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The Phenomenology of a Simple Song: Expression, Creativity, and the Recovery of Aesthetics

by
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Abstract

By placing aesthetics as art back within the phenomena of experience, this work seeks to recover philosophical aesthetics from the marginal position into which it has been relegated. Merleau-Ponty's thought and the perception of music lay a groundwork for ontology and epistemology less conditioned by Cartesian biases. Musical thinking highlights the rich content of thought, the dimensionality of meaning, and the need to place language back within the phenomena of expression. A phenomenology of expression by way of songwriting reveals a complex creative process, a good portion of which is not transparent (neither rooted in reflective thought nor consciously determined). There emerges a notion of subjectivity and intentionality that transcends and subtends the "I" with which we ordinarily identify. The lyre of Orpheus opens the doors of the unreflective life, the aesthetic dimension, the intimacy of the world that transcends us, and the generosity of the subjectivity that subtends us.

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In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes: "This book, once begun, is not a certain set of ideas; it constitutes for me an open situation, for which I could not possibly provide any complex formula, and in which I struggle blindly on until, miraculously, thoughts and words become organized by themselves."[1] So finally, this thesis is a testament to whatever it is that allows for this coming together, this crystallization, whether in thesis or song. The work represents a token of this generosity and is, in return, a token of my gratitude.

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 429.

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Our view of [humanity] will remain superficial so long as we fail to go back to that origin, so long as we fail to find, beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence, and as long as we do not describe the action which breaks this silence.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty[2]

It was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge …

Virginia Woolf[3]

[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 214. All subsequent references to this work will be noted in the text by page number.

[3] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 37.

Chapter 1: The Phenomenology of A Simple Song

The lyre of Orpheus opens the doors of the underworld.[4]

It might seem preposterous to assert that the consideration of a simple song can inform philosophy, but this is the premise from which the current work begins. The starting point is unlikely enough for those scholars of aesthetics who, like Theodor Adorno, hold to an elitism (i.e. a high art versus low art divide), but it is all the more implausible from the point of view of those who marginalize the study of aesthetics as philosophically unimportant.[5] Though the study is situated within more recent discussions about the disenfranchisement of art and the neglect of philosophical aesthetics, the marriage of philosophy and art has long been fraught: witness the ancient quarrel between philosophers and poets cited in Plato's work.[6] Socrates famously added insult to injury by concluding that it would be best to kick the poets out of his ideal republic. Yet, in the *Phaedo*, when facing death, Socrates was not so strident in his assessments:

> It appears that [the philosopher] … had from time to time a sense of void, loss, unfulfilled duty with regard to art. In prison he told his friends how, on several occasions, a voice had spoken to him in a dream, saying "Practice music, Socrates!" Almost to the end he remained confident that his philosophy represented the highest art of the muses, and would not fully believe that a

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[4] E.T.A. Hoffman quoted in Robertson Davies, *The Lyre of Orpheus* (London: Viking Penguin, 1988).

[5] Mary Devereaux, "The Philosophical Status of Aesthetics," *Aesthetics On-line* (1998): accessed January 10, 2013, http://aesthetics-online.org/articles/index.php?articles_id=6.
"Like many analytic philosophers, I felt that doing aesthetics, as that was officially pursued, was, well, not really doing philosophy." Arthur C. Danto, "Stopping Making Art," *Aesthetics On-line* (2010): accessed on March 6, 2013, http://www.aesthetics-online.org/articles/index.php?articles_id=47.

[6] Plato, *The Republic and Other Works*, translated by B. Jowett (New York: Anchor Books/ Doubleday, 1973), 302.

> divinity meant to remind him of "common, popular music." Yet in order to unburden his conscience he finally agreed, in prison, to undertake that music which hitherto he had held in low esteem.[7]

Music in this context is a broad term, more aligned with poetry in general than with the narrow definition prevalent today, and so, in response to the admonition, Socrates wrote a hymn to Apollo and some verse. Why would the divinity urge the great philosopher to practice common, popular music? How might the experience of music and the experience of the creation of music inform philosophy? This is the question to be explored.

The assertion is that far from merely serving up what Steven Pinker refers to as "auditory cheesecake," both the phenomena of music and the phenomenology of songwriting have much to offer philosophy. Arguably the biggest factor in the marginalization of aesthetics is a narrow understanding of aesthetics, one that limits its relevance to the study of art as set off in a realm separate from everyday experience. Elitism can fuel this depiction of aesthetics. In *Art as Experience*, John Dewey writes: "When an art product once attains classic status, it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life experience."[8] When 'aesthetics as art' is placed back within the phenomena of experience, a broader notion of aesthetics emerges. The conception of aesthetics promoted here relates less to judgments about works of art or objective constructs of beauty, and more to a dimension or dimensions of experience that

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[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* in Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Francis Golffing (New York: Anchor Books, Random House, 1956), 90.

[8] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 1934), 1.

are realized in a way of being in the world, in an openness to the world. This dimensionality is evident both in the genesis of the work of art and in the life of the work once completed. Maurice Merleau-Ponty says: "Art is the objective realization of a contact with the world, which itself cannot be objectivated."[9] Aesthetics, then, relates to experience, perception, and awareness of this intimate contact—a contact that is relevant not only to how we approach art, but to how we experience the poetry and potency of the self, the world, and others.

Aesthetics is marginalized because a philosophy that is narrowly defined is unable to engage adequately with the subject matter. The disenfranchisement of art and aesthetics can be understood in light of three factors: the limitations of prevalent methodologies in philosophical aesthetics, methodologies that fail to account sufficiently for knowledge as interaction (e.g., the natural-science research paradigm and "spectator model" of aesthetics); a narrow definition of meaning conditioned by presuppositions that commonly arise in the philosophy of language and in semiotics (e.g., meaning as logical, propositional, clear and precise communication, or meaning as a univocal pre-established message that is encoded and decoded); and, underlying these, a notion of thought and consciousness predicated on a pervasive dualism that dichotomizes subject and object, nature and consciousness, reason and emotion, spontaneity and reflection. The methods we adopt condition what we see, and the notion of meaning that we champion determines what we value. A model of "philosophy as science" is unable to reflect all the truths of aesthetics and of complex lived experience. A notion of meaning derived from

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[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, compiled and with notes by Dominique Séglard, translated by Robert Vallier (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 45.

"linguistics as science" is unable to represent adequately how we express and the dimensionality of meaning experienced and expressed. Merleau-Ponty asserts that phenomenology "measures the distance between our experience and this science."[10]

Phenomenology aims, in the most comprehensive sense, at radical reflection from which emerges consciousness of our dependence on an unreflective life (xvi). The word unreflective is not to be associated with unconsciousness or unawareness, but rather with that which cannot be objectivated. Reflection tends to take awareness of the "I think" (the point at which the I has become an object of reflection) as the beginning. Yet preceding and subtending this self-conscious thinking is a more primordial experience and knowledge, and here primordial should not be construed as primitive (i.e. less complex, subordinate). The awareness in radical reflection of an unreflective life is not to be set up in opposition to self-conscious reflection, rather it is reflection coming to awareness of its own beginning and history (xvi, 36). This makes possible another mode of self-consciousness, one that throws into question both the "I think" and the "I am" of Descartes' famous "I think therefore I am" (*cogito ergo sum*).

The consciousness of an unreflective life has two vectors. One is directed outward toward the intimate experience of being integral to and participating in an unreflective life that precedes and transcends the sort of subject/object distinctions from which we ordinarily operate (effecting sympathy, compassion). These subject/object distinctions are not rendered meaningless (or else how could there be intimacy?), rather they are

[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," *The Primacy of Perception*, edited by James M. Edie, translated by William Cobb (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 29.

experienced as moments/aspects of a more fundamental unitary process. The other vector is directed inward toward experience of our identity with this unreflective life, but particularly with the activity (i.e. creativity) of it. It is experience of subjectivity or activity that subtends the I with which we ordinarily identify. The first vector is most easily approached through a consideration of perception (in particular aesthetic perception), and the latter through a consideration of expression (in particular artistic or creative expression where the process is more protracted, and the activity more easily observed). The difficulty in approaching this unreflective life and an aesthetic dimension is that they cannot be presented as determinate conceptual premises or established categorical contents. They cannot be simply objectified, taken as things, as objects that can be extracted or abstracted from living relations. In the words of Alice Walker's Shug: "Don't look like nothing … It ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself."[11] They must be experienced. Once brought to awareness, it becomes clear that they are not obscure or obscured, only painted so by our desire and ultimate failure to objectify them and by the judgment that conceptual indeterminacy is unintelligibility.

This makes discursive discussion about such understandings challenging. Concepts can point toward experience of an unreflective life and an aesthetic dimension, but all too often they become barriers rather than doorways. Georges Didi-Huberman expresses this dilemma in relation to art criticism:

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[11] Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (New York: Harcourt Books, 1982), 195.

> No less often, unfortunately, we choose to close our eyes to the obvious, when this obviousness is there to disconcert us. We close our eyes to the surprises offered the gaze: we arm ourselves in advance with categories that decide for us what to see and what not to see, where to see and where to avoid looking. Our eyes forget to what extent the words used to account for what we see, and even to *choose* what we look at, are ambiguous words, layered by history, formed within one discursive field and deformed within another … . Thus, when … we speak of [it], … we are already running the risk of sinking into theoretical incoherence… . We are especially running the risk of no longer seeing to what extent [it] knows how to catch our gaze unawares, and to what extent it requires us to constantly correct the categories of our discourses, not only our interpretive but even our descriptive categories, in that a simple description … informs in advance the very modalities according to which the interpretive act subsequently unfolds.[12]

To express determinately what the unreflective life is or of what it is constituted is to risk limiting our ability to see and experience it. Yet, if we do not already experience it (and as Shug says, "… when it happen, you can't miss it"), if it is not brought to awareness, how are we to become aware?[13]

Merleau-Ponty's response centres on phenomenological method and in particular a *Phenomenology of Perception*. In Chapter Two, reflection upon the perception of music allows for a fresh elaboration of much that Merleau-Ponty derives from his analysis of visual perception. A phenomenology of music highlights the problems inherent in applying methods to art that presume one can abstract the observer from the system under consideration, or, reciprocally, that one can extract the observed from the system to which it is integral. Perception, as Merleau-Ponty insists, must be seen as the unity of perceiver and perceived, the observer and observed constituting a unitary process. All knowledge is interaction. These observations lay the groundwork for ontology and

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[12] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.

[13] Walker, *The Color Purple*, 195-196.

epistemology less conditioned by Cartesian biases. Consciousness is in and of the world, and our inherence in the world constitutes both the limit and the condition of our knowing. Everything hinges on coming to terms with what Merleau-Ponty terms our "double anonymity"—our identity as at once individual (singular) and integral (general).[14] The logic involved here is not bivalent logic (i.e. it is not a simple either/or, true or false proposition), and the insights gleaned are not simple, but complex and dimensional. They demand a sort of bicameral understanding that allows for the truth of ambiguity and the ambiguity of truth. They point toward metaphor, not merely as a matter of literary technique and rhetoric, but as a representation of the facts of experience. This sort of notion presents problems when it comes to questions of meaning.

Chapter Three centres on the inadequacy of applying narrow notions of meaning to art and aesthetics. Discussion is framed in light of the distinction between the sayable and the unsayable in the thought of early Ludwig Wittgenstein, and on similarly narrow models of language and thought evident within philosophy and linguistic theory. A consideration of musical thinking challenges austere notions of thought that would reduce it to logical propositional language. It demonstrates how the aspects of consciousness often seen as antecedents to thought (e.g., sensing, feeling, impression, intuition) are, rather, active constituents intervolved with the aspects categorized as rational. The multi-dimensional rich content of thought is present both in thinking as ordinarily defined (i.e.

[14] Friedrich Schelling writes: "All science depends on cognizing and identifying a twofold unity, one by means of which a being is in itself, and another by means of which it is in the absolute." F.W.J. Schelling, "Further Presentations From the System of Philosophy (1802)," translated by Michael G Vater, *The Philosophical Forum*, Volume XXXII, No. 4 (Winter 2001): 394-395.

conscious voluntary activity) and in immediacy and intuition. Immediacy takes up the rational products of previous reflection so that, just as rational reflection is not disjoint from other aspects of consciousness, immediacy is not lacking in rational content. To appreciate the dimensionality of meaning, language, and thought, these must be put back within the phenomena of expression and within the process and activity that generates the actualization of expression. *Langue* (spoken language) cannot be taken apart from *parole* (speaking language).[15] One must not merely analyze the products of thought, one must consider thought itself, the process and genesis of what is expressed.

It is significant to note that Socrates' dream did not urge him simply to think about music, observe music, or analyze music. The dream was about the distinction between "philosophical λόγος (rational account) and poetic *μῦθος* (myth, story)," but, more significantly, about the difference between rational thinking and poetic thinking.[16] The dream urged him to practice music, participate in it, create it. This is relevant both to the perception of art, which must be cast as active engagement (e.g., interpretation) as opposed to merely passive reception, as well as to artistic expression, the creation of the work of art. Without participation, there can be only a limited understanding of aesthetics and art, and, more fundamentally, a limited awareness of what these allow one to see and encounter in the world and in oneself. The practice of music and the creation of music are essential to this study. In Chapters Four and Five, first-person phenomenological

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[15] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 3rd ed., translated by R. Harris (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1986). These terms are derived from Saussure's work.

[16] David Roochnik, "The Deathbed Dream of Reason: Socrates' Dream in the Phaedo," *Arethusa*, Volume 34, Number 3 (Fall 2001): 239.

investigation of the simple song by way of songwriting seeks to disclose the human conditions of which Dewey speaks—the experience of music, and the experience from which the work of art (i.e. the song) emerges. It aims to observe the genesis of expression both verbal and musical, and to provide a glimpse, however obliquely, of the impetus underlying this genesis.

In addition to the theoretical exposition, the thesis will include a portfolio of songs produced over the course of the study.[17] These songs were intended to represent the product of practice and inquiry that allowed for close observation of the process and of the phenomena under investigation. They emerged as the means of expression whereby insight was gained into the matters under consideration, and where the process informed and often surprised in its ability to cut through the conceptual divergences allowing central themes to emerge naked and unapologetic. This is crucial. Expression is not merely a way to communicate pre-determined meaning; meaning is actualized by and in expression. When we focus primarily on the product of expression, a work that appears coherent and purposeful, we tend to extrapolate backwards, casting it as the realization of a clear and conscious intention of the artist. Yet, as much as the artist is actively engaged in the process, the process, or some aspect of it, informs the artist; it proffers a gift. Observations of the creative process subvert simplistic understandings of Descartes' *cogito*. They lead to questions about how both the "I" and the "think" might rightfully be circumscribed. The former will be looked at in Chapter Four in terms of subjectivity, and

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[17] See Appendix A: Simple Songs (Lyrics) and Appendix B: Simple Songs (CD).

the latter in Chapter Five, in terms of intentionality. The focus of the study then is less on product and more on process, less on the actualized creation and more on creativity itself.

What began as the phenomenology of a simple song took up, by some imperative inherent in the process, a phenomenology of expression that reflected upon both songwriting and academic writing. This came about because of somewhat radical differences between the creative process of songwriting and those of academic writing. For me, a song almost sings itself, a poem falls out; a thesis, however, is birthed through long and painful labour. The differences are a matter of content and scale, they are matters of the media involved, the literary forms and forms of discourse. To generalize either experience as entirely representative of expression is to miss out on aspects that warrant attention. The primary contrasts have to do with the prevalence of poetic thinking in songwriting as opposed to the prevalence of rational thinking in thesis writing (though there is always reason in the song and poetry in the thesis). The contrasting experiences highlighted that which is prominent in the songwriting process, but all too easily buried in the process of philosophical discursive expression; it is something I mark here as "the heart of the matter."

The heart of the matter relates to the unreflective life, and is not one point, one thing, one meaning, but rather it stands in for the spirit of the work. It insists that all knowledge is interaction. It asserts meaning cannot be confined to the letter and law of a work or expression. It maintains that rational thinking is not disjoint from feeling, and that immediacy and spontaneity are not vague indeterminacy, but are pregnant with significance and meaning. It points toward the impetus and the motivation for a work of

art or for a life. This is not what one might think; it is not a strictly conscious logical decision, but rather something that underlies or motivates the particular conscious choice.[18] Just as reflection must become aware of its beginning, its history, and its dependence on an unreflective life, so too our understanding of will, conscious intention, and intellectual projects must account for the unreflective life, existential projects, and what we will explore in terms of intentionality. If these are not perceived, we grasp neither the ways in which we are bound nor the ways in which we are free. The heart of the matter indicates something that cannot be pointed to as toward an object. It is the impetus and lure for creativity, or better, how this is experienced from situation to situation—a longing, sometimes strong and with clear direction, other times subtler and more meandering. It draws us like destiny and carries us like grace. The heart of the matter represents the relational nature of consciousness and reality, relation that has not merely to do with knowledge, but also with intimacy. In regard to philosophy in particular, the heart of the matter is about the love of wisdom, a love without which there can be no wisdom.

Reflecting upon the genesis of the song, it becomes easier to understand how, in the discursive thesis, the unreflective life and the aesthetic dimension cannot be aimed at as one would aim at a clear purpose or determinate goal. Rather, they are already tacit in the notion of intentionality that will be developed here, in the unenunciated teleology, the inherent purposiveness of the task, the inquiry, the longing, the desire to express and to

[18] "Goethe once said: '*Alles Wollen ist ja nur ein Wollen, weil wir eben sollten*'—whenever a man wills, this act of will always presupposes a grasp of what he ought to do. The 'ought' is ontologically prior to the will." Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 64.

understand.[19] They emerge objectively at the end, and only then are known as the beginning:

> We shall not cease from exploration.
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started,
> And know the place for the first time.[20]

In the creative process one becomes acutely aware "of a logic lived through which cannot account for itself" and of "an *immanent meaning* which is not clear to itself and becomes … aware of itself only through" the activity of expression which is at once exploration and explication (57). As Husserl puts it, the task of this study relates to "pure and, in a way, still mute experience which it is a question of bringing to the pure expression of its own significance."[21]

Though a good part of the subject matter of this work would be categorized as unsayable (e.g., that which cannot be expressed simply in definitive concepts, that which cannot be reduced to bivalent, true or false, propositions), I will argue that leaving such

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[19] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, translated by J.H. Bernard (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000). Purposiveness is a term used throughout Kant's text. Though happy to allude to aspects of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* with the use of purposiveness, I do not intend to echo his notion. The word, in itself, is apt. Just as meaningfulness can communicate an experience of meaning that only in retrospect can be made more explicit and that can never be reduced to any one thing said of it, so purposiveness expresses the corollary in activity. It represents the meaningfulness as opposed to the meaning of activity and will tie into how intentionality becomes understood.

[20] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," v. 241-244 in M.H. Abrams et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Third Edition: Major Authors Edition* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), 2552.

[21] Edmund Husserl, *Méditations Cartésiennes* (Paris: Colin, 1931), 33 quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 254.

experience in silence is not a viable option.[22] What we hold up to and for each other is a testament to what we value personally, but it also makes a statement about what ought to be valued generally. To leave the unsayable in silence out of some pietistic notion, or out of fear of one's inevitable failure to communicate it adequately, is to surrender it and its value to relative oblivion. In a more insidious way, leaving it out of philosophical discourse is to risk it gradually receding, virtually disappearing from our perception. If language and philosophy are limited to the sayable (i.e. that which can be said in clear and precise terms, that which is logically verifiable as true or false), we create a discourse from which the unsayable is excluded. Cultural discourse, as Marshall McLuhan might put it, is a medium—an extension of humanity that in turn conditions humanity. McLuhan cautions that the effect of the medium is insidious in that it "alter[s] sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without resistance."[23] If the unsayable relates to the ethical, as Ludwig Wittgenstein suggests, we must find some way to recover it from the silence into which it is all too often relegated.[24]

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[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein writes: "What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence," and "only propositions have sense." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge Classics, 1974), 3, 16. Wittgenstein sets out two conditions for the sayable (i.e. sensical language): "First, the structure of the proposition must conform with the constraints of logical form, and second, the elements of the proposition must have reference. … Moreover, logic itself gives us the structure and limits of what can be said at all. Logic is based on the idea that every proposition is either true or false." Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar, "Ludwig Wittgenstein," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), edited by E. N. Zalta, accessed September 30, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/wittgenstein/>.

[23] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Toronto: Signet Books, 1964), 33, viii.

[24] Wittgenstein writes:

> The point of the book [*Tractatus*] is ethical. I once wanted to give a few words in the foreword which now actually are not in it, which, however, I'll write to you now because they might be a key for you: I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here [the sayable], and of everything which I have not written [the unsayable]. And precisely this second

In the quest to recover the unsayable and to integrate it into philosophical discourse, aesthetics is far from marginal; it illuminates the roots of perception, cognition, consciousness, and reality. The recovery of the unsayable depends upon the recovery of aesthetics. If philosophy is to retain its claim to wisdom and relevance, aesthetics like ethics must regain its rightful place as a serious area of study. After exiling the poets, Socrates said:

> Shall I propose, then, that she [poetry] be allowed to return from exile, but upon this condition only–that she make a defence of herself in lyrical or some other metre?... And we may further grant to those of her defenders who are lovers of poetry and yet not poets the permission to speak in prose on her behalf: let them show not only that she is pleasant but also useful to States and to human life, and we will listen in a kindly spirit; for if this can be proved we shall surely be the gainers.[25]

In this work, I have picked up the gauntlet, and cautious yet hopeful, make a foray. I have, after many years, found the conviction to stand by poetry, which I now see has stood by me unfailingly. In realizing this conviction, the philosopher in me has been the obstacle, but also the means. I have long had a love of both poetry and philosophy, and so the foray is made in a kindly spirit. It is less an attempt to overthrow, and more an overture. If the overture were to come out like music, it would most of all express longing—the sense of something lost, but, perhaps, not irrevocably. It would be at once sad and hopeful, and within it would be a trace of the very thing I hope to recover. In

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> part is the important one. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, strictly speaking, it can ONLY be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: All of that which many are babbling today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it.

Letter from Wittgenstein to Ludwig von Ficker (1919), translated by Ray Monk in Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, *Bad Modernisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 88.

[25] Plato, *The Republic*, "Book X," *The Republic and Other Works,* 302.

seeking to “bring the philosopher closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title ‘*love* of knowing’ and be *actual* knowing,” philosophy has lost something.[26] Like Eurydice, this love has been relegated, if not to the underworld, then to the margins. Perhaps Orpheus can yet recover it.

[26] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, The Oxford University Press Translations, electronic edition (Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: InteLex Corporation, 2000), §5, p. 3. Italics in original.

Chapter 2: Music, Method, and Marginalization

He shook his head sadly. "I glanced over it," said he. "Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon it. Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid."

"But the romance was there," I remonstrated. "I could not tamper with the facts."

"Some facts should be suppressed, or, at least, a just sense of proportion should be observed in treating them. The only point in the case which deserved mention was the curious analytical reasoning from effects to causes, by which I succeeded in unraveling it."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*[27]

[27] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (1890) (Hong Kong: Forgotten Books, 2008), 3 quoted in Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2.

Knowledge as Interaction

In attempting to adumbrate what this work hopes to recover in philosophy, the difference between philosophy as 'love of knowing' and philosophy as 'actual knowing' is illustrative. The former indicates relation, even intimacy, with what is given, and the latter implies possession of what is given. The first is open, an ongoing process in which the other is continually met. The second seeks closure—an end. It seeks writing in stone, immovable conclusions, unwavering certainty. The methods of the 'love of knowing' are no less rigorous than those of 'actual knowing,' but they demand that in addition to attending to what is given, one must attend to the self and to how the object is constituted in and for consciousness. One must attend to how one stands in relation to what is given. First and foremost, all knowledge is interaction.

To say that all knowledge is interaction is to indicate that as soon as we entertain knowledge of something, we are concerned with human knowledge of it. Knowledge without a knower is meaningless. Moreover, our knowledge is human. If there were such a thing as the wisdom of trees, or the mind of God, or the definable essence of an object, I could not hope to know these apart from human knowledge. I cannot extract myself from the equation. Essence cannot be taken apart from existence.[28] Knowledge represents an interaction with what is given in experience, whether in reality or ideality. This means that it is relational, and that it is not merely a matter of what we know, but also how we

[28] Essence, that which makes a thing what it is fundamentally, cannot be reduced to the idea or concept we have of it; it must always relate to the facticity of it. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Looking for the world's essence is not looking for what it is as an idea once it has been reduced to a theme of discourse; it is looking for what it is as a fact for us, before any thematization" (xvii).

know. So the methods we champion or disavow have a significant bearing on how we understand truth and meaning.

The methods by and through which art is approached determine, to a great extent, how aesthetics comes to be understood and valued. In discussing the disenfranchisement of art and the neglect of aesthetics, Arthur Danto and Roger Scruton point toward factors in analytic philosophy as it developed in the 20th century (i.e. philosophy with an agenda set by science and a research paradigm like that of the natural sciences).[29] There are strengths in such an approach—intellectual rigour, argumentative clarity, specialization that allows for in-depth analysis of a problem—but also limitations. The underlying assumptions are positivist, focusing on empirical evidence, and on the logical and quantifiable. One deals in objective facts. Needless to say one can approach something like art in this way and derive interesting data, but, from a philosophical point of view, aesthetic artifacts resist explanation in terms of a purely objective empirical method of investigation. Such an approach lends itself to formalism—a focus on form and structure as opposed to content or meaning.[30] Roger Scruton discusses the problem inherent in this approach to art, and particularly to music: "The search for the real structure of a musical work (the structure that it has in itself) ends by presenting us with something that is not a

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[29] Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Roger Scruton, "Modern Philosophy and the Neglect of Aesthetics," in Peter Abbs, ed., *The Symbolic Order: A Contemporary Reader on the Arts Debate* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 1989), 21-33.
"Indeed, what distinguishes analytic philosophy even more than 'style' is its adoption of the research paradigm common in the natural sciences." Brian Leiter, ed., "Brian Leiter's Ranking of Graduate Programs in Philosophy in the English-Speaking World," *The Philosophical Gourmet Report 2011* (University of Chicago, 2011): accessed Jan. 10, 2013, http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/analytic.asp.

[30] Andy Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music* (London: Continuum, 2007), 71.

musical work at all, but an inscription on the page, or a mathematical ordering."[31] Music, he insists, cannot be understood apart from how it is heard. In discussing the marginalization of philosophical aesthetics, other theorists such as Jane Forsey and M.H. Abrams point toward methodological problems that arise within the discipline itself. They highlight the prevalence of a "spectator model" that sees a detached disinterested observer standing across from an object of art—an object generally removed from everyday life, set off in a gallery, museum, or concert hall.[32] Whether cast as the fault of the spectator model of aesthetics or of a strictly objective empirical approach to art, the conceptual hurdles are similar. Both models fail to account sufficiently for knowledge as interaction.

i. Objectivation and Ontology

In applying a natural science research paradigm to art or in assuming a spectator model of aesthetics, we encounter the problem of what Schrödinger terms objectivation. Objectivation is the practice of removing the observer from the system under consideration, of discretely separating the knower and the known, the subjective and the

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[31] Roger Scruton, "Analytical Philosophy and the Meaning of Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 46 (1987): 171, accessed April 3, 2012, *http://www.jstor.org/stable/431273*.

[32] Jane Forsey, "The Disenfranchisement of Philosophical Aesthetics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64.4 (2003): 591. "'The aesthetic', which anchors fine art's autonomy, is a category of commerce between recipients and objects. Where 'the aesthetic' is made central, the philosophy of art becomes a spectator aesthetics." Forsey quoting Lambert Zuidervaart, "The Artefactuality of Autonomous Art: Kant and Adorno," *The Reasons of Art*, edited by Peter J. McCormick (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985), 258. Forsey draws greatly on M. H. Abrams, "Art-as-Such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics," *Doing Things With Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 135-58 and Abrams, "Kant and the Theology of Art," *Notre Dame English Journal* 13 (1981), 75-106.

objective.[33] Objectivation fails to account for the subjectivity in all knowledge. As Werner Heisenberg states: "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning."[34] Not only is there mediation in interpretation after observation, there is mediation at the outset. The questions I ask determine the aspects of the observed to which I attend, and may even preclude the observation of other aspects. More radically, understanding the problem of objectivation entails recognizing the "individuality" of the system: the observer and the observed are integral to a system and constitute a unitary process.[35] Though perhaps more difficult to fathom in straightforward scientific inquiry, the implications are easier to grasp in relation to what Wilhelm Dilthey terms the "human sciences." The problems inherent in objectivation are apparent in analysis of cultural objects that emerge from and show up against a social and cultural "life-world" to which they and we are integral.

In particular, the experience of music subverts the tendency in what Husserl would call the "natural attitude" to see things in terms of a classical logical system—as objects apart from us, constant, and conceptually determinate. Unlike a painting that might be understood to sit solidly across from one's objectifying gaze, music is not so easily cast as something set apart, neatly located in space and time. Music extends across

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[33] William Taussig Scott, *Erwin Schrödinger: An Introduction to His Writings* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), 107.

[34] Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963), 57 quoted in Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Flamingo, Fontana Paperbacks, 1983), 152.

[35] Niels Bohr quoted in Yutaka Tanaka, "The Individuality of a Quantum Event: Whitehead's Epochal Theory of Time and Bohr's Framework of Complementarity" in Timothy E. Eastman and Hank Keeton, eds., *Physics and Whitehead: Quantum, Process, and Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 165.

space, and is constituted across time. When I attend to how music is heard, I note that it is rarely experienced as something over there, rather it is also here. It is less an object observed, and more a field in which I am immersed. Additionally, it "gets inside me." This is reflected in the visceral physical response to "groove," and in the welling up of emotion so frequently associated with the phenomena of music. As Merleau-Ponty might put it, the experience of music is "first of all an event which grips my body, and this grip circumscribes the area of significance to which it has reference" (273-274). When we attend to how music is heard, we see that we do not stand apart, but are entangled with it.

This entanglement is not merely passive reception; it is not "invasion of the sensor by the sensible" (248). I may pick up strains of music that vaguely beckon from a radio or a bistro doorway as I pass by, but this is not always the same as hearing in the sense to which Scruton adverts. Scruton's hearing implies listening, which intimates intentionality on my part. In listening/hearing, I am directed toward the music. My response to music is complex; it is not simply physical or emotional, it is also cognitive, though not in a way that relies upon the sort of concepts or logical propositions that are usually associated with a narrow notion of reason. Music communicates; it appears to me as significant and is experienced as meaningful. The cognitive aspect of music, a notion of musical thinking, and a hybrid conception of expression and meaning will be explored in the next chapter. For now, consider that, not only does music grip me, I grip it, and not only is there a sense of it getting inside me, but, reciprocally, I get inside it. The experience is more one of communion than of objective observation. I do not observe music; I participate in and with it.

The introduction of intentionality here requires further qualification. In stating that all knowledge is interaction, we hit upon the idea of consciousness as intentional. Consciousness is relational, and intentionality is most commonly associated with the directedness or aboutness of consciousness. Whereas many take intentionality as something quite apart from agency, the term as developed in this study makes explicit a connection with agency, albeit an ambiguous notion of agency. Intentionality cannot be equated to intention (i.e. conscious choice), but it will become associated with a purposiveness in consciousness and with what Merleau-Ponty speaks of as "the phenomenological notion of motivation … a *raison d'être* for a thing which guides the flow of phenomena without being explicitly laid down in any one of them, a sort of operative reason" (57). These ideas and the complexity and dimensionality of the term intentionality will develop in concert with reflection upon the phenomenology of expression. At the outset, to lay a foundation, we consider Merleau-Ponty's term *sens*, which is helpful in that it retains the dual sense of direction and significance in intentionality. If something is intentional, "it does not rest in itself as does a thing, but … is directed and has significance beyond itself" (248).

To speak of significance is to highlight that the directedness of consciousness is not merely a flat sort of aboutness, but a rich aboutness in which meaning and value are inherent. There is not just a passive horizon towards which I direct my attention, rather there is "the impression of reversible relations," not identical reciprocal relations (i.e. "perhaps not [relations] in the <u>same</u> sense"), but relations "which are not

unidirectional."[36] Consider that a striking aspect of my experience of music is some analogue of intentionality in the music to which I attend. It is not, as intellectualism would have it, merely that I confer a meaning on it. It is already meaningful. The music presents as significant and engages me. The perceived shows up as an object for consciousness, as an "intentional object." The interaction is not one of me as consciousness moving towards an empirical thing with a transparent meaning, a thing that I can possess in full knowledge. The music is meaningful, but not in the sense of a univocal meaning. The meaning communicated is by no means arbitrary, and yet it is not determinate. It combines intelligibility with indeterminacy. It is precisely this in the already meaningful given that draws me. I move outward as the given flows inward, and not only do I meet it, I am met. Now it might appear that this is a response peculiar to something like music, something heard, not localized in space in the way that an object of vision might be, and it might appear to represent an experience specific to that which is a cultural object—an object that might be said to carry the intentions or intentionality of its creator. Yet Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* explicates how sensation, whether aural, visual, or tactile, must be grasped as "co-existence or communion" (248). As with the experience of an analogue to intentionality in music, he indicates that the perceived appears as significant. He insists that the intentional object, whether natural or cultural, already has meaning. For example, it would not be possible to subsume a colour under a category of red or blue if the category were not already rooted in what is given.

[36] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, edited by Leonard Lawler with Bettina Bergo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 39. The underlining is in the original text.

At the same time, though meaning is not something I simply project or impose, neither is it fully determinate in what is given. One must account for dimensionality and what Merleau-Ponty focuses on as "depth," another term that will be elucidated as discussion proceeds.

The central understanding cannot be grasped until perception is understood as the unity of perceiver and perceived; the observer and observed constitute a unitary process. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Sensations, 'sensible qualities' are then far from being reducible to a certain indescribable state or quale; they represent themselves with a motor physiognomy, and are enveloped in a living significance" (243). The focus on motor physiognomy and living significance indicates that perception is not originally something I think or analyze or subsume under categories, but rather something I fully experience and live through. In this "bare perception" the sentient sensor and the sensible "do not stand in relation to each other as two mutually external terms" (248). The derivation of these poles is something that comes later. I do not observe the world, a disembodied thinker, a perceiving subject set apart from an object or objects of thought; rather I am in and of the world.

Once one recognizes the problem of objectivation in methodology and thinks deeply about the idea of a unitary process that takes up observer and observed, one is led to consider broader ontological implications. Observation is not what human consciousness undertakes over and against a world. We cannot stand apart from the world. Consciousness is not something added on, rather it is integral to the world and embodied in nature. We belong to the world. You and I are as much the world as the

rocks and trees. This makes sentience no less mysterious or wonderful, but, arguably, more so. Merleau-Ponty insists:

> It is a question of recognizing consciousness itself as a project of the world, meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses, but towards which it is perpetually directed—and the world as this pre-objective individual whose imperious unity decrees what knowledge shall take as its goal (xx).

We are "embodied subjects" integral to a life-world that exhibits a "quasi-organic relation."[37] The life-world is the world as experienced, as already given before it is consciously thematized. The life-world represents an intertwining of consciousness and world. It is experience in which dichotomized pairs like subject/object, reality/ideality, and nature/culture can no longer be taken as discrete. To speak of a quasi-organic relation is to draw a picture of the life-world as both lived through and living. Merleau-Ponty says that to unveil the life-world is to become aware of "the being of the horizon."[38] To approach this relation and the notion of intertwining, it is essential to consider the reciprocal problem inherent in the research methods under discussion.

ii. Field and The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness

The related implication of Scruton's comment about the centrality of how music is heard is that the observed (e.g., the musical work) can equally not be abstracted from the life-world. The assumption that it can be extracted for adequate examination underlies both the natural science research paradigm and a spectator model of aesthetics. Yet when

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[37] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 178; Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 12.

[38] Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, 32.

I perceive the world within the natural attitude, I take the product of perception for granted. I note the figure that I have isolated from the background, but I fail to take account of the background along with the impressions, conceptions, emotions, and intentions that determine the constitution of the object in perception. I fail to account for the object as an intentional object, and I fail to account for perception as a "meaning-giving act" (140). Merleau-Ponty explains that a focus on the primacy of perception is a focus on "our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us."[39]

A phenomenological study of perception reveals that "an isolated datum of perception is inconceivable" (4). Whatever we attend to as "something" makes up part of a "field." As Wittgenstein observes: "The impression that it makes on me hangs together with things in its surrounding."[40] A field is not merely spatial, the immediate surroundings and the horizon extending farther and farther to the edges where I discern vaguely what is given in this hanging together. The field is also temporal. In this present moment there is "retention" of what has preceded (some things clearer, some vaguer, some haunting the recesses like shadows) and there is "protention" (my directing towards a future, my expectations, my hopes, my apprehensions).[41] The present moment is not a

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[39] Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 25.

[40] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. I, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), § 433, p. 85 quoted in Jean-Pierre Cometti, "Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, and the Question of Expression," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, No. 219 (2002): 75, accessed March 31, 2012, http://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-de-philosophie-2002-1-page-73.htm.

[41] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1999). These terms originated with Husserl and are carried forward by Merleau-Ponty.

sliver surgically extractable. It is, rather, a shimmering drop heavy with memory, pregnant with possibility, inseparable from the flow of time. When expression is considered, it will become apparent that objects, particularly cultural objects, must be understood within a social field, a cultural field, and a field of meaning. This seemingly incorporeal background, the inter-subjectively constituted meanings and conceptions are present in the same way that the elements of the landscape are present. They influence and inform the constitution of the object in perception. In some cases these meanings can shut us off from what is given (e.g. prejudices, limiting assumptions), and in others they can open us to the richness and dimensionality of it. In either case, our response is not a completely fore-drawn conclusion, for there is yet the ingression of our mode of being in the world, our relation, how we attend to these meanings, reflect upon them, bracket them, respond to them, and open or close ourselves to what is given.

The research methods of natural science seek to isolate objects to allow for controlled, reproducible, verifiable experiments. This is essential to progress in science. The focus on specialization allows for the elucidation of specific in-depth knowledge, and this is certainly a worthy task. Yet according to Merleau-Ponty, classical science is a form of perception that has lost sight of its origins; as a result, it makes the error of believing itself complete (66). Unless data is taken up and considered in the complex context from which it originated and to which it is integral, it falls prey to what Alfred North Whitehead terms the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness."[42] This fallacy concerns

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[42] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978). The "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" is a concept and term used throughout the book.

not accounting for the degree of abstraction involved in considering something "merely in so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought."[43]

To explore one way in which experience and meaning evade tidy categorization, consider again the phenomena of music. Establishing the standard frequency for a tone can categorize a sound as a given note, but this does not yet uncover why it is experienced as music. I am aware, pulling out of a subway station, that there is a whine made by the train. This corresponds to a given frequency and yet it does not usually occur to most that it is a tone, and it is not generally experienced as musical. Yet one day, as I change trains, I pass a violinist playing in the station. In the bustle of the anonymous crowd, I am arrested by the melody of "Air on the G string." I feel my edginess drain away. I am at once transported and more present. In this moment, there are the shadows of bewigged courtiers, of bittersweet sunsets, of my Irish grandfather who, despite his usual brash and stolid manner, was moved to tears by this piece. I would like to stay and listen, but the northbound train is already there. Feeling lighter and full, I step on the train. The violinist begins a phrase, bowing a long sustained E, and as the doors slide shut, it is as though I reach toward the music, trying to sustain my grip upon it. I still hear the plaintive tone as the train accelerates into the tunnel; it merges with the clicking of the rails. It is some time before I realize that the sustained tone (the E) that I hear as music, is in fact the fortuitously tuned whine of the train that for that brief time is transformed into something beautiful. I cannot categorize the whine of the train as unequivocally musical, but I cannot insist that it is unequivocally not musical. It must be acknowledged that

[43] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 7-8.

many musicologists hold that "with limited exceptions, tones not produced by human intentional action do not count as music."[44] Arguably, context and the intentionality of the listener come into play in the "limited exceptions." Here the focus is less on what is categorically musical, and more on what is experienced as musical. It is less on objective notions of music, and more on perception. The point is that bivalent thinking does not account for ambiguity. Any tone both is and is not musical, depending on context and relation.

Whitehead's fallacy of misplaced concreteness centres on the problem of conceiving of the observed, or the observer for that matter, in complete abstraction from the system, the complex and rich context to which they are integral. In our attempts to ascertain hard fact by extracting things out of the lived context, we end up, not with that which is the most real, but that which is the most abstract. Merleau-Ponty insists that "the most rudimentary *factual perceptions* that we are acquainted with … have a bearing on relationships and not on any absolute terms" (4). This means equally that to seek for the "real structure" of music, one cannot try to ascertain some Platonic essence that entails absolute ideas and forms set apart, over and above existence. If we hope to grasp what is real in music, we require a phenomenological turn, a turn to experience.

[44] Hamilton, *Aesthetics and Music*, 49.

Phenomenological Method: Essence and Existence

Phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty explains it, seeks to uncover essence, but essence here and now, in the only place we can hope to glean it, in existence; it presumes to work from nothing other than “facticity” (vii). To be clear, he notes that essence is not the end of phenomenology, rather it is a means:

> The need to proceed by way of essences does not mean that philosophy takes them as its object, but, on the contrary, that our existence is too tightly held in the world to be able to know itself as such at the moment of its involvement, and that it requires the field of ideality in order to become acquainted with and to prevail over its facticity (xvi).

The aim is to rediscover “my actual presence to myself,” “my effective involvement in the world,” and “to bring back all the living relationships of experience” (xvi-xvii).

Phenomenological method seeks to bracket, or “put out of action” the accepted premises, conceptions, and conventions from which we ordinarily operate.[45] This is not to disregard them, but to better understand them. Merleau-Ponty explains that generally accepted conceptions and attitudes are suspended:

> … not because we reject the certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things—they are, on the contrary, the constant theme of philosophy—but because, being the presupposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed, and because in order to arouse them and bring them to view, we have to suspend for a moment our recognition of them (xiv-xv).

Phenomenological method aims to describe our experience as it is, as our primordial contact with a lived world, a world that is “always ‘already there’ before reflection begins—as an inalienable presence” (vii). Radical reflection is consciousness of one’s

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[45] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 7.

dependence on this unreflective life, our original situation, our being-in-the-world (xvi). It is awareness of myself as “a finite being in communication with an opaque being from which I emerge,” upon which I remain contingent, and to which I am continually committed (254); moreover, it is not merely the idea, but the experience of “put[ting] myself back inside that subject without finite limits” and putting the “the object [back] among the relations which previously subtended it” (254). It is experience of my existential situation as both individual and integral, singular and general. This need not be self-consciously experienced as having a particular conceptual meaning (i.e. it is not essential that it be called individual and integral, or “unity in multeity,” or some such title); the knowledge is not so much the knowledge of a concept as it is the knowledge of indeterminate transcendence, relation, and intimacy.[46]

i. Belonging to the World and Epistemology

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology owes much to Husserl, but he follows only so far. He characterizes Husserl’s phenomenological reduction as a picture of reflection withdrawing from the world into some transcendent unity of consciousness before which reality is rendered transparent. Though embracing phenomenological epoché (bracketing) as a method, Merleau-Ponty diverges in his assessment of the reduction: “We are caught up in the world and we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of the world” (5). He holds that a logically consistent version of Husserl’s transcendental idealism robs the world of both its opacity and its transcendence (xiii).

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[46] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “On Poesy or Art,” *The Harvard Classics 1909–14*, accessed November 4, 2011, http://www.bartleby.com/27/17.html. “Unity in multeity” is picked up from Coleridge.

The mistake made by both intellectualism and empiricism is that neither gives us an "account of the human experience of the world; [but rather] they tell us what God might think about it" (298). We are in the world, of the world, situated in and integral to the temporal flux that we are trying to grasp, and so we cannot acquire a "thought which embraces all our thought" (xv). We can never absolutely transcend the limitations of human knowledge, neither by trying to turn the world into a fully transparent object nor by trying to make the self a fully transparent subject. As integral to what is, we partake in it, yet we are a significant limitation, situated in space, time, and the peculiarities of our individuality. This epistemological state of affairs is double-edged; it engenders both tragic thought or tragic knowing, and wonder.[47]

Karl Jaspers holds that "tragic knowing" is characterized by openness, incompleteness, and *Nichtwissen*, unknowing or not knowing.[48] One response to such knowing might be despair in the face of our inability to know in any ultimate sense. This is Albert Camus' *absurd*, which is born of the contradiction between "the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" and "the unreasonable silence of the world" that offers no concrete answers and, so, no solace.[49] Dilthey frames the problem in terms of the "tragic contradiction between the philosophical desire for universal validity

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[47] Luigi Pareyson, "Hermeneutics and Tragic Thought," *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom: Selected Writings*, edited by Paolo Diego Bubbio, translated by Anna Mattei (Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, 2009), 217-220.

[48] Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit* (Munchen: R. Piper and Co Verlag, 1947), 957, 958 quoted in Petruschka Schaafsma, *Reconsidering Evil: Confronting Reflections with Confessions* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2006), 281.

[49] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 21, 28.

and the realization of the fundamental finitude of every attempt to satisfy that desire."[50] Awareness of such a situation may lead one to fall prey to an either/or fallacy that presumes that in the absence of an attainable universally valid meaning there can only be meaninglessness. Untethered by logical certitude, the vertigo of the void can leave one feeling sick, empty, and immobilized, struggling with the problem of how to act in the absence of rational certainty … and wondering why it matters anyway if everything is meaningless. For the less nihilistically earnest, the seeds of tragedy are still sown in the need for us to act in the absence of the sort of certainty that would ensure right action. There is the constant possibility of falling into error, doing wrong with the intention of doing right. In truth, there could be no freedom without such a possibility. For the despairing and earnest, after time immersed in such tragic profundity, it might begin to dawn on one that a univocal absolute meaning and absolute meaninglessness amount to the same sort of leap. Gradually, one might emerge to realize that despite the felt immobilization and uncertainty, one has still acted, and despite the conviction that things must be meaningless, things and experiences have continued to mean something. All the while consciousness strives to create order and meaning; it projects itself towards the world, longing. At this point, other questions emerge, phenomenological questions, questions that transform the tragic aspect of tragic knowing.

As much as our existential situation defines a limit to knowing, it also represents

[50] Jos de Mul, *The Tragedy of Finitude: Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 154.

the very condition of our knowing—our "originary solidarity … with truth."[51] Our situation does not mean that we cannot know or experience truth, in fact it guarantees a lived connection with it: "We are *true* through and through, and have with us, by the mere fact of belonging to the world, and not merely being in the world in the way that things are, all that we need to transcend ourselves" (530). Yet, this transcendence, "the active transcendence of consciousness, the momentum which carries it into a thing and into a world by means of its organs and instruments," though always "coming into possession of a world," can never escape its involvement in the world in order to possess it in a "view from nowhere" (176).[52] Even if we were to conceive of reality as static and unchanging, we could never know it absolutely. What I perceive is always seen from a perspective or a limited number of perspectives, which carry within them the intimation of a depth that transcends my ability to grasp it in total. We are open to the world, in communication with it, but not in possession of it (xviii-xix). The phenomenological reduction teaches us the impossibility of a complete reduction (xv). There is rather ongoing effort, ongoing dialogue, ongoing enunciation of what is.

With the courage to "live a certain insecurity" and to rest in ambiguity, the "unreasonable silence" begins to sing.[53] What is required is, as Keats terms it, a sort of

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[51] Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*, 14.

[52] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986). This phrase is lifted from the title of Nagel's book.

[53] Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998), 49.
Camus writes of a moment in Tipasa:

> Under the glorious December light, as happens but once or twice in lives which ever after can consider themselves favored to the full, I found exactly what I had come seeking … . In this light and this silence, years of wrath and night melted slowly away. I listened to an almost forgotten

"Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."[54] This is not vagueness or muddled thinking, but rather poetic thinking. Rational thinking tends to focus on things, and sees the spaces in between as nothing. Yet, as Merleau-Ponty writes:

> If we set ourselves to see as things the intervals between them, the appearance of the world would be just as strikingly altered as is that of the puzzle at the moment when I pick out 'the rabbit' or 'the hunter'. There would not be simply the same elements differently related, the same sensations differently associated, the same text charged with a different sense, the same matter in another form, but in truth another world (18).

We are in intimate communication with the world. The spaces are no thing, but not nothing. Such vision reveals that our inability to know absolutely does not correspond with meaninglessness, but rather with the experience of depth, of a world pregnant with meaning (176). Viktor Frankl expresses the resultant human dilemma as follows: "What is demanded of man is not … to endure the meaninglessness of life, but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms."[55] This unconditional meaningfulness is not experience of unreasonable silence or unintelligibility, rather it is experience of a world that is eloquent, but that can never be

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> sound within myself as if my heart, long stopped, were calmly beginning to beat again. And awake now, I recognized one by one the imperceptible sounds of which the silence was made up: the figured bass of the birds, the sea's faint, brief sighs at the foot of the rocks, the vibration of the trees, the blind singing columns, the rustling of the wormwood plants, the furtive lizards. I heard that; I also listened to the happy torrents rising within me. It seemed to me that I had at last come to harbor, for a moment at least, and that henceforth that moment would be endless.

Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 200-201.

[54] John Keats in a letter to George and Thomas Keats (December 21, 1817) in Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats, Cambridge Edition* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 277.

[55] Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 122.

reduced to any one expression. The world is "inexhaustible" (xix). As a result, Merleau-Ponty favours Eugen Fink's formulation of the phenomenological reduction as wonder in the face of such a world.[56]

ii. The "Opening of a Dimension"

What then can wonder effect? Merleau-Ponty says that the phenomenological reduction, radical reflection, effects "an opening of a dimension that can never again be closed."[57] This dimension corresponds to an aesthetic dimension and to the notion of aesthetics that the current work seeks to elucidate. Awareness of the aesthetic dimension takes in the spaces, the connections, the texture of reality. Merleau-Ponty writes: "The real is a closely woven fabric" (xi). It is fundamentally interwoven, complex, relational. The texture of reality takes up logical analytic reason, but cannot be limited to it; texture cannot be broken down to individual components without losing what it is. The texture of reality is not evident with a method that separates, categorizes, and seeks to ascertain isolated facts. A phenomenology of perception reveals this texture, and how the perceived world comprises relations and "in a general way, a type of organization which has not been recognized by classical psychology and philosophy."[58] To understand this organization, we must go beyond a picture of spatial organization and account for what

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[56] Eugen Fink, *Die Phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der Gegenwärtigen Kritik*, (Kantstudien, 1933), 331 quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xv.

[57] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, edited by Claude Lefort, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 151.

[58] Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 13.

Merleau-Ponty speaks of in terms of the dimension of depth. Depth cannot be understood without accounting for the activity of consciousness.

To begin to sketch the outlines of depth, consider the question of what wonder might effect. Wonder is not merely a passive response to a world out there. Wonder is realized through our participation. We belong to the world. We belong to the world in that there is a profound intimacy with it, our relation is deep and dear, and we belong to the world in that we *are* the world. We are implicated in wonder. As much as I stand in awe of this dimension or dimensionality, as I wonder at the inexhaustible depth of the world, I become aware of the same depth in myself.

Take, for example, the first breathtaking photos of earth from the moon. In the 1960's we saw, for the first time, pictures of the earthrise, images of this beautiful blue orb, an oasis of life, set out in the unforgiving depths of space.[59] We saw the beauty, but also the terrifying fragility. We saw our finitude in the vastness. How small, how infinitesimal we are. Yet it is by virtue of this insignificance that we begin to grasp a certain significance. It is this impossibly tiny, statistically negligible "I" that reaches toward the magnitude, this speck of stardust that reflects upon its own finitude and insignificance. It is consciousness that has built civilizations and cultures, consciousness that has developed the technology that can take us to the moon and back again. We see

[59] "From space there are no borders. The only boundary is the circle of the atmosphere, a thin layer protecting the vibrancy and fragility of the planet. This vibrancy is the richness of teeming life, of multiplicity and diversity: from deep sea bioluminescent creatures to bar-headed geese migrating over Everest; from the smallest micro-organisms to the largest giant sequoias; from the miraculous newness of the newborn to the weathered and sage centenarian who, recognizing beauty over a long and full life, has come to embody it. Life is vibrant; but life is fragile. Life is precious." Susan Patrick Breit, *Beauty, Truth, and Peace* (Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo, 2011), 1.

how infinitesimal we are, and yet within each tiny speck of humanity there exists a full round rich world of life and love and meaning, billions of worlds mutually contingent, overlapping, interacting, each of us ever only glimpsing a hint of the depth of the others.[60]

Wonder can bring about a shift in our orientation to the self and to the world. Wonder is not one thing, one experience with a determinate content. Rather, it relates to an order of experience, an order that would take in profound experiences associated with beauty and the sublime. On one hand, there is the experience of intimacy, of "loving and admiring."[61] On the other, awareness of "the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being."[62] There is a reconstitution of the visible in light of this invisible and this relation.

The awareness of and attentiveness to depth and the aesthetic dimension has what might be understood as two vectors: one centrifugal, moving outward toward the world, the other centripetal, moving inward as if toward a ground of rationality and subjectivity. The outward vector alters our experience of the world and is best elucidated in light of perception. The inward alters our understanding of the self, and is best elucidated in light of expression, which draws our attention to the activity of consciousness. Depth cannot

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[60] Breit, *Beauty, Truth, and Peace*, 1-2. Segments of the paragraph are drawn from this work.

[61] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 28. Camus associates his profound experience of beauty with loving and admiring, and it is this experience, he says, that gives birth to "the long fight for justice." He goes on to assert that in order to keep justice from shriveling into something bitter and dry, something that ends up setting injustice against injustice, "one must keep intact in oneself a freshness, a cool wellspring of joy." Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 201-202

[62] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 151.

be understood without understanding the relation between the two.

The difficulty is that the aesthetic dimension and the dimension of depth cannot be told explicitly. Merleau-Ponty explains the phenomenological reduction as the opening of a dimension; it is "the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated."[63] It is not positing a content; it is first experiencing in a different way. Merleau-Ponty speaks of "two ways of relating to the object and two types of being in the world" (141). In radical reflection, there is a phenomenological shift, and this effects an epistemological shift. Whereas phenomenological method assumes classical models and the natural attitude (or else how could they be bracketed), classical models and the natural attitude in no way assume the sort of experience or data made evident by a phenomenological shift. They, in fact, all too often disregard it. Whitehead speaks of science's determination to deal with only "half the evidence provided by human experience."[64]

Part of the issue is that in the absence of aesthetic awareness or the opening of a dimension much of the evidence is "just talk about nothing, about what for them is not there."[65] The other problem is that the logic of this dimension is not commensurate with strictly classical logic. In comparison to the continuity, determinism, and discrete

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[63] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 151.

[64] Alfred North Whitehead, "Nature Alive," Lecture Eight in *Modes of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1938) The Mead Project Electronic Version (2007): §211, accessed January 10, 2013, http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Whitehead/Whitehead_1938/1938_08.html.

[65] Johan Gottlieb Fichte, *Nachgelassene Werke*, edited by I.H. Fichte (Bonn, 1834), Vol. 1, p. 3 quoted in John Taber, *Transformative Philosophy: A Study of Sankara, Fichte, and Heidegger* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 80-81.

separate objects of classical theory, the logical system of radical reflection works from incomplete continuity, incomplete determinism (potentiality), and the underlying oneness of the system.[66] We have then two logical systems, which must be seen, not as contradictory, but as complementary. We are at once individual and integral, particular and general, and this paradox cannot be understood through dogmatic theory that establishes mutually exclusive categories. The two views must be seen as complementary views of the same reality, a reality that is not adequately defined in terms of either; a reality that can only be grasped through a sort of bicameral understanding.[67] With one eye (single vision) we see, but we need two (double vision) to take in the dimension of depth.[68] Without this double vision, depth is something that is simply not there. When viewed solely through the lens of a classical logical system and via the methods of objective science, the aesthetic dimension cannot be approached adequately. What is professed of it, the inherent relation and organization, involves seeming contradiction and ambiguity. Significantly, as the next chapter explores, ambiguity poses difficulties when it comes to questions of "meaning," questions central to the problems of philosophy.

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[66] David Bohm, *Quantum Theory* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1951), 168.

[67] "Complementarity" in the context of quantum theory is attributed to Niels Bohr, who asserts: "We must be prepared to accept the fact that a complete elucidation of one and the same object may require diverse points of view, which defy a unique description." Niels Bohr, *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 96.

[68] Here I am alluding to William Blake's fourfold vision, from a poem in a letter to Thomas Butts (22 November 1802) in Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 22.

Chapter 3: Music, Meaning, and Metaphor

From so much loving and journeying, books emerge.
And if they don't contain kisses or landscapes,
if they don't contain a man with his hands full,
if they don't contain a woman in every drop,
hunger, desire, anger, roads,
they are no use as a shield or as a bell:
they have no eyes, and won't be able to open them,
they have the sound of dead precepts.

Pablo Neruda [69]

[69] Pablo Neruda, "Ars Magnetica," *Isla Negra: A Notebook,* translated by Alastair Reid (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999), 326, lines 1-8.

Meaning and Marginalization

Knowledge as interaction and Scruton's focus on how music is heard draw attention to the fact that aesthetics, like philosophy in general, cannot be separated from questions of meaning. Agreeing on what "meaning" means is, of course, not so simple; this issue has contributed greatly to the marginalization of aesthetics. Danto and Scruton again point toward developments in 20th-century analytic philosophy, this time with a focus on linguistic approaches prevalent in a culture that emerged from logical positivist beginnings. Here meaning relates to a narrow definition—i.e. meaning as objective truth, meaning as something communicable in logical, propositional, clear and precise terms. Summed up in the aphorism of early Wittgenstein: "What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence."[70] In this way of thinking, the sayable (i.e. what is logically verifiable as true or false) is set apart from the unsayable (i.e. what is not verifiable in this way and therefore categorized as "meaningless" or "nonsense"). The unsayable has been linked to the "pseudo-problems" of things like metaphysics and aesthetics.[71] Accordingly, these have been subordinated in the hierarchy of philosophical inquiry.

Though the influence of logical positivism waned over the 20th century, linguistics saw the rise of a "code model of communication," a model that Perry Blackburn casts as

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[70] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3.

[71] Rudolph Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World and Pseudoproblems in Philosophy*, translated by Rolf A. George (Peru, Illinois: Open Court Classics, 2003).

fundamental to the meta-theory of contemporary linguistics.[72] It is tacit in assumptions and widely taken as commonsense: "The notion [i.e. the code model] is quite familiar and so intuitive that the question may be asked whether there is any conceivable alternative to it."[73] In this model, communication is depicted as the encoding and decoding of a pre-established message where "in theory, communication is said to have taken place if the information received is the same as that sent."[74] So, as with the sayable, the expectation is that meaning can be conveyed with almost equational precision. As will become evident further on in discussion of the creative process, when applied to art and human expression, such models are problematic on a number of levels, not least of which in their inability to account for how expression can communicate something new to the ostensible encoder.

Another issue in linguistic approaches to art can be traced to C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richard's *The Meaning of Meaning,* which was influential in "distinguish[ing] between referential and emotive uses of language and apply[ing] the latter to art."[75] In this model, casting aesthetics and judgments about art as purely emotive renders them empty of

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[72] Perry L. Blackburn, *The Code Model of Communication: A Powerful Metaphor in Linguistic Metatheory* (Dallas: SIL International, 2007), 27. According to Blackburn, this model represents the integration of three linguistic models: an old folk model that employs the conduit metaphor of communication; Saussure's speech circuit model; and information theory that developed in relation to electrical and computational engineering.

[73] Jerold A. Edmondson and Donald A. Burquest, *A Survey of Linguistic Theories,* 3rd edition (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of Texas at Arlington, 1998), 95-96 quoted in Blackburn, *The Code Model of Communication*, 1.

[74] David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics,* 5th edition (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 85.

[75] Forsey, "The Disenfranchisement of Philosophical Aesthetics," 583.

"truth value."[76] So the problem of linguistic analysis and art is not merely a matter of the sayable and unsayable, but also of the value that these elements (for lack of better phrasing) are afforded in our cultural discourse. Yet truth is not so small, meaning not so flat, and if truth has any bearing on the ethical, then feeling cannot be bled out of a notion like truth value.

Far from dismissing "nonsense," Wittgenstein says that the unsayable relates to "the Ethical," and it constitutes "the second part … the important part" of his philosophy.[77] His *Tractatus* serves to delimit this. For Wittgenstein, philosophy is a ladder that can be thrown away once one has used it to ascend and "see the world aright."[78] When we, in earnest, strive and question, only to find that we reach the limit of knowing in strictly logical conceptual terms, we may have the sublime experience in which what is beyond this limit is thrown into contrast, emerging from the background. This approach might be seen as going beyond established conceptions to allow the opening of a dimension, whereas phenomenology seeks to go beneath them to the same end. Wittgenstein says that the unsayable "gives the background against which what I could say gains its meaning."[79] He relates the unsayable to ethics and aesthetics, insisting that "ethics must be a condition of the world, like logic" and that "ethics and aesthetics

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[76] Monroe Beardsley, "Twentieth Century Aesthetics," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, edited by Matthew Lipman (New York, 1973), 44-50 quoted in Forsey, "The Disenfranchisement of Philosophical Aesthetics," 582.

[77] Letter from Wittgenstein to Ludwig von Ficker (1919) in Mao and Walkowitz, *Bad Modernisms*, 88.

[78] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §6.54.

[79] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 16.

are one."[80] In the current context, the emphasis is not on trying to paint ethics and aesthetics as identical, but rather on developing the idea that aesthetic awareness and ethical awareness are contingent on and aspects of awareness of the same condition of the world—the condition that we relate to the aesthetic dimension, and that Wittgenstein relates to the unsayable. The unsayable (what is meaningless in terms of the limited notion of meaning) is by no means unintelligible. It is intelligible but indeterminate in that it is irreducible and cannot be adequately communicated in a determinate way.

Wittgenstein's argument in the *Tractatus* comes down to how philosophy should be circumscribed, and his point relates to the limit of philosophy and of language. He aims to elucidate what can be expressed by propositions, "i.e. by language—(and which comes to the same what can be *thought*)," and what cannot be expressed in that way, but only shown.[81] So our conception of philosophy and the place of aesthetics within it is contingent upon how language is defined and how thought is delineated. Yet, the premise that logical propositional language and thought amount to essentially the same thing does justice neither to language nor to thought. As the later Wittgenstein contends, it is not so simple to define language. The problem lies in separating out what are often considered to be the mental antecedents to thought—impression, intuition, sense experience, feeling, emotion, etc.— from how thought is circumscribed.

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[80] Wittgenstein, "Journal entry (24 July 1916)," *Notebooks 1914-1916*, translated by Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 77e.

[81] Letter from Wittgenstein to Russell (19 August, 1919) in Nieli Russell, *Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987), 199.

i. The Rich Content of Thought

No, no … you are not thinking, you are just being logical.
Niels Bohr[82]

We experience the content of thought as multi-dimensional and far richer than an austere logical propositional model of thought allows. The experience of music challenges narrow notions of thought. Thought and language are often painted as almost synonymous. Hegel states: "The forms of thought are, in the first instance, displayed and stored as human language."[83] We also note Wittgenstein's comment above where he depicts propositional language as equivalent to what can be thought. Yet music expresses and communicates without the sort of conceptions and propositions one usually associates with language. It is widely experienced as meaningful, and yet the meaning or meanings derived cannot adequately be expressed in statements. Much traditional interpretation has rested on the notion that music communicates emotion, and unarguably it does. As a result, it has been sorted according to the reason versus emotion divide, and tidily filed away with other subordinate "irrational" items. Yet music is not without cognitive content, and arguably not without semantics.

In a musical work, motifs and themes are established and developed; the form of the whole is not without logic. Within the whole there are recognizable elements. The fact that certain configurations at particular points in a composition communicate

[82] Niels Bohr quoted by Otto Robert Frisch, *What Little I Remember* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 95.

[83] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 31.

something generally recognizable (e.g., resolution, heightened tension) intimates that something like propositions are at work. These are not bivalent propositions, and yet they are not arbitrary. Additionally, the musical components have a sense or meaning. When composing a song, it is apparent that in a given context a certain chord (e.g., Emin7) does not say precisely the same thing as another voicing (e.g., Dsus/E) even though the two are, in theory, minimally different. To say that one chord *says* something different is to intimate that there is not only an idea of something to be communicated, but also a way in which this will be understood. Wittgenstein himself speaks about how one "can point to particular places in a tune by Schubert and say: look, that is the point of the tune, this is where the thought comes to a head."[84] Music provides a recognizable phenomenon that cannot be accounted for in terms of the austere, verbal, code-breaking notion of language.

Presenting the phenomena of music as a challenge to the position that logical propositional language and thought are equivalent would not convince stalwarts of an austere model of thought, many of whom go so far as to separate literary language from thought proper. In discussing linguistic theory, Lakoff and Johnson write:

> Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor.[85]

So music is no threat to this model … that is until one has to account for the activity

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[84] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 47.

[85] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By (*Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3, quoted in Blackburn, *The Code Model of Communication*, 7.

involved in following, playing, and composing music. Consider that hearing music (i.e. experiencing it as meaningful) is not just passive reception. In listening, we follow, but not in such a way that we ascribe language to what we hear, though this may happen after the fact. As we listen, we carry in each moment a sense of retention and protention. The seeds sewn by way of motif and mood are carried forward, each note gaining meaning in relation to those notes appearing contemporaneously, as well as the arrangement that preceded and the anticipation of what will proceed. In a strange way, it is not only anticipation that affects meaning; what follows can actually shift meaning, retrospectively framing a preceding moment in a different light. This following and engagement *is* thinking. Jerrold Levison writes:

> That *following* music—as opposed to *mere* listening, or *half*-listening—is a form of thinking is evidenced by the near impossibility of doing any other thinking, of an unequivocal sort, at the same time. Musical process absorbs and effectively fills the mind that attends to it with any seriousness.[86]

This is the receptive side of musical thinking.

On the productive side of the equation, with respect to a composer creating a piece of music or a musician improvising a solo, it would be difficult to defend a notion of this work as activity where the subject is not thinking (i.e. where s/he is merely acting reflexively, automatically, mechanistically) or where the subject is thinking "nothing" (i.e. the content is empty or negligible). Yet the content of musical thought, a proposition of musical thought, cannot be equated with a logical proposition. Musical thinking intimates that the aspects of consciousness usually considered as antecedents to thought

[86] Jerrold Levinson, "Musical Thinking," *Journal of Music and Meaning*, Vol.1, Section 2 (*JMM,* 2003): accessed March 25, 2012, *http://www.musicandmeaning.net/issues/showArticle.php?artID=1.2*.

(e.g., sensations, impressions, feelings), are rather active constituents of thought intervolved with the aspects categorized as rational. The experience of thinking as something not entirely dependent on language or logical propositions is easier to grasp when reflecting upon expression in media where the product is not limited to a logical form. Yet even in science and math, though conclusions are presented in logical form, the process and content of thinking is not merely linguistic or propositional.

Albert Einstein describes his productive thought process as taking up "elements … certain signs and more or less clear images which can be 'voluntarily' reproduced and combined. … [These] elements are … of visual and some of muscular type."[87] He notes that though the process aims at logically connected concepts, explaining this teleology in terms of a desire and emotional basis for the play, the play goes on:

> before there is any connection with logical construction in words or other kinds of signs which can be communicated to others. …. The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. … Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be reproduced at will.[88]

In discussing mathematical creativity, Henri Poincaré insists that when potential solutions present themselves, it is because they have an effect upon the aesthetic sensibility. The possibilities that do not meet this criterion are summarily disregarded: "only certain ones are harmonious, and, consequently, at once useful and beautiful."[89] Additionally, he says that when false ideas emerge "we always notice that this false idea, had it been true,

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[87] Albert Einstein quoted in Dean Keith Simonton, *Origins of Genius: Darwinian Perspectives on Creativity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29.

[88] Einstein quoted in Simonton, *Origins of Genius*, 29.

[89] Henri Poincaré quoted in Simonton, *Origins of Genius*, 33.

would have gratified our natural feeling for mathematical elegance."[90] Though engaged in highly logical disciplines, both thinkers describe their creative thinking in terms more aligned with an aesthetic or poetic model than a strictly logical one.

Much as we have separated the observer from the observed, negating the fundamental relationality of the whole and setting consciousness over and against the world, a similar error has been prevalent in how we have separated reason, or a limited notion of reason (i.e. reason as logical, inferential, linear thinking) out of consciousness. Treating this reason as something distinct, "pure," and sovereign in relation to other aspects of the whole of consciousness, is yet another example of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. This assertion in no way denigrates rationality or seeks to make sovereign some sort of irrational principal. Highlighting the problem of objectivation does not denigrate the observer or seek to impose a purely subjectivist principle that denies that objective data (of a sort) is given. It rather points out limitations inherent in a strictly objectivist understanding. It indicates the subjectivity in all knowledge, the integral nature of reality, and that particulars are abstracted from this fundamentally inseparable whole.[91] The gist, then, is that thinking (the activity of consciousness) must equally be understood as a unitary process, one that takes up sensing, feeling, imagining, and logical reasoning.

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[90] Poincaré quoted in Simonton, *Origins of Genius*, 33.

[91] Elements of this paragraph are drawn from Breit, *Beauty, Truth, and Peace*, pp. 41-42.

ii. Metaphor and Meaning

A narrow notion of meaning that corresponds to the sayable (i.e. that which is definitive, associated with determinate concepts, and communicable only in logical precise terms) fails to account for the rich content of thought and fails to attend to how meaning is experienced. Music, art in general, is nonsensical when approached in terms of models that stake meaning on a univocal message or on signs and meanings that can be set off behind glass like experimental specimens isolated from the dirt and fecundity of life. In discussions of what music is in itself, we read comments like "in the absence of an accepted scientific aesthetic, metaphor often stands in for 'science' and is sometimes confused with it."[92] Or we happen upon a seeming admission of defeat: "Until we understand something fully and 'scientifically', we have to think of it in terms of something else—that is, metaphorically."[93] In this assessment, metaphor is depicted as a sorry consolation for truth, and in some sense a lie. Yet reality is, by nature, ambiguous. This is not to say it is vague or unintelligible. It is to say that nothing is simple; it is never only one thing. Physicist David Bohm is fond of saying that whatever we say of a thing it is always something else and something more. Reality is dimensional, and in addition to

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[92] Jo Tudor quoting John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 3 and passim, and Tudor quoting Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002) in Tudor, "Music and Musical Metaphor in Goethe's Work OR: When is a Language Not A Language?" *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, lxxvi:ii, (2007): 70, accessed February 27, 2013, DOI: 10.1179/174962807x212902.

[93] Tudor drawing from Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, translated by S. K. Langer (New York and London Dover Publications, 1946) and Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, translated by R. Manheim (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), especially vol. 2, 'Das mythische Denken,' in Tudor, "Music and Musical Metaphor in Goethe's Work," 70.

the more quantifiable dimensions of length, width, and height, we need to take account of depth. I will argue that music cannot be understood fully in literal "scientific" terms, because music is metaphor through and through.

In trying to explain aspects of experience, we can say they were like this or that, more simile than metaphor. Metaphor, too, can be used functionally in a similar way, but focusing solely on the explanatory function of metaphor denies the truth of it. Metaphor is not just another way to say what can be said in strictly discursive terms; it communicates something different about reality, something that literal terms cannot communicate.[94] Consider again the idea of the phenomenological reduction as opening a dimension that relates to aesthetics. According to Merleau-Ponty, one thing that emerges is the phenomenon of synaesthetic experience. He insists: "The constancy hypothesis, which allows to each stimulus one sensation and one only, is progressively less verifiable as natural perception is approached" (265). When I hear music, I do not merely hear a frequency. Notation in music indicates this with the additions of directives like brillante (brilliantly, with sparkle) or pesante (heavy, ponderous). When we speak of the "colour" or "weight" of a note, this is not just figurative or subjective. Colour and weight describe qualitative differences that are generally perceivable and that are experienced in a way that suggests qualities usually attributable to other senses (i.e. sight and touch). In fact, this dimensionality is essential to music communicating as music at all. When I

[94] Max Black, "More About Metaphor" in Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33, and D. Lynn Holt, "Metaphors as Imaginative Propositions," *Process Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter, 1982): 252-256.

experience music, I do not first hear a tone and then reflect back, imposing the quality of something else upon it. Rather, the experience is that the quality belongs to the tone.

In experience, this crossing or merging of senses is not surprising. As Baudelaire puts it:

> What would be truly surprising would be to find that sound could not suggest colour, that colours could not evoke the idea of a melody, and that sound and colour were unsuitable for the translation of ideas, seeing that things have always found their expression through a system of reciprocal analogy.[95]

Yet what is striking about Merleau-Ponty's assertion is that this system of reciprocal analogy cannot be understood simply in terms of reflective thought that draws connections and synthesizes after the fact. The senses are not originally isolated in silos, providing unrelated sense data. In the same way that my body navigates through space as one body—the separate muscles and nerves responding as one, quite independent of my need to consciously synthesize the unity—so too my senses operate in intimate communication, one perception, one grip on the world, one relation to being.[96] There are not, at the outset, segregated data that we then consciously synthesize to construct a picture. Rather, there is configurational awareness; the picture is first "all there." Metaphor is not an effort to explain analytically-determined objective fact, but rather an attempt to describe the facts of experience: "The romance was there."

So much comes down to how we look. Consider that if I am looking for a sign to

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[95] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 116.

[96] "The Synthesis of One's own Body" and "Sense Experience" in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. The phrasing here also alludes to Luigi Pareyson's definition of an existent as "relation to being." Luigi Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom: Selected Writings*, edited by Paolo Diego Bubbio, translated by Anna Mattei (Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, 2009).

tell me where my exit from the highway is, I read the words that register with a single message. I barely note the green of the sign or metal of the post. I attend to little other than the information I was seeking to extract, and, in this context, it is important that I can hone in on the relevant message. At other times, I am aware of something quite different. Gazing out of the train window, unhurried, watching the countryside pass, I see, not only the straw-coloured fields, but their soft bristle-brush feel. I see, not only the woody stalks by the lake, but their reedy clarinet tone beside the string-swell waves. Though this might sound like the product of reflective activity, it is not a conscious synthesis after the fact, but rather how the visual landscape strikes me *as* I perceive it. Admittedly, this is not how the view from the train might strike a good number of other people; yet few would find it surprising to *see* the softness of the dog's fur, or see the "energy" in a painting. These observations point to the ubiquity of synaesthetic experience where, on one hand, there are more generally recognizable aspects, and, on the other, there is uniqueness in individual perception and expression.

Merleau-Ponty insists that there is sense in saying one sees sound or hears colour as long as these sensations are not taken to be "opaque *quale*," but are understood to be "the experience of a modality of existence, the synchronisation of my body with it" (272). All knowledge is interaction and relation. Looking for what music is in itself denies not only this fundamental interaction, but it denies that what communicates in music is not just the note played, but how it is played and the context in which it is played. It disregards music as expression that emerges from the lived experience of the composer or performer, and negates how it is received and experienced by the living listener. It denies

that music can be what will later be explored as a living expression. It fails to understand that music is already metaphor. The note has weight. The note has colour. If music were not already metaphor it would be mere sound. This is not to say that music as metaphor indicates that a note or phrase stands in for some explicit thing. It is metaphor in the sense that it carries within it the dimensionality and depth of experience and thought.

Philosophy as science cannot account for ambiguity and dimensionality of meaning. The danger here is that what disappears from discourse can gradually disappear from perception. Merleau-Ponty says:

> Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the centre of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel, in order to deduce, from our bodily organization and the world as the physicist conceives it, what we are to see, hear and feel (266).

We must learn again how to see.[97] Reality cannot be fully contained in an equation or logical proposition. In this sense, the most true is not the specialized information extracted from the living context. Scientific understanding is invaluable, laudable, and essential, but it, alone, is not the same as understanding fully.

Whitehead insists that any proposition of fact must "in its complete analysis, propose the general character of the universe required for the fact."[98] This is akin to Merleau-Ponty's insistence that the most basic *factual perceptions* have a bearing on

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[97] "Thinking is learning all over again how to see, directing one's consciousness, making of every image a privileged place." Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 43.

[98] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 11. From this point of view there is an inversion of how we normally see abstraction such that a clear proposition about a limited particular is in fact the most abstract statement one could make as it is the furthest removed from reality in its completeness and relationality (i.e. reality as it is experienced). This thinking draws also on Holt, "Metaphors as Imaginative Propositions," *Process Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 252-256.

relationships. Metaphor, then, is not a sorry stand-in until scientific fact can be derived. Rather, in this way of thinking, expression that captures something of the dimensionality of what is given is more true than a reductionist fact. Metaphor is not merely a matter of language, it is a matter of experience. Lakoff and Johnson criticize prevalent attitudes in linguistic theory that categorize metaphor as inessential:

> We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. … [T]he way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. [99]

To deny the dimensionality of meaning is to be oblivious to what moves us, to be blind to aspects of consciousness that determine action. To grasp this, in addition to a richer notion of reflective thought, we must also understand a richer notion of aspects usually cast as antecedents to thought, aspects associated with immediacy (e.g., impressions, intuitions, feelings, sense, etc.). [100]

One Rationalism

i. The Heart of the Matter

The failure to conceive of consciousness as a dynamic unitary process has led to the sovereignty of a limited notion of reason, and to the subordination, even trivialization, of other aspects, in particular those aspects most often associated with immediacy and

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[99] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* 3 in Blackburn, *The Code Model of Communication*, 7.

[100] Whitehead, "Nature Alive," *Modes of Thought*, 213-214.

spontaneity. Yet when I attend to perception, I do not encounter a dumb landscape or a vague blur of unintelligibility; I encounter a world already pregnant with meaning (25). It might be said that impressions and intuitions birth ideas, enunciated through reflective thinking and language, but these in turn are taken up, colouring and informing. They are present and tacit in new impressions. Merleau-Ponty speaks of acquired worlds, amongst which he includes "a 'world of thoughts', or a sediment left by our mental processes which enables us to rely on our concepts and acquired judgements as we might on things there in front of us, presented globally, without there being any need for us to resynthesize them" (149-150). Immediacy, impressions, and intuitions are not lacking in rational content; they are already meaningful. Whereas the picture of the process above might still be seen as condoning the separation of aspects of consciousness as varying stages of a circular process, the stress here is on thinking, at *all* stages of the process, as multi-dimensional and configurational. The admixture of consciousness may manifest more as one aspect than another given the context of our thinking, but aspects are never discrete.

Intuition is often related to feeling, "knowing" feeling. In studies of decision-making in law enforcement officers, many claim to have a strong feeling about different scenarios; they just "know" that a suspect is carrying a weapon.[101] It is not until later that they may be able to decipher exactly what led them to that "feeling." According to Jung,

[101] Anthony J. Pinizzotto, Edward F. Davis, and Charles E. Miller III, "Intuitive Policing: Emotional/ Rational Decision Making in Law Enforcement," *The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (February 2004), accessed October 20, 2010, http://www2.fbi.gov/publications/leb/2004/feb2004/feb04leb.htm#page_2.

intuition is “perception via the unconscious.”[102] As will become apparent in our consideration of expression, we take in and sort far more data than we consciously register. Gary Klein, a research psychologist who has pioneered work in naturalistic decision-making (e.g., action based on intuitive assessments) asserts that intuition relates to pattern-matching. It is a configurational assessment of a situation. It is attuned to how elements fit together to form a coherent whole (how they “hang together”) and this whole, the immediate field, can be grasped as a whole, not requiring the lead-up time, the linear sewing together of disparate elements. Klein writes: “Because pattern-matching can take place in an instant, and without conscious thought, we’re not aware of how we arrived at an intuitive judgment. That’s why it often seems mysterious to us.”[103] So though not transparent to reflection, intuition is not a matter of magically knowing from nowhere or nothing. Klein’s studies indicate that the accuracy of intuitive judgements is related to priming via experience. Prior knowledge and experience condition perception, intuition, and feeling. Klein’s studies into naturalistic decision-making point to the way in which “feeling” is not simply “irrational” (i.e. it is not opposed to reason, or lacking in rational content).

This assessment is double-edged. It means that intuition and impression are never entirely unmediated. There is always the possibility of prejudice, of ignorance that arises from superimposition—the problem of projecting onto an object newly presented to

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[102] Carl G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 538.

[103] Gary Klein, *The Power of Intuition* (New York: Doubleday Books, 2003), 24.

consciousness the properties of something previously known.[104] Consider the possibility of tacit racial profiling in the assessments of law enforcement officers. We continually run the risk of imposing wrong understandings on reality, not just in reflecting upon them but in how they appear to us. As a unitary picture of reality highlights our inherence in the world and an existential situation that represents both the limit and the condition of our knowledge, a unitary picture of consciousness does the same. The meanings I discern or express are not left behind in the moment they were actualized; they remain with me whether I am consciously aware of them or not. Like the muscles in my back that I do not see as I lift the pot of water to the stove, they support or inhibit me, as the case may be. Ideas and rationality do not sit atop impressions, feeling, and sense experience; they go right down to the ground, though they cannot be said to constitute it. Merleau-Ponty writes: "It is impossible to superimpose on man a lower layer of behaviour which one chooses to call 'natural', followed by a manufactured cultural or spiritual world. Everything is both manufactured and natural in man" (220). This "world of thoughts," this wealth of experience that we carry means not only the possibility of error, but equally that we are carried, buoyed by a state of affairs that provides the converse of prejudice, the possibility of a sort of prescience.[105] It provides the possibility of a knowing that

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[104] Superimposition is "the 'appearance' in something of some other thing previously experienced and consists of a recollection." The term "superimposition" (*adhyasa*) is central to the primary problem of ignorance (*avidya*) in Sankara's system of *Advaita Vedanta*. Sankara, *Brahmasutra Bhasya*, I.I.1-4, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, edited by Theodore De Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 311.

[105] "The definition of philosophy would involve an elucidation of philosophical expression itself (therefore a becoming consciousness of the procedure used in what precedes "naïvely," as though philosophy confined itself to reflecting what is) as the science of pre-science, as the expression of what is before expression and sustains if from behind." Merleau-Ponty, "Working Notes," *The Visible and the Invisible*, 167.

precedes its own explication.[106] This idea will be explored further in relation to a consideration of expression as enunciation of what is known indeterminately (presciently, pre-reflectively) and also as a means of discovering and making meaning.

The aim here is not to paint intuition as strictly cognitive knowing waiting to be propositionally expressed. It is almost as though we need another word for knowing, one less conditioned by discourse in which logical reason is sovereign. Whitehead identifies this issue:

> The word perceive is, in our common usage, shot through and through with the notion of cognitive apprehension. So is the word apprehension, even with the adjective cognitive omitted. I will use the word prehension for uncognitive apprehension: by this I mean apprehension which may or may not be cognitive.[107]

Feeling—another problematic word, as we use it in relation to sense experience, intuition, and emotion—is not propositional logic. Yet all are in constant dialogue, never entirely separate, a unitary process. Along with Dylan Thomas:

> I resolve not to label the brain into separate compartments … not to differentiate between what is called rational and what is called irrational, but to attempt to create, or to let be created, one rationalism.[108]

When I weep or laugh, there is conceptual and cognitive content. When I am immersed in the most abstruse philosophical argument, I am yet engaged on an emotional level. The real danger arises when I lose touch with the reason in my emotion, or the feeling in my

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[106] Daniel Cappon writes: "I interviewed Nobelists Linus Pauling, Albert Szent Gyorgyi, Lord Adrian, and Jonas Salk. They said, 'Of course, we have hunches. We know the answer before we work it out.' Science, at its best, is the working out of things later." Daniel Cappon, "The anatomy of intuition," *Psychology Today*, 26.3 (May-June 1993): 40.

[107] Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 86 quoted in Ernest Wolf-Gazo, "Whitehead and Berkley: On the True Nature of Sense Perception" in Friedrich Rapp and Reiner Wiehl, eds., *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Creativity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 28.

[108] Dylan Thomas, *The Collected Letters*, edited by Paul Ferris (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 80.

reason.

In dichotomizing reason and feeling, feeling (in particular emotion) is the binary that has been subordinated and even trivialized. One who is emotional may be characterized as “soft,” the tacit judgment being “weak.” Equally, emotion can be seen as something to be suppressed, a matter of wild urges that must be tamed for fear they will possess us and take over, overflowing into irrational or even violent behaviour. Emotion carries within it this connection with motion and motive, and for this reason it has been suspect when not anchored to reason. It is thought of as reaction rather than action, but if this were always the case, reason would have little opportunity to interject itself. The ideas of reason shape the emotions before they emerge as much as they might serve to temper them once experienced, and not all feeling is equal. This is pivotal. Just as we speak of “higher order thinking,” it is reasonable to posit “higher order feeling.” In experience, we can discern lower or baser feeling, feeling that is petty, changeable, and generally unhelpful other than in calling attention to our own inevitable human foibles, and this, indeed, serves a positive function if it leads to self-reflection. We can also discern higher order feeling, feeling that informs us, elevates us, allows us to transcend our own narrow confines. This is an aspect of humanity that cannot be trivialized.

Feeling is relational. It can inform us of errors in our conceptions, but it can also birth new conceptions, configurational relational thinking making new connections, providing insights and ideas not yet consciously enunciated. However, to focus only on conceptions or knowing that can be identified as rational is to privilege the objective and sayable, missing the central point that all knowledge is interaction. Without this, we fall

back into the trivialization of feeling and see it largely as instrumental only in acquiring objective knowledge. Feeling takes up the how of what is given and not merely the what. To be oblivious to the attitude I take up, or to deny the feeling experienced for and from the given, is to deny my own participation in conditioning the interaction, to disregard essential evidence derived from the experience, and to make of myself a cognitive subject rather than an ethically existing subject.[109]

History is a testament to the danger of separating moral feeling or sentiment (i.e. sympathy and compassion) from moral reason (i.e. rooted on the social consensus of what is admirable and good, or on established dogma set forth as objective morality). Horrendous acts are carried out in the name of what is "good and just." Separating the letter of the law (which aligns with the sayable) from the spirit of the law (which aligns with the unsayable) renders laws hollow and precepts dead. To ignore the unsayable is to risk actualizing the unspeakable:

> [The unspeakable] is the void that we encounter, you and I, underlying the announced programs, the good intentions, the unexampled and universal aspirations for the best of all possible worlds. It is … the void that gets into the language of public and official declarations at the very moment when they are pronounced, and makes them ring dead with the hollowness of the abyss.[110]

It is the unexampled universals, the empty precepts that can become so insidious. The void is evident in invocations of precepts like "equality" that take it as a factual premise rather than as an ideal, an "ought" to be actualized. As such, equality can become a lie

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[109] Kierkegaard contra Hegel in Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* translated by D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1944), 178 quoted in Robert C. Solomon, *From Hegel to Existentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press US, 1989), 74.

[110] Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable (*New York: New Directions, 1966), 4.

that enables people to renege responsibility for injustice rooted in inequity.[111] The void is evident in ideals as abstract concepts. In the final chapter, I develop a notion of living aesthetic ideals, which are "ideal without being abstract."[112] We speak of ideals like love or beauty, not so much because we have a concept of them, but because we have an experience of something to which we apply the term. What we term "love" is real and present in the experience, but it is not actualized "finally" in this one experience in that it is not exhausted in it. The term alludes to something intelligible but inexhaustible in its potential for actualization. Our inability to circumscribe aesthetic ideals conceptually or to cast them as univocal does not indicate their non-reality, rather it argues for their reality in that they are not abstract, but can only be derived from concrete experience,

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[111] Jonathon Kozol, *Amazing Grace* (New York: Perennial, 1995). In this book, Kozol provides concrete examples of how this notion of equality can play out. He cites then-New York mayor Rudy Guiliani's speech to the children of a segregated high school in the South Bronx: "I think largely you have to help yourself. … Look at what is there and take advantage of it" (*Amazing Grace*, 101). Equality as fact blinded Guiliani to the context. For the children of the South Bronx and other ghettos, what is there? One adolescent, Maria, puts it this way:

> … sickness and filth, old mattresses and other junk thrown into the streets and other ugly ruined things, and ruined people, a prison here, sewage there, drug dealers here, the homeless people over there, then give us the worst schools anyone could think of, hospitals that keep you waiting for ten hours, police that don't show up when someone's dying, take the train that's underneath the street in the good neighborhoods and put it up above where it shuts out the sun ... (*Amazing Grace*, 39-40).

Given the experiences of those Kozol interviews in his book, this is understated in its bleakness. In these communities, many children do not have the necessities of life—adequate food, decent shelter, security. They are surrounded by the plagues of AIDS and drug addiction. They are witnesses of violent crime, degradation, destitution and despair. A local Public School teacher describes "traumatization as an ordinary state of mind … for many children" (*Amazing Grace*, 124). The notion of equality as factual premise is unable to deal with the problem of such huge disparities, and shut off from the lived experience of the "other," many reach the perverse conclusion that the poor are necessarily to blame for their own plight: "If poor people behaved rationally, they would seldom be poor for long in the first place" (Lawrence Mead quoted in *Amazing Grace*, 21).

[112] Marcel Proust, Chapter III, *Time Regained*, web edition (University of Adelaide, eBooks@Adelaide, 2012) accessed October 4, 2013, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/proust/marcel/p96t/chapter3.html. Gilles Deleuze employs Proust's phrase "real without being actual; ideal without being abstract." He uses this in his discussion of "the virtual," which resonates, in some respects, with what I point toward in my explication of aesthetic ideals in the final chapter.

from the example.

Aesthetic ideals are important not so much because of what they are (i.e. how they are defined objectively), but because of what they do. The experience and example generate an ought that provides a teleology in an intelligible but indeterminate ideal, one whose actualization is contingent upon the requirements of the living situation, and whose manifestation is conditioned by the limits and potentialities within that situation. This ought is not something merely theorized and thought through, it is felt and lived through. The actualization of the ideal is more "adverbial than substantive," having to do with the how, with the arrangement, harmony, and relation of elements within a conjunctive experience.[113] Because it has to do with the how, with lived relation, such arrangement cannot be reduced to strictly logical or conceptual terms; it cannot be understood apart from feeling. There are conceptual and cognitive elements to be sure, and from these one may derive laws with the aim of facilitating the actualization of harmonious relations, but without the spirit of the law, these are rendered inert.[114] In the wake of the Holocaust, German theologian Johann Baptist Metz was forced to ask: "Do we love, or do we only believe in love?"[115] As an objective idea or precept, love is empty

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[113] This discussion draws on parallels with Whitehead's explication of his "eternal objects." Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambrdige, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 37.

[114] The danger lies in taking the elements of one actualization and transposing these across contexts without accounting for difference and the inexhaustibility of the aesthetic ideal. This by no means makes the ideals entirely relative. We do not look on hate and call it love. We do not fail to recognize or experience love. The actualization of aesthetic ideals is not without criteria, but these cannot be reduced to quantitative or objective measurements; they must take up qualitative, relational, and personal elements. The letter of the law cannot be separated from the spirit of the law.

[115] Johann Baptist Metz quoted in Gregory Baum, *Compassion and Solidarity* (Toronto: CBC Massey Lectures, 1987), 79.

and meaningless. Love is not so much a noun, as a verb. It is not a thing: "It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself."[116] It is not disembodied ideality; it is living relation. If we are split, logical thought from feeling, objective from subjective, sayable from unsayable, we invite a deadening and dangerous psychosis.

If philosophy is to be limited to what can be expressed in logical propositions and equational communication, if it marginalizes those problems that resist tidy and pedantic analysis, it risks not only irrelevancy (i.e. philosophy as strict science renders itself redundant), but irresponsibility. What disappears from our discourse can gradually disappear from our perception. If the unsayable is not expressed, given form, if it is not reflected back to us, the prevalent discourse may render it virtually invisible. Discourse is a medium, and limiting the proper understanding of this medium to propositional logic and definitive meaning not only conditions what we value, but what we might experience: "it creates a totally new human environment."[117] An environment shut off from the aesthetic is an environment shut off from the ethical. This is not to make claims about art as ethical, but to assert that without awareness of the aesthetic dimension, of relational reality, the rich content of thought, and the dimensionality of meaning, we end up with an eviscerated humanity, humanity that has lost touch with the heart of matter.

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[116] Walker, *The Color Purple*, 195.

[117] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 33, viii.

ii. The Genesis of Meaning

To guard against the unspeakable, philosophy must find some way to engage with and express the inexhaustibility of the unsayable. But this is challenging. How can discursive discourse negotiate ambiguity and dimensionality? As Whitehead suggests, if we are to employ a notion of propositions it must not abstract the fact from its systematic environment, or the person from the world. A proposition must reflect the fullness of reality rather than the fragmentation of it. This means that in essence, language can be nothing but elliptical, always leaving something out, "requiring a leap of the imagination to understand its meaning in its relevance to immediate experience. … no verbal statement is the adequate expression of a proposition."[118]

To illustrate the dilemma, consider that when I observe the tree outside my window, my experiences of it appear as a harmonious whole, but not in that they are identical, constant or unchanging. Neither are they arbitrary. Nothing that I experience is contrary to the "treeness" of it, but this "treeness" is multi-faceted: one day it is blooming, lush, and hopeful; another day a bittersweet blaze of colour; on yet another day it stands naked and grey stolidly facing the cold of mid-winter. "The ipseity is, of course, never *reached*: each aspect of the thing which falls to our perception is still only an invitation to perceive beyond it, still only a momentary halt in the perceptual process" (271). Many years ago, I sat writing, thinking about the eloquence of the tree outside that particular window. I watched people returning from work, passing beneath the branches,

[118] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 13.

each with his or her own rich inner life, with his or her joys and sorrows. What did the tree convey for them that day, last week, a year ago? And if one could take all of these meanings and all of these people—those who lived years before me, those who would come after, all the possible interactions—and contract to a point the long line of time, this tree would in fact be infinitely meaningful. In that moment, I had the conviction that somehow it *was* infinitely meaningful. The tree is "the transcendent terminus of an open series of experiences" (271).

If we were to represent the tree in a proposition, if we were to try to grasp the whole truth or meaning of the tree, it could only be grasped as inexhaustible.[119] Merleau-Ponty writes: "What makes the 'reality' of the thing is therefore precisely what snatches it from our grasp. The aseity of the thing, its unchallengeable presence and the perpetual absence into which it withdraws, are two inseparable aspects of transcendence" (271). Still, this does not mean that what we express about the tree is untrue or that we are incapable of communicating meaning. Certainly I am incapable of communicating something like an absolute meaning, a truth that encapsulates all truth:

> Whatever exists is capable of knowledge in respect to the finitude of its connections with the rest of things. In other words, we can know anything in some of its perspectives. But the totality of perspectives involves an infinitude beyond finite knowledge.[120]

Yet as integral to facticity, I am capable of experiencing it. What's more, I am capable of

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[119] "Truth does not allow itself to be grasped except as inexhaustible, and this, indeed, is the only way to grasp it as a 'whole'." Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*, 144.

[120] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 42 quoted in Maria Teresa Martins Vieira Teixeira, "Epochal Time and the Creativity of Thinking: Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead," *Concrescence*, The Australasian Association for Process Thought (2009): 83.

expressing dimensions of it that transcend the limits of the sayable. Sayable meaning (in Wittgenstein's logical propositional terms) represents merely a sliver of the meaning we experience. Furthermore, it does not represent the limit of meaning that can be expressed.

Wittgenstein's ideas on language began to shift after the *Tractatus*. The following anecdote preceded the writing of his *Philosophical Investigations*:

> Wittgenstein was insisting that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form', the same 'logical multiplicity', Sraffa made a gesture, familiar to Neapolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt, of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the finger-tips of one hand. And he asked: 'What is the logical form of *that*?'[121]

This one gesture shifted Wittgenstein's thinking about propositions and opened the door to the sort of thinking about language, language-games, and *Lebenswelt* (life-world) that came later. It is, however, beyond the scope of this discussion to consider Wittgenstein's later work in any depth.

Merleau-Ponty insists that language must be put back within the phenomena of expression, back into the discourse that he associates with natural signs like gestural and "emotional pantomime." Words are conventions that emerged from this more primordial means of communication. Considered only in relation to their "conceptual and delimiting meaning," they appear arbitrary (217). Yet Merleau-Ponty explains that if we take into account the "gestural" sense of the word, which accounts for its emotional content ("which is all-important in poetry"), this arbitrariness dissipates:

> It would then be found that the words … are so many ways of 'singing' the world, and that their function is to represent things not, as the naïve onomatopoeic theory

[121] Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, with biographical sketch by G. H. Von Wright, and letters by Ludwig Wittgenstein (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 57–58.

> had it, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence (217).

To put language back within the phenomena of expression, we must acknowledge the fullness of the living lexicon at our disposal.

We are already in communication before we find ourselves in language. A mother and infant communicate before there is any shared verbal vocabulary. Once we are in language, meaning is determined as much by how a statement is said, as by the content of it. If this were not the case, irony and sarcasm would be non-existent. Tone, style, body language, gesture—these all determine the meaning of what is said, but the message is usually taken in as a whole without separating out or consciously registering the elements that inform the communication. We consciously take in what we are accustomed to value and register as incoming data (e.g., the words), but the meaning is determined from the holistic expression. Expression is multi-dimensional and always more than the grammar of what is communicated. Written language too is always more than the grammar of what is given. It is not merely about the choice of words based on literal meaning, but about the depth and allusions of words, how they combine or clash or flow together, how they express nuance cognitively and emotionally, bridging the ostensible divide between the personal and the general. What is said is not first disembodied ideality, but living expression.

Language and meaning cannot be limited to literal explanation, to labeling, to possessing and communicating objective knowledge. Consider that naming is not merely about signs and labels; it is not just about bringing something under our control (i.e. knowledge as possession). We name our children, not out of a desire to know and possess

(belonging as commodity, acquisition), but out of a desire to know and love (belonging as gift, acceptance). Naming can be about establishing relation, filling with identity forged by this relation, by meaning, and affection. This is not identity as neatly circumscribed generic categories, but identity as irreducible singularity. Naming is not only how I come to know objectively, it is also part of how I come to care, and how I communicate this care. In this latter instance, if the name becomes simply nominal, a label, all mystery and wonder lost, the relationship dies. It is no longer a living expression. So new expression is required to maintain a wellspring of relation, care, and life.

John Steinbeck expresses another dimension of this idea of language and writing as not merely explanation or labeling:

> A writer out of loneliness is trying to communicate like a distant star sending signals. He isn't telling or teaching or ordering. Rather he seeks to establish a relationship of meaning, of feeling, of observing. We are lonesome animals. We spend all life trying to be less lonesome. One of our ancient methods is to tell a story begging the listener to say—and to feel—"Yes, that's the way it is, or at least that's the way I feel it. You're not as alone as you thought."[122]

A focus on the sayable entirely misses the way in which language and expression are about establishing relation. Meaning is not merely about a clear message and objective "truth value," it also has a bearing on subjective truth, on how we stand in relation, on how we exist as ethical subjects, on value that is not easily reduced to empty precepts.[123]

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[122] John Steinbeck interviewed by George Plimpton and Frank Crowther, "The Art of Fiction No. 45," introduction by Nathaniel Benchley, *The Paris Review* No. 63 (Fall 1975), accessed June 17, 2013, http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4156/the-art-of-fiction-no-45-continued-john-steinbeck.

[123] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 178, quoted in Robert C. Solomon, *From Hegel to Existentialism*, 74.

Expression is not just received literally; it is not mere sign recognition and grammar. Blackburn discusses Saussure's separation of "*langue* (knowledge of a given language shared by all members of a speech community) from *parole* (speech production)."[124] He quotes John Joseph:

> Since modern science is predicated upon the elimination of the will from any object of inquiry, human desire, action and creation came to be excluded from the 'scientific' study of language. This has necessitated a considerable abstraction of language away from its role in human affairs, treating it as if it existed independently of speakers and speech acts.[125]

The problem is that *langue* cannot account for creativity and novelty. If I am able to learn anything new, then language must be able to communicate to me more than I as a listener put into it by way of already acquired explicit knowledge and literal sign recognition. The whole must be more than the sum of simple parts. One must, somehow, account for creativity and novelty, and this can only be done in terms of the activity that generates it. The parts themselves have dimensionality and depth, and so too does the subjectivity, the activity that expresses.

This activity is not disembodied. Expression is living expression and without accounting for this fact, the dimensionality of meaning cannot be properly appreciated. Wittgenstein notes: "Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one might think."[126] Expression, particularly artistic expression, presents with a style, a sort of physiognomy that we read as we would a grin or a frown, a

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[124] Blackburn, *The Code Model of Communication*, 234.

[125] John E. Joseph, "Saussurean Tradition in Twentieth-Century Linguistics," *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics,* edited by Ronald E. Asher (Tarrytown, NY: Pergamon Press, 1994), 3665.

[126] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), no. 527.

gestural expressive presence that quite apart from explicit content carries implicit meaning and intention.[127] A work of art appears, as Mikel Dufrenne puts it, as a *quasi-sujet*.[128] And even a work of philosophy is not without this living character. As Merleau-Ponty notes:

> I begin to understand a philosophy by feeling my way into its existential manner, by reproducing the tone and accent of the philosopher. . . . There is thus, either in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes, a *thought in speech* the existence of which is unsuspected by intellectualism (208-209).

Merleau-Ponty relates this thought to the non-reflective (i.e. the non-thematized, non-thetic or not explicitly posited) and insists that this implicit meaning is not a lesser meaning because objective thought draws on this and "presents itself as an explicit expression of non-reflective consciousness" (337).[129]

Philosophy cannot confine itself to the strictly objective, and meaning cannot be confined to the literal. If language is reduced to a lifeless bone-dry stentorian ruler that measures and separates, that imposes an oppressive order, rapping the knuckles of those who would dream, or laugh, or fidget as they try to control the repressed life within them

[127] "Meaning is a physiognomy." Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, no. 568. "Style," both of person and expression, presents as a consistent theme in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*.

[128] Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 329. This is a term coined by Mikel Dufrenne, who notes that "the aesthetic object is a quasi subject only to the authentic subject" that perceives it. So again, perception, how we listen or see, plays a significant role in the meaning or meanings we might derive. This thinking also calls to mind Marcel Mauss's depiction of art as a "total prestation," a gift that is not merely an object; what is given is indissolubly tied to the giver: "the objects [expressions] are never completely separated from the [people] who exchange them." Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (London: Cohen & West, 1959), 31.

[129] In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty uses the words pre-reflective, non-reflective, and unreflective almost interchangeably. However, pre-reflective is used only in relation to the pre-reflective cogito stressing that the activity of thought is not contingent upon reflection in the sense of the I think that takes itself as an object. Non-reflective is brought in most often to indicate this implicit meaning in expression, this not explicitly posited meaning. Unreflective is most prevalent and is frequently used as an adjective for life and experience.

… if the aim is for language and thought to "evolve" to the point of pure objectivity (*thereby effecting a regression to near nothing*), then we effect "the hollowness of the abyss."[130] We ignore the abyss by virtue of certainty, fences and facades, blind reason or blind faith. But the abyss is both our doom and our destiny: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."[131] The abyss is precipitous and unfathomable, but not hollow, never hollow. It is not nothingness, not meaninglessness. If philosophy wants to get at "the first-hand, that by which the rest can exist and be thought about," it needs to consider the genesis of expression, "the thematizing acts which posit objective thought" (337): "In a sense the whole of philosophy, as Husserl says, consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language."[132] Philosophy needs to put objective thought back within the living context from which it emerges, and put language back within the phenomena of expression.

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[130] Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, 4.

[131] *The Gospel of Thomas*, V. 70 accessed May 9, 2011, http://www.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/gth.htm.

[132] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 155.

Chapter 4: Expression and Subjectivity

Expression is inseparable from perception. Merleau-Ponty says that perception is a nascent *logos*, and that "the primary meaning of discourse is to be found in that text of experience which it is trying to communicate" (25, 393). Expression is both the hermeneutics of the text of experience (the field of meaning in which we find ourselves immersed) and the process of making that text, from which we are inseparable, evident to ourselves and to others. In so doing, the expression is taken up into the text in an ongoing "creative advance."[133] A focus on the genesis of expression sheds light not only on expression, but also, as will become evident, on perception.

Creativity and Cogito

Often underlying an impoverished notion of thought is the problem of conflating the product of thought (e.g., the clearly presented discursive argument) with thought itself. As evidenced by the observations of Einstein and Poincaré, thought is not a straightforward linear progression; it is a far more complex, convoluted, and mysterious process. Additionally, it is not entirely transparent to reflection. Poincaré discusses a subliminal self that composes possible solutions, and, of these, only those that have an effect on aesthetic sensibility rise to consciousness. We experience thinking both in a "conscious and voluntary way" and also in "an involuntary and unconscious way" that

[133] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiv.

nevertheless reaps mental results.[134] William James illustrates these "two forms of mental occurrence" by considering the problem of trying to remember a name.[135] One might at first work for it consciously, going over people and places that may be connected, but, often, as many of us experience, the more one tries, the more hopeless the recovery of the name becomes. The frequent advice here is to stop thinking about it, turn attention to something else, and, inevitably, the name will pop up, "as carelessly as if it had never been invited."[136] We tend to associate thinking with the first conscious or reflective way of which James speaks. Yet there is no denying that the result in this name recalling example was achieved through thinking of another kind. The result was connected to the intention of reaching, trying to get a grip on a name, but the method, however hidden or tacit, cannot be laid out in clear linear logical steps. It is not transparent to reflection, yet is undeniably part of our thinking. I see the product, but the process remains hidden and somewhat mysterious.[137]

This phenomenon is most evident in the creative process. Percy Bysshe Shelly says that poetry (the activity of the imagination) differs from logic in that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind (i.e. conscious intention): "It is presumptuous to determine that these are the necessary conditions of all mental causation, when mental effects are experienced unsusceptible of being referred to

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[134] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: The New American Library, 1958), 169.

[135] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* 168.

[136] Ralph Waldo Emerson quoted in James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 169.

[137] Portions of this paragraph drawn from Breit, *Beauty, Truth, and Peace*, 65.

them."[138] In his influential work, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*, Lewis Hyde stresses that a work of art is a gift—something bestowed on us.[139] Art as gift is relevant both in the process of creation and in the life of the work, how it is received as a gift and not a mere object (i.e. commodity).[140] In the current discussion, the focus is less on the life of the work and more on the process of creation. Here, art as gift highlights how the artistic work is something one cannot acquire simply through one's own conscious efforts, through a sheer act of will. The work transcends what the artist feels he or she could consciously construct. In writing about one of his earlier works, Henry James admits: "I think of … the masterpiece in question … as the work of quite another

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[138] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," *A Defense of Poetry and Other Essays* (Project Guttenberg, 2004), 28, accessed May 1, 2013, http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5428/pg5428.html.

[139] Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*, 2nd Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2007). Hyde's use of "gift" bears more resemblance to the thought of Marcel Mauss than to Kant's notion of genius. In the current discussion, the image of "gifted" individuals is problematic in that it establishes an elitism that might lead us to trivialize our own experience. Whether cognizant of it or not, the gift aspect of consciousness is operative for all of us in various ventures, though most of us note it most easily in the creative process. Furthermore, in the process of creating, the gift aspect is widely experienced quite apart from whether or not the product of the process (or the creator) is lauded or relegated to obscurity. In Hyde's discussion, art as gift is in not about the "specialness" of artists or particular individuals.

Like Mauss, Hyde focuses on the difference between a gift economy and a commodity economy. A work of art is, as Mauss would put it, a "total prestation," a gift that is not merely an object. Like Dufrenne's discussion of art as a *quasi-sujet*, art as gift is not merely an object, but is something that is never completely separated from the giver (Mauss, *The Gift*, 31). This exchange, this relation, intimates a reciprocity that makes for a rather different community than a community rooted in a market/commodity economy. Art as gift in relation to a gift economy cannot be separated from the experience of the gift aspect of the creative process itself. The heart of a gift economy in opposition to a commodity economy is that the gift can never be a possession; it must be passed on. If held as a possession it loses its magic, the gold turns to straw, the bread to stone. If the flow of the gift is dammed, "either it will stagnate or it will fill the person up until he bursts" (Hyde, *The Gift*, 10). When art is experienced as a gift for the creator, there is the sense that it ought to be shared somehow, not for self-aggrandizement but to keep the gift alive and to share what will be explored as a "generosity" encountered in the creative process. Both the creation of art and the commerce of art, like any circulation of gifts draws us into a "wider self … a body or ego larger than that of any single person" (Hyde, *The Gift*, 197).

[140] Hyde, *The Gift*, xvi.

person than myself … a rich … relation, say, who … suffers me still to claim a shy fourth cousinship."[141]

The gift aspect points to the unreflective life, but not merely in terms of unconscious activity that might be seen as habitual (i.e. repetitive and in some sense "unthinking"); certainly creation is conditioned by the forms and norms of a genre, a time, and a lived context. Also, what is learnt and practiced in terms of technique and acquired meanings is utilized and necessary to the process. However, the gift aspect relates to something more mysterious, more "alive." It represents the possibility of novelty and of that which is unreflective but much more than merely repetitive or "unthinking." In creativity, there is an operative aspect of the experience that is not other than the self and yet not identical with it. There is something elusive yet reliable, something that allows for novelty, and something that allows one to be, if only for a window of time, better, wiser, more beautiful than we ourselves feel capable of. Lewis Hyde writes:

> We also rightly speak of intuition or inspiration as a gift. As the artist works, some portion of his creation is bestowed upon him. An idea pops into his head, a tune begins to play, a phrase comes to mind, a color falls in place on the canvas. Usually, in fact, the artist does not find himself engaged or exhilarated by the work, nor does it seem authentic, until this gratuitous element has appeared, so that along with any true creation comes the uncanny sense that "I," the artist, did not make the work. "Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me," says D.H. Lawrence. Not all artists emphasize the "gift" phase of their creation to the degree that Lawrence does, but all artists feel it.[142]

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[141] Henry James quoted in Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *Ratio (new series)* XVII (December 2004): 428.

[142] Hyde, *The Gift*, xvi.

Such experience throws into question ideas of purely rational (as in totally consciously reflected upon) thinking and agency. It is experience of something beyond the boundary of personality, the uncanny sense that subjectivity and intentionality transcend and subtend the "I" with which I ordinarily identify.

Descartes' "I think (*cogito*) therefore I am" is not so straightforward. The gift aspect of creativity leads one to ask *who* thinks, expresses, or composes. Is it the "I" aware of itself consciously constructing and directing, or the "I" that cannot be fully grasped in conscious reflection? The "I" with which one identifies in terms of social identity and personality is more the narrated than the narrator.[143] The narrator transcends this lesser self and gives the impression of something behind, beyond, something of which I, in this reflected self-conscious identity, fall short. Merleau-Ponty writes:

> The true *cogito* is not the intimate communing of thought with the thought of that thought: they meet only on passing through the world. The consciousness of the world is not based on self-consciousness: they are strictly contemporary. There is a world for me because I am not unaware of myself; and I am not concealed from myself because I have a world. This pre-conscious possession of the world remains to be analysed in the pre-reflective *cogito* (347).

Creative experience points to this "other" cogito, an aspect of subjectivity that is most evident in process.

At this point it is necessary to stipulate that looking at consciousness in terms of James' two forms of mental occurrence in this context runs the risk of presenting a dichotomy that is not entirely representative. When Merleau-Ponty writes that our "pre-

[143] This "I" is like the face we see in the mirror, which is never identical with the face that looks. The point here is in no way to place all the resources of creativity within the self as something isolated. As will become increasingly clear, this intra-subjective process cannot be taken apart from inter-subjective processes, and this other "I" cannot be claimed as entirely mine.

conscious possession of the world remains to be analysed in the pre-reflective *cogito*," it becomes clear that we cannot simply equate reflection with conscious voluntary thought, and the pre-reflective cogito with unconscious involuntary thought. If this were the case, we could never become aware of the unreflective life or respond to the implicit thought in expression (i.e. the expression of the non-reflective). Radical reflection suggests a hybrid mode of awareness and functioning, and it is this picture of activity that will emerge as we proceed. It will become clearest in the next chapter when we explore songwriting in terms of intentionality.

To begin to explore expression, and to aim at the roots of the creative process, we must go beneath the surface activity—the more easily prescriptive steps most often associated with technique—and try to glimpse something of "the hidden art of the imagination" (xix). The imagination of which Merleau-Ponty speaks is far from fancy. He insists that this hidden art underlies, not only aesthetic judgment, but also knowledge and perception. It is "an art which forms the basis of the unity of consciousness and of consciousness" (xix).[144] This art is approached in a phenomenology of expression by way of songwriting.

Approaching Expression

Approaching a phenomenology of expression is fraught. As the pre-reflective cogito is central to the process, it cannot be reflected upon in a straightforward fashion,

[144] "You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus." Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1917), 439.

taken out and shown as you would the gears and spindles of a mechanism. The subject matter is not something that emerges opaque and solid, a form that we might stroll around, rubbing our chins, pondering from different angles. Yet it is evident in experience, and, for many, particularly artists, it is something intimate and dear. But when we try to bring it forth for observation, we face the dilemma of Orpheus on attempting to recover Eurydice from the underworld:

> They were not far from the border of the world above; here frightened that she might not be well and yearning to see her with his own eyes, through love he turned and looked, and with his gaze she slipped away and down. He stretched out his arms, struggling to embrace and be embraced, but unlucky and unhappy he grasped nothing but the limp and yielding breezes.[145]

When we try to freeze the process, to turn and look at that which animates it, we inevitably truncate the activity. We cannot extract it and look directly at it. Neither can we sketch it in clear discursive terms, providing a neat taxonomy of aspects. Yet, it is there, just behind our shoulder, close, and very real. Eugen Herrigel writes of this evasive cogito: "As [they] say in archery … 'It' takes aim and hits … And here too 'It' is only a name for something which can neither be understood nor laid hold of, and which only reveals itself to those who have experienced it."[146] The problem is that stated theoretically, cut off from experience, discussion of this cogito may appear fanciful or purely abstract.

In presenting the work then, there is the problem of literary style. In

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[145] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk X, v. 40-64 quoted in Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 274.

[146] Eugen Herrigel, *Zen and the Art of Archery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 84.

phenomenological investigation, the first person experiential accounts cannot be written in the style of dispassionate chronological observation without already falsifying the experience. At the same time, they must be rigorously considered and sifted and reflected upon. To approach the observation of expression and this "something" that underlies it, the secret might be to, as Cézanne puts it, "make him gaze as he does gaze."[147] It might be to allow it to be seen, not as an object set against a background, but as that which is evident in the depth of the landscape. Without blending forms of expression, I belie the understandings I seek to explicate. The form must fall somewhere between the rational discursive discourse of academia and something more literary, something that allows for the personal to emerge.

With that established, I am then faced with the problem of finding a beginning. Discursive discourse wants a teleological method. The presentation ought to have a purpose, a clearly articulated goal, and one should make one's way as succinctly and logically as possible from a starting point to this end. The clearest method then would be to move chronologically through the creative process, tracking a linear progression that reveals evidence for the rational argument. One may be able to proceed more linearly if engaged in criticism about the form and content of the finished work (i.e. a situation where the subject matter is laid out in front of us, an ostensible object), but assessing the process is something different. What one presents to the world—the song, the thesis—is the tidy product of a complex process, a good portion of which is not transparent (i.e. neither rooted in reflective thought nor consciously determined). What precisely is the

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[147] Cézanne quoted in J. Gasquet, *Cézanne* (Paris: Bernheim Jeune, 1926), 117 quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 230.

beginning of the process? What is the impetus? These are not so straightforward to get at. In the early stages of writing, the end or goal of the process is not clearly determined beyond the expectations of a given musical or literary form to which one conforms or from which one diverges. The process is not discrete edges, straight lines, and tidy points. It is more like the eddy in a great stream. It has form, but its form cannot be extracted from the background, which both surrounds and comprises it. The creative process does not exist in isolation but within a complex interconnected and dynamic situation—a situation that extends outward farther than the eye can see and inward farther than the I upon which we can reflect.

To find a beginning, I start by going back, not to the beginning of the song per se, but to the beginning of the personal experience of songwriting. This means going a long way back to the openness and naivety of childhood, back to a process yet unaffected by ideas about itself. This is not so much to privilege the creativity of childhood, but to ensure that theory does not over-determine observation, to allow for comparison of experience over time and across contexts (e.g., different ages, matrixes of beliefs, levels of technical expertise, etc.) and to tease out elements that remain consistent. It is also helpful to begin with childhood because early examples illustrate how an individual's uniqueness in perceptual style is evident early on. It is apparent prior to a large degree of inculcation in education and culture, and though influenced by them, cannot be reduced to a mere product of these. So much has to do with what we attend to and how elements of one's environment are received, integrated, interpreted, and expressed. As Coleridge writes, "What is poetry? is so nearly the same as the question with, what is a poet? that

the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other."[148] As with poetry, so with songwriting, and so a story must be told that allows something of the songwriter to emerge and inform the more general theoretical understandings: "I cannot tell my story without reaching a long way back. If it were possible I would reach back farther still—into the very first years of my childhood, and beyond them into distant ancestral past."[149]

Double Anonymity: Individual and Integral

i. Style and Person

> *Style for the writer, no less than colour for the painter, is a question not of technique but of vision: it is the revelation, that by direct and conscious methods would be impossible, of the qualitative difference, the uniqueness of the fashion in which the world appears to each one of us …*
>
> Marcel Proust [150]

Asking why one writes songs in the first place is much the same as asking why one laughs the way they do, or has a certain gait when they walk, or why they exhibit distinct mannerisms. There may be contributing factors, physiological characteristics, cultural inculcation, but when asked such a thing, one can only respond with phrases like "I've always done it" or "It is just what I do" or even "I can't help it." This last phrase may be taken as either a trite (flippantly overstated) or contradictory sort of claim, as if no choice or freedom were involved. Yet it points to a very real part of the story, a part less relevant to the question under consideration, but one that deserves brief mention in

[148] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* in Coleridge, *The Major Works*, edited by H.J. Jackson (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 319.

[149] Hermann Hesse, from *Demian* in Hesse, *Siddhartha, Demian, and Other Writings* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 105.

[150] Marcel Proust from Remembrance of Things Past in Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 2.

order to provide context. The story that I tell here is sweet and rosy; but pursuing art can be a painful prospect for a lot of reasons, many associated with the conflation of love and money, art and commodity. I have elsewhere examined these dilemmas in terms of *Creativity, Aporia, and Art*. The phrase, "I can't help it," relates less to having no choice and more to being faced with an impossible choice, the sort of choice where one can only be freed from pain by disavowing love.[151] This depiction of an intense relation with one's

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[151] "Aporia" denotes an impasse, a paradox, but particularly, as Derrida presents it, it is an experience in which the seeming contradiction, the "impossible-possible," is both constitutive and incapacitating. [Francois Raffoul, "Derrida and the Ethics of the Im-Possible," *Research in Phenomenology* 38 (2008), 272.] Creativity is said to exist in the triangulation of domain (area of expertise), field, and individual. Ultimately, it is the field that judges and determines whether an idea or work of art is creative or not. The aporia constituted by creativity as extrinsically determined but predicated on the agency and intrinsically motivated work of the individual is not merely an intellectual puzzle, it is one experienced personally, and lived fully. The joy and the gift aspect of creativity are essential to consider when seeking to understand the dilemma. For most artists, there is an intimate personal relationship with his or her art. It is not a professional acquaintance, a job they can leave happily. It is caught up with who they are, how they make sense of the world, the meaning of their life, the source of their joy. Yet the artist, however intrinsically motivated, cannot completely stand apart from the judgement of the field, and this can leave many feeling bereft. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writes: "If so many American poets and playwrights committed suicide or ended up addicted to drugs and alcohol, it was not their creativity that did it but an artistic scene that promised much, gave few rewards, and left nine out of ten artists neglected if not ignored." [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 19.] Artists may be left to feel that their life's work has, in the end, come to nothing.

Derrida explains that the experience of aporia requires endurance: "It is neither stopping at it nor overcoming it." [Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, translated by Thomas Dutoit, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 32.] In an attempt to evade the aporia, one may try to get rid of one term of the opposing tension. Suicide is a desperate way out. The silent less dramatic death is that of the artist who disavows his love and walks away from his or her art. This is neither a happy nor a simply executed solution. One day in my twenties, I pulled the blankets over my head and made the firm decision that I was through with music, with the industry, with the confusion, the conflict and pain. I was not cut out for it. I would be much happier doing something in which I could feel like I was succeeding, something where the path was laid out neatly before me and nothing too precious could ever be risked or lost. I would never write another song. I meant it! Despairing, empty, and longing for comfort I slowly pushed off the covers and, without thinking, reached for the guitar that leaned up beside the bed. Here is an excerpt from the song *Reach for You* that emerged:

> Maybe this one will be the last. Can't go on like I do - with this empty space beneath my ribs. Still I reach for you, even now I reach for you. I don't need this hole in my heart; I don't need this noise inside my head. If I didn't love you like I do, I'd be happy somewhere else instead. You're in my blood, my bones, what can I do. You've always come to me, and I always reach for you.

Perhaps some walk away and set off on the next great adventure. For me, disavowing the love was not possible. In later years, the song *Lament* expresses a certain resignation to the fact that the aporia cannot be escaped:

art is not true of everyone who writes, and perhaps not true at every stage of a person's development, but there is something to the sense of one's artistic expression as foundational rather than added on, something more evident in the very young and the very old when pretense and ambition are stripped away. For this reason, it is helpful to reflect upon the experience of songwriting at a very young age—experience yet untouched by the self-consciousness that inevitably creeps in with age and theory and the anticipation of reception in a wider world.

There are undoubtedly certain predispositions for songwriting. My mother says that even as a baby I loved staring at things. I would sit in my pram for ages quite content, and in some primordial pre-memory there seems to be dappled light and the friendly waving of leaves overhead. Looking at the sky, gazing at trees, these may not seem essential ingredients for songwriting, but they are. Perception and expression are inseparable. Though we all share a common world, we perceive it in accord with a unique perceptual style. Each of us is, in Luigi Pareyson's terms, a person—person defined as relation with being. To frame being, consider the following from Etienne Gilson: "What

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> You know I tried to leave you - said that this love's a lie
> But deep down you know I need you … though you just make me cry
> Hail's tapping at my window – in the distance a church bell rings
> There are things in this life you never know … like why the songbird sings.

What is required is "thinking according to the aporia" (Derrida, *Aporias*, 13). Arguably, how the individual processes, gives meaning to, subverts, transcends, and endures aporia determines the possibility or impossibility of creativity itself. The creative process can be a means of thinking according to the aporia. It can be an ongoing process of continuing sublation of contradictories in symbolic synthesis, a movement of overcoming, by will and creative action, the incapacity and immobilization that can result from aporia. It can be an element of an ongoing creative advance where nothing is lost, but nothing is ultimately and absolutely realized once and for all, so the process is never finally ended or truncated … other, finally, than by death. It is, perhaps, as renowned flamenco dancer Carmen Amaya might put it, a matter of "dance or die." As I wrote subsequently in a song called *Nothing is Lost*: "You love for love's sake … you give it away. It's sing or cry, dance or die, love or you're lost."

is it which the mind is bound to conceive both as belonging to all things and as not belonging to any two things in the same way? The word is—Being."[152] There is both identity and difference, but it is not so much about what belongs to all things (i.e. in terms of some knowable substance or essence), but how it belongs (i.e. in terms of activity and the style of activity of finite existence). For Pareyson, "finite existence is a perspective on being, a relation with being, an ontological relation."[153] This hermeneutical relation takes in both "self-relation and hetero-relation," how I relate to and come to know and care about the self, the world, and others.[154] Though cultural and social norms condition the ways in which we approach the world, extrinsic determination is far from the whole story. It is apparent that children, at very early ages, already possess uniqueness of perceptual style, a unique way of attending to and responding to life.[155] This is evident when we note how siblings that ostensibly have the same upbringing yet approach the world in highly distinctive ways. To sketch something of my own perceptual style and its relation to expression, it is necessary to lay out a bit of the context from which songwriting emerged. The story I tell is profoundly personal. The picture I paint of my upbringing is my own, and if you were to ask my siblings if this is the way it seemed to

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[152] Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 318-319 in John Laughland, *Schelling Versus Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2012), 14.

[153] William Franke, "Existentialism: An Atheistic or a Christian Philosophy?" in *Phenomenology and Existentialism in the Twentieth Century: Book I. New Waves of Philosophical Inspiration*, edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (New York: Springer 2009), 392.

[154] Silvia Benso, "On Luigi Pareyson: A Master in Italian Hermeneutics," *Philosophy Today*, 4 (2005), 383-384, quoted in Paolo Diego Bubbio's Introduction to Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*, 10.

[155] Not that our perceptual style is static and set. Experience, learning, and choices can amend and alter it over time, both for better and for worse.

them, I am sure that, other than the broad strokes of things, they would paint a very different picture. There may even be a sort of cultural divide within the shared culture, a culture more intrinsically determined than extrinsically conditioned.[156]

For me, from a young age there were words and music. I loved words, especially the sort that my Grandad would say in his Northern Irish accent, words like 'bombastic' or 'verbosity', words where you somehow knew what they meant just by how he bit into

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[156] The following poem marks the awareness not only of the distinctness of other perspectives, but also of my own. Breit, "Foreign Language," *Collected Poems* (unpublished).

Foreign Language

You speak a language foreign to my heart.
I strain to understand your flattened vowels, your clipped consonants.
You speak a language of veiled origins,
fermented like bitter fruit, distilled in isolation.

Has it always been so?
Did we not stand together, leaning on the same sill – window to the world,
gazing out across fields and streams and
branches that swayed beneath a benevolent sky?

Yet you speak a language foreign to my heart.
Your meaning confounds me; it cannot be what it seems.
Or this is a language of alien ethos, born of other premises, other revelations.

But were we not joined by blood, by time, by experience?
Did we not lean against the same sill,
where the pungency of moist hedges in late summer,
mingled with the comforting roundness of brewed tea and warm teisen lap?

What can this mean … now that we are grown,
and time and experience have made strangers of us?

It was you and I here together …
but perhaps I never saw what fixed your gaze,
what moved towards you, what drew you to itself.
I never heard what seduction whispered,
never felt the outside world rub so roughly against the tenderness of this skin.

We are joined despite this language that leaves me confused and aching.
Did we not have the same love of a mother?
The bitter ferment belies it. Your alien ethos belies it.
Yet there are moments … and there is the undying longing of my heart.

For, after all, this was the same window, the same sky, the same love …
and though you were always seeing something else,
perhaps so was I.

them or slid across them. And I loved poetry. When I was very young, there were the poems that rhymed and let you stomp in time. Later there were poetry books decorated with illustrations of little girls in frocks and old women in shawls, colourful pages of spring flowers and big smiling moons. I know that poetry had an early influence, because at the age of four when my toy boat bobbed out beyond reach and floated off onto Boulevard Lake—lost forever—I remember comforting myself with the thought of a poem. My boat wasn't lost, it had floated off down the straits and around the bend, bound for distant shores where there would be dancing, and firelight, and wonderful things to discover.

There were words, and, always, music. I loved to sing, soft and sweet or loud and with mucho gusto. Both tendencies were admittedly influenced and encouraged by different factors. My brother inadvertently encouraged the latter tendency. He was older, bigger, and stronger, and had the sort of infuriating strategy that would see him placing one hand on my forehead keeping me at arm's length, so that swing as I might I couldn't land a decent punch. My only weapon was a fearfully good Julie Andrews impression that would send him running from the room with his hands over his ears. The sweeter side was more widely encouraged. In kindergarten, the teacher came by as I and a little friend were singing and colouring. At first I thought we might be in trouble when she marched us down to the main office, but she wanted us to sing for the principal. We sang, and I was keenly aware of the grown-ups' surprise and delight. I sang at home … well everyone sang at home. This was my first indication that perhaps others didn't see this as so ordinary. To me it was a wonderful ordinary thing.

There was music at home. My father played jazz clarinet and had since he was very young. On VE day, he and a couple of buddies played all night on the streets of Liverpool as people celebrated, hugging each other, and dancing until they dropped. Later he was a founding member of the Merseysippi Jazz band. After moving to Canada where career prospects for a cardiologist were more promising, he still felt the need to keep this part of him alive. There was always one band or another. My mother, more classically trained, could chord and got a strong stride left hand going. To broaden her contribution, she wrote away and did a correspondence course on jazz improvisation. Once a week, people arrived with horns and drums for the jam session. On those nights, I fell asleep to the sound of Dixieland wafting up through the vents along with the hops and spice of beer and cigarette smoke.

There was Handel at Christmas, and Gregorian chant some Sundays. There were my sisters' 45s and LPs in the basement (among them an inordinate number of Beatle's albums, records that represented a connection with the life they had known in Liverpool, songs that helped them feel a little less displaced). Songs could do that … or they could remind you of being displaced. When my grandmother sang "Green Isle of Erin," I could see it in my Grandad's face … "*Are you McNally? Don't go down the Limestone Road tonight. They're waiting for you there.*" I didn't know so much about the history then, but, as she sang, I felt it, the weight and thickness of it.[157] My grandmother sang happier

[157] My grandfather's brother Hugh had been Belfast commander of the Redmondite Irish Nationalist Volunteers before graduating from Queen's University and leaving his post to take a position as Naval doctor. Hugh, ship's surgeon on the HMS Hampshire, went down with Lord Kitchener on June 5th 1916 when the ship struck a mine en route to Russia for a diplomatic mission. It was a tragedy for the UK, and a very personal tragedy for my grandfather's family. With his father failing and on disability, Hugh had taken on the role of supporting the younger siblings, particularly his younger brother Nicholas (my grandfather)

songs too. We'd all join in for "On Ilkla Moor Baht 'at," putting on our best Yorkshire accents. There was singing, especially at Christmas, during family gatherings, and at Welsh Society parties, singing in as many parts as possible. The haunting melodies of "Dafydd y Garreg Wen" and "Ar Hyd de Nos" became part of me, just like the ragtime of Jelly Roll Morton, the exuberance of Louis Armstrong, and the infectious pop sensibility of Lennon and McCartney.

When I was very small, I would make up little songs. I remember one particularly heartfelt song to my teddy, found at last after a week pinned down the side of the bed between the mattress and the taut precisely tucked sheets characteristic of my mother's bed making. And I would head to the basement, to the hush of the music room. I would sit at the piano, and put my hands down, letting them fall … at first softly (stars and light breezes, tinkling notes at the top of the piano that were fairies or fireflies), then with greater intensity (throbbing low notes, dangerous foaming sea swells, walls of threatening black water, thunder crashes). This was usually the stage at which someone would yell

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who aspired to get his engineering degree. That hope died with Hugh. When Nicholas finished school, rather than go on to a professional degree, he got a job with one of the big shipping firms out of Belfast. He hoped to apprentice, learn, prove his worth, and work his way up. But he was coming of age at a time when the war had changed the political landscape. The moderate centre had dropped out, leaving Nicholas caught between radical unionists and radical nationalists. Like his brother, he supported Redmond's ideas on Home Rule, but these involved compromises neither extreme was prepared to accept. Nick was not one to temper an opinion, so it was likely clear where he stood. Perhaps as Hugh's brother, he was more of a target; or perhaps, in Belfast at the time, just being Catholic was enough. He'd dodged bullets, helped put out fires in homes set ablaze, dealt with threats. But that night, there was a squad out for him. If they didn't get him tonight, it'd be tomorrow, or the next day. (*I often think of that man who stepped out of the darkness to warn him. So much can hinge on one moment. History was changed. Not only does my grandfather owe him his life, but so do nearly 50 of us who would have never existed had Nicholas McNally gone down the Limestone Road that night*.) Nick headed back to his employers and asked to talk to the "higher ups." They agreed to give him a position as fourth engineer on the next ship out that night.

As a child I pictured him on the deck pulling away from the docks, heading out to sea, the green hills receding slowly from view. He was exiled just as the song painted it. Of course later I realized, he was likely in the engine room or down in the belly of the ship wrestling with oil and machinery, but still, I thought, in his mind's eye, he would see his home receding, and feel it. So began his "seafaring days."

downstairs and tell me to stop banging on the piano. I'd return to the peaceful part of the symphony, or chastened, head off to mix beads and water in a plastic pan on my pretend stove. It was not until I was seven and had learned my first four guitar chords that I "officially" wrote a song.

My two best friends had moved to Montreal, and my mother thought it an idea to provide some new diversion so I wouldn't feel the loss so much. I was handed my big sister's guitar. Mary was ten years older and had a terribly exciting life that included a groovy little black guitar with plenty of butterfly stickers and a sunburst pick guard. We sat at the kitchen table and she very patiently helped me learn the four chords I needed to play "Where have all the Flowers Gone." (C - Amin - F - G7) They were hard chords for little hands, but the fret board wasn't too wide. Gradually I got the hang of it.

Shortly after this I put those four chords together and wrote "Seasons." It wasn't really something I thought about. I didn't think, "Now I will write a song." It seemed a natural thing to do. I loved poetry and words, and knew that children could grasp a greater degree of subtlety and dimensionality in meaning than most grown-ups assumed. I loved to stare out windows and think and feel and hum and put words together. I also liked to make up stories, and I remember feeling as though writing a story was like reading one. It took you on a ride and seemed to tell you what it wanted to do next. This was the same sort of thing. I began with the four chords in their familiar pattern and started singing different melodies and words over top. Soon I had the chorus: "I see the eye of daylight peaking through the mountain's peak. Awakening the morning slipping through the pine trees sleek." The verses started on the F, leading to a different

progression and a melody that resolved nicely back into the repeating chorus. The verses became: “The birds fly up high with the sunlight on their wings / the tall trees whisper secrets while the breeze softly sings;” and my favourite: “The lake in the forest is very very calm / except for a deer that’s drinking with her little fawn.” At that point I understood what the song wanted to be. Each dawn was different, the landscape of a different season, a moment full and silent, except for perhaps the creaking of wood, or crackling of leaves. There had to be four verses, and the images I wanted for the remaining parts would be of Fall and Winter.

Writing songs was not something I just tried, or thought to take up; it was something that in one way or another I had always done. Moreover, I felt it was something I was meant to do. Here it is necessary to reiterate that the picture I paint is my own. It might seem that songwriting was natural given my upbringing, and, certainly, I am grateful for a loving and enriched environment that held out so many possibilities.[158] Yet what I paint reflects the elements to which I attended. What determines this attention, and why do some aspects of our environment hold more fascination for us than others? Everyone has strengths, nascent talents, and many of us have the experience of being drawn to something at an early age. Though songwriting was natural to me, it was not so for others who shared my upbringing. Other activities were natural for them. As a child, my sister spent hours wading in tide pools, her fascination and absorption, even then,

[158] What I fail to mention is that though music was on one hand encouraged, there was a narrow notion of “good” music (and art in general), and anything outside these lines was treated with contempt. Also, despite how I depict things, the prevailing ethos was one of science over art, and the supremacy of reason over emotion (emotion associated with weakness) and reason over imagination (imagination equated with fancy). So the sweet and rosy story must be balanced with the understanding that songwriting was challenging to pursue creatively (kept private for fear of criticism), and logistically (other than as a hobby, it was strongly discouraged as a life choice). These factors came into play later.

foreshadowing the pursuit of marine biology. In Grade 3, my brother earnestly poured over high school biology books, on track, as it turned out, to a career in epidemiology. This is not to say there are no choices, but to say that there are factors that influence how we express our lives, and these cannot be reduced entirely to environmental factors. For me, it is as though, from the beginning, I recognized myself in poetry and music. It is how I have always made meaning of my life, how I have remembered what I am and what I ought to be, how I have both found and created myself. It is the expression of how I relate to my self, to life, to others, to being. Though the two cannot be separated, I have the sense that it has always had less to do with what I think to do, and more, somehow, to do with what I am.

What I Am

Before I can even open my eyes, you are singing
And I think … how is it possible,
what with things as they are …

I lie listening to the wind,
The breathing in the bed beside me,
And the song that vibrates through your chest,
so round and full – it seems too large to push up and out,
picking up the sweet high head tones as the passage narrows
before it bursts out into the spring morning.

As I shift my achy legs, you are singing,
And I am ashamed of my sadness, my apathy.
I stare at the drawn blind and want to see through to you
To know what wakes you at the crack of dawn
with the energy to love the world and life this much.

Is it because this is what songbirds do?
Perhaps I don't yet know what I am.[159]

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[159] Susan Patrick Breit, "What I Am," *Collected Poems* (unpublished)

ii. The Situation and Ek-stase

> *But every man is more than just himself; he also represents the unique, the very special and always significant and remarkable point at which the world's phenomena intersect, only once in this way and never again.*
>
> Hermann Hesse [160]

Attending to the writing of this first song at seven, a number of observations emerge. Before writing, there was no preconceived theme, no conscious idea of what it should be or how it should go. No idea determined the process. This is one of the most consistent and characteristic observations of the creative process over time, and something that will be addressed in the next chapter, but writing at such a young age highlights something else. No one guided me through the norms or theory of musical composition. I had no formal training. Yet no one had to tell me that a song usually has a chorus and a number of verses. No one had to tell me the theory of how one chord should progress to another. No one had to explain tropes or how the rhythm of words and phrases should be formulated. There was, of course, the richness of culture and thought in which I was, as a small child, already immersed. A child hears a IV-V-I cadence as a resolve long before they know a word like cadence even exists. To reflect upon artistic expression at this age is to recognize that it is not first something explicitly taught. It is not first a matter of learning rules and techniques, mastering form and then gradually, as expertise improves, learning to play more loosely with norms, infusing individuality and expressivity into content: "[I]t is not a mere aptitude for what can be learnt by a rule."[161]

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[160] Hesse, from *Demian* in Hesse, *Siddhartha, Demian, and Other Writings*, 105.

[161] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 189.

It is, first of all, the desire for expression. It is fullness of content that longs for form. It welcomes the limitations of a genre or literary style as the thirsty man welcomes the outlines of a vessel that allows water to be contained, taken in, made accessible. This is not to say that the fullness of content is vagueness or formlessness; it is already pregnant with meaning, with meaningfulness to which we are actively integral. The use of form here is best illustrated in terms of Paryeson's idea of form as organism, as "a structured object uniting thought, feeling, and matter in an activity that aims at the harmonious coordination of all three."[162] This activity, this "formativity," is intrinsically a responding, our responsiveness deriving from and built into our originary relatedness.[163] As experience and response is not one thing, expression is not one thing: in one instance it may be an overflowing of the fullness of content, the abundance in experience; in another it may be the desire to forge form, order, and meaning out of the "too muchness" of experience, the sometimes chaotic and overwhelming content; often, it is somewhere in between, it is the re-forming, the personalizing and interpretation of content, a re-forming which is creative, not merely reproductive.

The fullness of content and relatedness is not just something that appears out in front of us like an object. Certainly an essential ingredient is aesthetic sensibility that opens up to perception of a world pregnant with meaning, but the fullness of content is also this seemingly boundless interior and something akin to Goethe's description of

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[162] Umberto Eco, "Form and Interpretation in Luigi Paryeson's Aesethetics," *The Open Work*, translated by Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 159.

[163] Franke, "Existentialism: An Atheistic or a Christian Philosophy?" *Phenomenology and Existentialism in the Twentieth Century: Book I*, 391.

himself as a collective being, his work reaping what others have sown.[164] I had by the age of seven passed into Grade 2 and had learned and reflected upon the knowledge expected of me. But apart from what had been given explicitly and analytically, I already carried a good deal of the wealth of a western cultural inheritance. I carried AA Milne and Shakespeare, Carole King and Mozart, Augustine and Newton. I carried the richness of the natural world, the way the light could fall, the sweetness of honeysuckle, the tickle of grass on bare feet. I carried my grandfather's storytelling, and my father's relentless Socratic method. I carried my grandmother's fierce love and my mother's practicality. Merleau-Ponty states:

> We must therefore rediscover, after the natural world, the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence: I may well turn away from it, but not cease to be situated relatively to it. Our relationship to the social is, like our relationship to the world, deeper than any express perception or any judgement (421).

I had not yet begun the sorting of what I carried—what to keep, what to delve into, what to leave behind … or better, I had begun, but only just. I wanted to keep the eye of daylight and the birds with sunlight on their wings. That much I already knew.

In this "carrying," we begin to see part of what Merleau-Ponty means in speaking of our "double anonymity," our identity as at once individual (unique and singular) and integral (general). Hyde's discussion of the gift introduces two Greek words for life: *bios*, which is "limited life, characterized life, life that dies" and *zoë*, which is enduring life,

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[164] "I have often reaped what others have sowed. My work is the work of a collective being that bears the name of Goethe." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in conversation with Frédéric Soret, 17 February 1832, in Fodard Freiherr von Biedermann and Wolfgang Herwig, eds., *Goethes Gespräche. Eine Sammlung seitgenössischer Berichte aus seinem Umgang*, Vol 3/2 (Munchen: dtv, 1998), 839. Translation in Sebastian Donat, *Goethe: A Last Universal Genius* (Munchen: Wallstein Verlag, 2004), 141.

"the thread that runs through bios-life and is not broken when the particular perishes."[165] We are both existents and existence, that which has being and being itself. Beyond my finite life, there is a carrying forward of the life I inherit, and when we pass, it will not be as though we were never here.[166] As I carry Augustine and Newton, and my parents and grandparents, I too will be carried. *Will I be a burden or a blessing?* This double anonymity is complex and multifaceted; it emerges in different guises, a number of which come to the forefront when reflecting upon the creative process.

When I think back to writing as a child, I remember the hush and absorption, the feel: watching, listening, taking in the sky, the leaves lifted by the wind, the laughter of children playing in the back field. Observing the process of songwriting over time, this remains a constant. When writing, there is an absorption in the process, but this is attended with an expansion of awareness that takes in what is best understood as the field or fields in which we are immersed. Often seemingly unimportant elements from one's surroundings can emerge and present a thread that weaves into the work at hand, for instance the birds on the roof across the street: "Oh, the emptiness … but the seasons

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[165] Hyde, *The Gift*, 41.

[166] By inherited, I mean both genetically and culturally. Hyde stresses: "Once we realize that the thread of zoë-life runs beyond the physical body, beyond the individual self, it becomes harder to differentiate the various levels of our being" (Hyde, *The Gift*, 198). Hyde relates these levels to the biological, social, and spiritual. In this context, human expression and art are not merely symbolic of *zoë* but a necessary embodiment of it: "Those parts of our being that extend beyond the individual ego cannot survive unless they can be constantly articulated" (Hyde, *The Gift*, 199). Here Hyde's explication of *zoë* demonstrates the problematic of setting the natural and political (*polis*), or personal and political in sharp opposition. He discusses how "zoë-life" that is "the spirit of a community or collective can be wiped out" or lost through the "destruction, debasement or silencing of its art" (Hyde, *The Gift*, 199). In this sense, discussions of the *polis* in terms of communicative action must account not only for rational discourse, but also for the role of the creative dialogue of culture in structuring the public sphere and society.

change I guess; starlings huddle on chimney tops, and share the warmth till the cold spell stops."[167] Such elements, however seemingly random, can inform and direct the process.

The interesting observation is that one does not take up masses of random data and then discard what is meaningless, but neither does one consciously look for the element or elements that present as meaningful. I have no notion that the starlings are relevant until they appear as significant. It appears as a gift, this image of their intimacy, huddled together against the frigid cold of January. Jonas Salk suggests that intuition tells the thinking mind where to look next.[168] Here it is helpful to consider the definitions Nishida Kitaro offers of the classic distinction between intuition and reflection:

> *Intuition* is a consciousness of unbroken progression, or reality just as it is, wherein subject and object are not as yet divided and that which knows and that which is known are one. *Reflection* is a consciousness which, standing outside of this progression, turns around and views it.[169]

What we have too often missed in discussions of reflection and intuition is that in as much as we think of reflective thinking and the thought (the product), we must also conceive of intuition, not merely in terms of the intuition given in a moment (the product), but also in terms of the activity that generated that culmination. Here is where we encounter the hidden art of which Merleau-Ponty speaks. The activity of intuition is not just like the activity of reflection only unconscious. It is pre-reflective, meaning there

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[167] S.P. Breit, "Big Love," *Songs from the Hope Chest,* (unpublished).

[168] Jonas Salk, *Anatomy of Reality: Merging of Intuition and Reason* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983; New York: Praeger, 1985). The relation between intuition and reason is developed throughout the text.

[169] Nishida Kitaro, *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*, translated by Valdo H. Viglielmo with Takeuchi Yoshinori and Joseph S. O'Leary (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), §1, p. 3.

is this profound distributed configurational unity.

In Merleau-Ponty's terms, vision fulfills more than I consciously anticipate; it "outruns its premises and is inwardly prepared only by my primordial opening upon a field of transcendence, that is … by an *ek-stase*" (438). The perceiving is less related to this self—"the one for which I am responsible and for which I make decisions"—and more to "another self which has already sided with the world, which is already open to certain of its aspects and synchronized with them" (251). This other self is not enclosed in the same way as this ostensibly self-contained I that needs to reach out from within itself through conscious will. This other self is already outside (an *ek-stase*) … there, warming by the heat that rises from the chimney: "[T]rue intentionality … is *at* its object rather than positing it" (518). Merleau-Ponty's work explicates how perception and the *cogito* are revealed as "the deep-seated momentum of transcendence which is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world's being" (438-439).

In this activity, we encounter another aspect of our "double anonymity." When the image of the starlings is seen, it is not at first accurate to say that I see it. I do not look for it, or at it, with any conscious sense of purpose. I do not first give significance to it, rather the significance is given to me. It is as though it is seen, and then I see it: "Every perception takes place in an atmosphere of generality and is presented to us anonymously. … So, if I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive" (250). At the same time this is not generic perception, perception that is disembodied; it is yet "my" perception. It is mine in

that there is a style about it particular to my situation, my orientation, my person, my individual way of relating to and being in the world. Perception is the unity of perceiver and perceived:

> This subject-object dialogue, this drawing together, by the subject, of the meaning diffused through the object, and, by the object, of the subject's intentions—a process which is physiognomic perception—arranges round the subject a world which speaks to him of himself, and gives his own thoughts their place in the world (152-153).

I do not consciously construct this world as a constituting consciousness. I do not consciously posit it. At the same time it is not given in any absolute sense, the apparatus of sense and perception taking in entirely determinate data. There is rather an "intertwining" a "taking up of external by internal and of internal by external" (153).

The picture of perception is one of "a process of integration in which the text of the external world is not so much copied, as composed" (10). Observing the process of artistic composition can inform how we conceive of the activity involved in perception. Perception is so seemingly immediate that we are largely unaware of it as anything other than receptivity. Composing is more protracted; it allows us to become aware of this intertwining, which can only be understood in terms of the dimension of depth and the field or fields to which we are actively integral.

During the process of writing, it is often as though the past were more present, the feel of recollections, the texture of moments and meanings in memory. In addition to the spatial field, there is the temporal, the now thick with remembrance and experience: "I walk and gaze up at the trees/ That send me down some dancing leaves/ And I remember/ November/ They sky black with geese/ As the chill set in/ Suddenly we're losing him

again/ And longing."[170] The temporal field not only carries forward retention but also takes in protention, which contributes to the current moment, and can quite radically alter perception of it:

> It's a strange thing to live the present as if it were the past.
> Today, the first day after the shortest day of the year,
> we lie together on the unmade bed.
> The fading light is strangely sepia
> – we are an old photograph yellowing,
> a glimpse,
> a moment,
> a lifetime.[171]

In such moments the present is grasped as it is lived, the moment emerging as thicker and more precious in light of both its transience and its seeming eternity. There is an "*ek-stase* towards the future and towards the past which reveals the dimensions of time not as conflicting, but as inseparable: to be now is to be from always and for ever" (491). Awareness of this temporal field echoes the doubling of *bios* and *zoë*, particular and general.

Indeed, all the fields are not discrete dimensions; they weave together into a deep and rich tapestry, but *zoë* is most obviously grasped in relation to the cultural field and the field of meaning in which we are immersed. In writing the thesis, there is the tangible presence of unseen avatars who have challenged, inspired, led me to doubt, urged me on. I am never lonely in my questioning but am humbled by, and feel a solidarity with, ages of men and women who have lived, and loved, and learned. Writing the song, I carry and

[170] Breit, "Longing," see *Appendix A*.

[171] From Breit, "Sepia," *Collected Poems* (unpublished).

am carried by composers of symphonies and grunge songs, ragas and rock songs, poetry and pop. I am aware of this "common world," of the sedimented meanings, of the vocabulary of "previous acts of expression" (213). As I compose the song, a phrase may fall out that is reminiscent of another song, and it may be discarded as derivative, or kept as a meaningful allusion, establishing layers of meaning. How I sing, the vibrato or lack thereof, the tone or edge, these are picked up and applied the same way we pick up turns of phrase or colloquialisms that express different attitudes. Time signatures and rhythms also communicate shared cultural meanings. A song shifted from a straight four to a shuffle can suddenly be jauntier, a bit more carefree. As evidenced by writing at a very early age, much of this shared meaning is tacit. It is not that I reflect upon it and draw consciously on the cultural field, though this may happen at points in the process. With maturity and learning, this is more often consciously brought in to craft the song once the sense or heart of it has been birthed. Imposed too soon, technique and overt conceptualization can truncate what can only emerge in the absence of self-conscious construction. The situation is one where first I express, and the experience that I express as well as the mode of expression cannot be taken apart from my situation, from my place within this field of meaning and culture.

What I express is not entirely derivative or determined; it is not mere reproduction. The expression is singular in as much as it is the expression of my unique perceptual style, and it is the product of my unique style of "formativity."[172] Though we share a common language, "What I communicate with primarily is not 'representations'

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[172] Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*. This is a term used throughout the book.

or thought, but a speaking subject, with a certain style of being and with the 'world' at which [she] directs [her] aim" (213). Whereas the form of expression is determined by the constituents (i.e. the available meanings and cultural vocabulary), it is not merely, as Kant might put it, an educt: "[I]n the separation and recombination of this raw material we see such an originality in the separating and formative faculty" that it represents something new, unique, a fresh cultural entity.[173] This originality in the formative faculty indicates that as much as the work is an integration it is a "subjective integration."[174] It is not only what is integrated, but how it is integrated, and the way in which this integration is personal. The activity is not merely cause and effect, action and reaction. It is the activity of a person with a unique perceptual style, a unique style of expressing, a unique relation with being. And this is what allows for potentiality and the possibility of novelty.

Subjectivity and Creativity

In opening to the implications of double anonymity, much of the difficulty is related to the tacit premise that substance is foundational. We try to picture subjectivity as a thing—something with clear borders and constancy—while not adequately accounting for process and activity. In Alfred North Whitehead's terms, we must not only consider the "one" and the "many" (our double anonymity as individual and integral), we

[173] Kant, *Kant's Critique of Judgment*, Part II, Div. 1, § 64, p. 274.

[174] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*. This is a term used throughout the book.

must also account for the third component of his category of the ultimate, the "ultimate of ultimates," the "universal of universals"—creativity:[175]

> The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities it synthesizes. The many become one and are increased by one. In their natures, entities are disjunctively 'many' in process of passage into conjunctive unity. This Category of the Ultimate, [Creativity], replaces Aristotle's category of 'primary substance.'[176]

For Whitehead, "actual occasions" are the "final real things" constituting the world, and though they "differ among themselves," these "final facts" are all alike—"drops of experience, complex and interdependent."[177] In similar terms, Merleau-Ponty says that "to be a consciousness [is] *to be an experience*" (111). This focus was more overtly developed in his later work in terms of "the intertwining - the chiasm," and the "flesh of the world."[178]

To grasp actual occasions and intertwining, we must understand the dimension of depth. The complex unity into which the many enter (the "togetherness" or "concrescence") cannot be understood solely in terms of external relation.[179] "Double anonymity" must be grasped philosophically. Not only am I integral socially and historically, but I am also existentially and ontologically integral. This ontological aspect

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[175] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21.

[176] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21.

[177] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18.

[178] Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, 130-155; the concept of the flesh of the world is developed throughout *The Visible and the Invisible*.

[179] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21.

can only be understood properly in light of the possibility of novelty, and in terms of activity, creativity. Here again there is a sort of doubling in subjectivity. Creativity, the formative force, is not something external to the world, something imposed from without, it is rather the ground of what is (though one might say an ungrounded ground), inheres in what is, and animates what is. As much as I am determined by creativity, it also represents, in me, my measure of freedom, the degree to which I can be self-determining, expressing my uniqueness and individuality, participating in and contributing to the creative advance of the whole. Merleau-Ponty points to Husserl's discussion of "our 'generativity' [as] the basis both of our activity or individuality, and our passivity or generality" (497). We only begin to see how this doubling might work when we closely attend to the activity, to the intentionality that composes the perception, that composes the expression, that composes the harmony or discord of a life, a society, a world.

Chapter 5: Expression and Intentionality

Considerations of expression and subjectivity are inextricably tied to problems of intentionality and intention. Though intention (conscious choice and purpose) is usually taken as something quite apart from intentionality (the directedness and aboutness of consciousness), the notion of intentionality developed here makes explicit an association with agency, though not a simple notion of agency as conscious intention. One cannot consider the creative process without coming face to face with questions of authorial intent and how observations of the gift aspect of creativity inform the way in which subjectivity and agency are conceived. If we see ourselves as both individual and integral, we attend to the ways in which we are determined and the ways in which we are free. Until we grasp the complementarity of this dual identity, we tend to fall into what Merleau-Ponty calls the rationalist dilemma where "either the free act is possible, or it is not—either the event originates in me or is imposed on me from outside" (514). Yet, I am not entirely socially constructed, and neither am I totally self-made. The work is neither entirely original nor entirely derivative. All human action is conditioned and free, receptive and active. When we take into account the ways in which we are integral, the reversibility of outside in (historically and situationally integral) and inside out (ontologically and creatively integral), the question of freedom is no longer a simple binary dilemma. It is, in fact, a more perplexing one. This ontological aspect is difficult to approach. It is less evident in perception where objects seem to impinge from without, and more apparent in expression where activity generates objects from within. It is in

activity, creativity, that we grasp subjectivity and intentionality.

Being Open, Being - Open

To return to the phenomenological consideration of expression, consider that people create and compose in different ways, and even within one person's experience, there is no rule, no law, no sure-fire prescription. Yet there are consistent elements, elements without which the project would never be brought to fruition. One essential ingredient is openness. Writing is largely improvisational. The freeing thing about writing at a young age was that there was no expectation that I should "know" what I was doing. As a novice, I was feeling my way, unafraid to try things, oblivious to how things "should" be. I was constantly surprised and delighted. I would hit on something unexpected: a fortuitous previously undiscovered chord that moved me, a soaring melody or poignant phrase that fell out. There were happy accidents and always the surprising workings of some unseen art that saw me produce coherent wholes that were clearly no accident, and yet not consciously constructed.

The secret was to remain open; only in this way could inspiration, the gift aspect of creativity, be given room to play. When I found myself becoming predictable on the guitar, I turned to the piano. When that became familiar and I found myself falling into well-trodden paths, I returned to the guitar, and when regular tuning became predictable, I began writing in other tunings. Inspiration was more easily born out of openness, and a certain naiveté on an instrument subverted the tendency to be too clever. It was no good trying to "think" the song overtly. One had to avoid falling back into patterns that worked

previously, and, instead, reach out, search. The creative process is not primarily a process of explaining or rearranging, but first, a process of discovery.

In philosophical writing, the elements of openness and discovery are equally essential. It is not enough to reconfigure ideas one has previously discovered and expressed. It is not enough to explain what you know. In the current process I began to feel that I had written so much over the last few years that I was retracing steps, going over places that were engaging when I first arrived, but that now no longer held my interest. They did not move me, neither in feeling nor in motivation. If they were to be taken up again they needed to be reinvented, reanimated. In experience, perception, and expression, we do not aim at the actualization of an identical meaning or identical experience; we aim at a new iteration, a new understanding, an expansion of meaning. In expression, whether artistic or academic, I do not pose the answer; it is more that I pose a question, and search, and wait to be moved and informed by something.

To be open, one must let go of a notion of complete conscious control, and to say that one poses a question is to indicate that it will somehow be answered. When writing and composing, there must be trust in the process and trust in some hidden aspect of the self. When coaching young musicians, the cultural allusion that gets it across most often is "use the force."[180] There must be a relinquishing of the need to control consciously every aspect of behaviour or performance; instead there must be an opening up to another mode of functioning and awareness. In creativity, there is the bracketing of intention to allow for intentionality.

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[180] George Lucas, *Star Wars* (20th Century Fox, 1977).

i. Improvisation and Operative Intentionality

A consideration of musical improvisation is illustrative. Improvisation underlies much of the songwriting process, and arguably more of our actions than we acknowledge. As in James' name-remembering example, consciously thinking about the process of musical improvisation, overtly anticipating what comes next (i.e. where the fingers will fall, where the voice should be led) actually inhibits one's ability to perform. We find the same in conversation. If too self-conscious about our speech, we are inhibited. To improvise, one must rely on what Merleau-Ponty calls the "speaking subject" as opposed to the "thinking subject." In improvisation, especially in live performance, there is not the time to reflect continually, to make a conscious decision from given options, and then enact the choice. Still choices emerge. The playing is not simply reproduction of pre-established patterns or habitual repetition. The performance is not mechanical; it is very much alive (which of course involves an element of risk). Neither is the playing vague abstractness, immediacy without content, or random purposeless activity. What emerges spontaneously has sense and form. The present moment is already pregnant with meaning; it does not need me to first posit it consciously. Improvisation and spontaneity show that expression is not thought "coincid[ing] with itself," but thought "outrun[ning] itself" (451-452).

In Merleau-Ponty's discussion of expression, he captures the dynamics involved and presents an apt description:

> 'Pure' thought reduces itself to a certain void of consciousness, to a momentary desire. The new sense-giving intention knows itself only by donning already available meanings, the outcome of previous acts of expression. The available

> meanings suddenly link up in accordance with an unknown law, and once and for all a fresh cultural entity has taken on an existence. Thought and expression, then, are simultaneously constituted, when our cultural store is put at the service of this unknown law … (213).

This unknown law intimates a sort of self-organizing process. The process displays purposiveness without a determinate purpose.[181] It is not simply cause and effect, the addition of known factors that leads to an inevitable conclusion, or the expression of an idea or purpose that is explicitly given. These scenarios amount to "second-order speech," or "speech about speech," repetition or rearrangement without novelty (207fn). The scenario that allows for novelty involves the speaking subject and "authentic speech, which formulates for the first time," and only this, according to Merleau-Ponty, is identical with thought (207fn). If, as happens, through my own acts of expression, I can be informed, deriving understanding that was not explicitly mine before, then creative expression must be able to actualize meaning rather than merely to repeat it. If one attempts to separate the product from the process or act, *langue* from *parole*, we have no way to account for such experience. This cannot simply be explained in terms of the rearrangement of existing constituents—signs or labels or pieces of a puzzle.

The parts themselves, the constituents, have depth, but so too does the subjectivity that integrates and creates. In considering what emerges, it is not enough to consider the many (constituents) and the one (novel integration); one must account for activity, creativity, and intentionality. The activity involved is not simply that of conscious intention that conforms to a known law or purpose:

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[181] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, particularly Part I, Div. I, § 11, 12, pp. 67-70, and on "subjective purposiveness" in Part I, Div. I, § 15, pp. 78-80.

> We found beneath the intentionality of acts, or thetic [positing] intentionality, another kind which is the condition of the former's possibility: namely an operative intentionality already at work before any positing or any judgement, a 'Logos of the aesthetic world', an 'art hidden in the depths of the human soul', one which, like any art, is known only in its results (498).

This phrase "known only in its results" points to some of the most perplexing aspects of expression and creativity.

ii. The Mystery of Beginnings

In the genesis of a song, as Wittgenstein writes: "It is difficult to find the beginning. Or better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning, and not try to go further back."[182] We imagine some clear beginning because the product appears as an eloquent whole. It demonstrates design and coherence. It presents as an intentional object, appearing as significant and meaningful. It is not a mere accident; it is "art not chance."[183] Yet the situation is one where, as Kant put it, the creator "does not know himself how he has come by his Ideas; and he has not the power to devise the like at pleasure or in accordance with a plan, and to communicate it to others in precepts that will enable them to produce similar products."[184] The beginning is certainly not a clear idea that then simply seeks actualization. This would assume the song was somehow written before it

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[182] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (New York: HarperCollins, 1972), 122, no. 471.

[183] Paul Allen, ed., *Art, not Chance: Nine Artists' Diaries* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2001).

[184] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, Part I, Div. § 46, pp. 189-190.
This is from Kant's discussion of genius, a term that is somewhat problematic in this context as it establishes an elitism to this sort of experience, whereas, arguably, it is quite widely experienced even if it does not result in what is generally recognized as a master work or innovation in a given field.

was written. If the determinate song existed *a priori*, the aesthetic choices I made as a writer would be entirely externally determined, which they are not. As will become evident, the author is not dead, a vessel waiting to be filled, but is actively engaged in a process that nevertheless seems to transcend the conscious choices that s/he makes at pivotal moments in the creation of the song.

On returning to the idea of posing a question, the problem of finding a beginning starts to become clear. This questioning must be qualified. It is not that I first pose a particular intellectual question. The question is open, not clearly defined, and to say that I pose the question is not entirely representative; it could equally be said that life has posed the question. As Merleau-Ponty argues:

> [It, life] sets a kind of muddled problem for [me] to solve. I must find the attitude which *will* provide it with the means of becoming determinate …; I must find the reply to a question which is obscurely expressed. And yet I do so only when I am invited by it … (249).[185]

The problem presents less like a clearly articulated question and more like longing. The problem is personal; it arises from my own life, my love, my way of seeing, the histories I carry and hopes I hold, my strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, angels and

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[185] This notion of life posing a question is not only relevant to expression in art, but also to expression in general (i.e. how we express and actualize our lives and selves). Merleau-Ponty's notion of life setting a problem is more urgently expressed in the context of Viktor Frankl's reflections on incarceration in Nazi concentration camps. He says that for himself and other prisoners:

> We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life [i.e. purpose], and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. …. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man, and from moment to moment. Thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way. Questions about the meaning of life can never be answered by sweeping statements. "Life" does not mean something vague, but something very real and concrete, just as life's tasks are also very real and concrete. They form man's destiny, which is different and unique for each individual.

Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 85.

demons. It emerges from desire, disillusionment, and something like destiny. It arises from my situation, my inherence in the world, and from a strange confluence of overabundance and lack. It is the open question, the longing or desire that is the motive. Merleau-Ponty writes: “The act of the artist or philosopher is free, but not motiveless” (200). The motive is indeterminate, but not lacking in intentionality, in a sense of direction.

Songs emerge in many ways. It does happen from time to time that the song emerges almost fully formed. One feels impelled, and there is a clear sense of direction, but not one that is a concept or idea; it is more an overwhelming desire or longing. Usually this occurs when the song most needs to be written (or when I most need the song). In such situations, it can appear as though the music plays itself:

> Circumstances were such that I had to go alone. I watched the images on the ultrasound, trying to be stoic, knowing already. The technician said ‘it’s passed’ in the same way you’d say ‘it’s flat’ or ‘it’s time for a coffee break.’ That was the extent of the interaction. But then, being rhesus negative, I had to go to the hospital and get the shot of RhoGAM, as if “it” had passed bawling and pink and totally loved. Protocol required that I wear a surgical mask as I answered efficient questions from form fillers and triage nurses. I was painfully aware that garbed in this way I couldn’t put on a brave face. I couldn’t hide what was in my eyes behind the bravado of a smile. I waited. The doctor was sympathetic, and I rode the busy streetcar home to an empty house.
>
> To the world, it was as if nothing had happened. But I … I already had that baby, in my mind, and in my heart, and there, inside, where all that was left now was an incredible hollowness. It is a strange sort of grief that mourns an invisible loss. There was nothing else to do.
>
> I leaned into the piano as if falling into an embrace. Closing my eyes, I lifted my hands and let them fall … asking, invoking. The first chord was a total surprise, nothing I knew. It sounded like consolation. I lifted my hands again and placed them in another totally unfamiliar configuration. The progression was so full of longing and sadness and comfort that I could not have consciously come to it. The whole appeared in this way and with much of it quite unlike anything I’d written

> before. The words were understated and simple, the music carrying the weight of expression. The song emerged nearly fully formed. It was a gift … an epitaph … the process almost entirely invisible.

In this sort of instance, the song is, as Wallace Stevens puts it, "the cry of its occasion."[186]

To cast a work as the cry of the occasion is to intimate that it is not merely me interacting with life out there, but life itself bursting forth, needing expression. The cry of the occasion implies that the authorship is somehow distributed, spread out, taking up but not confined to the author. It is like Merleau-Ponty's discussion of consciousness and subjectivity as an *ek-stase*, already beyond itself, transcending, but not apart from this I with which I ordinarily identify. The song as the cry of the occasion is less an intellectual project and more an existential one. Merleau-Ponty describes the existential project as "the polarization of a life towards a goal which is both determinate and indeterminate, which, to the person concerned, is entirely unrepresented, and which is recognized only on being attained" (518). The intellectual project is the "bringing to completion of an existential project" (519). This is to say that the project is not first motivated by what I think, but by what I live through, the knowledge of which transcends purely conceptual circumscription.

In this scenario, one common to how my poetry often emerges, it is as though the work pours out. The song is quite clear on how it wants to go. To talk about where the song wants to go is to intimate that the song has intentionality. The meaning (or more accurately meaningfulness) and direction of the song are not known as you would know a

[186] "The poem is the cry of its occasion, /Part of the res itself and not about it." Wallace Stevens, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," XII, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Random House Digital, 2011), 468.

discursive meaning and clear set of instructions. Rather at some point either prior to sitting down, or shortly after beginning to write, there emerges the feel of the thing. I find myself immersed in a very strong image, though that is not quite the right word as it is not a determinate picture or idea or plan, but there is a *sens*, a strong direction, a sense of something that only needs to be elaborated and interpreted in a way that can do it justice. In such a situation, once the song is begun, the aesthetic choices are fairly clear, and options can be rapidly discarded since once one hits on an appropriate choice, there is the sense of an indubitable fit. There may be a certain chord I hear before playing it, one that I have to search for, sometimes note by note, building until I find the right tension, clearly knowing what fits and what does not. There are the norms of a particular genre, the limits of my virtuosity, but the real criteria, the criteria that determine aesthetic choices, are paradoxically determined by the song itself, what it wants to be. … And yet the song does not exist until it is written. It seems to be as Gianni Vattimo suggests: the individual work corresponds to its own law, a law that transcends the will of the artist.[187] One possible explanation for such clear criteria is that this scenario represents an instance of expression that emerges from pre-science in intuition. This knowing before explication is not about knowing the form of the expression, the concept or determinate idea; it is knowing the content of it, the meaning or meaningfulness of it, which is fairly well circumscribed, however indeterminately.

At other times there is longing, though subtler and less urgent than in the first

[187] Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, edited by Santiago Zabala and translated by Luca D'Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 101, 105-106.

scenario. There is a feel, a vague sense of direction. I am propelled, but more clearly drawn. As I write, an image or images emerge like shapes in the distance, gradually becoming more distinct as I draw nearer. I sing them into focus. Here aesthetic choices might be less clear. Choices at different turns can make the end product, not unrelated to the *sens*, but quite different from what it might have been otherwise. Very often there is the sense that this is just one possible song, one possible interpretation. In this, Vattimo's statement that "the law of the work is both invented and discovered, created and found" seems most apt.[188] Here expression is less the imperative to express, an overflowing of a prescient knowing or meaningfulness that seeks enunciation, and more a desire to express, to understand, a process of finding and making meaning (though this meaning must be understood in the rich multi-dimensional way previously set forth).

The impetus for a song need not be born of some immediate urgency in my own life; it can also be sought out or "fished for" through the ability to project oneself imaginatively into a lived situation. As Bob Dylan says: "Throwing yourself into a situation that would demand a response is like using bait."[189] If the situation is real enough and resonates enough, this indeterminate question emerges demanding a response. Also, we collect images, like smooth stones that in a moment grab our attention: "The moon is a smudge tonight in a soft thick impressionist sky, but the foreground is stark, naked limbs, twigs and bark."[190] Some of these immediately get taken

[188] Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, 105-106.

[189] Bob Dylan quoted in Paul Zollo, *Songwriters On Songwriting* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2003), 72.

[190] Breit, "Glow," *Glow (*Magdalene Music, release pending).

up into a song, and others jiggle around in our pockets, rubbing against each other, waiting for the right song to give them voice. The song is both an expression of life (of the self, the world from which she emerges and into which she is thrown), and the desire to see it, the better to understand, find meaning, and, in some way, transform it.

Here understanding is not merely cognitive; it is also affective. It is not merely a desire to know, but to care, to reach out across the divide of our separateness, to draw close, and be drawn close. Poet Mary Oliver says: “My work is loving the world.”[191] Additionally, the work is transformative. Through the creative process pathos can become poetry, anger catharsis, and even the saddest of losses can be transformed, at least for a time, into something tenderly beautiful. This transformation is not only there in the work—it is not just a gloss, a band-aid, an illusory consolation—it is there in my new found understanding, altering my relation to the situation, allowing for responses to life that are shaped by the meaning I have composed/found. In this sense, as much as I compose the song, the song composes me.

In all scenarios, the experience is that technique and conscious intention cannot lead. One cannot think the song, or force a form onto it; it needs to emerge, develop, more organic shaping than technical determination. Bob Dylan talks about the “primary impulse” that takes you so far:

> And then all of the sudden you start thinking. And when my mind starts thinking, "What's happening now? … " and my mind starts to get into it, that's trouble right away. That's usually big trouble. And as far as never seeing this thing again.[192]

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[191] Mary Oliver, “Messenger,” *Thirst* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), 1.

[192] Dylan quoted in Zollo, *Songwriters On Songwriting*, 76.

If you start "thinking" too soon, you lose touch with the heart of the matter and truncate the expression. Dylan talks about "ways you can get out of that," out of that deadening thinking, and one way is to "take the whole thing and change key." This resonates with my strategy of changing instruments or tuning. He talks about needing to stay in the "unconscious frame of mind to pull it off." In a similar vein, Steinbeck offers the following writing advice:

> Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper. Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.[193]

Both accomplished writers emphasize the importance of a kind of unconscious activity. There is the bracketing of intention to allow for this purposive activity, this intentionality, to operate.

William James argues that images of traditional psychology only take into account a very small part of our minds "as they actually live." He writes:

> The traditional psychology talks like one who should say a river consists of nothing but pailsful, spoonsful, quartpotsful, barrelsful, and other moulded forms of water. Even were the pails and the pots all actually standing in the stream, still between them the free water would continue to flow. It is just this free water of consciousness that psychologists resolutely overlook. … With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of whence it came to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to lead... .We all of us have this permanent consciousness of whither our thought is going. It is a feeling like any other, a feeling of what thoughts are next to arise, before they have arisen.[194]

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[193] John Steinbeck, from a letter to Robert Wallsten (February13-14, 1962) in Steinbeck, *A Life in Letters*, edited by Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten (New York: Penguin, 1989), no page numbers in book.

[194] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Volume 1 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1890), Google E-book edition, 255-256.

When we begin trying to think the work overtly, we put ourselves into the pails and pots, and lose touch with the flow and the feeling of what wants to arise. So there must be a sort of surrender and at the same time a trust in the process itself. Trust intimates both patience and perseverance, and, in this, we begin to see how the lines blur. Formativity or intentionality cannot be taken apart from the activity and style or personality of the artist.

The perplexing part about trying to circumscribe subjectivity arises when we seek to delimit agency and will, while taking into account operative intentionality. It is one thing to think of the way in which I may be determined from the outside in, and balance this with a conception of personal agency and freedom. Yet, if operative intentionality is something of which I am not strictly conscious, doesn't this mean that it determines me from the inside out? If it is something like "the wind that blows through me," am I not, then, merely instrumental in the process, no longer even an individual? In the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, this claim to some sort of "Power" that "Floats though unseen among us …/ … Like aught that for its grace may be/ Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery" is only seen to undermine the poet.[195] Socrates says to Ion, the rhapsode, that, if he claims to do what he does based on art and knowledge, he is being disingenuous:

> [Y]ou are only a deceiver, and so far from exhibiting the art of which you are a master, will not, even after my repeated entreaties, explain to me the nature of it. … But if, as I believe, you have no art, but speak all these beautiful words about Homer unconsciously under his inspiring influence, then I acquit you of dishonesty, and shall only say that you are inspired. Which do you prefer to be

[195] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," I, *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*, edited by D. H. S. Nicholson and A.H.E. Lee (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917), 19, Bartleby.com, 2000, accessed January 3, 3012, www.bartleby.com/236/.

thought, dishonest or inspired?[196]

Given the choice, Ion chooses "inspired," which, from Socrates' point of view, robs him of any personal authority, any valid claims to knowledge. He is as an empty vessel, a puppet. Yet, as Socrates is prone to do, he has presented an either/or question, a sort of multiple choice in which none of the answers are entirely representative; they lack the ability to rest in ambiguity.

Subjectivity must be considered in terms of both being and becoming. We must consider not only the actualized products, but also the activity that generates these. This activity, creativity, is not simply the "wind that blows through me," but is something that could not be activated or accessed without my initiative and participation. This ties back to Husserl's notion of 'generativity' as the basis of our activity or individuality, as well as our passivity or generality. Another way to approach the ambiguity of it is in accord with Coleridge's depiction of primary and secondary imagination:

> The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.[197]

This secondary imagination is not synonymous with conscious will, but co-exists with it. It was stipulated earlier that James' two modes of mental functioning—one conscious and

[196] Plato, *Ion*, translated by Benjamin Jowett (The Internet Classics Archive, 2009), accessed January 3, 2012, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/ion.html.

[197] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* in Coleridge, *The Major Works*, 313.

voluntary, the other unconscious and involuntary—are helpful in illustrating how we might circumscribe thinking, and yet they run the risk of setting up an unrepresentative binary, a fixed dividing line. Becoming aware of the unreflective life in radical reflection would be impossible if this were strictly unconscious activity. Merleau-Ponty's radical reflection and Coleridge's idea of co-existence intimate hybrid modes of functioning, modes that will become clearer as the exploration of the creative process proceeds.

In creation, the author is not absent. There are clear aesthetic choices that I make and techniques that I employ. Some of these are more a feel for things and others quite conscious decisions. There is pruning, and redirecting. There are tools I can utilize harmonically, dynamically, and rhythmically. There are the places I get stuck and the ways I get past them. There is the active engagement, the active trust, the perseverance, and a certain fearlessness. This is to say that there is remaining open (unknowing) and, also, knowing. There is both determinacy and indeterminacy. There is both intention and intentionality.

Intention and Intentionality

i. Creation as Interaction and Dialogue

A focus on operative intentionality and the gift aspect of creativity might indicate that the author is somehow absent from the process, but this is not the case. Songwriting is far from "automatic writing." It is not a process in which I am possessed and wake up later to find myself surprised by a finished note from some long dead poet. I am present in it from start to finish, but not in such a way that I self-consciously direct it. In writing,

the artist has the sense that the process is less something she determines, and more something in which she participates. The process is informed by the artist, but, reciprocally, it informs her. It is dialogical, an interaction.

All creation is interaction and dialogue. This is true in a number of senses. There is interaction with the medium in which one creates. The sculptor is in dialogue with the stone that offers its own qualities, possibilities, and limitations. The painter interacts with colour, texture, and canvas. The songwriter is most of all moved by music. There is a dialogue in which the music gives back and contributes. There is a dialogue between lyrics and music; a line suggests a chord progression, a musical phrase suggests an idea that directs the lyrical content. The medium in which I create, the discourse with which I engage, the genre in which I compose, these carry their own vocabularies and metaphors, meanings and histories, structural limitations and potentialities, norms that I defy or accept. A medium, especially a tangible one (something heard or seen), allows me to feel that this interaction is with something external and other. The music gives back more than I put into it; it moves me as much as I move it.

One element in songwriting that clearly sets it apart from more discursive modes is the physicality involved: “Now the body is essentially an expressive space” (169). In particular, the physicality of singing, the profoundly embodied expression, provides a different perspective on both composition and meaning. Singing is not just words; it is expression that is not without linguistic and intellectual sense, but it comes out like a cry or a yell or an intimate whisper. The fullness of expression, the dimensionality, the surface thought, the thought within the thought, these course through my body; the

expression is felt viscerally, almost amplified. It takes the muddled emotion and meaning I feel in life and makes it somehow clearer, more rarified yet more real. It may be that I have not known how deeply something has affected me, something that still weighs me down, and trips me up. When I open my mouth to sing, I may be taken aback by what comes out, by what I discover to be the truth, something I have managed to avoid or evade: "There's a wounded thing where my heart used to be. I hide it well, no one can see, and I lie about it constantly, especially to me."[198] Singing subverts the tendency to over-think, or to distance oneself from life by burying one's head in it. It wells up like laughter or tears. I hear it outside myself; it is profoundly mine at inception, but not entirely mine on reception. I sing and am sung to. Singing is freeing and somehow more eloquent than spoken words that too often fall flat, half empty of meaning, limping rather than dancing across the spaces that divide us from ourselves and from each other. But words too can sing, so long as they carry some sort of poetry and the sort of physiognomy that resonates for/with us.

To understand for ourselves and to make ourselves understood, we forge form out of the inexhaustibility of our experiences, not to imprison aspects in the coldness of unmoving metal signifiers, but to mold them and embody them in the living materials of the world so that we can better see them, feel them, understand them, and share them. Creativity is profoundly personal but never happens in a vacuum or void. The song, the poem, the philosophical work, these are mine, but at the same time not only mine. In academic work this is evident in citations and bibliographies, and even these capture only

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[198] Sue Patrick Breit, "Broken Heart," *Ever After,* work in progress.

the surface of ideas and experiences that have contributed to the expression distilled in the work. Life is profoundly inter-subjective and to illustrate something of the co-creative nature of life, it is helpful to return briefly to a consideration of musical improvisation.

In ensemble musical improvisation, it is apparent that the intra-subjective creative process does not happen in isolation. A fascinating aspect of improvisation is that it is profoundly inter-subjective. It requires configurational awareness, not just in relation to the arrangement of rhythm and harmony one plays, but in relation to what everyone else is playing and intending. There is dialogue, but more intriguing than the back and forth is the sort of symbiosis that entails protention (i.e. feeling toward the next moment) not in isolation, but together. One must be profoundly open. One must lose oneself, go beyond oneself (i.e. the self-conscious self) to become intimately attuned to another, or others. In improvisation there is a heightened sense of the full pregnant present moment. It is replete, not only with the meanings that we share in the form of "spoken speech" (e.g., the cultural forms, words, musical vocabulary, we inherit and share), but with the very personal meanings and intentionality of the "speaking subjects" engaged in the mutual expression. Each individual has a style, a certain manner of dealing with situations, of responding to and being in the world, but in improvisation there is profound reciprocity. Though each person has a style, what emerges is something other than what any player would create in isolation.

This is not a simple instance of classical cause and effect (e.g., I play this, then you play that). Though this element of back and forth is present, this does not account for the coinstantaneous choices that emerge. Even though, as often happens, it may be said I

am following another player who is leading or soloing on a section, I am not following "after the fact." I am *with* him or her. I am grasping in the moment the possibilities of the next moment, attuned to the intentionality of the other. For example, vocalists singing together may watch the other's mouth, take in the breathing, the emotional timbre, the flow of dynamics, the feel and trajectory of a phrase, the subtlety of intonation, the increase or decrease in vibrato, but these are not broken down into components. They are experienced as a field, a unified expression reaching towards realization. In this context, the self-organization of my creative thought merges with the self-organization of the inter-subjective field of thought in which I am immersed. It is this sort of picture, of experience, of human and cultural interaction, and of the world, that this study seeks to elucidate: "To be a consciousness or rather *to be an experience* is to hold inner communication with the world, the body and other people, to be with them instead of being beside them" (111). As will be discussed in the final chapter, recognizing this "withness" is crucial to grasping the implications of our "effective involvement in the world" (xvi).[199]

Yet, even writing in isolation, the picture of creativity as an intra-subjective process cannot be isolated from an inter-subjective context and dynamic. In composing, the interaction is not only with the music per se (rhythm, harmony, the norms in terms of structural form, etc.), or with the poetry of words, it is also with the cultural forms, norms, influences, and allusions that are part of the multi-dimensional field to which I am

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[199] John Shotter, "Goethe and the Refiguring of Intellectual Inquiry: From 'Aboutness'-Thinking to 'Withness'-Thinking in Everyday Life," *Janus Head*, 8(1) (2005): 132-158, accessed June 20, 2013, http://www.janushead.org/8-1/shotter.pdf.

integral; more than that, it is an interaction with life, the world, the situation, with existence. It is, paradoxically also, interaction with the self, but a self that is something more than I would ordinarily think, a self that extends beyond the boundary of personality, beyond the bounds of my ability to reflect upon it, beyond the capability and wisdom that I "myself" possess, a self that is humbling, elevating, and, I would have to say, loving. Creativity is the activity of a "person"—a person being the "coincidence of relation with oneself and relation with Being: incarnation and participation."[200]

ii. Creativity and Reflection

All creation is interaction and dialogue. Yet the song, as existential project, is always mine, even though at the same time it transcends and subtends this isolated I, being inseparable from my inherence in the world, and from this activity that will never become fully transparent to me. It is profoundly mine in that it stems, not simply from some external situation, or ontological transcendent activity, but from the fact of myself as an ethically existing individual. I stand in relation to the external situation and take it up. I also stand in relation to this aspect of subjectivity that I can neither describe nor lay hold of. "Living" relation requires creativity and openness.

Here we begin to see more of what openness implies. The existential and intellectual projects cannot be entirely separated. There is a trap in thinking of operative intentionality as something quite apart from the intentionality of act (my own intention). It falls back into separating reality and ideality, and, if misunderstood, robs us of agency.

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[200] Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*, 42.

Agency is not just about logical choices, ethics derived from concepts and principles. It is about an attitude I take up and live; it is about a way of seeing and being. Openness is not being directionless or undiscerning. It is receptivity, sympathy, and caring. It is not being sealed within oneself, all tight lids and fasteners. It is opening onto being and spreading out toward the world, toward others, toward possibility. Openness has to do with our mode of being in the world.

This mode must be fostered. If my relation is entirely extrinsically determined or simply habitual and reflexive, then it is lacking in authenticity and openness. It has become mechanistic, no longer a real or living relation. Though our conscious intentions stem from an intentionality that precedes them, this intentionality takes up my previous intentions and my previous intellectual projects. The ultimate inseparability in humanity of nature and culture, reality and ideality, existential and intellectual projects means that there is all the more need of some method to bracket conceptions and therefore determine what to carry forward and what to let go, to judge what is enrichment and what is impoverishment. Merleau-Ponty insists that "the true part that philosophical reflection has to play" is in attending to this unreflective life, so that consciousness can awaken to its own history, a history that it has been forgetting (36). To remain open, we must continually reflect upon what we have made, in ideas, in premises, in habits. As much as these propel us and free us to create, they can also entrap us and limit creativity. This is evident in the detuning strategies employed in songwriting to break out of previous patterns and habits. Reflection must not only synthesize and construct, but also as Coleridge said of the secondary imagination, it must dissolve, diffuse, dissipate, in order

to re-create.[201] Our ideas must remain vital, our thinking creative, and reflection is essential here, but "reflection does not itself grasp its full significance unless it refers to the unreflective fund of experience which it presupposes, upon which it draws, and which constitutes for it a kind of original past" (281-282).

Creativity requires reflection. Reflection can be both the lock that shuts us away from creativity and lived experience, and a key to accessing them. Existence requires ideality "in order to become acquainted with and to prevail over its facticity" (xvi). Merleau-Ponty explains that phenomenology proceeds by way of essences: "It is the office of language to cause essences to exist in a state of separation which is in fact merely apparent, since through language they still rest upon the antepredicative life of consciousness" (xvii). We require expression and concepts, but "these acquired thoughts are not a final gain" (150). If we take them as such, in their apparent separateness, we end up in a feedback loop, separated from reality, separated from experience, separated from the heart of the matter. Still, essences are an essential means; we require the field of ideality to lift ourselves out of our tight and deep inherence in the world, so that we can see it, appreciate it, and bring back the living relationships of experience.

Living relation, whether to reality or ideality, is key. My acquired thoughts "continually draw their sustenance from my present thought, they offer me a meaning, but I give it back to them. Indeed our available store expresses for ever afresh the energy of our present consciousness" (150). If we take our acquired thoughts and concepts as final gains, we no longer engage and attend to them, and without the sustenance (i.e. the

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[201] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* in Coleridge, *The Major Works*, 313.

energy of our present consciousness), they begin to lose their vitality: “To pay attention is not merely further to elucidate pre-existing data, it is to bring about a new articulation” (35). It has been noted that to be engaged in writing, whether musical or academic, it is not enough simply to reiterate meaning. For our thinking to remain vital, and for our thoughts to remain vital, we cannot rest in existing expression, and existing meaning. We must not just respond habitually. Without new articulation, the thoughts and concepts start to calcify, meaning fades, until the concept or thought, finally fossilized, is empty. It has no living meaning left.

Though sated for a time in the fullness of an expression, process requires new manifestations, novelty in expression, and creative advance. The realization or awareness awakened in radical reflection can also not be treated as a final gain. Though this dimension once opened can never again be closed, we can lose touch, lose focus, drifting slowly back into a kind of forgetting. We require some sort of practice: “The same applies in all cases of coming to awareness: they are real only if they are sustained by a new commitment” (529). In process, there is not only evolution, but also, without ongoing activity and creativity, devolution.

In order to be creative one needs to be open, but this is not always comfortable. It requires courage. We long for some kind of certainty and clarity. Being open means that one is open to new experience and to thinking that may alter understandings; these may at times shake the very foundations upon which we’ve built our edifices of certainty. We may grow comfortable within our fossilized walls, enjoying a sort of “agreeable

somnolence."[202] There may be a sense of belonging, a feeling of security in certainties shared by those within the walls; inevitably, over time, the walls grow taller, blocking out the sky. In the half darkness, we silence the unenunciated questions that push up, waving them off like insubstantial shadows. Yet even in our forgetting, it may happen that on a clear night, we might glimpse, "thro' narrow chinks of [our] cavern" a "small section of sky, where the light of a distant star elicits an unexplained longing … and something begins to dawn, like a memory we can't quite bring to consciousness."[203] The longing is the impetus; it provides the courage to tear down the walls and rebuild, allowing for more openness, more light, more sky. This we will do again and again. Our present consciousness must be prepared to deconstruct, to trouble the unreflected premises, and to resist the deadening of ideas by feeding them, keeping them vital, being open to their progression and change. In doing this, we may fear leaving behind security, and a conditional sense of belonging, but, in the end, a closed up sense of belonging is nothing to the embrace of the sky.

Self-consciousness and Self-as-subject

Ultimately, the existential project and the intellectual project are intertwined. Ideality does not sit atop existence as a detached layer. The pregnancy of meaning that is there when I perceive and that is there in this rich inner life that seeks expression is

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[202] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Mineola, NY: Courier Dover Publications, 1999), 83.

[203] "Thro' narrow chinks of [our] cavern" from William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 1330. "Small section of sky …" from Breit, *Beauty, Truth, and Peace*, 23.

replete with ideas and meanings and concepts. The focus on the primacy of the existential project is in no way a denigration of the intellectual project. It is rather to assert:

> [I]t is not the 'I am' which is pre-eminently contained in the 'I think,' not my existence which is brought down to the consciousness which I have of it, but conversely the 'I think,' which is re-integrated into the transcending process of the 'I am', and consciousness into existence (446).

In the same way, the self-conscious I (the I that I think and that is known in reflection as an object) is not disjoint from the I that proffers the gift. The paradoxical experience is akin to an experience of co-existence or interaction even though one sits in solitude; this is evident in notions of the muse or daemon. In writing, the I with which I ordinarily identify does not vacate the premises so that another agent can step in and compose. Rather, it forgets itself without losing itself. It goes beyond itself, and sees beyond itself.

There is the self-consciousness of reflection and then there is another sort of self-consciousness. I recount an experience that may help to illustrate:

> A few summers ago, I sat on the deck of our cottage soaking in the warmth after having been laid up with a fever for five days. The chair was faced away from the lake, but the view of water and trees and sky was clearly reflected in the large panes of glass that cover the front of the cottage. I felt too weak and tired to move the chair around and thought, "well, this is fine." But you see it wasn't. I couldn't see things clearly, distracted as I was by the reflection of myself. I got in the way. So I mustered up the gumption to turn the chair around and I disappeared, well I was still there but in a quite different way. I was just part of everything, like the rocks and leaves, the shimmering spider web, and the sunlight on the lake.

In the creative process, one has to somehow turn the chair around and step out of the self-conscious reflective mode. Flannery O'Conner says that "in art, the self becomes self-forgetful."[204] This self-forgetfulness is not a lack of awareness, but rather another mode

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[204] Flannery O'Connor quoted in Hyde, *The Gift*, 197.

of awareness. Radical reflection in the phenomenological process allows for awareness of an unreflective life. Radical reflection in the creative process also allows for awareness of this unreflective life, not just this life as spread out externally, but also this life internally in ourselves and as ourselves, though beyond the boundary of personality.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's study of "flow" explores and documents "optimal experience," a quality of experience reported by many individuals who spend time engaged and absorbed in certain activities, but particularly creative ones. He explains that flow is an "almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness."[205] In flow, self-consciousness disappears, and, in this self-forgetfulness, something more emerges. There are different modes of self-consciousness: there is the self-consciousness of reflection associated with personality and psychological identity; then there is what Richard Logan terms, in his study of "Flow in Solitary Ordeals," non-self-consciousness, or self-as-subject.[206] Here the I is not so much known in reflection, as revealed in process. What it *is* is not something other than me, but somehow not me … not in the ordinary way of thinking. It is the ground from which this limited I has emerged. One has the sense of being integral to something that transcends a limited identity. In such an experience one is fully immersed and energized. Accordingly, creativity is described as autotelic experience—experience that contains within it its own purpose.[207] The work is

[205] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 110.

[206] Richard D. Logan, "Flow in Solitary Ordeals," in Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, eds., *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 178-180.

[207] Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 113.

worth doing for its own sake regardless of outcome.

So, in songwriting, often it is less that the song needs to be written or that I yearn to make sense out of life, and more that I just long to sing and write. In Csikszentmihalyi's study of creativity, he notes:

> Scientists often describe the autotelic aspects of their work as the exhilaration that comes from the pursuit of truth and of beauty. What they seem to describe, however, is the joy of discovery, of solving a problem, of being able to express an observed relationship in a simple and elegant form. So what is rewarding is not a mysterious and ineffable external goal but the activity … itself. It is the pursuit that counts, not the attainment.[208]

What is less brought out in discussions of flow is this experience of interaction in creativity, and it is this experience of intimacy in the process which somehow merges the "pursuit of truth or of beauty" with the joy of the activity itself. I seek the absorption and freedom of the process. I am most myself there; I meet myself there … or I would like to think of it as myself, but I cannot quite do this honestly. I meet something beyond the boundary of my self, not-I, but not not-I. It is not other than me, but it transcends me, both in wisdom and beauty. It subtends me, carrying me, especially when I feel unable to carry myself. It is experienced paradoxically as both solitude and communion. And here one encounters the other pole of wonder. There is wonder in the face of the world, and wonder in the face of something encountered at the root of our own subjectivity. From many experiences over time, there arises the conviction, so poignantly expressed by Bergson, that it is "as if man encountered at the roots of his constituted being a generosity

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[208] Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 122.

which is not a compromise with the adversity of the world and which is on his side against it."[209]

The generosity encountered at the root of subjectivity is not only relevant to what we express artistically, but also to what we express ethically.[210] It does not do away with the adversity of the world. There is still war and hatred and misery and suffering, but this does not undermine the fact of this generosity, rather it indicates the importance of bringing it to conscious awareness.[211] Just as beauty cannot be realized and actualized without our participation, this generosity cannot be actualized without us. It cannot be accessed or activated without our participation, without our perseverance and commitment, and I would say a certain degree of courage. Accessing it is not like

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[209] Henri Bergson quoted in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "In Praise of Philosophy," translated by John Wild and James Edie, *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 25–26. Originally published as *Éloge de la Philosophie* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960), 33.

[210] In the creative process we may meet this generosity in ostensible isolation, but as previously established, neither my self nor my process can be taken apart from my being-in-the-world. The encounter with the gift aspect of creativity is experienced not only as being-in-the-world, but belonging to it in intimacy.

[211] In response to criticisms that might characterize these assertions as naïve given the state of the world, I cite the response of Mohandas K. Gandhi. When challenged on the untenability of his notion of love-force or truth-force based on the supposition that history did not support such a claim, he argued:

> The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force. But you ask for historical evidence. It is, therefore, necessary to know what history means. … History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world … and if this were all that had happened in the world, it would have been ended long ago.
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> The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. Therefore the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on. Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. … Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.

M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, edited by Anthony J. Parel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 89-90.

plugging into a commodified resource: “Primordially, generosity is not the expenditure of one's possession but the dispossession of oneself, the being-given to others that undercuts any self-contained ego.”[212] The generosity I encounter is a gift, but it might be seen as a gift proffered in response in that first the process requires of me trust and openness and a giving over of myself in self-forgetting. In this way, my consciousness is fully intentional, directed to the other, the world, the process of creation, without myself intervening as object. I am, as Jean-Paul Sartre might say, non-positional in the interaction; yet I am essential to it, not absent from it. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Emmanuel Levinas, Rosalyn Diprose develops a notion of “corporeal generosity,” casting generosity not only as an individual virtue that contributes to well-being, but as something pre-reflective, “an openness to others that not only precedes and establishes communal relations but constitutes the self as open to otherness.”[213] The experience of the generosity with which I am met transforms my orientation to the world. I embody it and allow it to issue forth in my intentionality, my openness, my responses, my choices, and my mode of being-in-the-world. I do not embody it completely or perfectly or constantly. I forget myself, not in the self-forgetting that opens me, but in the forgetting that slowly shuts me back into this “self-contained ego.” Yet the experience is never lost; the generosity is never lost. It is real if not actual––real in the way my past is real, real in this retention that I carry forward so that it is

[212] Rosalyn Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas* (SUNY Press, 2002), 4.

[213] Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity*, 2,4.

somehow present in this moment whether or not it is attended to or taken up or actualized. It is real in my longing for it, not as something to possess, but as something with which I long to be reconnected in intimacy, and as something I long to express, make actual, and, thereby, give/share. This longing cannot be taken apart from intentionality; it is the impetus for openness, for process, for creative becoming. The creative process is not merely a method to create art or actualize expression, it is a method to cultivate an openness to the world and to foster an orientation shaped by the generosity encountered in aesthetic practice and the intimacy encountered in aesthetic experience.

Chapter 6: Singing the World

Expression and Existence

As much as expression is inseparable from perception, expression is inseparable from existence. Existence is expressive, and expression in turn is taken up into the ongoing "creative advance" of existence.[214] Merleau-Ponty writes: "Thought is the life of human relationships as it understands and interprets itself (200)." The same may be said of human expression, though it is important to stress that understanding and interpreting in these senses are not merely cognitive, but also affective. In reflecting upon a simple song, we recognize how our intra-subjective creativity cannot be taken apart from inter-subjective creation. Musical improvisation exemplifies this intertwining, this "withness."[215] The aesthetic dimension is not merely about pleasure or cultural edification. Awareness of the interwoven texture of reality and of living relationships highlights our "effective involvement in the world" (xvi), and awareness of our effective involvement cannot be taken apart from ethical awareness. For philosophy, the implications of these insights go far beyond how it might conceive of art or the process of artistic creation. They bear upon and inform how we conceive of ethics. They relate to how we express our relation to being in interactions, choices, the relations and lives we create (co-create).

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[214] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiv.

[215] J. Shotter, "Goethe and the Refiguring of Intellectual Inquiry: From 'Aboutness'-Thinking to 'Withness'-Thinking in Everyday Life," 132-158.

Awareness of our effective involvement is awareness of our participation, the active aspect of our double anonymity. As Whitehead writes: "The world is self-creative; and the actual entity as self-creating creature passes into its immortal function of part-creator of the transcendent world."[216] Attending to this doubling alters our orientation to the world, and to the self. We experience ourselves as ethically existing individuals, and ethics here are not determined by the ostensible truth of morality set forth as general and objective, but by the truth of how we stand in relation to what is given, to the other, the world, the self, to being.

If approached or assessed only in terms of intellectual projects, this effective involvement is problematic. Without awareness of the unreflective life, without radical reflection or authentic expression, we are unaware of what moves us; we are cognitively existing subjects as opposed to ethically existing subjects.[217] We convince ourselves that we are in control, that we are thinking our life, willing it, when in fact we are swept along by currents that move like a quickening in the blood, both a source of freedom and a source of unfreedom. Until we begin to see how we are bound, we cannot begin to see "freedom's possibility," our "being-able."[218] In speaking of virtue, Kierkegaard looks to Socrates, who relates the ethical to the problem of the self, holding that ethical self-

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[216] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 85.

[217] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* 178, quoted in Solomon, *From Hegel to Existentialism*, 74.

[218] Kierkegaard, *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, translated and edited by E. Hong and H. Hong. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967-78), I:463, quoted in George J. Stack, "Kierkegaard: The Self and Ethical Existence," *Ethics*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Jan. 1973): 108.

knowledge is the most important knowledge one can acquire.[219] Such knowledge involves realizing:

> No individual is indifferent to the history of the race anymore than the race is indifferent to the history of the individual. As the history of the race moves on, the individual begins constantly anew, because he is both himself and the race, and by this, in turn, the history of the race.[220]

Ethical self-knowledge then corresponds to awareness of the unreflective life, our double anonymity, and our effective involvement. For Kierkegaard, virtue is "choosing to be what one is, and especially choosing to actualize (become) one's possible self."[221] It is being cognizant of the concrete situation, accepting oneself as integral and inseparable from it, and yet seeing freedom's possibility—our ability to respond and not merely react, and our ability to actualize creative potentials. In exercising this choice, one not only actualizes one's own potentials, but participates in actualizing the potentials of the whole. As Kierkegaard stresses, this virtue is not a doctrine that can be taught (i.e. objective truth). This choosing is not something that can simply be intellectually (i.e. logically) derived or actualized.

Knowing the unreflective life, our doubling of identity, and our effective involvement as concepts is not the same as knowing them in experience. If we approach our effective involvement strictly in terms of intellectual projects we run into difficulty. We run the risk of employing dead precepts, or, if seeing the void beneath these, of

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[219] Stack, "Kierkegaard: The Self and Ethical Existence," 108.

[220] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: Kierkegaard's Writings, Vol. 8*, edited and translated by Reidar Thomte (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 29.

[221] Arnold Bruce Come paraphrasing Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* in Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self* (Montreal and Buffalo: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), 56.

falling into apathy. We may find ourselves culpable, yet helpless, with no objective certainty upon which to base action. We may be led to think that, given consciousness that longs for rational certainty and our corresponding inability to ultimately acquire it, "the direct, inevitable, and logical product of consciousness is inertia—a conscious sitting down with folded arms."[222] Yet this is no solution. Participation cannot be avoided or ducked. We are caught. Action or inaction, both have an effect. In the end, the question of how to act in the absence of certainty is rhetorical. It presumes this answer, this apathy and inertia. We might spend years caught in such a trap, until it begins to dawn on us that we have not gone through life entirely immobilized. We have acted. The question ought to be, "How *have* I acted in the absence of objective logical certainty?" Reflecting upon this, something begins to emerge from the shadows where it has hidden, safe from the "blinding light of truth":[223] "It is I who give a direction, significance and future to my life, but that does not mean that these are concepts; they spring from my present and past and in particular from my mode of present and past coexistence" (519). They spring from something a bit more adverbial, *how* I do what I do, how I relate to the self, the world, and others. This line of thought is highly relevant to meta-ethics. Reflecting on how consciousness functions in the creative process, how aesthetic choices are made, and how some indeterminate criteria are brought to bear, all of these may be able to elucidate how we think of ethics and moral action. These questions must await another study.

Awareness of my effective involvement must be awareness of my living

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[222] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, translated by Mirra Ginsburg and introduction by Donald Fanger (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 16.

[223] Breit, "The Blinding Light of Truth," *Collected Poems* (unpublished).

relationships. You do not simply belong to the world like a generic cog in a machine (John, child number 4), you belong to the world as irreducible singularity (our John). But we do not see this, not ordinarily… and yet there are moments:

> I shut the screen door softly so as not to wake the baby. On the Tree House deck, amid branches and bark, and blankets of leaves with patches that sparkled blue, I breathed in the smell of moss and earth and wind. The baby slept, and I exhaled, and in this letting go, the silence and the sky threw up a riddle. It was a question I'd long pondered, but it rose up now with unexpected urgency. *Do I love because I'm loved, or am I loved because I love?*
>
> I cannot remember how it began. When I was small there were angels and trees and poems, and I never doubted love. Now, more jaded, I see the wonder in this. I have lived enough to know, it is not the same for everyone. Inside, the baby stirred briefly, and then settled. The urgency was for him. *Do I love because I'm loved, or am I loved because I love?*
>
> Staring across at the island and the far shore of the lake, I asked the question. No reply, but the landscape listened, leaning in. "But I do love," I thought. It is not hard to feel held in an embrace; the world waits, patiently. "All this …" I was intimately inside it. I silently pledged my love to the rock and the sky, to the sparkling lake and the cool shade leaves.
>
> At that moment I heard the deep beating of wings. There, by the waters edge, a great throbbing response. A blue heron rose up … the ascent, impossibly slow, defying gravity. It crossed, hugging the shoreline directly in front of me, and then abruptly it turned inland and flew west, marking the edge of the property, passing beside me, up and up until it disappeared behind the house and over the rise.
>
> I stood for a long time not wanting to break the spell. Through the screen door I heard the baby stir and wake, and still wondering which way it worked, I rushed in to embrace him.

We belong to the world, but we must breathe life into this belonging. This is our effective involvement. In the recognition of "unity in multeity," the dual identity of individual and integral that effects awareness of our effective involvement, we combine

"the love of wisdom with the wisdom of love."[224] Unless 'actual knowing' is equated with actualization of this combined knowing, it falls short of ethical awareness. It fails to grasp that "intimacy itself … is knowledge."[225]

The Intimacy of the Metaphysical Experience

This work began by asserting that a simple song can indeed inform philosophy, and that art and aesthetics are not marginal to the problems of philosophy, but essential to them. Aesthetic perception and aesthetic activity can open us to the aesthetic dimension and to awareness of this unreflective life that transcends and subtends us. In the context of such abstruse philosophical aims, the consideration of a simple song might seem paradoxical. Yet in trivializing experience, in overlooking the small in search of the large and lofty, we inevitably miss the mark. The personal is the threshold to the universal, and it is only through the personal that the universal can, in any way, be grasped … but the term "universal" here is misleading:

> All modern philosophy hinges around the problem of defining the world in terms of subject and predicate, substance and quality, particular and universal. The result always does violence to that immediate experience which we express in our actions, our hopes, our sympathies, our purposes, and which we enjoy in spite of our lack of phrases for its verbal analysis.[226]

When seen in light of the unreflective life, the aesthetic dimension, and the underlying relational and processive unity of reality, the sharp distinctions between these sets of

[224] S.T. Coleridge, "Lecture IX," *ST Coleridge Philosophical Lectures*, edited by H.N. Coleridge, 390, accessed November 12, 2011, http://books.google.ca/books?id=40kVAAAAIAAJ.

[225] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 37.

[226] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 49, 50.

terms (e.g. particular and universal) become blurred.[227] Yet, there must be a term that can point to certain aspects of experience that are real and operative, aspects that arise, not from one pole or other, but from the intertwining, the depth, the living relations. To this end, I employ the idea of aesthetic ideals.

To get at what aesthetic ideals represent and the way in which they are operative, a phenomenological approach is required (i.e. a focus on lived experience). As stated at the outset, phenomenology aims at radical reflection from which emerges consciousness of our dependence on an unreflective life. This consciousness has two vectors, one directed outward toward the intimate experience of being integral to and a participant in this unreflective life, and one directed inward toward experience of our identity with this unreflective life, and, particularly, with the activity, the creativity of it. In both, we can encounter wonder, and in both we can encounter "the intimacy of the metaphysical experience."[228] Such experience is personal (though not merely subjective) and yet of general (i.e. universal) significance. This is not to say it is universally recognized as significant, but to say that to the experiencer (and the author), the judgment is that it "ought" to be.[229] Though employing aesthetic ideals may sound like an invocation of

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[227] "These terms 'universals' and 'particulars,' both in the suggestiveness of the two words and in their current philosophical use, are somewhat misleading. The ontological principle and the wider doctrine of universal relativity [inter-relatedness], on which the current metaphysical discussion is founded, blur the sharp distinction between what is universal and what is particular." Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 48.

[228] Louis Lavelle quoted in Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*, 43. This phrase also alludes to the thought of William James, particularly throughout James, *The Pluralistic Universe* (Rockville, Maryland: Arc Manor, 2008).

[229] This thinking borrows from Kant's discussion of pure aesthetic judgment, which combines subjectivity with universality. Kant, "Analytic of the Beautiful," *The Critique of Judgment*, particularly § 6 -9, pp. 57-67 and §20-22, pp. 92-95.

universals, such experience is singular in a number of ways. It is singular in that it cannot be taken apart from the unique individual(s) who participate in actualizing it. For the experiencer, it stands out as singular, as extraordinary or optimal experience. The experience is also singular in that it is unrepeatable; not that one can have only one such experience, but rather these experiences, though of a kind, are never identical. To focus only on dramatic examples of such experience is to be blind to the ubiquity of opportunity, and to the possibility of learning to see in this way, a calmer actualization, "a witnessing, an appreciating... ."[230] In such experience, there is something like an intelligible quality or essence—sometimes more vivid and intense, sometimes joyful, sometimes sad, at other times subtler or muted. The experience is an exemplar, and it leads us to reach toward the idea of what I have termed an aesthetic ideal.

Like Kant's aesthetical ideas, an aesthetic ideal "occasions much thought, without, however, any definite thought, *i.e.* any *concept*, being capable of being adequate to it; it consequently cannot be completely compassed and made intelligible by language."[231] The knowing of aesthetic ideals bears the characteristics of Jasper's tragic

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[230] Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (New York: Penguin Edition, Kappa Delta Pi, 1964), xiv. Maslow's study of "peak experience" led him to delineate what he terms plateau experience. As he proceeded to investigate profound experience and the notion of "self-actualization," he came across individuals who demonstrated another model. For them, experience of what he calls B-values (Being values) was serene and calm rather than highly emotional and climactic. He says that whereas peak experience can sometimes be almost purely emotional, plateau experience always exhibits a noetic and cognitive element. Significantly, plateau experience is something far more "voluntary" than peak experience. This idea is also similar to John Shotter's focus on "withness thinking" as opposed to "aboutness thinking." Shotter, "Goethe and the Refiguring of Intellectual Inquiry," 132-158. It is also akin to Brian McNamara's focus on taking "a long, loving look at the real," on looking "not to steal an idea of it [the observed], but to know it by experience, a pure intuition born of love." William McNamara, *Wild and Robust: The Adventure of Christian Humanism* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2006), 120, 119.

[231] Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, Div. 1, § 49, p. 197.

knowing—openness, incompleteness, and unknowing or conceptual indeterminacy. Yet the other side of the coin is wonder, and the experience of intimacy constitutes knowledge of another kind. Some may be tempted to argue that this knowledge cannot be taken apart from faith, but experience is experience, and faith has to do with the conceptions one imposes upon it: "I don't have to have faith, I have experience."[232] I know that the table on which my laptop rests is no illusion. In the same way, I know my experiences of beauty or love are no illusion.[233] I cannot point to beauty or love as I point to the table. I cannot objectify them in the same way, but they are just as real, and are experienced as quite a bit more significant.[234] The knowledge of intimacy and of an aesthetic ideal is not knowledge of a thing; it is knowledge that has to do with something

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[232] Joseph Campbell, "Episode 6: Masks of Eternity," *The Power of Myth: with Bill Moyers* (PBS, 1988).

[233] Merleau-Ponty captures this when he says: "For in so far as we talk about illusion, it is because we have identified illusions, and done so solely in the light of some perception which at the same time gave assurance of its own truth" (xviii).

Simone Weil addresses the dilemma of such experience and objective conceptions, expressing the conundrum in relation to the ultimate leap of faith: "A case of contradictories, both of them true. There is a God. There is no God. Where is the problem? I am quite sure that there is a God in the sense that I am sure my love is no illusion. I am quite sure there is no God, in the sense that I am sure there is nothing which resembles what I can conceive when I say that word." Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: Perennial Classics Edition, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), xxix.

[234] What might be seen as a failure, throughout this text, to commit to the nature or objective conception of what I point toward is, on one hand, a result of the conviction that it cannot be objectified in this way, and, on the other, a conscious admission of unknowing—an unknowing that no leap of faith could remedy. This is not to say that leaps of faith are always unhelpful or unwarranted. Conceptions can mediate, serving a positive function in terms of method, but conceptions, if too concretized, can truncate the openness, shutting us off from opportunity, from living relation, from the varieties of possible experience in which an aesthetic ideal can be manifest/actualized. It is also to say that how this is objectified has little bearing on the facts of the experience. If one chooses to attribute that of which I speak to the spiritual, or nature, or God, or the collective unconscious, this is all well and good, but the interjection of objective notions in the context of this discussion would only direct the focus to arguments about the concepts and divert attention away from the point. The point is experience and the facticity that can only be derived from experience. The experience, regardless of objective constructs, opens a dimension. It, quite apart from explanations, does something. This is what the notion of aesthetic ideals, a notion which avoids ontological commitment, attempts to do.

more "adverbial than substantive," being involved in the how of what is actualized.[235] Aesthetic ideals are intelligible yet indeterminate. They combine cognitive and affective aspects. An aesthetic ideal is not something apart from the particular, and not something fixed and static. It is not a thing-in-itself that can be known in its entirety and it is not a pure essence or idea that can be known apart from existence. It cannot be reduced to one definition or other; it does not relate to something separate and apart, but rather to the harmony or arrangement or relation within and between things, including oneself. It can be expressed differently in different contexts whilst retaining a recognizable resonance or quality (whether labeled in terms of beauty, truth, love, the sublime, etc.). Aesthetic ideals allow for diversity without total relativization. Crucially, an aesthetic ideal is a living ideal to which we are integral—a living ideal that depends upon our cooperation to be realized, the richness of our novel manifestations making actual the essential quality, here and now, in our interactions with the world, with life, and with each other.[236]

The idea of an aesthetic ideal is important not so much because of what it is as because of what it does. Like Deleuze's "virtual," aesthetic ideals might be described as "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract."[237] Aesthetic ideals are ideal but not abstract; they are known in and derived from concrete experience, and yet they are not contained/limited by the one actualization. It is as though there is an overabundance,

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[235] This discussion draws on parallels with Whitehead's "eternal objects." Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 37.

[236] Breit, *Beauty, Truth, and Peace*, iii.

[237] Marcel Proust, Chapter III, *Time Regained*, web edition (University of Adelaide, eBooks@Adelaide, last updated 2012) accessed October 4, 2013, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/proust/marcel/p96t/chapter3.html. This phrase is employed by Gilles Deleuze in explicating his notion of the virtual.

an overflowing both in the quality of the experience and in the meaningfulness of it. We reach toward an idea of it, but fall short, coming up against a limit. Yet imagination, the activity of consciousness, does not stop at the limit and turn back. It reaches beyond into the unknowing, the ostensible "nothingness" which is not nothing, but something more. It reaches out to that which transcends it; it overflows, an *ek-stase*. It is intentional: "It does not rest in itself as does a thing, but … is directed and has significance beyond itself" (248). This overabundance and overflowing is creative, i.e. the aesthetic ideal is both an actualization (end) and a beginning (impetus) of creative activity, and here creative activity is not limited to the realm of the traditionally aesthetic. It takes up how we create and transform ourselves, our relationships, our world. Aesthetic ideals, like "virtualities are always real (in the past, in memory) and may become actualized in the present."[238] The experience and the aesthetic ideal which we carry with us (in retention; or, in Deleuze's terms, virtually) effect a teleology of sorts, an ought, an imperative, but not an explicit universal law that can be applied across situations. Whereas the common notion of ideals attempts to set up beauty or justice or the good as an objective goal, aesthetic ideals have less to do with purpose and more with purposiveness, less with intention and more with intentionality: "You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your

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[238] Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 17. Deleuze argues that the movement of being, ontological becoming, is not a movement from possible to real (realization), but from virtual to actual (actualization). For Deleuze, the possible is actual but not real (e.g., the possibility of landing a person on Mars is actual, but not realized). Realization is tied to two terms: limitation and resemblance. Simply put, limitation means that not all possibilities can be realized, and resemblance intimates that the real is the image of the possible. From a conceptual point of view, there is no difference between the possible and the real. In contrast to realization, actualization relates to difference and creation. The actual is not a copy of the virtual; no pre-established order dictates the form it will take. The virtual-actual connection is not one of order (a form) but of organization (a forming). "Without the blueprint of order, the creative process of organization is always an art" (Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 18).

knees for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves."[239] Aesthetic ideals are the tacit motivation, which cannot be taken apart from intentionality, and they are exhibited most often as longing. As Whitehead would put it, they serve as a "lure for feeling."[240] The aesthetic ideal both impels and draws us. It is a living operative ideal.

Aesthetic ideals are not merely the actualization and impetus of creative activity, they are inseparable from the activity itself. Consciousness functions as if there were truths to be ascertained, wholes to be composed, meaning to be grasped, connection to be forged. We seek meaning and unity, we aim at conjunction, and this is not merely an intellectual exercise, it is affective, and existential.[241] Consciousness is intentional, and whether described in terms of "the will to meaning" (Frankl), "formativity" (Pareyson), or "creativity" that aims at "strength of beauty" (Whitehead), there is in humanity what

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[239] Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese," *Dream Works* (Boston, MA: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 14.

[240] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 85.

[241] Merleau-Ponty discusses this at some length in relation to the body, and he quotes A.A. Grünbaum: "Already motility, in its pure state, possesses the basic power of giving a meaning (*Sinngebung*)" (164). Yet giving a meaning does not mean arbitrarily doing so. If meaning were merely something I imposed, it would be disingenuous. We do not simply posit meaning. We experience meaning both as something found (that exists external to us) and as something created (intrinsically determined). The picture is one of interpretation. Merleau-Ponty describes normal perception as a process of integration where the text of the external world is not so much copied as composed (10). In the use of the word "compose," he mirrors Luigi Pareyson's focus in formativity on acting "aesthetically." The creative and aesthetic nature of the activity is as true of creativity in science and mathematics as in fields ordinarily associated with the aesthetic. As Poincaré insists, solutions emerge to the forefront because of their effect on the aesthetic sensibility, because of their elegance, because they appear harmonious and so at once useful and beautiful (Poincaré quoted in Simonton, *Origins of Genius*, 33). Physicist David Bohm proposes that "a kind of art — a movement of fitting together — is what is universal, both in nature and in human activities." [David Bohm, *On Creativity* (London: Routledge, 1998), 90.] The notion of aesthetic ideals captures the sense that this "fitting" is not merely based on logical quantifiable determinate criteria. It takes up relational qualitative indeterminate criteria. Yet beyond this, it attempts to capture the operative aspect, the sewing together of these singular moments of experience, of a mode of experience, and of the activity of consciousness.

Merleau-Ponty terms "active transcendence," a process in which consciousness as a project of the world is oriented toward the world.[242] The notion of aesthetic ideals teases out the question of how it is oriented, and asserts that one cannot abstract the content of thought from the function of thought.[243] The aesthetic ideal, the virtual, is not merely an idea (i.e. the idea of beauty or generosity). It relates less to a model or conception of order, and more to a mode of organization.[244] In terms of the intertwining of what the aesthetic ideal is and what it does, Nikolai Berdyaev gives this perspective:

> Truth is not conformity with what we call being, but rather the kindling of a light within being. I am in darkness and seek the light; I do not yet know truth but I seek it. By this very fact I affirm the existence of Truth and light, existence in another sense than the existence of the world's realities. [i.e. What is discussed here in terms of virtual existence, the real but not actual existence.] My seeking is already the dawning light, and truth already beginning to reveal itself.[245]

My seeking, my longing, is already the dawning of truth, or beauty, or whatever word one feels best approaches the aesthetic ideal. Radical reflection upon the genesis of meaning allows us to recognize this longing as a source of wonder in itself. Our lack is, at once, a fullness, our striving, already an accomplishment. In this scenario, it is impossible to say whether the impetus is the experience (i.e. the actualization, which engenders the idea of the ideal, and longing) or whether the impetus is the innate activity of

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[242] These represent central terms and themes of these three thinkers. See particularly: Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*; Pareyson, *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom*; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*.

[243] "The more general difficulty with thought is that thought is very active, it's *participatory*. … Thought is always doing a great deal, but it tends to say that it hasn't done anything, that it is just telling you the way things are." Bohm, David, *Thought as a System* (London: Routledge, 1994), 5.

[244] This draws on Deleuze's dicussion of the virtual as explicated in Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 18.

[245] Nikolai Berdyaev, *Christian Existentialism: A Berdyaev Anthology*, selected and translated by Donald A. Lowrie (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1965), 167.

consciousness itself (which can be characterized as longing). It is possible to say that raising these dynamics to the level of awareness effects a shift, not only in our perception, but in our expression. In perception, there is the opening of a dimension—awareness of the unreflective life and the aesthetic dimension. In expression, there is the opening of a dimension of conscious activity—awareness of the unreflective life and of intentionality. The realization of purposiveness effects a shift in our sense of purpose. One moves differently in a world that is meaningful than in a world that is meaningless. One acts differently when one is aware of and trusts in the purposiveness of one's creative activity. One is able to persevere, move, act, even through unknowing, to actualize something meaningful.

The intimacy of the metaphysical experience, the generosity encountered in the creative process, the beauty and seeming benevolence of a landscape cannot be taken apart from the activity of consciousness—the expression of my being and the expression of being. Such experience is relevant, not so much to cognitive conclusions, but to ethical existence. Awakening to the aesthetic dimension, the texture of reality, and the living relationships of experience, effects a transformation in the relationship between the knower and known. Awakening to our effective involvement in such experience awakens ethical awareness. Ethical awareness is not ideological but relational. Aesthetic ideals have to do with how things come into relation and conjunction. This how is not disembodied but always profoundly personal. It is not generic, but always associated with a person, a unique style of perception, of creativity, of relation in and with being.

Because everything is process, and because the actualization of the aesthetic ideal is contingent upon you and me—with all our richness and poverty, our fullness and lack, our finitude, our flaws and foibles: the expression is always imperfect, always transient, always somehow unfinished.[246] Yet somehow this is the beauty of it. An aesthetic ideal has to do with relation, harmony, and resonance, and it is evident in the presence of something grasped in terms of quality. The aesthetic ideal is neither abstract nor contingent upon perfection. One might then question why I invoke the term "ideal" at all. The term is employed because it captures the transcendent (overabundant and overflowing) sense of the experience and idea, and it captures the teleological function of aesthetic ideals. The teleology here is not about a final end, the possession in actual knowing of the aesthetic ideal; it is about the love of knowing/actualizing the aesthetic ideal, and an ongoing process in which the other is continually met. The aesthetic ideal does not require perfection in the sense of "a finishing," "completeness" an objective goal actualized.[247] Neither does it require perfection in terms of conformity to established objective criteria, something that "measures up." Perfection of this sort intimates uniformity and therefore excludes singularity. In art particularly, if the expression were perfect in this sense, I venture to say that it would not move us. It would be absent of personality, of the thought within the thought, the life within the expression. It would be absent of striving, of the very personal activity that longs and loves. The expression,

[246] This is influenced by the Japanese notion of *Wabi-sabi*, an aesthetic of beauty that is "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete". Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers* (Berkley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1994), 7.

[247] Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, "Perfection the Term and Concept," *Dialectics and Humanism*, Vol. VI, No. 4 (Autumn 1979): 5,6.

however ostensibly perfect based on some objective sort of standard, would appear like a veneer, a manikin, a sort of ugliness, or at least it would be a dead expression, immovable, and unmoving. What we love in another is not their generic nature but their singular nature; often it is the ostensible imperfections unique to that person that become so very dear to us. What we love in the process is not something we would seek to freeze, to render immobile, to stop, to end, to finish once and for all in an absolute actualization. Each expression, however imperfect, however humble, is yet meaningful, often delightful, and almost always worthwhile: "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."[248]

Sisyphus and Orpheus

In this context, we might imagine an Orphean Sisyphus, a combination of the two Greek mythological figures. We picture Sisyphus consigned by the Gods to push the boulder up the hill, enjoy the view and accomplishment only briefly before the rock descends, rolling back down again. Sisyphus descends after it. The accomplishment is never a final actualization; it is, from this point of view, imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. Time and again Sisyphus must make the ascent and once more head down hill to begin again. Here we encounter the despair that can result from tragic thought that recognizes its inability to achieve the certainty and completion for which it longs. From this point of view, we see Sisyphus burdened with helplessness and meaninglessness:

> And what you thought you came for

[248] Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 1326.

> Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
> From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
> If at all. Either you had no purpose
> Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
> And is altered in fulfilment.[249]

Yet, Camus says: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy."[250] This is difficult, almost impossible to resolve with the dreary image of repetitive action in which nothing appears to be accomplished. Yet if the task were creative, even if nothing lasting or perfect or final were actualized, we might begin to think differently. If the process itself was replete with purposiveness and meaningfulness, the activity worthwhile in itself, we might well imagine Sisyphus happy and find ourselves agreeing with Camus: "The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart."[251]

Now consider Orpheus and his heartbreaking predicament with Eurydice. Eurydice was the beloved of the legendary musician and poet. She was bitten by a snake, died, and relegated to the underworld. Orpheus was devastated and wrote the most heart-rending laments. His songs so moved the Gods that he was allowed to descend and bring her back up to the surface, but on one condition: he could not turn around and look at her. So the lyre of Orpheus opened the doors to the underworld and allowed him to descend and be reunited with his beloved, though he could not look at her directly. He began to lead her up toward the light of the surface world. On his way up, he knew she was there,

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[249] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," v. 31-36, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 2547.

[250] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 123.

[251] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 123.

tangible, present, loving and loved … there, just behind his shoulder.[252] Yet, as Ovid told it, Orpheus's concern for Eurydice and his profound longing to see her, led him, out of love, to turn and look. With this turning around, with his reflective gaze, she slipped away and down.

Imagine these two figures superimposed, Sisyphus pushing his rock up from the bottom of the hill, and Orpheus leading Eurydice up from the underworld, both ultimately doomed to strive, yet never to realize the final "perfect" ending to their quest. I wonder … if Orpheus knew that he would never ultimately be able to bring Eurydice across the border to the world, that he was destined always to feel her presence and closeness but unable to resist that glance out of love, only to lose her once more, would he repeat the quest, like Sisyphus, again and again? I think so. If one were to ask skeptically: "Who then devised the torment?" The answer would have to be "Love."[253] Though not without his share of loss and difficulty, of striving and heartbreak, we would have to consider our Orphean Sisyphus happy. He would be happy in the quest, in the attempt, in the journey that, though challenging, allowed this drawing close, this intimacy, this reconnection, however fleeting. As I've already had the audacity to mix Orpheus and Sisyphus, I will go one step further and presume to write the ending differently (though it is not the final ending, only one actualization, one moment before the process resumes). I think, in the end, Orpheus does not emerge empty handed. Out of love, Eurydice proffers a gift, a

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[252] This intimacy is beautifully captured in Rodin's statue of "Orpheus and Eurydice."

[253] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," v. 209, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 2551. Another relevant line from this poem is "With the drawing of this Love, and the voice of this Calling." v. 240, Eliot quoting a line from the *Cloud of Unknowing*.

boon—something small and unostentatious perhaps, but nevertheless something precious, something that carries part of her in it—and this serves as a testament, not only to the journey and the attempt, but to the very real experience of relation and love.

Singing the World

"Art is the objective realization of a contact with the world, which itself cannot be objectivated."[254] It is also the objective realization of a contact with something at the root of our own subjectivity, an aspect of ourselves and of existence that cannot be objectivated. However defined, this contact leads to wonder. Looking outward, there is wonder in the face of an inexhaustible world, and experiences of beauty that transform the relation between the knower and known, effecting sympathy and care: "Love and wonder, then, are stages in an imaginative expansion: they establish a permanent unity of subject and object, and they lift us from a world of subject and object to a world of lover and beloved."[255] Looking inward, there is wonder in the face of a seemingly inexhaustible subjectivity/creativity, this generosity. In creativity, "it is not the union of lover and beloved, but of creator and creat[ed], of energy and form."[256] These vectors of awareness, one oriented outward toward the world and one oriented inward as toward a ground of subjectivity, are not separate but united, aesthetic receptivity and aesthetic activity

[254] Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, 45.

[255] Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, edited by Nicholas Halmi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 55.

[256] Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 56.

opening to "the world of lover, beloved, and mutual creation."[257]

It was earlier stipulated that the aim of phenomenology is to rediscover "my actual presence to myself," "my effective involvement in the world," and "to bring back all the living relationships of experience" (xvi-xvii). A focus on the genesis of expression highlights mutual creation and our effective involvement. Awareness of my effective involvement is awareness of both my freedom and my responsibility. Without awareness of the aesthetic dimension, of the living relationships of experience, I can find myself inhabiting a "concept system" rather than a "life system."[258] I am a cognitive subject rather than an ethically existing subject.[259] Here again we see the connection of ethics and aesthetics. Ethics are not ideals set apart, or moral ideas I pick up like garden tools when the situation calls for them. Ideals like love, beauty, or the good are aesthetic ideals, which are meaningless without relation. A living ideal is not merely something I think, it is something I feel; it moves me. It is something I express (in word and deed) in order to actualize it (however imperfectly) here and now in my relation with self, with others, and with the world.

Our effective involvement cannot be fully appreciated via methodology that separates observer and observed. It cannot be represented in terms of meaning as logical propositions. It cannot be understood without the dimension of depth, and without an

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[257] Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 56.

[258] Joseph Campbell quoted in Michael Toms, *An Open Life: Joseph Campbell in Conversation with Michael Toms*, (New York: Perennial Library, 1990), 21.

[259] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 178 quoted in Solomon, *From Hegel to Existentialism*, 74.

ability to rest in ambiguity. It cannot be known as one knows a bivalent truth. Knowledge and meaning are not just about concepts. Communication is not merely propositional. Philosophy ought not to lose the love in its quest for knowing. If the impetus is separated from love, it is reduced to a "will to power." Knowledge becomes a weapon we wield to establish our dominance. Philosophy is in and of the world; it is an expression of existence. In this light, the idea that philosophy should trade the 'love of knowing' for 'actual knowing' is an impoverishment. What we know cannot be taken apart from how we know it. Philosophy is not merely an instrument with which to probe the world to attain mastery of it. We do not stand apart from the world, but in intimate relation to it; we are inseparable from the world, and we are active participants. Philosophy as science knows little of intimacy, and so to a large extent it presumes our effective involvement is purely an intellectual project. Yet "philosophy, when properly understood as including radical self-questioning, turns itself inside out and ceases to be a project of rational analysis alone. Instead, like Socrates in the *Phaedo,* it "experiments" with *μῦθος* [poetry]."[260]

Like language, philosophy must be put back in the world and among the phenomena of experience and expression. It cannot be merely an intellectual project, it must also be an existential one. The connection of the existential project with the intellectual project is most easily seen in the creation of art. This is because the nature of art retains the aesthetic quality of the nature of existence, the dimensionality of meaning, and it is because the process of creating art is a process that cannot work if it is purely

[260] Roochnik, "The Deathbed Dream of Reason: Socrates' Dream in the Phaedo," *Arethusa*, 249.

intellectual. No poetry, no art. Speaking of the state of philosophy in the mid 20th century, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> My thesis: this decadence is inessential; it is that of a certain type of philosopher.... Philosophy will find help in poetry, art, etc., in a closer relationship with them, it will be reborn and will re-interpret its own past of metaphysics—which is not past.[261]

Philosophy cannot ignore aesthetics and metaphysics, however speculative, however "non-falsifiable" aspects of these may be.[262]

Aesthetics is in no way marginal to the problems of philosophy. Existence requires "the field of ideality" in order to become evident to itself. The hitch is that this very method of making evident can separate us from existence—that is if we only "think" the world in a narrow sense. Logical thinking without aesthetic thinking (poetic or musical thinking) relegates us to a concept system—a copy of reality that, like a menu in place of actual food, leaves us empty.[263] It tends toward "secondary speech" which manipulates existing thought, words and concepts that get drained of meaning, becoming mere signs with barely a trace of the existence that birthed them. Philosophy must be "originating speech" (453). Whitehead writes: "The use of philosophy is to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system. It reverses the slow

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[261] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Notes de Cours* (1959–60), 39, translated by Bernard Flynn, quoted in Bernard Flynn, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), edited by E.N. Zalta, accessed May 3, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/merleau-ponty/>.

[262] Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Routledge, 2002). Popper presents his idea of "falsifiablity" throughout the text.

[263] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 447.

descent of accepted thought towards the inactive commonplace."[264] The purpose he says is to rationalize "direct insight into depths unspoken."[265] This is done, "not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated."[266] The purpose, as he sets it forth, is to give expression to the unsayable, to the background against which everything we can say gains its meaning. This expression will always be imperfect and unfinished; it will be elliptical, leading us to reach beyond it through "its unchallengeable presence and the perpetual absence into which it withdraws" (271). Yet this reaching, this longing, is itself part of what must be understood. In this reaching, we may encounter the opening of a dimension that will not only change what we know and what we see, but how we know and how we see.

The lyre of Orpheus opens the doors of the underworld, of the unreflective life, of the aesthetic dimension, the intimacy of the world that transcends me, and the generosity of the subjectivity that subtends me. A simple song can inform philosophy. It needn't be clever, or theoretical, or have some sort of edifying "message."[267] How it communicates,

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[264] Whitehead, "The Aim of Philosophy," Lecture Nine in *Modes of Thought*, 237.

[265] Whitehead, "The Aim of Philosophy," Lecture Nine in *Modes of Thought*, 237.

[266] Whitehead, "The Aim of Philosophy," Lecture Nine in *Modes of Thought*, 237.

[267] Excerpt from a Bob Dylan Interview. Dylan's responses italicized:

Do you prefer songs with a subtle or obvious message?

With a what???

A subtle or obvious message?

Uh—I don't really prefer those kinds of songs at all—"message"—you mean like—what songs with a message?

Well, like "Eve of Destruction" and things like that.

Do I prefer that to what?

I don't know, but your songs are supposed to have a subtle message.

Subtle message???

Well, they're supposed to.

Where'd you hear that?

the dimensionality of meaning it holds, and the trace of the impetus that lingers like the resonance of a string bowed, these lead to questions with which philosophy must grapple. Philosophy as radical self-questioning requires poetry, and originating expression can indeed engage with the unsayable. Expression can communicate and create depth, dimensionality of meaning, of experience, of thought, and of intimacy. Language is more like music than many linguistic theories allow. It is not as hobbled as austere notions suggest. There is poetry and literature, and, once it comes to terms with ambiguity, philosophy too can "sing the world."

"Bob Dylan Gives Press Conference in San Francisco, Part II," *From the Archives: Rolling Stone*, accessed June 26, 2013, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/bob-dylan-gives-press-conference-in-san-francisco-part-ii-19680120

Appendix A: Simple Songs (Lyrics)

Muse
Nothing But Wonder
Longing
Nightingales
Sing or Cry
Open
Empty
So Close
Full
Sing
You, Me, and Beauty
Stand By You

Muse

Ah, well … you've got a way of showing me,
I'm all ears, so draw near, whisper low to me.
Breath from an empty space
You give me language
show me beauty and grace.

You're my ears, you're my eyes
You're my angel in disguise.
You're my heart - you're my muse.

You're my joy; you're my soul
You're the journey; you're the goal.
You're my love – you're my muse.

Ah well …you've got a way of calming me,
Make it clear; let me see what I ought to see.
Swear that I'm blind half the time,
but you give me vision
rhythm and rhyme.

You're my ears, you're my eyes
You're my angel in disguise.
You're my heart - you're my muse …

We trip and fall,
after all we are human;
and we're bound till we find our wings
… something that sings …

You're my joy; you're my soul
You're the journey; you're the goal
You're my love – you're my muse.

Nothing But Wonder

The more I say, the less you hear
Leaves me feeling all alone way over here
When I'm just trying
to express
Tenderness

And all these words move me to tears
Across languages and down across the years
But you feel they shut you out
And they're nothing about
Tenderness

There must be a way. There must be a way to convey it.

Oh go look at the sky
Go look at the light falling
And the wind alive in the trees
Moments like these
Nothing but wonder
(Nothing but wonder) in the face of a world like this
Nothing but wonder in the face of the world

... it's not often you see beauty ... in the city

The more I sing, the more I'm shown
There is so much more to us than what we've known
We've got to bring it out
Cause it's something about
Tenderness

There must be a way to convey it.

Oh go look at the sky
Go look at the light falling
And the wind alive in the trees
Moments like these
Nothing but wonder
(Nothing but wonder) in the face of a world like this
Nothing but wonder in the face of the world

Longing

They forge ahead their chins set
Eyes straight ahead, and you bet
They know where they're going
They know where they're going to

I walk and gaze up at the trees
That send me down some dancing leaves
And I remember November
The sky black with geese
    As the chill set in
    Suddenly we're losing him again, and longing

    Longing – Longing … beautiful and sad
    As if we had
    The power to carry him
    I carry him here

Eyes on some prize, dressed for success
They've got conviction, and I guess
Belonging
Grown-ups in a grown-up world

Eyes on something I vaguely see
One glimpse and then it's gone from me
But I remember how tender
Life can be
    Don't let it fade
    Left here with the glow and things I've made, and longing

    Longing – Longing … beautiful and sad
    As if I had
    The power to sing it back
    And bring it back again

They forge ahead. I fall behind. But I don't mind most times
Either way there's regret, caught between, we can't forget
But if longing is born of love, there is no giving up

    Longing - beautiful and sad
    As if we had the power to make it real, so they can feel
    Can feel that way … and make it stay.

Nightingales

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears
If a song pours out like love but falls on deaf ears
    Is it nothing …
    Oh I can't believe

Tell me why does a nightingale sing in the dark
Against all odds throw a spark into the night
A little light to see it through
Why does the nightingale sing … would you?

He works till fingers bleed with little to show
She loves until it hurts, but few will ever know
    Is it nothing …
    No I can't accept

Cause why does a nightingale sing in the dark
Against all odds throw a spark into the night
A little light to see you through
Why does the nightingale sing … would you?

    Lack of ambition?
    Lack of drive?
    Lack of what it takes to thrive
    in the light?
    … it's alright … sing

Sing in the dark
Against all odds throw a spark into the night
A little light to see us through
Sing like the nightingales do.

Sing or Cry

Can’t live with ‘em, can’t live without.
Lift you up or spit you out
Oh you just do what you do,
you do it for love
… what will love do for you

With love it’s not that way
You love for love’s sake … give it away

> It’s sing or cry, dance or die, love or you’re lost
> If the beat of a butterfly wing, can really change something,
> then nothing is lost, nothing is lost

Feel alone, but no thing apart.
Give you joy or break your heart
Oh well life just cuts both ways,
got to learn to balance
on a knife blade

Can’t be afraid to bleed
The love you make you give, can you get what you need

> It’s sing or cry, dance or die, love or you’re lost
> If the beat of a butterfly wing, can really change something,
> then nothing is lost, nothing is lost

> Nothing is lost, nothing is lost
> Just as long as you can sing …, dance ..., love …,
> Love or we’re lost
> … nothing is lost.

Open

Don't tell me you don't feel it like I do
Am I just raw and open to the view
Of the world
    pouring itself out
    giving itself up
    so it is enough to get you through
What I wouldn't give
if I could just give this to you too

I know the difference between what's real and what is fake
Don't tell me I'm a dreamer when I'm awake
To the light
    and the subtle glow
    that lets you somehow know
    there is enough love to make things right
All you've got to do
is somehow learn to tune into it right

    There's a frequency
    It's a part of me
    It's a part of you
    There's an undersong
    Carries us along
    All you've got to do
    Is open – open – open

Don't tell me you don't feel it like a groove
Wells up from way deep down and makes you move
Like a song
    pouring itself out
    giving itself up
    so it is enough to get you through
What I wouldn't give
if I could just give this to you too

    There's a frequency
    It's a part of me
    It's a part of you
    There's an undersong
    Carries us along
    All you've got to do
    Is open – open – open

Empty

Well I over-think and I over-drink and I'm overwrought sometimes
But you redeem me, lift me up, forgive the crimes
And what would I be without you

Empty
I'd be empty
I'd be empty
I'd be nothing

I lose my way, can't even pray when I most could use the grace
But I fall into you and you are always there with that embrace
And what would I be without you

Empty
I'd be empty
I'd be empty
I'd be nothing

Something from nothing, symphony from silence

So Close

Oh why do you leave me stranded
And how am I going to move on now alone
Oh I can't shift this weight single-handed
So tell me I'm wrong
Tell me you wouldn't walk away
Just when I need you most
Need you most

And we're so close
To building something beautiful
Tell me I'm right that you're coming back, coming back now
Cause we're so close
And maybe baby you're just scared
Of falling, falling shy
Some ideal in the sky
Baby beauty's you and I
Right here, right now
Oh it's so close

Did you let the naysayers break you
And how am I going to move on now with the doubt
Baby (baby baby) you know that I could not forsake you
So tell me I'm right, tell me that you're coming back, you wouldn't leave, you believe

Cause we're so close
To building something beautiful
Tell me I'm right that you're coming back, coming back now
Cause we're so close
And maybe baby you're just scared
Of falling, falling shy
Of some ideal in the sky
Baby beauty's you and I
Right here, right now
Oh it's so close

Tell me I'm wrong. Tell me you wouldn't walk away
Just when I need you most, need you most
Oh we're so close.

Full

If I try to find you
so all can see
Could I lose you, I'd never choose to
You're everything to me

So give me one kiss, express this
Hold it to the light
It may fall shy, but still I
Can't give up the fight

I can't stop trying, I can't stop trying
It's always leading me back
I feel the pull of the deep and full
That makes good all that we lack
And it overflows
In a song that goes
… I feel the pull
… I am full

If I say this, play this
Could there be a trace
Of what I find
Time after time
In this intimate embrace

I can't stop trying, I can't stop trying
It's always leading me back
I feel the pull of the deep and full
That makes good all that we lack
And it overflows
In a song that goes
… I feel the pull
… I am full

And I can't stop loving now
I can't stop loving how
    can you stop the love
    when there's not enough love in the world.

Sing

I have picked up the gauntlet,
and I stand here with chain mail on
Socrates – get on your knees
And bow to the muses of song

Not to detract from the good you've done
Yet there's a disservice to everyone
If we shut ourselves off from the fullness of what we bring

> When we sing – yeah yeah – when we sing
> Sing – yeah yeah yeah – you've got to …

I will carry the torch on
Like so many beside me do
Descartes – you had a heart
But you never quite gave it its due
Your "I think" is not so clear to define
I am much more than this little mind
And thinking is all that goes on behind
Everything – you don't see till you

> Sing – yeah yeah – till you sing
> You've got to sing – yeah yeah yeah – you've got to …

Don't want to fight, I want to sing
No imperious light, just a glowing
I know you want the same and that knowing
Is all about
reaching out

You, Me, and Beauty

You, me, and beauty – shouldn't be this hard
But we're the walking wounded … yes we are
You, me, and beauty - should be its own reward
But it's complicated.
    Do you sell your soul – or do you hide it all away
    Beauty turns poison holding on to it this way …
        Oh love betrayed
        … but I never knew who betrayed who.

You, me, and beauty – see with angel eyes
But we've had our wings clipped and we just yearn to fly
You, me, and beauty – you wonder why
What makes you sing can make you cry
    Hold it to the light – but it's all messed up with me
    Mixed up with love as commodity …
        Oh love betrayed
        … but I never knew who betrayed who.

    So I sing for you who walk beside me
    Wounded and beautiful – you inspire me
    You feel alone, but inside we've always known
    It's you, me, and beauty.

Stand By You

I've forgotten why I started
Maybe I have just been running away
Still leaves you broken hearted
Regrets don't go away

If I'd stood by you
Would it have made any difference
If I did … or if I do
If I stand by you
Would it make any difference
… maybe dreams just don't come true

I know the reasons why I doubt you
And how our strengths can sometimes make us weak
But I cannot live without you
And now I have to let you speak

If I'd stood by you
Would it have made any difference
If I did … or if I do
If I stand by you
Would it make any difference
… maybe dreams just don't come true

Not the way we think
Not the way plan
But maybe how they should
And what's more important than
Anything
Is what makes you sing
        All that's here behind
And in my darkest hour
I've felt the power
        Time after, time after time

You have stood by me
And it's made a difference
To who I am and who I'll be
I'll stand by you
Cause it makes a difference
If I do, if I do
I'll stand by you. I will stand by you.

Appendix B: Simple Songs (CD)

Attached

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