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"Ethics and Aesthetics are One": The Case of Zen Aesthetics

Abstract: The theoretical possibility of the aims and methods of moral education and of art education converging is explored through the examination of the Japanese Tea Ceremony which is grounded in the Buddhist metaphysics and psychology of *nonduality*. This exploration is in response to the call for "aestheticized ethics" in the contemporary Western moral theorizing which rejects the traditional rigid separation of the moral and the aesthetic.

I. Introduction

As many may recognize, the title of this paper, "Ethics and aesthetics are one," comes from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1961, p. 147). Shusterman (1990) explains that what Wittgenstein means by this statement is that there exists a fundamental unity between ethics and aesthetics, and he goes on to explicate the many aspects, according to Wittgenstein, in which ethics and aesthetics intersect each other. Since that enigmatic statement was made by Wittgenstein over thirty years ago, the moral theorizing in the West has been seeing an increasing interest in the "aestheticization of ethics," that is, the conception of living ethically in terms of living aesthetically. My own interest in this Western trend in the aestheticization of ethics stems from the recognition of a parallel case in Eastern thought, namely, Buddhist aesthetics (for example, Zen aesthetics) which is fundamentally grounded in the unity of ethics and aesthetics. In this paper, I shall first briefly examine the unity thesis of ethics and aesthetics as it came to be appreciated in the contemporary moral theorizing in the West. I shall then explore the unity thesis through the example of Zen aesthetics. To my understanding, Zen aesthetics is a perfect example of the fundamental unity of art and morality achieved through a kind of

"transcendental" viewpoint which has to do with overcoming the egoic, dualistic frame of consciousness. More about this by and by.

I undertake the exploration of the unity thesis with two educational implications in mind. First, if ethics and aesthetics can be conceived to be fundamentally linked, then one implication that this understanding has is that moral education and art education could be a vehicle for enhancing each other. By this, I do not mean that all art education can and should be reduced to moral education or vice versa. Rather, my suggestion is that there may be a certain kind of understanding for morality and art under which the education in these domains may fruitfully share a common space of endeavor. Secondly, with respect to the Zen aesthetics example, the reason why I bring in the Zen aesthetics as a case study is my awareness that a cross-cultural perspective is increasingly demanded of us as educators by our commitment to multicultural education. Because the metaphysical or ontological orientation towards life and world that underlies Zen aesthetics is different from the one that we are familiar with in the Western tradition, my bringing together of the postmodern trend in the aestheticization of the ethics with Zen aesthetics may serve to facilitate the kind of fruitful "fusion of horizons" that Taylor (1994), borrowing Gadamer's celebrated phrase, speaks of in "The Politics of Recognition" as an ideal for multicultural education.

II. Aestheticization of the Ethical: a Postmodern Search for an Ethic of Life

What has aesthetics to do with ethics? We often think of the artist and the moralist as being two different breeds of people and, even, likely to be antithetical in their search for *summum bonum*. While I concede that this perception harbors stereotyping, nonetheless I believe that it reveals the vein of a particular conception of morality that is part of our commonsensical view,

namely that morality has to do with following rules of conduct that are formulated in view of "human nature" and human purpose. In contrast, our commonsensical understanding also has it that in doing art and being creative, the artist has to challenge the norms and break rules. But what if there is no fixed human nature and human purpose? What if the notion of what we are like and what we aspire to is an open-ended question always waiting to be reconceived and reformulated, therefore requiring all the creativity of an artist? Ethics and aesthetics then may not be two distinct and separate spheres of concern but can inform and complement each other. Let us pursue this possibility.

The belief in human nature and human purpose is what is usually referred to as essentialism in moral philosophy, and it has been a basic metaphysical assumption in the Western tradition since ancient times. According to this view, human nature or essence (*ergon*) is what defines us as truly human, and therefore knowing it helps us to be clear about the end (*telos*) towards which we should strive to live. This essentialistic understanding, which actually is still very much alive in our midst, is rooted in the ancient and medieval Western metaphysics of there being one transcendental noumenal reality which lies outside the contingency of existence. As long as we believed in this noumenal reality and its realization in humans as essence and telos, morality will be a matter of figuring these out and devising ways to fulfill them. As Putnam (1987, p. 48) puts it, if "we know what the human essence is, what the human ergon is, what the inclusive human end is, and we are capable of knowing all this using reason, then the problem of using rationality and freewill, first to discover what one should do and then to do it, is, in certain ways analogous to an engineering problem." Ethics as an "applied science" of determining right things to do and right ways to live is essentially connected

with this foundationalistic metaphysics of there being a fixed and objective reality of human nature and human ends.

However, we have good reasons to argue that reality is *always already* interpreted by the human mind which itself is contingently disposed by the whole evolutionary stream of history and culture. It is safe to say that at least intellectually we have been increasingly abandoning the foundationalistic metaphysics of the human *ergon* and *telos*. In this so-called postmodern era, people are increasingly suspicious of any talk of ahistorical, inherent, fixed properties to the world and humans which define us as who we are and which point us to where we should go. (To be expected, there are thinkers--for example, MacIntyre (1984)--who feel that we ought to resurrect some form of essentialistic, foundationalistic worldview in order to restore our faith in morality.) Speaking of Freud as one of the foremost modern progenitors of the aestheticization of ethics, Rorty (1986, p. 15) states that "[Freud] broke some of the last chains that bind us to the Greek idea that we or the world, have a nature that, once discovered, will tell us what we should do with ourselves."

So, what remains in the way of ethical theorizing and conduct when we have abandoned the transcendently anchoring notions of essence and *telos*? Precisely, the problem with this situation is that nothing seems to remain, creating "ethical *horror vacui*," to use Shusterman's dramatic description. So central was the essentialistic worldview to our traditional conceptions of ethics that once it collapses, the result is a moral vacuum which, some would argue, is surely indicated by such signs as the lack of societal agreement on moral values, standards, criteria, and means. It is into this vacuum that, according to Shusterman, "the ethics of taste naturally rushes in" (Shusterman, 1987: p. 118). But, what is this ethics of taste? This is how Shusterman characterizes it, and I will quote him at some length (*ibid.*, p. 123):

The result of this demotion of the moral to merely one significant factor in ethical deliberation on how to live the good life is to make such deliberation much more like aesthetic judgment and justification than syllogistic or legalistic discourse. Finding what is right becomes an affair of finding the most fitting and appealing gestalt, of perceiving the most attractive and harmonious constellation of various and variously weighted, changing and changingly weighted, features in a given situation or life. . . Similarly, ethical justification must come to resemble the aesthetic in appealing to perceptually persuasive argument in its attempt to convince, an attempt that relies on and aims to sustain and extend some basic consensus, and yet also recognizes and serves to promote a tolerance of difference of perception or taste emerging from it. Ethical judgments can no more be demonstratively proven categorically true through unexceptionable principles than can aesthetic ones. Ethics and aesthetics become one in this meaningful and sensible sense; and the project of an ethical life becomes an exercise in living aesthetically.

From the above account, we gather that the plurality of moral perceptions and moral arguments, which defies the traditional conception of morality as universalizable rules and principles, is the fundamental character of aestheticized ethics. Both at the general, macro level of debating about visions and versions of moral life and moral conduct and at the particular, micro level of debating about the interpretation of a concrete moral situation, the aestheticized ethics results in an open-ended, dynamic, and decisively pluralistic approach to moral aims, means, and deliberation.

Now, one might raise the question here: "It is all very well to embrace pluralism and engage in dynamic and open-ended interpretations with respect to moral perception and debates about moral matters in general. But since the possibility of assessing all these different visions, versions and perceptions against a system of fundamental rights and wrongs is ruled out, wouldn't the moral debate end up just as a debate, with no common ground upon which to build a public morality? How can an ethic of taste be embraced as a viable public morality? How can there be a public morality without norms which regulate and make coherent the interpersonal conducts?"

I would argue that the ethics of taste is not without norms or criteria that act as regulators or guides. Shusterman's own account is suggestive of a few regulatory principles, such as tolerance of difference, ambiguity, and uncertainty; perception of emergent harmony; and cultivation of sensitivity or receptivity. To

me, these concepts and others figure in both the language of morals and of arts and serve to bridge the two fields with the result of enriching each other. Of these concepts, receptivity and sensitivity are of particular interest to me because I am persuaded by the view that their cultivation and exercise would constitute the core of moral responsibility on the part of the moral agents (Nussbaum 1990; Vetlesen 1994). For, being moral implies, at the most foundational level, understanding, not abstractly but concretely, in flesh and blood, as it were, each other's experiences concerning joy, fears, sufferings, and hopes, and thus empathy, or more accurately, empathic moral imagination, is a *sine qua non* moral activity that secures such understanding.

Empathy and its cognate virtues or moral abilities have received an increasing recognition as the key to becoming morally competent humans (Vetlesen 1994, Blum 1994). Not only does the lack of moral empathy result in an impoverished understanding of others, but also, worse, it may even result in missing entirely the moral import of a situation. Moral blindness and numbness set in (Vetlesen 1994), disabling us to function as moral agents, let alone sensitive and sagacious ones.

Above, inasmuch as I made this failure of moral empathy sound like the moral agent's failure to *exercise* his or her capacity, to my understanding, a truer picture is one in which the agent has at her disposal a limited or restricted capacity for empathy. In other words, I am shifting in this case the framework of understanding from the person to the capacity, and my reason for this move is the belief that it is not the will but the capacity or resources which we have to focus on when trying to enhance the moral performance. In other words, the foundational task of becoming moral is to cultivate and enlarge this capacity, and it is at this juncture that I wish to bring in the case of Zen aesthetics. For, Zen aesthetics is the clearest example of where the cultivation of the capacity for

empathy, not just with other humans but with all sentient beings, is pursued to the utmost extent of deconstructing the dualistic consciousness of the subject-object dichotomy that is deemed to stand in the way of attaining the full capacity for empathy. The result is uncovering or recovering the nondual consciousness that we are said to be capable of, which, according to the Buddhist epistemology and psychology, is essential to our becoming radically empathic, therefore, compassionate, harmony-seeking human beings. The limited space in this paper does not allow me to explore properly the Buddhist epistemology and psychology and its fundamental insight into the nondual consciousness and its import to morality. Thus, what I will do is to examine the notion of nondual consciousness in the context of the Buddhist aesthetics with the intent of showing how ethics and aesthetics coincide in this case.

III. Zen Aesthetics

In his exposition of the Buddhist aesthetics, Yanagi (1972, p. 152) states that "[t]he sense of beauty is born when the opposition between subject and object has been dissolved, when the subject called 'I' and the object called 'it' have both vanished into the realm of Non-dual Entirety," and that "[a] true awareness of beauty is to be found when beauty watches beauty, not when 'I' watches 'it'." Nishida makes the same point (1973, p. 101): "To view a thing aesthetically must mean to submerge the self within the thing in itself."

When the self submerges within its object, when the "I" and the "it" both vanish into "Non-dual Entirety," what is achieved is subject-object unity. But what exactly is this unity? If, for instance, by subject-object unity we understand indistinguishability of the subject and object, so that a person, for instance, looking at a teapot, is unable to say which is the teapot and which is the human, such indistinguishability, even if possible as a pathology, is not what is aimed at

in Zen. A Zennist is not one who would mistake the teapot for a person. But, she may easily say that she is "one with" the teapot and demonstrates it by picking it up and pouring tea from it. Of course, others pour tea from a teapot, too, but they may not perceive that they are "one with" their teapots, and so, we ask, what is the crucial difference between the attainer and the non-attainer of nondual consciousness?

If we are looking for behavioral differences, we are bound to be disappointed. Inasmuch as we think, and justifiably so, that how we perceive, think, and feel must make difference to how we behave, *if* we expect that we can tell nondual behaviour from dualistic behaviour just on the basis of the kinds of behaviour, I think we are mistaken. For, duality or nonduality here concerns states of consciousness, and as such, they are matters of intentionality. There is no one-to-one correspondence between behaviour and intention. Two different people may exhibit the same behaviour but with very different understanding, motivation, and attitude. Back to our example, one person could be pouring tea as an *expression* of experiencing seamless interconnectedness and harmony between the material world (as instantiated by the teapot and the tea inside) and humans, or between humans (as instantiated by the tea server and her guest). But another person could be pouring tea for the other with an outward show of cordiality but inward resentment. When actions are the expressions of one's seamless interconnectedness and harmony with the world, they are nondual. Our actions are dualistic when they are expressions of a dualistic mind. A dualistic person experiences the world as the Other, and therefore demarcates the self as categorically separate from the world.

But, at this point, my reader may point out to me that harmony and interconnectedness could not be exclusive to the nondual consciousness as I was making it out to be, and that ordinary folks, presumably in the realm of dualistic

consciousness, also talk about, work with, and strive after harmony and interconnectedness. So, if I want to insist on there being a real difference between the nondual sense of interconnectedness and the dualistic sense of it, then I must qualify the notion of interconnectedness and show that there is a significant difference. Recalling Yanagi's description of nondual aesthetic perception, what is crucially captured there is dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy, not just as a theoretical possibility but as experience--as an event in the consciousness. The dissolution marks a definite and substantial change in the texture of consciousness, definitely noticeable to the experiencer.

Granted that it must be particularly difficult to describe and characterize nondual experience using a fundamentally dualistic language, still Yanagi and others converge on the characterization of the nonduality as the subject's not experiencing herself or himself to be categorically and substantially separate from all that surrounds one.

It is not so much that the boundary between the self and the other disappears as the boundary now appears as a site of the co-emergence of the two. Boundary does not separate; it joins the two sides inseparably like the two sides of a mobius strip. This understanding of the self-other unity is a radical challenge to the usual view of the self-other dichotomy so that, if we accept the former, it spells the end of the latter. In other words, embracing (not only theoretically but also experientially) the self-other co-emergence is simultaneously a deconstruction of the substantive notion and experience of the self, i.e., the self as an ego, categorically separate from the other. When this ego-self is dissolved, what would take its place is the sense of the self as a site of unbounded awareness. It is unbounded because the previous demarcation between the self and the other transforms into their continuity as in the continuity of the inside and the outside in a mobius strip. Self as a site of

awareness is no more identified with one body than with another. For example, watching a sunset, how can we truly separate the perceiver, the perceived, and the perception? The perception is always already the co-emergence of the perceived and the perceiver (Macy 1991). Self as a site of experience can no more be singularly located in one of these terms than in another. Thus a Buddhist is more likely to understand the 'self' as a relational term, i.e., a term that signifies a relation rather than an entity.

All Buddhist practices, whether or not formally differentiated as moral, spiritual, or aesthetic, aim at the deconstruction of the singular entity-like sense of the self and the discovery and articulation of the relational sense. As alluded to before, this relational sense is not restricted to human relations but embraces all forms of relatedness that characterize our embeddedness in the sentient and material world. Art is that which *art*-iculates life, as Panikkar (1992) so aptly puts it, and in this sense the Buddhist aesthetic practices are an articulation of the seamless interconnectedness of life, or as we say in Buddhism, the co-dependent arising (*paticca samuppada*), of the sentient world. "To be one with" is a common expression used over and over again in the practice of any Zen-inspired arts, and it must be understood as an expression of the central effort in Buddhism to discover our fundamental interconnectedness with and embeddedness in the phenomenal world. Thus in pursuing Calligraphy (*shuuji*), Water-colour Painting (*mizue*), Pottery (*yakimono*), Flower Arrangement (*ikebana*), Tea Ceremony (*chanoyu*), and even martial arts, the practitioner strives to be "one with" the particular media and the subjects of his or her chosen art.

IV. The Way of Tea (*Chado*)

Of the various Zen arts, I have chosen the Tea Ceremony as my case study in which to explore and illustrate the notion that the Zen ethics and aesthetics

converge on the art of overcoming the dualistic ego-consciousness and discovering the continuity of the self with the non-self, thereby achieving harmony with the world. The Tea Ceremony is a particularly appropriate example for us because it is a composite art that incorporates many other art forms, including the art of human interaction, and thus its reach of relatedness with the world through various media is all-embracing.

Drinking green tea is said to have its origin in Zen meditation practice. Green tea was served to the meditators in order to help them stay awake and alert during meditation. But from this utilitarian beginning, it became an art of its own and highly revered as a path (*tao*) of non-egoic consciousness. Hammitzsch states (1979, p. 63) that "[t]he Tea Way. . . is a Way designed to bring man to the annihilation of the ego, to pave the way for the ultimate experience of enlightenment." To many of us, this claim about the art of tea may strike fantastical. How could the ordinary activity of drinking tea together bring about what appears to be the most transcendental result--that of overcoming the dualistic ego-consciousness. Instead of tackling this question discursively, I will illustrate my answer with a narrative picture of the tea ceremony and a commentary thereupon. Below I will briefly sketch out a typical Japanese Tea Ceremony.

On this blue-skied autumn day, bright with leaves turning red and gold, I traveled to Master Okada's tea garden. A sanctuary within, the garden was enclosed by a white-washed wall partitioned by wooden beams and capped with blue-gray roof tiles. Stepping inside the yellow cedar gate, I was greeted by a most exquisite yet natural-looking landscape of bamboo groves, Japanese maples, azalea bushes, and the ground thickly carpeted with varieties of moss. Deep stillness and tranquillity, accentuated by the sound of a small waterfall somewhere, pervaded the landscape. Following the garden path and crossing a little footbridge, I arrived at the waiting-lodge. After exchanging greetings with other guests, I took up my seat beside them on the bamboo bench, and soon I was absorbed in the tranquil beauty of the garden. Listening to the birds and waterfall, I felt as though I had been

suddenly transported to another dimension of reality far away from the hectic pace of life and its many harrowing anxieties and discordance. Breathing in deeply the peaceful atmosphere, I was beginning to feel a new sense of spaciousness settling in, loosening the usual tightness and preoccupiedness.

Soon the tea host appeared in the garden path, silently bowed to us, and walked away, signaling that he was ready to receive us. The guests got up, bowed to each other, and one by one walked down the winding garden path. A short way from the tea-house, we came to a large stone basin filled with trickling water from a bamboo pipe. There we performed the symbolic purification ritual of rinsing the mouth and washing the hands. Free of "worldly dust," we were ready to enter the tea-room.

The door to the tea-room was so low that I had to bend down, as if bowing, to enter. It was said of the olden days of samurai that even powerful warriors had to take off their long swords and come down on their knees to enter the tea room. The demeanor was a symbolic gesture of setting aside one's ego, here represented by the sword. The room was bare except for the flower-arrangement in the alcove (*tokonoma*), but the design and the construction of the timber-clad ceiling, the fresh tatami floor, the walls with embedded wooden posts, showing an exquisite grain, all spoke to me of a refined taste of austere simplicity and naturalness.

The Tea Ceremony began now, with our host bowing deeply to the guests. He brought in various tea utensils and proceeded to make the fire in the fire-pit in the center of the floor to boil the tea-water in an iron-kettle. His every movement was beautifully precise and composed like the decisively executed strokes of calligraphy. The guests, likewise, followed the choreographed movements of holding the tea-bowl in the left palm, swilling it around after each sip, wiping the place on the rim from where one has drunk, and passing the tea bowl to the next guest with a deep bow. Guests and host conversed convivially about matters of aesthetic appreciation and appraisal regarding tea utensils, teas, and tea practices. The last part of the ceremony was devoted to a detailed examination of the tea-bowl and the tea-caddy.

Now, having given a brief sketch of the Tea Ceremony, I shall proceed to discuss how the aesthetic experience of participating in the ceremony is a Buddhist practice of nonduality. Hammitzsch, in relating to us the Tea Master Takuan Shuho's classic text on Tea, states that the whole nature of the Tea Way is outlined by four concepts: *kei* (reverence), *wa* (harmony); *sei* (purity), and *jaku* (tranquillity). Hammitzsch then goes on to explain each of these concepts. As

for *kei* (reverence), he states (*ibid.*, p. 69): "The concept 'reverence', *kei*, comprises deference, respect for each other and at the same time, self-control in so far as the ego is concerned." In my understanding, what is implied here is a causal relationship between diminution of the ego and arising of reverence. In other words, reverence results from shedding the egoic frame of mind which constantly assesses and calculates about the world in terms of its own gains and losses. The whole orchestration of participation that makes up the Tea Ceremony--from the contemplation on the landscape, the tea-room, and the tea-utensils, to the repeated rounds of bowing, including bending down low to enter the tea-room, from meticulous observance of the most minute details of the ceremonial arrangement and sequences to the convivial conversations--is an exercise designed to draw the person out of the usual self-concerns and to enfold him or her into a heightened sense of relatedness and harmony with all that surrounds the person. The tea garden is a microcosm into which the mountains, the rivers, the rocks, and the flowers are transported, and thus a nondual appreciation of the tea-garden is a prelude to the nondual perception of all of the natural world. Even the boiling sound of water in the iron-kettle over the brazier is there to remind the listener of the wind singing in the pine. Through reverent participation, the tea host and guests experience harmony among the myriad of sentient and insentient beings. As Takuan Shuho so authoritatively pronounces it, "Chanoyu [tea ceremony] takes its origin from the spirit of harmonious union between heaven and earth, and thus becomes a vehicle of peace, a means of preserving order in the world" (quoted by Hammitzsch, pp 66-67).

This harmony is none other than the experience of nonduality where the self does not stand apart from, or as it often happens, in opposition to the Other, worrying about its self-preservation and self-gain, but instead experiences itself as being appropriately enfolded into the harmonious "inter-being," to use Thich

Nhat Hanh's neologism. In the context of inter-being--that is, seamless interconnectedness and co-emergence of all beings--the self is but a function and a site of receptivity and attunement, of adjusting thoughts and feelings, perceptions and actions to what lies before one. Here is Hammitzsch once again (Ibid, p.69): "One's heart, once it has surrendered itself to [reverence and harmony] in the Zen sense, no longer has any room for any particular object or circumstance, but devotes itself solely to what is in front of it--in the sense of *mushin* [no-mind]--and thus becomes totally 'gentle and tender', *nagoyaka*." This gentle and tender *mushin* --a psychic product of this highly aesthetic activity--is the source of nonviolence and compassion.

This connection between Zen aesthetics and the cultivation of compassion is further brought out in the third and fourth cardinal concepts of *Chado*, which are purity (*sei*) and tranquillity (*jaku*). Purity signifies the mind-heart free and empty of those emotions caused by the turbulence of egoic desires, and tranquillity is the resultant state of the mind-heart. The moral import of purity and tranquillity does not lie simply in the enjoyableness of these states. If this were the case, it would indeed be difficult to see what their import is to morality. The moral import of purity and tranquillity is their ability to render the mind-heart receptive and sensitive so that it can be more fully present to what lies before it. Just as a turbulent water surface cannot register clear images, a mind-heart full of egoic desires and concerns, even in the form of good will and sympathy, is not able to be attentive and sensitively attuned to reality around. Thus, the point of purity and tranquillity is not that one does not want to be disturbed by anything and wishes to stay pure and tranquil at all times, in which case, one should just avoid involvement in human affairs. Rather, purity and tranquillity renders the mind-heart fit for the task of empathically perceiving and sharing the joys and sufferings of the world.

Communion--the dwelling in the space of nondual participation--is what Tea Ceremony is all about. Rikyu, one of the most celebrated Tea Masters of the past, left behind a haiku whose last stanza simply expresses this communion between people:

Garden path, tea-room!
The guest and with him his host
together at tea:
their action is harmony
and nothing stands between them. (Quoted by Hammitzsch, p. 61)

A contemporary tea master, Master Sen, similarly speaks of the essence of *chado*: "What is the most wonderful thing for people like myself who follow the Way of Tea? My answer: the oneness of host and guest created through 'meeting heart to heart' and sharing a bowl of tea." (Quoted by Carter, p. 122).

V. Concluding remarks

The idea of art-making as a form of therapy is now commonly accepted. But art-making as a vehicle of moral education seems still novel with us. Yet, my exploration of Zen aesthetics convinces me that we should explore such a possibility. Though the Tea Ceremony is a highly involved practice requiring a special setting and equipment, the essence behind this practice, namely the art of nondual participation, seems to be potentially present in all forms of art. Frederick Franck, author of *Zen Seeing*, *Zen Drawing: Meditation in Action*, and eminent teacher of drawing as an art of perception, unhesitatingly tells us that the capacity to draw is the same capacity "for empathy, wonder, and reverence, for awe for the simplest things of nature, for a leaf, a scallion" (1993, p. 14) and that "[t]o see is that specifically human capacity that opens one up to empathy, to compassion with all that lives and dies" (ibid. p. 39). Franck contrasts "seeing" from "looking-at" and argues that what distinguishes the former from the latter is

transformed consciousness wherein the subject-object dichotomy no longer holds. Franck explains (ibid, xvii):

The thing I draw, be it leaf, rosebush, woman, or child, is no longer a thing, no longer my "object" over and against which I am a supercilious "subject." The split is healed. When I am drawing leaf or caterpillar or human face, it is at once de-thingified. . . By drawing it, I dignify it, I declare it worthy of total attention, as worthy of attention as I am myself, for sheer existence is the awesome mystery and miracle we share.

In another passage, Franck recounts his nondual meeting with a cow: (ibid., p. 15).

One day I was drawing a cow in a meadow near our house. As I stood there drawing, our eyes met, and at that instant she stopped being "a cow." She had become this singular fellow being whose warm breath mixed with my own in the cold fall air.

To me, art-making as this practice of "deep seeing" that heals the subject-object duality goes straight to the heart of morality, since, as I understand it, the heart of morality is compassion and caring for our fellow beings, humans and non-humans alike.

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