

Analytical psychology and aesthetics of reception: possible dialogues

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Abstract: This article briefly presents the field of Aesthetics of Reception and highlights the Jung's writings related to art spectators, in order to establish bases for a dialogue between those texts and that still little-known discipline. The article brings up the particularities of the phenomena involved in the apprehension of works of art, considering, among others, Jungian notions of symbols, art as a compensation and the dynamic between consciousness and the unconscious. To ground the theoretical data, the study also introduces some passages that reveal Jung as a spectator of works of art. Finally, it takes a stand against the recent acts of censorship of contemporary works of art.

Keywords: analytical psychology, aesthetics of reception, Carl Gustav Jung, art.

Introduction

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) elaborated his work over many years, addressing and dialoguing with several areas of knowledge, not limited to his experience as a psychiatrist. Among these many areas, art variously appears in several of its texts, both theoretical and autobiographical, as a specific knowledge – we highlight here, as noteworthy examples, the volume XV of his *Complete Works* (1932/2009a) and the posthumous book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961/2012).

One of the aspects of art he explores investigates the effects of works of art on his spectators. Although Jung did not do it in a systematized way, we intend to show in this article how Analytical Psychology enables the researcher to approach questions related to the reception of works of art and to dialogue with other areas, such as Aesthetics of Reception theory. It is, in general, an extension of what can be understood by art, allowing a perspective different from the habitual one by removing the main focus of analysis from the work or from the artist.

When we were preparing this article, Brazilian newspapers, magazines and social networks reported a succession of cases of censorship to artistic exhibitions and plays, alleging the protection of morals and good manners and the care for children and adolescents. To mention just three examples, after aggressive demonstrations against visitors, collaborators and artists, the following artistic exhibitions and performances were censored: the exhibition “*Faça você mesmo sua Capela Sistina*” (Make your own Sistine Chapel), by Pedro Moraleida, at the *Palácio das Artes* in Belo Horizonte, in early October 2017; the performance “*La Bête*”, in the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) in São Paulo, in September of the same year; and the exhibition “*Queermuseu – cartografias da diferença*”

(*Queermuseu – cartographies of difference in Brazilian art*), at Santander Cultural Center in Porto Alegre, also in September 2017. The censorship of the latter led to the cancellation of the exhibition about a month before the expected date.

Our initial intention – to address issues related to the reception of art based on the assumptions of Analytical Psychology – has proved to be particularly propitious and necessary in the face of such episodes because, even without analyzing in depth such events, it proposes a perspective of art that emphasizes the specificities of the psychological experience involved in the act of seizing art works and a reflection on the relevance of the enjoyment of art in different contexts. The current repression of artistic manifestations – and also of different points of view – served as a wake-up call and a great stimulus to reflect even more on this issue and overcome the superficiality of media opinions or committed to abusive political campaigns, resisting the violation of the social place that is intrinsic to art.

Moreover, we intend to argue that artistic activities – in the broad spectrum from execution to reception – are fundamental to the individual and collective human psyche; such activities are marked by the “unusual” quality revealed to the onlooker, by the creative act and by the possibility of transformation in the artist and in its audience.

We present below some of the propositions of the Aesthetics of Reception, a theory that focus on the spectator, and then use a Jungian approach to the phenomena involved in the seizure of works of art.

The Aesthetics of Reception

Although studies related to the Aesthetics of Reception have at first focused on literary studies – and, therefore, have not been originally conceived to

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investigate other kinds of artistic manifestations –, it is possible to take them as reference, since they were later used to study the reception of art in general.¹

The history of literature and art has for a long time concentrated on authors and works; it practically did not discuss the reader/spectator and rarely took into account the role of the audience (Starobinski, 2005). The Aesthetics of Reception – whose main precursors were Hans Robert Jauss (1921-1997) and Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007) – emerged in the 1960s as a discipline determined to study the audience. It understands the reader/spectator as an active agent, a constituent part of the work and a fundamental element of the artistic activity. Thus, “the aesthetics of reception is a theoretical approach that inquires about the active role of this element of the artistic praxis” (Gonçalves, 2004, p. 83).

The Aesthetics of Reception, concerned with the dialectic between author, artwork and audience – and always taking into account the panorama of the history of art and the cultural environment in which the work is created and received – determines a fundamental field of investigation: the aesthetic experience. At first, the aesthetic experience is formed by the effect that the artwork exerts on its observer; it is the moment of contemplation, enjoyment and pleasure – Jauss (2002, 2005) points out that the word pleasure acquires different meanings throughout history and focus on the connotation of pleasure as a way of knowing, participating in and claiming the world and one’s own self. At that moment, the audience is influenced by the work of art – the same work that has impacted contemporary observers upon its creation and which, therefore, maintains links with the past in which the work originated (Starobinski, 2005). However, even in the first time that the spectator experiences a certain work of art, it is never seen as an absolute novelty, since its audience is already predisposed to a certain way of receiving certain signs, statements and implicit references intrinsic to the work (Jauss, 2005).

In the next moment, it is the addressee who determines the work. From the stimuli provoked by it, certain experiences, memories, perceptions and thoughts of the spectator are triggered. Her personal experience and worldview come to the fore for an interpretation, an assignment of meaning to that work. In this movement, often, the spectator finds herself in a situation that is not common to her. Jauss (2005) emphasizes the liberating potential of art: “the aesthetic experience allows the imprisoned man in his daily activities to free himself for other experiences” (p. 142).

However, when one takes into account the personal contribution of the recipient, at the same time, one takes into account the fact that she is inserted in a certain historical-cultural context. Although the recipient – like

the artist – is immersed in the “aesthetic norms of his time” (Starobinski, 2005, p. 19) and her participation in the aesthetic experience is always tied to social determinants, she creates meanings for the work of art with some degree of autonomy, even if always influenced by the context. “Aesthetic experience is thus evidenced in its transgressive function, in relation to consolidated worldviews, revealing a space of relative freedom of the recipient” (Gonçalves, 2004, p. 87).

While in Jauss’s studies the emphasis is on the moment of reception itself and on the consideration of the social-historical framework, which is fundamental for understanding the reading process (Gonçalves, 2004), Iser contribution is a theory of the aesthetic effect. Despite focusing on the effect of the work of art on the recipient and distinguishing two different poles in the literary work – the artistic pole, consisting of the text created by the author, and the aesthetic pole, the concretion realized by the reader – Iser understands the work of art as an intermediate space, as something virtual, since the work cannot be reduced either to the reality of the text or to the conditions that constitute the reader. The work of art is defined, then, as the constitution of the text in the reader’s consciousness and its place is precisely the convergence of the text and the reader (Iser, 1989).

In Iser’s theory, what allows the effective participation of the reader are the indeterminacies – the “voids”, the open spaces, that which is not said... – intrinsic to the very structure of the text. Such indeterminations are remodeled in the act of reading. Thus, “the effect is planted in the structure of the work of art and will be realized according to the ‘horizon of expectations’ of its recipient” (Lima, 2002, p. 25). From this structure of what is said and not said, visible and invisible, a dynamic process is born, because “what is said is only realized when it refers to what is not said. And because what is not said is the reverse of what is said, only by the latter the first acquires its contours. . . . The process of communication is set in motion and is regulated by this dialectic of what is expressed and what is kept silent” (Iser 1989, p. 150).

From this perspective, Iser (1989) argues that each statement of the literary work (each sentence) only reaches its goal when it points to something beyond itself; thus, the correlations intertwine and, therefore, reach the fullness of the intended semantic goal. This result is not achieved in the text, but in the reader, because it is she who activates the interaction of the pre-structured associations in the sequence of sentences. Caused by the stimulus of the sentences, a process starts in which an imaginary object related to the text will appear. This process can be described thus: each individual correlate of statement prefigures a given horizon that brings a certain orientation and correspondence to the reader. This horizon, then, presents itself as an open space and becomes a screen on which the recipient projects the next correlate – thus modifying the previous horizon.

¹ See, for example, Bourdieu and Darbel (2007), Davallon (1999), Gonçalves (2004), and Frayze-Pereira (1995).

In short, each new correlate consists at the same time of intuitions satisfied and empty representations.

However, what the text presents does not always correspond to what the reader was imagining. The implication of this is that what was already read is constantly modified; that object of the first reading begins, in a second moment, to be part of the past and, therefore, of the memory. Thus, everything that is being read ends up not only generating expectations but also being incorporated into what has already been retained in memory. The particularity of this product – now also defined by modified memories and expectations – is that it provokes the reader, even if only remaining as a potentiality of the text.

The two horizons within the text merge, past and future blend continuously, and in this dialectic the implicit potential is actualized in the text. The text expands into multiple realization potentials and any given reading will never exhaust all possibilities, since the unformulated connections between the sentence sequences or voids found in the interlacing of intentional correlates will always ensure new reading possibilities. Each reading of the text thus becomes an individualized actualization of the text. Since the intertextual space of relations is only subtly delimited, it is possible that different configurations of meaning will be illuminated.

The reader determines each specific meaning configuration through the many distinctions and selections he makes by relating the correlates that arise in the course of the reading. It is on this process that is based the fundamentally creative activity experienced by the reader of literary texts. It is the reader who creates new meanings of the text when she encounters some void that, in turn, modifies the previous expectations and ends up situating what has already been read in a new horizon, modifying the remembered one. The act of reading manifests the inexhaustibility of the text. And the inexhaustibility of the text is a condition for the constitution of the imaginary object – which, in turn, only presents itself through the selection choices made throughout the reading.

Jung's comments on Goethe's Faust give us a good example of such a structure of voids, choices and expectations present in the act of reading.

It is true that [Faust's] puerility was then unmasked; but *it did not seem to me* that he had deserved the initiation into the great mysteries. *I would have him retained* a little more in Purgatory! The real problem was centered on Mephistopheles, a figure that obsessed me and *seemed to me* obscurely related to the mystery of the Mothers. In any case, Mephistopheles and the great final initiation were an *extraordinary and mysterious event, in the far reaches of the world of my consciousness.* (Jung, 1961/2012, pp. 93-94, emphasis added)

This brief excerpt can be understood as follows: until a certain point in his reading, having read certain

correlates, Jung had already acquired some information about the plot; he had already laid out a profile of Faust and had designed for him a destiny. The course of reading, however, revealed to Jung a plot that, to him, did not exactly match the character. On the other hand, this “disappointment” of Jung did not diminish the effect that the book had on him – “I have read Faust, which was a miraculous balm for my soul” (Jung, 1961/2012, p. 93) – neither prevented him to delineate configurations of meaning – that of the highlighted section is associated with the mystery of the Mothers. Moreover, reading the book apparently led him to non-ordinary experiences, to a dive into himself beyond consciousness, and seems to have contributed to its later conceptualization of the archetype of the Great Mother.

The Aesthetics of Reception is not the only discipline that privileges the recipient of works of art. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) had already dealt with the question of the reception of the work of art in the 1930s, emphasizing, on the one hand, what he called the “aura” of the work of art and, on the other, historical, political and social aspects that affect the recipient (Benjamin, 1985). But Benjamin did not create a specific discipline, as Jauss and Iser later did. With the field of the Aesthetics of Reception open and systematized by them, other areas could, according to their specific points of view, venture along the paths of the reception of art.

Our intention here goes in that direction. We intend to highlight the contributions of Jungian theory to a psychological understanding of the phenomena related to the seizure of works of art and, additionally, to establish bases for a dialogue; on the one hand, we will address how the Analytical Psychology can expand the understanding of the reception of art; on the other, we will consider how studies based on the Aesthetics of Reception can stimulate the attribution of new configurations of meaning to the Jungian work and how it relates to current cultural movements.

Symbol, interactional field and symbolic experience

In order to start this dialogue, we address the Jungian notion of symbol and the symbolic character of the works of art. While the Aesthetics of Reception refers to works with voids and indeterminations, inexhaustible in its attributions of meaning, Jung argues that works of art may be symbolic, that is, each work of art, because it constitutes a symbol, is produced from of a tension between a thesis and an antithesis, between consciousness and the unconscious. Based on the self-regulation mechanism of the psyche, this tension gives rise to a “unifying function that goes beyond the opposites” (Jung, 1921-1949/2013, pp. 491-492, paragraph 913), a synthesis is reached.

By the activity of the unconscious new content emerges, constellated equally by the thesis and

antithesis, and which behaves compensatorily towards both. Since this content has a relation both to the thesis and to the antithesis, it forms an intermediary basis where the opposites can merge. (Jung, 1921-1949/2013, p. 492, paragraph 914)

Jung names the symbol-forming process the transcendent function, comprising by this term “not a metaphysical quality, but the fact that by this function the passage from one attitude to another is created” (Jung, 1921-1949, p. 493, paragraph 917). The symbol, then, concerns both what is conscious and what is unconscious, and the reception of art, in turn, will involve a dynamic of utterances and silences, voids and fillings, conscious and unconscious aspects.

If we are shedding light on the reception of the work of art, what is at stake is a work that is not considered in isolation; it is not solely the work itself, but the work lived, activated by the spectator. What is at stake is the interactional field that is constellated when the encounter between the work and its recipient occurs, and which also includes the whole context in which it occurs.

On one side of the interactional field, we have the potentially symbolic work of art; a form, a sound or a movement that is more than what our eyes or ears perceive; the artistic form is not exhausted in a single perception; there is always something incomprehensible, unspeakable and unrepresentable to each interaction – for this very reason the work of art always presents the possibility of an opening to meanings different from those already considered. It refers to something more, not tangible but intuitively present. And the plasticity that is inherent to it and which is independent of the plasticity of its material – but at the same time depends on it to exist – leads us to believe that, however static the symbolic form may seem, it is always alive, full of meanings; or, in Jung’s words, the work is “something in continuous becoming and ever again amenable to be experienced” (Jung, 1914/2013, p. 204, paragraph 398).

Although this symbolic potential is inherent in the work of art, we are interested here in the relationship between it and its recipient – who is also essential to the interactional field, because, after all, the work can only be experienced by someone. Moreover, “it depends on the attitude of the conscience that observes whether something is a symbol or not” (Jung, 1921-1949/2013, p. 488, paragraph 907), thus without such an attitude the work of art is not perceived in its fullness, its possibilities remain hollow; not having anyone to see or hear it, the work of art remains static, silent.

Following Jung, we understand the symbol – the work of art – as an intermediary basis which, in order to be evident as such, depends on the subject’s experience with it. In the same sense, Iser locates the intermediation precisely in the convergence between the object and its recipient, which occurs in a larger context, a dynamic

field composed of different elements and possibilities of interaction. Having said this, we venture to argue that the isolated work of art cannot be considered symbolic, since such potential can only be triggered when experienced by someone, in a specific time and place. Therefore, in our view, studies of art in Analytical Psychology that consider the symbolic dimension of works of art must also take into account the recipient and the environment where the relationship between the two takes place, in all their interactions – whether the recipient is the author of the study interpreting the work, the artist experiencing his own creation or the public visiting a museum.

Focusing, then, on the interactional field constellated by the work-recipient-context relationship and on the symbolic aspect of the work of art activated by such encounter, we propose to think about the artistic fruition, the aesthetic experience, as a symbolic experience. An experience replete, of course, with conscious attitudes (a conscious movement toward a work of art, which may involve the recognition of the techniques employed, the understanding of the plot mechanism of a book or a film, the understanding of a concept represented by the work, the perception of the pleasure or displeasure that the work causes, etc.), but an experience also permeated by the participation of the unconscious and impregnated with emotion. And this is the greatest contribution of Analytic Psychology to the field of art reception. After all, “insofar as life is to us something new constantly triumphing over the past, we must seek the main value of a work of art, not in its causal progression, but in the living effect it exerts upon our spirit” (Jung, 1914-2013, p. 204, paragraph 398) – even if this effect is perceived as something unpleasant, as was the case with Jung when he read James Joyce’s *Ulysses* for the first time, as we shall see below.

However, in order to deal with the living effect – positive or negative – brought about by experiencing the work of art, it is crucial that such an encounter occur. If, as in many of the recent cases of censorship – some of them already mentioned above – the effect occurs even before the work is apprehended, or if the repulsion to the work of art compulsively determines the individual’s action leading him to impose rigid moral values, certainly we are not referring to a interactional field, but to a field delimited by prejudices and intolerances, in which the possibility of symbolic experience is threatened or even violated.

Psychic self-regulation and art as compensation

Jung considered that art originates in a regulatory movement, constituting a psychic compensation not only individual, exclusive of the creator, but also collective: “just as in the individual the unilaterality of his conscious attitude is corrected by unconscious reactions, so art

represents a process of spiritual self-regulation in the life of the ages and nations” (Jung, 1922/2009, p. 71, paragraph 131). Here, Jung draws attention to the dynamics between consciousness and the unconscious of the collective psyche and opens another perspective to the historical-cultural context so emphasized by the Aesthetics of Reception, proposing that art has a social function: to elicit contents previously inaccessible to the conscience and to set in motion the stalled and unilateral attitudes of society.

It was following this reasoning that Jung very much approached the question of the recipient, most importantly by addressing Modern Art, especially the abstract. He posited that faced with non-figurative images, with pictorial vagueness, with the voids of signification mentioned previously, the spectator turns to herself, to an intimate dimension that does not correspond to the conscience, in search of a meaning for the work of art. This movement, provided by the apprehension of modern artworks, was understood by Jung as compensation, because for him, since the advent of the modern point of view, “the world was divided into diversified beliefs and the inner unity and stillness gave place to a materialist longing to conquer the outside world. Through science, values became externalized” (Jung, 1925/2014, p. 96).

Modern Art is thus seen as a compensation of the spirit of that era, aiming at a balance when confronted with an attitude too outwardly directed. Precisely because it is not figurative, not representing anything recognizable at first sight, possibly causing a feeling of strangeness, it leads the spectator – and before him the artist – to seek internal correspondences, to turn to itself, and then to give meaning to the work.

We may ascribe [to Modern Art] an intention, conscious or unconscious, of arousing in the spectator an ascetic viewpoint, removed from the understandable and agreeable ‘world’, forcing instead a revelation of the unconscious. (Jung, 1958/2013, p. 110, paragraph 754)

Art as an activator of complexes and its relation to the archetypal

Shedding light on another aspect of the issue, Jung suggests that the movement of introversion and possible constellation of the unconscious, provided by Modern Art, tends to awaken complexes in the spectator – and the activation of a complex brings to the surface a poorly adapted, unfamiliar aspect of that person, thus causing certain affections. But, Jung elaborates, the complexes, in this case, “stripped themselves of their usually personal aspect, and therefore appear as what they were initially: original forms of the instincts. They are supra-personal in nature, that is, of a collective-unconscious nature” (Jung 1958/2013, p. 111, paragraph 755). Broadly speaking, a complex, in Analytical Psychology, is a set of unconscious psychic associations charged with affection; that is,

fantasies, memories, images, thoughts clustered around a common core that remain hidden until they “collide” with some stimulus. When this occurs, the constellation of a complex occurs; the result is always disturbing to consciousness: the person starts to lose control over their emotions and/or their behavior. The exacerbated reaction, for example, in the recent cases of censorship to which we have referred, can be read as the constellation of a complex of that audience and also of some authorities, given the radical and inflexible character of their emotional and behavioral response.

It is true that these ideas of Jung referred to a single artistic form: abstract modern painting. On the other hand, in his essays on poetry (Jung, 1922/2009, 1930/2009), his approach seems “timeless”, since there is no mention of the characteristics of any specific literary period – the very example we mentioned about Faust points to a certain generalization, since, after all, Jung reports that the effect that that romantic work exerted on him was that of mobilizing the unconscious, of activating the “far reaches of consciousness.” It is also true that in his writings on poetry Jung made no distinction between the various forms of art, nor did he consider any distinction in writing about the reception of art. But in spite of these weaknesses, it seems to us possible to relate, to some extent, all these propositions to the aims of this essay.

In the text *Psychology and poetry* (1930/2009), Jung focuses on the “imaginary force” (p. 74) that poetry exerts on the recipient. In relating the ideas of this text to the other texts of Volume XV, the answer to his questions concerning the impact of the work of art gravitate toward the sphere of the collective unconscious. The reception of a work of art, according to Jung, would give “the possibility of reimmersing in the original condition of *participation mystique*, because in that plane it is not the individual but the whole people who vibrate with the experiences” (Jung, 1930/2009, p. 93, paragraph 162), since the work is created based on an “unconscious activation of the archetype and an elaboration and formalization in the finished work” (Jung, 1922/2009, p. 71, paragraph 130). Then, the course of the realization of the work “begins, in general, with . . . the journey to Hades, the descent into the unconscious and the farewell to the upper world” (Jung, 1932/2009a, p. 122, paragraph 210), following to the steps of formalization, concrete execution and, finally, addressing the spectator in the depths of a new place, which transcends the former materiality. In other words, the work of art emerges as an archetypal manifestation that can generate in its recipient a numinous effect.

Let the work of art model us as it has modeled the poet

In considering that the emotional intensity aroused by the works of art has archetypal roots, Jung highlighted

the neutral character of the archetype, which is only subjected to a value judgment when confronted by the conscience; it is through the egotistical attitude that the archetypal manifestation acquires any inflection. The work of art proposes an image; it is up to the one who apprehends to give shape to her experience – through sensations, conclusions, emotions, questions... it is up to the reader, the listener, the spectator to give meaning to the work. In Jung's words:

To understand its meaning, we must allow it to model us, in the same way that it has modeled the poet. We will then understand what the original experience of the latter was. He touched the deep regions of the soul, salutary and liberating, where the individual has not yet segregated himself into the solitude of consciousness. . . He touched the deep regions, where all beings vibrate in unison and where, therefore, the sensibility and action of the individual embrace all mankind. (Jung, 1930/2009, p. 93, paragraph 161)

Here, again, we come across the relevance of the role of the observer. The work of art itself does not have an explicit meaning, because the symbol is not a symbol without a consciousness to perceive it as such. The relation spectator-work of art, thus, can be understood as a potential remodeling. The work of art is remodeled with every new observation, every impact and every attribution of meaning. The spectator, on the other hand, remodels himself, firstly to communicate with the work of art, to enter into the symbolic field that it propitiates; after this contact, another modeling may occur, given the possibility of a psychic reconfiguration.

Based on Jung's ideas on non-figurative art, this "remodeling" can be understood as the mobilization of content that does not come from consciousness or from the external world: "Non-objective art extracts its contents essentially from the 'intimus' of the person . . . of the unconscious psyche that affects the consciousness from behind and from within, in the same way that the external world affects the consciousness from the front and from the outside" (Jung, 1932/2009a, p. 120, paragraph 206). And he elaborates:

Modern art takes us away from the excessive dispersion of the libido in the external object and brings us back to the creative source that exists within us, back to the inner values. In other words, it leads us along the same path by which analysis seeks to guide us, but it is not a conscious drive on the part of the artist. (Jung, 1925/2014, p. 95)

We should remember that Jung, as an author, is also contextualized in time and space. He formulated concepts that seek a primordial essence of the human being, something that transcends, as long as it is possible,

the dimension of time and space; but the psychic life, individual or collective, does not take place in the archetypal domain, but in the soil created by our complexes and cultivated by our symbols. Therefore, it is always necessary to relativize and contextualize each theoretical contribution, each statement. Jung refers above all to a time and historical context in which the risk of massification is exacerbated, and, therefore, the compensatory function necessarily involves a certain introversion, to better anchor each person in his bodily and relational soil, so that the dimension of the individual, constructed with great effort, would not be lost.

If, on the one hand, it is necessary to keep in mind that the theoretical propositions are linked to conditions of the time and culture that can compromise their literal generalization, on the other hand, it is a valid effort to take advantage of the metaphors and ramifications that such propositions can incite. In this case, if it may not make sense to think of a compensation related mainly to introversion, it is possible to understand the intimate, the return to values that transcend the superficiality and trivialization, as a mobilization of elements and attitudes, differing from individual to individual and from society to society, dormant in the unconscious but capable, when aroused, of stimulating the constellation of new, creative acts, which evidence the transgressive potential of art – propitiating non-everyday experiences – and the aesthetic experience as a creative activity as postulated in the theory of the Aesthetics of Reception.

Art, analysis and life

This brings us to another issue. Sometimes in his work, Jung resorted to the notion of art to define the psychotherapeutic practice or to make analogies between artistic and analytic procedures. In 1916, for example, Jung (1916/2007) stated: "In this sense, analysis is not a method that can be monopolized by medicine; it is also an art, a technique or a science of psychological life, which we must cultivate after the healing, for our own benefit and for the benefit of all" (p. 148). We also highlight Jung's great emphasis on creativity as a psychic factor present in life in general, not limited to artistic activities (Jung, 1936/2013); and, as we have already pointed out briefly at the beginning of this text, the importance of the artistic perspective in the life of Jung and, consequently, in the development of his theory.

Now, if the barriers between art, analysis and life present certain porosity, why could we not imagine the symbolic experience involved in the reception of art, in some ways, as analogous to an analysis? An analysis understood not in the sense of a treatment for a psychic suffering, but as a practice enabling the participation of the unconscious and an eventual enlargement of the consciousness – individual and collective – triggered by

the encounter with contents stemming from unconscious depths and from non-ordinary experiences, or even from everyday life but transcending it. Although this experience may be significant for different reasons, it is worth remembering that there will only be a raising of consciousness if the attitude of the ego points in that direction, if there is involvement and a minimal conscious elaboration of what happened in the interactional field.

Jung reads *Ulysses*: An example of an interactional field

In Chapter VIII of Volume XV of his works, Jung writes about *Ulysses*, by James Joyce (Jung, 1932/2009b). In this essay, the Jung-spectator and the interactional field delimited by him and *Ulysses* come to the forefront, offering an example of how the ego can position itself before the obscurity of a work of art.

Early in the text, Jung makes it clear that the book does not appeal to him:

Each sentence contains an expectation that does not materialize; finally, by mere resignation, the reader no longer expects anything else, and to his repeated astonishment he gradually perceives that he has, in fact, been correct. . . . The 735 pages that nothing contains are not, in any way, blank pages but, on the contrary, densely printed. The person reads, reads and reads and thinks that he understands what he is reading. Occasionally, we find ourselves, through a vent, faced with a new phrase – but, once we reach the proper degree of dedication, we become accustomed to everything. So too I thus read, with despair in my heart, through page 135 falling asleep twice. (Jung, 1932/2009b, pp. 95-96, paragraph 165)

In a footnote, Jung mentions the phrases that led him into deep sleep, realizing that such an effect occurred because they established a line of thought of which his consciousness was still unaware – and, therefore, such an effect became ultimately disturbing. He also reveals that he would later realize that this point in the book had given him the first clues to understand *Ulysses*'s purpose. A little further, Jung writes about how annoying that book can be and again reflects on his own reaction: “A psychotherapist like me is always practicing therapy even on himself. Irritation means: ‘You have not yet seen what is behind it’” (Jung, 1932/2009b, p. 98, paragraph 168).

It is mainly by the sense of incomprehensibility and the tedium aroused by reading – together with symbolic amplifications – that Jung constructs configurations of meaning for the work and goes back to what he had written about modern painting:

We must attribute not only to *Ulysses*, but also to the art of its spiritual congeners in general, a

positive sense and creative value. With respect to the destruction of the criteria of meaning and beauty valid until now, *Ulysses* does accomplish something extraordinary. It insults our conventional feelings, brutalizes our expectations of meaning and content, it is a mockery of everything that is a synthesis. (Jung, 1932/2009b, p. 103, paragraph 177)

After a long reflection on the book and its effects on him, Jung ends his essay: “Additional Note: Now the reading of *Ulysses* has begun to be quite bearable” (Jung, 1932/2009b, p. 116, paragraph 203). In this example, then, Jung ventures into a work he does not like, seeking, in different ways, to make sense of this book that, as he emphasizes himself, has achieved great success with the public. We will venture to say that as a side effect of his writing the essay, the importance of assuming an attitude that accommodates and interacts with what is unpleasant has been reinforced. Jung ended up looking at himself, his emotions and reactions, at literature and contemporary phenomena from other angles, transgressing – or transcending – the barriers of what was already known to him. Although it is evident that the forms and the particularities of the aesthetic experience differ from the analytic experience, it is possible to infer that both – like so many other experiences – can propitiate a change of perspective; and why not conclude that each symbolic experience opens a different window for the apprehension of the world?

Conclusion

Going back to addressing the limits – so unlimited – of the aesthetic experience, but without trying to catalog how the consciousness of each spectator will react, we have to conclude that the reception of art provides a specific experience. If Jung defined the work of art as “a creative reorganization . . . a creative achievement” that “freely [avails itself] of all the preconditions” (Jung, 1922/2009, pp. 60-61, paragraph 108), we propose to extend this realization, considering the work of art not only as a creative reorganization, but also as something that evidences such creative achievement, as the indication of an activity that brought to the surface, where before there was nothing, something perceptible, permeated by aspects of the collective unconscious and that, when experienced, also exposes the inexhaustibility of the work of art, the voids always open to be filled.

In the midst of the polarities of absence and presence, real and unreal, imaginary and concrete, personal and universal, the work of art is created – and for Jung “this dualistic character of real and unreal [is] inherent in the symbol” (Jung, 1921-1949/2013, p. 124, paragraph 169). Supported by the movement between

the imperceptible and the perceptible, the interactional field of spectator-work of art can be understood as a symbolic experience in which occurs the reception of a form (or a movement, or a sound, or a text) and which carries in itself the clues to the secrets of the creative act; an experience marked by the mutual reverberation between work and spectator – after all “ [the] symbolic can only be that which encloses in the one the other too” (Jung, 1921-1949/2013, p. 124, paragraph 169).

And if art is a psychic compensation, we can think of the reception of art as something that, more than compensating, complements; the artistic experience – aesthetic, rhythmic, imagistic, poetic as it is – accesses not only the artistic aspects of the observed manifestation, but also activates the creative, aesthetic, rhythmic, imagistic, poetic dimension of the recipient, often complementing – or at least tempering – automated, static and obscure everyday attitudes.

With regard to education and culture in general, the role of art as an instigator of otherness, that is, of the possibility of taking the other as another – different but in a symmetrical condition to our own – stands out because of its symbolic character, which causes and imposes contact with the new, the unusual, causing a movement of opening and a decentering. And it is not just about something inter-relational, but also intra-relational; art plays the role of promoting contact with the other which can be recognized in us and which contains the seeds for creative action if properly cultivated.

To return to the question of the current acts of censorship of certain artistic expositions and performances, it is not necessary to dwell on the above considerations to lament and emphasize that the artistic experience, recognized as a libertarian space, must remain free of the bonds of any censorship, so that it can remain as a symbolic, comprehensive and renewing manifestation, and play its role as promoter of otherness, of compensation and of psychic self-regulation.

Psicologia analítica e estética da recepção: diálogos possíveis

Resumo: O artigo, após apresentar brevemente o campo da Estética da Recepção, destaca os escritos de Jung que se referem aos espectadores de arte, para, então, estabelecer bases para um diálogo entre tais textos e essa disciplina que ainda permanece pouco conhecida. O artigo discorre sobre as particularidades dos fenômenos envolvidos na apreensão de obras de arte, considerando, entre outras, as noções junguianas de símbolo, de arte como compensação e da dinâmica entre a consciência e o inconsciente. Para fundamentar os dados teóricos, o artigo também introduz algumas passagens que revelam Jung em sua faceta de espectador de obras de arte. Por fim, opõe-se aos recentes atos de censura a obras de arte contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: psicologia analítica, estética da recepção, Carl Gustav Jung, arte.

Psychologie analytique et esthetique de la reception: dialogues possibles

Résumé : Cet article présente brièvement le domaine de l'Esthétique de la Réception et met en valeur les écrits de Jung relatifs aux spectateurs d'art, afin d'établir des bases pour un dialogue entre ces textes et cette discipline encore peu connue. L'article aborde les particularités des phénomènes impliqués dans l'appréhension des œuvres d'art, en considérant, entre autres, les notions jungiennes de symbole, d'art en tant que compensation et de la dynamique entre la conscience et l'inconscient. Pour fonder les données théoriques, l'étude présente également quelques passages qui révèlent le Jung dans en tant que spectateur d'œuvres d'art. Enfin, il s'oppose aux récents actes de censure d'œuvres d'art contemporaines.

Mots-clés : psychologie analytique, esthetique de la reception, Carl Gustav Jung, art.

Psicología analítica y estética de la recepción: diálogos posibles

Resumen: El artículo, después de presentar brevemente el campo de la Estética de la Recepción, destaca los escritos de Jung que se refieren a los espectadores de arte, para entonces establecer bases para un diálogo entre tales textos y esa disciplina aún poco conocida. El artículo discurre sobre las particularidades de los fenómenos involucrados en la aprehensión de obras de arte, considerando, entre otras, las nociones junguianas de símbolo, de arte como compensación y de la dinámica entre la conciencia y el inconsciente. Para fundamentar los datos teóricos, el artículo también introduce algunos pasajes que revelan a Jung como espectador de obras de arte. Por último, se opone a los recientes actos de censura a obras de arte contemporâneas.

Palabras clave: psicología analítica, estética da la recepción, Carl Gustav Jung, arte.

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