

Delusion, disease and art

Abstract

In this article I seek to show how the link between art and homeopathic medicine is embedded in the work of all homeopaths and in its philosophy, from the founding principles of Samuel Hahnemann to modern commentators and practitioners.

Art as a medium of human expression is fundamental to how we perceive all disease and cure. This article is an extension of earlier work, published recently,¹ which showed how art can be a focus of case taking leading to the correct remedy selection.

Keywords: art, homeopathy, delusion, disease, cure, health

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Opinion

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty. This is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know”
John Keats - Ode on a Grecian Urn.

When I was looking for a way of representing the new Art and Homeopathy movement,^{1,2} I was always drawn to an image on a Greek urn, of a muse playing the lyre (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Muse playing the lyre (Public domain).

Now I use this image to depict what the movement is about. But why? I am beginning to realise that what I am grappling with in linking art with homeopathy is to do with Hahnemann and the Organon³ directly. Aphorism 1, “*The physician’s highest and only calling, is to restore the sick to health, to cure as it is termed*”, is a restatement of Keats’ famous line. Because the idea of cure is to restore the organism to health, is to aspire to the idea of restoring perfection. And beauty is perfection, in a Platonic, idealistic but nonetheless human way.

Of course we fall short of true “cure”, for all sorts of reasons. We are flawed by psora, the perfectly healthy organism is a phenomenon unlikely to be found in modern society. Although who knows whether

there may still be a group of humans as yet “undiscovered”, who retain perfect health.

The other main stem of my thesis is that disease is delusion. I am not the first to do this. Sankaran uses this idea in *The Substance of Homoeopathy* (p358) “*Thus I could demonstrate the basic idea that disease is delusion, awareness is cure*”.⁴ That is, real awareness of the root of the problem, which is usually a delusion. Thus, homeopathic thinking tells us that disease is not external to us, but is part of us. Either through susceptibility, miasmatic inheritance, and lifestyle, maintaining cause or lack of self awareness, the organism creates a dynamic process called disease. This is a full or partial manifestation of the delusion belonging to and brought about by, the unhealthy organism. And it is completely from us. We create it. In just the same way as dreams are complete manifestations of the unconscious, disease is a manifestation of delusion within the organism. It is generally an unconscious process. We do not wish to be diseased, but it happens willy-nilly. If we were perfect beings, we would be aware and not susceptible to the exigencies of imperfection. (Interestingly, dreams are pure delusions, belonging to us, which can help lead to the similimum choice, if interpreted with other characteristics. In the same way, if all the cells of the organism are indivisible parts of the whole, then we can see that dream delusion can be seen as part of disease delusion. They are one).

In my thesis, that perfect being would also represent beauty, because here, as with perfect health, there is no delusion, only truth, hence Keats’ poetic contention, with its myriad layers of philosophical and ontological meaning. Also layered with meaning, in homeopathic philosophy, is the idea of opposites and polarity. For example, under three rubrics connected with apparently contradictory symptoms, we find the same remedies within these rubrics (see below). *Gelsemium*, to a strong degree, has fear of being alone but with aggravation from company. *Phosphorus*, equally has an element of aggravation from company, with strong fear of being alone. Of course we explain it by saying that in some circumstances, a different delusion is at work, because of the stage of pathology, or some other way in which the remedy presents in the proving. But these are *both* delusion states. In health there is no delusion, only truth. In terms of opposites, this is the ultimate. Truth is the absence of delusion. The similimum, be it one of these or some other remedy, will restore that health, that state of truth. Each remedy can contain within it contradictory delusion states and, as the similimum, the absence of delusion (or cure) (Figure 2).

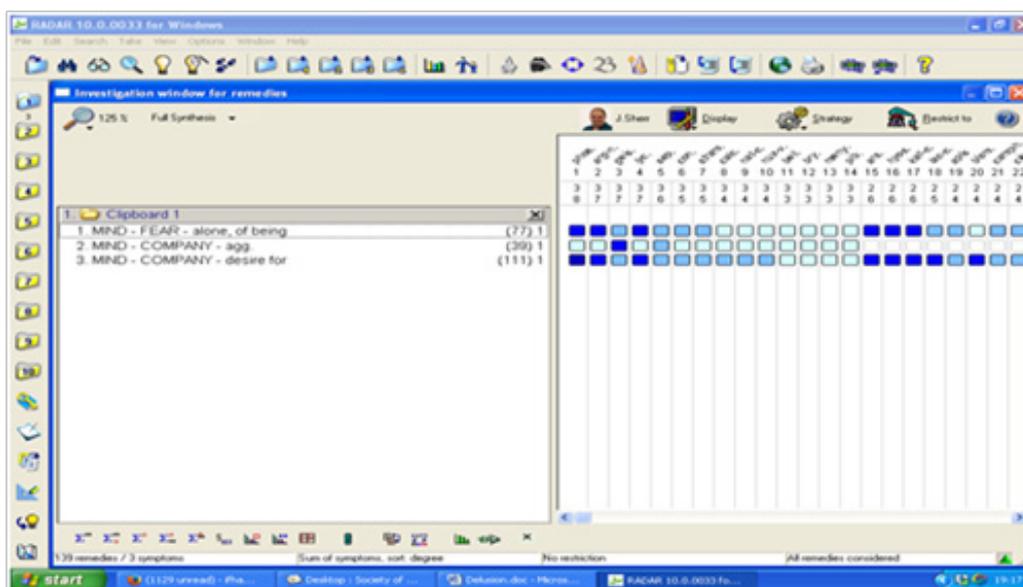


Figure 2 RADAR screen shot (Archibel Belgium).

Psora and the beginnings of delusion

My friend and colleague, Maria Jevtic, has written about the origins of Psora⁵ as being the beginnings of the road to disease as we know it today. Before this, we had the acute miasm, as Hahnemann and later Sankaran described it, where the perils of life and death tended to be from nature and the natural world. Infection from a wound is real, not a delusion and would be a real peril. Fear of wild animals is not a delusion but a real fear, needing to be acted upon by flight or fight. Delusional fears, as Vithoulkas has pointed out,⁶ are psoric and are about the anxieties of a more manufactured life, which farming and organisation brought about. Thus it is perfectly clear that fear of poverty, is a delusional state, brought about by a human construct, not by nature. As we travel further away from the source and towards the society regulated by timepieces, factories, religion and money, so the delusions grow and we are more susceptible to disease.

Now what has this to do with art? It is a mistake to suppose that there existed a perfect world, a pre-lapsarian paradise, where mankind existed in a Garden of Eden, although most myths do have such a story. True, one explanation of this myth is that there is a collective race memory of the time before settled existence, which recalls the hunter-gatherer life as a sort of paradise.⁷ But even in those times, we had our irrational fears and we invented religion to provide explanations.⁸ Religion is in many ways one of the most complete delusions ever created, but it was a necessary stage of development of a flawed organism, providing succour, comfort, explanation and a hiding place for an imperfect being. But what is most fascinating and paradoxical about religion is that it also tries to provide for and contains the idea of reaching perfection as a higher ideal.

And this is where art comes in. From earliest times, humankind has created art; images of deities, depictions of animals, records of or precursors to, successful hunting. And often these images (or stories) are rooted in religion. Art has many functions in human life, but we can settle on two for our purposes.

- i. The depiction or interpretation of life, death and religion
- ii. The depiction of perfection often also through religion

- iii. The first of these has ancient origins and is always with us. Take the following examples:

Figure 3 This sculpture is at least 40,000 years old. It's known as the *Löwenmensch* and was found in Germany. It's a lion headed god, so thought. It depicts an animal/man deity and we can only speculate on its meaning. But it is a work of art. It was not created to kill animals with or to skin a pelt. Maybe it was to help drive out evil spirits; or give strength in the hunt.



Figure 3 *Löwenmensch*, a lion-headed figurine found in Germany, dating to the Upper Paleolithic of about 40,000 BCE (Public Domain).



Figure 4 *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso 1937, Oil on canvas, 349cm × 776cm, PICASSO, la exposición del Reina-Prado, *Guernica* is in the collection of Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Without doubt. Picasso’s *Guernica* is a depiction of war and suffering. It is about the human condition. It is important because it resonates across all cultures and emotions. It also depicts a delusional state, because there is a sense of madness here, of the world gone wrong. This is not about the natural world.

The second of my purposes for art, is about the striving for beauty and perfection which is within humankind. The following examples show this attempt by an artist to do this.

Figure 5 is a depiction of male beauty, from the ancient Greek perspective. It is not religious but very rooted in the idea of what human physical perfection may be.



Figure 5 Roman copy after *The Doryphoros* (Greek Δορυφόρος “Spear-Bearer” by Polykleitos (British Museum).

Figure 6 This is *The Three Graces*, by Antonio Canova. These are the daughters of Zeus, said to represent beauty, charm and joy. So we are getting nearer to religious depictions of perfection.



Figure 6 *The Three Graces*, by Antonio Canova, Victoria and Albert Museum London.

The image (Figure 7) of the Buddha is an obvious religious interpretation and is meant to depict perfection in a religious sense, but what humankind can also aspire to.



Figure 7 Statue of the Buddha, artist unknown (Public Domain).

The beauty of the simiimum

In my analogy of beauty is truth and the truth of the 1st Aphorism, I want to do two things. Firstly, to suggest that the giving of the simiimum and the attainment of cure, is attempting to restore the organism to a healthy state as close as possible to the pre-psoric state. It may be very wide of the mark but at least it is subtly altering the delusional state which blocks the attainment of true health. The artistic parallel here is with the attempt by the artist to cut into human delusion and see more of the truth which lies beneath. Picasso did this for us in *Guernica*. Maybe the correct remedy is also doing it for us.

Secondly, there is a notion that in looking for cure we are seeking perfection. If we really experience something life changing with the simiimum, for instance, a restoration of lost joy which Vithoulkas speaks of as the mark of health, we have reached for the perfection in art which is sought in the works depicted above. And some of those works are about perfectibility in the religious sense.

There is no doubt that religion is a human construct, in many ways a delusion. But it has been with us for as long as humans have been aware of their mortality. So this delusion is not like the delusion which is disease. It is capable of having meaning, of containing many layers of explanation and without it we would be less than human. In this sense then, there are some delusions which are necessary for development. Humans would not have developed as they have without religion. But like all human constructs, it is a delusion and therefore flawed. It leads both to suffering but also to the possibility of perfection. It is not a delusion which always leads to a disease state, but has the possibility of reaching a higher sense of purpose. Artists

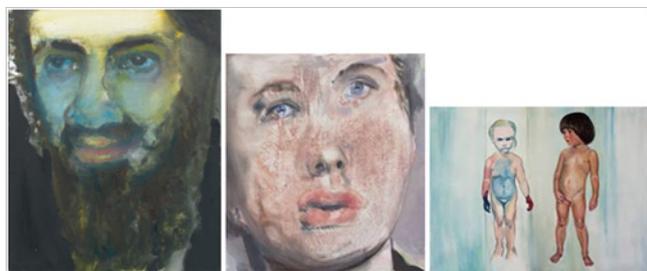


Figure 8 Images from recent Marlene Dumas Exhibition at Tate Modern. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/marlene-dumas-image-burden>



Figure 9 Victim, No resurrection, Terry Duffy 1982.

throughout the centuries have been the channels of these collective delusions and it is this direct link with the artist's interpretation and the disease/delusion state, which our art and homeopathy movement explores.

The power of the true simiimum

I am in no way trying to say that religion and the simiimum have anything in common. It is quite the reverse. For the simiimum to truly restore an organism to perfect health, in the ideal Platonic sense, then all delusions would be stripped away as superfluous, because contradictory, and with it religion. But we can never really restore perfect health, if it ever existed. Meanwhile we strive to depict these things; truth, beauty and perfection, as well as awareness, in artistic terms, because it is the one way we can. Religion then in the older world, the pre-atomic world, the pre AIDS world, helped humans to grapple with the delusions of that time and to seek attainment of some higher purpose.

Art in those days, was serving a different set of delusions. So we had the depictions I have shown above. Now art is trying to do other things. Our modern collective delusions come from another unconscious source. So our art is serving other purposes. The artist Marlene Dumas's recent exhibition at Tate Modern,⁹ is an example of how we depict the fears, the syphilitic, the AIDS miasm, the legacy of Hiroshima, the voyeurism of the facebook society. Very rarely is beauty depicted, in an accepted sense. She paints the images and delusions of the day. Possibly the Row 7 remedies are also depicted here (Figures 8-10).

Religion, delusion and the post-apocalyptic world

The Row 7 remedies, the *Uranium* series of the periodic table, are possibly a different order of delusion, if we call disease delusion. It seems that at least some of the diseases prevalent in modern life, which were not so before, may actually be from outside us. According to Dutch homeopath Jan Scholten, some of the pathologies of this series are genetic defects, congenital defects, virus infections and AIDS. It is quite likely that we have in part created many of these, in creating the substances which do not occur in nature. In creating them we have released some forces which only we can be responsible for.

Scholten says the people who are in this series, "*use invisible sources of power, and they work in secret, unbeknown to most of humanity. They know how to harness the hidden knowledge and wisdom buried deep within the unconscious*".¹⁰ Are we not here dealing with the mysterious and powerful, represented by the notorious 1%, the manipulators of the money markets and global capitalism amongst other things? This is the apocalyptic world, ushered in probably from the end of World War 1. *Easter 1916*, the poem by W.B Yeats,¹¹ is where we hear the phrase *A terrible beauty is born*, and that seems to resonate with the splitting of the atom and the age of Row 7. That phrase, an oxymoron, is descriptive of the sight of the Atomic Bomb exploding for the first time. It also sums up the contradiction I spoke of above, about remedies containing the opposites of each other. So whilst the *Uranium* series is apocalyptic in its threat, it is post apocalyptic in its promise - the promise of an enlightened and delusion free humanity.

Religion also has a part to play here in how artists in this age use and depict things like Christian symbols. The Liverpool born artist

Terry Duffy painted a huge canvas in 1982, as a response to the riots which beset that city. It is called *Victim, no resurrection*¹² (Figure 11).

Again we can see, as with *Geurnica*, a depiction of human suffering, but also much deeper levels are explored, partly Christian myth, partly political and social ills. To me this image also contains the apocalyptic world of the *Uranium* series. Interestingly, this work is being seen as a symbol of reconciliation, in communities around the world beset by historic, manmade, suffering, and usually delusional in its origins. Surely the work is post apocalyptic in its influence.

I am reminded also of another Yeats poem, *The Second Coming*; “*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world*” where the poem ends, “*And what rough beast, its hour come at last/ slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*”¹¹ For me this is a depiction of encroaching apocalypse, expressed in artistic but quasi-religious, terms, our hugest and most long lasting delusion.

Art and homeopathy

I believe that the whole notion of delusion, health, human aspiration, beauty and the finding of the similimum, are tied inextricably to art. Art is human expression at its best. It both reflects the society and tries to change it by making us aware. It is only by being aware that we strip away delusion and move towards health. Artists both depict their own delusional state and reflect society's, but they are usually aware as well, either consciously or unconsciously. This is why I have found that paying attention to the artistic expression can lead to finding the similimum. Art may well be about the passion people having in their lives. Find that passion and you are led to the similimum.

I have taken cases of people who actually are artists, by inclination or training and there is a link between their work and the remedies they respond to. But it need not be artists who show this. Artistic expression and passion are closely linked. Veterinary Homeopath Geoff Johnson says he always asks about the hobbies of his patients as it reveals their true nature and passion. Somewhere there is a link between the disease delusion, the “artistic interpretation” delusion and the similimum and it is what we as a movement are trying to uncover.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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