R F PRONOUNCING THE ARCHETYPAL TO R F DISCOVER THE UNKNOWN

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CONTENTS

Before >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	7
Be Real >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	11
Recognition in Weird Vehicles >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	24
To Make a Distinction between Good and Bad Non-art	30
After >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	37
Notes >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	39
Bibliography >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	43

BEFORE

What am I looking at? While I perceive the subject matter as a credible reality, I am also experiencing the unknown.

Day-to-day-being surrounds me with, what I among the many words, together making up this writing, shall call the Archetypal; a yellow pencil with a pink eraser on the top, the black pavement with white stripes, an orange basketball, a standard wooden chair with four legs, etc. I know that a chair is meant for sitting, that shoes are for walking, and that an umbrella is meant to keep me dry when it is raining. In the impression of my surroundings, I somewhat make use of these archetypes as illustrations of reality, but: I am not born with this knowledge.

What happens when the eraser suddenly lights up, like the nose of Rudolph the red-nosed Reindeer, when the pavement is white with black stripes, when the basketball is double-size, and when the wooden chair has five legs instead of four? We do not know the function of a bicycle the first time we encounter one, and when we get to know the function of it, we take this for granted, and are no longer able to perceive the bicycle without our knowledge of its function.

When perception of life becomes a self-evident real, something might be lost. But: Is it possible not to know on command, or to create a platform for perception without context?

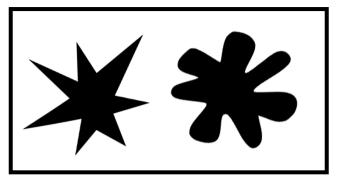
When I am faced with something I do not know, I will quickly try to make an understanding of what this is, how it works and so on, but when I come to face with something familiar, in a new context, with another function, or concept, it feels a bit like knowing something I do not remember, or remembering something I do not know. In these situations, I think I am somehow experiencing a perceptual suspension. Not being able to link my perception to my knowledge, I am left in ambiguity. This might lead to the conclusion that my cognitive perception is very different from a reality, which exists beyond me.

I believe that the mechanism of perception is always subjective. But what happens when we are experiencing something that we cannot read easily? When there is no context, perceiving becomes more of a sensory experience. It would be, however, paradoxical to claim, that when perceiving something out of its context, and thereby disconnected from knowledgeable memory, we are being more subjective. This paradox arises by understanding subjectivity in two different ways: Subjectivity as our reality, experienced through a filter of awareness such as memory and knowledge. And, Subjectivity as our reality, experienced without this filter.

In order to explore these notions we will employ two case histories of soviet neuropsychologist Alexander Romanovic Luria: *The Man with a Shattered World*, in where he presents and studies the journal of ex-soviet soldier Zasetsky, who after being wounded in the head, at the battle of Smolensk in 1943, faced profound perceptual, memory and language problems, and *The Mind of a Mnemonist* in where he studies the perception and memory of professional mnemonist Solomon Shereshevsky. Further more we will utilize an interview in relation to our subject, which I made with Alice who is "synesthetic". We will consider the

mechanics of the absurd, in a comparison between two photos of nail-art, and excerpts from *The Space of Literature* by Maurice Blanchot. Trobriand Cricket serves as an example of what I am inspired by, which I, in the tittle of this thesis call the re-pronunciation of archetypes, and this will be assessed in juxtaposition with Allan Kaprow's ideas about non-art.

BE REAL



1

We all have the ability to make more or less complex associations. The following might be a good example of this. When presented with the pictures above, and asked which shape is called Kiki, and which one is called Bouba, most people will reply that the jagged shape to the left is called Kiki, while the curved shape to the right is called Bouba. In some way, in the mechanism of being creative it seems a bit as if synesthetic² associations are made subconsciously or intuitively. For example: the painter who "feels" that this space of his painting should be painted red, or the poet who "senses" that the word succeeding dog should be the word blue. This "feeling", "sensing", could be called intuition, and as the Kiki & Bouba experiment indicate, that the meaning of sound is not arbitrary, but might belong to a consistent collective perception, other parts of intuition might also be a part of this perception. But, do we share a collective subjectivity, and if so, how does it affect or alter our collective existence?

Monday evening the 25th of November 2013, I had scheduled for an interview with Alice, who is a graphic designer and experience strong visual synesthetic responses with numbers.

I asked her first to explain the visual appearance of numbers.

She replied as follows:

- 1 is White
- 2 is Blue
- 3 is Purple
- 4 is Red
- 5 is Yellow
- 6 is White
- 7 is Green
- 8 is White
- 9 is Black
- 10 is Purple

I see them in 3d into a dark blue space.

I thought I wanted to test this out, so I constructed this image:

When I asked her what was depicted in the image, she responded quickly, within few seconds.

Cherry

Apple

When I looked at the image, I could only see a square of numbers, black on white, and for this reason it seemed incredible, that Alice could see a depiction so promptly. The picture below, however, imitating the square of numbers as Alice sees it, makes it clear, that for her, it is only natural to see a clear depiction, and for this reason being able to respond immediately.

Further more, Alice made a clear distinction between intuitive associations, and her synesthetic responses. When asked if she connects any feelings to numbers she replied:

I don't know why four is red. It has always been like that. I can make analogies with everything that surrounds me, and the feelings it inspires me. Colours inspire me feelings, but it's like that with everyone else as well. It helps me to remember telephone numbers, parking, birthdays. It hinders me more than anything else. I mean, I am zero in mathematics. Sometimes numbers are white, so it's hard on a sheet of paper for example, everything in my head mix and colours don't go together.

Later in the interview I asked Alice if she thought that the world is different from how we perceive it in our minds, and her answer was quite distinct:

Yes, as Maupassant (popular 19th-century French writer) I think we are limited to our needs as humans. I think we don't see everything. Our faculties are limited to our current life. For a long time I have been very anxious about that.

Following, Alice said:

Objectivity doesn't exist. Maybe your blue is my green. I like the phrase: Objectivity is the camouflage of subjectivity, but one thing might be objective. For example what I can physically experience, because I feel something and I hear something and other people can say the same thing. Like: this table is smooth and flat.

In the dictionary, part of the explanation of objectivity goes as follows:

Not dependent on the mind for existence; actual: a matter of objective fact.³

This is the philosophical idea of objectivity as a truth or reality⁴, and not the objectivity, which can be spoken of as neutrality.

I think this description can only be an assumption. It is an assumption that concludes, that the world might be different from how we experience it in our minds. This assumption really puzzles me a lot. How is it possible to perceive this

objectivity? Can we escape the matrix of our minds and enter the realm of actual matter of objective fact? An assumed objective fact could be that gas particles are spaced far apart and, for this reason, moves at a higher speed than a liquid. This is proved by technology and science, which is based on human perception. But: How can we prove something as an objective fact, when we only have our own human perception to evaluate this proof? Can something that is not part of our reality be considered real?

In *The Mind of a Mnemonist* ⁵ Records of Solomon Shereshevsky's thoughts and Reasoning are frequently analysed. In the fourth chapter, is a subchapter about his perception of words. One record in this chapter goes as follows:

... I was ill with scarlatina ... I had come back from Hebrew school with a headache and my mother had said: "He has heets [Yiddish: "fever"]. True enough! Heets is intense, like lightning... and I had

such a sharp orange light coming out of my head. So that word's

right for sure!

... But take the word holz [Yiddish: "firewood"]. It just doesn't fit. Holz has such a brilliant hue, a ray of light around it ... Yet it's supposed to mean "log" ... No, that's wrong—some misunderstanding.

... Then there's the word "pig" [Russian: svinyd]. Now, I ask you, can this really be a pig? Svi-n-ya— it's so fine, so elegant... But what a difference when you come to khavronya [Russian: "sow"] or khazzer [Yiddish: "pig"]. That's really it—the kh sound makes me think of a fat greasy belly, a rough coat caked with dried mud, a khazzer!...

... And when I was five they took me to the He- brew school to begin studying. Before that, the teacher had been to our apartment. So when my parents told me: "You'll go to school and study with Kamerazh," I figured this meant the man I'd seen, the one with the dark beard who was dressed in a long coat and broad-brimmed hat. Clearly this was Kamerazh, except that the word rebe [Yiddish: "teacher"] just didn't fit him . . . Rebe is something white, whereas he was so dark.

. . . And then there's the word Nebuchadnezzar [Yid- dish pronunciation: Nabukhadneitser] . . . No, this is some mistake.

He was so wicked, he could tear a lion to pieces. If it were Nebukhadreitser, that would really suit him!

- ... As for shnits [Yiddish: "pointed"], that's all right. It had to be something thin and sharp.
- ... And dog [Russian: "great Dane"] is also understandable ... It's big and should have that sort of word...
- ... But take the word samovar. Of course it's just sheer luster—
 not from the samovar, but from the letter s. But the Germans use
 the word Teemaschine. That's not right. Tee is a falling sound—
 it's here! Oi! I was afraid of that, it's on the floor . . . So how
 could Teemaschine mean the same thing as samovar? . . . 6

This seems to be a highly individual and subjective way of perceiving words. Keeping this in mind, I think it is interesting that Shereshevsky, somehow, shows a belief in this perception as a sort of universal reality. By indicating it as some misunderstanding or, some mistake when a word does not match with his synesthetic experience of what it represents, he is proclaiming his reality as being general fact. The sad thing is then, simply, that most people cannot detect this

reality. If we are to believe him, it means that our reality is only part of a greater reality. This is something science declares. – We are filtering the information we receive in order to relate only to the most crucial and relevant information we need to survive. ⁷ People influenced by psychedelics often report having experienced what they call Ego-death, or out of the body experiences. What happens, scientifically, when influenced by these drugs, is that our filtering of information is decreased, and in this way our perceived input widens. ⁸ This could feel a bit like loosing your ego, or leaving your body, but does that make our perception less subjective?

When somebody tells you to *be real!* he is somehow advising you to behave in order to survive. I think this reality has something to do with what Alice was talking about when she said: *Our faculties are limited to our current life*.

In *The Man with a shattered World* ⁹ we find excerpts from Luria's subject, the ex-soviet soldier, Zasetsky's journal. In the following excerpt he describes, how he perceives his body fragmentally as a result of the brain damage he got in the war

:

Often I fall into a kind of stupor and don't understand what's going on around me; I have no sense of objects. One minute I stand there thinking about something, the next I lapse into forgetfulness. But suddenly I'll come to, look to the right of me, and be horrified to discover half of my body is gone. I'm terrified; I try to figure out what's become of my right arm and leg, the entire right side of my body. I move the fingers of my left hand, feel them, but can't see the fingers of my right hand and somehow I'm not even aware that they're there. And I get terribly upset. I know there's something I should keep in mind — that I suddenly "lose" the right side of my body because I'm forgetting I can't see on my right side but I can't get used to that idea, so often I'm terrified when part of my body disappears. 10

This can serve as an example of how our perception, works in association with our knowledge in the creation of our reality; When Zasetsky forgets that he cannot see on his right side, his perception of only having half a body becomes reality. When the only possible way we can acquire knowledge, is through our perception of our reality, in evaluation with the knowledge we already have, our reality, our knowledge, and our perception, seems to be simultaneously, subjective, nuclear, and self-generated.

RECOGNITION IN WEIRD VEHICLES



By recognizing knowledge extracted from its original context, or concept, our logical way of perceiving is lost. Since perception and knowledge is not separated, but works together in the creation of our reality, I think this could be perceived as a sort of alienation in our reality. The mismatch in seeing the screen of a first hand shooter game painted

onto a fingernail is amplified in the diversity of the layered elements/dimensions. Even though it might not be rational to paint ones nails, it corresponds to a certain category of sense. Once an image is painted, however, we become, not only, aware of the act of painting, but also aware of the absurdity of the canvas, in this case, being a nail. Yet this mechanism would not bear the same fruits if something went missing. The key, and the stimulant of all the rest, is the image, which is painted onto the nail. If there would have been a painting of Hello Kitty, it would seem more logical, because this would be fitting to it's vehicle, and this mechanism would not be apparent:



We can, however, also see the logics of these examples on another plan, which has more to do with tactility: While the painting of Hello Kitty is flat and 2-dimensional, and in this way matches our expectations of how a nail is supposed to be experienced, the perspective of the first hand shooter image, creates a room going into the finger, and for this reason becomes an unexpected tactile experience.

These mechanisms consist of information we do not pay attention to usually, made perceptible through a particular vehicle. It could be fruitful to utilize this mechanism as an appliance against taking reality for granted, since alienation, in some sense, forms as a respond to this.

In *The Space of Literature* Maurice Blanchot talks about the realness in a work of art. ¹¹

The work is eminently what it is made of. It is what makes its nature and its matter visible or present, it is the glorification of its reality: verbal rhythm in the poem, sound in music, light become color in painting, space become stone in the house.

He makes it even clearer when he continues:

The work makes what disappears in the object appear. The statue glorifies the marble. The painting is not made from material ingredients added to a canvas; it is the presence of this matter, which without it would remain hidden to us. And the poem likewise is not made with ideas, or with words; it is the point from which words begin to become their appearance, and the elemental depth upon which this appearance is opened while at the same time it closes.

In some sense material in an art context, can be independent from what it signifies. But, the glorification in the "first hand shooter nail" seems more to be a glorification of its vehicle, then its material.

In contradiction to the realness in an artwork, Blanchot mentions a nothingness in what he calls the usual object :

For in the usual object (this much we know), matter itself is of no

particular interest; and the more the matter that made it made it right for its use -- the more the material is appropriate -- the more it nears nothingness.

When an object becomes its function, and its context, it is no longer what it really is – something that is no longer what it really is, is close to being nothing. In regard of that, in some way, it could be argued that we live in a "nothing-world".

Blanchot, however, also questions the realness he talks about:

The work is not adequately accounted for by this thingly realness which it seems to place before us. This description is only a sound comparison. It is nevertheless, important, for it shows us that if the sculptor uses stone, and if the road builder also uses stone, the first one uses it in such a way that it is not used, consumed, negated by usage, but affirmed, revealed in its obscurity, as a road which leads only to itself.

I experience, that we are able to frame everything as art. In this sense I think it is not only the one who creates the work of art, who is the artist, but also the one who can perceive it as such. We are able to make everything our reality. Therefore we can argue that: Nothing will ever be non-real, and nothing will always be non-real. And while reality might be nothing, reality can only be real. But if reality is nothing, and nothing is non-real, how can this reality then be real?

TO MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD NON-ART

The game of cricket was first introduced to the Trobriand Islands in 1903 by the British Methodist missionary William Gilmore, who hoped it could serve as a substitute for *Kayasa*, a Trobriand competitive activity held between rivaling tribes, executed traditionally in the form of ritual warfare. Since it's introduction in 1903, the game has gone through a considerable transformation and has now become an activity of its own: Trobriand Cricket. One could say that the Trobrianders has found a way around Gilmore's colonial schemes, and the game now incorporates many Trobriand traditions, such as ritual dances and chants. As the new rules and customs have been integrated, the game has become an annual Trobriand tradition held in connection with Harvest.¹²



In my research it is not just the Trobriand tribal aesthetics I am intrigued by, and neither the anthropological aspects of Trobriand Cricket, but more so the merging of two diverse archetypes, and the mechanism this impact forms. Lets think of Trobriand Cricket as an example of an archetype and a phenomenon (British Cricket) that has been successfully recontextualized. Being so, I wonder where such a phenomenon fits into Allan Kaprow's ideas about Non-art, and Un-art.¹³ Trobriand Cricket has not evolved from an art-

context, but has been through a similar process of Recontextualization, and Appropriation, and therefor, in many aspects, does not seem to fit into the pigeonhole of what Kaprow speaks of as non-art. It is irrelevant to make a conclusion as to whether Trobriand cricket has any distinct artistic intention or not. Nevertheless it possesses similar conceptual qualities, with much contemporary art, and on that account it could be related to what Kaprow means when he in his Manifesto from 1966, says:

Not only does art become life, but life refuses to be itself.¹⁴

But, as much as his observation is part of an artistic vision on the future of art, it is also a very specific attitude to life, which can almost be leveled in synchronization with Buddhist Zenism ideas. ¹⁵ While Allan Kaprow's idea of Unart is dependent of the artists' acknowledgement in order to exist, because it is all about perceiving life as art, however, Trobriand Cricket actually bears the aesthetic criteria to be art, while being life. - What, through Kaprow's perspective, would make it a very art-like Non-art.

In digesting ideas like these, our fork and knife, could be considered the notion of perception through knowledge vs. the notion of perception through experience; the last one related to the ideology Kaprow is formulating and trying to devote him self to. I think that, in a way, children experience the world as art, in the same way Kaprow represents – And now we come back to the bicycle example. -The only obvious difference I can think of is, that if a child has no knowledge and therefore would experience the world as Non-art, Kaprow has attained knowledge, and through experience he has finally been able to let go of this knowledge, in order to experience the world as Un-art. I think that, this is what, according to Allan Kaprow, makes him an "Un-artist", and the mainstream "Non-artists". In this circumstance I would consider a Child the best "Non-artist". - But, can this distinction be made after all?

If we were to consider Un-art the destination of art, in some aspect it seems to be the furthest away from life you can get. When Allan Kaprow says that he is following the legacy of Jackson Pollock, he is in some sense indicating that, he is doing what Pollock could not, and by escaping the

canvas and framing real life as art, he has somehow taken the final step. In *The Education of the Un-artist, Part I*, from 1971 Kaprow states the following:

Nonart is often confused with antiart (password two), which in Dada time was nonart aggressively (and wittily) intruded into the arts world to jar conventional values and provoke positive aesthetic and/or ethical responses. Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi, Erik Satie's Furniture Music, and Marcel Duchamp's Fountain are familiar examples. The late Sam Goodman's New York exhibition some years ago of varieties of sculpted dung piles was still another. Nonart has no such intent; and intent is part of both function and feeling in any situation that deliberately blurs its operational context.¹⁶

This is an example of what Non-art is not, and I think it captures why Kaprow can merely blur art and life. Namely, because making art, always comes with an intention. This is why Kaprow remains an Un-artist, but as he says it himself in *Happenings in the New York Scene:*

I am not so sure whether what we do now is art or something not

quite art. If I call it art, it is because I wish to avoid the endless arguments some other name would bring forth.¹⁷

When I look at a phenomenon such as Trobriand Cricket, the perspective from where I perceive it might be similar to the perspective from where Allan Kaprow perceives Non-art. - It is a perspective of a reality disconnected from its context. Moreover, anyhow, it feels a bit as if I am looking at reality from another reality. Allan Kaprow's biggest obstacle could be the idea, of the artist being the one who makes art happen. But the holy grail of Kaprow, I think, is that art is everywhere to experience, and utilize for anyone who is able to perceive it as such. - And I think it is. Even though the attention to these ideas has been drawn in the history of art and philosophy, I do not know whether it is important to call this person an artist, or this experience art.

Is Trobriand Cricket unsuccessful non-art, since it is not as non-arty as brushing my teeth in the morning? - And would Kaprow's Un-art enter the realm of Non-art if he could eliminate his knowledge of art? One could say that, it is never possible to distinguish between good and bad, wright

and wrong, without conceptualizing our reality, but if this is out of discussion, how can we then make any distinction between non-art and art?

AFTER

In life I search for meaning, but in the re-pronunciation of my reality, I am somehow able to appreciate its absurdity and meaninglessness. It is the catastrophe in catharsis, and it is full of wonder. My being, is my reality, and I am made from my knowledge and my perception. Since being real seems to be a way to survive, acting against this reality, as a creative pursuit, may serve as a way to explore death. I am interested in archetypes because they serve as illustrations of my reality, and for this reason they have become cornerstones in my understanding of life. Re-pronouncing these illustrations is, and can only be, an attempt to lose myself, since the only way to succeed in losing myself, and my reality, completely, would be to stop being: Perceiving reality without myself is not a goal or a purpose, but more so my impossible periphery. It is hard to make a clear distinction to where my being begins and where it stops, and for this reason I feel simultaneously very connected and very disconnected from the world. When life re-pronounces itself, and becomes ambiguous, it does so

because it does no longer connect directly with my knowledge of it, and this is somehow very liberating to experience. But, no matter to what extend I am disconnected from one reality, I will never discover anything which is not real.

notes

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bouba/kiki_effect, 10-11-2013

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Objectivity_%28philosophy%2 9, 21-12-2013

² From Synesthesia: is a neurological condition in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway.

³ New Oxford American Dictionary, A. Stevenson & C. A. Lindberg, Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁵ Luria, A. R., *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, Harvard University Press, 1998.

⁶ Luria, A. R., "Words", *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 86.

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognition, 27-12-2013

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychedelics, 27-12-2013

⁹ Luria, A. R., *The Man with a Shattered World*, Harvard University Press, 1987.

- ¹¹ Blanchot, M., "The Statue Glorifies the Marble", *The Space of Litterature*, University of Nebraska Press, 1982, p. 223.
- You can watch the first minute or so of this documentary about Trobriand Cricket, here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jTP7a9I0dU

 J. Leach & G. Kildea, *Trobriand Cricket an Ingenious Response to Colonialism*, Published by the Government of Papua New Guinea, 1976, 02-12-2013
- ¹³ Allan Kaprov categorized art into three basic notions: Art (Art-art), Un-art, and Non-art. Art (Art-art) can shortly be explained as the art that is encountered in the constitution of the art-world. Un-art, is life perceived as art. Non-art is Un-art, but from someone/something who/which is not an artist.
- ¹⁴ J. Kelley, "Manifesto (1966)", Allan Kaprow, Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life, University of California Press, 2003, p. 81.

¹⁰ Luria, A. R., "His Body", *The Man with a Shattered World*, Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 42.

¹⁵ Kaprow believed the spirit of Pragmatism to be the mechanism of Zen, and that Zen therefore was the spirit of

Pragmatism. On page nr. xxiv, of the above mentioned book Kaprow is quoted "Doing is knowing".

- ¹⁶ J. Kelley, "The Education of the Un-artist, Part I (1971)", *Allan Kaprow, Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, University of California Press, 2003, p. 99.
- ¹⁷ J. Kelley, "Happenings in the New York Scene", *Allan Kaprow, Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, University of California Press, 2003, p. 21. (This page strangely disappeared from my book, as I was looking for the quote, page 21 had suddenly gone blank.)

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