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The Visionary Art of C.G Jung: An Exploration of *Liber Novus* using Neumann's Understanding of Great Art

Abstract

This article considers how visionary art expresses itself within paintings and pictorial configurations by using Neumann's work to expand on Jung's notion of the 'visionary mode of creativity.' The first part is a comparative study of Neumann's 'four stages of psychological development' discussed in 'The Origins and History of Consciousness' (1949) and his 'four stages of art in relation to its epoch' discussed in his essay 'Art and Time' (1959). This comparison aims to establish a selection of categories that considers the role of art on the micro-level (the individual) and the macro-level (society). Additionally, it is suggested that these four categories offer an interesting framework for identifying and understanding visionary artworks. Subsequently, the second part uses Neumann's framework to examine a selection of paintings from 'Liber Novus' (2009).

Keywords: individuation, visionary art, Erich Neumann, creative unconscious, the visionary mode of creativity, art criticism.

Introduction

In recent years Jungian scholars have shown an increased interest in creativity and its connection to the imagination, fantasy thinking, symbolic representations, and the individuation process. This interest may have sprung from the publication of Jung's *Liber Novus* (2009) – an illuminated manuscript style text that documents his creative self-experimentation. This text enters the field of analytical psychology late yet presents itself as a foundational text – it was a personal monstrum from which Jung formulated much of what would become his analytical psychology. This publication's success is proof of the public's

fascination with Jung's visual creative works and style, a style which he later referred to as the 'visionary mode of creativity.'

Even though there is an emerging conversation on the connection between analytical psychology and fine art, it has for some time been a neglected topic. Ulrich Hoerni, Jung's grandson and co-editor of *The Art of C.G. Jung* (2018), recently described how, "for decades, few suspected the vital role that visual art played in his oeuvre" (Hoerni, Fischer, & et al. 2018, 10). Jung himself wrote extraordinarily little on the subject, mostly mentioning the visual arts as an after-thought to literature and poetry. This suggestion is evident by the title of the two essays which introduce the topic: *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry* (1922) and *Psychology and Literature* (1930)[1]. Even then, literature and poetry were only touched upon briefly.

Likewise, the subject of visionary art has been discussed by various post-Jungian analysts and academics such as Susan Rowland, Tjeu van der Berk, Craig Stephenson, David Parker, and Robert Matthews. In *Psyche and the Arts* (2008) glossary, Rowland defines the category as consisting of mainly "symbols, which point to what is not yet known or unknowable in the culture." She continues, "visionary art is primarily expressive of the collective unconscious. As such, it compensates the culture for its biases, brings to consciousness what is ignored or repressed, and may predict something of the future direction of the culture" (Rowland 2008, 190). Likewise, Craig Stephenson describes the visionary artist as a creative individual who is "aspired to transcend the limits of what was actual and artificial by descending into the sensual and sublime profundity of nature as well as intuitively going down, through reverie and dreams, into the ancient pagan depths of the mind" (Stephenson 2015, 14).

[1] Both essays are published in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (C. W. 15).

Similarly, the Jungian analyst Robert Matthews has shown a keen interest in Jung's visionary notion, evident by his publication *An Analytical Psychology View of Wholeness in Art* (2015). In this source, he defined the visionary artist as one "who can act as a conduit for a new vision arising from the 'primordial' experience within" (Matthews 2015, 125). This article sets out with three objective (1) to describe the general creative process according to Jung's view of the transcendent function, (2) discuss three roles of the visionary artist according to Neumann, and (3) explore the role of the visionary artist in the west at present.

However, Matthews' discussion contains several discrepancies. First, he failed to discuss contemporary western art. Instead, his focus was on modern art, a movement that ended during the 1970's – forty-five years before the article's publication. Second, his interpretation of Neumann's 'three roles of the visionary artist' does not correlate with the source material. Instead, Neumann's essay *Art and Time* (1959) described *four* stages with minimum similarities to Matthew's interpretation. This article addresses this inconsistency by examining Neumann's framework and considering whether it can inform the evolving conversation of visionary art within analytical psychology and potentially further afield to art criticism.

Methods and Considerations

In this article, I consider how the visionary mode of creativity expresses itself within paintings and pictorial configurations by using Neumann's work to expand on Jung's notion of visionary art. Additionally, this study builds upon Neumann's ideas by suggesting characteristics of pictorial configuration that are implied within his texts.

The first part of this study is a comparative analysis that aims to establish a correlation between Neumann's 'four stages of psychological development' discussed in *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (1949) and his 'four stages of art in relation to its

epoch' discussed in his essay *Art and Time* (1959)[2]. The former text is an in-depth consideration of the stages of life and how the individuation process manifests within mythology and symbolic imagery. In comparison, the latter essay explores the development of a visionary artist's creative process and its relation to society.

In my opinion, Neumann's essay *Art and Time* is relatively short and difficult to follow. Therefore, it seems crucial to consider it alongside his earlier publication to better understand his outlook. This inquiry stems from Neumann's statement that the "supreme alchemical transformation of art merely reflects the alchemical transformation of the Great Individual" (Neumann 1959, 104). Hence, it is also essential to determine what Neumann was referring to when he used the terms, 'Great Individual' and 'Great Artist.'

Subsequently, a selection of paintings from *Liber Novus* is interpreted from the perspective of Neumann's framework. This focused inquiry considers how the compositional characteristics of Jung's paintings can be considered visionary while also indicating the importance of the recognised styles in defining the genre of visionary art.

The Visionary and Psychological Mode of Creativity according to Jung

In his essay *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry* (1922), Jung hypothesised two modes of creativity that correlate with directed and fantasy thinking[3]. In his view, it was crucial to distinguish between these two entirely different modes to judge a piece of work effectively. He wrote, "in one case, it is a conscious product shaped and designed to have the effect intended. But in the other, we are dealing with an event originating in unconscious nature" (Jung 1966, para. 116). According to Jung, the works belonging to the first category

[2] This essay can be found in Neumann's text *Art and the Creative Unconscious* (1959).
[3] Jung discussed directed and fantasy thinking in his earlier essay *Two Kinds of Thinking* (1912).

exist within the limits of conscious comprehension. In contrast, the latter is strange in form with content that can only be understood intuitively.

Eight years later, Jung elaborated these ideas in his essay *Psychology and Literature* (1930). Within it, he labelled these two modes as 'the psychological and visionary mode of creativity.' The former category works with materials drawn from man's conscious life – it is called psychological because it "remains within the limits of the psychologically intelligible" (ibid. 140). In his view, this type of work originates entirely from an artist's intention to produce a particular result.

> He submits his material to a definite treatment with a definite aim in view; he adds to it and subtracts from it, emphasising one effect, toning down another, laying on a touch of colour here, another there, all the time carefully considering the overall result and paying strict attention to the laws of form and style. He exercises the keenest judgement and chooses his words with complete freedom. His material is entirely subordinate to his artistic purpose; he wants to express this and nothing else (109).

According to Jung, countless creations belong to this category. Yet, whatever form they take, they always originate from the sphere of conscious experience. He described, "the raw material of this kind of creation is derived from the contents of man's conscious life, from his eternally repeated joys and sorrows, but clarified and transfigured by the poet" (139).

It is interesting to note that Van der Berk suggests that labelling works of this type as 'psychological' is confusing; he states, "Jung had a very unlucky intuition when he called the first form 'psychological' […] he easily could have picked another name for psychological

art, for example 'realistic art'" (Van der Berk 2012, 88)[4]. However, viewing works of this type merely as 'realistic art' simplifies a category that can highlight meaningful experiences and give us greater depth of human insight by making us aware of everyday happenings which we tend to overlook. Popular examples of this type of work in fine art are Andy Warhol's Pop Art and Claude Monet's Impressionism. However, a less obvious example of this mode would be Georgia O'Keeffe's abstract paintings which are playful depictions of flowers and nature. Her work belongs to this category as they are inspired by the sights and objects from her external world with limited alterations.

In contrast, the visionary mode of creativity forces itself upon the artist, bringing its own form, reminding us of our dreams and night-time fears instead of our everyday life experiences. With this mode, the artist is overwhelmed with a surprising avalanche of images and thoughts.

> These works positively force themselves upon the author; his hand is seized; his pen writes things that his mind contemplates with amazement. The work brings with it, its own form; anything he wants to add is rejected […] he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and which his own will could never have brought into being. Yet in spite of himself he is forced to admit that it is his own self speaking, his own inner nature revealing itself and uttering things which he could never have entrusted his tongue (110)

Jung described the visionary product as "sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness; it arises from timeless depths; glamourous, daemonic, grotesque, it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form" (141). In his view, the

[4] Cited from footnote 268.

visionary expression remains a constant challenge to our thoughts and emotions while also representing a more profound and impressive experience than the human passion depicted in works created with the psychological mode.

Interestingly, Jung described how a visionary experience is often concealed by a historical or mythical event, which can be mistakenly considered the real subject matter. However, the work's deeper meaning does not lie in the historical or mythical material but in the visionary experience it expresses. Since the expression can never match the psychoid archetype[5] or richness of the symbol, the artist must have an extensive collection of visual material to communicate a fraction of what he experienced and make use of complex and contradictory images to express the strange paradoxes of his vision. Popular examples of this type of configuration within the field of fine art include Leonora Carrington's (1917-2011) surrealist paintings and Ernst Fuchs' (1930-2015) Fantastic Realist works.

Erich Neumann and the 'Great Artist'

Erich Neumann (1905-1960) was a first-generation post-Jungian scholar who was arguably one of Jung's most gifted students. Before his untimely death, at the age of 55, he had written various scholarly works held in high regard by Jung. As shown by the following quotation, "My dear Neumann… I would like to sincerely thank you, not only that you have taken to the pen for me in such a generous way, but also for that greater thing you are achieving in your life's work" (Liebscher 2015, 310). However, he was generally misunderstood and unaccepted by his fellow post-Jungians. Fortunately, this has begun to change, as evidenced by two recent publications that focus on the relationship and correspondence between Jung

[5] The psychoid archetype is the name given to the real nature of the archetype, which is not capable of being made conscious. Instead, the psychoid archetype communicates its meanings and effect through archetypal images which are symbolic. However, the archetypal image is not as pure as the psychoid archetype as it is blurred by the 'material of conscious existence.'

and Neumann[6]. According to Erel Shalit and Murray Stein, these texts have set the stage for a "Neumann renaissance" (Shalit & Stein 2016, ix). In line with this advancement, it seems relevant to refocus on Neumann's material and consider how his writing could bring a more nuanced understanding of visionary art to analytical psychology (and potentially art criticism).

Neumann's essay *Art and Time* was an inquiry into the psychology of culture; it aimed to understand art as a psychological phenomenon essential for both the individual and the collective. He explained, "our effort will begin and end with the question of what art means for mankind and what position it occupies within human development" (Neumann 1959, 82).

In his view, it was the role of the 'Great Individual' to stimulate cultural growth and orientate a group's collective consciousness. This process did not begin in the collective parts of a group, "but only in the great, i.e., differentiated individuals who are the representative bearers of a group's consciousness" (127). These 'Great Individuals' are the institution forerunners of whom the group follows, for example: "medicine men, seer, prophet, […] the man of genius," who possess "a form of consciousness different from the average" (286). In western culture, the characteristics of a great individual can be seen in pioneers such as Leonardo de Vinci and Marie Curie. These 'great' individuals propelled society forward with their ideas and inventions and are often referred to as 'visionaries.'

According to Neumann, the great individual is the hero of our time who has "achieved a synthesis between consciousness and the creative unconscious […] upon which the continued existence of the world depends" (211). Furthermore, when this great individual expresses themselves through art, they become the 'Great Artist' – a person who can

[6] See *Analytical Psychology in Exile: The Correspondence of C.G. Jung and Erich Neumann* (2015), and *Turbulent Times, Creative Minds* (2016).

effectively portray the formless psychic structures of the unconscious (82). This description correlates with Jung's visionary mode of creativity, suggesting that Neumann focuses on this mode. In addition, Neumann indirectly described the psychological mode of creativity and stated that this vocation could never truly realise the potential of 'Great Art' (93).

Neumann does not mention the visionary mode of creativity within his texts; however, the above observations strongly suggest that this was the mode he was referring to. Therefore, this article will proceed with the assumption that the 'Great Artist' refers to a creative individual who effectively engages with the visionary mode of creativity and produces visionary artworks.

The Four-Fold Process of Psychological Development

Jung used the term 'individuation process' to describe the potential for psychological development innate in every person that relies on the delicate balance and creative interplay between the psyche's conscious and unconscious portions. This term was first introduced in his essay *Psychological Types* (1921). However, this process of psychological development was implied much earlier in his doctoral thesis *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena* (1902) and in his anonymously and privately published text *Septem Sermones Mortuos* (1916). The latter is a small collection of seven mystical texts that speak of the individual's liberation (creature/a) from a collective and general existence (pleroma).

The principum individuationis or the principle of individuation was not a new concept during Jung's lifetime. Many great thinkers explored this idea, such as Aristotle, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. Jung, however, repurposed the concept from the realm of biology into psychology. He explained, "the process by which individual beings are formed

and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being from the general, collective psychology" (757).

In his essay *The Stages of Life* (1921), Jung discussed different phases that characterise the human lifespan. To explain this suggestion, Jung used a metaphor of the sun sweeping across the horizon. He wrote, "in the morning it rises from the nocturnal sea of unconsciousness and looks upon the wide, bright world which lies before it in an expanse" (Jung 1960, para 778). In this source, Jung divided the human life cycle into four stages: childhood (earliest years to puberty), youth (just after puberty to the thirty-fifth or the fortieth year), mid-life (fortieth to the eightieth year), and old age (eightieth year to death). He also considered how this division into four parts could be separated again into unconscious and conscious phases. The former refers to young childhood and extreme old age; "childhood and extreme old age are, of course, utterly different, and yet they have one thing in common: submersion in unconscious psychic happenings" (795). Whereas the latter refers to youth and midlife; "conscious problems fill out the second and third quarters" (ibid).

When discussing the individuation process, Jung focused on mid-life. He believed that it is only during this phase that an individual is prepared to integrate the two portions of the psyche. However, Neumann suggested that the first half of life and childhood play a crucial role in this process of self-realisation. He explained, "self-formation, whose effects in the second half of life Jung has termed 'individuation,' has its critical developmental pattern not only in the first half of life but also in childhood" (Neumann 1954/1995, 35). In response to this realisation, Neumann coined the term 'centroversion' to illustrate the individual's desire to strive towards wholeness – to individuate. He described it as a regulatory and compensatory system that exists as a primary factor within organic and psychic life (356).

In his text*, The Origins and History of Consciousness* (1949), Neumann hypothesised four stages of psychological development that correlate with Jung's four life stages. He

labelled these as (1) The Original Unity, (2) The Separation of Systems, (3) The Balance and Crisis of Consciousness, and (4) The Self-Realisation of Centroversion. Likewise, in his essay *Art and Time,* he posited four stages of development to describe the relationship between the artist, their creative growth, and the cultural epoch. He labelled them as (1) SelfRepresentation of the Unconscious, (2) Representation of the Cultural Canon, (3) Compensation for the Cultural Canon, and (4) The Transcendence of Art.

These two sets of four stages seem to mirror each other. An idea solidified by the following statement, "we begin to see the supreme alchemical transformation of art merely reflects the alchemical transformation of the Great Individual" (104). In this way, Neumann suggests parallels between the process of individuation and the visionary artist. Additionally, he drew upon a wide selection of mythology to demonstrate his hypothesis and to show how individual consciousness (of both the great individual and great artist) undergoes the same archetypal development as the evolution of consciousness seen throughout history. The following sections explore these categories by comparing Neumann's two publications. Also, there is a brief consideration of how these categories express themselves within fine art using examples within contemporary and historical art criticism.

Stage one: The Original Unity/ Self Representation of the Unconscious

In his text, *The Origins and History of Consciousness,* Neumann labelled the first stage of humanities psychological development as the 'original unity.' Also, in his essay *Art and Time,* he described the first stage of *art in relation to its epoch* as the 'self-representation of the unconscious.' According to Neumann, this stage is the "symbolic expression of the numinosum, characteristic of origination and early culture" (Neumann 1959, 83).

Neumann explores the concept of 'the original unity' with the symbol of the Uroboros – an ancient image of a serpent or dragon eating its tail. In his view, it is symbolic of the

pleromatic condition as described in Jung's *Septem Sermones Mortuos.* Neumann explained, "the Uroboros is the symbolic representation of the dawn state, showing the infancy both of mankind and the child" (10). It is the stage of "non-differentiation" (276) – signifying the unity of a group that lives as one, not as individuals. Even though this psychological state is pre-historic, Neumann suggested that we can still experience it in dreams, or through meditation and practice, or equally due to some dehabilitating illness that lowers levels of consciousness that is overwise induced (266).

Eventually, however, there is a gradual emergence of an 'ego-seed' from the uroboric state, symbolised in mythology by the young lover's relationship to the Great Mother. With this development, a person detaches from the Uroboros' security and begins to descend into the lower realms of reality – full of unknown dangers and discomforts. According to Neumann, there are several stages to this advancement. The natural surrender to the fate and decisions of the Uroboros signifies the earliest stage. The next stage, however, involves a struggle for independence. Neumann explained, "the youth struggling for self-consciousness now begins," the individual begins to desire their own fate, and the Great Mother becomes "deadly and unfaithful" (93). According to Neumann, the fear of the Great Mother within mythology is the first sign of self-formation, centroversion, and ego stability.

Even though there is a struggle for independence, the ego does not become sufficiently developed during this first phase. Consciousness instead sporadically appears in the form of 'uroboric incest,' only rising occasionally. According to Neumann, this early emergence of consciousness can be equated to a moment of "illumination" or a "flash revelation," which disrupts the monotonous flow of consciousness. He explained, "the isolated or habitual phenomena have always been regarded by primitives and us, as characterising the 'Great Individual' (286).

Likewise, the artist's 'self-representation of the unconscious' is characterised by "the individual's immersion in a group context that transcends him" (84). Neumann explained, "at the beginning of the development of human consciousness the original psychic situation prevails; unconscious, collective and transpersonal figures are more significant and evident than conscious and individual factors" (ibid). From this statement, it becomes clear that there is a direct correlation between the first stage of *art in relation to its epoch*[7] and the four stages of psychological development. However, how can we apply this structure to the visual arts? The following statement may bring some clarity:

> The individual's consciousness is almost blind to the underlying forces: his reaction to the creative impulse of the psyche is not to reflect; it is to obey and execute its commands […] the psychic undercurrents which determines man's feelings and image of the world are manifested through colour and forms, tones, and words, which crystallise into symbolic spiritual figures expressing man's relation both to the archetypal world and the world he lives (Neumann 1954/1995, 84).

In this way, the artist's unconscious expresses itself in irrational and unobjective forms, with limited interference from consciousness – reminiscent of early primal drawings [FIGURE 1], children's drawings [FIGURE 2], automatic drawings, and expressive configurations [FIGURE 3]. These varied examples show simplified and abstract forms, aching to communicate the unintelligible to us. This work is not visionary art; however, it shows humanities inclination towards depicting symbolic and abstract forms in various circumstances – either through the induced practice of mediumistic exercises, the natural configurations of ancient communities, or the sweet drawings of a young child.

[7] This is how Neumann referred to the four stages mentioned in his essay *Art and Time.*

Stage Two: The Separation of the Systems/Representing the Archetype in the Cultural Canon

Neumann described the second phase of psychological development as 'the separation of systems' – the division of the individual personality into two parts, consciousness and the unconscious. Likewise, in his essay *Art and Time*, Neumann appoints the second stage of *art in relation to its epoch* as 'representing the archetype in the cultural canon.' With this stage, the artist derives their inspiration from the collective consciousness.

Neumann describes how this phase relates to the mythological stages of the world parents and the dragon fight. In his view, the separation of the world parents is a mythological representation of the "splitting off of opposite from unity, the creation of heaven and earth, above and below, day and night, light and darkness" (Neumann 1954/1995, 103). Through this division, polarity is created. The uroboric unconscious or the Great Mother becomes separate from the light of ego-consciousness. Neumann wrote, "only in the light of consciousness can man know. And this act of cognition, of conscious discrimination, sunders the world into opposites, for experience of the world is only possible through opposites" (ibid.104).

According to Neumann, the separation of the world parents is synonymous with the mythological hero fight, which recites a tale of liberation of the individual from the overpowering dragon. When the hero succeeds in defeating the dragon, he metaphorically frees the ego conscious from the great mother's control. Neumann stated that the dragon fight correlates with the different stage of development of consciousness, "the conditions of the fight, the aim and also the period in which it takes place vary. It occurs during the childhood phase, during puberty, wherever in fact, a rebirth or reorientation of consciousness is indicated" (205). The rescuing of the captive symbolises a new element whose liberation

makes further development possible. The mythological goal of the dragon fight is always to free the captive, or more generally, obtain the treasure.

In his essay *Art and Time*, Neumann describes the second stage of art in relation to its epoch as representing the cultural canon. He wrote, "there arises […] a configuration of definite archetypes, symbols, values and attitudes, upon which the unconscious archetypal contents are projected" (87). With this phase, transpersonal figures already known to the group direct the life of the community. However, in his view, this phase is limited and will never realise the full potential of visionary art. He explained:

> For the artist, whose vocation it is to represent the cultural canon, it is a question of growing into tradition – that is, into the situation of his time and into collective consciousness – rather than receiving a direct mandate from the unconscious. Of course, an image of the canon can also be full of inner experience, but its archetypal reality may no longer encompass the whole of the artistic personality. An art which is orientated toward those sectors of the archetypal world that have already entered into consciousness through representation that will never realise the supreme possibilities of art (Neumann 1959, 93).

Neumann's description of this phase relates to Jung's conceptualisation of the psychological mode of creativity – creative works drawn from man's conscious life. Examples of this type of configuration can be seen in any painting or drawing that is inspired by or refers to an individual's experience or observation of their external world [FIGURE 4].

Stage Three: The Balance and Crisis of Consciousness/Compensation for the Cultural

Canon

In his text, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Neumann labelled the third stage of psychological development as 'the balance and crisis of consciousness.' Likewise, in his essay *Art and Time*, Neumann described how "the next stage in relation of art to its epoch is the stage of compensation for the cultural canon" (Neumann 1959, 94). In this phase, the artist is influenced by the needs of their time without them seeing it or realising it. According to Neumann, the balancing tendencies in culture generally operate through religion, art, and ceremonial group activities. These behaviours contain a world of symbols that form a bridge between consciousness and the collective unconscious. He explained, "so long as this world exists and continues to operate through various rituals, cults, myths, religion, and art, it prevents the two realms from falling apart" (365). In his view, this 'falling apart' was evident in modern western society, which has resulted in a societal crisis caused by the alienation of the unconscious from consciousness.

Nonetheless, this disarray is not always the case. Neumann described how the psychological system in the average individual is organised to prevent invasions from the unconscious. This system guarantees him a relatively high degree of inner-security – ultimately enabling them to lead an ordered existence in a world system where the personal and transpersonal articulate with one another. However, the exception to this rule is the 'outsider,' upon which the community depends, which in Neumann's view was the 'Great Individual,' the 'Great Artist,' and the hero.

On his journey to becoming a great individual, the hero must conquer the old order's power, which inevitably constricts him. However, this resistance to everyday life is a form of self-sacrifice, as it involves coming into conflict with the collective and marking themselves as an outsider. Neumann believed that the creative person, whose mission is to compensate

for the cultural canon, is usually an isolated individual – whose desire for compensation suggests that he has suffered under the deficiency of his time.

In his essay *Art and Time,* Neumann described how the third stage of *art in relation to its epoch* is characterised by an artist grounded in the collective unconscious' vitality, which is opposed to the group's collective consciousness. He explained, "compensation for the cultural canon means opposition to it – that is, opposition to the epoch's consciousness and sense of values" (94). In this stage, the artist is influenced by the needs of the time without them realising its fundamental importance. This artist does not represent the cultural canon; instead, they transform and overturn it, giving utterance to the authentic and direct revelation of the numinosum. Neumann offered the Hieronymus Bosch as an example; he described:

> This intense conflict governed the work of Bosch, one of the most magnificent painters ever to have announced the coming of a new era. He clung consciously to the old medieval canon, but beneath his hand, the world transformed itself. It became demonic and gnostic; everything was temptation, and in the paranoiac despair of his ascetic, medieval consciousness he experienced the revival of the earth archetype around him, glittering demonically in every colour (Neumann 1959, 95).

In this way, the artist subtly re-envisions the already conscious archetypal forms – they invent a language that challenges the cultural norm without straying too far away from what is recognisable and understandable. This phase correlates with Jung's visionary mode of creativity, reminding us of our night-time fears and dreams instead of our everyday life experiences. This type of work can be identified when the external object loses its inherent value and becomes a primary material to project inwardly directed psychic processes. This work usually radiates a strange and eerie quality – for example, the untitled work from

outsider artists Alan Doyle [FIGURE 5] and Lisette Knutsen [FIGURE 6]. Likewise, Peter Birkhauser's painting *Inward Gaze* (1954/55) is an exciting example. In the lower part of this painting, there is a man whose 'inward gaze' can be seen, or in other words, a man who has closed his eyes and is allowing the inner world to appear before him.

Stage Four: The Realisation of Centroversion/ The Transcendence of Art

In his text, *The Origins and History of Consciousness,* Neumann described how individuation commences in the fourth stage of psychological development. This initiation results in the self's constellation as a psychic centre for wholeness, which no longer acts unconsciously but is instead, experienced consciously. He explained, "whereas the initial phase [the first half of life] led to the development of the ego and the differentiation of the psychic system, its second phase [the second half of life] brings the development of the self and the integration of that system" (Neumann 1954/1995, 410). Likewise, in his essay *Art and Time*, Neumann labels the fourth stage of art concerning its epoch as the 'transcendence of art.'

Neumann states that the individuation process generally begins during the second half of life – between the thirty-fifth and fiftieth year. This process results in the realisation of the 'self,' the psychic centre of wholeness instead of the ego. Interestingly, this process turns in the opposite direction compared to the first half of life, resulting in an expansion of consciousness by the ego reflecting upon itself. Neumann explained, "it is no longer the unconscious, purely collective world of the uroboros that now dominates the ego, nor the conscious, purely collective world of the community, but both are combined in a unique way" (415).

According to Neumann, this self-experience of the ego is combined with 'everlastingness' and 'immortality.' In his view, the wholeness that comes into effect because of the individuation process presents itself as increased stability, lowering tension, and a

"profound structural change, a new configuration of personality" (415). He continued, "the genesis, the stabilisation, configuration and consolidation of the personality are therefore associated with symbolism whose ingredients are perfect form, balance, harmony, and solidity" (415).

Likewise, in his essay *Art and Time*, Neumann discussed how the fourth stage of art concerning its epoch rests on the artist's individual development. Through self-realisation, the artist becomes a 'Great Individual' who transcends their relationship with the collective both internally and externally; he explains:

> It is no longer his function to express the creative will of the unconscious or to depict a sector of the archetypal world, or to regenerate or compensate for the existing culture out of the depths of the collective unconscious. What is fundamentally new and different in this stage is that the artist here attains to the level of timelessness (Neumann 1959, 100).

In his view, this 'timelessness' can only be experienced by an enhanced consciousness; he described, "for what figure of Christ can be truly understood without knowledge of Christianity, what Buddha with Buddhism, what Shiva without the Hindi conception of cosmic cycles? (101). This phase of artistic achievement is not common, as it requires an artist to no longer orientate themselves towards the ego, or the collective. Instead, "the creative act which mysteriously creates form and life in nature as in the human psyche seems to have perceived itself and to shine forth with its own incandescence" (105). In addition to the third stage, this fourth stage corresponds with the visionary mode of creativity.

Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) is an ideal illustration for this category – for example, *The Dove, No. 2, Group IX* (1915) from her series *Paintings for the Temple*. This painting

shows a variety of shapes with perfect symmetry and a soft pastel colour palette. It depicts a perfect circle, a Fibonacci heart, and a double helix suggesting a duality – a theme which runs through most of her paintings. The image is highly ambiguous and leaves little for the rational mind to contemplate[8]. This type of configuration can also be seen in the work of Sinead McKillican [FIGURE 7] and one of my own drawings [FIGURE 8]. Additionally, the mandala form is an important example that fits into this category.

At first glance, these pieces may be interpreted as abstract and included in the first category – self representation of the unconscious. However, the composition is not irrational and unobjective. Instead, it depicts perfect form, balance, and harmony, which, in Neumann's view reflects the amalgamation and stabilisation of the personality.

Liber Novus and Jung's Creative Process

During the early twentieth century, Jung recorded, revised, rewrote, and meticulously illustrated what he considered the numinous beginning from which all his succeeding work derived. The *Red Book*, otherwise known as *Liber Novus,* consisted of parchment pages of meticulous calligraphy and detailed watercolour paintings bound in red leather. Throughout his lifetime, Jung only showed a handful of people the contents of this book (either in whole or part), and it was only made available to the public in 2009 – fifty years after his death.

Jung's *Liber Novus* began as a psychological investigation, "a confrontation with the unconscious" (Jung 1963)[9] – this experiment, however, was not completely unusual as

[8] For a more comprehensive article on Hilma af Klint, read Marybeth Carter's *Crystalizing the Universe in Geometrical Figures* (2020). Published in *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche*.

[9] 'Confrontation with the unconscious' is used as a chapter heading in M. D. R.

'introspection' was a standard psychological tool during the time[10]. Within this document, Jung artfully recorded his unique inner experience in an attempt to hear and understand his soul's longing. The Jungian analyst Murray Stein suggests that an existential crisis drove the creation of this manuscript. He writes, "it is clear that after his break from the personal relationship with Freud, he had to regroup his forces and find a new line of psychological thought" (Stein 2012, 283). In addition, the editor of *Liber Novus,* Sonu Shamdasani states that one of the reasons Jung began this project, was the experience of two horrific and identical visions that occurred two weeks apart.

> It happened in October of the year 1913 as I was leaving alone for a journey, that during the day I was suddenly overcome in broad daylight by a vision: I saw a terrible flood that covered all the northern and low-lying lands between the North Sea and the Alps. It reached from England to Russia, and from the coast of the North Sea up to the Alps. I saw yellow waves, swimming rubble, and the death of countless thousands (Jung 2009, 231)

This reoccurring vision lasted for about an hour, causing Jung to feel "perplexed and nauseated, and ashamed of [his] weakness" (Jung 1963, 199). The experience even made him question his sanity (200). Subsequently, Jung considered his situation and even searched for therapeutic and palliative insight. However, these conventional routes provided no answers, forcing Jung to seek his answers introspectively. Thus, in November 1913, Jung sat at his desk and started to make entries in his private journal – the so-called *Black Books*[11]. At the

[10] A technique forwarded by Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). Wundt is known today as one of the founders of modern psychology.
[11] *The Black Books* were recently published in 2020.

beginning of this inner journey, he asks, “my soul, where are you? Do you hear me?” (Jung, 2009, p. 232).

However, the course before him was unknown – he had no concepts or theories to explain what he was doing, whom he was addressing or how to proceed – instead, he ‘just let things happen.’ Jung engaged with exercises to reduce critical thinking, quiet his conscious mind, and allow his unconscious to have a voice. Slowly, he began to hear a response. He explained, “sometimes it was as if I was hearing it in my ears, sometimes feeling it with my mouth, as if my tongue was formulating words; now and then I heard myself whispering aloud” (Jung 1963, 178). The *Black Books* consisted of six sequentially dated journals, described by Jungian analyst, Lance Owens as “his primary and contemporaneous ledger of a voyage of discovery into imaginative and visionary reality” (Owens 2010, 24).

By early December, Jung discovered that the activity he was engaging with could evoke autonomous visionary scenes and dialogic interactions; he declared, “the spirit of the depths opened my eyes, and I caught a glimpse of inner things, the world of my soul” (Jung 2009, 237). Moreover, by 1915, Jung felt the need to produce a more formal and detailed record of his inner visions. Jung proceeded by working for sixteen years, translating the primary record of his experience from the *Black Books* into the elaborate *Liber Novus*. Within this manuscript style text Jung meticulously painted seventy-two images, which exist as a reflection of his inner visions initially documented predominantly in literary form. This period of creative self-experimentation was a formative time for Jung, in which he discovered his unique voice and his true vocation. He described, “the years when I was pursuing my inner images were the most important in my life – in them, everything essential was decided” (Jung 1963, 199).

Jung hid his creative project from the public during his lifetime; it seems that he did not think of himself as an artist, nor did he want to be viewed in that way. In M.D.R, Jung (or more, accurately, his anima) states, “it is not art! On the contrary, it is nature” (Jung 1963, 211). However, many people would disagree with this statement due to the extensive and elaborate visual material documented within *Liber Novus* and many other examples highlighted throughout *The Art of C.G Jung* (2018). The analyst Paul Brutsche states that the public has shown great enthusiasm towards the publication of *Liber Novus.* A response most likely due to the exceptional quality of the drawings and calligraphy produced by a gifted man with great talent and skill (Brutsche 2013, 8).

A Selection of Paintings from *Liber Novus*

Liber Novus is presented as a selection of visions, fantasies and dialogues, often copied directly from the *Black Books* – followed by a poetic commentary. The fantasies play out as a dramatic performance between Jung’s ego and several characters who evolve over the narration. However, how does Neumann’s definition and understanding of visionary art apply to Jung’s creative project?

In the previous section, this study acknowledges a four-fold process of psychological development which mirrors a four-fold process of a visionary artists creative growth. In addition, it was suggested that the ‘visionary’ begins to emerge when an individual begins to challenge and reimagine the cultural canon – at point three (compensation of the cultural canon) and point four (the transcendence of art). This article introduces two styles which are prevalent within *Liber Novus* and suggests a correlation between the configurations and Neumann’s framework. First, Jung’s use of figurative fantasies to convey his experience. Second, Jung’s creation of geometrically abstract compositions in the form of mandalas.

Figurative Fantasies

This section focuses on three of Jung's paintings depicting figurative fantasies (1) *Image 36*, Izdubar, (2) *Image 119*, the slaying of Atmavictu, and (3) *Image 154*, Philemon. These images are crucial to the stories unfolding and reveal an compelling overlap with Neumann's framework.

First, Izdubar (Image 36) is a mosaic illustration of a large man with bull horns and a beard. His hands fall to his side, holding a heavy double-edged axe. Red and blue dominate the composition. In the blue background, there is an unusual pattern of a winged snake repeated over and over. Below his feet is Jung himself, with his arms outstretched, seemingly worshipping the figure. Jungian academic Mathew Mather describes how Izdubar represents Jung's regression to the "dawn state of civilisation" (Mather 2019, 265) when the ego began to emerge from the undifferentiated collective psyche. This idea correlates with Neumann's first stage – *The Original Unity/Self Representation of the Unconscious* – the symbolic expression of the numinosum, typical of origination and early cultures. In this way, Izdubar represents the uroboric stage of the psyche, "which like all other bygone stages continue to exist in us and can at any moment be reactivated" (Neumann 1954/1995, 266).

Likewise, The Slaying of Atmavictu (Image 119) depicts a hero with a silver sword slicing through the stomach of a 30-legged dragon. From the open wounds pours streams of blood and orange spheres. The dragon dominates the composition, with an interesting position – wrapped up like the uroboros or, more accurately, the number zero. In a psychic sense, the zero symbolises the terrors of nullity, non-existence, and death. Likewise, the dragon is an image of the self-fulfilling and self-devouring unconscious. This configuration is a perfect depiction of Neumann's second stage – *The Separation of Systems/Representing the Archetype in the Cultural Canon* – which he described as relating to the mythological dragon fight. Through this battle, a division is created between the uroboric unconscious and the

egoconsciousness. This results in a separation of opposites from unity, "the creation of heaven and earth, above and below, day and night, light and darkness" (Neumann 1954/1995, 103).

Subsequently, the third configuration depicts a new figure, Philemon (Image 154). This figure is understood to be the most significant character in *Liber Novus.* Jung described, "[Philemon] was simply a superior knowledge, and he taught me psychological objectivity and the actuality of the soul. He formulated and expressed everything which I had never thought."[12] The painting depicts an older man with large, outstretched wings. His hands meet at his chest, holding a small flame. Above his head is a golden halo, and beneath his feet, a temple, with an approaching serpent. Mather describes how Philemon depicts "a new god image of the approaching Aquarian age" (Mather 2019, 266). This new 'god image' is presented as a guru (or as Jung calls him, a psychagogue) in the individual's psyche, contrasting the transcendent and unreachable God of the last age.

These configurations illustrate an intriguing story – the creation of a new god image, beginning[13] with the bull-man Izdubar and ending with the wise magician Philemon. However, this mutation was not instant and required a lengthy incubation period which involved several fantasy figures, an egg, a visit to hell and various incantations. Amongst this array of activity was the slaying of the dragon, Atmavictu, whose body fertilised the wasteland, ultimately allowing for the iconic birth of Philemon. Through this narrative, Jung is enacting Neumann's third stage – compensating for the cultural canon. In this stage, the visionary artist or Great Individual transforms and overturns the cultural canon, giving expression to the direct and authentic revelation of the numinosum. Works of this type offer a

[12] Jung said this to his close friend and colleague Aniela Jaffé while taking a stroll in the garden of his lakeside home in Switzerland. Quote retrieved from http://www.philomenfoundation.org/who-is-philomen/

[13] However, it is important to note that Elijah appeared before Izdubar as an early depiction of Philemon. [14] Mandalas are mostly used in Hindu and Buddhist cultures. They were produced in Tibet, India, Nepal, China, Japan, Bhutan, and Indonesia and date from the 4th century to the present.

new perspective to the cultural canon by subtly re-envisioning already conscious archetypal forms.

Mandala Drawings

In *Liber Novus,* there are approximately twenty-eight pages dedicated to mandala forms – a diagram, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos symbolically or metaphysically. The word 'mandala' is the Sanskrit word for 'magical circle,' which commonly contains a quaternity. Traditionally[14], these designs represented an imaginary fortress that assisted in contemplation and meditation, with each object representing an aspect of wisdom or reminding the meditator of a guiding principle. Similarly, in Jung's view, the mandala motif was a symbol of the unconscious that represents the transition to psychological wholeness (Jung 1944, 167). Jung's interest in these mandala forms persevered throughout his life, motivated by their recurrence in his patient's drawings. In his essay *Concerning Mandala Symbolism* (1950) he explained:

> The pictures differ widely, according to the stage of the therapeutic process, but certain important stages correspond to definite motifs […] I would like to say that a rearranging of the personality is involved, a kind of new centring. That is why mandalas mostly appear in connection with chaotic psychic states of disorientation or panic. They then have the purpose of reducing the confusion to order […] at all events they express order, balance, and wholeness (Jung 1959, 645).

Likewise, the geometric patterns also spontaneously appeared to Jung during the creation of *Liber Novus* - for example, *Systema Munditotius*[14], and *Image 97.* These motifs help illustrate the dramatic unfolding of Jung's visionary experience through abstract forms. The first drawing, *Systema Munditotius,* contains three layers, divided by four. At the end of each point, there is a figure from Jung's vision – at the top is a winged figure in an egg, reminiscent of the Orphic Phanes, who evolved into Philemon. At the bottom is the dark antithesis, in the form of a dragon, or serpent with uncountable legs resembling Atmavictu. According to Jung, this figure represents the "*Dominus Mundi*, the lord of the physical world" (Jung 2009, 364). To the left is a striking figure of a dark serpent who winds itself around a phallus. To the right, there lies the rich fullness of light where the dove of the holy ghost takes flight. Within the sizeable inner sphere, the macrocosm is repeated but reversed. Jung described, "these repetitions should be seen conceived of as endless in number growing even smaller until the innermost core, the actual microcosm is reached" (ibid). In Jung's view, the innermost point represents the self at the the centre of the personality.

Similarly, *Image 97* is a geometrically abstract configuration with limited reference to the external world. It depicts an oval vessel that resembles an egg or the human head. The 'egg' is divided by four in various ways; for example, the horizontal and vertical line which meets at the centre with four dots balanced at each end and a four-petalled flower shape surrounding the centre. The stable and self-contained vessel appears to be submerged in a liquid that is full of energy. Every element in this composition brings attention to the centre, marking it as the most crucial feature. The location of this configuration within *Liber Novus* is also significant; it is placed at the end of a series of eighteen geometric drawings, which are used to represent the following passage:

[14] This mandala form was included in the publication of *Liber Novus* in 'Appendix A.' However, it was not part of the original draft. Nonetheless, it seems relevant to briefly discuss the image as it is much discussed and relates to the topic at hand.

> Sometimes you no longer recognise yourself. You want to overcome it, but it overcomes you. You want to set limits, but it compels you to keep going […] there is no escape […] by the way is my own self, my own life founded upon myself (291).

This quote highlights Jung's natural urge to strive towards wholeness – a human desire which Neumann labelled 'centroversion.' The significant shape of the egg implies that Jung's realisation of the self begins to emerge from the fantasy function and the reconfiguration of the old God-image (Izdubar) into the new God-image (Orphic Phanes and Philemon). These geometrically abstract compositions reflect Neumann's fourth stage – *The Realisation of Centroversion/The Transcendence of Art*. This notion is implied by Neumann's suggestion that "the genesis, the stabilisation, configuration and consolidation of the personality are therefore associated with symbolism whose ingredients are perfect form, balance, harmony and solidity" (Neumann 1954/1995, 415).

Conclusion

The first aim of this article was to establish a connection between the visionary mode of creativity and the individuation process according to Neumann's material. To achieve this, it was important to highlight Jung's definition of visionary art, alongside Neumann's understanding of the 'Great Artist.' Subsequently, a selection of categories was identified by comparing Neumann's writing on the four-fold process of psychological development and the four-fold process of *art in relation to its epoch*. These categories were presented as follows (1) The Original Unity/Self-Representation of the Unconscious, (2) The Separation of Systems/Representing the Archetype in the Cultural Canon, (3) The Balance and Crisis of Consciousness/Compensation of the Cultural Canon, and (4) The Realisation of

Centroversion/The Transcendence of Art.

The second aim of this article was to consider how this framework relates to the paintings within Jung's *Liber Novus*. This notion was explored by examining two styles which are prevalent within the text (1) figurative fantasies and (2) mandala forms – it was then shown how these styles match the characteristics of visionary art discussed in Neumann's framework. Additionally, this section introduced the intriguing narrative within *Liber Novus* and how the configurations portrayed the stories unfolding. Through this examination this article acknowledges that *Liber Novus* acts as a visionary text that channels the collective psyche's compensatory role – which involved the 'death' of the hero culture, the integration of the shadow and feminine functions, and the eventual realisation of the wise old man archetype – Philemon. The analyst Ashok Bedi, states that Philemon is "a gift from the 'spirit of the depths' that offers a GPS to navigate the 'spirit of our times'" (Bedi 2017, 351). In this way, *Liber Novus* is a prophetic book insofar as it brings a new view on the religious phenomena – hence the title *Liber Novus* (New Book).

Furthermore, through this comparison and analysis, this study suggests that the 'visionary' begins to emerge when an artist instinctively challenges and reimagines the cultural canon using visual fantasies or when they represent the consolidation of their personality through geometric forms. Neumann's position provides a fruitful starting point for considering the characteristics of configuration of visionary art and the role of a visionary artist within culture. However, it is historically limited. Therefore, it is crucial to consider – in a further study – whether Jung's and Neumann's ideas are relevant within contemporary society. Specifically, does mainstream definitions of visionary art within art criticism match their interpretation? Equally, could the concepts explored within this article bring a more nuanced understanding of visionary art to contemporary art criticism?

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