucracy*, 1999. Microsoft word, dot matrix printer on paper, 40x40cm
Manchester Metropolitan University.

Plato's transcendent world of Forms finds its reflection in materia in imperfect translations into substance. This is the first Platonic 'copying error'. However, in Meme theory, copies of copies beget mutation, diversity and evolution. 'Corruption' of the precursor leads to variety or novelty. Few mutations confer benefit, but the ones that do have a better chance of being conserved and propagated. This is referred to as their 'fitness' – their 'good fit' to their relationship to the selective terrain.



In memetic theory, the fitness of ideas results in their preservation. But what is the fitness landscape of ideas? We could propose that those ideas or memes that confer benefits in terms of survival would be preserved better. Ideas that lead to destruction of the host win the 'Darwin Award' and vanish. Ideas enshrined by the Academie could be those that are thought to be useful approximations of practical 'truth' to the human community.

The jewelled web: rhizomes

Through the latter 20th century the field of cybernetics and systems theory emphasised a Heraclitian perspective to reality, where 'All Is Flux'.

A key concept in biologists' Maturana and Varela's work is *Autopoiesis*, referring to the self-creation, self-production, and self-maintenance of living systems (MATURANA, VARELA, 1973, p. 97-101). Their concept of *enaction* is the idea that cognition is not just the result of mental processes but also the result of embodied and embedded interactions with the environment (MATURANA, VARELA, 1991, p. 173). Perception is not the passive reception of external stimuli, but rather an active construction of reality that reflects the organism's history and present state in its interactions with the environment.

In the book 'A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia', the philosophers' Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome describes knowledge and culture as non-linear, decentralised, and constantly evolving. This idea challenges traditional hierarchical structures and promotes the emergence of new connections and ideas.

On a rhizome, each point can be connected to any other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order...A rhizome is composed of plateaus. Each of its points is a mere connection, always in the middle of an assemblage. It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1988, p.21)

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'body without organs' (GUATTARI & DELEUZE, 1988, p. 3) can be related to the transpersonal experiences. The 'body



without organs' refers to a state of being that is free from preconceptions and societal expectations, allowing for new and uncharted experiences - a state of liminality. The body without organs represents a state of being where the individual is not defined by external factors, but rather exists as a pure, unbounded force. It is only through the imposition of social and cultural structures that the individual becomes limited and defined, cut off from this potentiality. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this process of becoming is one of rhizomatic deterritorialization (Guattari & Deleuze, 1988, pp.4-28), or the breaking down of established social and cultural structures that limit individual potential.

[...] the body without organs has replaced the organism and experimentation has replaced all interpretation, for which it no longer has any use. Flows of intensity, their fluids, their fibers, their continuums and conjunctions of affects, the wind, fine segmentation, microperceptions, have replaced the world of the subject.

Becomings, becomings-animal, becomings-molecular, have replaced history, individual or general. (GUATTARI & DELEUZE, 1988, p. 162)

The mutagenic quality of liminal space, Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization implies an effect of boundary remodulation and redefinition or 'reterritorialization'. This may bring the liminal 'body without organs', as it re-corporealises, into conflict with existing memetic geographies. Interestingly, Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that territory is 'a result of art' - "what is called art brut in not at all pathological or primitive; it is merely this constitution, this freeing, of matters of expression in the movement of territoriality: the base or ground of art." (DELEUZE and GUATTARI 1988, p. 316). Territory is therefore established by marking, for example, with rocks, barriers, scent, or an oil painting.

Civilisational memetic edifices

The neurobiologist Susan Blackmore proposed the term memeplex to refer to aggregates of memes (BLACKMORE, 2000, p. 78)– relatively 'vast' (if we take a spatial analogy) symbiotic and mutually reinforcing ideas that support each other's



survival. Archetypal Memeplexes have something of a 'holographic' quality - exist in relatively low-resolution in the individual, but highly complex and 'edifice-like' in collective manifestation. Although change in the form of the memeplex is inevitable, when many people in the network are involved in processes of comparing their 'versions' of the memes through reciprocal communication, a memeplex is buffered from degradation (VELIKOVSKY, 2018, pp 209-239).

Transpersonal experiences are profoundly personal and qualitative (GROF, 1979). They occur within the domain of subjective human experience – qualia. However, they appear to develop an intra-subjective dimension – shared numinous rituals, ceremonies and transpersonal experiences constitute the core of many religious practices, thus becoming mythogenic and psychological shared realities. In his book "The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure," Turner argues that ritual can provide a means of accessing the "deep structure" of culture, which includes not only its shared beliefs and values, but also its underlying tensions and contradictions. He writes, "Ritual provides a means of exploring and expressing the hidden and often repressed aspects of cultural life, and thereby of mediating the gap between the social structure and the deep structure" (TURNER et al., 1995, p. 125).

When large memeplexes encounter each other on the world stage (since memeplexes have geographic correlations to the worlds' various cultures) it may look like a 'clash of civilisations' or 'culture war' – or, if organs of logic and consilience are brought to bear, a 'dialogue of civilisations' whereby host parties recognise the potential benefits of synthesis; 'make love, not war'.

The suicide bomber or the utopian idealist, both alike driven by emotion and emblazoned inwardly by the heraldry of religious and tribal visions. Finding ourselves within these invisible matrixes of memetic formations, progressive and revolutionary action characterises tradition as oppressive and will seek to transcend, and the opposing conservative pole will resist and will characterise radical change as disrespectful and diabolic (as in – to 'throw apart', to 'dis-integrate').

The force of conservation in opposition to revolution is not always 'wrong' – many inherited traditions' are part of what constitutes our more advanced humanity, and in the manner of an *autochthonous revival* it is considered prudent to carefully distinguish outmoded and pathological past forms of social norms vs those that



enabled our survival and progress, and 'conserve' our accumulated cultural lore, which may contains many principles that empower and liberate, educate and enlighten, representing forms of human relating and systems of 'The True, Good & Beautiful'.

Consensus reality and 'truth preserving' institutions have existed in human culture – the cult acts as a selective pressure and fitness landscape. 'Truth holding' institutions whether the Cathedral or the Academie serve to gate-keep what is regarded as truth from untruth in human communities, serving to distinguish canon from heresy.

Esoteric or visionary art may be regarded as symbolic or memetic representations of transpersonal experiences. Just as state art expresses political egregores and ethnos and the archetypes governing political and state institutions, then esoteric art expresses the deterritorialized egregores of sub-cultures, transpersonal experiences ciphered and symbolised through established sub-cultural meme species.

Counter-cultural figure Terrence McKenna, an exponent of an autochthonous revival which he branded 'Archaic Revival', spoke of the entheogenic or contemporary liminal experience in Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, in 1989:

It's a doorway out of history and into the wiring under the board in eternity. And I tell you this because if the community understands what it is that holds it together the community will be better able to streamline itself for flight into hyperspace because what we need is a new myth."

Perhaps a difficulty that canonical truth-keeping institutions have in integrating transpersonal experiences is that the 'deterritorializing' or 'decompartmentalising' transpersonal experiences are idiosyncratic and mythogenic.

Applying memetic theory, we could say that transpersonal experiences are even mutagenic. The shaman brokers in symbolic remixing and modification within the communities that host them. The ambivalent and even suspicious regard societies have for such experiences can be understood from the need for consensus reality and 'fit ideas' to be conserved against the incursion of mutagenic de-territorializing influence. Traditionally the 'cult', and the office of the shaman or priest would to some



extent modulate or interpret transpersonal experiences via the conserving forces of mythic traditions. But how any society can uphold and preserve its established functional structures and truth-definitions under too high a rate of mutation of ideas or memes via transpersonal experiences in its population is an open question. We may perhaps look at the reaction of establishment structures to the 1960's Psychedelic Revolution and early 1990's Rave movement for historical clues.

Many ideas that begin as 'sub-cultural' may be sand-boxed, tested, slowly integrated if found to have fitness, so that they eventually become endemic within general culture. For instance the American Psychological Association (APA) established a Division of Humanistic Psychology in 1961. However, the division did not initially include transpersonal psychology as a distinct field. It was not until 1972 that the division's name was changed to the Division of Humanistic Psychology and Transpersonal Psychology, indicating an official recognition and incorporation of transpersonal psychology into the division's scope. This change was due in large part to the efforts of Anthony Sutich, A. H. Maslow, Roger Walsh, and Stanislav Grof, who were instrumental in bringing attention to the importance of transpersonal experiences in psychology (WALSH & GROB, 2006, p 432–448. GROF, 2008, p. 46-54)

In short, in the contemporary world, subcultures act almost as sorting-houses, or quarantined liminal spaces within the collective meme space, if mutated memplexes are found to have a reasonable 'fitness' or adaptive advantage.

Concepts from esoteric subculture

*La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.
(BAUDELAIRE, 2015, p.15)*

*Translation by William Aggeler:
Nature is a temple in which living pillars*



*Sometimes give voice to confused words;
Man passes there through forests of symbols
Which look at him with understanding eyes.*

The concept of memetic aggregates that function as intransigent or embedded cultural edifices invokes concepts eluded to within occult and esoteric culture. These 'emergent orders' have been described in occult and hermetic literature as 'egregores'.

Egregores are the result of the combined desires, emotions, and beliefs of a group of people. They take on a life of their own, becoming a thought-form or spirit that influences the thoughts and actions of the group. They are created whenever people come together with a common goal or purpose, whether consciously or unconsciously. (STAVISH, 2018, p. 2)

This idea is similar to the concept of the "noosphere" proposed by Teilhard de Chardin (TEILHARD de CHARDIN, 2008/1955), which refers to the total network of human communication creating a collective planetary mind. Yet from the perspective of memetics, this space originates in neither the genes or a transcendent dimension, but rather is a complex emergent property or information network effect of many human minds in connection (BLACKMORE, 2000).

Memeplexes are 'bigger' than us, and this is saying nothing more than culture itself transcends individuals whilst being composed of individuals. Memeplexes are emergent, highly complex systems, and so they contain features not predictable or implied by the basic behaviour of semantic or semiotic units or figurae. Moreover, though many parts of the meme-pool of culture are consciously engineered, a much vaster reach is built upon an evolutionary and ancestral cumulation, geologic features and terrains, realms and domains of vast depths, heights, and intricacy. These structures are 'organic' and more akin to the geometrical organic orders of coral reefs than of skyscrapers and cathedrals.

The sense of the sublime, or numinous, in an artwork, may be the experience of 'contact' with a 'civilisational edifice' that feels bigger, deeper and richer than our individual knowledge and understanding. In this way 'Great Art' acts as heraldic



signifiers or 'master nodes' in the meme network. Such memplexes are greatly older than the individual human being – some components and features of these palisades of memory are of great antiquity.

If we suppose that there is something to the concept of the archetype or memplex, we must also consider the long evolutionary history and the resultant moraine that more discreet and ornately formed architectural patterns or structures have arisen from - the *ursprache*, the primordial and chthonic and ancestral, part of the primordial soup of memetic space. What formations memes make in the subconscious mean that the 'mating' and mutagenic remixing of memes is not a process occurring in the externalised, rational consciousness but also within the subconscious.

From this lens, we may discern the ancient primordial abiding structures, 'archetypes' or 'memplexes' that are deeply stable in our language and culture, and the more mobile, shorter lived, 'active agents' or 'egregores' created within this dynamic field of resonance. For example, the phenomenon of autonomous agency and 'discarnate entities' experienced in transpersonal ASOC, such as elves, angels, goddesses & demons and so on, that personify certain memplex, in the way in the Hindu Vedanta tradition, various deities are thought to reflect discreet facets or qualities of 'The One', ParaBrahman etc.



Jean Delville, *The Last Idols*, 1931.
Oil on canvas. 300x450 cm

We could say, therefore, that part of the powerfully engaging quality of art, for instance listening to *Spring* by Vivaldi, reading *Lord of the Rings*, or absorbing ourselves in a painterly work of magnitude, is to enter a transpersonal space of a highly charged ‘rhizome’ of memetic referents that will, as it were, ‘vibrate’ or ring or chime



into being like a struck bell, resonating in excitation when enlightened upon by conscious awareness/energy/attention.

Sungeneia (Affinities)



Gustave Moreau, Jupiter and Semele (detail), 1895.
Oil on canvas, 212 x 118 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.



We have briefly surveyed the affinities between the notions of ‘collective consciousness’, noosphere, egregores, and meme hyperspace, this ‘primordial psychic moraine’, that recurring numinous motifs and archetypal symbols emerge in all times and places in autochthonous revival. These archetypal symbols or highly charged memetic constellations can remain latent until ‘activated’ by a ‘releasing stimulus’.

Such ‘archetypes’ have immense power. Zeus’s paramour, Semele, was immediately obliterated when she was tricked by Hera into demanding that her lover show himself to her in his full divine glory. The Greeks knew that the personal ego cannot always withstand direct contact with transpersonal energies.

Possession or encounter with an archetype is not necessarily always negative; it can be a source of archetypal power and inspiration (von FRANZ 1980, p. 29). Poets and philosophers invoke the Muses; lovers appeal to Aphrodite and Eros; theurgists call on Helios. The clearest and most relatable example is when the lover is charged by a numinous energy (in the eyes of the beloved). Much art seems to elude this intersection of the personal with this transpersonal dimension in human life. This recalls the ‘divine madness of the oracles’.

By regarding memes not merely as information but as strongly coupled with enaction, the social body and evolutionarily relevant behaviours, we move closer to understanding Arts’ relationship to phenomenological human experience.

Jung described the alchemical process of ‘Amplification’ (JUNG, 1970, pp 95-97) whereby imagery is used to create a meaningful context around a symbol needing examination. In subjective amplification, a dreamer, for example, uses active imagination to associate a dream symbol in order to grasp it better. In objective amplification, the analyst collects themes from mythology, alchemy, religion, and other sources to illuminate, or amplify, archetypal symbols produced in dreams or fantasy.

This process brings about *Catharsis* (from Greek κάθαρσις, katharsis, meaning “purification” or “cleansing” or “clarification”), which Aristotle underlined is so important in the Arts. (ARISTOTLE Poetics, c. 335 BCE). Catharsis is related to *Abreaction*— an artistic ‘re-telling’ of an event, in either ‘mythic time’ or in historical or living memory, ‘re-living’ the experience to purge it of its excessive emotional charge.



Anagnorisis also plays a strong part in this- the hero's sudden awareness of a real situation and the hero's insight into a relationship with an often-antagonistic character, causing an 'integration' of proto-memetic forces and emotions.

Psychological & visionary

In a lecture delivered in 1929, "Psychology and Literature", Jung differentiated between the 'psychological' and the 'visionary' in art.

It is a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterlands of man's mind—that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding, and to which he is in danger therefore of succumbing. The value and the force of the experience are given by its enormity. It arises from timeless depths [...] The primordial experiences rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world. And allow a glimpse into the unfathomed abyss of what has not yet become. Is it a vision of other worlds, of the obscuration of the spirit, or of the beginning of things before the age of man, or of the unborn generations of the future? (JUNG, 2001, p 169)

The online Chalquist Glossary of Jungian Terms annotates this point thus:

Art can never be reduced to psychopathology because visionary art is greater than its creator and draws on primordial images and forces. Rather than a symptom or something secondary, it's a true symbolic expression, a reorganisation of the conditions to which a causalist explanation reduces it. (JUNGIAN Terms | Chalquist.com, n.d.)

In doing so, he elaborated upon the poet's divine madness or inspiration that Plato alluded to, and also perhaps eluded to the Tautegorical – invoked by Coleridge and Friedrich Schelling – where the Symbol directs to itself, its primal self-existence ("primordial thoughts" - Urgedanken), rather than something else (as in allegory). Schelling contends that the "Prometheus" of Æschylus is "not a human thought." It is



one of the “primordial thoughts which pushes itself into existence.” (DAY, 2003, pp 71-74)

Herein is the ancient power vested in bards, oracles, artists and poets – the ‘divine madness’ of ‘inspiration. A ‘reorganisation of the conditions’.

In other words, Art affects the symbolic moraine, rather than just ‘representing’ it, or making commentary’. Artists are *Artifex*, or artificer within this symbolic space, producing artefacts that may comprise powerful transformations by ‘resonating’ archetypal fields within the collective consciousness, and thus, through processes of catharsis, abreaction, anagnorisis, toward *Anagogy* (PROCLUS, 412-485 AD),– the ‘divine ascent’ of integration of the subconscious with the conscious, this *Peripeteia* or ‘turning point’, in the journey from the chaos or cathartic ‘underworld’ of disordered internal realms, and up toward a higher level of integration (*apocatastasis*) and wholeness.



Final considerations

Inter-discourse between various disciplines is important for the correct valuation of visionary art production in human life. It can be fruitful, when trying to understand or account for such a phenomena as 'visionary art', to develop and test novel connections between disciplines and concepts, Many concepts that at first appear 'mystical' can be found to have some affinities to archetypal psychology and information theory.

Acknowledging the cultural and psychological value of transpersonal experiences does not require a full-frontal challenge to the dominant scientific paradigm, but may be understood as a phenomena arising in qualia producing modulatory and remixing effects not only upon the individual but upon culture via the medium of the arts.

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