

## Terry Atkinson: The AGMOAS \* Notes

„There have from the earliest times, been two types of theory as to perception, one empirical, the other idealist. According to empirical theory, some continuous chain of causation leads from the object to the participant, and what is called “perceiving” the object is the last link of this chain, or rather the last before the chain begins to lead out of the percipient’s body instead into it. According to the idealist theory when a percipient happens to be in the neighbourhood of an object a divine illumination causes the percipient’s soul to have an experience which is like the object.”

Bertram Russell, *Human Knowledge: its scope and limits*; George Allen & Unwin, London, 1948, p211

Agmoas has a strong idealist<sup>1</sup> strain in its construction. It is perhaps the dominant historical factor in this construction, as it has been transmitted and received during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present. This idealist input underwrites the presupposition that the function of the avant-garde is an inherently progressive one, viz. it is inherently progressive to be a recipient of ‘divine illumination’, or some secular equivalent.<sup>2</sup> Thus the equation: If avant-garde, then necessarily, cultural development. Then, in a strong sense, those embracing the agmoas presuppose it develops culture rather than merely maintaining it.

This distinction between cultural development and cultural maintenance, or rather, the distinction that the subscribers to the agmoas cannot now recognize, is at the centre of the agmoas’ intellectual weariness and its manic obsession with artistic personality rather than being concerned with ongoing inquiry. By the 1960’s, at the very latest, the presupposition that the avant-garde is necessarily an agency of cultural development had become a mantra, so to write, set in stone. It is this kind of idealist investment in the concept of the agmoas, more or less unwittingly transmitted and received in day-to-day art school and art milieu exchange, which ensured, as I have just noted, that by the 1960’s at the very latest, the agmoas became a reproduction, rather than a platform of inquiry interrogating and developing the model of the artistic subject. Thus the agmoas is now a programmatic, ongoing performance of cultural maintenance. Once the agmoas had achieved (if this is the right verb - perhaps ‘settled upon’ would be more appropriate) the status of near perfect reproduction, then what its subscribers take to be its foundation neglects and ignores

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\* AGMOAS: the Avant-Garde Model of the Artistic Subject

its historical and social specificity. For its subscribers, the agmoas, at this point, takes on the illusion of being a natural state.

This view then serves to sustain further illusions. Not only that the agmoas is perfected, and is therefore at rest, but that it also then tends to view nature itself as static. At this point, the agmoas is securely embedded in an idealist framework, securely attached to an alleged realm of eternal values, viz. the familiar stereotypes of 'artistic personality'; 'artistic licence', for example – of which more below is written. With hindsight, by the 1960's, it was possible to discern that as early as the 1920's, significant power-wielding parts of Western art practice and interpretation already treated the agmoas as an eternally recurring formation. By the 1960's the view was hegemonic. Not only has this view stayed in position, but the further view of its many champions has uninterruptedly intended that it stay, ideologically unmolested, eternally grooming and reproducing itself. This view then, via embracing of the agmoas, is to adopt a particular view of human nature. The model of the artistic subject is then allegedly naturalised among its alleged characteristic faculties – 'creativity', 'self-expression', 'authenticity', etc. .

Much of the inflationary rhetoric, in its day-to-day more prosaic forms, as well as in its historically connected, disguised, and less obvious darker companion background, which both construct the articulation of the agmoas (perhaps inarticulation would frequently be more appropriate), rests on this alleged naturalist status. This was never clearer than in the case of the correlation of avant-gardism with postmodernism during the 1980's and early 1990's. The idealist sentiment of the agmoas, at this point, took on rampant inflationary form. And for those with even a modicum of historical sobriety, this inflation could be discerned to be of a levelling democratic redistribution of the evaluation of cultural artefacts. To the contrary, as it very quickly turned out, the so-called 'dumbing down' was an attempt to dumb-up. This cultural-study-fest speedily emerged as the promotion of a new range of academic consumer items in the expansion of higher education. Curriculum vitae fillers for the burgeoning academic specialist in popular culture – something of an irony, if not a paradox, in itself.

These specializations emerged according to the changing higher educational demands in the West of the state apparatus increasingly remodelled by global corporate capital, upon whose stage the art market is a persistent and sycophantic performer. Many of these post-modernist practices were unapologetic attempts to

sustain some kind of analytical complexity where it was unsustainable. These specializations, like all agencies using the agmoas, had links, disguised and distant as they had become by the 1980's, to the darker side of Western cultural imperialism, not least in the tradition of avant-garde practices.

These links were established through the early avant-garde embrace of the exotic, the first manifestations of which were firmly confined in 19th century cultural imperialism. It is pretty obvious that 20<sup>th</sup> century racism was not cultural imperialism's only guise. Popular cultural productions and artefacts, by the 1980's, could equally act as proxy recipients of the old cultural imperialist Suprematism. Academic patronization and Suprematism, by that time, flitted easily in the older culture's long supremacist shadows. Cultural maintenance not least maintains that old culture's habits, even if in disguised form.

Dumping-up could just as easily patronize the quasi-primitivism of the working class-cum-aspiring middle class, substituting it for the Suprematism directed at 'the primitives', as characterized by the Victorian cultural empire builders. The concept of the 'noble savage', championed by Rousseau in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and especially popularized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was imbedded as a strong, residual influence of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism especially upon the ideological climate of 20<sup>th</sup> century Western art schools. The climate was a febrile one for equating "the noble savage" with the 'artistic subject as natural'. The 'noble savage' was seen, in such ideological climates, as more 'natural' than 'civilized' Western individuals.

Agmoas as a naturally endowed state of subjectivity settles snugly into this comfortable supremacist position. Again, this 'naturalization' enjoyed hegemonic status *vis a vis* the agmoas by the 1960's. The legacy of this 'naturalization', rampaging through much of the art theory-cum-cultural theory in the art schools of the 1980's and 1990's, did not, obviously, explicitly adopt any part of the racial theory of the 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism. On the contrary, it claimed a contra-position. But Suprematism is not so easily ditched; patronization is perhaps a larger part of cultural imperialism's late 20<sup>th</sup> century operation. Racism is at least often hidden, perhaps in some cases overcome *vis a vis* the agmoas. The promotion of the 'exotic' was replaced by a promotion of the popular.

This replacement gave the 'popular' the same virtues that 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural imperialism had assigned to the 'primitive' – perhaps the primary virtue being the 'authentic'. Here 'authenticity' is granted according to some such status as 'ordinary',

even 'normal'. It is paradoxical with respect to the agmoas, since the artistic subject is seen in this framework as 'extra-ordinary', even 'abnormal', and in extreme cases of the artistic subject, as special – at this latter point the situation becomes near contradictory, although the notion of the extra-ordinary subject (the artist) depicting/ commenting upon 'ordinary lives'/'normal lives' is conventional.

At any rate, the current academic 'cultural studies' industry of the 1980's did not shrink from the promotion of studying popular cultural events and artefacts (Soaps, for example) as worthy forums for the study of the 'ordinary' and 'normal' – stressing always the intrusion of the 'abnormal' (lesbianism, for example). But lesbianism is normal since sex is normal, insofar as we can make sense of such categories. A common simultaneous claim with the promotion of the 'ordinary' and the 'normal' was that the study of popular culture was anti-elitist. These remarks will pass on this one except to observe that to this observer at least, a body of the 'top' cultural commentators soon emerged – whether the consensus criteria used to pick out these 'top' protagonists was elitist or not, I leave as a moot point. Whatever the answer to the above may be, the products of popular culture were claimed to be of sufficient significant insight to warrant the labour of the specialists in this burgeoning academic market, titled some such as 'cultural studies'.

'Cultural studies', where it is not cultural regression, is cultural maintenance. And, a kind of perverse cultural maintenance. Not only an attempt to inflate popular culture into high culture, but at the same time, an attempt to deflate high culture. This may not matter too much, except one of the main thrusts of this inflationary/deflationary action was made by attempting to deflate the rationalist project of the Enlightenment (Foucault, et al. and the dreaded 'French theory')<sup>3</sup>. There was frequently something comical, not to mention contradictory, in the attempted dismissal of the Enlightenment notion of truth, using the rationalist methods of analysis and scholarship. We just need to remind ourselves that it had better be true that there is no such thing as truth. Amongst all this contradictory academic debris, the celebration of the 'exotic', so prominently displayed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism, and never quite completely extricated from the agmoas today, despite the constant pleas of more recent current alleged secular counter claims, from 19<sup>th</sup> century radical theory, moved its target from 'native primitivism' to 'low brow media narrative'<sup>4</sup>.

In this movement the latter became the recipients of the alleged virtues of the former (viz. 'more authentic', 'less inhibited', etc). Science, in turn, with its foundations firmly

set in the Enlightenment project, became one of the main focussed targets of dumping-down/dumping-up fury, in this move embracing quite a number of emergent political strands (Greens and various environmentalist focus groups, derivations of 'back to nature primitivism', animal rights).

It is perhaps worth noting that the celebration of the 'exotic', the elevation of the 'primitive', in various versions, had become a fairly prominent part of the art world's largely intellectual mind-set by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The art world generally, and the art schools particularly, have found this mind-set to be a convenient ally of their view of the artistic subject as high on some such as 'feelings' and low on 'cognition'. The contradictions and paradox of post-conceptualist licence were nowhere more bathetic than in postmodernist claims to inherit, not to say canonise, the so-called avant-gardism of the alleged, and very much over-rated, conceptualist achievement.

Just as in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century in many areas of Western cultural practice, Western intellectuals saw non-Western peoples as 'more authentic' – because they were 'nearer-to-nature', 'more real' than enlightenment driven Westerners. Many of the cultural studies mandarins of late 20<sup>th</sup> century Western culture frequently held both the producers and products of Western popular culture to be 'more authentic' and 'real' than the producers and products of Western high culture. The exotic-as-novel had been transferred into the 'popular'-as-novel. It is worth remembering, at this point, that Western global corporate capital, in seeking to develop a planet-wide market, is a significant force in generating increasingly uniform global cultural forms. The pressure to absorb and contain popular culture stems from this via various cultural markets – the art market and popular music market being two prominent ones. With respect to the art market, Australian Aboriginal, East European and, more recently, Chinese art production have been amongst those promoted in this globalization project using the art market global capitalist platform during the last twenty years or so.

Thus to summarize. The academic cultural studies 'levellers' were, by the 1980's, a chattering class celebrating Western popular media culture as a version of the 'Other'. This does seem to have some marked link with the 19<sup>th</sup> century notion of the 'authenticity' of the 'exotic' and the 'primitive'. Similarly to the way the 19<sup>th</sup> century notions claimed the 'exotic' and 'primitive' to be antidotes to the alleged degradation of the 'natural state' of homo sapiens by Western culture ('civilization'), the 20<sup>th</sup>

century cultural studies mandarins claimed 'popular culture' to be an antidote to the alleged 'intellectual elitism' (read 'civilization') of Western high culture. Such sentiments, whilst attenuated and disguised today by various forms of alleged secular content, are also, nevertheless, distantly tied into right-wing anti-intellectualism. 'Low-brow' deals with 'ordinary' people (these days the expansive middle-class in Western property-owning democracies – to use the exact Thatcherite term). 'Ordinary People' are more 'authentic' than intellectuals – the 'middle-class' have 'their feet on ground'; they are less loaded, even 'more pristine'. They live in the 'real world' in proportion to their distance from intellectual culture.<sup>5</sup>

The argument for popular culture is often held by those surveying it from a position of aspiring to, as well as achieved, intellectual standing. This position, equally often, appears to be in denial of their aspiration and position. Such a paradoxical position perhaps also has links with the sentiments of those anthropologists and emergent evolutionary psychologists in the 1960's who at that time, claimed that contemporary 'stone-age' hunter-gatherers were more authentic than Western populations (whether consuming high or low-brow culture). This was because the hunter-gatherer communities were less touched by Western civilization. In the case of cultural studies champions of popular culture, this culture is viewed as more 'authentic' than high culture because it's less intellectual.

In the 1960's, a group of anthropologists, influential at that time, raised funds for the study of something they termed 'evolution of behaviour'. Acting upon this initiative, a number of anthropologist teams went out to study hunter-gatherer communities such as !Kung San (Namibia/Botswana), Yanonami (Brazil/Venezuela), Yomut (Iran). etc.. All this notwithstanding, with a little application, it is not hard to work out that there is no 'natural man' living in his (mythical) original state. And it takes little further effort to equally work out there is no 'natural artist' living in her/his 'natural artistic state'. No human group, no matter how conservative, how preoccupied with cultural maintenance, not contemporary hunter-gatherers, not communities such as the Amish in Pennsylvania, nor anyone else, remain culturally and socially static, despite their best efforts, over thousands of years. Even the severest cultural maintenance cannot last forever, nor within the much further time span of modern Western cultural development, within these constituencies working, so to write, within the belly of the modern cultural beast, can any group of protagonists, embracing any particular

established model of the artistic subject plausibly expect to remain eternally immune from inquiry. The agmoas has proved remarkably durable considering how silly many of its manifestations are. But despite the best efforts of its champions to ensure it reproduces itself ad infinitum, there are signs it is a weary model of the artistic subject. It may be hard to lay down precise markers as to the time it takes to exhaust a given model of the artistic subject, but a 150 years of maintaining the agmoas seems about its limit in respect to its garnering any further cognitive harvest.

Today we do have consumer fetishization of both artistic personalities<sup>6</sup> and artistic artefacts, not least the personalities and artefacts of the maintained line of agmoas grandees. Global capital has gathered in the relations of distribution of art practice (Christies, Sotheby's, et al and their buying patrons) and through this process, has increasingly dominated the relations of production of art practice, both directly and, equally effectively, indirectly. At the present state of deep entrenchment of agmoas then, the view that the important clues to significant art behaviour and production (practice) lie in its established model of the artistic subject is no more than a version of the past, explains the present. In the particular case of the agmoas, such an explanation is pretty much a blanket adaptation, a version stifling inquiry into the agmoas itself. A notion such as 'self-expression', which has heraldic status in the conceptual structure of the agmoas, perhaps invites and warrants some further remarks on the concept of the self.

Although our sense of me is not biologically arbitrary, since the notion of 'me' is an evolved trait, presumably genetically endowed, the concept of the self, in contrast, is historically and socially specific. The variants of the concept of the self, historically and socially constructed, can, it seems, be easily mistaken for the genetically endowed sense of 'me'. This now seems to happen habitually carelessly because it is so unwittingly transmitted through the teaching in Western art schools. A historically and socially constructed model of the artistic subject (agmoas) has been converted into an illusory claim that it is genetically endowed.

The artistic subject is always socially constructed. The historically, extremely long-range inherited mix of ideas, resting upon Platonic and Aristotelian idealism is a significant player in forming this illusory model of the artistic subject. The model has a confused make-up. This older idealism has been filtrated by more recent forms of idealism: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Romantic idealism (the concept of the bohemian

artist, for example), and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by psychoanalytic theory (the concept of the unconscious, for example). It is probably hard to overestimate the impact of psychoanalytic theory on Western culture and identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> This input of psychoanalytic theory has served to make the agmoas a more rather than less confused model. The older inheritance from the legendary Greek sources holds that ideas are not representations of the world confined to the mind, but are located in the world itself. Thus, before the input of psychoanalytic theory is received, this part of the inheritance itself has some serious inconsistencies. But curiously, and in considerable contrast to much of the self-aggrandizing and irrational iconoclasm granted to the agmoas throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek inheritance presupposes, historically at least, a pre-existent rational order, which the individual knows and towards which the individual has a reverent appreciation<sup>8</sup>. Under the Greek scheme of things, the self is at least inquisitive; reverence includes this necessarily, and the self has some substantial criteria to judge what might amount to a big outcome, even if this outcome should be so idealized as to constitute a totalitarian system.

Totalitarian yearnings aside, a rational order is no part of the agmoas<sup>9</sup>. The totalitarian tendencies of the agmoas are much more likely to champion an irrational ethos, resting upon the elevation of some such as 'the individual', or the hard to check out 'inner world', etc. With the advent of Romanticism at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and its passage through Western culture during the next 200 years, the idealism is transferred from the world to the individual. In a sense, 'the individual' is the ideal world within this outlook, for there is a sense in which, for the Romantics, 'the individual' became the world. The concept of the individual becomes, as this Romantic idealism permeates the model of the artistic subject, the totalising and ideal system.

The agmoas in 20<sup>th</sup> century form essentialises and 'naturalises' 'the individual'. Methods of communication based on common communitarian exchange are downgraded in favour of methods of "communicating with an individual's 'inner world'". In the later 20<sup>th</sup> century development of the agmoas, the input of psychoanalytic theory, which sits very well with the elevation of 'the individual', meant methods of communication based on communitarian exchange were downgraded in favour of the methods used in positioning 'the creature on the couch'<sup>10</sup>, which allegedly reveals the workings of some such as the 'inner world'. The paradox



emerges quickly. The art world's methods of communication are, like any other group, necessarily based on social exchange, thus the content of the art world community exchange (the communitarian exchange) is increasingly invaded by notions such as the 'individual's inner world'. The particulars emerge following on from this, such as the art world's tendency to favour a psychogeography where some such as the 'unconscious', the 'subconscious', the 'pre-conscious, the 'half-conscious', is given priority – anything, it seems, but the thinking consciousness. The inheritors of Romanticism had at last found a comfortable 20<sup>th</sup> century ally, a fellow anti-mentalist, in their resistance to the thinking consciousness of the Enlightenment project.

The link from the 20<sup>th</sup> century typecasting of the 19<sup>th</sup> century bohemian to the large congregation of current agmoas celebrity personalities hardly needs pointing out at a broad level. But left undisturbed like this, which is more or less what happens in the current relation between the relations of production and the relations of distribution of art practice, some important factors contributing to the stifling conservatism of the agmoas are likely to be missed. The art world convention of 'radical' (a big feature of a significant 'artistic personality', so the story goes) is symptomatic of this conservatism. In the current state of art practice management (say, the case of the corporate art dealers, although artists are just as likely to be networks and career managers), it is as if 'radicalism' is simply an act of cultural maintenance.

In this constant networking milieu, 'radicalism' and cultural development were long since rent asunder. The notion of the outlaw, obviously, is interdependent with the notion of law. As Rachel Clarke has pointed out, quoting Roy Porter, "Every law has its outlaws, every territory its margins, all rule presupposes misrule and the unruly."<sup>11</sup> The art world notion of 'radical' is a very loud but weak hoorah for outlaws and misrule. To the contrary, to these cheer leaders for artist 'radicals', the relations of distribution, safely anchored in the grip of global corporate capital, these days ensure that the alleged 'artist radicals' are securely fixed within the orbit of permitted dissent. This shakes out as the 'artist radicals' either uttering/writing themselves, or having rhetoric uttered/written on their behalf by cultural medianiks of one sort or another, through which the alleged 'artist radical's' radicalism is asserted. Practically all of this rhetoric is little more than aesthetic chique.

As for claims concerning the redistribution of cultural wealth ('every man is an artist', in the words of one famous artistic grandee of the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde), what is

needed is not so much a concern for redistribution as a closer examination and evaluation of wealth. So-called 'public art' projects often take the form of claiming to redistribute 'cultural wealth' – 'city piazzas as access' in the words of our art consultant friends. Such projects are, by definition, celebrative rather than critical and Jochen Gerz's cultural outlay is no exception. In the case of projects less politically-minded than Gerz's, they typically bypass the political and wander indiscriminately through that part of the art world conversational exchange (and it is a very large part) dominated by one version or another of psychoanalytic theory concerning the specialness of some such as 'artistic personality'. 'Public art', 'private art', 'semi-public art', whatever art diagnostic term is used, there is an unremitting habit in art world conversation to imply the artist, some such as the 'true artist', as radical.

Where art practice is driven to greater or lesser extent by input from psychoanalytic theory, it is often some caricature of Freudian or Jungian theory. Freud has enjoyed special prominence, or at least caricatures of Freudian theory, in the agmoas throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus art world protracted dallying with Freudian theory is part of a wider phenomenon also well described by Rachel Clarke: "The impact of over a century of psychoanalytic thought on contemporary Western culture and identity has led some to conclude that today to be 'modern' and Western is, in some important respects, to be irreducibly Freudian."<sup>12</sup> The agmoas 'radical' is not infrequently a version of the 'creature on the couch' rather than the 'citizen in the street' (public art notwithstanding).

For the 20<sup>th</sup> century art world, the most convenient aspect of the emerging forms and caricatures of psychoanalytic theory was the surrendering of social exchange, more particularly that of the enlightenment rationalist project. Especially with respect to cultural formations and political ideas, and replacing it with what might be called 'the language of the couch'. Clarke again: "On the psychoanalyst's couch the uncensored flow of integral perceptions, feelings, thoughts and memories are reported without reference to their sensibleness, agreeableness, discretion; importance, relevance, or otherwise, for interpretation by the analyst."<sup>13</sup> One of the caricatures the art world adopted was the idea of 'the uncensored flow of perceptions, etc.' as itself a sign of radicalism – thus the model of the artistic subject as an uncensored flow.

The matter of reporting the 'inner world' being also, explicitly, an evaluation that this particular world, the 'inner world', is more authentic than the 'outer world'. In fact, the

distinction between the 'inner' and 'outer world' is so drawn that the 'inner world' is the authentic world which, by implication, judges the 'outer world' to be inauthentic. This kind of evaluative distinction afforded the agmoas licentious opportunism. What came to be known as some such as 'artistic license' became a forum for silly and banal behaviour, for epistemological charlatanism and production of an ontological zoo. The artistic subject as 'unusual', 'exotic', and 'novel' agent was granted totalitarian status.

This characterization of the artistic subject became an item of mass consumership (Kirk Douglas as Van Gogh, Jose Ferrer as Toulouse-Lautrec, Dennis Hopper as Bruno Bischofberger et al). So there is a kind of democratic consensus that the artistic subject is like this – albeit a strongly media manipulated consensus, which these days might serve as a partial definition of democracy. Clarke again on the input of psychoanalytic theory, using Van Zyl, states “No other spoken genre can sustain such a collapse in the distinction between the public and private worlds of inner life and its outer expression. This is particularly so given the relationship between 'fantasy' and reality in psychoanalysis, where what counts as true or actual often differs from that which has the same status and upon which so much depends outside it.”<sup>14</sup> Clarke, following Van Zyl, may not be quite right here. The spoken genre of the art world can also, I think, sustain such a collapse.

Much psychoanalytic theory, especially Freudian theory, has, in its passage through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, proved remarkably compatible with the expansion of big business, with Western corporate capitalism in its construction of a consumer society. The art market itself, vigorously expanded in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a case in point. Poised on that part of consumership where it is perhaps hard to tell what a need is and what a desire is, but where need and desire are carefully run together. Then what, if anything, is the clear boundary between them? One of the major uses of psychoanalytic theory in this corporate capitalist project of first, reshaping Western economics and then, if possible, all other earthly economics (the project presently going on – the current situation in Iraq being an almost perfect example of the effort!) is not only inventing the particular desires, but of re-defining the notion of desire itself. The clash with Muslim cultures foregrounds this latter clearly – the desire for martyrdom is quite beyond the realm of Western corporate capital's notion of desire, not least because it offers very restricted manoeuvre for monetary profit, except in the case of the arms industry, an unusually high profit zone.<sup>15</sup>

The concept of the 'free individual' (read 'free-spending individual' more particularly) was one of the iconic concepts pumped out by the West in its Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Simultaneously, the concept enjoyed the same iconic status in the project of constructing the desire-led economy. The 'free individual' is defined not so much by the fulfilment of the consumer's such and such desires, but more by her/his aspiration to try and satisfy them. Psychoanalytic theory has been much more than a bit-part player in tutoring corporate capital how to fashion this aspiration. The project in the West has been pretty successful. Saudi royal family members and Dubai development projects notwithstanding, it meets more resistance across the Arab world than perhaps anywhere else, especially if Iran is included on grounds of geographical proximity to the Arab world. Wherever it is, successful does not necessarily mean being successful is right. Here, I mean 'right' in both the objective scientific sense (the environmental impact of corporate capital) and in the ethical sense (the war, poverty and debt visited upon large parts of the world as a result of the quest for profit – we await the further outcome of the expansion of the economies of China and India!).

The objective-scientific sense of right rests upon the fact of whether or not psychology is a natural science; I return to this matter below. The moral sense of right appears to be a little more straightforward. The celebration of the 'free individual' cannot be right when measured against many of the facts pertaining to huge numbers of people living in near starvation conditions and frequently starving to death, of whole nations mired in insurmountable debt. All this not least manufactured by institutions and individuals who cleave to the values of the alleged 'free market'. Many of these institutions and individuals appear to live in a constant state of denial, since they continually proclaim sentiments inconsistent with the life-styles and consumer choices they enjoy and make everyday. Our friends in the celebrity rock 'n roll circuit for example, some of whom are intent, if their rhetoric is to be believed, on saving both the starving millions and the planet. Both of whose grim conditions have been wrought in no small measure by the corporate capital our rock 'n roll friends so diligently serve in the other part of their working lives. Certainly, according to them, a redistribution of wealth, but redistribution conducted along the lines of 'a bit more for them and a very great deal more for us!' And, all this charitable work notwithstanding, in whole swathes of the globe, including the rich West, Marx's reserve army of labour remains relentlessly intact and continues its plodding restricted existence, continuing

to be as boring as ever to our 'success preoccupied-celebrity doting' cultural managers.

The list of inconsistencies which our Western celebrity-fetishizing/award winning-cult-of-personality culture here in the West practices is not small, and ought not to be hard to discern. But the desire-led economy is nothing if not vainglorious and aspect blind. The agmoas is one of the celebrity manufacturing and seeking formations at the centre of all this partying, inconsistency and blithe authoritarianism. Art stars these days rank nearly as high as rock and film stars in the celebrity lists of corporate capital culture, perhaps higher in the more culturally pretentious echelons of the chattering middle classes. In such communities, the type 'artist', and especially the particular 'art star' is seen as an exemplification of the 'free individual' operating in the 'free market'. The links going back from early 21<sup>st</sup> century art star to 19<sup>th</sup> century 'bohemian' have gone through several debilitating caricatures during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the start, say 1871, Rimbaud hammered out his poetry on the crucible of the Paris Commune. And, Stalingrad notwithstanding, our old anti-anarchist, communist friend Uncle Joe didn't help much with his suppression of anything he saw as threatening, not least since he saw most things as threatening in one way or another. No wonder the agmoas got such a good deal out of the Cold War.

It is frequently claimed that the 1960's were a watershed, an upsurge in libertarian hopes. In general terms, compared to earlier decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this is probably true. But perhaps the decade is not quite the watershed it is often made out to be. There were outpourings of libertarian aspirations. And there were many groups who challenged the state in one way or another, not least the groups who took on the most powerful state apparatus, the American state. But large sections of the so-called 1960's counter-culture were celebrative rather than critical, and even where the celebrative might itself have become critical, the uses of the celebration were often not consistent. This inconsistency was especially notable in the counter-culture's rhetoric of anti-consumership. Pleasure was high on the counter-culture agenda, especially sexual pleasure. Unwitting caricatures of Hobbes' Leviathan were never far away from the big rock festivals and hippie encampments – the truism 'we like what we like and we tend to aim for it' is just that – a truism. At the centre of the pleasuredome was rock music. Here the anti-consumerism became transparently inconsistent. The anti-consumerists supported the rock groups, and the rock groups sold records by the millions, which buyers, not infrequently, included large numbers

of the anti-consumerists. Corporate capital, certainly in the shape of record companies, did very well out of the publicity the rock festivals provided – the companies made big profits. All this taken into account, when the corporate state got the ‘heavy boys’ out, especially the American ‘heavy boys’, the mass base of anti-consumerism wilted and transformed.

At this point, the once anti-consumerist constituency not just started quoting psychoanalytic theory so much as started to consume it. Not least various filtered versions of Jung and Freud. And with these versions came yet another caricature of the ‘free individual’. From their alleged, but far from consistent and thorough anti-consumerist ambition for transforming society, these constituencies turned toward what was termed ‘a transformation of the self’. From directing their effort to destroy, or at least convert ‘the policeman out there’ they turned to the destruction or conversion of ‘the policeman in all our heads’. The social libertarian hopes turned to personal libertarian hopes. A sort of ‘internal’ Paris Commune via the Freudian/Jungian caricatures, the commune without barricades. At this point, had he been alive, Rimbaud perhaps would have seen his early conversion from artist to Abyssinian trader and gun-runner as entirely justified.

Ironically, the concern with ‘the policeman in all our heads’ became an extreme preoccupation with the consuming of the concept of the ‘free individual’, and, as the 1980’s progressed, chimed perfectly with the fondest hopes of the entrepreneurs of corporate capital. Psychoanalytic theory never had it so good! Nor had the agmoas – the vague notion of some sort of ‘inner freedom from the policeman’ meshed very cosily with the agmoas’ characterization of the ‘personal’, the artist’s ‘inner world’. No wonder the likes of Warhol and Beuys could get away with endless one-liners and self-obsessed meandering interviews. From the late 1980’s, permitted dissent was the order of the day. No celebrity figure is more of a permitted dissenter than the artist-celebrity-radical. Apart from soviet dissidents, who deserved all the support they could get against the fearsome crumbling tyranny they faced, celebrity-artists, the Reagan administration’s assault on Mapplethorpe’s work notwithstanding, were top of the listings in the West’s Cold War almanac of ‘free individuals’.

To reiterate. The emergence of psychology, especially Freudian theory, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had significant input into the development of agmoas throughout the century. In my view, in respect of the art constituencies, what has been called psychology is a very loose interpretation of the field of study and has been almost entirely used, both

in art practice and art interpretation, for either, at best, poetic purposes, or in much more coherent undertakings.<sup>16</sup> Many metaphors used in reference to both the interpretation of art works and the analysis of art behaviour ('the artistic personality') are so vague as to be impossible to refute. Such metaphors, not least, contribute toward the fulfilling of a form of unwarranted special pleading on behalf of the alleged exceptional sensibility of the artistic subject. At this juncture, it is perhaps worth attempting to comment further on the general status of psychology.

Following Freud at least this far, psychology should aspire to the status of being a natural science. Freud is reputed to have said something to the effect that 'psychology is a natural science or it is nothing'. In this kind of context it is perhaps worth reflecting upon how a serious student of psychology would react to the art world's approval of interpretations of psychoanalytic theory being used not only for poetic purposes but for bolstering the conceits of the model of the artistic subject. Presumably, he/she would observe that such uses do very little toward granting psychology the status of a natural science. These uses are wrong if they claim artistic output is hard objective evidence of the theory's truths. One characteristic of claims which claim to represent such things as states of an 'inner world' is that it is pretty hard to gain objective criteria to back up the claims; the claims can be just made-up. It is important for the art constituencies, not least for the art market, that their version of 'psychology' furnish their cult of artistic-personality-cum-celebrity, from which issues both their epistemological charlatanism and ontological zoo.

Contrary to all this art world 'art personality' construction, it is important that psychology should aspire to follow the scientific method. This is because the practices of psychology are concerned with claims about the character of human nature. Psychology is concerned with human capacities to both act in the world and to interpret the experience which results from such actions. Equally important, it is concerned too with locating and describing the mental structures which produce these acts.

If there is a primary science, then physics is often claimed to be it. This is plausible, but from it we should not conclude physics is a fixed entity. The most vehement holders of the view of physics as primary argue that all sciences may be reduced to physics. But we should remember that unification is much the more common outcome than is reduction, if the history of science is any measure of how things work out in the sciences. Perhaps it is also worth pointing out at this juncture that the

concept of the 'physical world', let alone 'physics', is an open one – just look at the achievement of quantum theory during the last century.

That psychology is not best represented through its adoption by 20<sup>th</sup> century art production, seems obvious. Art practice is frequently characterized as some such as a 'self-expressive' practice, a practice which represents 'the emotional state of the artist', a practice which expresses the state of the artist's 'inner world', etc. But we should remember that, despite its repeated anti-intellectual protestations, that art practice is firmly rooted in the cognitive domain. And it is in this very general point, that psychology may, at some future date match its aspiration to be a natural science with resources that art practice, in the past, has been in no position to develop. Claims have been made, and continue to be made, in art practice prominently using caricatures of psychoanalytic theory, on behalf of the agmoas, which have contributed toward turning it into a mere reproduction rather than a forum of ongoing inquiry. The art world's claim towards its use of psychoanalytic theory – that it is a poetic resource and should not be 'scrutinized' – has some respectable allies at least in terms of the division of labour in the academy, the argument of which the art world is scarcely aware.<sup>17</sup> But if psychology, following Freud's initial aspiration, is to approach the status of being a natural science, then the basic questions are of the order; what do we know about ourselves? How do we go about finding out about ourselves?

Nothing has been more widely promoted in the act of constructing the agmoas than notions such as that of the 'unconscious', the 'subconscious', etc. One obvious matter, unsurprisingly prominent since so obvious, is the question of access to the unconscious? The question, 'how do we gain access to the unconscious?' Simply to posit its existence then, presumably, we must judge we have access of some kind to it. Freudian theory, and especially caricatures of it, has been a main vehicle through which the notion of the unconscious has come to enjoy such prominence in the profile of the agmoas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the question of access to the unconscious, Freud himself was not always consistent.<sup>18</sup> If those using the notion of the unconscious as a prominent motif of the agmoas, were aware of Freud's inconsistency, which was probably a sign of caution, they did not seem to heed it. Certainly, access to the artist's unconscious is taken as a given in the agmoas. The Surrealists were a very marked example of that characteristic. Sometimes, in this



context, access is taken not so much as 'at will', as that the artist 'can't help but have access' – a kind of compulsive access and representation of the unconscious is one kind of definition of the artistic subject. Another one, is that not only does the artist have access to her/his unconscious, but that it is access to a 'special unconscious' – and a mysterious access too.<sup>19</sup>

The notion of 'compulsive access' to the unconscious as a kind of definition of a certain stereotype of the artistic subject is circular in the sense that it takes the objects/events of production of the artist as evidence that the artist has accessed her/his unconscious. There is no further test – nor it seems can there be other than a testimony of the artist her/himself; or the testimony of some other individual, expert analyst or not. In the end it seems to be testimony or nothing – handwaving, in other words. Obviously objects/events can and will be interpreted, it is not this fact which is at issue here. It is the question of criteria for matching a given interpretation of an object/event with the notion of access to the given artist's claims (by the artist or someone else) that the object/event represents a state of the artist's unconscious (read some such as 'inner world').

At any rate, the idea of the artist' unconscious as producer of work (output) is, along with some other stereotypes, pretty deeply imbedded in the agmoas. I guess it is an especially emphatic example of the 20<sup>th</sup> century general belief that the unconscious is genetically endowed, hardwired into every person. This may or may not be true, something is genetically endowed *vis a vis* our having dreams, fantasies, etc. but whether either the term 'unconscious' or 'inner world' absolutely covers what happens in these cognitive events is a more vexed question. The concepts, in even most expansively formulated manifestations, still seem to tell us very little about issues such as physical structures, path of access, etc. One of Freud's suggestions is that the unconscious is without access to the conscious except via the preconscious during the passing through of which its excitatory process is obliged to submit to modifications.<sup>20</sup> At a number of other points in his extensive work, Freud discusses ways in which something that is itself unconscious becomes pre-conscious. At one point, he stipulates the 'preconscious' as "what is capable of being conscious". At other points he argues, seemingly to the contrary, that the unconscious is "inadmissible to the consciousness". It is not completely clear whether this is an assertion that the unconscious is totally closed off from the conscious. A straightforward response to the assertion being: if the unconscious is by definition totally closed off from the

conscious, then how does Freud himself, or anyone else for that matter, know this since his unconscious, like everyone else's, is closed off from his conscious? If we cannot be, so to write, conscious of the unconscious, then how come I'm writing this? What is there to be said? A lot will turn upon what we are prepared to count as knowledge. My view is that there is such a thing as unconscious knowledge, and with a careful enough application of scientific method, some access to it can be achieved. Chomsky's approach to the language-forming faculty is a good example of such a careful application. But in the above quote from Freud, this use of the word 'inadmissible' perhaps invites further discussion. He may be suggesting that the conscious 'knows' of the unconscious but does not bring itself to admit it – consciousness in a kind of state of denial *vis a vis* the unconscious. To 'not admit it' does, logically, assign knowledge of something named by 'it' – that, I guess, amounts to some kind of access. If denial is the name of the game, perhaps 'it' is only too accessible.

But all this aside, close analytical inquiry into Freudian theory does not seem a priority in the way such theory is established in the agmoas. Such analysis seems not of much concern to many adherents of the agmoas. Their use of the concept of the unconscious is seemingly untroubled by such questions. Access to the unconscious of the artist of the agmoas is taken as a given.

We come now to another area of inquiry into the agmoas. The matter of how we, or if we do, use the term 'art' in gaining knowledge of ourselves as artists. Either through the artist's own efforts and testimony, or through the efforts and testimony of others who advance these on behalf of the artist (say an art historian or critic – history is an engaging factor here – dead artists being psychoanalytically assessed necessarily relies on object/record and analyst. Corpses are not known for making claims about their unconscious.) If art is a study of human beings and their perceptions, and of the societies in which artists live, why is it that art is held to be so distinct from science? Not infrequently, art is held out in opposition to science. Perhaps many of the champions of the agmoas argue that by definition, art practice eliminates the scientific method from its procedures. The argument seems to be grounded as much by convention as through anything naturally bestowed on either scientific or artistic practice. The 20<sup>th</sup> century agmoas has seemingly helped reinforce a social convention as if it is a natural state of affairs.

This strict convention appears even more strange considering how porous the boundaries of art practice became during the 20<sup>th</sup> century – indeed this porousness was often taken as ‘novel’ and therefore ‘radical’. Nevertheless, unification in certain areas of art practice with scientific method cannot be ruled out in principle. It is perhaps easier to see what is not science than it is to see what is not art. The practice of following a Judean dictum<sup>21</sup>, whether knowingly or not, has led to some pretty dumb behaviour and products with respect to the agmoas. But the term ‘art’ is both an idealization and abstraction and these kinds of functions will contribute strongly not only to what is to be counted as art and what is to be counted as not art, but, more significantly, what is to be counted as valuable art, and what is to be counted as less valuable art. It seems pretty clear, if the agmoas record is seriously interrogated, that what has been counted as valuable art does not necessarily preclude dumb behaviour and products.

The scientific method is organised around idealisation and abstraction. Using a parallel term such as the ‘artistic method’ will, to those crowds particularly enthusiastic about the agmoas, perhaps seem an outrageous infringement on the freedoms alleged to be characteristic of ‘artistic license’ and the ‘artistic personality’. Again, it cannot be ruled out in principle that it is certainly worth considering whether or not some rational method of studying the agmoas is a legitimate part of ongoing practice. In short, this would amount to this part of art practice continuing in an interrogative rather than a reproductive frame of mind, a critical rather than a celebrative mood. At present, the past of the agmoas totally and easily explains its present. It is at the stage of complete and comfortable reproduction – straight-up unquestioning cultural maintenance.

There may be something perverse in the reproductive monopoly the agmoas now exercises over art practice, because insofar as it stifles our curiosity *vis a vis* the model itself in the longer view, and this may reduce our cultural survival pattern. The most regressive and conservative aspect of the agmoas is its anti-mentalism. In this respect too, the agmoas is anti-cartesian. Like Descartes’ theory, the agmoas is dualistic. But, contra Descartes’ theory, the dualism of the agmoas is hostile to the mental, it is anti-cognitive. It contrasts the mental to some such as ‘the spiritual’, ‘the artistic temperament’, ‘the emotional’. And, characteristically, this list of agmoas’ alleged virtues is not consistent. A term like ‘artistic temperament’ is so vague as to be impossible for anything concrete to be discussed concerning it. A term like ‘the

spiritual', used in contrast to the mental, is historically absurd – think of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, or Erasmus, or William of Ockham, for example. And the term 'emotional' is simply misplaced, as the emotions are quite definitely cognitive events, and are subject to inquiry by rational scientific method. It is bizarre to split a category like 'the emotional' away from the mental or the cognitive. The agmoas' dualism is one that prioritizes anti-mentalism over and against the mental. In this sense it is a dualism which is anti-Cartesian. It is as if it splits the world into three (a kind of trism), the mental, the anti-mental (viz the spiritual), and the physical. It seems the agmoas has settled for a pre-Newtonian folk-view of the world. Its materialism is so primitive and immune to inquiry that it need not even acknowledge Newton's invocation of immaterial forces, let alone such 20<sup>th</sup> century rational achievements as the ghostly quantum physics. The agmoas by mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was firmly set in a view in which the cognitive is held to be inferior to the irrational. It shows no sign of breaking this mould. It is in fear of rationalist inquiry being directed upon it. This implicit fear, for example, is displayed at the point where agmoas devotees assert that such things as the 'inner world' are not so much beyond rationalist inquiry, but such an inquiry would violate them – as if such items are sacred and therefore, subject to heresy and blasphemy. This latter protectionism seems, ironically, to be a symptom of a suspicion that the 'inner world' must be susceptible to rationalist inquiry. In this fear and rejection of rationalist inquiry, the agmoas outlook is anti-Freudian.

All this confusion is further compounded by the assertion, especially made from within the postmodernist versions of the agmoas, claiming that such things as the strangeness of the quantum phenomena reinforces and confirms an anti-enlightenment outlook.<sup>22</sup> Suffice it to write, that there is nothing either irrational or enlightenment-condemning about quantum physics. It is a clear outcome of the application of scientific method.

Again, in contrast to, say, Newton's theory of action at a distance, or the 20<sup>th</sup> century theories of relativity and quantum physics, there is no powerful theoretical account of the agmoas. The theories, such as they are of the agmoas, if they are theories, seem to be mainly hand-waving assertions, the framework of which have served as a favourite refuge for such items as the 'inner world' of the artist. The agmoas these days seems to be more and more a kind of insurance policy through which its celebrities and its future celebrities can protect their career investments. Amongst all

this ideological debris, a few basic characteristics of the artistic subject are perhaps worth noting. To start, a truism. Since the artist is a homo sapiens (notwithstanding mark-making chimpanzees, Beuys' coyote, etc.), the assumption is that the artist is a perceiving being. Equally obviously, it is assumed the artist continuously perceives some part of the world in which s/he exists. It may be that what s/he perceives is an illusion. There is clearly a sense in which an illusion is part of the world since we experience an illusion of a kick in the knee in much the same way as we experience an actual kick in the knee. Here no further comment will be made concerning the status of illusions. I mention them insofar as a notion such as the 'inner world' may turn out to be an illusion. For the present, it is presumed that every person has an 'inner world', and further, this being the case, that every person can perceive her/his 'inner world'. It is further assumed that, for example, the artist can represent her/his 'inner world'. The difference, or at least discerning one, between perceiving and representing the 'inner world' may turn out to be more troublesome than it at first appears to be.

Thus, some questions. Is the representation of the 'inner world' part of the perception of the 'inner world'? From where do we perceive the 'inner world'? From within the inner world? From some such as the 'outer world'? Is a perception of the 'inner world' always a representation to our self of that 'inner world'?

The matter of making a representation of the 'inner world' seems to bear upon the notion of self-expression. Expressing one's self is a very common way of characterizing the practice of making art. The links between the concept of the self, the concept of the 'inner world' and the concept of the unconscious are perhaps one of the most marked symptoms of the influence of psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freudian theory, via the art world's caricatures of it, upon the agmoas. Quite a lot has been written in these remarks about the 'inner world'. The question is posed directly: The 'inner world', what does the term mean? To what does it refer? Of what, if there is such a thing, is the 'inner world' constituted? One of the concepts with which it is most associated is that of the unconscious. And the dualist suggesting precedents for the contradistinctive pair conscious/unconscious are not hard to pick out, since the term 'inner world' invites its own other half contradistinctive pairing, the term 'outer world'. Thus the double equation 'inner world' = unconscious / 'outer world' = conscious. We are again in the orbit of what Clarke calls "the language of the couch", which has been mentioned already. The double equation represents today a

commonplace, established as certain motifs of psychoanalytical theory were filed in the popular imagination during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today the double equation is perhaps more implicitly than explicitly in circulation as a result of the familiarity the general public has with a number of transcriptions, which frequently amount to misrepresentations of psychoanalytic theory.

But the logic of the 'inner world' is a strange one. Continuing to assume the concept can be made sense of, then perhaps one way is inquiring a little further as to the plausibility of claims asserting its existence is the matter of considering the relation between perception of the 'inner world' and its representation, which has been mentioned already. Another way of getting at this question is perhaps worth raising. For example to start, is the 'inner world' a steady state? Say, in the following sense. In holding that there is such a thing as an 'inner world', does it (more or less) stay in the same state throughout its existence (presumably throughout the life of an individual)? It is perhaps worth pointing out in passing that the above question presupposes the 'inner world' has a beginning and an ending. Continuing: can the state of the 'inner world' change? Is it, say, relatively volatile? For instance, can the making of an (alleged) representation of a person's 'inner world' feedback into that given ongoing state of the 'inner world' which, it is claimed, is being represented? If it can feedback, then how quickly does the feedback work? Does it work quickly? If so, how quickly? Presenting the matter a bit more technically: representation begun at  $T_1$  is completed at  $T_2$ . Does the state of the representation at its completion ( $T_2$ ) then represent the state of the 'inner world' at  $T_1$  (its starting point), or  $T_2$  (its point of completion) or some point between  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ ? If the state of the inner world is steady enough (uniform) over appropriately long periods, then, presumably, the time difference,  $T_1$  to  $T_2$  will make very little difference as to which particular state the representation claims to represent. This since, under the uniform conditions of the state of the 'inner world' between  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ , one state, given the resources of the representation, is pretty much like another, and the two states at times  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  will be sufficiently similar for the representation to count as reasonably accurate. But this kind of analysis does suggest that the time taken to make the representation of the 'inner world' may be an important factor in how accurate a representation the representation actually is. Consider the following:

- (1) If the state of the 'inner world' does not ever change, then a representation can be accurate.

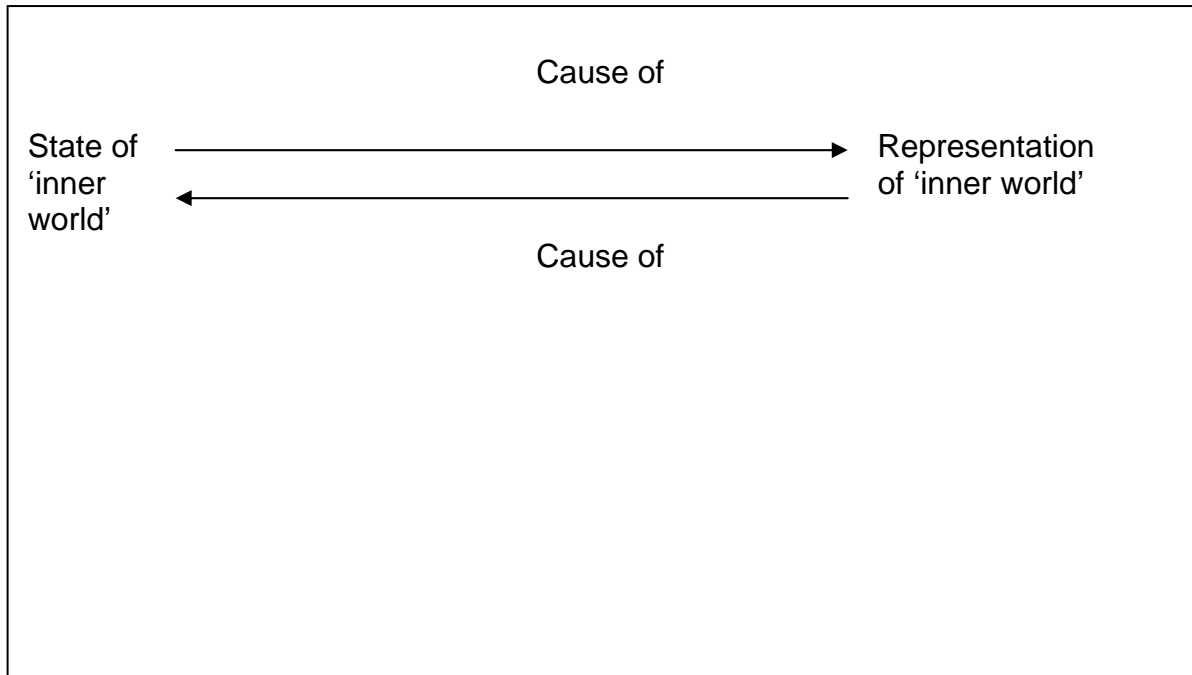
- (2) If the state of the 'inner world' changes slowly, than a representation may still be accurate, depending upon the amount of time it takes to make the representation.
- (3) If the state of the 'inner world' changes constantly and rapidly, then the representation can only be accurate if it is made as quickly as the amount of time the 'inner world' remains in a given state and this might be only a fraction of the time it takes to make the representation – you can see the problem!
- (4) Relating to (3). If the rate of change of the inner world is rapid enough to make it impossible to represent the 'inner world' as it is now, then obviously any representation can only represent a past state of the 'inner world'. Under these conditions, the 'inner world' changes faster than it can be represented.
- (5) Detailing (2) and (4) out a bit. The message leaves the 'inner world' and registers with its possessor at some other point, say, the possessor positioned in the 'outer world' – or is the registration or her/his going to make a representation of a (given) state of her/his 'inner world' a registration located in the 'inner world'? You can see the problem again! Is the representation of the 'inner world' itself in the 'inner world'? If it is not, where is it? In some such as the 'outer world'?

But a representation must be logically separate from the thing it represents; that, surely, is the logic of representation. A thing cannot be both a representation of the thing, and the thing it represents. The remarks immediately preceding suggest that 'inner'/'outer' here is strange geography of the body. One of the ways we may be able to make more sense of this is to state that the 'inner world' can cause a representation, but the representation it causes is not a representation of the 'inner world'. It is simply a representation caused by the 'inner world'.

There is another possible difficulty with respect to the status of the 'inner world'. We return to the matter of feedback, specifically the speed of the feedback. To start, questions.

Does the act of making a representation of the 'inner world' feedback and alter the state of that 'inner world'? If so, how fast is the feedback? If it is, say, very quick, immediate, instantaneous, then the act of representing the 'inner world', very quickly, or immediately, or instantaneously alters the state of that 'inner world'. Then, in any case, the 'inner world' can, once again, never be represented as it is, only as it was. But, if the act of representing the 'inner world' instantaneously affects the state of that 'inner world', how does a representer know the state of his/her 'inner world'? Imagine that the feedback works both ways – that the art

of representing the 'inner world' affects the state of the 'inner world' being represented, and, at the same time, the state of the 'inner world' affects the act of representation. We can perhaps envisage something like the situation in the following diagram in which that feedback works in both directions:



This is an absurdity. The logic of causation rules that the cause comes before the effect.

The notion of the 'inner world', and a number of notions taken to be correlates; 'unconscious', 'the private', 'the authentic self', 'the true self', etc., have been widely canvassed (no pun intended!) throughout the development of the agmoas during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interpretation, derivations, misrepresentations, and caricatures of psychoanalytic theory have been the main generator of the use of these correlates. All the correlates, and there are many, are comfortably established in day-to-day (what shall we call it?) art talk, both in the art schools and in the wider art world. The artist's 'private world', the artist's 'inner life' (two more correlates) have enjoyed high visibility in the evaluation and discussion of art and artists through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**NOTES:**



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## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> A distinction should be made between the kind of idealism with which the institution of the agmoas is filled and the kind of idealism which helped from the inquisitive spirit present at the founding of the project of modern science in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century of which Cartesian science became a characteristic inquiry. The agmoas anti-mentalism is a correlate of its elevation of some such as the 'artistic spirit', 'the emotions', 'feelings', etc. In this strong sense, anti-mentalism ('too much thinking stifles artistic creativity' and other art school cliches) the agmoas' idealism is the diametric opposite to Cartesian science. The agmoas idealism hangs on to some notions of mystery (one early 20<sup>th</sup> century example being the theory Kandinsky spun around his early 'non-figurative' work). Cartesian science was fascinated by the mental, the cognitive – fascinated by the mind, which concept was at the centre of its inquiry. The agmoas has attempted to shut out the cognitive, it promotes an ideal of some such as 'spirit', it abstracts such items as 'emotions', 'feelings' from the cognitive, elevating them as resources of the mystery – the mystery of the 'artistic spirit' or the 'creative', etc. Most parts of our cognitive process we know still very little about, and we have to acknowledge the possibility that much of the working of our cognition may be beyond our cognitive reach. But admitting this possibility is far from arguing that we should not try and to find out as much as we possibly can about the way our cognitive processes work. The agmoas now is very different – It frequently seems to promote the idea of some such slogan as "the less amount of thinking the better the artist". Besides this kind of rabid anti-mentalism it also frequently advances related sentiments, some such as 'it is good that such things as our mental facilities remain mysterious', and not infrequently, the stronger 'they should remain mysterious'.

<sup>2</sup> Besides, Kandinsky mentioned above in Note 1, Paul Klee's 'Pedagogical Sketchbook' is another equally clear examples. A much longer list could be drawn up.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault's praise of the Iran Revolution seemed to be part of his anti-Enlightenment-outlook. Whilst it was impossible to argue in favour of a continuation of the regime of the Shah and his Savak thugs (Khomeini's revolution couldn't not happened to a nicer set of guys!), eulogizing a Muslim fundamentalist regime seemed as dumb and, as disingenuous, as the New York Times constant attempts to shade the fact that all Israeli's administrations are the world record breakers of UN resolutions and a blatant thieves of Palestinian land. Foucault perhaps could have benefited, if it were possible in 1979, from a refresher course of the writings of Noam Chomsky and Robert Fisk.

<sup>4</sup> Popular access to substantial social themes is a required priority. It is not that hard to achieve, as the films of Alan Clark and Ken Loach, for example, bear witness to. There is nothing, low-brow or eulogizing of some such as 'the ordinary' in the ambitions of such film-makers.

<sup>5</sup> There is a frequent tendency to treat academe as not the 'real world' – an academic post – is not a 'proper job', and, certainly, it is even more frequently seen as a 'cushy job'. There is both a working and middle class refrain of this sentiment – the middle class version often takes the form of a lecture in which the speaker holds some such as being educated in 'the university of life'. – It is a form of suprematism at the same time as it is resentful. This latter view, more often than not, is enclosed by people who do not held jobs with physical toll involved in them. There is nothing wrong with being a ball-point pen salesman but it gets a bit much when the job is held as 'more real' (what ever this want mean) than being an academic.

<sup>6</sup> Three clear cases of inflation of the celebration of artistic personality: (1) Warhol, (2) Beuys, who both devoted a significant part of their relations of production producing their 'personality'. For their relations of distribution, a third case is Gilbert and George, who have cultivated a form of dual-common 'art personality' as a central part of their relations of production. For their relations of distribution I recently saw what I thought was a very silly and sycophantic Yentor eulogy-cum-suppliant exchange with them on BBC. (G + G)'s one-liners were both unsubstantiated and deingenuous. The art celebrity game is a central part of the promotion of the agmoas institution.

<sup>7</sup> Rachel Clarke, paper for Sue and Terry Atkinson on the occasion of the exhibition: Sue Atkinson "Greenham Work 1983 to 1986", Terry Atkinson "Irish Work 1983 to 1986", International Project Space, Bournville Centre For Visual Arts, Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Birmingham, England, 2007.

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Clarke outlines the input of psychoanalytic theory in a number of areas, not least its role in helping form a desire-led economy.

Sue Atkinson in an essay for the same exhibition, also raises the topic of the role of psychoanalytic theory in forming a desire-led economy. She notes, for example, Marcuse's critique of Freudian theory where he accuses the Freudians of "helping to create a world that reduced people to expressing their feelings and identities through mass produced objects, resulting in what he called 'one dimensional man', conformist and repressed – psychoanalysis had become a corrupt agent of those who ruled America." *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> In respect of the agmoas, reverence and fetishization are directed towards the irrational and the alleged mysteries of some such as 'artistic insight', but especially the notion of 'individual self-expression'.

<sup>9</sup> There seems to be a strong sympathy for total systems in Gilbert and George's duo outlook. They idealize some kind of notion they have of 'London' (even more focussing the East End) promoting it as a centre of a total social system, which they claim to represent in their work. The organization of their relations of production displays this concern with a total system too (not without the occasional piece or 'radical' flashing thought – the category 'spunk' for example, presumably just in case we may overlook their 'radical' credentials). Material is categorized and systematized according to a total system-classificatory of some such as the 'persona minuteae'. Nothing, Yentob's sycophancy notwithstanding, it seems is negotiable *vis a vis* organization of their art cult. They appear to be their own showbiz agents, incorporating these orders at the relation between their relations of production and relations of distribution.

<sup>10</sup> Clarke, *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* p. 1

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p. 1

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p. 1

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* p. 1

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East*, Harper, London, 2006

<sup>16</sup> One of the most vainglorious and stupefying, because so irrefutable, was Joseph Beuys' claims concerning the 'psychology' of the coyote.

<sup>17</sup> Hilary Putnam's "Sophisticated Realism", for example, in which he argues that psychology cannot be 'scientized'.

<sup>18</sup> Perhaps it is worth keeping in mind here that Freud's vast body of work, his prolific writings, are a founding part of early 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental inquiries into psychoanalytic theory. Freud was firmly committed to scientific method, or what he held to be scientific method.

<sup>19</sup> See again Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*.

<sup>20</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, p. 288

<sup>21</sup> Don Judd is reputed to have said or writtend something like, 'If someone says it's art, it's art'.

<sup>22</sup> During the rampart postmodernist relativism in the 1980's, it was not unusual for such theories as the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to be claimed as evidence for the idiocies of relativism – one can imagine what Heisenberg's response would have been to such claims! Imagine Wolfgang Pauli loose amongst postmodernist relativists.