

Artistic Pursuit & the Psychodynamic Endeavour of Bringing Inner Wisdom to the External World.

How the artist searches

Taken at face value, artistic endeavour and scientific pursuit are two completely separate modalities. While in regards to the end product both seek - this is true, the nucleus underlying the drive of these pursuits is more similar than we would initially assume.

Both pursuits, as different as their manifestations may appear, are driven by a burning curiosity to understand the condition we exist in. While scientific endeavour is concerned with understanding the external condition we live in by extracting insights from objective facts about the material world, artistic pursuit is involved with distilling the essence of subjective experience by internalising and processing our individual truths.

Both depend on a desire for truth, the distinction being the type of truth which is achieved. An outcome which is predicated on what function is used.

Science strives through thinking whereas art lives through feelings.

The function of thinking uses logic, structure and rigidity to process the world; with the intent of achieving resolute insights that are objective facts.

Whereas, the feeling function - which is purely subjective - gives way to the realm of art.

Feelings differ from emotions. I regard feeling as the sense that is sensitive and receptive to energies. Whereas, emotions are psychic activities which catalyse into behavioural outbursts.

Feelings enter our psyche through an osmosis from the external world to the internal, whereas emotions operate on the principle of starting inwards and moving outwards.

Feelings, and emotions alike, are a form of communication from the subconscious which require us to understand them first, then put words to them secondarily. But, even the most eloquent expressions can't convey the true essence of a feeling, leaving it as a task better attempted through artistic endeavour.

The life path of the artist involves deeply feeling, then following these feelings up with pensive reflection, which introduces the analytical functions of the thinking brain. In turn, the thinking functions, and feeling functions unite — synergising and creating a more complete perception that isn't restricted to the findings of one function.

What unites science, humanities and art alike is an endeavour for truth, followed up with authentic expression of this truth. The superordinate aim being to contribute the message and lessons from this experience into a wider framework of humanity's understanding.

Having outlined how the artist moves in pursuit of truth, I will now unveil the essence of the truth being sought.

What the artist searches for

Light is the spiritual backbone of our civilisation, the eternal task of artists involves replenishing the dwindling light emanating over humanity. I regard light as the energy which charges and expands awareness. The brighter the light, the more intensity permeating our relationship with key principles.

These principles shape the *microcosm* of internal reality and the *macrocosm* of universal reality.

The relationship between individual and collective light is reciprocal; the knowledge our civilisation has accumulated and openly circulated determines the depth and hindsight we use to establish our own personal values. The more thorough the formation of personal values there is, a stronger ripple effect that is delivered on the wavelength of society. But heightened levels of light are accompanied by deeper & darker shadows, as new light can only transpire where darkness has been illuminated.

The essence of what is expected from us as artists involves sensing this light, photosynthesising and refining it, then reflecting this refined light back onto society as a beacon. The key element involves distilling, then teaching lessons regarding what was perceived within the darkness that was ventured into. This darkness could contain the navigation of personal trials or exploration of unfavourable feelings.

The spiritual endeavour of turning dark into light is represented by the old tales of alchemists attempting to turn lead into gold. This state of transformation has to be facilitated with a tool, in the spiritual example this tool is reflection. Reflection on experiences allows us to re-experience the same stimulus from both the function of feeling combined with the analytical aspect of our thinking function. This is done through synergised transmission of neuronal wirings activating, allowing these two separate subsets of our perception to work together to provide a fuller picture of the whole. (McGilchrist, p31, 2019) discusses the neuronal phenomena underlying this, explaining that the fusion of these functions “*Re-presents a version of experience that is bounded despite the components being experienced in fragmented, separable ways*”.

After refining our cognitive process, a task achieved via creating a dynamic between our thinking and feeling functions, we are equipped with the tools necessary for untangling the matter associated with one's personal light.

Following this, It becomes the perpetual task of expressing and constantly advancing one's understanding so that internal perceptions and external reality work their way into alignment.



Psychodynamics & the science of the spirit world



Psychodynamics is the field of psychological thought and philosophical interest which explores metaphysical insights about our psyche through psychoanalytic case studies, deep bouts of introspection and analysis of 'mythical' stories, which when decrypted and analysed contain tremendous insights about human nature.

The subject which best fits the exploration of the forces interfering with the interior world would be alchemy. 'Alchemy is the shadow of modern science' (Eternalised, 2022). Meaning that it contains areas of interest into psychology that modern science such as neuroimaging have yet to shine light on.

Alchemy involves the materialisation of spiritual knowledge into the matter of our physical being.

Because the articulation of any function which lies outside thinking is difficult, if not impossible, creative outlets offer a means for internal understandings to manifest externally, and potentially, be understood by others.

All that has and will be discussed is derived from the source of my experience, making this a phenomenological exploration.

I have evolved alongside this understanding and with time will evolve it past the form it takes here in this essay. I can't say for certain that this knowledge is infallible, if it is false, this transmission is a confabulation rather than an intentional mistruth.

While I have grown beyond there being parts of me I refuse to acknowledge, I can't say there's parts of me I'm yet to discover, therefore this is bound to be an incomplete framework.

This doesn't necessarily mean it's faulty, it's just not as comprehensive as it could be.

This is because the understanding contained within this writing will never stop advancing due to the principle of acquisition that surrounds the assimilation of knowledge,

"In right evolution the line of knowledge and the line of being develop simultaneously, parallel to and helping each other" (Ouspensky, 1965, p64).

Psychodynamics

To acquaint you with the framework this essay needs to be perceived through in order to be understood, I will lay out a few definitions that if interpreted correctly, should guide you to an understanding that's in alignment with how I intend this message to be received.

"The acquisition or transmission of true knowledge demands great labor and great effort both of him who receives and of him who gives." (Ouspensky, 1965, p39).

The Psyche is a term I will, and have been using interchangeably with the Jungian concept of the 'Self'. I will break down the concept of the 'Self' in relation to the 'ego' so a clearer picture regarding the structure of our psyche can begin to form.

With the *Self* representing the whole of who we are and what we harbor, the ego represents the medium for us to perceive our 'Self' through. We can only embody as much of our 'Self' as the ego has allowed us to become aware of.

The ego is a drive with self-preservation as its primary command, this self preservation branches out into two expressions, one being a protective function that blocks out stimulus from our conscious mind that could potentially harm us, such as memories of trauma.

The other function is social preservation where it negotiates our natural way of being with the expectations society requires of us, modifying our expression based on social observation and imprinted societal beliefs.

When discussing the ego in psychological terms, it should be conceptualised as the sensory centre of our psyche, which perceives, interprets and reacts to all the stimuli we are at the receiving end of. This cognitive centre sits on the borderline of the conscious and unconscious mind.

Jung calls this '*the centre of the field of consciousness*' (Jung, 1951, p3) and it is present within all of us from our very first development, albeit at this stage it is a clean slate. But as it evolves alongside us, everything that happens to it is perceived, shaping what becomes our adult ego. Therefore, our adult behaviours are an accumulation of all our past experience mixed with our innate personality, ultimately leaving us with the proposition that we are beings that are modified by what we experience to such a significant extent that we can't fully consider ourselves autonomous.

While this idea is frightening, analytical psychology posits a hopeful remedy to this harsh truth, acknowledging that it is possible to take back power over these forces within us by recognising, embracing and integrating them into our being. Integration is a fundamental concept that discusses the relationship/interplay between the ego and how it embraces the *Self*. Integration conceptualises the idea that our psyche disintegrates due to conflicts with our conscious beliefs and unconscious drives which give rise to expression of our behaviour that does not flow properly.

Predicated on the spiritual principle of light discussed earlier, introspection is the act of shining light on the shadows within our psyche. This involves concentrating focus toward the unactualized areas of our consciousness so they can be processed thoroughly and truthfully. Doing this opens the gate for integration to occur, where we take back ownership of all the fragmented parts of our being and embody them. These fragments can be feelings, thoughts, and underlying drives behind our behaviour or beliefs. Severe disintegration of inner forces such as those mentioned above can result in a plethora of psychological phenomenon, including; complexes, behavioural disorders, disturbances in quality of life, reduction of peace within day to day life, existential angst, distorted drives such as insatiable hunger and sex drives, and even deviant expressions of behaviour which arise from distorted expression of drives due to repression.

The same way physical laws bind the universe together, energetic laws influence the operation of our psyche. The principle that energy can't be destroyed is of worthy note. Repressing an energy doesn't diminish it permanently, It only temporarily subdues its presence until the pressure bursts forth and it demands expression again. When this energy has to make itself manifest, rather than naturally flowing, it becomes distorted in its expression. Until authentic expression is allowed this cycle will repeat viciously.

Just like the elements act upon the earth, inner forces collide within our psyche, shaping the expression of our behaviour. The same way that psychic disturbances alter our behavioural expression, synaptic transmissions in the brain correspond to this behavioural outburst. This model of reality we're starting to build makes it very clear that the outer world shapes the inner world and the inner world alters the way we interact with the outer world. The ego, as mentioned, is the focal point of this inner world. The technology used in neuroscientific study is allowing us to overlap how the brain works with psychological

understanding of how the psyche works, bringing science and psychology into alignment. Emerging data in this field is validating a lot of the presumptions posited about psychodynamics.

The Prefrontal-cortex is the most recently evolved area of the brain. This region hosts our cognitive processes, higher thinking functions and has neuronal wiring attached to all other areas of the brain it has grown over. Conversely, the limbic system is our most archaic brain region, more involved with functions that perpetuate our survival such as threat detection, emotional regulation and aggressive and sexual drives.

Through neuroscience we've discovered that the Prefrontal-cortex and our primitive limbic brain are linked. The area responsible for this connection is the ACC *"The anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) lies in a unique position in the brain, with connections to both the "emotional" limbic system and the "cognitive" prefrontal cortex."*(Stevens et al, 2011). Hereby, Its function as a network between these two areas is to *"control emotional conflict via top-down modulation of limbic and endocrine systems"* (Jhang et al, 2018). This job of subduing the expression of the limbic system is reminiscent of the psychological conflict discussed regarding integration. The limbic system will never disappear, it's the region of our brain responsible for our survival. But, most of its tendencies are unnecessary within modern day life. Therefore, the ACC — by utilising the higher functions of the prefrontal-cortex, imposes itself on the expression of these functions, aiming to lessen the severity of actions our primal ancestors would have needed uninhibited access to in order to survive. The spiritual struggle of reconciling our primal nature with values and principles we have consciously established is almost identical to this neurological process of our cognitive functions working for dominion over our primitive brain.

The artist is at the forefront of untangling the complexities of human consciousness with the vocation of synthesising these discoveries into artworks that can be felt.

I believe a psychodynamic conflict occurs when an artist confronts a blank canvas. This blank canvas serves as a mirror for the artist to reflect their subconscious onto. This is identical to the belief Jung holds about dreams, whereby he claims it's *"a psychic phenomena that transmits unconscious relations or spontaneous impulses to consciousness"* (Jung, p56, 1964).

The framework mentioned above is the world where artistic pieces arise from.

Art, to me, offers a bridge between the conscious mind and subconscious energies.

Therefore, when it comes to the conception of art, sometimes it's not about revealing answers, but expressing feelings, feelings that are brought forth by forces residing in our psyche. The artist straddles the border between the conscious mind and the subconscious experience, pulling forth light from the abundant darkness that shrouds our unconscious. This state of being can't just be accessed by anyone, therefore it's important to recognise if this is something you're born with the innate propensity to do. If this is the case, it's advised that this task is embarked upon with caution, carefully construing morals before ensuing on a journey where control is relinquished. Autonomy over the lessons we learn is absent. Therefore, we must extract whatever value is given to us through the experiences we're forced to endure. The only way we can wrought direction is by establishing solid values that will guide us through our journey.

Value systems precede behavioural output. But the establishment of said value systems must be founded in a realistic framework where our subconscious tendencies are recognised, negotiated with our ego, then moved into alignment with our will.

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Anterior Cingulate Cortex: Unique Role in Cognition and Emotion: The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences Volume 23, Number 2

McGilchrist Ian. 2019, *Master and his emissary: the divided brain and the making of the western world*. Yale

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Jinho Jhang, Hyoeun Lee, Min Soo Kang, Han Sol Lee, Hyungju Park, Jin Hee Han. (2018)

Anterior cingulate cortex and its input to the basolateral amygdala control innate fear response

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Yao, Nyamekye Morris. 1997, *Amanmere: The natural blueprint for sexual relationships*.

While this book isn't directly referenced, it's of important note in informing my thinking. The Amanmere project refers to a "seven year project within indigenous cultures". During this period of research Master Yao lived alongside and gained great knowledge from humans living naturally, away from the influence of modern machine culture. The communion with nature these cultures lived in was something which seemingly facilitated advanced spiritual sophistication. Within this book, Master Yao distills natural blueprints for behaviour that have been passed down from generation to generation and possessed for a long time within these cultures. Of particular note for this essay was the discussion surrounding abnormal personality structures which are regarded as 'spirit dysfunctions' brought on by early life traumas. The indigenous insights align with the model of the psyche that has very recently been articulated in modern psychology.

Kalsched, Donald. 1996, *The inner world of trauma: archetypal defenses of the personal spirit*.

Myss, Caroline. 2001, *Sacred contracts*.

This book explores the idea of a life path a certain person is predisposed to going on based on archetypes that reside in our consciousness and influence our behaviour. This helped me reinforce my beliefs about the vocation and life path of an artist.

Noll, Elaine Joyce. 1991, *Company of prophets: African American Psychics, Healers and visionaries*

Explores accounts of mystics, healers, clairvoyants and other gifted people - exploring the gifts they possess as god given traits for these individuals to service humanity with. A sentiment i believe is acceptable to extend to artists.

Jung, G, Carl. *Psychological types*. A revision by R. F. C. Hull of the translation by H. G. Baynes. Routledge
<https://perpus.univpancasila.ac.id/repository/EBUPT200904.pdf>

A far deeper discussion surrounding functions such as thinking and feeling which are briefly discussed in this essay occur from page 307 forwards.

Page 472ff gives a brief breakdown of the four types and their core functions, with relation to each other. These quotes were too extensive to belong in my essay and really, the whole section of this book needs to be read for the understanding to be grasped properly, so i'll leave this footnote here for the eager readers who really do want to know more. Like I said within the essay, "The acquisition or transmission of true knowledge demands great labor and great effort both of him who receives and of him who gives." (Ouspensky, 1965, p39).

P358 contains a notable discussion surrounding the 'introverted-feeling type'

The definition of extraversion and Introversion within this framework has nothing to do with being social or reserved, a connotation modern psychology has projected onto the definitions. Instead, it is to do with the direction that thought/feeling/sensory/intuitive processes are directed.

The easiest way to conceptualise this is through analogy.

Imagine that two men go to a battlefield; the extraverted type is likely to project his perceptions about the battlefield outwardly, imagining the distraught families that dead soldiers have left behind.

Conversely, the introverted type perceives inwardly, whereby his subjective experience is where his perceptions are oriented. This would manifest in a way such as imagining the fear and shock he would of been exposed to if he was pitted to a similar scenario.

A very interesting point of discussion, which I deem relevant to this essay but uncondusive to any of the points made, is about the shift in how women interacted and expressed themselves within the art world at the turn of the 20th century.

Women depicting naked bodies - whether it was of a man or a woman was a sign of impropriety before the 20th century.

Parallel to the emergence of psychoanalysis this belief started to dissipate and women were encouraged and embraced for expressing their perceptions.

The Cornish artist Laura Knight was one of the women at the forefront of this shift in expression and attitude. Her 1913 self-portrait of her drawing from a naked body in an art school may seem ordinary to us modern readers but in the context of the times this was revolutionary.

This demonstrates a really interesting point about the liberation of womens expression and the psychodynamic pursuit of accepting human nature in its totality. As prior to the emergence of psychoanalysis, people (men in particular) didn't endorse women embracing all parts of themselves-especially those parts revolving around their sexuality. As exploration of the psyche became a pursuit of fascination these attitudes around suppression of women's innate expression also faded. While we're still working toward total emancipation from the stigmatisation of women's sexuality, we've progressed very far. This book gives a good overview of this shift in attitude

