

Janus Head

Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies
in Literature, Continental Philosophy,
Phenomenological Psychology and the Arts

Copyright © 2011 by Trivium Publications, Pittsburg, PA
All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America

Requests for permission to reproduce material from this work should be sent to:

Permissions
Trivium Publications
P.O. Box 1259
Amherst, NY 14226
jhinfo@janushead.org

Cover Art: Victor Barbetti

ISSN: 1524-2269

0 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 0

Janus Head

Editor-in-Chief

Brent Dean Robbins

Associate Editors

Sean P. Connolly

Amy E. Taylor

Editorial Board

David Anfam Branka Arsic Richard Bargdill

Dusan Bjelic Scott Bortle Thorsten Botz-Bornstein

Eric Boynton Daniel Burston William Bywater Scott Churchill
Bainard Cowan Christine Cowan Louise Cowen Aurelian Craiutut

Helen Douglas David Durst Hulya Durudogan Frank Edler

Camelia Elias David Elkins Fred Evans Andrew Felder

Harris Friedman Shaun Gallagher Louis Hoffman Don Ihde

Alphonso Lingis Robert McInerney Dan Martino Lyle Novinski

Alan Pope Brent Potter Jonathan Raskin Robert D. Romanyshyn

Kirk Schneider Eva-Maria Simms Michael Sipiora Robert Stolorow

Co-Founding Editors

Victor Barbetti and Claire Barbetti

Office Manager

April Robbins

Janus Head is a biannual journal published (winter/summer) by Trivium Publications, P. O. Box 1259, Amherst, NY 14226. Visit our website at www.janushead.org. Subscriptions: \$20 for one year; \$40 for two years; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add \$8 for mailing costs per year; institutional rate \$40 per year; \$80 for two years; single copy \$10. All payments from foreign countries must be made by United States money orders or checks payable in United States currency. Submissions: Send manuscripts plus diskette and two (2) copies to: *Janus Head*, P. O. Box 1259, Amherst, NY 14226. Poetry, if 300 words or less, may be sent to: jhinfo@janushead.org. Please include full mailing address. ISSN 1524-2269

Table of Contents

Volume 12:1

Amy E. Taylor	<i>Introduction</i>	5
Robert Gibbons	<i>Editorial: "Souling"</i>	6
Rolf von Eckhartsburg	<i>Social and Electronic Immortality</i>	9
Amy E. Taylor	<i>Body and Technology: Reframing the Humanistic Critique</i>	22
Nathaniel Rivers & Jeremy Tirrell	<i>Productive Strife: Andy Clark's Cognitive Science and Rhetorical Agonism</i>	39
Julie Dunlop	<i>2 Poems</i>	60
Eugene M. DeRobertis	<i>St. Thomas Aquinas's Philosophical-Anthropology as a Viable Underpinning for a Holistic Psychology: A Dialogue with Existential-Phenomenology</i>	62
Richard Hoffman	<i>Three Poems</i>	92
Mark Fratonis	<i>What Do I Love When I Love My Patient? Toward an Apophatic Derridean Psychotherapy</i>	95
Jerome Rothenberg	<i>Five Poems</i>	106
Michael P. Sipiora	<i>Hesse's Steppenwolf: A Comic-Psychological Interpretation</i>	123
Liz Bradfield	<i>Five Poems</i>	148
Sylvie Gambaudo	<i>We Need To Talk About Eva: The Demise of the Phallic Mother</i>	155
Joshua Soffer	<i>The Meaning of Feeling: Banishing the Homunculus from Psychology</i>	169
William Heyen	<i>Five Poems</i>	198
David D. Dillard-Wright	<i>Figurations of the Ecstatic: The Labor of Attention in Aesthetic Experience</i>	203
Cleopatra Kontoulis & Eliza Kitis	<i>Don DeLillo's The Body Artist: Time, Language and Grief</i>	222
William Heyen	<i>The Green Bookcase</i>	243
Norman Arthur Fischer	<i>Rudyard Kipling's Stories of Overcoming Existential Angst through Empathy</i>	259
Gregory Phipps	<i>Matisse of Montreal</i>	269
Bryne Lewis Allport	<i>Postcard</i>	291
John Pauley	<i>Faulkner's Tragic Fiction and the Impossibility of Theodicy</i>	292
Robert Garfield McInerney	<i>A Transcontinental Journey Brings Transcendental Understanding: A Review of Existential Psychology East-West</i>	315

Introduction

Dear Janus Head readers,

It is my pleasure to introduce you to our latest issue. This open issue continues *Janus Head's* tradition of bringing together thought from across disciplines, inviting conversation and, perhaps, revealing the indistinctness of boundaries between philosophy, poetry, art, literature, and psychology. Thank you for keeping this conversation going.

It is an honor to introduce myself as a new associate editor of the journal. I am a doctoral candidate in Duquesne University's psychology program and continue the tradition of Duquesne's involvement with the journal that began with its inception twelve years ago. My own work involves revealing the ambiguity of presumed boundaries—in my paper in this issue, boundaries between the human and the technological, and in my current dissertation work, between flesh and artifice. My educational background is interdisciplinary; I attended St. John's College in Annapolis, MD, where I read across all seven liberal arts the books that shaped the Western world. At Duquesne, inspired by the psychology department's collective interest in illuminating human experience (including the range and diversity of human experience), I combined psychology with women and gender studies. I dedicate myself to *Janus Head* out of appreciation for its shared goal of presenting the human as a category with a broad range of interpretations.

Janus Head has exciting open and special issues underway right now. Our next issue will be a special issue with the theme "Corpse." We have just released a call for papers for our next special issue, a guest-edited volume on feminist phenomenology. In the meantime, two open issues await their release. As always, we welcome your contributions and your feedback. Your voice is integral to the journal's ongoing success. We hope you enjoy this issue, and again, thank you!

Sincerely,

Amy E. Taylor

Souling

Robert Gibbons

Janus Head could possibly be credited with saving a person's life. Such is the nature of conjecture in language. At the beginning of this issue 1 of Volume 12, the authors Rolf and Elsa von Eckartsberg propose that, "Language can accomplish immortality." Early on in its existence as a journal devoted to the interdisciplinary endeavors of Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts, *Janus Head's* contents portrayed a myriad of complex subject matter and writing style, which if one were to attempt to read through its labyrinthine paths valued secrets could be garnered. At least that was the case for me more than ten years ago, even before then Poetry Editor, Claire Barbetti, generously published my work in its pages in 2001. Three years later Claire offered me the position she left in order to pursue other avenues in academia. It's been my honor to solicit work from Robert Bly, Liz Bradfield, Andrei Codrescu, Clayton Eshleman, Richard Hoffman, Fanny Howe, Sidney Goldfarb, and Pattian Rogers, translations of Cristian Aliaga, Paul Celan, Pablo Neruda, Tomas Tranströmer, and César Vallejo, along with acceptances from less well-known writers of no-less valuable work.

The current issue staggered to the finish line. Few literary journals outlive the inevitable inertia of grueling publication demands, deadlines, and commitments. Some of those which have run their course made an impact during their time, and afterward, for readers and writers alike. Think of *Black Mountain Review*, *The Dial*, *Origin*, *Sulfur*, *Yugen*, etc. Often these journals depend on a small coterie of diligent, dedicated enthusiasts. As it now stands, *Janus Head* can credit its survival to the staunch, creative will of Brent Dean Robbins, along with added contributions by Manager, April Robbins, and newly appointed Associate Editors, Sean Connolly and Amy Taylor. I am thankful Brent decided to continue publishing. The decision to go on was probably as difficult as getting a journal of this quality out online and in print biannually.

This issue gives us a chance to publish the work of William Heyen, whose book, *A Poetics of Hiroshima*, as I have written elsewhere, is in my opinion the best book of poetry written in the past decade. At the same time Jerome Rothenberg has given us a large sheaf of brilliant poems representative of his vast historical take on the world. Mr. Rothenberg's own editorial

work has been nothing short of monumental, what with both volumes of *Poems for the Millennium*, co-edited with Pierre Joris, a veritable encyclopedic analysis of modern/postmodern poetry worldwide. The editors' annotations add up to some of the most insightful, risk-taking criticism of the genre ever compiled. It's the most comprehensive anthology of its kind since *America a Prophecy*, which he edited with George Quasha in 1973. Over forty years ago Mr. Rothenberg showed me what poetry can do as he chanted, played ancient instruments, and read to an astonished audience in Cambridge.

As I peruse the current issue I know I will return often to the von Eckartsbergs' article concerning the "democratization of fame" and narrative activity devoted to the service of spiritual immortality. Their article is counterpoint to Michael Siporia's analysis of Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, in which the hero is saved by immortals such as Goethe and Mozart led by the Feminine portrayed by Hermine, a character Siporia sees "akin in her spirituality to the prostitutes in Dostoyevsky." I'm intrigued by Siporia's point that the spontaneity of the Jazz Club in the novel will offer the *Steppenwolf* the milieu for possible redemption, reminding me of Barthes' comment, "... man's spontaneity is his culture..."

There's a fine mesh going on in the articles Robbins has chosen here between connections and juxtapositions, where the hero of the Hesse novel defaults toward his razor as a Nietzschean alternative, while Kontoulis & Kitis examine the abandonment of language in DeLillo's *The Body Artist*, where at the center of the novel a suicide is dealt with by performance art and language reduced to "autistic repetitiveness and involution," "echolalia," or a "barely semiotic language." An experiment in writing close to Marguerite Duras giving silence a voice, the body alone having its say. Similarly, yet quite distinctly, Sylvie Gambaudo's investigation into "the Phallic Mother" in the novel *We Need to Talk about Kevin* via its "impolite narrative dealing with social themes most would prefer to keep under silence" is superb. The difficulties she undertakes and unravels in examining the relationship between Kevin and his Mother, Eva, (and ultimately the author herself, Lionel Shriver) are equal to the example she gives of Julia Kristeva unmasking "Maternity" as "the metaphor of the invisible."

Janus Head has long been known for its excellent literary criticism, psychological analysis, and philosophical inquiry, rarely fiction, so it is with great pleasure to offer what I consider our finest piece of fiction thus far in Gregory Phipps's short story, "Matisse of Montreal." Cezanne's preparatory aesthetic approach to the canvas leading up to his gestural act of painting

comes under scrutiny by David Dillard-Wright using insights offered by Merleau-Ponty. The latter's use of phrases toward aesthetic perception and appreciation such as "communion" and "carnal intersubjectivity" reminds one of Kristeva's theories of the chora as an internal preverbal vibration prior to language and cathexis as the erotic charge ultimately transforming the body into language. Dillard-Wright manages to link both art and writing as similar aesthetic processes seeking ecstasy, but cautions against it stopping there.

There is more to be found in this volume, but the impetus to write something here at the last moment was spurred on, not as an apologia, or attempt to justify to the authors, and readers alike the delay in publication, but a brief statement of appreciation to all involved for exhibiting patience and courage, the two qualities Lacan calls both wings needed for "Souling."

Social and Electronic Immortality

Rolf von Eckartsberg and Elsa von Eckartsberg
Duquesne University

“As long as we are not assured of immortality, we shall never be fulfilled, we shall go on hating each other in spite of our need for mutual love.”

-- Eugene Ionesco

Existential, Co-Existentialism, and Immortality

How can we overcome the death barrier? Existentialism claims that we cannot. Our life is characterized by finitude which has death as its limit condition. But the sting of death--mortality--and our acknowledgment of this reality makes us wake up to life and be resolute for our projects of self-realization. Yet we die alone!

But which if this existential conviction is based on shaky ground? Are we not born into family-community and do we not die within a community of extended family and friends within the social body of our “existential ensemble” (von Eckartsberg, 1979) which we have co-created by our living? This cast of characters of our existence survives our death. The survival community is launched at the funeral of the deceased. While the dead person is lowered into the ground, the person’s spirit is raised in speech and imagination of the survivors. A spiritual rebirth occurs. To the deceased person a new state of being, a new life: social immortality is bestowed in and through our collective commemoration. It exists as a circulation in image-consciousness and speechy. This is the point of view of co-existentialism. Personal immortality for oneself may well be impossible, but social immortality, continued life in the consciousness and speaking of others is not.

Existentialism focused on subjectivity, the actor’s point of view, and the life-span of the individual. The individual experiences the world and him- or herself in consciousness which produces the meanings which guide our decisions and actions. In this article we will revision this ego- and conscio-centric attitude of existentialism with regards to the issues of immortality. Consciousness is not the autonomous creation of the person alone. It is grounded in and permeated by human language which co-articulates our experience. The life of the community, of others, life in interpersonal

relationships, life between us, precedes, envelops, and succeeds the life of the individual.

Co-existentialism, in my view, was founded by Buber and Rosenstock-Huessy (von Eckartsberg, 1985). The starting point of co-existentialism is the conviction that we exist in relationships, and that we communicate with others and with ourselves through interaction and language. The between of co-existence is our primary reality and language is equiprimordial with consciousness. We talk to ourselves, we process reality in a private mode shaped by language. This private experience has to be articulated to others to achieve interpersonal and thus irrevocable social and moral reality. Once communicated, the person's experience in principle can live on in the memory and discourse of the listeners and, as such, it can survive the death of the speaker or writer. Co-existentialism discusses the multi-generational nature of human discourse and it emphasizes the study of interpersonal relationships--our life in social network--which can survive the death of its members. Relationships may attain immortality in and through co-existence.

Language can accomplish immortality. It does so in a relative manner depending on the extent and duration of the circulating discourse in co-existential networks. In the view of co-existentialism immortality is a social reality of discourse, as was especially true in ages steeped in the oral tradition. Co-existentialism aligns itself with this wisdom, hoping to bring it back and to strengthen it in our fast-paced and forgetful modern era.

Immortality is understood as life after death, better, life after life. Humankind has striven for immortality from time immemorial. The earliest human traces of communal burial ritual are found in graves 60-70,000 years ago. Graves are the living addresses of the dead. The names of the dead are their addresses in our living language through which we can visit their presence and commemorate when alone or in discourse with one another. And the ritual observance of anniversaries bespeaks the continuing spiritual life-presence of the deceased in the surviving community. As was said of Lincoln: "And now he belongs to the ages."

Rosenstock-Huessy (1970) says that in biological reality: "life precedes death," but that in the realm of the spirit, in human reality: "death precedes life;" the founder's death precedes the life of the institution or school of thought which he or she founded. The United States of America exists on the inspiration of the "founding fathers." Their constitution is our heritage, their founding acts are alive and sustain us today. Remembering means being able to survive the death of what is remembered.

Even in the spiritual life of the individual in the course of a lifetime the principle that “death precedes life” holds in that we have to die to parts and stages of ourselves in order to free us to grow in new directions and to develop new spiritual life-forms. We have to die to but remember childhood and youth in order to be born into adulthood; we have to die to the activities devoted to a project such as writing a book when it is completed so as to find new life in another project. In all major milestones and turning points in our life, we have to learn to die to our “old self” in order to be re-born into a “new self,” we die to old existential relationships and communities and are reborn into new ones.

In this view death and immortality is very much a part of our own living and it plays an important part in the continuing life of our multigenerational social existence. Our life is punctuated by decisive events and by ends and beginnings which mark our life in terms of eras: B.E. before the event, and A.E. after the event. Through existential periodization which delineates the important chapters in our life, as individuals, as families, and as communities, we obtain our basic orientation in time: B.C., before Christ, and A.D., “anno domini,” in the year of the Lord.

The Fixed Stars of Proper Names

The name stands for the person. Every name is the title of a story, of the person's life-story (Schapp, 1976). Proper names are the fixed stars in the firmament of language. They act as foci, as crystallization points and magnetic poles which draw and hold all the facets of a person's life and all the stories which carry the meanings of these existential facts. Without names we would vanish in the anonymity of mass society, lost and forgotten in the oblivion of impersonal numbers and statistics. Names stabilize reality for us. They establish perceivable identities in the flux of changing perspectives.

Proper names, of persons, of groups, of places, and of times, constitute the foundation of language (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1981). Names identify entities: reference points. Without names we would lose all orientation in society, space, and time. We would be cast adrift in the ocean of the world-process. Names establish stable points of reference around which we can accumulate narrative knowledge and upon which we can pass judgments. The proper names of persons and groups are our trans-temporal addresses in language and society which make meaningful speech to and about persons possible. Names are the most immortal parts of language.

A person's life does not have an unequivocal meaning: the person's life story. There are as many stories as there are people telling them, although there is also much consensus. We find a myriad of written biographies and there may even be an autobiography in the paradigm case of famous people. The "self-story"--what my life means to me--is at best a privileged insider version of the life. A person's intimates, wife, husband, parents, children, friends, colleagues, enemies, critics are as close to the action--partners and participants in the life--and often can see clearer into the living truth and reality of the deceased person. There is no ultimately privileged point of view here for us. All circulating stories stand in a dialectical relationship with each other, demanding continual revision.

However, there are some "facts" which belong to the deceased, indisputable existential life facts, deeds and dates about which there is consensus, and artefacts: mementos and possessions. In our technical age we have created print and photography and electro-magnetic storage capacities: computer memories, laser discs, cassette recordings, videos, as well as the more traditional writings of letters, of diaries, which provide touchpoints and clues--traces--to a person's living. Every individual, especially in the industrial world, accumulates and collects a myriad of "things" which become disseminated or discarded after our bodily death. These things carry the spiritual meaning--traces of the person. Most of them vanish into oblivion over time. Fame is the crucial variable here. We remember and recollect more about persons who are deemed important in the life of humanity: our culture-heroes. Commemoration is relative to the size and the affection of the mourning community, of the circle of people who knew the deceased personality or through media.

The Process of Immortalization

Love used to be considered stronger than death. Nowadays love often does not even survive life. In our era of disposable marriage and family relationships we are lucky to be remembered at all.

Fame once outlived the life of its hero. But, as Andy Warhol has remarked: "In the future, everybody will be world-famous for 15 minutes." Are we not entitled to more, to at least one day or at least one hour of commemoration each year which our folk wisdom and life praxis has institutionalized through anniversaries? But even anniversaries and their celebration diminish in frequency over time. The accelerating pace of our modern era

and its increase in information bombardment seems paradoxically to have undermined our capacity for remembrance and commemoration. Too many new events overlay and displace memory. We are in danger of becoming individuals and communities without a past.

The maintenance of the past as a living memory is of essential importance in the life of a group and of individuals. Knowing about origins, about past achievements and mistakes allows us to understand ourselves as links in the chain of generations, as partners in long-range, multi-generational co-existence. Commemoration also reminds us of our indebtedness to our ancestors upon whose achievements and shoulders we should stand. Through such remembrance we overcome our narcissism and we are reminded of the immortality of our spiritual social life.

The “process of immortalization” can best be studied in the reality of history and biographies. Historians shape and dominate our collective memories. Although the important names of personages, of places, and of events are first pronounced and propagated by the participant people, historians, after an initial surge of commentary, have been given the task of providing systematic accounts of the important people and their important events: to narrate the past and its actors. All narrative activity is devoted to the service of spiritual immortality.

The “great man” or “great person” theory of history has created the secular pantheon of the immortals, the luminaries of a culture, and accumulated and monumentalized the impressive documentations of these culture heroes. This approach has been based on an elitist bias: only the extraordinary personages and the leaders in their field have been accorded recognition and the honor of commemoration. All others have been more or less forgotten leaving only faint traces in the barren data-banks of genealogy.

The Democratization of Fame

A democratization of fame seems in order, a democratization of the ancient Roman tradition of “*monumentum erecti*,” a monument has been fashioned, hence immortality is guaranteed in the life of the successors, until even these monuments topple. Of course, every grace and every tombstone is already a monument of the dead for the survivors. The names and the dates are engraved in stone or metal to last a few generations longer in sacred burial grounds.

While many strive frantically to achieve the “grand fame” of celebri-

ties and willingly assume the dangers of grandiosity and paranoia—real persecution by paparazzi, the press and curiosity seekers—most of us are accorded only “safe fame,” small fame, in the memories and discourse of our existential ensemble.

We remember the life of our public leaders in all fields: our culture heroes. But every family and friendship circle has its own leaders which carry on the tradition: the way we do things together, how we organize our time, what we devote our energy to, what values we hold sacred, what spirit we adore and serve. Parents and grandparents collaborate in this or come into conflict over these life-form issues. Multi-generational family life is the spiritual life form closest to our existence and calls out for renewed attention and appreciation. We need to move from cultural elitism to cultural personalism rooted in family life, in kinship, friendship, and inspired fellowship. The source and anchor of personal living and personal recognition lies equiprimordially in our love and family life, in our celebrative life, and in our work life (von Eckartsberg, 1988).

Today much of the wisdom of personal life seems to get lost when the person dies. Why do we not take the task of biography writing more seriously in our own families and kinship groups? It seems that most people think that they are not important enough to be considered historical figures. This calls out for revisioning. Everybody is an ancestor and has something to teach (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1970). I should think that this was implied in all the current talk about the “value of the family.”

In our super-competitive modern life the ladder of success is hard to climb. For every person who makes it into public celebrity and culture-hero status, hundreds if not thousands of others of equal merit and ability go unrecognized and suffer the agony of defeat in the winner/loser ideology of modernity. The success and publicity market devalues the accomplishments of the unrecognized, their genius goes largely unacknowledged. Yet they also need affirmation, encouragement and immortalization.

All of us are “luminaries” to some others in the however limited circles of our existential cast of characters: the people whom we encounter in our life and with whom we establish a lasting and meaningful personal relationship. In this social circle, which survives the individual, we can all reach limited immortality.

Everybody is a super-star in his or her own ensemble, an irreplaceable valued person. Every person’s life can be considered to be a work of art, worthy of appreciation. The way of life which a person fashions out of

his or her talents, means, and circumstances, is his or her dynamic work of art which needs to be articulated, preserved, displayed and celebrated. It calls for ways to express this life in artful and lasting forms beyond the often gossipy and fleeting circulation of stories.

We live in an age of cultural transformation in which, within one generation, high-tech electronic media became available to almost everybody and in which computer literacy became as prevalent as knowing how to drive a car. "Information navigation" entered our language as a new concept and reality. Using these computer/video skills, we can transform from being primarily media consumers to become media producers (Leary, 1987). Celebrity oriented elitist mass culture, already shook up by cable proliferation and constituency-television is further challenged by personal ensemble-television and culture. The democratization of fame is already under way, as personal knowledge becomes more important than mass media knowledge, and as personal, reciprocal and dialogal communication becomes more valued than one-sided, passive, mass media pseudo-communication.

The television habit, not to say the television addiction, is well established on a global scale. Today, according to a conservative estimate, the average person watches over five hours of television each day. This amounts to 35-40 per week. The same amount of time as "working for a living" is used to "play at living," to watch living, paying others to play-act living for us, selling our attention to entertainment—and news—providers. How much of this bombardment is relevant to your own concrete inter-personal life? How much enters into conversation? Just recovering one hour a day for personal interaction would accomplish much for personal empowerment and for personal culture building.

Fame, of whom, by whom, for whom? Every person authors his or her life; the participants and first-hand witnesses testify to this life; the members of the existential life-community live in genuine reciprocity; they share a fate together and they also cultivate the fame of its members in living discoursing circulation including the fruits of video productions. Thus fame can be democratized.

The Spiritual Testament and the Electronic Immortality Portfolio

Every person has the right and even the obligation toward his or her kin and the state to make a last will and testament—often a legal video-will—in which he or she can determine how the possessions are to be distributed,

what and how much is to be given to which heirs. Through the act of making a will, a person can reach beyond his or her personal death and affect the future. This is the self-willed reach and immortality of the person beyond his or her biological lifetime.

If the person has produced “works”: writings or creations such as artworks or knowledge works, these have long since become disseminated through publications and dispersed through the market place and thus have achieved their own immortality as creative mini life-sums in the listener’s or reader’s consciousness and discourse. Every story is a mini life-sum and enters the great stream of our collective discourse. However, the birth of a work is also, at the same time, the partial death of its author as the spirit-rector of its accomplishment. The work moves beyond the recall and control of its author into spiritual immortality even during his or her life-time becoming a voice on a record which repeats itself forever and ever in new encounters with newcomers, or in suspended animation on the shelves of libraries and shops, or in electro-magnetic storage in some data-base waiting to be discovered and resuscitated.

In this way of seeing, death is not the radical break we attribute to it from an ego-centric perspective. It is true that everyone dies as a body, but we also survive and are reborn through language in the remembrance of the heirs and the surviving community, through the circulation of life stories and life portraits. Through such lasting spiritual wills and testaments we continue to affect our progeny and the community at large, although we have no longer any control over this. From a socio-centric perspective, we survive our biological death in the spiritual life-time of the community.

In facing sickness, old age, and death every person craves some form of immortality (Lifton, 1968) and engaged in activities of “life-review” (Butler, 1971, 1975). This desire is expressed in the many varieties of activities which assemble and express essential events and features of the person’s existence.

Remembering and reminiscing, together, are the spontaneous activities we engage in. We also collect and review fotos and mementos which embody significant events and relationships in our life as traces. We articulate stories which weave them into the meaningful fabric of our lives. Let us call this documentation material and its narration the “immortality portfolio” of a person. It is a kind of existential time-capsule.

As individuals living in our modern era we cannot assume that the increasing accumulation of our existential data made possible by technol-

ogy will be welcomed by our heirs. They are kept too busy with their own lives to sift through all our materials and organize them into a coherent documented legacy-story. Each person shall have to initiate and accomplish this for him- or herself and learn to engage in the rewarding activities of psychological life-summing, by means of which we can refashion our lived life into an existential work of art.

Such an existential gathering and accumulation of life-traces—the immortality portfolio—can be overwhelming and an embarrassment of riches, or at least an avalanche of details. What to do with such an overabundance of materials of a person's whole life-time? There are several promising approaches that I have come across. Progoff (1975) has developed a complex psychological system of existential bookkeeping called the "Intensive Journal Process" which aims at recording the inner and outer events of a person's life and integrating the life-data through journal feedback and inner dialogue. Through keeping a journal workbook which has 19 sub-sections, and dialoguing with these dimensions in a workshop format, Progoff leads people on a personally meaningful journey of self-recording, self-exploration, and self-integration. Progoff's "Dialogue House" has become an important psychological and spiritual movement.

Van de Bogart (1985) has composed and exhibited a very elaborate and complex "immortality portfolio" entitled "Life-O-Mation." A person's existential data are assembled and transferred onto a laser disk. An authoring program called the "immortality project" provides access to, organization and integration of these life data in multiple forms.

Leary (1988) has developed life-game computer programs under the collective title of "Head Coach," and a specific program called "Mind Mirror" is available on the software market.

In the 1940's the artist Marcel Duchamp experimented with ways of summarizing and condensing his work in the form of boxes and the "valise." In an interview he explains:

Here again, a new form of expression was involved. Instead of painting something new, my aim was to reproduce the paintings and the objects I liked and collect them in a space as small as possible. I did not know how to go about it. I first thought of a book, but I did not like this idea. Then it occurred to me that it could be a box in which all my works could be collected and mounted like a small museum, a portable museum, so to speak. (Schwartz, 1969, p. 513)

In my own work with graduate students in existential and co-existential social psychology, I employ the task: "Make a representation of your life-world using any creative medium or means you see fit. After the representation is made write a legend to narrative and explain your creative production." An amazing variety of life-world representations are made and shared in the classroom, first in a small group context and then in the form of a plenary class exhibition which is photographed or videotaped. This exercise of representing one's life is always very provocative and much appreciated by the students. It accomplishes its aim of personalizing and condensing the individual's life-world and experience.

The availability and increasing popularity of electronic recording devices, especially of VCR's and Video-cameras, this democratization of technology invites us to become video-artists of our life within a circle of inspired fellowship. Our own life together becomes the subject matter of artistic expression and representation: personalized television. We can and do record our highest events and appearances. We are accumulating an existential portfolio of experiences which can then be edited into presentation as we grow older. Retirement becomes a time for personal reminiscing, life-sum constructions and co-creative personal video-production. We can now create an electronic immortality portfolio which contains all the records of the person's life, be they written, photographed, filmed, spoken or videotapes. All this is now available for technologically assisted commemoration.

Through electronic technology we can digitize all information and make it easily and instantly available for review and reworking. All types of life-data can be scanned and entered into the memory banks and the "hypertext" of electronic immortality. These existential data can be organized by various authoring languages and programmed for multiple access "information navigation." We become enables to travel through our life and that of others. Our role becomes indeed that of "cybers," pilots in our own information ocean: personal electronic databases. Technically, a person's life-data would be available as an electronic immortality portfolio in the form of, for example, a DVD or CD-Rom.

Psychological Life-Summing and the Life-Sum Video

The approaches discussed in the previous section are very instructive, and they illustrate the immensity and complexities of one person's life-data. But, we think yet another step has to be taken. A condensed form—a

synopsis—has to be given to these materials, an ordering and editing, and creative rearrangement must take place. Representative episodes and icons must be selected. A storyline must be fashioned from our total life-collage. The isolated events, the relationships, the projects, the achievements and failures, the glories and defeats, the joys and sorrows need to be condensed and integrated into a coherent bio-narrative. The “life-sum” of a person’s existence, which expresses this unique life as a work of art, calls out to be created.

To do this life-summing on one’s own can be very difficult. It calls for the guidance of a professional collaborator who is trained in “life-sum counseling.” The counselor’s role is to help the person who may be overwhelmed by his or her life-data and memories to attain a self-accepting and even celebrative attitude and to engage in philosophical reflection on the essence and wisdom of his or her life-experience and existence. The counselor must assist in finding the most appropriate form for the person to work out a “life-sum presentation” whether this be in the form of writing, audio, or a “life-sum video,” whatever the client feels is most congenial.

In our experience and work in psychological life-summing, we have found that it is important to clients to dwell on the important milestones of their life, both as achievements and as losses or defeats, on their value-experience and emergent life-philosophy, and on their interpersonal relationships which are often illustrated by photos and stories. The person’s favorite books, art-works and music, places, celebrative and vacation-activities, are also significant dimensions of existence to be woven into the life-narrative. The way a person arranges his or her home and belongings is typically already a “personal work of art” which can be videographed as a guided tour narrated by the person, creating a vivid portrait of personal living. A television production in the series “The Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous” featured a “video-souvenir” of several of Liberace’s houses, their furnishings and collections of art-objects which were filmed in their original setting and arrangement. The video reflects and preserves Liberace’s unique taste before everything was auctioned off and dispersed. It is a good example of one possibility or dimension of life-summing which is adaptable also to the lifestyle of “the not so rich and not so famous.”

The lifestyle portrait combined with an existential “show and tell” format in which the person selects the most important photos and mementos from their portfolio and narrates them to an evocative interviewer and is also asked to draw some “life-lessons” in the form of maxims or a poem,

is our preferred mode of working. This is easily video-taped integrating pictures, voice and the speaker into a unified production. We call this the Life-Sum Video.

In preparatory meetings, the clients are instructed how to gather and collate the materials of their life for the immortality portfolio and to put them into disk storage. More than one session may be needed to complete the preparation engaging the client in short term life-sum counseling, especially since clients often have to face and work through strong emotions associated with their memories. Collecting all materials, organizing them and thinking about them inaugurates the life-summing process which is intended to accomplish an existential harvest. The fruits of one's life are to be identified, articulated, and then fashioned into a spiritual form which expressed the person's life as a work of art and as a morality play, as a video-performance within a given limited time frame demanding summarization and condensation. This life-sum video will then be both a crystallization of the immortality portfolio and a hypertext which provides points of access to the more detailed and complex life-data portfolio of the person.

Most everyone, in the future, will be retired computer-video literates with time on our hands to make our life and its digitized immortality portfolio into audio-visual art-works. We will engage in life-summing, electronic life-summing, as a most meaningful therapeutic as well as personality-integrative endeavor. With the rising population of the elderly, life-sum counseling and life-sum creation may well become a popular trend in psychology, we hope. A new way of "thanking-thinking" (Heidegger, 1969, von Eckartsberg, 1981) will develop which expresses the spirit of appreciation and thanksgiving in a condensed form to others. Through life-summing everyone can complete their lives which otherwise might remain fragmented and "unfinished symphonies," so to speak.

These creations of life-summing will constitute a person's lasting spiritual will and legacy, perhaps to be placed into national archives, a sort of "universal population life data bank" as Butler (1974) has also suggested. Life-sums and their matrices, the immortality portfolios, may also become accessible at "electronic wakes" and in "electronic cemeteries and memorials" and even in "immortality communication satellites," by means of which the survivors and successors can engage the deceased and his or her life via interactive video—especially at anniversaries—thus commemorating the deceased and enlarging and deepening their understanding and appreciation of who and what this person was and remains in our living discourse: in electronic immortality.

References

- Buber, M. (1923/1958). *I and Thou*. New York, NY: Scribners.
- Butler, R. (1971). *Life is a Terminal Illness of Which Age is the Symptom*. Psychology Today, December.
- Butler, R. (1975). *Why Survive?* New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Butler, R. & Lewis, M. (1974). Life review therapy. *Geriatrics*, 29, 165-173.
- Heidegger, M. (1969). *What is Called Thinking?* New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Leary, T. (1987). *High Frontiers* magazine, 4, 5.
- Lifton, R. (1968). *Revolutionary Immortality*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Proff, I. (1975). *At a Journal Workshop*. New York, NY: Dialogue House Library.
- Rosenstock-Huessy, E. (1970). *Speech and Reality*. Norwich, VT: Argo Books.
- Rosenstock-Huessy, E. (1981). *The Origins of Speech*. Norwich, VT: Argo Books.
- Schapp, W. (1976). *Geschichten Verstrickt*. Wiesbaden: B. Heymann.
- Schwartz, A. (1969). *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*. New York, NY: Harry Abrams Publishers, Inc.
- Van De Bogart, W. (1985). "Life-o-Mation." In D. Albert, *Electronic visions*. *The New Orleans Art Review*, 4(1), Jan/Feb.
- Von Eckartsberg, R. (1979). "The Eco-Psychology of Personal Culture Building: An Existential-Hermeneutic Approach." In A. Giorgi, R. Knowles, and D. Smith (Eds.), *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology*, vol. 3. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Von Eckartsberg, R. (1985). "The Dialogal-Existential 'We' Feeling and Non-Violence." *Journal of Dharma*, 10, April-June, 145-156.
- Von Eckartsberg, R. (1988). "Schutz's Promise for Social Psychology." In L. Embree (Ed.), *Worldly Phenomenology*. Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology.
- Von Eckartsberg, R. & Valle, R. (1981). "Heideggerian Thinking and the Eastern Mind." In R. Valle & R. von Eckartsberg, *The Metaphors of Consciousness*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Body and Technology: Reframing the Humanistic Critique

Amy E. Taylor
Duquesne University

Technology critique, as taken up by humanistic psychology, has remained grounded in late Heidegger. This critique has had little practical effect on the development of technology and everyday technology use. I postulate reasons for this, which include that this critique regards technology in general rather than specific technologies, overlooking the multistability of any particular technology. I then discuss a different humanistic, phenomenological ground for technology critique from the position that human beings are at home with technology, meaning that technology does not threaten disembodiment or disengagement with any other important components of humanity. I draw inspiration primarily from Don Ihde's and Marshall McLuhan's phenomenological, descriptive works on the ways human beings are shaped and extended by technology. I end with a discussion of embodied experience in cyberspace which serves as a model for new humanistic, phenomenological techno-critiques.

Technology critique is an essential task in our technological era. Humanistic psychology, in its ongoing project of recognizing and elaborating human experience or the human world, has taken up the critique. It does so primarily through Heidegger's later work (I refer here mainly to "On the Question Concerning Technology"). This is not surprising, given that humanistic psychology is grounded in the ideas of existential-phenomenological thinkers like Heidegger. However, technology critique is one area where most of humanistic psychology has remained thoroughly embedded in this particular discourse and has not updated its view in a significant way since Heidegger. The Heideggerian discourse approaches technology broadly, as a sort of systematic worldview, thus leaving little room for practical action. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, the humanistic critique of technology has had little practical effect on contemporary human interactions with technology. In this paper, I will discuss an alternative existential-phenomenological humanistic critique that I believe offers solutions to the practical problems inherent in humanistic psychology's current major critique. I will begin by elaborating the Heideggerian critique, then discuss some hypotheses about precisely why it has had little effect on practice, and finally offer the alternative approach to critiquing technology.

The Heideggerian Critique of Technology

Heidegger and Heideggerian influenced thinkers on technology point out the non-neutrality of technology, meaning that technologies are not mere objects, but have the potential to shape and transform. As in much of phenomenology, Heidegger's major focus is on human relationality and experience. Technology is not neutral because it is in relation to humans. When discussing modern technology, however, Heidegger seems to regard this relation in one particular way (rather than recognizing the range of relationships or ways of being non-neutral offered by particular technologies). As Charles Sabatino (2007) stated in his article, *A Heideggerian Reflection on the Prospects of Technology*,

For Heidegger, technology does not represent merely the tools and equipment we make use of as we build and settle our world. More fundamentally than that, technology represents the manner in which humans have extended their reach to change, shape and thereby control just about everything we encounter within the world with practically no limit. Nothing has meaning or purpose except that it can be made available to be used. (p. 66).

Sabatino adds that Heidegger's reflections on technology constitute "a warning concerning the manner in which everything, including all within the natural realm, has become subject to human arranging" (p. 4). For Heidegger and the technological critics who follow him, this extended reach is dangerous, as well as a cause of some kind of human corruption. As Don Ihde (2002) explains, Heidegger regards technology as "a sort of transcendental dimension that posed a threat toward culture, created alienation, and even threatened a presumed essence of the human" (p. 113). Ihde (2002) calls this a "dystopic tendency" that appears with the focus on technology seen as a broad category, a kind of force or imposition that obscures other paths. Heidegger and Heideggerian critics discuss modern technology as a sort of massive force—as Ihde (2002) puts it, they portrayed "technologies as Technology" (p. 113).

Robert Romanyshyn, a technology critic in the Heideggerian tradition, elaborates the problems with technology. He writes that technology, or the viewpoint of the human being in relation to technology, distances us from a way of being in which we are embodied, present, and "in relation

to nature.” Instead, we “become an observer looking at [the world] from a distance” and we “[withdraw] our immediate presence” (1989, p. 67). Thus, technological human beings have lost some way of being that made us human or authentic.

Already, this discourse leaves discouragingly little available outlet for practical action. How are we to affect our relationship with technology if it is a problem of mass perspective and something already beyond our mastery? Heideggerians express a desire to re-enter an order prior to this latest shift in technology and our relationship to the technological. They are careful to state that this does not mean turning back time (Heidegger, 1966, Romanyshyn, 1989) (despite romantic visions of pre-industrialized, pre-Enlightenment life); rather, the Heideggerian claim is that modern technology is “early,” i.e., that it is beyond our grasp (Heidegger, 1966). They seem to characterize modern technology as a disruption or aberration of some course of human development. By re-entry, then, I mean that technological critics wish to return to a path that begins prior to a technological or scientific viewpoint. The only option they leave open for this feat is a particular kind of re-thinking of our relationship with technology. In any case, this way of thinking about technology leaves no room to change this relationship practically. Any action seems too minor, and any pragmatic approach pointless—the only solution is for us to collectively alter the Heideggerian-defined scientific-technological worldview (“attain an adequate relationship to the essence of technology” (Heidegger, 1966), and even if that were to take place, practical effects would remain to be seen.

* * *

Because I discuss technology and embodiment later, I want to say a bit about how this technology critique views technology’s relation to the body as taken up by Robert Romanyshyn. Romanyshyn suggests that the effect of technology dualizes the body; the self is trapped inside an exterior “space suit” body, protected and abstracted from any context and surroundings. This self is not *of* its body, but *in* the body; the body is something the self can do without since the body is a mere means. He explains that technology turns the body into mere function, for example, the activity of the heart, which gives rise to the metaphor of the “broken heart,” is replaced with a functional heart as pump. Functionality implies that parts may be replaced, that body parts and eventually the body are inessential. They are also interchangeable (he cites the case of “Baby Fae,” who received an infant heart transplant with a heart from a baboon; instances of replacements using non-organic parts,

cyborg parts, seem to illustrate Romanyshyn's point even more clearly). The human body is currently (quoting Wentinck), "an almost inhuman abstraction, further removed from nature than at any other moment in our history." The body as we know it, or what Romanyshyn calls the "archaic body [...] a body in intimate connection with the earth" is "increasingly threatened by extinction" (p. 29). He sees the earthly body being replaced by "technical function," on the way to becoming an astronaut body (disconnected from earth and itself) and beyond that, cyborg. Romanyshyn explains that the astronaut's body is "still [...] a body of human activity within the layers of technical functions by which it is enshelled" (p. 28). This implies that the next phase of relating to the body, or the next body that we create and become, will not be human. For this critique being human means to be embodied and earthly, which is placed in opposition to the technological; that is, the human world and the technological world are distinct.

Problems with the Heideggerian Critique

As I already stated, the Heideggerian discourse seems to frustrate practical action by characterizing technology as a massive problem beyond the scope of human intervention (at least, on a level that is not equally massive). Ellen Rose (2003), a sociologist, offers four hypotheses about why technological critique in general has "had a disappointingly small effect on the way we, as a society, receive technology" and "technological development proceeds apace, regardless of the critics' protestations that human ends are becoming increasingly sublimated to the imperatives of the technological dynamo" in *The Errors of Thamus: An Analysis of Technology Critique* which apply to the Heideggerian critique. She elaborates why this critique fails to reach "social individuals coping with the contingencies and realities of the day-to-day use of technological devices." Her hypotheses are that technology critique has the following problems: 1) pessimism that seems to be less a response to technology but to techno-enthusiast rhetoric, 2) speaking at a distance from society at large, 3) interrogating technology as an entity that destroys or stands outside of culture rather than as an element of culture, and 4) constructing members of society at large as victims rather than agents of technology.

Technology critique often takes the opposite extreme of pro-technology discourse—a pessimistic extreme that at times seems to predict its own failure as contrasted with the enthusiastic (if not a bit manic) optimism of

its opponents. I am not suggesting that pessimism is unwarranted, but that, because technology critique aims to counterbalance the opposing narrative of technological utopianism, much of it is less of a response to technological developments than a reaction to prevailing pro-technology¹ narratives. Heidegger seems to write his critique with the disappointments and unpredicted effects of industrialization in the background, and the alarm in his discourse opposes the idealism of those who had expected industrial technology to produce, in essence, a utopia. Some have taken up the technology critiques of Heidegger and others to “[link] technologies to everything from warfare to the Holocaust” (Ihde, 2002, p. 115). This dystopian rhetoric is discouraging, as it presents the problem of technology as insolubly huge, and confusing, since we live with both positive and negative consequences of technology. Rose quotes Steve Mann (a self-described cyborg) as stating, “How many times can the alarm be sounded before we start to ignore it?” The alarm about the ills of technology clashes with the image of life without it—without, for instance, medicine, hot showers, electric lights, machines which relieve our muscles from lifting and digging, and so on. Technology critique loses the notion that technology does not merely create but also solves problems.

Secondly, the way technological critique is situated also removes it from society at large. It stands over and against technological society, with the intent of making technology strange. The problem with this is that technological critique has a linear perspective on this buzzing world, viewing it from an uninvolved distance. Rose suggests that “the critics’ entreaties are largely lost in the wind because they are standing on an earlier shore, watching people flounder in rough waters that they refuse to test” (p. 152). Indeed, the critique seems to come from a privileged realm in which coping and purposeful action are replaced by detached reflection. The techno-critic response to the reason for the theory-practice gap seems to be that human beings lack enlightenment—they have not “attain[ed] an adequate relationship to the essence of technology” (Heidegger, 1966), a position which, presumably, the critics have attained, or at least understand. It heightens the polemic not only between the critics and the technophiles, but between the critics and the rest of the world.

Thirdly, this pessimism and distance also seem to contain an assumption “that culture is synonymous with tradition” (Rose, p. 150), meaning that the popular, the ordinary, or the “low” are excluded from culture. Another way to put this would be to say that technology critics believe “culture [is] severely degraded by the rise of technique” (Rose, p. 151). Contemporary

culture is seen as displacing the authentic, traditional, and to a degree, pre-technological culture. Heidegger implies that human beings lost some essential element of culture or humanity—roughly, poetry, spirituality, or an embodied sense of self, with the rise of modern technology. Heidegger states, “From our human experience and history, [...] I know that everything essential and great has only emerged when human beings [...] were rooted in a tradition” (1966). If, however, these critics were to leap into a more democratic perspective (the perspective much pro-technology rhetoric has claimed) and regard contemporary life not as an erosion of tradition but as also constituting culture (and not merely a partial culture or a culture veiling what ought to be), then technological devices would not be regarded as outside of culture. Rather, “computers, personal digital assistants, cell phones, and other technological devices do not stand outside of culture and impose on it but are, increasingly, part of it and should be regarded and interrogated as such” (Rose, 150).

Finally, the critique of technology leaves people with little agency. Human beings are seen as victims of technology; we are “prisoners of our own creations” (Romanyshyn and Brien, 2005), rather than agents who make use of and effect technology. In this critique, we are depicted as passive consumers and unquestioning participants in technology, or as carrying out technology as a mission from our collective unconscious. This viewpoint ignores how technology users are acutely aware of the ways technology affects their lives, as well as ways that people have taken up and transformed technology. Often, the consequences of a specific technology are not predictable because we shape technologies to our own ends; that is, we are in relation to technology rather than taken up by technology. Ihde (2002) argues that technologies do not have determinate directions, and that “possible uses are always ambiguous and multistable” (p. 131). As Heideggerian technology critics assert, technologies are not neutral, but enter into a relationship with human beings. As Ihde explains, using a gun as a sample technology, “the relations of a human-gun (a human with a gun) to another object or another human is very different from the human without a gun. The human-gun relation transforms the situation from any similar situation of a human without a gun” (2002, p. 93). The human and the technological object enter into a relationship that alters both, enabling capacities in each. This relationship, however, leaves open multiple possibilities.

This particularly interests me as a feminist when I consider the ways women have re-appropriated technology for our own purposes. For in-

stance, the telephone industry first marketed its product with the notion that it would be used by men for business and management purposes and conversations would be brief exchanges of information. When some users, primarily women, began using the telephone to keep in touch with family and friends and hold longer exchanges, the industry eventually adapted to this new use of their technology (for instance, by charging per minute instead of per call, and by advertising the telephone as a way to maintain social contact) (Van Zoonen, pp. 6-8). The internet, and social software communities² in particular, have followed a similar trend in which users expanded from small and fairly specific user groups consisting mostly of men until gradually, at the beginning of this decade, the user base became reflective of the general population (at least in the United States), meaning slightly more women than men are online. Women are the primary users of current popular internet social softwares (like MySpace and Facebook). As Rose puts it, "The critics would serve society better by acknowledging that people are agents, not victims, of this cultural transformation" (2003, p. 150). I would add that an emphasis on our conscious activity, rather than unconscious participation, would empower those within technological society to examine their relationships to their technologies.

Not only are there multiple ways of relating to a single technology, but there are multiple kinds of technologies which all imply different ways of relating. Based on his examples, Heidegger seemed to have in mind massive technologies (bombs, combines, hydroelectric plants, rockets) which he contrasts with old simple technologies (bridges, sails, windmills). The classes of simple technologies and monolithic technologies, however, overlooks the variety of contemporary technology. Contemporary technology takes many forms, many relations, and shapes our worlds and our bodies in multiple ways. For example, mobile technology shapes the environment differently and implies a different set of human actions than the looming, undemocratic technologies Heidegger had in view. Mobile technology is available without infrastructure (i.e., telephone lines), is relatively easy to use and to learn, and offers the same set of information to all users. Mobile phones have become quite popular and advanced in Kenya, perhaps because they bypasses the problem of having to build infrastructure, including banking infrastructure as cell phone credit has become a currency.

In sum, this critique problematically situates itself outside of the shared, day-to-day technological world and frames those in that world as lacking agency. It also tends to over-generalize and create a sharp division between

these two worlds. We should re-write humanistic technology critique from a perspective that is connected to the life world, from a place of action rather than from a perspective of dispassionate observation. Furthermore, human being (including embodied being) and the technological are not necessarily opponents; they do not ultimately stand to destroy or perfect one another. The category, “human” (a category which has historically excluded many individuals or at least labeled them inauthentically human) does not exclude technology: *techne*, those things we do to shape what we are, is no less human than *physis*, nature. Particularly for contemporary human beings, we are born into technology, we are always already in technology. The human and the technological are co-constituted; human beings are called by the world to shape it, and we are called to shape ourselves. We are technologists—the so-called authentically human or pre-technological human is a myth, as John Caputo indicated in his Simon Silverman address³ at Duquesne University in March 2008. The “technological human” isn’t a new breed, and the technological has always been a component of living with and in the world. Technology does not stand over and against us—rather, we are its agents, however far its reach. I would suggest that we never left home.

An Alternative Humanistic View of Technology

How, then, do we solve our problems as technological beings (as opposed to trying to stand outside of or see through technology)? I would suggest that in order to make change, the technology critique must refocus on specific technological developments and avoid the extreme of speaking only about dangers or potential dangers of technology. As techno-critic Neil Postman says, “Every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and-that,” and “[I]t is inescapable that every culture must negotiate with technology, whether it does so intelligently or not” (1993, p. 2). This also implies that there are multiple ways to engage with technology and that human relating to technology is an ongoing process.

Ihde (1993) explains that Heidegger’s later work on technology is derived from earlier work appearing in *Being and Time* in which, beginning from the phenomenological principle that human beings are always situated in a body, he argues that when we use an object it “becomes the means to experience itself” (Ihde, 1993, p. 40). Heidegger describes appropriating the hammer as a “useful thing” in *Being and Time*, and explains that through actively using the hammer, we develop a greater relation to the hammer as a

useful object (1996, pp. 65-67). This relation is not “theoretically grasped” and we will not discover this relation of “handiness” by merely “looking at” the tool (Heidegger, 1996, p. 65). Rather, the hammer is not, or no longer, simply an object. It becomes a useful thing by means of which we accomplish our work, taken for granted as a kind of bodily extension through which we experience the world. Later on, Heidegger changed his view to refer to technology as “a systematic way of seeing the world” (Ihde, 1993, p. 41) as a useful thing for accomplishing work, and as a taken for granted (that is, invisible) means of experiencing the world. The invisibility of technology when it is this kind of bodily extension became the invisibility of the technological viewpoint, a view we hold to the unconscious exclusion of other views or other modes of human existence. My argument here is that being in relationship to technology does not limit but rather expands the range of human experience, and that it is not a simple or deterministic mode, either. I am making use of Heidegger’s earlier view to examine embodied relations to specific technologies (the relation we form with a hammer, for instance, is different than the relation we form with another technology), rather than seeing human relation with technology as a single, and imposed, way of seeing the world.

Humans are being-in-technology, and this sets the task of contemporary phenomenologists to unfold the manifold complex relations we have in technology. I am not suggesting we give up the task of technology critique nor that we fail to examine (and respond to!) the destructive potentials of technology. I am suggesting that because we are already in a technological state of mind, that we must find a solution within technology that is more complex than getting rid of new technologies or adding more. Ihde (2003) discusses ways of solving environmental problems that involve technology, explaining, “the solutions to technoenvironmental problems that have worked call for better technologies rather than older, simpler, or no technologies” (p. 121). A friend offered the situation in Haiti as an example of this principle. Haiti has been torn apart for energy. The country is severely deforested, as their trees have been burned for cooking fires. Solar ovens present a potential technological solution to this technoenvironmental problem in the direction of sustainability. Technologies can be friends of the earth and of humanity.

* * *

Now, I want to provide an alternative way to discuss technology, with a specific focus on technology and the body. In this section of my

paper, I provide an example of viewing a technology specifically, not a broad and vague category, not from a distance, and not as something out of human reach. Rather, I start from the position of being at-home with technology. I hope to give a more “optimistic” account of some technology-enabled potentialities without going over the top and becoming a utopian. My stance is like that of Don Ihde, who states that, “Unlike our forefathers in philosophy of technology, I am not a dystopian (nor am I a utopian)” (2002, p. xiii), avoiding both the pessimistic tone of Heideggerian critique and the extreme of total technophilia. My stance is also like that of Marshall McLuhan, who transcends the divide between the distance and abstraction of most anti-utopian technological critique and the technophilic innovators by staying close to technology with a critical eye. The task of technological critique, then, is to take the relationship between humans and technology seriously and to get close enough to it to see what’s going on.

I am particularly interested in media and communications technologies, that branch of technology that seems the most disembodied, and among these, especially computers and the internet, those technologies which have really taken off and seem to be what people mean now when they talk about new technologies. By means of these technologies, claims Scott Kaper in his Romanyshyn and Heidegger inspired paper, *The Future of Dream Bodies in Virtual Reality*, “The conversation that goes on over the modem is between two interiorized subjects, between whom all traces of bodily interaction have been etched away into words on a screen” (p. 3). This self is a “cybernaut” with a “spectator consciousness” (p. 2).

Contrast this with Mey Elbi’s discussion in her paper *Playing in MUD: How Cyberspace and the Internet Can Change Our Identity?* [sic], in which she describes the sense of being embodied during online interactions: “The majority of the people feel a sense of ‘being there’ when an intense interactivity and communication process is happening. Several cases have proven that cyberspace is an existing physical world where people can be hurt, can have sex, even can be raped.” By her characterization of cyberspace as a “physical world,” Elbi seems to mean that members of online communities are in some way embodied and communicate in embodied ways. One could even say that cyberspace simply extends our individual realities (which, insofar as they are perceived, subjective and particular, could be called virtual). Indeed, Ihde (2002) notes that the term virtual reality is an oxymoron, suggesting that this “reality” is as real (or as virtual) as any other.

Researchers Judith Sixsmith and Craig Murray in their paper *The Cor-*

poreal Body in Virtual Reality, which provides a phenomenological account of the experience of embodiment in virtual reality applications, argue that in virtual reality the mind is not “freed from the body” but that VR “brings [...] embodiment with it” (p. 319). They explain that “VR technologies become all-embodying or even re-embodying” and are not “characterized by a disembodied gaze—that is, a projection of our selves into an optic panorama” (pp. 317-18). In other words, they conceive of VR (and perhaps cyberspace generally) as embodied spaces.

They quote Marcel Mauss’s idea that “the body is our first and most natural technical object,” and add that “techniques of the body work not only upon the body-object, but also upon the body-lived, producing our embodied experience” (p. 319). An example could be the way wearing high-heels changes the body gestalt, or Merleau-Ponty’s example of a person with a feather in her hat. The person navigates herself through a doorway without hitting the feather on the door-frame, she has an awareness of the boundary of the feather like her awareness of her body boundary; the feather is a bodily extension. A more familiar and comparable experience for us might be driving a car through a tunnel. Merleau-Ponty explains that “the hat and the car have ceased to be objects” and are “no longer perceived for [themselves]” but “[extend] the scope and radius of touch” (cited by Ajana). This is like Heidegger’s analysis of tool use, referenced above, that “the tool can become a means rather than the object of experience” (Murray and Sixsmith), becoming a part of bodily experience. As Donna Haraway asks in the *Cyborg Manifesto*, “Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?”

Murray and Sixsmith suggest that VR is a similar phenomenon in which the body is immersed and body boundaries become ambiguous until “the separation between biological and cyber-bodies [...] becomes invalid” (p. 325). Btihaj Ajana, in her paper, *Disembodiment and Cyberspace: A Phenomenological Approach*, takes up the idea of technology as extension of body with specific reference to the apparent disembodiment of cyberspace, calling the problem an “ironic dialectic.” She summarizes it thus:

In light of the technological rhetoric, new technology is suggested to be partly the “instrument” by which we may override our bodily limitations and reach the transcendental moment. Yet, this instrument is but an extension of the body itself and as such, its *raison d’être* can only be realized through an embodied experience. In cyberspace, this embodi-

ment is, in fact [...] a spontaneous prerequisite for communicating in it and interacting with its interface, which is by no means a pure mental construct but a myriad of sensory dialogues (seeing, hearing, feeling, etc.). *As such and insofar as the body is the basis for our interactions and perceptions, virtual space can only be seen as a symbiotic synthesis of technology and corporeal phenomena* (p. 9). (emphasis added).

The critique of technology seems to have lost this phenomenological sense of technology as instrument, or technology as the result of a world infused with care, instead arguing that this sense of the technological either no longer exists or never existed. Marshall McLuhan provides an example of how to bring this sense back into technological critique. He takes up the strand from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty directly—indeed, just note the title of his book: *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. This book focuses on shifts in human perception as clues to the new human environment created by any new technology, all the way back to writing, what some people think of as the first technology. In other words, McLuhan agrees with Heideggerian critics that our present consciousness constitutes a particular kind of perspective, but looks more intricately at specific technologies to understand how they change perception (he thinks of this literally, calling technologies “electronic extensions of our central nervous systems” (1964, p. 4). For example, from his chapter on television (1964, p. 308):

Perhaps the most familiar and pathetic effect of the TV image is the posture of children in the early grades. Since TV, children—regardless of eye condition—average about six and a half inches from the printed page. Our children are striving to carry over to the printed page the all-involving sensory mandate of the TV image. They pore, they probe, they slow down and involve themselves in depth. This is what they had learned to do in the cool iconography of the comic-book medium. TV carried the process much further. Suddenly they are transferred to the hot print medium with its uniform patterns and fast lineal movement. Pointlessly they strive to read in depth. They bring to print all their senses, and print rejects them. Print asks for isolated and stripped-down visual faculty, not for the unified sensorium.

Btihak Ajana goes so far as to call the body itself a medium in connection with technology. That is, the body isn’t a “container” of the mind, nor is it merely a tool for using technological apparatuses (e.g., “typing on a keyboard, seeing the screen”), but is “the very parameter for constructing

cyberidentities and performing instances of gender bending and identity play” (2004, p. 9). The technological, as Don Ihde notes, traverses both the body as “being a body [...], our motile, perceptual, and emotive being-in-the-world” and being a body “in a social and cultural sense” or body as culturally endowed with significance. Indeed, technology (at least the communications technologies I’ve been taking about—I don’t think this statement applies to all technology, not bombs and probably not rocket ships) does not represent an attempt to escape one’s body. The body as technology is an attempt to add presence, to bring oneself more into the world, to become more human.⁵

* * *

I am seated in front of my laptop, my fingers moving over the keyboard, eyes on the screen. The screen displays my Facebook profile page. I tap out, “at a coffeeshop in Shadyside, writing.” I check the home page for updates—my eyes tick from one item to the next, up and down the page, the way I might check out a party room, scanning for significance, taking in a general sense of what everyone in my social network is doing/ thinking/ feeling/ expressing to their social circles. The image of Ian, a good friend, appears next to the statement, “Ian is working with double-plus diligence.” An ambient sense of Ian working in his focused but playful, Montessori-like way fills the room. Ian lives in Toronto. I see that an old college friend has rewritten himself as class clown, adopting a goofy picture, a new middle name, and lists his political views as “eco-fascist.” I smile at how well he executes his role. My attention is called by a flash at the bottom of the screen—my index finger follows my eye toward the urgent icon. My partner says, “How’s the writing going?” I respond spontaneously, typing out a reply as quickly as I would speak it. The feeling is one of connection and containment, that I am supported and involved. These technologies are not replacing, distancing, nor eliminating the body, but extending body. Technology may even be conceived as a way of embodying the world, or *incorporating*—actively bringing the world into the body schema.

Conclusions

So, what’s next? Based on the criticisms I outlined above, I suggest that future technology critiques should take a phenomenological approach. These critics may argue that their work is phenomenological, but their critiques are dualistic and contain value-laden assumptions that are neither withheld

nor made explicit. They should start from a new standpoint that is outside of both technological utopianism and the technology critique I discussed above. They should reject the dualistic premise altogether and begin from the position that mind and body are not separable (indeed, only those in extreme positions on either side of the debate agree, either with horror or jubilation, that these are separable). This is a critique for a post-Cartesian world in which we are, *a priori* and irrevocably, our bodies. Critiques should be specific and concrete, interrogating particular technologies, the effects and intentions of their use, and the ways they are *incorporated* by users. This means our task is to become more involved in the proactive rather than reactive work on technology. Ihde suggests that the new job of the philosopher of technology is to become involved in the “research and development” (Ihde, p. 125) of technological solutions.

It seems that this also involves exploration. For instance, to explore the phenomenology of cyberspace, I think a number of first-person accounts must be collected (perhaps more elaborate than the personal one I began writing above).⁶ This is a task suited to the next generation of humanistic researchers, unless we withdraw from society to an ethereal realm without technology, or simply continue to use it reluctantly, avoid developing competence, and with a sense of denial and feeling of subjugation. I think this is especially important for us humanistic psychologists in our roles as clinicians as we begin work with a generation of patients whose realities include cyberspace—our attitude should, as always, be one of understanding before anything else (e.g., before pathologizing, resisting, or imposing pre-packaged interpretations of what their worlds mean and how they experience them). I think we’re up for it.

Notes

¹ We might call them Cartesian, modern, or Enlightenment perspectives.

² Online social networks (which I refer to interchangeably as internet social software networks, social software, internet communities, etc.) is a broad term I have adopted to cover a range of places on the internet in which people express identities to one another in some way. I refer to everything from early text-based internet communities called “MUDs” (multi-user dungeon) to massively multiplayer online role-playing games (such as “World of Warcraft”) in which users build characters to participate in the game with other players, to internet social network services (Friendster, Facebook,

MySpace, etc.) in which users network in a virtual community. Though these are different sorts of networks established for different purposes, they have some features in common; each provides a medium for users to communicate, in some way, with other users, and each requires users to build some kind of an identity (or character, profile, etc.).

³ On the Wings of Angels: Post-humanism and Info-techno-theology (unpublished)

⁴ That is to say, pro-technology rhetoric, but what she says is also true to a degree also technology critique.

⁵ As radically stated by an eighteen-year-old interviewed by danah boyd (2007), "If you're not on MySpace, you don't exist."

⁶ Ideas for those who wish to take them up: someone's experience of browsing profiles on a dating site, someone (perhaps a psychotherapy client) constructing a social software profile, the experience of getting to know someone by reading her blog, micro-blogging and instant messaging throughout the day, tracking progress on goals online in a supportive community, seeking advice online, videoconferencing with co-workers or with loved ones, the experience of being "friended" on a social software network, receiving a public message on an online social network, experimenting with gender identity via an online social network, coming out online, experiencing a sense of community in an internet group, keeping in touch with a deployed partner via internet communication (including love and sex through the web), meeting a romantic partner on the internet, transgender experiences of exploring life in a differently-sexed body on the internet, googling someone you know, finding out about one's therapist on the internet, high school students using the internet post-Columbine as a new safe space.

References

- Ajana, Btihaj. (2004). *Disembodiment and Cyberspace: A Phenomenological Approach*. Electronic Journal of Sociology.
- Boyd, Danah. (2007). *Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life*. MacArthur foundation Series on Digital Learning—Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume (ed. David Buckingham). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brien, Dolores E. (2005). *The Star in Man: Jung and Technology*. C.G. Jung Page. Available at: http://www.cgjungpage.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=681&Itemid=40

- Brien, Dolores E., Romanyshyn, Robert. (2005). *Robert Romanyshyn On Technology as Symptom & Dream*. C.G. Jung Page. Available at: http://www.cgjungpage.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=683&Itemid=40
- Elbi, Mey. (2001). "Playing in Mud: How Cyberspace and the Internet Can Change Our Identity?" The Light Millennium, Inc., Issue 6. Available at: http://www.lightmillennium.org/spring01/melbi_cyberspace.html
- Haraway, Donna. (1991). "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." From *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1996). *Being and Time*. (Joan Stambaugh, Trans.). State University of New York Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1966). "Only a God Can Save Us: The Spiegel Interview." Accessed 12/18/09 at http://www.archive.org/stream/MartinHeidegger-DerSpiegelInterviewenglishTranslationonlyA-GodCan/Heidegger-derSpiegelInterview1966_djvu.txt.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1977). *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. (William Lovitt, Trans.). New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Ihde, Don. (2002). *Bodies in Technology*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Ihde, Don. (1993). *Philosophy of Technology: An Introduction*. New York: Paragon House Publishers.
- Kaper, Scott. (1998). "The Future of the Dream Body in Virtual Reality." Janus Head, Summer 1998.
- Kling, Robert. (1994). "Reading 'All About' Computerization: How Genre Conventions Shape Non-Fiction Social Analyses." *The Information Society*, 10 (3): 147-172.
- Kling, Robert. (1996). *Computerization and Controversy: Value Conflicts and Social Choices, 2nd edition*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Mason, Paul. (2007). *Kenya in Crisis*. BBC News, available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6242305.stm>.
- Mander, Jerry. (1978). *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. New York and London: Routledge.
- McLuhan, Marshall & Fiore, Quentin. (1967). *The Medium is the Massage*:

- An Inventory of Effects*. New York: Bantam Books.
- McLuhan, Marshall. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Postman, Neil. (1993). *Technopoly: the surrender of culture to technology*. New York: Vintage.
- Romanyshyn, Robert. (2008). *The Melting Polar Ice: Re-visiting Technology as Symptom and Dream*. Spring, vol. 80:
- Romanyshyn, Robert. (2002). "The Dream Body in Cyberspace." C.G. Jung Page. Available at: <http://www.cgjungpage.org/content/view/389/28>
- Romanyshyn, Robert. (1989). *Technology as Symptom & Dream*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rose, Ellen. (2003). *The Errors of Thamus: An Analysis of Technology Critique*. Bulletin of Science, Technology, & Society, 23 (3): 147-156.
- Roszak, Theodore. (1994). *The Cult of Information*. University of California Press.
- Sabatino, Charles. (2007). *A Heideggerian Reflection on the Prospects of Technology*. Janus Head, 10(1), 63-76.
- Van Zoonen, Liesbet. (2002). *Gendering the Internet: Claims, Controversies and Cultures*. European Journal of Communication, 17:1, 5-23.

Productive Strife: Andy Clark's Cognitive Science and Rhetorical Agonism

Nathaniel Rivers & Jeremy Tirrell
Purdue University

This article posits that Andy Clark's model of distributed cognition manifests socially through the agonism of human activity, and that rhetorical theory offers an understanding of human conflicts as productive and necessary elements of collective response to situation rather than as problems to be solved or noise to be eliminated. To support this assertion, the paper aligns Clark's argument that cognition responds to situated environmental conditions with the classical concept of kairos, it associates Clark's assertion that language structures behavior (Being There 195) with the long-held rhetorical stance that language is constitutive, and it examines the online encyclopedia Wikipedia as an enactment of what Clark and rhetorical theorists claim about productive agonism and the litigious nature of identity and cognition.

Andy Clark's *Being There* attempts to locate acts of cognition in the context of their situated material conditions, or, as the book's subtitle states, it tries to put brain, body, and world together again. By reinserting the physical world into the rarefied concept of thought, Clark implicitly rejects the Cartesian split between mind and body manifested in Descartes's *cogito* argument: I think, therefore I am. According to Clark, Descartes's division negates a vast amount of relevant, practical data, in that "treating cognition as pure problem solving invites us to abstract away from the very body and the very world in which our brains evolved to guide us" (xii). It is possible that Decartes's structure is therefore inverted; perhaps the theoretical "I" is able to form abstruse concepts because of the decidedly physical nature of human being, or in Clark's phrasing, because human intelligence is born of the "coupling of organism and world that is at the root of daily, fluent action" (4).

Clark asserts that his holistic stance has connections with philosophical texts including Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, cognitive development studies such as those by Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget, and more recent cognitive science works such as *The Embodied Mind* by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch (xvii). *Being There* thus reveals a rich, cross-disciplinary heritage that transgresses the permeable membranes between the hard and social sciences and more conventional humanities subjects. Indeed, Clark states that these elements are most productively addressed as a single field, and he posits that "the *overall* system of brain, body, and

local environment can constitute a proper, unified object of study" (154, emphasis in original). Clark attempts his own treatment of this amalgamated subject in his later work *Natural-Born Cyborgs* by exploring how the interplay between a physical organism and its natural and constructed environment manifests ontologically, resulting in what Clark calls the "soft self": a contingent identity emerging from the interacting elements of a wide, continually-changing network (138).

The classical concept of the *agōn* (or agonism), which rhetoric scholar Debra Hawhee calls "productive strife," has deep resonance with the soft self Clark posits (*Bodily Arts* 25). The *agōn* describes a scenario in which multiple components engage in a reciprocal process of generative competition. An *agōn* shapes its participants, but it also produces a higher-order emergent effect. In the classical world, agonism was frequently linked with activities such as rhetorical debate, wherein multiple orators would engage in a hybrid competitive/cooperative process toward the production of a gestalt such as civic harmony, which in turn would shape the lives of the participants and the broader citizenry. The *agōn* thus has a circular flow among micro and macro levels. In addition, agonism was also closely associated with competitive physical activities, in particular wrestling. It was in these corporal interplays that "in the name and spirit of the *agōn*, bodies not only came together, they *became* bodies, bodies capable of action and (hence) identity formation" (*Bodily Arts* 15, emphasis in original). Classical agonism thus endorsed a unification of mind and body that denied (and predated) the comparatively recent Cartesian segregation. Moreover, such unification was not metaphorical for the ancient Greeks, but actual. Discussing *hexis*, the Greek word for bodily condition or state, Hawhee writes that for the Greeks a change in *hexis* constituted a change in thinking (*Bodily Arts* 58). Shaping the unified body/mind through the *agōn* was thus the holistic "dynamic through which the ancients repeatedly produced themselves," both materially and mentally (*Bodily Arts* 15).

Agonism connects to biology and cognition as Clark articulates them because, as Hawhee argues, in a classical context agonism was "not merely a synonym for competition, which usually had victory as its goal" (*Bodily Arts* 15). Hawhee points out that for such contests as these the Greeks had another word, *athleuein*, a verb meaning "to contend for a prize" (*Bodily Arts* 15). The struggle of the *agōn*, whose root meaning is "gathering" or "assembly," was not the intellectual or physical triumph of one autonomous entity over another; the *agōn* was an emergent structure, emphasizing "the

event of the gathering itself" (*Bodily Arts* 15-16). As such, the structure of the *agōn* was democratic and collective rather than hierarchical.

Both classical agonism and Clark's formulation of the soft self lack a central authority like the Cartesian rational mind. Clark positions the conscious mind not as the master control that orders sense experience, but as the connective tissue that binds and nurtures the network. "For *who we are*," Clark writes, "is in large part a function of the webs of surrounding structure in which the conscious mind exercises at best a kind of gentle, indirect control" (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 174, emphasis in original). Through this model, the conscious mind "emerges as something like a new-style business manager whose role is not to micromanage so much as set goals and to actively create and maintain the kinds of conditions in which various contributing elements can perform best" (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 135). Keeping in mind that when Clark writes "conscious mind" he is not using it in a Cartesian sense, but in the decentralized, coalitional ways described above, the activities he attributes to it (creating and maintaining conditions conducive to contributions from multiple elements), we argue, are complementary to the work of rhetoric, which we will come to define as training in linguistic agonism to negotiate¹ the continually-contingent situation. To be more precise, we posit that the cooperative competition Clark identifies in distributed cognition also manifests at a macro social level as the agonism of human activity, and a rhetorical perspective permits an understanding of intra- and inter-personal conflict as productive and necessary elements of collective response to situation rather than as problems to be solved or system noise to be eliminated.

To support this assertion, we will draw three central connections between Clark's intellectual project and rhetorical theory. First, Clark argues that cognition responds to situated environmental conditions, and he gives voice to the "role of context, culture, environment, and technology in the constitution of individual human persons" (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 139). Similarly, the classical concept of *kairos* implies that the identity (or *ethos*) of the rhetor emerges in response to situated environmental conditions, both material and intangible. As such, rhetorical theory provides productive historical frameworks to understand a self that is in constant flux. Second, Clark argues that "the role of language is to guide and shape our own behavior—it is a tool for structuring and controlling action, not merely a medium of information transfer between agents" (*Being There* 195). Rhetoricians have long argued that language is not merely expressive but constitutive; that

is, speech and writing are not the expression of thought but the engines of it. Thus, we argue that rhetorical negotiation of human language defines the parameters of human *being*. Last, we will connect Clark's project with rhetorical theory by turning to a current, practical humanities project that complements this paper's theoretical perspective with real-world praxis. The text we will explore is the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, which is a manifestation of much of what Clark and rhetorical theorists both ancient and modern have to say about productive agonism and the litigious nature of identity and of shared cognition.

To reiterate, we contend that Clark's work implicitly calls for a renewed emphasis on rhetoric and rhetorical training as the means to negotiate personal and social agonism. Rhetoric may very well be, in Clark's terms, the ultimate cyborg technology, and the very thing that can address the real concerns he gives voice to in the conclusion of *Natural-Born Cyborgs*: namely that—heterogeneous as we are—there is always the risk of inequality, intrusion, uncontrollability, alienation, deceit and degradation among people (167). We do not claim that rhetoric solves these problems. What rhetoric offers is the means to reinterpret such strife as a productive element of a generative agonism, allowing us to navigate through the world that moves through us, in and out of the body and mind.

Kairotic Identity

The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus is perhaps best known for his statement that “one cannot step twice into the same river, nor can one grasp any mortal substance in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs” (qtd. in Kahn 53). Eduard Zeller's claim, which has become something of a standard modern reading of Heraclitus,² is that this statement and others like it reveal the central tenet of Heraclitus's cosmology: the essence of existence is flux (67). Heraclitus posits a world in which all things are in a constant state of change. Stability thereby becomes a kind of useful illusion. Such a worldview explains why a person cannot enter the same river twice; not only has the river changed, but the person has as well.

Clark sees embodied in human beings the sort of constant change that Heraclitus observes in the world at large. Clark states that “a human body does not comprise the same mass of matter over time—cells die and are replaced by new ones built out of energy from food. We, too, are higher-

order collectives whose constituting matter is in constant flux" (*Being There* 74). This continual flow in and out of the body has profound implications for the status of the self. Clark views the boundary between the body and its surroundings as extremely porous, and in words that recall Heraclitus's sentiment, he states that "plasticity and multiplicity are our true constants" (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 8). We can see in both these claims—one drawn from classical rhetoric and one from contemporary cognitive science—a concept of the human being as, both literally and metaphorically, *part* of its changing surroundings, intermingled with its environments.

This leaky worldview, understood with regard to the entanglement Clark posits between biological body and immaterial mind, raises important questions about the nature of self and identity. If humans are deeply enmeshed with their environments, what is identity and how is it formed? One pathway into this issue offered by classical rhetoric is the role of language and communicative acts in the making of self. The sophistic³ doctrine of *dissoi logoi*, or "opposing arguments," is a discursive mode that seeks to explore the "probable truth" in alternate perspectives (Bizzell and Herzberg 23). *Dissoi Logoi* promotes an agonistic structure in which production arises from the tension between contraries, or what Eric Charles White calls "the strife of opposites" (16). The *dissoi logoi*, according to White, "proposes a view of reality itself according to which the historical unfolding of reality can be expected to assume the form of an unending flux," a concept that has clear connections to Heraclitus's view of existence as a continual fire that "remains the same by becoming other than itself" (qtd. in Kahn 16), as well as Clark's coalitional soft self.

The contradiction of the *dissoi logoi*, its agonistic strife of opposites, is intended to be generative rather than paralyzing: an interpretation that can be best understood by exploring the classical concept of *kairos*. Although *kairos* does not map directly to any modern English term, its classical meaning was close to "the right moment" or "the opportune" (White 13). *Kairos* also incorporates connotations of opportunity or invitation, somewhat akin to the modern term *exigence*. Because of this, *kairos* has become associated with a pragmatic response to the needs of the contingent situation. In a world of flux, driven by contradiction, all actions are inherently temporary and idiosyncratic. The appropriate sophistic response is thus to eschew the goal of transcendental truth and pragmatically meet the *kairos* of the moment.

To understand how *kairos* and rhetoric were invested in the making of self in ancient Greece, we must go back even further than Heraclitus's 6th

century BCE. A productive starting point is the prototypical Greek hero Odysseus. As a fictional character, Odysseus is quite literally constructed from oral, and later written, discourse—most prominently but not exclusively in Homer. Odysseus is depicted as a crafty figure with a mutable identity that becomes temporarily fixed through rhetorical acts in response to *kairotic* situations. In their book *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant refer to Odysseus as a central Greek archetype of *kairotic* metamorphosis, a man “who can turn a different face to each person” (39). This characterization is not only a modern interpretation; Hawhee claims in *Bodily Arts* that the ancient world considered Odysseus to be a personification of cunning (*mētis*), a man of many turns (*polytropos*) (51). Importantly, the mechanism of Odysseus’s persona transformations is language. This manifests notably in the conclusion of the *Odyssey*. Upon landing at Ithaca, Odysseus attempts to pass himself off as a shepherd to his disguised patron goddess Athena. The two verbally joust, and although the deity can see through Odysseus’s subterfuge, she allows him to spin an impromptu background narrative, and applauds his use of language to make himself other than he is—noting that in the mortal world, being protean is being prudent. Soon after this incident, Odysseus, now masquerading as a beggar, encounters his wife Penelope and son Telemachus, and he is able to inhabit his new persona so completely that even after he has shed his visual disguise Penelope does not believe he is who he claims to be until he answers her marriage bed riddle (thus establishing another identity, that of Odysseus the husband, through a rhetorical game).

These events reiterate that Odysseus’s multiple identities arise from rhetorical performances; they coalesce and dissipate through communicative acts in response to situated needs. The most explicit example of this and one of the most well known episodes of the *Odyssey* occurs in Book 9, when the Cyclops Polyphemus captures Odysseus and his men. Responding to the demands of the *kairotic* situation, Odysseus convinces the cannibalistic Cyclops that he is “*Outis*,” which translates approximately as “no one” (Hawhee, *Bodily Arts* 51). When Odysseus’s plan comes to fruition and he blinds Polyphemus, the Cyclops is unable to call for assistance, foolishly shouting that no one has injured him.

Rhetoric’s connection to the making of self is revealed in this episode. Odysseus forges an identity (or non-identity) through an act of discourse. Hawhee devotes a fair amount of attention to Odysseus in *Bodily Arts*, and concludes that “Odysseus is always becoming something else: in a bizarre

twist, his proclamation to Polyphemus that he is no one in particular is actually fairly accurate" (52). Odysseus is fundamentally a shapeshifter; his identity is radically contingent and predicated upon response to context. As Hawhee suggests, the disguises of Odysseus do not conceal a core self; the act of morphing between personas *is* his defining characteristic, and it is rhetoric that enables his transformations (52).

The ability of rhetoric to make selves also potently manifests in the 5th and 4th century BCE rhetorical theory and praxis of the sophists. White reveals in *Kaironomia* that, like Odysseus, the figure of the sophist was traditionally associated with *kairos* in classical Greece. Through rhetorical guile, the sophist responds to contextual circumstances by changing himself and his situation, "implying an occasional or context-specific stance toward experience" (39). Because of this contingency, the *ethos* of the sophist must remain fluid, and "would thus become identical with its present performance" (38). Like Odysseus, the sophist must be both potentially everyone and no one.

This description of the sophist is potently embodied in Gorgias of Leontini, one of the most influential sophists. Gorgias practiced a rhetorical theory that "privileged *kairos* as the master concept" (White 14), so much so that when he was called upon to orate at Athens, he invited the audience to name the subject upon which he would speak, trusting to the "immanence in a particular rhetorical moment" (Hawhee, *Bodily Arts* 76). Crucially, such a move does more than just depict Gorgias as a skillful fabulist; each turn of argument, from one *kairotic* moment to the next, transforms his identity into that of a person with the credibility to speak about the subject. Hawhee provides insight into this distinction in "Kairotic Encounters" through her discussion of Gorgias's "Encomium of Helen." As Gorgias shifts through his arguments for why Helen was not guilty of causing the Trojan War, he directs his audience to "listen (*phere*) as I turn (*metastô*) from one argument (*logon*) to another" (qtd. in "Kairotic Encounters" 23). As Hawhee contends, this is more than a simple transition between arguments; it underscores the act of turning, or transformation itself:

This moment of direct address thus marks a critical—and literal—turning point in the *Helen*: not only does it mark a transition from one argument to the next, but it marks the transformation of Gorgias himself in that discursive moment. Gorgias does more than catalogue arguments; he cultivates an *ethos* that morphs between *logoi*. It is,

therefore, the *turn* itself, not the *logoi*, but the very act of changing and being changed that Gorgias foregrounds when he directs those present to listen (*phere*) (“Kairotic Encounters” 23, italics in original).

It is this transformation of self through language in “the timely, kairotic encounter” that causes “different *ethoi*” to emerge (“Kairotic Encounters” 32). Rhetorical action thus becomes the means through which Gorgias’s identities become temporarily congealed in response to the needs of the *kairotic* situation. For Gorgias, such changes were not metaphorical but literal. In keeping with the classical notion of *hexis*, as well as Clark’s materialism, Gorgias equated changes of mind with changes of substance, as evinced in his “Encomium” through the claim that Helen is not to blame for her actions because speech has an affective power on the physical body comparable to that of drugs (45). For Gorgias, language causes real changes in the material world—to bodies, selves, objects, and situations.

For these various figures of antiquity, the means of engagement with a universe in constant flux was to suit the *kairotic* moment by becoming the person appropriate to the present situation. These changes occurred through the use of the uniquely human cyborg technology: language. This connects *kairotic* rhetorical theory with Clark’s model, and helps us address the very real problems of identity that seem to arise in the distributed cognition paradigm. The emergence of a contingent self through rhetorical action is not a morally relativistic act born of pernicious postmodernism; it has a legitimate intellectual tradition with millennia-old roots that predate Plato’s division of existence into two discreet spheres (and also accordingly Descartes’s Neoplatonic dualism). A *kairotic* rhetorical perspective thus does not solve distributed cognition’s identity problem; it subverts it. Like Clark, we might recognize that Neoplatonic Cartesian dualism is paradigmatic rather than inherent.⁴ There are legitimate and substantive cosmologies that predate it, which we argue grants Clark’s proposed reunification in *Being There* historical and intellectual weight.

Constitutive Language

Rhetorical theory, in particular the sophistic tradition, privileges language as the key to human action and thought. Beginning with the earliest treatises on rhetoric, persuasion, and speech, language has been seen as constitutive. In the 4th century BCE, Isocrates wrote in his *Antidosis*

that “there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish” (327). All social action, any being together, was constructed (agonistically/persuasively) through a shared language. Isocrates viewed language not only as constitutive of human institutions but as constitutive of human thought as well: “For the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thought” (328). In all our actions *and* in all our thoughts, “speech is our guide” (329).

Language, in addition to its power to construct institutions and thought, was seen as having power over human bodies. Gorgias, as mentioned in the previous section, argued in his “Encomium of Helen” that “speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity” (45). Hawhee argues that “speech, for Gorgias, doesn’t merely operate on bodies, but, as Gorgias hints here, discourse itself operates as a body, albeit difficult to discern separately from its effects” (*Bodily Arts* 80). Language, in the rhetorical tradition, is more than a means to convey information; it is a productive presence in the physical lives of those who take part in it. Again, we see Clark’s vision of cognitive science dovetailing with the rhetorical tradition.⁵ When Clark writes that “the old technologies of pen and paper have deeply impacted the shape and form of biological reason in mature, literate brains,” we see how such language-based technologies not only operate on the body and the brain, but how they also operate biologically themselves (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 32). Language, both rhetoric and cognitive science argue, is constitutive of bodies.⁶

Through this view, language becomes more than merely a means for the transmission of knowledge. Just as Isocrates suggests that we use public speech when we think in private, so too does Clark argue that “language is not the mere imperfect mirror of our intuitive knowledge. Rather, it is part and parcel of the mechanism of reason itself” (*Being There* 207). We are left to wonder, Clark writes, “whether this might be an entire species of thought in which language plays the generative role” (*Being There* 209). Language here constitutes a special, productive body of thought, as Isocrates suggests. Clark himself acknowledges the roots of this line of thinking in ancient Greek thought:

The Greeks, however, are said to have begun the process of using the written word for a new and more transformative purpose. They began

to use writing to record ongoing processes of thought and theory-building. Instead of just recording and passing on whole theories and cosmologies, text began to be used to record half-finished arguments and as a means of soliciting new evidence for and against emerging ideas. Ideas could then be refined, completed, or rejected by the work of many hands separated in space and time (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 79).

Clark goes on to cite Donald Merlin, who argues that writing was “much more than a symbolic invention, like the alphabet or a specific external memory medium, such as improved paper or printing. [It was] the process of externally encoded cognitive change and discovery” (qtd. in *Natural-Born Cyborgs* 79). Writing thereby serves the even more important function of allowing human thought to become an object of reflection. Clark states:

After all, our single most fantastically successful piece of transparent cognitive technology—written language—is not simply the poor cousin of face-to-face vocal exchange. Instead, it provides a new medium for both the exchange of ideas and (more importantly) for the active construction of thoughts. (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 109)

Following Peter Carruthers’s formulation that “one does not *first* entertain a private thought and *then* write it down: rather, the thinking *is* the writing” (qtd. in *Being There* 197, emphasis in original), Clark argues that writing creates a new place for human problem solving by manipulating the environment: “However, the emphasis on language as a medium of communication tends to blind us to a subtler but equally potent role: the role of language as a tool that alters the nature of the computational tasks involved in various kinds of problem solving” (*Being There* 193). Through language we create designer environments that in turn shape human intelligence. Even something as apparently un-rhetorical as math is predicated “upon the operation of distinct, culturally inculcated, and language-specific abilities” (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 72). Math thus becomes a product of a linguistically-designed smart environment. For Clark, then, as for rhetoric, language is a technology “to live with, to work with, and to *think through*” (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 58, emphasis in original).

Fully tracing the implications of this model, Clark argues (seconding Isocrates and Gorgias), that language is constitutive of *being* as well. Clark,

however, is not alone among cognitive scientists in making such claims. Stanley Greenspan and Stuart Shanker, authors of *The First Idea*, argue, as Clark does, that external structures (such as language) drive human development and explain human *being*. Rather than being solely an expression of genes, humanness is seen here as a linguistically (and thus rhetorically) constructed quality. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, authors of *The Tree of Knowledge*, argue that “we human beings are human beings only in language” (212). We do not really, like Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*, come into language by ourselves. “We are,” rather, “constituted in language in a continuous becoming that we bring forth with others” (235). Disconnected from language and the others with which we must share it, we are not “human” in the sense we have come to know. This is not to suggest that language brings us to an essential human nature, but that humanness continually emerges, in part, through language, which exists socially. Additionally, this recalls Hawhee’s statement that it is through competitive/cooperative agonism that the Greeks continually remade themselves. If human being is dependent not just on biology, but on language-driven social activity, then the rhetorical work of being human is never done.

Clark draws from Daniel Dennett, a prominent American philosopher of the mind, to posit that our advanced cognitive abilities are “attributable in large part not to our innate hardware [...] but to the special way that various plastic (programmable) features of the brain are modified by the effects of culture and language” (*Being There* 198). Responding to the question of what “linguistic surroundings” do for brains such as ours, Clark addresses spoken language “as a kind of triggering cognitive technology” (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 69-70). He argues further that “words, on this account, can be seen as problem-solving artifacts developed early in human history, and as the kind of seed-technology that helped the whole process of designer-environment creation get off the ground” (70). Clark and other scholars working in cognitive science, along with those working in rhetorical theory, see language as constitutive of what it means to be uniquely human.

As we have argued, this line of thinking in cognitive science implicitly calls for rhetorical theory in not only understanding human development as driven by language, but as the way of negotiating the complex task of creating cultural environments that have profound influences on the ways we live and are. When language is seen as more than the transmission of information between autonomous agents, rhetoric becomes more than mere ornamentation. Rhetoric, tied to language as it is, is the means to negotiate

the production of knowledge and the cultivation of external scaffolds that will in turn constitute how we think and are; rhetoric, in short, allows us to negotiate reality itself. Language constitutes thought, it operates in and as a body, and, as Isocrates reminds us, it constitutes public bodies—governments, courtrooms and markets (all our *agoras*). If agonism as a system is at the heart of what it means to be human, then language and rhetoric are the technologies we use to negotiate it.

Bodies of Knowledge

At this point, it is appropriate to turn to a practical example of how agonism extends through the individual body into social knowledge structures to give real-world grounding to this paper's proposed connection between Clark's intellectual project and rhetorical theory. The entity we will examine is the multilingual, international, online encyclopedia Wikipedia. Although there are widespread concerns about the accuracy and quality of Wikipedia's content, it nevertheless embodies and enacts the features of knowledge production that Clark and rhetorical scholars describe: hybridized competition/cooperation; distributed rather than centralized authority; the formation of a emergent gestalt irreducible to its parts; construction of knowledge, and thereby truth, through language. Through real-time editing and the ability to mark questionable information for debate, knowledge in Wikipedia continually emerges through a social *agôn*.

To reiterate and clarify before proceeding, we are not making any claims about the accuracy or inaccuracy of Wikipedia's *content*; our exploration focuses on Wikipedia's *process* of agonistic social knowledge production. Wikipedia, as indicated above, is often dismissed in academia due to fears that it is uncontrollable and error-filled,⁷ despite (or perhaps because of) its immense popular use. Wikipedia itself acknowledges that "as with any community-built reference, there is a possibility for error in Wikipedia's content" ("Who Writes"). Of course, any body of knowledge, socially-generated or not, is similarly contestable. As stated in this paper's introduction, rhetoric—training in linguistic agonism—is not a means to eliminate error (for this is not possible), but rather to reinterpret it as a necessary feature of social knowledge construction. Through this lens, knowledge is produced through the back and forth of a plurality of voices. Appropriately, Wikipedia's recommendation is not to narrow

the validation of knowledge to one objective data stream, but to “check your facts against multiple sources” (“Who Writes”). Indeed, Wikipedia’s “flaws” may only be viewed as such from the position that knowledge is fixed and immutable.⁸ Clark and the ancient Greeks contend that the self and its biological and intellectual compliments are constantly negotiated, suggesting that Wikipedia’s perpetual imperfect evolution is merely a more visible manifestation of an omnipresent phenomenon. Knowledge, like bodies and minds, is never “finished.”

Knowledge is produced agonistically on Wikipedia through the various, frequently-competing page modifications posted by Wikipedia users. “This allows Wikipedia,” its administrators argue, “to be a place not only of information but of collaboration” (“Who Writes”). Indeed, the statement of principles on Wikipedia founder Jimmy “Jimbo” Wales’s user page reads: “Wikipedia’s success to date is entirely a function of our open community” (“User: Jimbo Wales”).⁹ As with any such system, disputes inevitably arise. However, rather than referring conflict resolution to a central authority, Wikipedia explicitly establishes a framework to govern productive discourse¹⁰ which is supported through a wide network of editors, mediators, and arbitrators nominated from the user community itself. This casts Wikipedia as one of Clark’s “self-organizing knowledge structures” (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 145). Drawing from artificial intelligence researcher Rodney Brooks, Clark states that these entities are not controlled by “a central planner or reasoner. Instead, we see a ‘collection of competing behaviors’ orchestrated by environmental inputs” (*Being There* 14). The words of Wikipedia’s administrators reveal the site’s investment in negotiation as a means of organization:

A useful feature of Wikipedia is the ability to tag an article or a section of an article as being the subject of a dispute about a neutral point of view. This feature is especially popular for controversial topics, topics subject to changing current events or other topics where divergent opinions are possible. To resolve the dispute, the interested editors will share their points of view on the article’s talk page. (“Who Writes”)

This statement reveals that Wikipedia repeatedly produces itself through the enactment of linguistic agonism. Additionally, as Clark’s model suggests, the written language of Wikipedia allows it to function as a designer environment that promotes the cognitive enterprises of its participants. This is, we argue, the system of knowledge production, and of thought, practiced by the sophists and reinstituted by Clark.

Crucially, Wikipedia encounters the same kinds of “closures, dangers,

invasions, and constraints” that Clark identifies as problems of cyborg existence (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 167). Indeed, Clark’s distributed cognition model and his concept of the soft self have been subject to the same kinds of criticisms. For instance, Evan Selinger and Timothy Engström have recently contended that “when agency no longer ends ‘at the skinbag’ then neither do attributions of responsibility and irresponsibility” (579). Similar charges are frequently leveled at Wikipedia because of the anonymity of its contributors and its lack of a central responsible agent. However, by examining how Wikipedia works as a social knowledge network we can see the ways that responsibility and *ethos* emerge from the productive strife fostered by its discourse code of conduct. A closer look at the workings of Wikipedia therefore provides a tangible way to address the potential problems of distributed agency that Clark identifies (and that his model is critiqued for neglecting).

Wikipedia addresses its own distributed agency through what is termed *soft security* (a term that recalls Clark’s *soft self*), a policy widely used in wiki communities. Following the doctrine of soft security, Wikipedia administrators rarely exert overt conflict resolution techniques, but rather, like Clark’s new-style business manager, seek to build a goal-driven framework that is conducive to self-regulating agonism. Wikipedia’s own information on soft security states that such systems depend primarily on decentralized control and “elaborate social security systems such as the moral network in a tightly-knit community such as a cluster of friends on a busy city street” (“Soft Security”). What enables these interactions of multiple components under common rules toward a shared goal is rhetoric. Meatball Wiki, a similar wiki community devoted to online collaboration, makes explicit the importance of rhetoric in its collective functioning, stating that soft security “works architecturally in defense to *convince* people against attacking and to *LimitDamage* [sic]. It works socially in offense to *convince* people to be friendly and to get out of the way of people *adding value*” (“Meatball Wiki,” emphasis in original). Persuasion and negotiation—rhetoric—thus underpin the productive agonism of shared knowledge-making.

One example of these policies in practice, Wikipedia’s “Great Hunger” page (which covers what is commonly called the Irish Potato Famine), is about a subject that is presumably historical and fact-based, yet it manifests the features of knowledge production that Clark and rhetoric theorists describe. Over time, the content of this entry became subject to much debate, mostly centering on the British government’s possible culpability in

the famine as well as its duration and scope. Because the page experienced frequent combative edits, debate over its content shifted to its talk page. There, key issues surrounding the topic were engaged, including the name of the page (“The Great Hunger,” critiqued by some as too “emotive,” or the “Irish Potato Famine,” critiqued by others as a neologism), the questionable neutrality of its point of view (critiqued as either anti-British or ignorant of the British government’s role in the event), and the causes of the event (generally attributed either to a potato disease or to negligence on the part of the British government) (“Talk: The Great Hunger”). This negotiation did not satisfy all of the parties, and the discourse split into contentious factions, despite the efforts of mediators to “cool the ill will between the two groups” (“Wikipedia: Requests for Arbitration/Great Irish Famine”). Ultimately, one user successfully petitioned for arbitration by Wikipedia’s Arbitration Committee, stating that “it has become obvious that the issues behind this case will not be settled unless [the Arbitration Committee] looks at it” (“Wikipedia: Requests for Arbitration”).

In keeping with this paper’s emphasis on distributed rather than centralized authority, it is crucial to reiterate that users, not specialized authority figures, instigate the sorts of litigious measures seen in the “Great Hunger” case, and users constitute the bodies that oversee them. Moreover, in keeping with a spirit of agonism and productive strife, arbitration does not address content disputes and thereby stabilize the subject matter in question, but rather it resolves conflicts stemming from participant conduct, and thus promotes the overall health of the system. Wikipedia’s information on arbitration states:

The committee accepts cases related to editors’ conduct (including improper editing) where all other routes to agreement have failed, and makes rulings to address problems in the editorial community. However it will *not* make editorial statements or decisions about how articles should read (“content decisions”). Please do not ask the committee to make these kinds of decisions, as they will not do so. (“Wikipedia: Requests for Arbitration/Great Irish Famine,” emphasis in original)

The arbitration page of the “Great Hunger” dispute records statements by invested parties, reprints applicable Wikipedia conduct principles, and reports arbitrator judgments regarding user violations (referencing the language of the principles). Penalties, most of which involve preventing cited users from being able to make edits to the subject page for a determined period, are then assessed.

This brief example suggests that the critique that Clark's model—and by association, rhetorical agonism—negates personal responsibility is somewhat unfounded. The participants in the "Great Hunger" arbitration are identified only through usernames, such as SirFozzie, sony-youth, Domer48, and Sarah777. These selves are assembled from fragments of contributed text and other media, and yet they are coherent enough to be culpable. Indeed, the user Sarah777 reacts in her arbitration statement to the possible consequences hinging on the case's outcome with indignation, and by vehemently asserting her value to the community:

I find the suggestion of a ONE YEAR BAN to be contemptible and completely OTT - and bizarre. So much over the top that I REFUSE to participate in this charade until the suggestion/threat is withdrawn. I have instigated over 300 articles and made over 7,600 edits in one year on Wiki; all on geographical topics. ("Wikipedia: Requests for Arbitration/Great Irish Famine").¹¹

Wikipedia allows completely anonymous editing, so any penalties could be easily circumvented by not logging in, yet these distributed personas have accrued palpable *ethos*. As befitting an *agōn*, the participants have a shared communal buy-in, which establishes both collective and individual identities. To borrow language from Clark, Wikipedia, for those who participate, is lived with, worked with, and thought through (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 58)

As a system constituted by hybridized competition/cooperation and mediated linguistically by distributed rather than centralized authority, Wikipedia embodies the principles of sophistic Greek rhetoric and evinces the model of distributed cognition espoused by Clark. Importantly, it demonstrates the viability of such principles and such a model in a way that confronts charges frequently leveled at both (namely, the difficulty of assessing responsibility and the inability to verify truth claims objectively). It confronts such challenges not by denying or resolving them, but by incorporating them as necessary components of any effort at knowledge creation.

Being Negotiated

Like a wiki page, our minds are hackable, or as Clark argues, "open to rapid influence by tricks and by new technologies" (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 59). Knowledge and the mind are forever constructible and contestable.

Centralized control, while appealing in the service of Platonic Truth and Cartesian rationality, blinds us to the material, contingent, and agonistic nature of cognition and its complimentary institutions. The difficulties we have in grasping such entities amount to, in the language of Maturana and Varela, a sense of dizziness that “results from our not having a fixed point of reference to which we can anchor our descriptions in order to affirm and defend their validity” (240). Describing the same phenomenon and the same sensation, Clark writes, “We create supportive environments, but they create us too. We exist, as the thinking things we are, only thanks to a *baffling dance* of brains, bodies, and cultural and technological scaffolding” (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 11, emphasis ours). This dizzying, baffling situation results from our contingent, distributed mode of thinking and being, or what 20th century rhetorician Kenneth Burke calls “the necessity of compromise” (225). Clark argues that “minds like ours are complex, messy, contested, permeable, and constantly up for grabs” (*Natural-Born Cyborgs* 10), and we are often paralyzed in the face of this disintegration. What it means to be human is dispersed across bodies, environments, a shared language, and a shared cultural heritage, all of which are open (we avoid the pejorative *susceptible*) to change. Once human being is seen in a dynamic way, change, unavoidable as it is, becomes part of a rhetorical negotiation of agonism. No longer anchored to genetic mutation as the sole source of alteration, we become wedded to each other and our institutions, each composing and comprising the generational structures we have inherited not only from our genes, but also from the contact we make with others.

Notes

¹ *Negotiate* is here used because this verb connotes physical action or movement (such as negotiating a terrain), and also language use, connection, and compromise.

² Zeller’s work was published in 1895, but as Kahn identifies, its line of thought about the central role of flux in Heraclitus’s cosmology remains influential.

³ As Bizzell and Herzberg identify, sophistry is not a specific philosophical school (22); *Sophist* is a term associated with a diverse group of itinerant 5th and 4th century BCE teachers-for-hire, such as Gorgias and Protagoras. Although these instructors covered a broad array of subjects, “Whatever area of knowledge the Sophists explored, it was clear that language—in which

Greek culture was deeply interested—was crucial to the exploration” (Bizzell and Herzberg 23).

⁴Detienne and Vernant claim in the last sentence of their book, “Platonic Truth, which has overshadowed a whole area of intelligence with its own kinds of understanding, has never really ceased to haunt Western metaphysical thought” (318).

⁵Although Hawhee and Gorgias refer to speech and Clark describes writing, our position is that rhetoric encompasses both modes. We acknowledge that there are important distinctions between spoken and written language, but because the main purpose of this article is to articulate productive connections between extended cognition and rhetoric differences between speech and writing have been flattened.

⁶As will become clearer during the course of this section, we are attempting to use the term *bodies* in an appropriately broad sense.

⁷This fear of error can be traced back, as can Descartes’s *cogito* argument, to Plato’s concept of pure forms. Error as such can only exist in a paradigm that establishes the existence of permanent objective truths. Bizzell and Herzberg point out that such binary divisions between true and false are historical rather than transcendental. The sophists operated under a cosmology that predated Plato, and that held that because human knowledge is inherently suspect, absolute truth is unobtainable; yet, probable knowledge may be vetted through challenge and revision (22).

⁸It may be argued that those who “misuse” Wikipedia—such as the stereotypical uncritical student essay writer who seems to be the source of so much consternation over Wikipedia in academia—share an epistemology with those who critique it as flawed or error-filled. Both appear to assume that knowledge is (or should be) stable and bankable. Wikipedia’s own explicit precepts encourage continual multi-source triangulation.

⁹It must be admitted that the Wikipedia community is not completely without authoritative figures, including founder Jimbo Wales. As such, it is possible to forward the criticism that it is a Cartesian structure with a privileged caste that, like Descartes’s rational mind, serves as a final controlling entity. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that Wikipedia’s structure, including the function of the broader community, works to prevent such figures from acting in domineering ways in opposition to the shared value system. This was potently evinced when the broader Wikipedia community chastised Wales for making changes to his own Wikipedia biography, a practice that is counter to community standards. Although Wales claimed

that his alterations were “solely intended to improve the accuracy of the content,” he acknowledged that his actions were in violation of Wikipedia’s code of conduct (“Jimmy Wales”). This incident was quickly documented in Wales’s Wikipedia biography (where it remains a prominent feature), which demonstrates the system’s agonistic functions.

¹⁰ Wikipedia’s discourse framework is partially established through its code of conduct, which includes detailed information pages on etiquette (“Wikipedia: Etiquette”) and dispute resolution (“Wikipedia: Dispute Resolution”).

¹¹ Sarah777’s ban on editing the “Great Hunger” page ultimately was only seven days rather than the proposed year.

References

- Bizzell, Patricia, and Bruce Herzberg. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Attitudes Toward History*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.
- Clark, Andy. *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.
- . *Natural-Born Cyborgs*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.
- Detienne, Jean-Pierre, and Marcel Vernant. *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. Hassocks, Eng.: Harvester Press, 1978.
- Gorgias. “Encomium of Helen.” Bizzell and Herzberg 44-46.
- “The Great Hunger.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 24 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 26 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Hunger>.
- Greenspan, Stanley G., and Stuart G. Shanker. *The First Idea: How Symbols, Language, and Intelligence Evolved From Our Primate Ancestors*. Cambridge, MA: DaCapo Press, 2004.
- Hawhee, Debra. *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2005.
- . “Kairotic Encounters.” *Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention*. Ed. Janice Lauer and Janet Atwill. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2002. 16-35.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fitzgerald. 7th ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

- Isocrates. *Isocrates*. Trans. George Norlin. Ed. Jeffrey Henderson. Vol. 2. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000.
- "Jimmy Wales." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 24 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 26 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Wales>.
- Kahn, Charles H. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Maturana, Humberto R., and Francisco J. Varela. *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*. Boston: Shambhala, 1987.
- "MeatballWiki: SoftSecurity." *Meatbal Wiki*. 10 Dec 2006. 10 Dec 2006 <<http://www.usemod.com/cgi-bin/mb.pl?SoftSecurity>>.
- Selinger, Evan, and Timothy Engström. "On Naturally Embodied Cyborgs: Identities, Metaphors, and Models." *Janus Head* 9.2 (2007): 553-84.
- "Soft Security." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 5 Nov 2006. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 9 Dec 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_security>.
- "Talk: The Great Hunger." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 27 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 27 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:The_Great_Hunger>.
- "User: Jimbo Wales." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 27 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 27 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jimbo_Wales>.
- White, Eric Charles. *Kaironomia: On the Will-to-Invent*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.
- "Who Writes Wikipedia." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 3 Dec 2006. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 9 Dec 2006 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Who_writes_Wikipedia>.
- "Wikipedia: Dispute Resolution." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 24 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 26 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Resolving_disputes>.
- "Wikipedia: Etiquette." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 23 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 26 June 2008 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Etiquette>>.

“Wikipedia: Requests for Arbitration.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 26 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 26 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests_for_arbitration>.

“Wikipedia: Requests for Arbitration/Great Irish Famine.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 23 June 2008. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 26 June 2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests_for_arbitration/The_Great_Hunger>.

Zeller, Eduard. *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*. Trans. Sarah Frances Alleyne and Evelyn Abbott. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895.

Julie Dunlop

CAVERN

The sky fills
with everything
but the rain
filling the cavern
strung hip to hip,
its contours
shaped by voices
carved by the moon.

Heavy with bent rock,
the weight of it all howls.
Fossils begin to shake
free from the stone,
their flattened selves
rising up into a roar.

THE CURRENT, THE RIVER, AND THE RAIN

The riverwaters gleam
a glistening black, the recent rainwaters
quivering the current. It is night
and there is nowhere to go
but everywhere. The spilling of one thread
into the next.

And this flow
does not stop does not stop does not stop.
It opens into the wingspan of morning
coasting in over the night's sprawl,
over the first sleep, second sleep,
last sleep.

The river of breath
spilling over the crests and banks
of the bones, slipping in and out
of the corridors of the lungs,
sending its currents rippling into the farthest reaches
of toe tips and palms,

the curl and curve
of all that gives and all that gives way,
the edges letting go into something softer,
sweeter, the mirage of goodbye breaking
apart,

the weight of a construction crane
reduced to a bright yellow leaf floating
on the Gihon River which is Powell River
and the Potomac and the Rio Grande and every river
brushing the earth with smooth, sure strokes
shaping the tides of live and the tides of die
that speak each time we breathe.

St. Thomas Aquinas's Philosophical-Anthropology as a Viable Underpinning for a Holistic Psychology: A Dialogue with Existential-Phenomenology

Eugene M. DeRobertis, Ph.D.
Brookdale College

In this article, the philosophical-anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas is examined. In particular, the non-dualistic aspects of his anthropology are explicated and shown to have the potential to provide an underpinning for a holistic approach to psychology. In the course of this examination, parallels are drawn between Thomism and existential-phenomenology. The article concludes with an exploration of the ways in which a dialogue between existential-phenomenology and Thomism might benefit both traditions of thought, particularly as regards their relevance to metapsychology.

Introduction

Both existentialism and phenomenology can be viewed as reactions against the spirit of modern philosophy as initiated by Descartes. Nonetheless, I often think back to my days as a student of existential-phenomenological psychology and wonder why so little of my studies involved a more substantive dialogue with pre-Cartesian thought. After all, existential thought was not entirely unprecedented in the history of Western philosophy. For example, Maurice Friedman (1964) traced the origins of existentialism as far back as Heraclitus of Ephesus and the Old Testament. Interestingly, both Maritain (1948, p. 134) and Solomon (1988, p. 175) found the root of modern existentialism in its popular, Sartrean form to be rooted in Cartesianism, while Maritain considered “true” existentialism to be rooted in Thomism. Moreover, it might be argued that the phenomenological movement was ushered in by Edmund Husserl’s famous dictum, “To the things themselves.” The student of Thomism will recognize in this dictum a striking similarity to the epistemological view of St. Thomas. For St. Thomas, the soul represents our direct contact with the world of things and others. In Magee’s (1996-1999) words:

The identity of knower and known, then, is to be distinguished from the view that what we know are ideas or sense impressions that are caused by extra-mental realities. The Thomistic view is stronger than the view that our ideas are impressions that are similar to, or the same in kind with, the object of which it is the idea. This other theory (ala

John Locke) is often called “indirect realism” because it claims that we do not have direct access to extra-mental reality, but only indirect access, through impressions and ideas. Thus, on the Lockean view, there is a chain of causality: things affect us and our senses producing sense impressions and ideas, and these produce knowledge.

Before Cartesian dualism and the emergence of the strict mind-body dichotomy in John Locke’s philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas (reviving Aristotle’s ideas) vehemently insisted that a human is a singular being rather than two beings. Aquinas was familiar with the threat of dualism spanning from Plato to St. Augustine. As Copleston (1950) put it, “We have seen that St. Thomas rejected the Platonic-Augustinian view of the relation of soul and body and adopted the Aristotelian view of the soul as form of the body, emphasizing the closeness of the union between the two” (p. 383). In many ways, the basic positions of existential-phenomenology and Thomism with respect to the history of philosophical-anthropology are very much the same. To demonstrate, consider the following excerpt from Brennen’s *Thomistic Psychology* (1941):

Philosophers who have tried their hand at a solution of the problem of ideogenesis have been committed to one of three great traditions, all of which have come down from the Greeks. The first is the tradition of sensism. It may be said to begin with Democritus. It is materialistic in character. In its description of the birth of the idea it represents an overemphasis of the object of knowledge, which is material, at the expense of the subject of knowledge, which is immaterial. The second tradition is that of intellectualism. It may be said to begin with Plato, in whose writings we find its first complete exposition. It is idealist in character. In its account of the birth of the idea it represents an overemphasis of the subject of knowledge, which is immaterial, at the expense of the object of knowledge, which is material. Finally, there is the tradition of moderate realism. It begins with Aristotle. It is partly materialistic and partly intellectualistic in character, since it requires both sense and intellect for the generation of the idea. (p. 176)

Approximately two decades later, Adrian van Kaam spearheaded efforts to found an existential-phenomenological psychology program at Duquesne University. In his seminal work *Existential Foundations of Psychology*

(1966), van Kaam summed up the proposed philosophical-anthropological position of Duquesne's psychology department in the following way:

Neither the positivist nor the rationalist view fully represents man as I actually experience him in daily life, although each of these perspectives uncovers real insights into essential aspects of his nature. When I observe man as I meet him in reality, I realize that he is neither a mere thing like other things in the universe nor self-sufficient subjectivity which maintains itself in splendid isolation from the world. He is not locked up within himself as mere thought and worldless self-presence. Instead he is already outside himself and in the world.... (p. 6)

Notice that both Brennen and van Kaam renounced materialism (i.e., "sensism" or "positivism") and idealism (i.e., "intellectualism" or "rationalism") in favor of anthropological positions that avoid the extremisms of the aforementioned viewpoints. This is but one example of how there is an inherent harmony between Thomism and existential-phenomenology. However, while existential-phenomenology is widely accepted as a holistic underpinning for psychological theory and research, Thomism has yet to make a significant impact on contemporary psychology, especially in the United States. Thomistic psychology is far more recognized in philosophy than in psychology. Nevertheless, St. Thomas's philosophical-anthropology is a viable underpinning for a holistic psychology. With this in mind, this article aims to show how St. Thomas's work contains a non-dualistic anthropology, one that is intrinsically harmonious with existential-phenomenology.

The Holistic Foundation of St. Thomas's Philosophical-Anthropology

Existential-phenomenology is, in part, a reaction against anthropological dualism in philosophy and psychology. While St. Thomas's work is sometimes mischaracterized as a form of dualism (e.g., Brett, 1967, p. 286; Hunt, 1993, p. 56), in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. For St. Thomas, a human being is an "integer" (Brennen, 1941, p. 64), a composite or amalgam that consists of body and soul. St. Thomas insisted that the body and soul are merely dimensions of a singular being. He saw a human being as one being without proposing any form of monism. He saw humans as embodied without proposing any form of materialism. A human soul can only actualize vital life functions when brought together

with a body. As Levinas (1969) observed, “The body does not happen as an accident to the soul” (p. 168). However, a body is animated by a soul. This interconnectivity between body and soul is essential for St. Thomas. Body and soul are not two separate, self-sufficient substances, as one finds in Descartes. As Kenny (1993) observed:

It is thus that human sensation falls, for Descartes, within the boundaries of the mental, whereas for the pre-Cartesian it fell without. When we come to look closely at Aquinas’ account of the mind, we have therefore to realize that he not only describes it in a way different from Descartes, but has from the outset a different concept of the phenomenon to be described. (p. 18)

From a position of materialistic monism (a position that is quite present in reductionistic, positivistic psychology), one might be tempted to accuse St. Thomas of creating a dualism. However, from a Thomistic point of view, both spiritual and materialistic monisms operate within a dualistic conceptual framework, trying to overcome dualism by totalizing one aspect or constituent of the human composite. Monistic viewpoints begin with the assumption of dualism (i.e., that mind and body are not only distinct, but self-sufficient) and thus can only claim victory over the dichotomy of body and soul by offering a bastardized form of dualism.

For Thomas, it makes no sense to refer to concrete worldly existence in terms of a body without a soul or a soul without a body. Thomism holds that it is only possible to stop, reflect, analyze, and explicate the characteristics of “body” and “soul” because we have already encountered both in their original, holistic, synthetic form as “human being.” It is the human existent that one encounters in the real life world of day-to-day experience, never a body, never a soul. Thus, in common vernacular, to have encountered “a body” is to have found a corpse. To have encountered “a soul” or “a spirit” is to have seen a ghost. To consider body and soul in isolation from each other in relation to a living human being is something that can only be done mentally by abstracting from concrete experience.

This notion of the soul is fundamentally different than the post-Cartesian notions of “mind” or “consciousness” in that so-called “embodiment” is a given. As Kenny (1993) put it:

What Aquinas is really arguing against Averroes is that the property of being material, the form of corporeality, is something included in humanity, not something separate from it and inessential to it. This is ground which will be extensively revisited in question seventy-six. We may surely agree with Aquinas against Averroes that human beings are, by definition, bodily beings. (Kenny, 1993, p. 138)

To be embodied is an essential characteristic of the earthbound soul. For the soul to have to “reside” in specific physiological localities by way of something like the pineal gland was foreign to St. Thomas. According to St. Thomas, the soul is the very form of a body in potency to life, meaning that body and soul do not have any “real life” existence in isolation from each other (Aquinas, 1948, p. 293). In this particular regard, St. Thomas’s notion of the soul is unabashedly Aristotelian. As Irwin (1985) noted of the Aristotelian view of the soul:

Aristotle defines *psychē* as the first ACTIVITY of a living body. If an axe were alive, then cutting...would be its soul. For a living organism the soul is the characteristic functions and activities that are essential to the organism and explain...the other features it has. (pp. 425-426)

Ensoulment and Be-ing

It is important to note that the term “first” in the above characterization is not a temporal term. In other words, by referring to the soul as the “first activity,” Aristotle and Aquinas were not meaning that the soul is the very first action that an organism engages in. Rather, the term “first” might be better thought of as “top,” “overriding,” “prime,” or better still, “defining.” As Kenny (1993) put it:

Some vital motions have their origin in the animal’s heart, and the form of consciousness which is vision depends on the activity of the animal’s eye. But neither the heart nor the eye is a soul. St. Thomas is prepared to call each of them a principle of life, but not a root or first principle of life. (p. 130)

For St. Thomas, the soul animates an organism and orients it toward a

particular style of living out its life. In other words, ensoulment makes possible the manifestation of a life form. An important implication of this characterization of the soul is the impossibility of understanding the nature or essence of a human being separate from his or her existence. The nature of human existence lies in the potential to act, to do or “be” in the world in a characteristic manner. Thus, Caputo (1982) observed:

It is a serious mistake, but not an uncommon one, to think that essence somehow floats about awaiting actualization by existence. Essence is a potentiality, for St. Thomas, not because it exists in one way now while being able to take on a new form later—although this is what potentiality meant for Aristotle—but because it is a principle of receiving and limiting esse. To be potential in this case means to be able to be, not to be formed. Essence signifies the capacity to exist in such and such a way, to be able to be so much and no more. Of itself it is not; and when it is conjoined with the actual principle it “is” only so much, and no more. (pp. 127-128)

As Caputo aptly notes, St. Thomas’s anthropological scheme does not allow for an essentialist interpretation, whereby the actual living out of one’s potentials is accidental or secondary to the being of the organism. As Copleston (1950) put it:

Existence determines essence in the sense that it is act and through it the essence has being.... We must not imagine that essence existed before receiving existence (which would be a contradiction in terms) or that there is a kind of neutral existence which is not the existence of any thing in particular until it is united with essence.... Existence, then, is not something accidental to the finite being: it is that by which the finite being is a being. (pp. 333-334)

The Soul as Spiritual” Clearing,” “Lighting” or World-Openness

Thus, to inquire into the nature of the human soul is to articulate the way a truly human life is animated into action. According to St. Thomas, human beings are spiritual beings. More precisely, the human soul is a spiritual soul. To assert that the human soul is spiritual was, for St. Thomas, a way of avoiding the perils of materialistic reductionism, such as psychologism.

St. Thomas's argument against the possibility of the soul being "just another material thing" is grounded in the observation that human beings can perceive, reflect upon, and make organized sense out of anything in the concrete, material world from a multiplicity of perspectives. The inherent receptiveness of the human soul requires a certain distance from the material world for this process to begin. For example, in order to see an apple, the apple cannot be shoved into the eye, nor can the apple be too close to the eye for that matter. In order for a person to perceive an apple, the apple must not actually be in the eye, but separate from the eye. As Kenny (1993) noted, St. Thomas used the example of an infected tongue to illustrate his argument for productive distancing, as it were. A tongue infected with bilious and bitter humor cannot taste sweetness, only sourness as a consequence of the infection. The tongue cannot taste anything of itself in order to taste the flavors of the world (p. 132). Viktor Frankl (1978) uses a parallel analogy to illuminate the self-transcendent nature of human existence. As he put it:

When, apart from looking in a mirror, does the eye see anything of itself? An eye with a cataract may see something like a cloud, which is its cataract; an eye with glaucoma may see its glaucoma as a rainbow halo around the lights. A healthy eye sees nothing of itself—it is self-transcendent. (pp. 38-39)

Thus, for St. Thomas, the soul's powers of apprehension and apperception require that the human soul itself not be just another material thing. The powers of the soul cannot be confined to a particular material substrate if they are to be available for the free exploration of the material world, unhampered by restrictions that would arise as a result of biological reductionism. As Copleston (1950) observed:

If [the human soul] were material, it would be determined to a specified object, as the organ of vision is determined to the perception of colour. Again, if it depended intrinsically on a bodily organ, it would be confined to the knowledge of some particular kind of bodily object, which is not the case, while if it were itself a body, material, it could not reflect on itself. (p. 384)

All in all, St. Thomas's view is that the soul is a spiritual "clearing" or "lighting" so to speak, that endows human beings with world-openness. The use of

Heideggerian sounding terminology here is quite intentional, so as to draw a deliberate parallel between Aquinas's notion of the soul and existentialist "being-in-the-world." This parallel is seen even more clearly in the following passage from the famous Heideggerian psychologist Medard Boss (1963):

...How would any perception, understanding, and elucidation of the meaning of a single thing or living being, any appearing and shining forth of this or that particular matter, be possible at all without an open realm of light, a realm that lends itself to letting shine forth whatever particular being may come into its elucidating openness? ...Only because man—in contrast to the things he deals with—is he essentially an understanding, seeing, luminating being is he capable of going both physically and spiritually blind. (pp. 37-38)

The Soul as Primordial "Closeness" to Oneself or Relative Self-Awareness

A spiritual soul is not only able to be open to the world, but also to oneself in the world. As spiritual, the human soul is a primordial closeness to oneself that founds the inclination to bend back upon our own comportment and reflect upon our total situation. In other words, human ensoulment endows a person with potentials for self-awareness and also self-reflection. However, it is vitally important to note that the human potential for self-awareness did not lead St. Thomas to posit the existence of a mind that is always fully conscious of itself. As Strasser (1957) observed, "It is very well possibly to be a 'rational animal' without possessing objective self-knowledge" (p. 186). St. Thomas did not believe in the primacy of a cogito or world-determining transcendental ego. St. Thomas's notion of the soul is that it is inherently worldly. The mind has no privileged, "back door" contact with itself that completely sidesteps concrete existence and life-world experience. As Strasser (1957) put it, "It is a misuse of the traditional categories when one claims that the self-subsistent being is found by detaching from it what is accidental being in it" (p. 75).

For St. Thomas, human knowledge is inherently worldly and therefore relative and imperfect. As Caputo (1982) observed, the "weakness" of the human intellect plays an important role in St. Thomas's account of the differences between the human soul, angelic forms, and God (p. 261). He notes, "Now, in St. Thomas' Neo-Aristotelianism the distinctly 'human' character of knowledge is found in its dependence upon perception" (p. 263). The

primacy of perception in the soul's acquisition of knowledge reveals the inherently perspectival and finite nature of human knowledge. Embodied perspective is inherently limited in scope. Again, Caputo:

In Aristotle, the actual principle determines matter and saves it from being unformed; in Thomas, the potential principle determines and restricts the being in its very be-ing. As Father Clarke so conclusively shows, potency does not limit act in Aristotle, act limits potency. The limitation of act by potency is a Thomistic breakthrough. (p. 127)

Therefore, the impossibility of perfect self-transparency is rooted in the very nature of the human, embodied soul itself. As Strasser (1957) has shown in his analysis of the soul in St. Thomas's philosophy, a human being can never "get behind" or "above" his or her own thinking and willing so completely that idealism is at last justified. There is no possibility of a total, absolute egological or "transcendental" reduction, to use the language of phenomenology. The act of reflecting upon ones thinking and willing is itself a kind of thinking and willing. At no time can a human being "step back" or "detach" from thinking and willing completely, so to speak, and gain an absolutely neutral, conceptual grasp of his or her existence. In Strasser's words, "Will not my actual "I consider to be true" be that with respect to which I cannot place myself at a distance? Is not my actual willing for me something of which I cannot dispose at all?" (p. 159). Concrete existence cannot be bypassed or overcome by what Paul Tillich (1952) called a "naked epistemological subject."

The Soul as a Non-Objectifiable Fact of Existence

St. Thomas, in effect, espoused a very existential view of the soul. The Thomistic soul lies in between the abstract, hypothetical realms of pure objectivity and non-worldly, non-embodied subjectivity. On the one hand, St. Thomas rejected the idea that the soul might be the epiphenomenal "residue" of physical and physiological forces. Though embodied, the soul is neither a material thing, nor reducible to materialistic dynamisms. Spiritual ensoulment implies a truly personal element to existence that is characteristic of human living above all. Thus, we sometimes label machines "soulless." As Strasser (1957) noted, to "besoul" means to endow something in the world with something of my being, to make it part of my being-in-the-world

(in the lived, phenomenological sense of the term) (p. 143). However, as Strasser further noted, “my being does not exhaust itself fully in the being of anything.” (p. 143). In his words:

I cannot leave my soul out of consideration, because my soul is that which considers. I cannot “raise” it to universality, because for me the soul represents a center of the universe which cannot be compared with anything else. In other words, my soul is not a possible object of abstractive thinking. My soul is for me the unique and incomparable reality through which my being is rooted in being itself. (p. 106)

On the other hand, besouling is not the “work” of a “free and rational consciousness set against a mechanical, physical world,” as Solomon (1988) termed it (p. 175). The soul is impotent without a body and a world. St. Thomas saw the soul as emanating from a source that outstrips the personal or is more primordial than the personal without leading to the hypothesis of a transcendental ego. St. Thomas view of the soul avoids psychologism while leaving no room for a homunculus. To understand the human soul we are “condemned” to look forever in-the-world, as the soul is naturally oriented towards things, others, and so on. The similarity between this aspect of the soul in St. Thomas’s work and Husserl’s notion of the intentionality of consciousness are striking. This may be one reason why St. Edith Stein commented that Husserl told her that his work “converges towards” and “prolongs” Thomism (de Mirabel, 1954, p. 37). At the same time, the similarity between this aspect of the Thomistic view of the soul and Heidegger’s being-in-the-world are due to the fact that Thomism diverges from Husserlian phenomenology inasmuch as Husserl made a “transcendental turn” back to the realm of immanence during his famous “idealist” period.

Herein lies the inexorable mystery of the soul: the soul is not reducible to any one or a number of worldly contingencies (i.e., its existence cannot be “explained away”), yet it can only exist in and through its worldly conditions (i.e., its situatedness “in-the-world”). Thus, Heidegger (1962) observed:

Thomas is engaged in the task of deriving the ‘transcendentia’—those characters of Being which lie beyond every possible way in which an entity may be classified as coming under some generic kind of subject-matter (every *modus specialis entis*), and which belong necessarily to anything, whatever it may be. Thomas has to demonstrate that the

verum is such a transcendens. He does this by invoking an entity which, in accordance with its very manner of Being, is properly suited to ‘come together with’ entities of any sort whatever. This distinctive entity, the ens quod natum est convenire cum omni ente, is the soul (anima). Here the priority of ‘Dasein’ over all other entities emerges, although it has not been ontologically clarified. This priority has obviously nothing in common with a vicious subjectivizing of the totality of entities. (p. 34)

All things considered, St. Thomas’s understanding of the soul is consonant with Gabriel Marcel’s (1995) notion of “being”: “being is what withstands—or what would withstand—an exhaustive analysis bearing on the data of experience and aiming to reduce them step by step to elements increasingly devoid of intrinsic or significant value” (p. 14). A human a soul is neither a material thing nor a “thought-thing,” as it were. As Strasser (1957) observed, “My soul is not my soul because I “have” it. My “ego-source,” my originating ego, my soul is that which primarily I am.” (p. 73). Accordingly, St. Thomas viewed human existence as “a non-conceptualizable act in the being itself” (Caputo, 1982, 111). As Caputo (1982) noted of St. Thomas’s view of the relationship of the soul to existence:

...Just as esse cannot be contained within the limits of metaphysics, so human ratio must give way to the simplicity of intellectus. Just as esse cannot be contained within the limits of rational conceptualization, so the mind itself is not content with conceptual, judgmental, and discursive knowledge of reality. The mind is driven on by a dynamism of its own to seek a life beyond ratio in the sphere of pure intellectus. (p. 260)

This same theme of non-conceptualizability is integral to Levinas’s phenomenology of the Other as well (DeRobertis & Iuculano, 2005).

The Soul as Primordial Existential Unity Rather Than Mental Construct

In addition to being the non-objectifiable fact of existence, the soul is also the fountainhead of personal integration attributable to the human existent. In St. Thomas’s philosophical-anthropology the soul represents the ultimate source of integration governing all aspects of human functioning. The idea that there is some kind of overarching principle of psychophysical

integration inherent to human existence has long been debated in both philosophy and psychology. Aquinas's work counts as one of the great defenses of the integrative approach to human existence and personality. Ensoulment bestows the existent with irreducible organismic unity:

Fundamentally Hume speaks the strict truth when he says that "we have no impression of self or substance, as something simple and individual." The only suitable answer here is: do not look among your "impressions," your "idea," or any contents of consciousness whatsoever which you have. Pay attention to the fact that you are. What you have is always a plurality; what you are is necessarily an identical self-subsistent unity. And this is precisely what we mean when we speak of "substance." (Strasser, 1957, p. 73-74)

To be sure, many philosophers since Aquinas have defended the integrative thrust of his work, but in a somewhat different way. Descartes's systematic doubt set a precedent in philosophy that significantly increased emphasis on questions regarding the epistemological subject (Murray, 2001, pp. 37-38). This, in and of itself, was not necessarily a bad thing, as Descartes was attempting to defend the notion that the "subject" of knowledge constitutes a necessary component of experiential reality. In grammar, the subject is that about which we are speaking. In the world of interpersonal relationships, a subject is he or she to whom we are referring or addressing, as opposed to an accumulation of nerve impulses or fleeting sensations. This idea has remained central to the philosophies of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Ricoeur and other contemporary existential-phenomenological thinkers (Ricoeur, 1971). The importance of the notion of a "subject" (for those who defend it) is that if there is any such thing as real knowledge or truth, then truth is not without a substantive "someone," a person who is compelled by and "subjected" to that truth, an individual who stands for that truth (Levinas). The subject constitutes a substantive "pole" of experience correlative to the world of things. If there is no substantive someone, no "I" of any kind, then reductive psychologists are quite justified in looking upon human existence as nothing more than a mass of sensory impressions and neural impulses, for example. Skepticism is given similar justification, which then undermines psychology as a science, as a matter of course. In effect, defenses of psychologism, biologism, and any number of "gisms" are strengthened, while arguments against reductionism and skepticism are

considerably weakened.

Philosophical meditations on the epistemological subject grew out of discourse pertaining to the soul. Philosophical reflections on the nature of subjectivity are historically rooted in discourse on ensoulment, such as that which is found in St. Thomas's work. Discourse on ensoulment and subjectivity in philosophy emphasize the need for some recognition of an integrative core of human existence. However, whereas the study of subjectivity can sometimes revolve rather strongly around cognition (such as in Descartes work, for example), philosophical dialogue concerning ensoulment in St. Thomas's work brings to bear larger questions regarding a dynamic psychophysical configuration (Gestalt) that is unique to human beings. For St. Thomas, to study human ensoulment in particular is to illuminate an organized bio-psycho-social-spiritual-ethical life form. Such a process, however, cannot be completed without considerations of the will and individual freedom of the will.

St. Thomas' Non-Rationalist View of Human Existence

The existential movement in philosophy "officially" began as a reaction to what Paul Tillich (1952) called "the loss of the Existential point of view since the beginning of modern times" (p. 131). As Rollo May (1958) put it:

[Existentialism] arose...in Kierkegaard's violent protest against the reigning rationalism of his day, Hegel's "totalitarianism of reason," to use Maritain's phrase. Kierkegaard proclaimed that Hegel's identification of abstract truth with reality was an illusion and amounted to trickery. "Truth exists," wrote Kierkegaard, "only as the individual produces it in action." (p. 11-12)

St. Thomas's view of human existence is intrinsically harmonious with the non-rationalist spirit of existential philosophy, despite his emphasis on the importance of the intellect in human living. While both Aquinas and Descartes (1993, p. 66) saw the intellect and the will as highly important aspects of the human soul, Aquinas would have disagreed with Descartes's famous declaration, "I think, therefore I am." Aquinas could not agree with such a statement due to its inordinate emphasis on intellection. Aquinas adamantly held that "the intellect is a power of the soul, and not the very

essence of the soul” (p. 337). In agreement with this viewpoint, Levinas (1989) observed:

The reduction of subjectivity to consciousness dominates philosophical thought, which since Hegel has been trying to overcome the duality of being and thought, but by identifying, under different figures, substance and subject. This also amounts to undoing the substantivity of substance, but in relationship with self-consciousness. (p. 93)

Simply put, the will and the other powers of the soul are too integral to human existence for Aquinas to grant the intellect the magnitude of importance that one finds in Descartes’s work. As St. Thomas put it, “Reason has its power of moving from the will” (1948, p. 611). Moreover, as Copleston (1950) noted of Aquinas’s philosophy, “...the will may be nobler than the intellect in certain respects...” (p. 382). St. Thomas considered intellectual knowledge of corporeal objects to be “superior” to our will in relation to these objects. Again, Copleston:

In regard to corporeal objects, therefore, knowledge of them is more perfect and nobler than volition in respect to them, since by knowledge we possess the forms of these objects in ourselves. And these forms exist in a nobler way in the rational would than they do in the corporeal objects. (p. 382)

Kenny (1993) also noted that for St. Thomas, the intellect is only superior to the will with regard to relations to entities inferior to the soul, such as material forms. Otherwise, however, the will is the superior faculty of the soul (p. 72). As regards entities that are transcendent with respect to the world of corporeal objects in their sheer complexity, things which are not reducible to material causes (particularly human souls and God), Aquinas saw the will as having a role that is superior to knowledge:

In the case of objects which are less noble than the soul, corporeal objects, we can have immediate knowledge, and such knowledge is more perfect than volition; but in the case of...an object which transcends the human soul, we have only mediate knowledge in this life, and our love...is more perfect than our knowledge.... (Copleston, 1950, p. 383)

St. Thomas's notion of willing had a very concrete, anti-intellectualist character in another respect as well. For St. Thomas, volition is not utterly dependent upon reflective awareness. A willing organism may engage the world of things without explicit self-consciousness as a matter of course. St. Thomas maintained that volition often occurs with no more than implicit or "pre-reflective" self-awareness, to employ the language of phenomenology. St. Thomas did not consider choice to be a pure act of the intellect (Aquinas, 1948, p. 514). The intellect is important for human volition inasmuch as it provides the means for a more perfect knowledge of the end or goal of volition. However, explicit, self-reflective knowledge of acts is not continuous or even necessary for willing to occur (p. 483). As St. Thomas put it, "On the contrary, The Philosopher says that both children and irrational animals participate in the voluntary" (p. 482).

Thomistic Emphasis on Individuality and Freewill

To be sure, Kierkegaard's existentialist reaction to Hegel displays other themes that can be found in St. Thomas's works. For instance, Kierkegaard's emphasis on the unique value of the individual human existent as a free agent is represented in St. Thomas's view of the human soul. Kierkegaard is famous for having once noted, "Once you label me, you negate me." Kierkegaard fought against the systematizing approach to philosophy wherein the value of individual human beings is subjugated to larger, more impersonal forces in nature or society. In particular, he found the pantheistic element of the Hegelian "Spirit" to be depersonalizing and dehumanizing. Similarly, St. Thomas noted that every human soul is distinct and individual, and therefore cannot be grasped as a mere dimension of a collective spirit. Aquinas believed that the human soul was "multiplied according to the number of bodies." In his words, "It is absolutely impossible for one intellect to belong to all men" (Aquinas, 1948, p. 299).

Moreover, Aquinas believed in the freewill of every individual human being. As he put it, "Man has free choice, or otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would all be in vain" (p. 369). Teleologically, human beings are oriented toward happiness, the good life, the life of virtue, as an inherent part of the contextual backdrop of human willing. However, St. Thomas was quite emphatic that will and freewill are not separate, distinct powers (e.g., Aquinas, 1948, p. 375). Thus, despite this inherent teleological thrust, the living, breathing human being

is free to resist his or her most primordial inclination, and this opens human beings to the possibility of authentic good and evil. Stated differently, while Aquinas would likely agree with the saying, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions,” he nonetheless maintained that acts of evil can be performed out of passionate or malicious choice as well as sheer ignorance (Brennen, 1941, p. 227).

Though St. Thomas believed in freewill, however, it is important to note that his view of freewill diverges from the view of freedom that has typically been identified with existentialism due to the popularity of Jean-Paul Sartre’s work. Sartre (1966) is famous for having espoused a notion of “pure,” intellectual freedom, which is intimately connected to his view that human beings have no essence, no nature. Paul Tillich (1961) criticized this view of freedom, calling it an attempt to espouse a “pure” existentialism. St. Thomas’s philosophy radically differs from Sartre’s with respect to both freewill and human nature.

With regard to human freedom, St. Thomas never viewed freedom as operating with complete and total autonomy. For Aquinas there are theological (i.e., creationist), physiological and psychological (i.e., “vegetative” and “sensitive”) factors that provide universal structure to human freedom. On this basis, Kenny (1993) has opined that St. Thomas might be considered a “soft determinist” (pp. 77-78). In St. Thomas’s philosophy, there are situational factors and forces that contextualize human agency and give rise to distinctly human forms of being in the world. A host of existential-phenomenological psychologists and philosophers have argued against the notion of a “pure,” Sartrean existentialism on just this sort of basis. For example, Rollo May (1981) asserted:

The Sartrean man, it is true, becomes a solitary individual creature standing on the basis of his defiance alone against God and society. The philosophical basis of this principle is given in Sartre’s famous statement, “Freedom is existence, and in it existence precedes essence.” That is to say, there would be no essences—no truth, no structure in reality, no logical forms, no logos, no God nor any morality—except as man in affirming his freedom makes these truths. (pp. 5-6)

Later, May noted, “...you cannot have freedom or a free individual without some structure in which (or in the case of defiance, against which) the individual acts. Freedom and structure imply each other” (p. 7). Thus, Viktor

Frankl (1969) opined:

...as Jean-Paul Sartre has it, man invents himself. This reminds me of a fakir trick. The fakir claims to throw a rope into the air, into the empty space, without anything to fix it on, and yet, he pretends, a boy will climb up the rope.” (p. 60-61)

In philosophy, some of the most highly regarded existential thinkers have also rejected the argument for pure freedom from a pure existentialism as well. Martin Heidegger (1977) specifically addressed the misidentification of his own work with Sartre’s work by observing that Sartre simply inverted objectivistic, causal (i.e., traditionally “metaphysical”) thought, and thusly remained within its strictures (p. 208). Whereas objectivistic philosophies tend to minimize the role of freedom in human existence due to an over-emphasis on causative forces tied to a preexisting human design, the notion of a pure existentialism purifies freedom of all form or structure. In effect, pure existentialism merely reverses the very same current of objectivistic thought, thereby failing to truly transcend the very tradition it opposes. Even Emmanuel Levinas (1969), who has more recently opposed essentialist philosophy quite vehemently, maintained:

Life is an existence that does not precede its essence. Its essence makes up its worth [prix]; and here value [valeur] constitutes being. The reality of life is already on the level of happiness, and in this sense beyond ontology. Happiness is not an accident of being, since being is risked for happiness. (p. 112)

Human Nature as a Context for Human Freedom in St. Thomas’s Philosophy

With regard to human nature, St Thomas maintained a position that resisted rationalist and idealist interpretations of human existence through his insistence that vegetative and vital (i.e., “sensitive” or animal) functions are integral to human ensoulment. Aquinas, following Aristotle, saw humans as intelligent animals. However, for St. Thomas, the intellect is not “pure,” not tangentially related to a body, not a logical thought-thing set against a mechanistic world. A human being is an amalgam of both vegetative and vital characteristics and intellect. This characterization of human nature is at odds with the Cartesian worldview. Descartes explicitly rejected the

Aristotelian-Thomistic characterization of human nature (1993 p. 64). The body and all of its functions were systematically doubted by Descartes in his search for the true core of human identity. As a result, he found the essence of human existence in cogitation. St. Thomas, on the other hand, wholeheartedly opposed the identification of the soul (and still less, human existence) with the intellect, despite the fact that he considered the human soul to be an intellectual soul.

St. Thomas often spoke of the uniquely human aspects of human beings in terms of ratio, and also referred to humans as rational animals on this basis. However, it must be noted that “reason,” for St. Thomas, does not refer exclusively to mere “formal operations,” to borrow Jean Piaget’s terminology. Ratio is not exclusively indicative of logical deliberation. As Heidegger (1962) noted, ratio has multiple translations, one of which being the “ground” or “reason” for discussing something with another person (p. 58). The concept of reason is far more limited in the post-Cartesian world than it was in St. Thomas’s time. In Caputo words:

It cannot be overlooked that St. Thomas’ metaphysics is pre-Cartesian and hence that it is not an onto-theo-logic in the strong sense of the post-Cartesian systems. St. Thomas’ conception of reason differs markedly from that of the post-Cartesian thinkers and should never be confused with rationalist reason. (Caputo p. 250)

The pre-Cartesian notion of ratio is not so closely identified with pure, abstract logic. Rather, ratio has wider denotations, such as the more concrete phenomenon of “being reasonable” as a human possibility above and beyond brute animal existence, which is more decisively dominated by innate behavioral tendencies and emotions. Hence, St. Thomas made a distinction between the concupiscible, irascible and intellectual appetites (e.g., Aquinas, 1948, pp.352-353). Consequently, Stein (2000) observed that St. Thomas work has practical import as a “philosophy for life” (pp. 27-28). All in all, it is perhaps best to bear in mind that St. Thomas considered the intellect to be the uniquely human aspect of humans in order to avoid confused associations with post-Cartesian reason. Again, Caputo:

There is no Cartesian subjectivism in St. Thomas which groups the whole of Being around the thinking self, no principium reddendae rationis which refuses to grant permission to be unless the being can

present its credentials before the jurisdiction of reason (Leibniz), no Hegelian absolutizing of rational categories. In St. Thomas, reason is subordinate to faith, to mysticism, and, in the end, to the eschatological consummation of intelligence in the beatific vision. (Caputo p. 250)

In addition to being an intelligent animal, St. Thomas Aquinas considered human beings to be inherently social and political animals. Thus, he noted, “Man has a natural inclination to...live in society...” (Aquinas, 1948, p. 638). Aquinas derived this idea from Aristotle. In Gilby’s (1989) words:

Aquinas was the first to depart from the traditional view, formed by the Stoics and Augustine, that the civil power, like private property, was *propter peccatum*, a remedy against our anti-social appetites. He revived Aristotle’s idea of the State meeting the essential demands of human nature, which, he says, using two terms, is both social and political (p. 23).

Inevitable consequences therefore follow as a result of Aquinas’ views on human nature.

Given that human beings have an intellect and a natural proclivity toward social and political relationships, the establishment of cultural milieus is unavoidable. The nature of a culture can be healthy or unhealthy, just or unjust. However, according to St. Thomas, humans live in a world that was given to them by design. Creation is not ours to desecrate, defile, and destroy. Finite humans participate in eternal Being, which added further justification for St. Thomas to appropriate Aristotle’s notion that happiness, the good life, *eudaimonia*, is the life of virtue rather than hedonistic selfishness or mere enjoyment (Aquinas, 1948, pp. 598-599; Aristotle, 1985, p. 7).

For St. Thomas, both virtue and law belong to our nature as intellectual, reasonable creatures (Aquinas, 1948, pp. 610, 639 & 587). What is most properly human, therefore, is that humans create a culture that is value laden, virtuous, ethical, moral, and considerate of the many needs of all life forms. Thus, the many derivatives of St. Thomas’s views on human nature, such as “cultural animal” (Baumeister, 2005), “valuing animal” (May, 1979, p. 72), “religious animal” (Strasser, 1977, p. 290) and “metaphysical animal” (Strasser, 1977, p. 356) all apply to St. Thomas’s work as well. It is no wonder, then, why St. Thomas’s work has most often been discussed in the areas of social, moral, and political philosophy.

Existential-Phenomenological Correctives to Thomistic

Philosophical-Anthropology

While the preceding discussion outlines some significant points of conversion between Thomism and existential-phenomenology, it is certainly not meant to imply that these two currents of thought are identical. There are differences between Thomism and existential-phenomenology, but these differences provide opportunities for mutual enrichment. For instance, Heidegger's work was in some respects an attempt to retrieve the primordial meanings of logos as speech, language, and dialogue as a corrective to its typical translation as ratio in Medieval philosophy and St. Thomas's philosophy. Through Heidegger's works, the importance of language in the creation of human reality and hermeneutics were given much needed recognition in philosophy. Heidegger's appreciation for the radical and transformative role of language in human existence was not present in St. Thomas's work. This is not to say that language and logos were not important in St. Thomas's work. Rather, St. Thomas's philosophy had a more causal and objective character about it wherein language was not characterized as a factor in the actual construction or constitution of worldhood, as it were. At the same time, Heidegger never endorsed any form of relativism, skepticism, or nihilism as an alternative to objectivism. As was noted above, Heidegger rejected metaphysical objectivism and subjectivism alike. These issues are addressed most formidably and most clearly by Heidegger in his *Letter on Humanism* (1977). Adopting the hermeneutic standpoint prevalent in existential-phenomenology makes possible discourse on the "changing nature of man," as van den Berg (1961) termed it, and can temper the more causal-objective aspects of Aquinas's work.

Another highly significant existential-phenomenological corrective to Thomism is the notion of *Existenz* itself. As Copelston (1950) noted:

The philosophy of St. Thomas...does not presuppose a notion from which realism is to be deduced...his thought remains ever in contact with the concrete, the existent, both with that which has existence as something derived, something received, and with that which does not receive existence but is existence. In this sense it is true to say that Thomism is an 'existential philosophy,' though it is very misleading, in my opinion, to call St. Thomas an existentialist,' since the *Existenz* of the existentialists is not the same thing as St. Thomas's *esse* (p. 308)

Despite the existential import of St. Thomas's work, the fact remains that he did not dwell on human existence as a network of meaningful projects and relationships under conditions of finitude. He did not examine the ways in which being-with-others-alongside-things (Heidegger) is concretely affected by lived-embodiment, socio-cultural and historical situatedness, and so on. Moreover, Aquinas did not articulate the distinction between authentic and inauthentic being-in-the-world. This kind of dialogue is evident in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger to name a few. Existential philosophers tend to emphasize the importance of distinguishing between someone who follows "the crowd," "the herd," "the flock," or "that man" as opposed to someone who is more circumspect and conscientious with respect to their existence. For example, in Heidegger's work, the modification in being that marks the shift from inauthenticity or "fallenness" to authenticity is the appropriation of one's "ownmost" possibilities such that the person refuses to interpret his or her life and death as anyone and everyone would. Thus, he noted that the "who of everyday Dasein" is not the "I myself" (1962, p. 150).

One such way that people can live their lives in an anonymous, inauthentic manner is to interpret their lives primarily in terms of reason, logic, and calculative thought. Hence, Solomon (1988) noted that, "falling into the Cartesian view of the world will be a paradigmatic form of inauthenticity" (pp. 161-162). Knowles (1986) made similar assertions in his existential-phenomenological reinterpretation of Erik Erikson psychosocial theory of child development. Along similar lines, Edward L. Murray (1986, 2001) admonished that it is imaginative thinking that is closest to the core of authentic subjectivity. Even though St. Thomas reserves an important place for the imagination in his work, he did not explicate the central role of the imagination in facilitating authentic being-in-the-world. Such explications can be found in Murray's works. Following Heidegger, Murray considered "imaginative projections" to be at the very core of human subjectivity and selfhood. As a hermeneut, Murray explored the ways in which imaginative projections manifest themselves in everyday language, scientific language, philosophical dialogue, and theological discourse via metaphor, symbol, and myth. In his works, the centrality of both language and imagination in historical, embodied, enculturated being-in-the-world are unmistakable. This is in no way meant to disparage the value of discursive reasoning. In his words:

It is a proper human accomplishment to live both logically and imaginatively, and it may well be that the greatest human achievement of all lies in the experiential realization of genuine poetic living, thus optimizing the strong presence of both kinds of thinking in human existence. (pp. 36-37)

Murray's point is that one cannot truly access the meaning of authentic human living without adequately accounting for the central and primary role of the unity building power (i.e., imagination) within each of us (1986, pp. 62-69). In effect, it is the imagination that allows a person to "imagine another way" of interpreting their lives, one that diverges from anonymous, "they-existence." It is likely that St. Thomas's time and place in history was simply too "collectivist" for him to pursue such ideas.

Finally, despite his insistence that the human soul is a spiritual soul, St. Thomas did not speak of the human spirit in terms of meaningful living. Here, it is Viktor Frankl's existential-phenomenology that is implicated. For Frankl, human existence is unique in its dependence on meaning, value, or a sense of purpose. The term spiritual as indicative of the uniquely human soul entails recognizing human meaning-dependence. As he put it:

In fact, *logos* means "meaning." However, it also means "spirit." And logotherapy takes the spiritual or noölogical dimension fully into account. In this way, logotherapy is also enabled to realize—and to utilize—the intrinsic difference between the noetic and psychic aspects of man. Despite this ontological difference between the noetic and psychic, between spirit and mind, the anthropological wholes and ones is not only maintained by our multidimensional concept of man, but even supported by it. (1967, p. 74)

Once again, to be fair to St. Thomas, such considerations are most pertinent in a world that has already been exposed to nihilism. St. Thomas's work predates the nihilistic trends that typify modern and post-modern philosophy. Hence, the need to emphasize meaning, value, and purpose would not likely have occurred to him or perhaps would not have seemed worthy of discussion.

Thomistic Contributions to Existential-Phenomenological Anthropology

In its turn, St. Thomas's philosophical-anthropology has much to offer existential-phenomenology. For example, some existential-phenomenological authors purposefully avoid using terms such as subjective and objective. This is due to their rejection of the subject-object dichotomy. However, as Husserl once noted, subjectivity and objectivity represent inextricable poles of concrete, lived-experience. This fact is sometimes forgotten in the existential aspiration to illuminate being-in-the-world. As Frankl (1967) observed:

I am aware that Daseinsanalysts would abhor speaking of a "subjective mode of experiencing," for this would presuppose an objectively given world. Logotherapy, however, holds that no matter how subjective (or pathologically distorted) the segment we are "cutting out" of the world (which as a whole always remains inaccessible to a finite spirit) may be, nonetheless it is cut out of the objective world. The typical daseinanalytic terminology which claims to have closed the gap between subjectivity and objectivity seems to me to be self-deceptive. Man is neither capable of bridging such a gap, nor would such an accomplishment be commendable. Cognition is grounded, indispensably, on a field of polar tension between the objective and the subjective, for only on this basis is the essential dynamics of the cognitive act established. (pp. 134-135)

Frankl, like St. Thomas before him, recognized that neither the soul nor the material world can be totalized or eliminated without serious consequence. For St. Thomas, the consequence would have been a lapse into absurdity due to a series of logical contradictions, whereas for Frankl, the consequences were nihilism (*vis-à-vis* materialism) and noölogism (*vis-à-vis* spiritualism).

From a Thomistic perspective, rationalists and idealists (including Husserl in his transcendental period) have fought too hastily to preserve the possibility of truth while materialists have fought just as hastily to save the objectivity of the world. Thomism provides an explicit framework for preserving both subjectivity and objectivity without resorting to Husserlian transcendental idealism or a daseinsanalytic minimization of the poles of human experiential reality.

Existential-phenomenology also stands to benefit from a dialogue with St. Thomas's anthropology due to the popularity of the concept of soul in various aspects of psychology. There are serious contributions to psychology wherein the concept of soul plays a primary role, most notably, Jungian-archetypal psychology (e.g., Hillman, 1975). The popular success of archetypal psychologist Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul* (1992) attests to the appeal of the notion of ensoulment among contemporary readers. To be sure, archetypalists and Thomists do not use the term soul in exactly the same manner. Nonetheless, a hermeneutic interpretation of the soul via a dialogue between Thomism and existential-phenomenology might act as a catalyst for an increased and deepened dialogue between existential-phenomenology and archetypal psychology.

An existential-phenomenological-Thomistic notion of ensoulment also has relevance in contemporary psychology due to the still rising popularity of the concept of selfhood, which began in the middle of the twentieth century (Murray, 2001, p. 47). Ensoulment is the philosophical precursor and underpinning of dialogue on the self as well as the subject. As Allport (1955) noted:

Since the time of Wundt, the central objection of psychology to self, and also to soul, has been that the concept seems question-begging. It is temptingly easy to assign functions that are not fully understood to a mysterious central agency, and then to declare that "it" performs in such a way as to unify the personality and maintain its integrity. Wundt, aware of this peril, declared boldly for a "psychology without a soul." It was not that he necessarily denied philosophical or theological postulates, but that he felt psychology as a science would be handicapped by the petition principii implied in the concept. For half a century few psychologists other than Thomists have resisted Wundt's reasoning or his example. Indeed we may say that for two generations psychologists have tried every conceivable way of accounting for the integration, organization, and striving of the human person without having recourse to the postulate of a self. (pp. 36-37)

Elsewhere, Allport reiterated the historical relevance of Thomism in psychology as a proponent of the need for an integrative life principle in psychology as follows:

It may seem odd to credit Freud, the supreme irrationalist of our age, with helping the Thomists preserve for psychology the emphasis upon the ego as the rational agent in personality, but such is the case. For whether the ego reasons or merely rationalizes, it has the property of synthesizing inner needs and outer reality. Freud and the Thomists have not let us forget this fact, and have thus made it easier for modern cognitive theories to deal with this central function of the proprium. (p. 46)

Allport's comments demonstrate how discourse on the soul in philosophy continues in psychology on a more factual level in theoretical and empirical research on the self. Murray (2001) has defended the same position regarding the notions of subject and self (pp. 44-45). To be sure, the soul in St. Thomas's works is not identical to any of the objectifiable egos or selves (e.g., personal, social, etc) that appear in psychological literature (Strasser, 1957, p. 65). However, as Edie (1987) noted, William James distinguished between the "empirical," experienced self and the experiencing self on purely phenomenological grounds (pp. 76-77). While James held that former is conceptualizable and objectifiable, he denied that possibility of the latter. Years later, Heinz Kohut (1977) asserted that the self is "not knowable in its essence" (Kohut, 1977, p. 310-311). In his words, "we will...not know the essence of the self as differentiated from its manifestations" (p. 311). More recently, Daniel Stern (1985), observed, "Even though the nature of the self may forever elude the behavioral sciences, the sense of self stands as an important subjective reality, a reliable, evident phenomenon that the sciences cannot dismiss" (Stern, 1985, p. 6). Thus, a convergence of existential-phenomenological thought and Thomism on the concept of ensoulment may be productive in making a unique and valuable contribution to psychological theorizing on the self. As Murray (2001) put it, "The truth of the matter is, both the metaphysical and the empirical, the ontological and the epistemological...have much to offer psychology's efforts to understand the human being (p. 44).

The emphasis on the social, moral, and ethical aspects of human nature in St. Thomas's philosophical-anthropology can also make a positive contribution to existential-phenomenology. As Sartre's philosophy demonstrates so well, there is a highly individualist current that runs through some of existentialism. Even a thinker as synoptic, rigorous and consistent as Heidegger has been accused of creating an unduly individualist philosophical-

anthropology (e.g., Friedman, 1964, p. 173). In addition, there is a highly tragic element to existential thought that is perhaps sometimes inordinately emphasized as well. Thinkers such as Marcel (e.g., 1995), Buber (e.g., 1956) and Levinas (e.g., 1969) have written about the excesses of tragic, individualist existentialism, as it were, at some length. Hence, Marcel (1995) referred to “the man of Heidegger and Sartre” as “the victim of some cosmic catastrophe, flung into an alien universe to which he is bound by nothing” (p. 102). Marcel goes on:

But should it not be the task of a sane philosophy at this time to link up with this tradition by an effort of thought which should bring out its metaphysical evidence? Nothing short of an effort of this kind seems to me to have any chance of success against a doctrine of deism on which, whatever one may say, no wisdom can be built. (pp. 102-103)

St. Thomas’s emphasis on the social, moral and ethical aspects of humanity can help to counterbalance the individualistic, nihilistic trends in existential-phenomenology. Aquinas’s philosophical-anthropology might be brought into contact with the works of thinkers like Marcel, Buber and Levinas to aid in the explication of a more holistic, personalistic existential philosophical-anthropology.

Finally, an existential-phenomenological dialogue with St. Thomas’s works on happiness can provide the means for a critical dialogue with positive psychology and its current trend of researching “the good life.” For example, Martin Seligman has recently authored *Authentic Happiness* (2002), a title that discusses a topic central to the thought of Aristotle and St. Thomas (i.e., happiness) using characteristically Heideggerian sounding language (i.e., authenticity). Literature on happiness is becoming increasingly popular, and references to concepts like *eudaimonia* are commonplace in positive psychology. There are even debates over whether or not it is possible to be “too” happy (e.g., Oishi, Diener, & Lucas, 2007). Yet there is no compelling evidence that the leaders of the positive psychology movement are philosophically trained despite the fact that they are importing philosophical language into psychology. In fact, Seligman’s concept of *eudaimonia* has been found to be problematic on just this basis (Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005). Together, existential-phenomenologists and Thomists can help increase rigor and conscientiousness in the theoretical and empirical study of

human happiness.

Concluding Remarks

In the above discussion I hope to have shown that St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophical-anthropology is a viable underpinning for a holistic psychology, one that avoids dualism, reductionism, and rugged individualism. I hope to have demonstrated this by calling attention to legitimate parallels with existential-phenomenology. These parallels are evidence of a certain internal harmony between Thomism and existential-phenomenology. An ongoing philosophical-anthropological dialogue between these two traditions of thought ought to benefit both traditions. Existential-phenomenology can assist in eliminating objectivistic bias from Thomism. Thomism, in return can help to strengthen existential-phenomenologists' arguments for anthropological holism and, ironically, assist existential-phenomenology in reaching a wider audience among contemporary readers.

Notes

¹ See Neiman, *op.cit.*, p. 212.

² Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality" in Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956-1972* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 90. It should also be noted here that Williams helped me a great deal in developing the ideas on finitude.

³ See Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

⁴ Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), pp. 213-240.

⁵ John Dewey, "Human Nature and Value" in *The Moral Writings of John Dewey*, edited by James Gouinlock (New York: Hafner Press, 1976), p. 97.

⁶ Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), pp. 87-88.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology* in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt (New York, 1977), p.45.

⁸ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study in the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (New York: Minton, Balch&Company, 1929), p.260.

⁹ Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*

(Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), pp. 128-129.

¹⁰ Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), pp. 92-93.

References

Allport, G. (1955). *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*. Connecticut: Yale.

Aquinas, T. (1948). *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*. New York: Random House.

Aristotle (1985). *Nicomachean Ethics* (Terence Irwin, Trans.). Indiana: Hackett.

Baumeister, R.F. (2005). *The Cultural Animal: Human Nature, Meaning, and Social Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Boss, M. (1963). *Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis*. New York: DaCapo.

Brennen, R.E. (1941). *Thomistic Psychology*. New York: Macmillan.

Brett, G.S. (1967). *Brett's History of Psychology*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Buber, M. (1956). *The Writings of Martin Buber*. New York: Meridian Books.

Caputo, J.D. (1982). *Heidegger and Aquinas*. New York: Fordham.

Copelston, F. (1950). *History of Philosophy Volume II: Augustine to Scotus*. New Jersey: Paulist Press.

de Mirabel, E. (1954). *Edith Stein*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

DeRobertis, E. & Iuculano (2005). "Metaphysics and Psychology: A Problem of the Personal." *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 25(2), 238-256.

Descartes, R. (1993). *Discourse on Method and Meditations of First Philosophy* (Donald A. Cress, Trans.). Indianapolis: Hackett. (Original works published in 1637 and 1641 respectively).

Edie, J.M. (1987). *William James and Phenomenology*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Frankl, V.E. (1969). *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*. New York: Nal.

Frankl, V.E. (1967). *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Frankl, V.E. (1978). *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism*. New York: Washington Square Press.

Friedman, M. (1964). *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader*. New Jersey: Humanities Paperback Library.

- Gilby, T. (1989). *Aquinas*. In J.O. Urmson & J. Rée (Eds.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy & Philosophers*, (pp. 20-23). New York: Routledge.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time* (John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper Collins. (Original work published 1926).
- Heidegger, M. (1977). *Basic Writings*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Hillman, J (1975). *Re-visioning Psychology*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Hunt, M. (1993). *The Story of Psychology*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Irwin, T. (1985). Glossary. In Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (pp. 385-432). Indiana: Hackett.
- Kenny, A. (1993). *Aquinas on Mind*. New York: Routledge.
- Knolwes, R.T. (1986). *Human Development and Human Possibility: Erikson in the Light of Heidegger*. Maryland: University Press of America.
- Kohut, H. (1977). *The Restoration of the Self*. Connecticut: International Universities Press.
- Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. (Original work published 1961).
- Levinas, E. (1989). *The Levinas Reader*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Magee, J.D. (1996-1999). Thomistic philosophy page. Retrieved February 28, 2008 from <http://www.aquinasonline.com/Topics/identity.html>
- Marcel, G. (1995). *The Philosophy of Existentialism* (Manya Harari, Trans.). New York: Citadel. (Original work published 1949).
- Maritain, J. (1948). *Existence and the Existent: An Essay on Christian Existentialism*. New York: Image Books.
- May, R. (1979). *Psychology and the Human Dilemma*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- May, R. (1958). "The Origins and Significance of the Existential Movement in Psychology." In R. May, E. Angel & H.F. Ellenberger (Eds.), *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (pp.3-36). New York: Basic Books.
- May, R. (1981). "Introduction." In J.P. Sartre, *Existential Psychoanalysis*. New York: Gateway Editions.
- Moore, T. (1992). *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Murray, E.L. (1986). *Imaginative Thinking and Human Existence*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

- Murray, E.L. (2001). *The Quest for Personality Integration: Reimaginizing our Lives*. Pittsburgh: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center.
- Oishi, S., Diener, E., and Lucas, R.E. (2007). "The Optimum Level of Well-Being: Can People be Too Happy?" *Association for Psychological Science*, 2(4), 346-360.
- Ricoeur, P. (1971). "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language." *Criterion*, 10, 14-18.
- Sartre, J.P. (1966). *Being and Nothingness* (Hazel Barnes, Trans.). New York: Washington Square Press. (Original work published 1943)
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. New York: Free Press.
- Solomon, R.C. (1988). *Continental Philosophy since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self*. New York: Oxford
- Stein, E. (2000). *Knowledge and Faith* (Walter Redmond, Trans.). Washington D.C.: ICS Publications. (Original work published 1993).
- Stern, D.N. (1985). *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Strasser, S. (1957). *The Soul in Metaphysical and Empirical Psychology*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Tillich, P. (1952). *The Courage to Be*. Connecticut: Yale.
- Tillich, P. (1961). "Existentialism and Psychotherapy." *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, 1(1), 9.
- van den Berg, J. H. (1961). *The Changing Nature of Man: Introduction to a Historical Psychology*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Van Kaam (1966). *Existential Foundations of Psychology*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Woolfolk, R.L. & Wasserman, R.H. (2005). "Count No One Happy: Eudaimonia and Positive Psychology." *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 25(1), 81-90.

Richard Hoffman

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT THE SIRENS

It makes no difference
if their songs enthrall you

or you're only rowing
over there to ask them,

for pity's sake, to shut up;
the rocks never move,

and winds and currents
change the approach

so it is never as it was,
and never as it is on charts.

PROCEDURE

1. Return to your birthplace. But before you do, become as solitary as you can wherever you are.
2. Repeat your name aloud until you understand it only as a sound you make.
3. Set out for your native ground. Travel overland if possible, by water if necessary.
4. Note each obstacle on your way, along with each resistance you experience inside yourself. For example, do you need money? A passport? Another language? Particular items of clothing? A profession of faith or allegiance? Is your lack of resolve an inability to foresee benefit? Is it fear? Procrastination?
5. Immediately upon your arrival, drink the local water. Eat food grown there.
6. Pinch the earth between your thumb and fingers. (If you are right-handed, use your left hand, and vice-versa.) Sniff that earth. Note both smell and texture.
7. Attend to the question that will now arise, coherent, in your mind. Be undisturbed until you can clearly speak it.
8. Remain in that place for a length of time roughly equal to the time it took to get there, whispering your question over and over until you hear the music in it.
9. Turn to your left and walk in widening counter-clockwise circles.
10. Ask your question of the first person you meet.
11. Listen carefully to the reply.
12. Thank that person with some sort of gift.
13. Heed what you now understand, including what doubts remain.

AGAINST THOSE WEALTHY VIA PUBLIC MISCHIEF

(adapted from Alciati's *Book of Emblems**, Emblem 89)

Avarice in check, the country at peace,
does not please everyone. Those who fish

for eels, for example, who know how to slice
one into segments thin as paper dollars

for sushi or paste, must find some way
to roil the placid water and churn the bottom

to be successful. (To stir the muck religion
makes a good long stick, or bogus history

wed to rhetoric.) They know just how.
They have fished for eels a thousand years.

*Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum liber* or *Book of Emblems*, a collection of 212 Latin emblem poems, was first published in 1531, and was expanded in various editions during the author's lifetime.

What Do I Love When I Love My Patient? Toward an Apophatic Derridean Psychotherapy

Mark J. Fratoni Jr.
Duquesne University

*This essay examines the implications of Jacques Derrida's complex engagement with negative theology for the field of psychotherapy. Negative (or apophatic) theology is a long tradition which emphasizes God's absolute otherness. This essay explores Derrida's attempt in *The Gift of Death* to translate this theological language into the language of human intersubjectivity. John Caputo, the most renowned American interpreter of Derrida's writings on religion, calls for a "generalized apophatics," an application of apophatic thought to fields outside of religion. Caputo bases his exhortation on Derrida's assertion that "every other is wholly other." This essay is a preliminary attempt to sketch the outline of an apophatic psychotherapy, with an emphasis on Derridean themes such as the impossible, the secret, and translation.*

I know that by the act of praying in the desert, out of love (because I wouldn't pray otherwise), something might already be good in myself: a therapy might be taking place.

-- Jacques Derrida (2005, p. 31)

Introduction: Generalized Apophatics

In *The Prayers and Tears* of Jacques Derrida, John Caputo makes the case for what he calls a "generalized apophatics":

The tout autre [wholly other], on Derrida's telling, is everybody's business, a matter of general interest which belongs to a generalized apophatics Negative theology is an old and venerable form of heterogeneity, an ancient and complex tradition – "a memory, an institution, a history, a discipline. It is a culture with its archives and its tradition" (Derrida, 1995, *On the name*, p.54). We must learn to "translate," negative theology (pp. 46-48), even if we are not Christian, even if we do not belong to the tradition or "community" of any of the great monotheistic filiations that owe everything to Abraham. Even if the constancy that the name of God supplies goes under other names for us, even then, especially then, we must learn to translate negative theology. For the very thing that localizes negative theology and assigns it to its proper place also dislocates it from that place and "engages it in a movement of universalizing translation" (p. 63). Who would trust

a discourse whose steel had not been tempered by negative theology, that has not learned a thing or two about the *tout autre*? (Caputo, 1997, pp. 41-42)

This paper is a preliminary attempt to take up Caputo's call, to explore what it would mean to translate the apophatic tradition into a new language, in this case, the language of psychotherapy.

Specifically, I will examine the significance of Jacques Derrida's engagement with negative theology for the field of psychotherapy. Indeed, Derrida's argument that every other is wholly other will serve as the fulcrum on which this entire project turns. Derrida paves the way for a generalized apophatics by emphasizing the absolute singularity of every human other and pointing to the ways in which apophatic discourses which have typically served to describe the human relationship to God can also be applied to relationships between human beings. For Derrida, the apophatic theological tradition's import extends far beyond its native Christian Neoplatonic context, and we can appropriate its discursive strategies without endorsing its traditional theological aims.

If, as Caputo reckons, apophatic thought is "everybody's business" (p. 41), then it is nobody's business more than the psychotherapist's. The intersubjective field forms the very condition for the possibility of psychotherapy; human relationships comprise both the content and the context of psychotherapy. If intersubjectivity is the very substance of psychotherapy, then the field of psychotherapy perhaps more than any other discipline should take note of Caputo's call for a generalized apophatics.

Background: The Apophatic Tradition

Although the apophatic tradition is quite diverse, it is possible to isolate certain themes which recur throughout the tradition, and perhaps the quickest route to understanding these common threads is through the oft-cited quotation from Meister Eckhart: "So therefore let us pray to God that we may be free of 'God' (Eckhart, trans. 1981, p. 200). In other words, what is at stake in apophatic thought is a critique of representation as a form of idolatry. If we were able to know God, then God would not be God. It is precisely this human representation of God which Eckhart and negative theology in general want to problematize. To the extent that we have some idea of what God is, that notion must be stripped away or denied.

So, negative theology bases its position on the contention that God cannot be known with discursive reason. Thus, negative theology constitutes a protest against and alternative to the entire Western theological project of enumerating God's properties, which assumes its paradigmatic form in Thomistic thought. Thomas Aquinas was the principal exponent of this kataphatic, or positive, tradition; his project was an essentially rationalistic attempt to understand God's being.

Negative theology grounds its epistemological concerns in a critique of this onto-theology. God's being cannot be known discursively because human reason is finite, while God is infinite. Indeed, one of the most radical claims proffered by apophatic thinkers from Plotinus to Jean-Luc Marion is that God is beyond being itself (Marion's landmark work is titled *God Without Being* [1982/1991]). Negative theologians through the ages have insisted on this fundamental ontological difference between humans and God to justify their approach. If God is wholly other, beyond being itself, then God is never given as an object of consciousness. God "appears," then, through God's silence or absence.

Denials: Derrida's Engagement with Negative Theology

And yet, negative theology is anything but silent. John Caputo (1997) argues that:

When Meister Eckhart says, "I pray God to rid me of God," he formulates with the most astonishing economy a double bind by which we are all bound: how to speak and not speak, how to pray and not pray, to and for the tout autre. (p. 4)

And it is precisely negative theology's insistence on speaking the unspeakable that fascinates Derrida; negative theology is a discourse that recognizes itself as impossible but nevertheless remains a discourse. According to Caputo:

For Derrida, negative theology is an event within language, something happening to language, a certain trembling or fluctuation of language. That is why the effect of negative theology is always so verbal and verbose – so grammatical – and why these lovers of wordlessness are so excessively wordy, why Meister Eckhart, for example, was one

of the greatest preachers of the day, and one of the founders of the German language, there at the creation of modern Deutsche. (pp. 11-12)

Thus, despite Derrida's self-described atheism (which is a complex and controversial self-identification in its own right), we can see why Derrida is "fascinated by the syntactics, pragmatics, and rhetoric of this discourse that is driven, sparked, and solicited by the impossible" (p. 11).

A full analysis of Derrida's complex relationship to negative theology is outside the scope of this essay and has been treated in detail in the Continental philosophy of religion literature. To briefly summarize, Derrida contends that despite their denial of God's presence, negative theologians believe that God still exists in a state of hyperessentiality beyond being. However, Derrida's critique of negative theology constitutes an attempt to radicalize rather than reject the tradition; in some sense, Derrida saves negative theology from itself. To the extent that negative theology can function as a backdoor attempt to prove God's existence by denying God's givenness, it has abandoned its most fundamental premise: the irreducible gap between the human and divine spheres. This gap must necessarily produce a radical uncertainty; indeed, apophatic faith must take seriously the possibility of atheism which always attends the denial of God's presence. Derrida (2005) argues that "if belief in God is not also a culture of atheism, if it does not go through a number of atheistic steps, one does not believe in God" (p. 46). Faith is always a decision that occurs at the limit of calculation and, therefore, always involves risk, even (and especially) the risk of damnation. Thus, Derrida in a certain sense keeps negative theology honest by emphasizing that the relationship with the *tout autre* is always marked by radical uncertainty, which is the condition for the possibility of authentic faith.

Translating Negative Theology: Every Other is Wholly Other

However, the main point of divergence between Derrida and negative theology is the meaning of the *tout autre*, the wholly other. Caputo (1997) concisely summarizes this distinction: "The difference is that in negative theology the *tout autre* always goes under the name of God, and that which calls forth speech is called 'God,' whereas for Derrida every other is wholly other (*tout autre est tout autre*)" (pp. 3-4). Derrida (1992/1995) argues persuasively in *The Gift of Death* that because of the absolute singularity

of every human being, relationships with other humans can be conceived in terms of radical alterity that have traditionally been reserved to describe the human relationship to the divine:

If God is completely other, the figure or name of the wholly other, then every other (one) is every (bit) other. *Tout autre est tout autre* This implies that God, as wholly other, is to be found everywhere there is something of the wholly other. And since each of us, everyone else, each other is infinitely other in its absolute singularity, inaccessible, solitary, transcendent, nonmanifest, originarily nonpresent to my ego, then what can be said about Abraham's relation to God can be said about my relation without relation to every other (one) as every (bit) other, in particular my relation to my neighbor or my loved ones who are as inaccessible to me, as secret and transcendent as Jahweh. (pp. 77-78)

Derrida's celebrated aphorism, "*Tout autre est tout autre*" (pp. 77-78), does not represent a mere secularization and humanization of theological language; rather, it represents an elevation and sacralization of human relationships. This is why Caputo (1997) asserts that Derrida's idea that every other is wholly other is his way of "saving the name of God" (p. 52). For Caputo, God is not only "the exemplar of every 'other,'" but every other is "the exemplar of God" (p. 52). We do not have to choose between God as wholly other and neighbor as wholly other; indeed, Derrida's position could easily be reconciled with that of Simone Weil (1951/2001) who argued that "love of God" and "love of our neighbor" are "made of the same substance" (p. 64).¹

Derrida (1992/1995) confirms this point when he says in *The Gift of Death* that "the trembling of the formula 'every other (one) is every (bit) other' allows us alternatively to restate the formula as 'Every other (one) is God, or God is every (bit) other' (p. 87). Derrida continues:

In one case God is defined as infinitely other, as wholly other, every bit other. In the other case it is declared that every other one, each of the others, is God inasmuch as he or she is, like God, wholly other. (p. 87)

Consequently, Derrida's translation of the language of the wholly other to the human terms of intersubjectivity is anything but reductionistic. Derrida does not necessarily deny God's existence; on the contrary, he simply affirms that the inaccessibility of the human other is as radical as the inaccessibility of God. If negative theology undercuts the assumptions of onto-theology, Derrida's singular appropriation of negative theology analogously undermines a certain ontology of the subject.

Translations: Derrida and Psychology

Perhaps no field has relied more on this traditional ontology of the subject than modern scientific psychology, which regards the individual as a unitary whole, a closed system which is in principle orderly, predictable, and intelligible. In contrast, Derrida's whole project from his early critique of self-presence in Husserl to his late work on the secret has insisted on the opacity of the self to itself and to others. Derrida's (1992/1995) appropriation of negative theology in *The Gift of Death* is part and parcel of this project: if the alterity of the individual human being is as radical as the wholly other God of negative theology, then all the epistemological and methodological assumptions of modern psychology are called into question. More specifically, Derrida's engagement with negative theology problematizes many of the basic assumptions of psychotherapy. The entire diagnostic system which attempts to categorize the patient's symptoms depends upon the guiding assumption that the therapist can know the patient determinately.

However, this model is impossible. The patient is incapable of revealing himself fully to the therapist, meaning she cannot follow the "fundamental rule" to disclose everything. This insufficiency is not merely quantitative; it is not simply a matter of the patient revealing parts of herself and concealing other parts of herself. Rather, like the God of negative theology, the patient is in principle hidden from herself and the therapist alike. Derrida (1992/1995) draws a helpful distinction in this regard between the "visible in-visible" and "absolute invisibility" (p. 90). The visible in-visible "is a matter of concealing one surface beneath another; whatever one conceals in this way becomes invisible but remains within the order of visibility; it remains constitutively visible" (p. 90). In contrast, Derrida defines absolute invisibility as "the absolutely non-visible that refers to whatever falls outside of the register of sight, namely, the sonorous, the musical, the vocal or phonic" (p. 90). Psychotherapy has traditionally concerned itself with the visible invisible,

assuming that the patient's attitude toward the therapist covers over (and to that very extent reveals!) the patient's unconscious attitudes toward her significant others. What, then, is at stake in Derrida's distinction between the visible invisible and the absolute invisible for psychotherapy?

For the field of psychotherapy to take Derrida's distinction seriously, it would have to acknowledge the absolute invisible. What is at stake, in turn, in this acknowledgement is the radical alterity of the patient. Derrida (1992/1995) asserts that "if the other were to share his reasons with us by explaining them to us, if he were to speak to us all the time without any secrets, he wouldn't be other, we would share a type of homogeneity" (p. 57). In this way, we are led back to Derrida's argument that every other is wholly other, which forms the very basis for our translation of negative theology into the language of psychotherapy. The psychotherapist could easily object, "Of course, the patient keeps secrets from himself, of course the patient is unaware of the ultimate rhyme and reason of his words; that is what I am here to decipher." However, if we take seriously what Derrida says about absolute invisibility, which is the essence of the assertion that every other is wholly other, then we have to admit the irreducibility of the patient's otherness. The patient speaks in an altogether different register: the language of God, which is to say, the language of the other.

But should we take Derrida seriously? If we think of the patient as wholly other, and therefore, as radically nonmanifest, how do we proceed as psychotherapists? If we take seriously Derrida's assertions about absolute invisibility, how is psychotherapy possible at all? Psychotherapy is indeed impossible, but the idea of impossibility carries a specific meaning in Derrida's work. Caputo describes the impossible in a passage that is worth quoting in full:

It is only when you give yourself to, surrender to, and set out for the wholly other, for the impossible, only when you go where you cannot go, that you are really on the move. Anything less is staying stuck in place, with the same. Going where you cannot go, going somewhere impossible, constitutes true movement, genuine coming and going, since going where it is possible to go is only a pseudo-motion, the 'paralysis' of a 'non-event' (Derrida, 1995, *On the name*, p. 75). When you go to the possible nothing much happens. The only event, the only e-venting, or in-venting, is to go to the impossible. If the possible spells paralysis, the impossible is an impassioning impetus. If

the possible means the paralysis of the programmable, the impossible is the passion of decision. (Caputo, 1997, p. 50)

Thus, impossibility is not tantamount to a dead end for Derrida; in fact, the opposite is true. Possibility, which is to say predictability, sameness, continuity, etc, is a dead end; the impossible is the unexpected which interrupts the order of sameness – but which never arrives. The moment the impossible arrives, it would be assimilated into the order of the same. For the impossible to live up to its impossibility, for the other to remain wholly other, it can never strictly speaking arrive.

Of course, the patient does speak and reveal himself to the psychotherapist, and it is possible to know the patient. And yet, at the same time, it is absolutely impossible to know the patient. This is the aporia which constitutes the passion of psychotherapy. However, as Derrida (2005) says, “The aporia for me doesn’t mean simply paralysis. No way. On the contrary, it’s the condition of proceeding, of making a decision, of going forward. The aporia is not simply a negative stop” (p. 43). It is possible to know the patient, and yet, it is impossible to know the patient – this aporia constitutes the apophysis of psychotherapy. The other remains wholly other, even in giving himself. The gift of the other’s presence never exhausts the other’s infinite singularity. The word apophysis comes from the Greek word *apophanai*, which means “to say no.” An apophatic psychotherapy would accept the absolute reserve which the patient always retains, a reserve which she holds even from herself. Furthermore, an apophatic psychotherapy would nevertheless say “yes” to this “saying no,” because this “no” is the very condition of psychotherapy. As Caputo (1997) says, the impossibility of translating the other is “the impassioning impetus” (p. 50), and as Derrida (2001) says in a somewhat different context, “A work that appears to defy translation is at the same time an appeal for translation” (p. 16).

Thus, to translate Derrida’s words into the language of psychotherapy: the impossibility of translating the patient is at the same time an appeal for translation. This is why psychotherapy must say “yes, yes” in every moment to the other’s “no.” If the other were indeed fully present to himself or fully present to the therapist, then psychotherapy would not exist. By no means should we abandon reason, embracing a dangerous irrationalism; by all means, we should continue in our attempts to understand our patients and formulate their cases. However, Derrida would simply remind us that the patient’s absolute invisibility is precisely what constitutes our entire system of diagnoses, categorizations, and conceptualizations and cannot, therefore, be completely appropriated by that system.

Conclusion: What Do I Love When I Love My Patient?

Derrida (1989/1992) says: “Every title has the import of a promise” (p. 86). We are finally in a position to examine the title which I promised for this essay, which paraphrases Augustine’s (trans. 1991) famously unanswerable question, “What then do I love when I love my God?” (p.185). Augustine’s question points to the problem that arises when we deny the objective presence of God’s attributes. In other words, if I admit that God is wholly other and, therefore, that I can never know God’s predicates, then in what sense can I know God at all? The psychotherapist could make an analogous objection: If my patient is wholly other, if I can never know him at all, then isn’t the whole enterprise of psychotherapy irrelevant? We have already shown the way in which Derrida’s work circumvents this sort of irrationalism – the patient’s radical alterity is precisely what motivates understanding; the patient’s complete presence would amount to the closure of psychotherapy.

However, what is at stake in Augustine’s question is not knowledge, but love. Caputo (1997) writes about the relation between love and the impossible in another passage that is worth quoting in full:

To surrender to the other, to love the other, means to go over to the other without passing the threshold of the other, without trespassing on the other’s threshold. To love is to respect the invisibility of the other, to keep the other safe, to surrender one’s arms to the other but without defeat, to put the crossed swords or arrows over the name of the other. To love is to give oneself to the other in such a way that this would really be giving and not taking, a gift, a way of letting the other remain other, that is, be loved, rather than a stratagem, a ruse of jealousy, a way of winning, eine vergiftete Gift. Then it would turn out that the passion for the impossible would be love. (p. 49)

Loving the other means letting the other remain other. This love is the very opposite of knowledge which as Levinas (1947/1987) says, always reduces that which is other to sameness (pp. 64-65).

It is precisely because the wholly other never arrives that we must prepare a place for him. This is the sense in which we can properly speak of the gift of psychotherapy:³ psychotherapy is the gift of letting the other remain other, of accepting the other’s non-arrival – but, nevertheless, preparing a

place for the other. This essay opened with a quote from Derrida in which he referred to the act of prayer as a therapy. For Derrida (2005), the other to whom we address our prayers must necessarily remain absent; the “suspension of certainty is part of prayer . . . if I knew or were simply expecting an answer, that would be the end of prayer. That would be an order – just as though I were ordering a pizza!” (p. 31). Essential to the act of praying to the other is letting the other remain other; to demand the presence of the other is to neutralize the very act of prayer. My prayer is that the practice of psychotherapy may come closer to assuming the form of a prayer that expects no answer; this is the very definition of love, and as Derrida says, when we pray out of love, a therapy is already taking place.

Notes

¹ Weil, like Derrida, argues forcefully for the singularity of the other, which Weil discusses according to her theory of affliction: The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: ‘What are you going through?’ It is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not as a unit in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled ‘unfortunate,’ but as a man, exactly like us, who was one day stamped with a special mark by affliction [*italics added*]. (p. 64)

² Caputo is referring to Jean-Luc Marion’s practice of crossing out the letter “o” in the word “God.” According to Marion (1982/1991):

The unthinkable forces us to substitute the idolatrous quotation marks around “God” with the very God that no mark of knowledge can demarcate, and, in order to say it, let us cross out G-d, with a cross, provisionally of St. Andrew, which demonstrates the limit of the temptation, conscious or naïve, to blaspheme the unthinkable in an idol. (p. 46)

³ Cf. Irvin Yalom’s (2002) *The Gift of Therapy*.

References

- Augustine (1991). *Confessions* (H. Chadwick, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Caputo, J. D. (1997). *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1992). “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials” (K. Frieden, Trans.). In H. Coward & Toby Foshay (Eds.), *Derrida and Negative*

- Theology* (pp. 73-142). Albany: State University of New York Press.
(Reprinted from *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary theory*, by S. Budick, Ed., 1989, New York: Columbia Press)
- Derrida, J. (1992). *Post-scriptum: Aporias, Ways, and Voices* (J.P. Leavey, Jr., Trans.). In H. Coward & Toby Foshay (Eds.), *Derrida and Negative Theology* (pp. 283-323). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Derrida, J. (1995). *The Gift of Death* (D. Wills, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1992).
- Derrida, J. (2001). "I Have a Taste for the Secret" (G. Donis, Trans.). Interview with M. Ferraris & G. Vattimo. In G. Donis & D. Webb (Eds.), *A Taste for the Secret* (pp. 3-92). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Original work published 1997)
- Derrida, J. (2005). "Epoche and Faith: An Interview with Jacques Derrida." Interview with J. Caputo, K. Hart, & Y. Sherwood (Transcribed by B. Cameron & K. Hart). In Y. Sherwood & K. Hart (Eds.), *Derrida and Religion* (pp. 27-50). New York: Routledge.
- Eckhart, M. (1981). *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (E. Colledge & B. McGinn, Trans.). Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Levinas, E. (1987). *Time & the other* (R.A. Cohen, Trans.). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press. (Original work published 1947)
- Marion, J. - L. (1991). *God without Being* (T. Carlson, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1982)
- Weil, S. (2001). *Waiting for God* (E. Craufurd, Trans.). New York: Perennial Classics. (Original work published 1951)
- Yalom, I. D. (2002). *The Gift of Therapy*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Jerome Rothenberg

THREE PARIS ELEGIES*

[1]

into my own dark sunday light approaches like the moon through feathers
that's no sooner seen than sunk by blindness & the thought that everyone
is dead around a city that's about to vanish as it has before sucked down
an empty pocket oversized & with a smell of earth the bright adventurers
of 1910 whose streets these were sharing a common grave with those who
followed reaching even to the place where you and I are waiting with the
friends who drop out one by one like cybermonkeys flying into mindless
space

[2]

above a gorge we hung
& swayed
the mountains were alive to every side
stone witnesses
the air was still with only a distant puff of wind
we sat suspended by an iron wire
voiceless
no one to talk to in the world
but you & me
that revelation
I think I prize its emptiness the most
so even now arrived in paris
I sit alone
& feel it bursting from my chest
electric
final
rush of footsteps down an empty street

* Set to *Three Voices for Joan La Barbara* by Morton Feldman (with text by Frank O'Hara).

[3]

why does a well-dressed man come up to me & ask me for a handout?
 (this is a dream, I think, it can't be real)
 why does a smiling mother dressed for church reach out a hand to
 touch me shadows all around her sitting on the ground
 why does she ask for help
 & why do I keep walking walking past her
 where there is no street or sun
 even in paris on this hottest day in summer
 what is the sound that comes at us around a corner sound of a wave
 suspended in the air of hives of bees of hands applauding in the dark
 who is the man who wears a flower in his ear a shirt with many folds
 a vest a beard the buttons glowing like electric sparks
 the more I search his features I can see his lips are gone his tongue is
 heavy hanging to one side & forming words that never reach me that the
 darkness covers
 all the people on this street sit flat against a wall some open-eyed
 some sunk in a deep sleep
 all are dressed up
 the men wear business suits & blazers a cardigan a double breasted
 jacket a tuxedo tie & tails but have no coats or hats
 their shoes are simple always a dark brown or black with marks of
 sand from garden walks in paris laces open sometimes without socks
 & the women well dressed too although the hair of one is hanging
 limply with another's there are open spots that show her skull a third one
 has the traces of a beard a large wet stain under one armpit
 just look at them & they begin to talk
 the way that birds talk
 feathers that the wind is blowing swirl across the square
 we sit in paradise & pass a ball between us
 papers at our feet
 then when it's time to leave we walk around a corner climb the little
 flight of stairs & hear them following
 the rush of music from a distant time a woman's voice becoming
 regular the words emerging low & high relentless openings processions
 & it's picasso in the lead a little man with hairy shoulders he has
 stripped down to his running shorts like frank o'hara both of them now

stars for minneola prep both now declare their love of evil

with apollinaire here too his head no bigger than a thumbnail
flanked by gertrude stein eyes like a crazy doll's & someone looking like
my father max jacob wrapped in a monk's brown cloak down which his
body disappears

here in a world where there are only little people phantoms where the
sky is not a sky the earth is shrinking daily under silver plastic disappearing
slipping through my hands like balls in a pachinko parlor eyes revolving
like red lights

to end here in la république with all the other dead the hungry
ghosts under our windows a soup kitchen for the dead the ones who run
the ones who squat now on the grass

they speak our frailty the doom built into life decomposition chaos
anarchy *confusion worse confounded* helter skelter squalor

out of whack & out of order out of kilter out of money out of time
& out of place & out of breath & out of work & out of hope & out of
power

because the men who come to us though dead are just like us & stare
at us like fallen princes

we welcome you to death they say their looks dividing us in two

the numbers dance again behind our eyes

the circles break

the man holding a clock up to his ear will count the silence

every day is summer

what was once alive is gone

& what has yet to be alive

is also gone

Paris

August/September 1997

[From *A Paradise of Poets*, New Directions, 1999]

PERORATION FOR A LOST TOWN

[May 1988]: "On this road thou camest ..."

[1]

What will I tell you sweet town?
that the sickness is still in you
that the dead continue to die
there is no end to the dying?
for this the departed would have had an answer:
a wedding in a graveyard
for you sweet town
they would have spoken they who are no longer among us
& would have shown forth in their splendor
would have danced pellmell
over your stones sweet town
the living & the dead together pebbles
would have dropped like pebbles
from their fingers no like gold like roses
like every corny proposition
fathers or uncles ever gave us they gave us
to call your image back to life
sweet town their voices twittering
like bats over your little houses
is this the sound then that the breath makes
in its final gasp that the dead make
having lived a whole life under water
now coming up for air, to find themselves
in poland in the empty field
bathers who had their bodies torn apart
& ran from you their long guts
hanging, searching the forgotten woods
for houses & the consolation
that death brings children in a circle
dancing without tongues the meadow that had once stood open
shut in remembrance now sweet town
the screams of the cousins carried by the wind
lost in the gentile cities

in the old men's dreams of you
 each night sweet town who rise up from their beds
 like children bellowing their words
 stuck in their beards like honey
 who drift up brok street past the russian church
 the doctor's house beside it heavy
 & whitebricked in the dream who glide above
 napoleon square o little orchards little park
 where lovers once walked with lovers children
 still capture fishes in thy little pond
 its surfaces still green with algae
 o sounds of church bells--bimbom--through the frozen air
 that call forth death o death o pale photographer
 o photos of the sweet town rubbed with blood
 o of its streets the photographs its vanished folk
 o wanderers who wandered o bodies of the distant dead who stayed
 o faces o dimming images lost smiles o girls embracing girls
 in deathless photographs o life receding
 into images of life you beautiful & pure sweet town
 I summon & I summon thee to answer

[2]

I have come here looking for the bone of my grandfather (I said). Day-
 light had intervened. The town was no more empty as we walked its
 length. Then the old man spat--gently--through his beard. I have come
 here looking for the bone of my son. (Had someone reported a breath of
 life under his houses--a movement within the soil like worms & cater-
 pillars?) Tell the Poles that they should come to me. I am a baker & a
 child. I have no one to take me from this darkness.

Then he asked--or was
 it I who asked or asked *for* him?--were there once Jews here? Yes, they
 told us, yes they were sure there were, though there was no one here who
 could remember. What was a Jew like? they asked. (The eye torn from
 its socket hung against his cheek.) Did he have hair like this? they asked.
 How did he talk--or did he? Was a Jew tall or short? In what ways did
 he celebrate the Lord's day? (A rancid smell of scorched flesh choked
 us.) Is it true that Jews come sometimes in the night & spoil the cows'

milk? Some of us have seen them in the meadows--beyond the pond. Long gowns they wear & have no faces. Their women have sharp-pointed breasts with large black hairs around the nipples. At night they weep. (Heads forced in the bowls until their faces ran with excrement.) No one is certain still if they exist. (Plants frozen at the bottom of a lake, its surface covered by thick ice.)

They spoke & paused. Spoke & paused again. If there was a history they couldn't find it-- or a map. The cemetery they knew was gone, the dead dispersed. (On summer days the children digging in the marketplace might come across a bone.) And the shops? we asked. The stalls? The honey people? Vanished, vanished in the earth, they said. The red names & the flower names. The pink names. (There was a people once, they said, we called the old believers. A people with black beards & eyes like shrivelled raisins. Out of the earth they came & lived among us. When they walked their bodies bent like yours & scraped the ground. They had six fingers on each hand. Their old men had the touch of women when we rubbed against them. One day they dug a hole and went back into the earth. They live there to this day.)

The village pump you spoke about still stands back of the city hall (they told us). The rest was all a dream.

[3]

[by gematria]

a wheel
dyed red

an apparition

set apart

out of the furnace

Ostrov-Mazowieck
Poland/1988

[From *Triptych*, New Directions, 2007]

ROMANTIC DADAS: FOUR POEMS FROM
A BOOK OF CONCEALMENTS

[From *Concealments & Caprichos*, Black Widow Press, 2010]

ROMANTIC DADAS

for Jeffrey Robinson

A late night party
where Romantic Dadas
cut a rug too iridescent
to resist
our smug caresses.
How will we begin
addressing them,
by name or by a face
that turns away from you
unseen, leaves scarce
a trace behind.
Mister Novalis,
or if that isn't
your real name,
drop it right now
& try another.
He is too determined,
too far below
his average height
for anyone to count.
Aside from which
there are the odors
of the women
who surround him,
so many that the walls begin
to press his skull.
He has to break away
to make an outcry
in the name of Dada.
I & I & I are left
without a place
ulterior to place,
to run or hide.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE LYRIC VOICE

for Scott McLean

He will keep writing,
 will he not,
 as you will.
 A pressure like a finger
 builds inside
 his chest
 & travels upward,
 somewhere between
 the trachea
 & glottis,
 pushes the fold aside
 & breaks.
 Imagined speech.
 It is the same for everything
 we say we think we know
 the speaker but the speaker
 escapes our observation.
 It is this concealment
 that reveals
 the truth of poetry
 no less authoratative
 than the other
 in full gusto.
From the direction of his voice,
an absence & a grief,
his profile is a kind of blue.
 The footfall of a wanderer
 crosses the open field
 in daylight.
 Let the *spirit* rise
 until it's *mind*,
 the untranslated,
 untranslatable,
 in which the lyric voice
 resides mind's matter
 & its coming forth
 by day.

THE MOON INSANE & FEEBLE

Loony moon, whose babies
suck a ring,
how many look to you
or look beyond you?
Little dolls, like
clockwork, pumping
air & beckoning,
are what the man pretends
to cherish. Halfway
up the stairs,
the window brings him
to the sky,
the sky to where
the moon
insane & feeble
hides a white (P.B. Shelley)
& shapeless mass.
Pleasure that should be his
escapes him,
he is always
in purusit,
always the distant runner.
A flock of moons,
the leaden weight
of butterflies
oppresses him.
To wait there,
dewy eyed,
to write the final line,
how long before
life breaks,
before what's written
fades from sight.
A song sounds
in the mind
& quavers:

Cold is hot
(he cries)
but hot
is never cold.

A DEEP ROMANTIC CHASM

for Michael McClure

A deep romantic chasm
beckons him it leaves no time
to hide from light
in spite of circumstances,
& the way the street
flows like a stream
from no source,
nowhere. *This season*
with its birds
newly arrived,
the first one on a fence,
mortal as you,
a harbinger of days to come.
Another word,
a false return,
the spoken still unspoken
carries us off.
The cavern of the universe
widens each morning.
My head fills up with dew,
the father writes,
having no home but where
his shadow leads him.
In greasy shirtsleeves, heavy
lids, blotched faces,
the men pursue
a trail of tears,
unbuttoned captive
to a dream,
a starless galaxy,
the deeper sky
a field of images
measureless & mindless,
absent their god.

BLANCO: THREE VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY OCTAVIO PAZ

BLANCO 1: A VARIATION ON A THEME IN SEVEN SEGMENTS BY OCTAVIO PAZ

1. white as the land looks | the vultures | white also | circle above | each one a soul | glows white | on horizon | or on page
2. the land is the land | it is white | thunderheads cover it | drumbeats | joining the land | & the sky
3. sky receptive to thunder | drumbeats to sky | white to colors | faces to eyes | sand turning white | like the sky
4. green is also | a color | like flesh | stung by thorns | my body | or yours | sparks a rage | like a drumbeat | violent | mineral | white
5. uproots trees | marks the land | like a body | shattered by lightning | the word | once proclaimed | white turns yellow
6. those who beat | on a waterdrum | spines tightly pressed | to a wall | & the drumbeat | spreads violet ash | on the sky | a sun glowing white
7. language | a desert | pink everywhere | seeds in your mouth | like white crows | & more drumbeats | a flute | turns everything white

21.i.10

BLANCO 2: A VARIATION ON A THEME IN FIVE SEGMENTS BY OCTAVIO PAZ

1. A clarity | of all the senses | lingers | leaving on the mouth & face | a white precipitation | sculptures crystal-thin | blank space | translucent whirlpools
2. Is it a pilgrimage | that brings us | dancing in a ring | into a forest | where our thoughts | are white | the only signs | our steps | that break the silence

3. Green would be better | a slim defile | through which we pass | an archipelago | the shadow of a syllable | a white reflection

4. Is it red | or is it blue | this dazzlement | that blinds us | numbers | dancing in the void | like *things* | a final clarity | no longer white

5. Thoughts fade | winds cease | forgetfulness erases truth | there is a deeper music in the words we speak | yellow isn't white | & amethyst | is just a color

24.ii.10

BLANCO 3: A VARIATION ON A THEME IN NINE SEGMENTS BY OCTAVIO PAZ

1. Presentiment & penumbra | hide the river | where the sand | still white | buries a palm | a pike emerging | skewers our vowels | as we speak

2. Blood fills the mouth | the chest counts anxious minutes | as the dead might | undulations | of a copper lamp | high overhead | casting a shadow

3. Transparency in daylight | where a river | seeks a river | poles apart | the consonants feel heavy | water vanishes | the drought starts up

4. The Spanish centuries | remain anonymous | against my forehead | silt | obscures a castle | coal burns yellow | patience ends | a white confusion | covers all

5. What does the vase hold? | blood & bones | not flowers | the sad reality of words | a language of atonement | silences & syllables | white as this dust

6. No further clarity | than this | no histories or hieroglyphs | to guide us | dunes & water all around | conspiracies of light | absent survivors

7. White bones | appeasement hard to find | or patience | when we climb the ladder | mineshafts open up | below | a red hand beckons

8. His source is Mexico | his language set apart from | all the others |
white on white

9. pulsebeat quickens | on the playing card he holds | a foliage unfolds
for him | a language no one reads | a river rife with whitecaps | rolling by

25.i.10

FOUR MEDIEVAL SCENES
for Robert Duncan

[1]

Jesus at a wedding
waits for us

monkeys with chains around their legs
surround him

dishes of squabs on table

the strangers come to wash his feet,
tra la they sing

a boy perched at a window
blows a trumpet

cherries & pears along the floor

a single fly

a skull rests at his feet,
a bird over his head

[2]

A VISION OF THE GODDESS, AFTER CRANACH

sage & holy
she is sharpening a long stick

while on a swing
a babe sails by

the sky fills up with
warriors on goats & boars

a sleeping dog

a dish of fruit

a castled landscape

[3]

a man called john,
much like the others, stands barefoot near a lake
with swans & boats

I turn away from him
& wait,
another year inside my head,
another cycle

then see him, crying
from his cauldron,
sad turks surround him,
warts on their noses

pouring water on his head

[4]

the priest's hand underneath
the bishop's robe
against the rump, the flesh
envelops him & hides

whatever floats around the dancing
twitching jesus

on his altar: heads & hands
tacked onto space

a hand holding a switch
a hand that points

a head propped on a pedestal
a head in mid-air

separated from the crown,
the spear, the rattling dice

under the dancer's feet
a robe in flames

[Published in *Retrievals: Uncollected & New Poems*, Junction Press, 2011]

Hesse's *Steppenwolf*: A Comic-Psychological Interpretation

Michael P. Sipiora
Pacifica Graduate Institute

The psychological character of Herman Hesse's Steppenwolf is explored by way of a detailed analysis of the novel's comic genre. This reading of Steppenwolf contextualizes its celebrated portrayal of the crisis of modern life within a story of "healing" (Hesse, 1974, p. viii) informed by the comic vision of "faith, hope, and love in a fallen world" (Cowan, 1984, p. 9). The novel's innovative sonata-like structure (Ziolkowski, 1965) and the extensive use of double perception, along with the employment of classic comic action, themes, and stock characters are discussed. In the work's comic vision, the dichotomies (flesh/spirit, subject/object, inner/outer) that plague the Steppenwolf give way to humor and imagination as preferred responses to the soul's alienation and homelessness.

Steppenwolf, more than any other work of Nobel Prize winning author Herman Hesse, captured the restless imagination of American youth in the 1960s. The novel, written in 1927, endured through the seventies and on into the eighties as one of the counter-culture's most popular readings. A successful rock and roll band took its name from the novel's title. Bars, cafes, and bookstores followed suit. The very word "*Steppenwolf*" was appropriated by the counter-culture and integrated into its vocabulary of discontent (Ziolkowski, 1973).

Several factors account for the enormous popularity of Hesse's book. First, the alienation from the bourgeois world suffered by the novel's protagonist drew the identification of a generation itself at odds with the "Establishment." America's youth echoed the profound mistrust of modern technology and the nationalist state voiced by the character Harry Haller, the *Steppenwolf*. Further, the *Steppenwolf*'s stance as a pacifist was seen to accord with the protests mounted against the war in Vietnam. Add to this Haller's scorn for the false values of the middle class and at once you have an image of the heartstrings of the radical unrest that animated the counter-culture.

A second, but no less significant aspect of *Steppenwolf*'s popularity issues from its portrayal of music, sex, and drugs--a major portion of the counter-culture's culture. During the course of the novel, Haller is initiated into the exotic world of the 1920's jazz club. There he is introduced to the primitive rhythms of jazz, the forbidden pleasures of sexuality, and the mind-altering effects of opium. To many readers, Hesse appeared to be vindicating

the value of rock and roll, free love, and the use of marijuana and psychedelic drugs. Timothy Leary went so far as to recommend *Steppenwolf* as a guide to the use of LSD in inducing altered states of consciousness: "The last part of *Steppenwolf* is a priceless manual" (quoted in Ziolkowski, 1973, p. 12).

"Poetic writing," ventures Hesse in his 1961 preface to the novel's English translation, "can be understood and misunderstood in many ways. . . . Yet it seems to me that of all my books *Steppenwolf* is the one that was more often and more violently misunderstood . . ." (1974, p. vii). Hesse goes on to speculate that one reason for the misunderstanding may lie in the fact that many of the work's readers are young people while the problems that the book deals with are those of a fifty year old man. But then again, Hesse notes the numbers of his own generation who failed to grasp the work's significance. Certainly the book tells of grief and suffering, of the crisis of modern life; yet, writes Hesse, "still it is not a book of a man despairing, but of a man believing" (1974, p. viii). The story tells not only of the *Steppenwolf*'s "problematic life," but also of the "Indestructible . . . world of faith" (Hesse, 1974, p. viii). "I would be happy," Hesse concludes, "if many of them were to realize that the story of the *Steppenwolf* pictures a disease and crisis—but not one leading to death and destruction, on the contrary: to healing" (1974, p. viii).

"Faith, believing, healing"—with these words Hesse directs attention to the action which underlies his novel, the action missed by so many of its readers. The author asks that we recognize and appreciate the current of imagination which flows through the *Steppenwolf*'s story. This is no less than the perfectly valid request that our interpretation acknowledge the genre to which the work belongs.

"Literary genres," writes the philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, "are the poetic functions, the directions in which esthetic creation moves" (1963, p. 112). Genres are the grand metaphors, the archetypal patterns that vitalize literary works. The audience's awareness of the vista of imagination from which a particular poetic work issues makes a great deal of difference in how they will view that work. *Steppenwolf*'s vision is not one in which grief, suffering, and despair hold the dominant place in human existence. Its vision is not tragic, even in the most common use of the term. The action of the psyche, which *Steppenwolf* makes visible, moves in the opposite direction towards endurance and health; its genre is comedy. Comedy, according to the literary critic, Louise Cowan—to whose genre theory the present essay is greatly indebted—speaks of "faith, hope, and love in a fallen world" (1984,

p. 9). The comic vision embraces life through imagination and instills in us the belief that things can go well in this life. "The message of the book," Hesse wrote, "is how to endure life . . ." (quoted in Bolby, 1967, p. 202). Such a message is the heart of comedy. Comedy performs a recovery of life's vital rhythm that, when read carefully, is what *Steppenwolf* is meant to accomplish.

The task at hand, then, is to interpret *Steppenwolf*, Hesse's most popular and misunderstood novel, as a poetic work of the comic imagination. The motivation for such an undertaking is not to serve the author (although in the case of a writer so often wrongly praised--and equally unjustly maligned as Hesse--this service is honorable). Rather, the motivation reaches beyond the author to the facilitation of the reader's vision and so to the cultivation of the imagination of which *Steppenwolf* is a literary embodiment. Such a reading both clarifies the novel's genre, and, as we shall see, illuminates its psychological character.

The Story and Its Structure

Steppenwolf is the story of Harry Haller recounted in the form of his own manuscripts. An ailing, alienated, and despondent intellectual, Haller, who is fast approaching his fiftieth year, despairs of life's meaning. Personal life and professional career have collapsed and he is adrift in a world that offers neither place nor peace. His wanderings bring him to an old city, familiar from his past, where he resides for a time under the pretext of using the renowned library. He takes a room in a sedate middle class home but proceeds to live a secluded and tortured existence apart from the house's ambience of bourgeois orderliness and self-satisfaction.

Steeped in the works of Novalis and Nietzsche, Haller indulges in relentless, venomous introspection finding that his sick and aging body is the abode of two souls: one a man, a burger, and the other a beast, a lone wolf of the Steppes. This duality between flesh and spirit rents his troubled existence and has plagued Haller for many years. He is attracted to the bourgeois world and yet at the same time repelled by it. The realm outside the bourgeois claims him, but he cannot endure it. The *Steppenwolf* is caught in a vicious duality in which the two sides of his soul make war on each other, leaving his life a bloodied field of self-hatred and recriminations. Under the savage attack of a divided will turned against life, Haller seeks escape in the timeless world of philosophy, art, and music. And failing that, in alcohol.

On one of his nocturnal prowls, the Steppenwolf encounters a mysterious sign on an ancient, barren wall: "Magic Theatre, For Madmen Only." Subsequently, he encounters an equally mysterious vendor who provides him with a nondescript pamphlet. Upon returning to his lair, Haller discovers that what he has obtained is none other than a "Treatise on the Steppenwolf." This tract, written from the perspective of the immortal world for which Haller longs, is a philosophical and psychological analysis of the Steppenwolf's dual existence. A solution is offered but in magical terms that Haller does not comprehend. However, the Treatise does make a profound impression, echoing as it does sentiments Haller has transcribed in poetry. But, it does not alter his conviction that the ultimate resolution of his dilemma rests on the edge of his razor; he has reserved suicide as his most viable alternative.

Several days later, a dinner engagement with a former colleague turns into a disaster. The Steppenwolf vehemently objects to his hostess' domesticated portrait of Haller's revered Goethe, while his host expresses no less virulent loathing for the traitorous political writings of the pacifist Haller. A deeply troubled Haller is left roaming the dark streets convinced that the razor which waits in his room is the tool of his fate. Quite drunk from visits to taverns on his path, and weary of trying to fend off the inevitable return to his lodgings, the Steppenwolf discovers himself below the sign of the Black Eagle--a nightclub/bordello mentioned to him earlier in the day by a man whom he had mistaken for the mysterious pamphlet vendor. Inside, the evening's festivities are in full swing. Haller feels himself very much out of place but cannot bring himself to leave. Pushed to the bar by the surges of the crowd, he is thrust into the company of a beautiful and fashionable prostitute. Hermine (as Haller later discovers is her name) exerts an uncanny charm over the Steppenwolf. Taking the situation in hand, Hermine orders food and drink for the desperate suicide. She chides him for his foolish despondence and at the same time initiates a pact of obedience in which the Steppenwolf is to submit to her tutelage in the art of life.

During the weeks which follow, Hermine teaches Haller to dance and introduces him to the popular culture of abandon of the twenties. She leads the skittish wolf into the risqué and heady world of the jazz nightclub. Haller behaves as a dutiful student but strains under the contradictions such a lifestyle presents to his ingrained rejection of the contemporary, the physical, and the spontaneous. Hermine sends her sister courtesan, Maria, to school the lonesome wolf in the subtle pleasures of the flesh. Moreover,

she introduces Haller to her friend Pablo, a jazz musician of singular detachment who possesses an alchemist's knowledge of narcotics and other exotic drugs.

Participation in a grand masked ball is the culmination of the Steppenwolf's apprenticeship. There Haller falls completely under Hermine's spell and celebrates his newly learned appreciation of life in a Dionysian revelry which lasts well into the night. When morning brings the ball to an exhausted close, Pablo guides Hermine and Haller through a drug induced finale to the Steppenwolf's re-education. Under the influence of opium, Haller enters the Magic Theatre--a series of fantasies revealing the multidimensional nature of the Steppenwolf's soul. Although Haller fails a final test of his renewed existence, he nonetheless emerges from the Theatre with a fuller acceptance of life's endless possibilities and with hope for their attainment.

Steppenwolf, for all of its popularity, is not an easy novel to read. This fact alone makes a comic interpretation difficult as readers expect a comedy to be more easily accessible than, for example, a tragedy. Yet Hesse, not unlike Shakespeare in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, makes considerable demands on his audience's capacity for interpretive reading.

Hesse's friend Thomas Mann insists, "as an experimental novel, Steppenwolf is no less daring than *Ulysses* and *The Counterfeiters*" (1967, p. ix). Hesse himself, responding to criticisms that the novel lacked a coherent structure, contended that it is the most tightly constructed of his works and that it is "compositionally . . . like a sonata" (quoted in Ziolkowski, 1965, p. 192). In an effort to facilitate the proposed comic reading of Steppenwolf, Theodore Ziolkowski's (1965) authoritative elucidation of the novel's sonata structure will be utilized.

Steppenwolf is divided into three main sections or movements. The first movement, which Ziolkowski labels "preliminary material," (1965, p. 181) is in turn divided into three sub-sections. The novel begins with an introduction authored by the man in whose aunt's house Haller stayed and in whose possession the Steppenwolf's manuscript came to rest. This man is a self-proclaimed, typical bourgeois to whom Haller's experiences are an alien world. The introduction contains both this gentlemen's personal recollections of Haller and his own analysis of the Steppenwolf's character. Subsection two is the beginning of Haller's account proper. It contains some of the events related in the introduction as well as a more detailed picture of the Steppenwolf's existence given from his own perspective. The concluding subsection of the first movement comprises the "Treatise on the

Steppenwolf," a copy of which Haller has included in his manuscript. In Ziolkowski's analysis, these three subdivisions correspond to "the classical structure for the opening section of a sonata" (1965, p. 189). Two themes, that of the Steppenwolf and the burger--the two parts of Haller's soul--are introduced in the first division. In the following subsection these themes are developed and interpreted in terms of their significance in Haller's life. The third subsection recapitulates the two themes and proposes their resolution. Thus Steppenwolf's first movement follows sonata form: two themes are set forth, developed, and then restated.

The second movement contains the novel's action which takes place during a several week period leading up to and including the masked ball. This is the time during which Haller is instructed by Hermine. In this second movement the themes from the first division are further developed through what Ziolkowski describes as the literary equivalent of the musical device of counterpoint: double perception (1965, pp. 195-199). Double perception is a technique employed by Hesse in order to render the simultaneous existence of two levels of reality. Double perception, like counterpoint which, according to the *Howard Dictionary of Music* combines "into a single musical fabric" lines which have "distinctive melodic significance," (quoted in Ziolkowski, 1965, p. 198) brings the real and the imaginal into play at the same time. The net result of this double vision in *Steppenwolf* is the collapse of dichotomies: flesh/spirit, real/unreal, and subject/object. Double perception communicates Hesse's conception of magical thinking as the free exchange of inner and outer realities and the perception of their essential unity. The fantastic events around which all of the novel's action revolves--attaining the Treatise, the relationship with Hermine, the Magic Theatre, etc.--each rely in one way or another, on magical thinking.

The Magic Theatre is the *Steppenwolf* sonata's third and final movement. Ziolkowski refers to this movement as a "theme with variations," and as the work's "finale" (1965, pp. 216, 224). Here Hesse explores the multiplicity of personality, one of *Steppenwolf*'s central themes, by composing variations on motifs already present in the previous two sections. The succession of fantasies experienced by Haller in the Magic Theatre is episodic amplifications of chords struck during the course of Haller's re-education. The novel reaches its finale in a waking dream in which the Steppenwolf understands the significance of the initiation he has undergone.

Comic Patterns, Themes, and Characters

Ziolkowski's insightful analysis provides more than a valuable framework for discussion of the complex novel. It also reveals how Hesse's art has fashioned the *Steppenwolf's* intricate tale into a cohesive structure which reflects the novel's concern with the polyvalent existence of the real and the polymorphous nature of the human soul. While these two concerns accord with the comic tradition's preoccupation with imagination as the preferred response to life's difficulties, analysis of *Steppenwolf's* form also discloses its affinity with the structures of comedy. *Steppenwolf* follows the general comic pattern of resolving a conflict through a fortunate series of events that climax in a celebration. In addition, each of the novel's movements makes use of specific comic forms and devices.

The role of the Treatise in the first movement closely resembles that of the chorus in Attic Comedy. The Treatise makes its appearance in the story after a prologue in which the burger and the *Steppenwolf* each present their respective views of Haller's conflict. Like the chorus of Attic Comedy, the Treatise voices a perspective on the conflict which is detached from the distress of the characters. This perspective issues from a higher realm, another world which the chorus brings into the play. The chorus points to a resolution of the conflict, thus marking the direction which the rest of the story will take, that direction usually being one of imagination and fantasy, as is the case in *Steppenwolf*. And not unlike the authors of Attic Comedy who would address the audience directly by way of the chorus, Hesse presents his own psychology, his own personality theory, in the Treatise.

Steppenwolf's second movement, relying as it does on double perception, is full of the tricks, deceptions and chance encounters which typify comedy from Aristophanes to Shaw. Throughout the novel the operations of Fortune are elicited to reinstate Haller in the order of life. The comic devices employed all work toward the good, and have a didactic dimension. The *Steppenwolf's* apprenticeship to Hermine is symbolic of the novel's educational intent. *Steppenwolf* is about, as Hesse remarks, "enduring life" (quoted in Bolby, 1967, p. 202) specifically, life in the city. The story's urban setting (—another comic motif), while inspired by the actual cities of Basel and Zurich, is the early twentieth-century city in which the breakdown of culture is most acutely felt. Hesse gives us a city in which the memory of the old and the developments of modernity provide a workshop in which imaginative experiments in living can occur and lead to a new response to

the conflicts of the soul's life in the human community.

The Magic Theatre, Steppenwolf's finale, makes use of a wide range of comic episodes from the romantic interlude of *New Comedy* to the bizarre happenings of *Theatre of the Absurd*. The use of episodes which are not directly related to the main action is a time honored practice of the writers of comedy. Like a rhetorical digression, these episodes diverge from the storyline only to later return to the action, bringing a heightened awareness of the story or a twist of fate which ultimately bears on the story's outcome. The episodes of the Magic Theatre do both. They not only develop the multiplicity of Haller's personality, but they also set the stage for the novel's final scenes.

Despite the novel's comic structure, there can be no doubt but that Steppenwolf begins as tragedy, to use Ziolkowski's phrase, "the tragedy of intellect in despair" (1974, p. 179). Haller, as an intellectual--that is, as one who has cultivated the thoughts and sentiments of the past and who in turn thinks deeply about the present--is caught between two worlds, caught between the Old World of refinement and the brash new world of modernity. The Steppenwolf suffers the breakdown of the myths which have structured society. "Human life," observes Haller, "is reduced to real suffering, to hell, only when two ages, two cultures and religions overlap" (Hesse, 1974, p. 24).

Such an inferno is the Steppenwolf's hellish existence. Yet this fate is not the Steppenwolf's alone. "Haller's sickness of the soul," writes the author of the introduction, "as I now know, is not the eccentricity of a single individual but the sickness of the times themselves, the neurosis of the generation to which Haller belongs . . ." (Hesse, 1974, pp. 23-24). Unfortunately for the Steppenwolf, the prevalence of his affliction does not easily make for a community of the damned. Those who do endure, do so alone, in pain, without grace or freedom, alienated and betrayed by a world which grants no shelter . . . lone wolves living under the constant threat of the violence of taking their own lives.

Haller's end would be tragic if he were to succumb to an accident while shaving. As it is, a chance encounter turns the tide of fate when he acquires the *Treatise*. This first intercession of Fortune sets the precedent which will rule the subsequent events in the Steppenwolf's story. The *Treatise* offers a ray of hope which conspires with Haller's previous glimpses of another realm to move the action towards life and endurance, the direction of comedy. Northrop Frye (1957) makes note of the "ritual pattern" in comedy in which

the tragic hero is resurrected to a new life (p. 215). By itself, the appearance of the Treatise is not sufficient to work this transformation. However, it does offer the “bright idea” which traditionally initiates the action of comedy. Like its predecessor in Attic Comedy, the Treatise’s bright idea is an imaginative solution to the dilemma faced by the comic hero. Three options are put forth: Haller may find a mirror into the depths of his soul, he may encounter one of the Immortals—a being who abides in the other realm—or, he might find his way into a magic theatre. Not understanding these options, the Steppenwolf dwells on those passages in the Treatise which deal with suicide. The action, then, of the first movement is comic because the possibility of resurrection exists for the Steppenwolf, but the level of the comedy is, to borrow Cowan’s Dantean scheme (1984), infernal. It remains for the novel’s second movement to avert tragedy by bringing into the action a comic pattern familiar from so many of Shakespeare’s plays: the hero being saved against his will. And again as in Shakespeare, the vehicle of salvation is the feminine.

Hermine, who rescues Haller on that bleak night in the Black Eagle, is a cross between the courtesan of New Comedy and the wise and pure hearted heroine in Shakespeare. She has beauty and common sense, and is knowledgeable in the appreciation of both the physical—as befits a high class prostitute—and the spiritual. Hermine is akin in her spirituality to the prostitutes in Dostoyevsky. She reconnects the Steppenwolf with the flow of life, nudging him loose from his “stuckness”, to use Frye’s term, in the confines of abstract intellectualism. Hermine performs the comic function of bringing Haller back to his senses. She is, in a Shakespearean sense, the personification of the life force. Accordingly, her identity has a mystical dimension which Haller spies on their first encounter but that is fully revealed only at the end of the Masked Ball.

“You have always done the difficult and complicated things,” Hermine tells the Steppenwolf, “and the simple ones you haven’t learned” (Hesse, 1974, p. 101). It is in these simple things of life that Hermine instructs Haller. Her lessons focus on teaching the lone wolf to dance. Dancing is Steppenwolf’s central metaphor for living. It is the dance of life in which Haller requires instruction. Preoccupied by the airy world of ideas, Haller has lost touch with life’s vital rhythms. Much to his horror, Haller is forced to buy a gramophone to facilitate his dancing lessons. The gramophone is symbolic to the Steppenwolf of the gross and unrefined sensibilities of the modern world. His disdain for the products of the age prevents him from

having any appreciation for the variety among items, and bars him from the fun of buying anything. Yet under Hermine's direction, even the buying of the gramophone becomes a lesson in vitality and in the importance of things. Progress is slow, but Haller does finally learn to dance--not only the Fox Trot, which was the wolf's first assignment, but the Boston as well. "Dancing, don't you see," Hermine tells him, "is every bit as easy as thinking . . ." (Hesse, 1974, p. 136). Learning to dance is Haller's first step toward the reconciliation of his tortured duality.

Her profession notwithstanding, Hermine does not make love with Haller. Instead she sends her friend and lesbian lover, Maria, to instruct the Steppenwolf in the "charming play and delight of the senses" (Hesse, 1974, p. 158). Maria, with her erotic wisdom and untainted innocence, also continues Haller's education in the appreciation of the ways and things of what had been for him a decadent and superficial world. Haller "learned a great deal from Maria" (Hesse, 1974, p. 164).

Above all else I learned that these playthings were not mere idle trifles invented by manufacturers. . . . They were, on the contrary, a little or, rather a big world, authoritative and beautiful, many sided containing a multiplicity of things all of which had the one and only aim of serving love, refining the senses, giving life to a dead world around us, endowing it in a magical way with new instruments of love, from powder and scent to the dancing show. . . . All were the plastic material of love, of magic and delight. (Hesse, 1974, p. 164)

Maria is an extension of the feminine constellation introduced to the novel by Hermine. Maria comes to the old wolf as a gift from Hermine and continues the instructions begun by her sister courtesan. Haller's lessons in love, as Maria is well aware, will prepare him for a future, with a more complete union with Hermine. Hermine, Maria, and later Pablo form a triad who school the Steppenwolf in the arts of life and love, which he has forgotten. They reawaken and foster the Steppenwolf's dormant aesthetic sensitivity, his ability to feelingly perceive his embodied existence. Through this rekindled awareness, Haller is allowed entry into "the world of imagination." After a passionate rendezvous with Maria, the Steppenwolf recollects: "That night, however, gave me back my own life and made me recognize chance as destiny once more and see the ruins of my being as fragments of the divine" (Hesse, 1974, p. 162). "Destiny in the guise of Fortune," writes Susan Langer, "is the fabric of comedy" (1958, p. 458).

It was fortunate for Haller that he ended up in Hermine's company

and there was destiny at work in her recognition of Haller as a kindred soul. Hermine was able to recognize the Steppenwolf because, as she later tells him, "it is the same for me as for you, because I am alone exactly as you are" (Hesse, 1974, p. 143). What Haller and Hermine share is a longing for eternity, the Third Kingdom of the Spirit. "Whoever wants to live and enjoy his life today must not be like you and me," (Hesse, 1974, p. 172) Hermine tells the Steppenwolf.

Whoever wants music instead of noise, joy instead of pleasure, soul instead of gold, creative work instead of business, passion instead of foolery, finds no home in this trivial world of ours. . . . All we who ask too much and have a dimension too many could not contrive to live at all if there were not eternity at the back of time; and this is the kingdom of truth. . . . The music of Mozart belongs there and the poetry of your great poets. The saints, too . . . the image of every true act, the strength of every true feeling, belongs to eternity just as much. . . . It is the kingdom on the other side of time and appearances. It is where we belong. . . . And we have no one to guide us. Our only guide is our homesickness. (Hesse, 1974, p. 175)

Both Hermine and Haller are alone, but together they are a community, the community which the Steppenwolf had earlier been denied. Beyond the union of these two souls, Hermine has introduced Haller to the larger community of the jazz world. Hermine's lessons have been the Steppenwolf's initiation into the flair, the rhythm, the spontaneity, the style and taste of this world. In this qualitative appreciation of the artfulness appropriate to the mundane, there is a transformation of the mundane through a communal imagination. So it is that shared homesickness gains expression in an imaginative embrace of life.

Hermine tells Haller that she often thinks that Pablo may be a "saint in hiding," (Hesse, 1974, 175) one of those rare individuals who lives in the finite but breathes the air of the eternal. To Haller, Pablo appears as an enigmatic fellow with whom conversation is limited to a range of clichés. Pablo's sole domain is the jazz club; there he is a master. A consummate saxophonist, he is the heart of the bands with which he plays. His extensive knowledge and use of drugs only enhances the aura of the fantastic which exudes from his reticence. Both Hermine and Maria assure Haller of Pablo's fondness for him and Pablo's sympathy for the Steppenwolf's suffering. "Poor,

poor fellow. Look at his eyes," Pablo comments to Hermine. "Doesn't know how to laugh" (Hesse, 1974, p. 142).

Pablo is a fantastic, a variation in the tradition of stock comic characters which includes the minstrel, the fool, and the trickster. He does not occupy a set place in the order of the world, but is rather a mediator between different realms, possessing knowledge of rites of passage and hidden mysteries. Pablo, who is privy to secrets about which Haller can only guess, remains a hidden mover until the novel's finale in which he takes his place as an almost omnipotent master of ceremonies.

The period of Haller's apprenticeship expresses a shift in the workings of the comic imagination. Just as Haller is delivered up from the inferno of his tormented isolation through Hermine's intercession, the novel's vision progresses to the purgatorial level with the introduction of the feminine and the communal. The Steppenwolf has been befriended by the beautiful Hermine. Maria has brought gentleness and sensuality to his life. Even the distant Herr Pablo, eliciting Haller's assistance in caring for a sick friend, has brought the Steppenwolf into the circle of lives which transpire behind the gay abandon of the dance floor. Love, both physical and maternal, eases the pain, suffering, and alienation which dominated the novel's first movement. The weeks and days before the Masked Ball are a time of waiting, full of both anticipation and sadness. "Never," wrote Haller in this manuscript,

did I experience the feeling peculiar to these days, that strange, bittersweet alteration of mood, more powerfully than on that night before the Ball. It was happiness that I experienced. . . . Within all was significant tense with fate. . . . I was conscious all the while in my heart how fate raced on at breakneck speed, racing and chasing like a frightened horse, straight for the precipitous abyss, spurred on by dread and longing to the consummation of death. (Hesse, 1974, p. 179)

The approach of the Ball and the fantastic events which follow it signal yet again another shift in the level of the novel's comic action.

When the evening of the Ball finally does come, the Steppenwolf is filled with apprehension. Arriving late, he is at once taken aback by the festivities in progress. The wolf in him wants to flee but the commitment to Hermine forces Haller to stay and search the crowded rooms for a familiar face. Hermine not to be found, Haller succumbs to the wolf and returns to

the cloakroom to retrieve his coat. Not being able to find his check number, Haller is approached by a "small, red and yellow devil" (Hesse, 1974, p. 187) who gives him an alternate ticket. Once again, Fortune is at work. Instead of carrying a number, the ticket is a summons to the Magic Theatre, and to Hermine who is in Hell--the ball's basement bar. Immediately, the Steppenwolf is given a new lease on life.

As a marionette whose thread the operator has let go for a moment wakes to a new life after a brief paralysis of death and coma and once more plays the lively part, so did I at this jerk of the magic thread throw myself with the elasticity and eagerness of youth into the tumult. . . . (Hesse, 1974, p. 188)

The tragic hero has been resurrected and thrown head over heels into the comic rhythm of life.

Haller's entry into the night's entertainment inaugurates a new phase in the level of comedy. The Masked Ball of Steppenwolf belongs to the long tradition of celebrations that have occurred in comedy since the Greeks. Its predecessors include the Dionysian festivals of Old Comedy, medieval carnivals, and the wedding feasts in Shakespeare. With the Steppenwolf's participation in the festivities, the novel's comedy rises toward the paradisaical level in which joy and love are celebrated in a human community where flesh and spirit are no longer at war, and in which no one is worse off for the conviviality.

Madly "one-stepping" his way through the Ball's packed rooms, Haller makes his way to Hell. Enroute he pauses for a final farewell dance with the subtle and sensuous Maria who is dressed as a Spanish dancer. But he cannot linger long for he is in haste to be united with Hermine. Maria, the embodiment of the physical dimension of the feminine, gives way to the call of wholeness.

Hermine awaits Haller with the secret of the mysterious charm he had glimpsed on their first meeting. Dressed as a young man, Hermine is greeted by Haller as "Herman," the Steppenwolf's friend from youth. The spell she casts is that of a "hermaphrodite" (Hesse, 1974, p. 190) --the trickster, guide of souls wed to the lure of beauty. The understanding she provokes transcends the division between sexes. Together, the two "men" sip champagne and speak of their youth, both his and hers. Their conversation is an imaginal return to the Garden:

those years of childhood when the capacity for love, in its first youth, embraces not only both sexes, but all and everything, sensuous and spiritual, and endows all things with the spell of love and a fairy tale ease of transformation such as in later years comes again only to the chosen few and to poets, and to them rarely. (Hesse, 1974, p. 190)

Competing as friendly rivals, Herman and Haller take to the dance floor playfully courting and wooing unsuspecting ladies. Herr Haller has come to the Ball without a costume, but had hidden behind the snarls of the Steppenwolf for most of the evening. Now the magical events' twists and turns work to unmask the lone wolf. In the heat of Hell, Haller discards his persona--much to the surprise of one of his dancing partners: "One wouldn't know you. You were so dull and flat before.' Then I recognized the girl who had called me 'Old Growler' a few hours before" (Hesse, 1974, p. 192). Refigured, the Steppenwolf is momentarily released from the dichotomies which tore apart his soul. Hermine's dance lessons had well prepared Haller for the Ball but he outdoes himself performing new and unfamiliar dances with grace and ease.

His apprenticeship complete, the Steppenwolf is now ready to encounter the fullness of the feminine. Hermine has slipped away only to return in fresh costume. She reappears as a Pierrette, a fittingly comic character. And the stage upon which she gives herself to the Steppenwolf has too been transformed--through imagination. "Everything had a new dimension, a deeper meaning. Everything was fanciful and symbolic" (Hesse, 1974, p. 191). As Hermine and Haller dance, Hermine becomes the Feminine in a way that she had reserved for just this moment. "She knew that there was no more to do to make me fall in love with her. . . . All the women of this fevered night . . . had become one, the one whom I held in my arms. . . . On and on went this nuptial dance" (Hesse, 1974, p. 196).

Union with Hermine symbolizes the integration of the Steppenwolf's divided nature. Hermine is Haller's counterpart, his opposite and yet his completion. As a courtesan who has brought Haller back into the joys of physical existence and as Haller's spiritual companion, Hermine is a true descendent of the remarkable women in Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare's teaching women dressed as boys, Hermine sheds her disguise in favor of a wedding gown. The union of Hermine and Haller celebrates one of the highest goals in Shakespearean comedy: the merger of spiritual and romantic love, the union of matrimonial and sexual joining.

This union of kindred souls, which occurs during the ball's final hours, has been foreshadowed throughout the novel. "Doesn't your learning reveal to you that the reason why I please you and mean so much to you," Hermine had earlier told the Steppenwolf, "is because there's something in me that answers and understands you?" (Hesse, 1974, p. 123). In Hermine, Haller has discovered the mirror into his own soul spoken of earlier in the Treatise. In a pivotal example of the novel's technique of double perception, Haller had previously suspected that his beautiful and somewhat mystical friend was in fact a magical looking glass: "It seems to me," mused Haller, "that it was not, perhaps, her own thoughts but mine. She had read them like a clairvoyant, breathed them in and given them back, so that they had a form of their own and came to me as something new" (Hesse, 1974, p. 176). The Steppenwolf's apprenticeship to Hermine has been a working out of the bright idea of finding a magic mirror which set the comic action in movement.

As the fever pitch of the Masked Ball gives way to the novel's finale, the Magic Theatre, Steppenwolf makes a highly experimental departure from not only realistic fiction, but also from the traditional movement of comic action. The irony of paradisaal comedy transpiring in Hell opens the way for the novel's third movement. Haller had to descend to the most hellish reaches of his soul in order to encounter his whole self. In the discovering of that self, hell is transformed. However, the movement of imagination does not stop with that; the comic action reaches beyond the marriage of Hermine and Haller to the consummation of that union. The third movement leads from the integration of the self to the exploration of the self's potentialities in imagination.

As the morning sun creeps in upon the nocturnal revelries, the exhausted participants slowly disperse and the grand Masked Ball comes to an end. Pablo, attired in a "gorgeous silk smoking jacket," appears with a proposition for the Steppenwolf: "Brother Harry, I invite you to a little entertainment. For madmen only, and one price only--your mind. Are you ready?" (Hesse, 1974, p. 198). Together, Pablo, Haller, and Hermine ascend to one of the building's upper rooms. As a Hermes figure, Pablo is the guide who leads souls across the border between the mundane and the imaginal, but there is an additional dimension of Pablo's character which also shows itself. Previously, Haller had scarcely heard Pablo utter "two consecutive sentences," (Hesse, 1974, p. 199) yet in the "rare atmosphere" the small, round room, Pablo discusses at length the Steppenwolf's desire for the other

Kingdom. As Pablo speaks, a thought comes to Haller: "Was it not perhaps, I who made him talk, spoke, indeed with his voice? Was it not, too, my own soul that contemplated me out of his black eyes like a lost and frightened bird, just as it had out of Hermine's gray ones?" (Hesse, 1974, p. 198). The fantastic Pablo is the figure of the wisdom of Haller's own soul, just as much a magic mirror for the Steppenwolf as is the lovely Hermine.

In this already surreal setting, Pablo offers his guests strange cigarettes and an aromatic elixir. As the effects of the drugs begin to take hold, Pablo continues his discourse. "Only within yourself," he instructs the Steppenwolf, "exists the other reality for which you long. I can give you nothing that has not already its being within yourself. I can throw open to you no picture gallery but your own soul" (Hesse, 1974, p. 200). With that, Pablo holds up a small mirror in which are reflected the lone wolf and the suffering man who cohabitate in Haller's inner being.

Leading them out of the room and into the inner corridor of a theatre, Pablo motions to the many doors, each of which opens into a private theatre box. (It should be noted that the name of the building in which this transpires is the "Globe," the same as that of the theatre in which Shakespeare's magic was performed.) To enter the Magic Theatre, Haller must be relieved of his "so-called personality" (Hesse, 1974, p. 201); he must break loose from the tyranny of his ego. Pablo tells Haller that he must "introduce" himself "by means of a trifling suicide, since that is the custom" (Hesse, 1974, p. 202). Turning the Steppenwolf to face a wall-sized mirror, Pablo urges Haller to cast off the "spectacles" (Hesse, 1974, p. 201) of his personality. Enthralled, Haller looks on as one by one numerous images of himself--young, old, child, man, every age and style of appearance imaginable--appear and then shatter into bits and pieces.

Haller's desire for suicide, the telos which if it had been reached would have turned Steppenwolf to tragedy, has been de-literalized to reveal the psychological necessity of Haller's breaking free of the shackles of a stifling and rigidly divided ego. The "trifling suicide" (Hesse, 1974, p. 202) required to gain entrance to the Magic Theatre, the loss of one's mind as the price of admission are not a tragic ending of life, but rather a comic release into the fullness of life and its variety of possibilities. The de-structuring of the ego is the catharsis toward which Steppenwolf aims.

De-realizing of mundane reality and the realizing of metaphorical psychological reality are enacted again and again in the novel. Haller's suicide is the death of the duality which has caused him so much suffering. Released

from the literal division between man and wolf, Haller is freed to experience the multiplicity of the self--the multitude of varying personalities which constitute the human soul. This experience is facilitated by Herr Pablo's Magic Theatre in which imagination is let loose to perform the dance of life.

Pablo and Hermine have disappeared and so Haller proceeds to survey the Theatre's maze of doors, each entrance having transcribed on it a different alluring invitation: "Downfall of the West. Moderate Prices. Never Surpassed . . . Laughing Tears. Cabinet of Humor . . . All Girls Are Yours . . . Marvelous Taming of the Steppenwolf . . ." (Hesse, 1974, p. 205ff). In the course of his drug induced journey through the Theatre, Haller enters five of the rooms. Inside of each he lives a fantasy whose theme has already been either stated or implied earlier in the novel. The fantasies deal with the multiplicity of personality, the crisis of culture and technology in the modern world, the absurdity of Haller's man/wolf split, creativity and guilt, and the full appreciation of sexuality and the feminine. These comic episodes, which vary in both style and content, all serve to either compensate for some deficiency or dissolve a fixation in the Steppenwolf's psychological make-up.

At the close of the longest fantasy, that of the feminine, Haller goes in search of Hermine as he is now prepared to embrace her in the union celebrated by the nuptial dance. Entering the last booth on the corridor, Haller finds "a simple and beautiful picture. . . . On the rug on the floor lay two naked figures, the beautiful Hermine and the beautiful Pablo, side by side in a deep sleep of exhaustion after love's play" (Hesse, 1974, p. 238). Haller, discovering that a knife has replaced the magic mirror in his pocket given by Pablo, stabs Hermine. Still in a dream state, Haller watches the figures only to himself awaken when Pablo emerges from his blissful slumber. Pablo covers the dead/sleeping figure of Hermine and then exits, leaving Haller alone with the body of his beloved.

The Steppenwolf has failed the test of his re-education. Bourgeois jealousy has lead to a transgression of the Theatre's code of unreality. The ego's possessiveness has perverted the play of imagination and brought on a violent, destructive fantasy which Haller mistakenly believes to be reality. Hermine is not dead, but neither has the wedding of the Steppenwolf's dichotomous personality been consummated. In terms of the novel's comedy, the paradisaical level is not sustained. The promise of wholeness, held out during the Masked Ball, remains unfulfilled. However, the fall is not back to the infernal as the play of the novel's imagination is not yet complete.

When Pablo later returns to the booth, Haller perceives him as Mozart, one of the Immortals. The theme of the Immortals and their realm has been constant throughout *Steppenwolf*. Even before coming upon the Treatise, Haller had momentarily visited the other world, "a cool and star bright" realm while listening to classical music. The Treatise itself spoke not only of, but also from the perspective of the Immortals. Haller had encountered the Immortal Goethe in dreams, and in one of the Magic Theatre's fantasies, he had conversed with Mozart. Goethe and Mozart figure as, what Northrop Frye terms, "chorus character"-- characters who give voice to the same perspective as the chorus and who are also involved in the action of the story. Pablo's appearance as Mozart further reinforces his roles as wise man and as a psychagogue who moves back and forth between the novel's two realms. In Pablo/Mozart the apparent dichotomy between jazz and classical music, between the sensual and the sublime is reconciled.

The "two world" motif is both a persistent element in comedy, stretching back to Aristophanes and continuing through Shakespeare to the present, and integral to Hesse's chiliastic vision (to again borrow a phrase from Ziolkowski). In *Steppenwolf*, Hesse experiments with the traditional Christian version of this vision by rendering the simultaneous existence of the fallen world and the imaginal Third Kingdom of the Spirit. The vehicle of experimentation is, as has been noted, the technique of double perception which gives literary embodiment to the coexistence of the two kingdoms.

Steppenwolf's fallen world is divided into three separate realms, each with a different relationship to the world of the Immortals. The bourgeois world has no inkling of the other realm. The *Steppenwolf's* isolated, subjective world of introspection and philosophical speculation glimpses the other world but lacks the vital constitution to sustain the vision. The jazz world, on the other hand, acknowledges its deficient condition but proceeds to embrace life relying on homesickness for the other world as orientation for living in a fallen world. This highly romantic view of the jazz world should not be taken as a literal advocating of drugs, prostitution, etc., but rather as a metaphor for the embodied imagination--an imagination that sees the immortal in and through the finite. Pablo and Hermine are agents of this imagination and the role of the Magic Theatre has been to initiate the *Steppenwolf* into its workings.

The archetypal pattern of comic action begins in the distress of the fallen world, moves into the other world in which there is a metamorphosis which is the comic resolution, then goes back into the normal world. *Steppenwolf*

closely follows this pattern with the comic resolution taking the form of Haller's resolving or dissolving, if only temporarily and albeit incompletely, the dichotomies of his fallen existence: man/wolf, spirit/body, the either/or consciousness in which he has led his tortured life. In *Steppenwolf*, as in all comedy, the motive for the movement into the other realm is not as much escape, as it is mimesis. Haller is to learn to imitate the Immortals. Because he has failed in this by, as Pablo tells him, "stabbing with knives and spattering our pretty image with the mud of reality," (Hesse, 1974, p. 247) Pablo and the Magic Theatre have one more lesson for the *Steppenwolf* before he is returned to the normal world.

Pablo/Mozart brings a radio into the room where Haller sits with the motionless figure of Hermine. To the *Steppenwolf's* ears, the radio spits out a "mixture of bronchial slime and chewed rubber," (Hesse, 1974, p. 241) not music. Like the gramophone, the radio is symbolic to Haller of a decadent modernity's "war of extermination against art" (Hesse, 1974, p. 241). This symbolism is transformed through Mozart's instruction. "You hear," the Immortal tells the disbelieving Haller,

not only a Handel who, disfigured by radio, is all the same, in this most ghastly of disguises still divine; you hear as well and you observe, most worthy sir, a most admirable symbol of all life. . . . Everywhere it obtrudes its mechanism, its activity, its dreary exigencies and vanity between the ideal and the real, between orchestra and the ear. All life is so, my child, and we must let it be so; and, if we are not asses, laugh at it . . . learn to listen. . . . Learn what is to be taken seriously and laugh at the rest. (Hesse, 1974, p. 243)

This is exactly the lesson Haller has failed to learn in the Theatre, the lesson of laughter, the knowledge of what is to be taken seriously. As punishment for stabbing "the reflection of a girl with the reflection of a knife," (Hesse, 1974, p. 243) Haller is laughed out of the Magic Theatre and barred from re-entering for a period of twelve hours.

If he is to endure life, it is the laughter of the Immortals which the *Steppenwolf* needs to emulate. On numerous occasions, in dreams and fantasy, Haller has heard the "beautiful and frightful," other worldly laughter of the Immortals. As Haller had entered the Magic Theatre, Pablo had told him, "You are here in a school of humor. You are to learn to laugh. Now, true humor begins when a man ceases to take himself seriously" (Hesse, 1974, p.

202). Humor accepts the world; having a sense of humor is simultaneously a depreciation of the ego and appreciation of life. Humor is antidote to the deadly, literal minded seriousness with which Haller has divided his being into frowning man and leering wolf.

Integral to comedy's didactical dimension is the castigation of particular vices singled out during the course of the action. In *Steppenwolf* that vice is ego inflation and domination resultant in a will turned against life. "Self-hate," observes the bourgeois author of the introduction in regard to the *Steppenwolf*, "is really the same thing as sheer egoism, and in the long run breeds the same cruel isolation and despair" (Hesse, 1974, p. 12). The "tragedian" Haller, as Mozart knowingly asserts, "must apprehend the humor of life, its gallows-humor" (Hesse, 1974, p. 246). Faced by the finitude and suffering of human existence, the *Steppenwolf* must learn to laugh as it is only laughter which will liberate him from the dark and lonely throws of despair.

To the *Steppenwolves* of this world, Haller has read in the *Treatise*, "a third kingdom is open ... an imaginary and yet sovereign world, humor" (Hesse, 1974, p. 62). The *Steppenwolf* had all but entered that kingdom when Pablo had revealed the mirror reflection of his dual existence.

For a moment there was a convulsion deep within me too, a faint but painful one like remembrance, or like homesickness, or like remorse. Then the slight oppression gave way to a new feeling like that a man feels when a tooth as been extracted with cocaine, a sense of relief and a letting out of a deep breath, and of wonder, at the same time, that it has not hurt in the least. And this feeling was accomplished by a buoyant exhilaration and a desire to laugh so irresistible that I was compelled to give way to it. (Hesse, 1974, pp. 202-203)

Laughter appears with the collapse of the given; it comes on in the breakdown of dichotomies. Laughter is the spontaneous accompaniment of release from stuckness. It is the invocation of the body's participation in magical thinking. Having a sense of humor means having a way out of the ego's bondage; it means embodied imagination, the capacity to perceive the invisible in and through the visible. "[H]umor alone," contends the *Treatise*, "(perhaps the most inborn and brilliant achievement of the spirit) attains to the impossible and brings every aspect of human existence within the rays of its prism" (Hesse, 1974, p. 63).

Steppenwolf's laughter is the light of imagination transforming a fallen world. Not coincidentally, Haller uses metaphors of light to describe the

laughter of the Immortals. Laughter and magical thinking form a unified vision. As the one dissolves appearances, the other perceives essences. This is what Pablo/Mozart had sought to teach the Steppenwolf in tuning his ear to the radio of life.

Suddenly, Mozart is there no longer, only Pablo who offers Haller another “charming cigarette” and mildly chastises the Steppenwolf for not having “learned the game better” (Hesse, 1974, p. 247). Exhausted, Haller’s mind drifts under the narcotic influence of the “sweet and heavy smoke” (Hesse, 1974, p. 248). In the twilight of a deep sleep, Haller comes to a new awareness. He begins to understand the Magic Theatre and the world of the Immortals.

A glimpse of its meaning had stirred in my reason and I was determined to begin the game afresh. I would sample its tortures once more and shutter again at its senselessness. I would traverse not once more, but often, the hell of my inner being. . . . One day I would be a better hand at the game. One day I would learn how to laugh. Pablo was waiting for me, and Mozart, too. (Hesse, 1974, p. 248)

When he wakes up, the Steppenwolf will return to the tortures of his inner being, but he is not damned to the hellish existence with which his narrative began. The comic imagination has interceded to transform the lone wolf’s fate. The union of magical thinking and laughter has seen through Haller’s tragic dilemma in the affirmation of the dance of life over the despair of death. Haller will not be consumed by the desire for suicide. That fate has been averted; tragedy has been foresworn. No, Haller’s hell is, at the close of the novel, purgatorial, not infernal. The justice meted out by the Immortals condemns Haller to go on living; time is on the side of life and Fortune. Pablo and Mozart have offered fellowship, and the world of jazz and the realm of the Immortals remain opened to the Steppenwolf. There will be other balls and journeys once more through the Magic Theatre. There is hope that the Steppenwolf’s destructive split between spirit and matter will give way to the joys of the embodied imagination and that he will, in time, learn to laugh.

Conclusion

Once Steppenwolf has been seen as a work of the comic imagination, those interpretations which would make of it a paean to drug use or which

one-sidedly emphasize the theme of alienation are recognized as the misunderstandings Hesse lamented. But with that established, other questions arise concerning the novel's artistic merits, its particular comic vision and its psychological character, and the relationship of that vision to contemporary culture. On these questions, then a few final comments.

Appreciation of *Steppenwolf's* sonata structure quells criticisms of formlessness. Indeed the novel's complex composition is a credit to Hesse's craftsmanship. His employment of double perception in weaving the fantastic into the very fabric of realistic narrative is quite masterful and reveals a flattering debt to German Romanticism (Ziolkowski, 1965). The novel's final movement, the Magic Theatre, is a tour de force of imagination despite the interpretative difficulties it may cause casual readers. Still, Hesse too often falls into clichés and has the unfortunate habit of using his characters to make editorial statements whose intent might be better conveyed in the novel's action or descriptive passages. The net result is that some of the work's metaphors appear contrived instead of natural, the reader is told things he or she should be shown, and on occasion, important concepts are left hanging without sufficient textual support. While these shortcomings do detract from *Steppenwolf*, they do not substantially undermine its literary achievements, make the novel any less interesting or exciting, or lessen an appreciation of its comedy.

Steppenwolf is undoubtedly a psychological comedy, partaking as it does of the complex and paradoxical realm of interiority usually reserved to tragedies. Much has been made of the influence of Jungian psychology in the novel. The circumstances surrounding the novel's composition lend support to this view. Hesse had undergone a course of analytical treatment with a student of C.G. Jung and had even had several sessions with Jung himself. Motifs from Jung's psychology are scattered throughout the book. Much of the language in the "Treatise on the *Steppenwolf*" has a distinctly Jungian ring. The novel's action takes place as Haller approaches fifty, the stage of life in which Jung taught that true individuation occurs. The object of Haller's quest is easily seen as the Self, conceived in Jungian terms. Hermine is an Anima figure, the feminine side of Haller's personality which he must go through to reach the Self. And the wolf in Haller is clearly his Shadow, the dark yet vital side of his character. Further examples could be sighted *ad infinitum*.

Jung's psychology proved useful to Hesse not only because of that psychology's emphasis on imagination as a primary dimension of human

existence but also because of the spirituality inherent in Jungian psychology. When he wrote *Steppenwolf*, Hesse was convinced that the only way toward a transformation of society was through the rebirth of individuals. And, because he perceived the crisis of the modern world in spiritual terms, the desired rebirth had also to be of a spiritual nature. Thus in *Steppenwolf*, Hesse appropriated many of the concepts and the dynamic of Jung's personality theory, as well as its goal of individuation: spiritual and psychological wholeness attained through the self-realization of the individual. In correspondence Hesse wrote: "Psychoanalysis has at bottom no other goal than to create a space within oneself in which God's voice can be heard" (quoted in Freedman, 1973, p. 160). In *Steppenwolf*, that space is the imagination and the voice is the laughter of the Immortals.

Despite the novel's spiritual and metaphysical overtones, partially the result of the Jungian influence and partially the expression of Hesse's own spiritual imagination, *Steppenwolf's* comedy is open to interpretation on a more phenomenological level. Hesse has created an "objective correlative," to use T.S. Elliot's famous term, for the *Steppenwolf's* psychological life. Witness the comments in the introduction by the bourgeois author concerning "the truth of the experiences related in Haller's manuscripts":

I have no doubt that they are for the most part fictitious, not however, in the sense of arbitrary inventions. They are rather the deeply lived spiritual events which he has attempted to express by giving them the form of tangible experiences. . . . I have no doubt that they the fantastic happenings have some basis in real occurrences. (Hesse, 1974, p. 22)

Haller's manuscripts do not portray "tangible" reality, that is, objective reality perceived from the bourgeois perspective. The reality in which the manuscripts find their ground is not a factual, literal reality, but rather metaphorical psychological reality. They provide a provocative account of psychological reality, a reality of metaphorical reflection lived through the magic mirrors of the world, things and other people (Romanynshyn, 1982). Two examples from Haller's account are particularly illustrative. The first is the *Steppenwolf's* insight that the "playthings" of the jazz life style confer life and magic to a dead material world. Second is Haller's recognition of Hermine as a mirror into his own soul. Indeed, Hermine observes that we should all be such mirrors for each other.

The perception of life as a reality of metaphorical reflection is what characterizes Steppenwolf as a psychological comedy. Accordingly, the transcendence made possible through Haller's re-education--which may legitimately be described as an initiation into psychological reality--is not an overcoming of physical existence but rather the realization of possibilities which go beyond the stagnant, deadly situation of Haller's ego domination and absorption in a literally dual existence. These possibilities are opened because psychological reality is the disruption of the dichotomies and divisions which had previously structured the Steppenwolf's life. With the breakdown of the Steppenwolf's split between mind and body, subject and object, comes the laughter of release and the revivification of the mundane world provocative of the wonder which accompanies metaphorical psychological reflection.

In creating this account of psychological life, Hesse's art and vision are one. By making his readers experience metaphorical reality through double perception, Hesse disrupts the very dichotomies from which the Steppenwolf himself must gain release. Hesse realized that to some extent, we are all Steppenwolves caught in the divisions between subject and object, inner and outer, mind and matter. We are all subject to the homelessness of modernity. Little wonder that the 1960s' counter-culture, a generation who felt most acutely that its society was held by a materialism that was dead and a spirituality which was empty, should be attracted by Steppenwolf.

To endure life, one must embrace it through humor and imagination. To overcome alienation, one must reorient one's perception of reality, not take refuge in despair. This is the vision of human life that places Steppenwolf within the comic tradition. It is as well the re-visioning of contemporary reality which has given Hesse's psychological comedy its claim to authentic cultural relevance.

References

- Bolby, M. (1967). *Herman Hesse: His Mind and his Art*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Cowan, L. (1984). "Introduction: The Comic Terrain." In L. Cowan (Ed.) *The Terrain of Comedy* (pp. 1-18). Dallas: The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture.
- Freedman, R. (1973). "Person and Persona: The Magic Mirrors of Steppenwolf." In T. Ziolkowski (Ed.), *Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays*

- (pp. 153-182). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Frye, N. (1957). *Anatomy of criticism: Four essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hesse, H. (1974). *Steppenwolf*. B. Creighton & J. Mileck (Trans.). New York: Bantam Books.
- Langer, S. (1958). "The Comic Rhythm." In S. Barnet, M. Bernam & W. Burto (Eds.) *Eight Great Comedies* (pp. 456-460). New York: The New American Library, Inc.
- Mann, T. (1967). "Introduction." In H. Hesse, *Damian* (pp. 1-2) (M. Roloff & M. Lebeck, Trans.) New York: Bantam Books.
- Ortega Y Gasset, J. (1963). *Meditations on Quixote* (E. Rugg & D. Martin, Trans.) New York: W. V. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Romanyshyn, R. (1982). *Psychological Life from Science to Metaphor*. Austin: University of Texas Press
- Ziolkowski, T. (1973) "Introduction." In T. Ziolkowski (Ed.) *Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays* (pp. 1-20). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Ziolkowski, T. (1965). *The Novels of Herman Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Liz Bradfield

PRELUDE TO *APPROACHING ICE*

*Because this life, this alarm clock time card
percolator direct deposit income tax stop light*

seems vast and blank and numbing.

*Tell me secret orchids hide
between the black rock and the ice.*

*Tell me a wild bird sings deep
in the crevasses, wingstrokes cracking air.*

*Tell me there's a surface we can walk on
lidding miles of plumed and luminescent fish.*

I'm ready to be amazed. I'm longing for it.

POLAR EXPLORER

JULES SEBASTIAN CESAR DUMONT D'URVILLE—1840

For a day he sailed through bergs and along a face
of ice. Land? The bellies of penguins, when slit,
scattered stones on the deck, a granite morse
that said rock grounded what they passed. Adélie Land,
he called it. Named not for patron or ruler
or favored lieutenant, but wife.

*... an act of justice, a sort of obligation I have fulfilled
to give her, after losing three children, after his years away,
something to perpetuate...my deep and lasting gratitude.*

Rock had been his fame before. Twenty years earlier,
in Greece, a farmer showed him a statue of Venus
so beautiful d'Urville had to have it for France.
Dragging her back to the ship, chased
by bandits, her broken arms were left on the rock
of Melos. Her body stands still in the Louvre.
What did he lose to Antarctica? Time. Men
to dysentery and scurvy. The boyhood
of his own boy. I wonder what she thinks of it now,
standing in her climate-controlled room,
the business of hands taken. I like to think she tracked
his journey and return, heard among visitors
whispers of his end: a train wreck coming home
from a day at Versailles with his wife and son.

The land, the statue are still where he left them,
and each Austral summer his wife's other namesake,
a penguin, hunts up stones for its nest,
presents them to a mate, steals more
from other nests and then, until the chick
fledges, guards them as if rightful.

ON THE LONGING OF EARLY EXPLORERS

I would prefer one hour of conversation with a native of terra australis incognita to one with the most learned man in Europe.

—Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, ~ 1740

Before satellites eyed the earth's whole surface
through the peephole of orbit, before
we all were tracked by numbers trailing from us
like a comet's tail—O if only,
they'd say in quaint accents and obscure
sentence structures—if only the unsullied
could be discovered, if only, once found,
it could speak its own nobility and let us
empathize. Poignant, the despair that itched
beneath their powdered wigs, their longing to touch
the unspoiled, their sense that the world was already ruined.

[First published in *The Gay and Lesbian Review*]

POLAR EXPLORER ADRIEN DE GERLACHE,
FIRST TO WINTER BELOW THE ANTARTIC CIRCLE (1898)

What hope at the outset: to put
his small nation in the running. To seek
a pure and scientific aim untroubled
by what his king, Leopold, was seeking
in the Congo.

 The Belgica stuck on purpose?
Too proud to say it was error and pride
that kept them south too long? There were not
enough lamps for the unsunned days.
Not enough bags of flour or books.
They were trapped in pack ice.

 North
of them, under the same crown, children
and wives were hostage to rubber. Bodies
dropped in a dark river to become
unrecognizable. Easy, there, to lose flesh to rot.

Under de Gerlache, a man was buried at sea.
They trudged out from the ship's stuck hull,
hauling him on a sledge. They hacked
a grave, opening ice to the sea below
that still moved, teemed, heaved
through the Austral winter.

 A few short words—
and through them, uneven reports and crackings
as the grave was opened again,
again to the sea.

And then he was gone
to them, though his body
would not have gone to bone
quickly, chill allowing his flesh
to crawled by sea spiders
and limpets for years.

So was he erased? And were the bodies
in the river of Africa erased? No
headstones for either but memory. The sea
holds them all now. And in the water all have tongues.

[First published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*]

WIVES OF THE POLAR EXPLORERS

Some hunk of ice or rock named after them, an address,
a memory for the men to write to those cold months, adding
to the pages then carrying them home.

Adélie d'Urville

The send-off is where she's most familiar, starched
petticoats at dockside attempting to empathize
with the ice-filled, cracking sea

Eva Nansen

her husband's headed for. Good-bye, dear heart—if
you lose a finger, string it for me as a charm
to beckon you home. Lucky if she

Kathleen Scott

has a fortune's backing because what bills
could the cold freight, the new maps,
the slim discoveries and rough ventures pay?

Josephine Peary

In the swelling absence, often,
a child born with his nose, his
remembered mouth. Of course

Lucy Henson

the return was worse. His restless, frostbit
limp, his early-aged eyes unable to focus
in the temperate air, his immediate schemes

Emily Shackleton

to leave again—or the household inspected
and the crew found wanting, his command
chafing. It could go either way.

Elizabeth Byrd

Either way, no easy slide back
into a shared sleep. I missed you, I missed
you each would say, trying to understand

Liz Bradfield

through the strange dialects discovered in separation
of solitude, of companionship.

We Need To Talk About Eva: The Demise of the Phallic Mother

Sylvie Gambaudo
Durham University

Lionel Shriver's novel, We Need To Talk About Kevin fictionalises the experience of motherhood through a sensational storyline relating the events that led a teenager, Kevin, on a killing spree. Faced with the malevolence of her child, the narrator, Eva explores her internal conflicts, as her son's perceived evilness leads her to acknowledge her ambivalence towards motherhood. Through the novel, the essay investigates how the construction and destruction of identity is inherently linked to a limitative social framework. The main protagonists' non-conformist ambition leads them to encounter the limits of social signification, initially translated into an obsessive dedication to the de(con)struction of authority and ultimately to choose social self-effacement over empowerment.

Lionel Shriver's *We Need To Talk About Kevin* (Kevin) is a retrospective account of the narrator's life up to and past the moment her son goes on a killing spree in his American high school. The novel was hugely successful and won the British Orange Prize in June 2005. Part of Kevin's success lies in its participating in a genre that also saw Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* rewarded with the Cannes Palme d'Or and prize for best director in 2003. The increasing occurrence of teenage high school killing frenzies and the intense emotional response they elicited called for new narratives to at least chronicle, if not explain, how the ordinary and somewhat colourless boy-next-door could possibly metamorphose into the monsters the tabloids depicted. Kevin is certainly one such narrative. But disguised behind a sensational story line, it explicitly paints an awkward picture given from the perspective of the killer's mother's, a narrator now looking to find answers and sympathy for her predicament. Shriver constructs her narrator, Eva, as a well educated, self-analytic, white, middle-class, socially affluent, career woman who 'does' motherhood by the book: she has researched her subject, found the ideal partner, given up work to dedicate herself to the task, etc.. This goes a long way to teasing sympathy and curiosity out of Western readers who can but identify with the benevolence and good, hard-working life ethics of the character. Surely the epitome of the good citizen and the good mother can only be innocent in the making of a serial killer. But Eva also admits that behind her good intentions hid an intense frustration with her 'mother' status, a feeling of having been cheated by society and a dislike for her son from the moment of his conception. Although Kevin is no feminist manifesto the

novel nevertheless presents strong feminist themes that cannot be ignored. We can see in Eva's despair the quintessential expression of a doubt about female anatomy and destiny. Parents and parents-to-be also found the narrative spelt out fears and/or disappointments they secretly harboured that having children was not all it was cut out to be. Shriver presents us with an impolite narrative dealing with social themes most would prefer to keep under silence. Partly, there is an irrational belief that suggesting nurture as that which fabricates evil in the individual may poison the good parent vibe that each of us would innately be endowed with, and incite us to poison the child. Evilness would be better left unthought, especially if one is a parent. Eva asks the question of whether her ambivalence vis-à-vis motherhood may have contributed to the making of a murderer. But the question is so entwined with Kevin's own existential ambivalence that it becomes impossible to answer. Through Eva's complex and contradictory description of the family unit, Shriver creates a microcosm of power struggles, engaging as she progresses with impertinent issues of women's desire, the place of the mother in the family and society, and parental responsibility in a culture imbued with women's natural duty of care and the even more chauvinistic belief in the mother's obligation to love the son. Indeed, Kevin carries a strong oedipal undertone: there is the obsessive attention the mother and son give one another; the storyline resembles a modern version of Sophocles' classic tragedy as the son kills his father and little sister to become the only one in his mother's life; the mother ultimately capitulates to embrace her son, etc.. Given the strong oedipal theme, it seems impossible to avoid a Freudian reading of Kevin. But my interest in Kevin and his struggle with the paternal realm will only be as a means to discussing Eva's phallicism and subsequent castration, alongside a questioning of woman's agency as mother in a society which plainly makes good mothering rhyme with disempowerment, and of Eva's desperate search for a new frontier to rival her life of unwanted domesticity.

A traditional oedipal interpretation of Kevin would seek to extract from the narrative the story of a protagonist caught between his desire for the mother and his fight to suppress the father. In Kevin, the oedipal triangle is easily found. The character of Kevin is on a mission to destroy instances of authority, not so much because they threaten his desire for his mother, but because he sees them as inauthentic and 'dumb'. Kevin's oedipal fight is less about the traditional crossing of swords with obvious (and thus boring to him) markers of paternal authority than his engagement with more subtle

forms of paternal instances that appeal to the complexity of his intellect. The meticulously planned destruction of schoolteachers, fellow students, his father and his little sister result in his media notoriety as a spectacular killer, an image Kevin relishes and cultivates. But it also entraps Kevin as the iconic dissatisfied adolescent whose killings are no more than a desperate cry to be noticed. Yet, in his value system, the huge fame he gains from his actions is only a peripheral achievement and an offshoot to the real aim and the real audience whose interest Kevin wishes to catch. While he is dedicated to exposing the 'dumb-ing' and numbing effect of social organisation, Kevin is above all invested in a fight against what could be described as his mother's phallicism. Whether Kevin's destruction of Eva's phallicism is an intentional plot on the part of a son eager to strip his mother of her potency to find her maternal side or whether it is Eva who perceives Kevin as the annihilation of her phallicism remains unanswered in the novel. Both narratives co-exist and constitute the novel's intrigue. Shriver's narrative presents us with the construction of phallicism as anti-thetic to 'mother' and ultimately as destructive of Eva, as if 'being woman' required to choose between phallicism and motherhood, and the combination of both necessarily signalled a woman's demise.

The concept of the phallic woman is explained by psychoanalytic theory and derives from the theory of child sexual development. The very young child supposedly perceives the mother as an all-powerful entity, capable of conferring life and death onto the child. Assuming all individuals are invested in their own survival and that survival results in different patterns of behaviour at different stages of one's development, most of the newborn's energy is invested in its main activity, feeding. The 'maternal breast', a generic term coined by Melanie Klein (1988) and locating maternal care upon the body of the mother, is at this early stage where survival resides and where maternal agency is perceived. As the child matures, motor functions and psychological capacity modify the individual's apprehension of his/her environment. No longer bound to the maternal breast, libidinal investment changes focus and around the age of seven, the child notices that social conventions segregate individuals into two distinct categories, each governed by very different rules and granted differing means of empowerment. The basis of this difference hinges on the presence/absence of a penis. The young individual comes to understand the correlation between sex organ (penis) and its symbolic function (phallus). Thus the notion of 'phallus' emerges as that which empowers the individual. The passage from the notion of penis to that of phallus and

the good adjustment of the individual to their environment are dependent upon the assimilation of cultural imperatives the value of which change throughout history. The value we (Westerners) give to 'phallus' is a legacy of that which emerged in Antiquity. Laplanche and Pontalis (1994) surmise that the phallus is a transcendence of the penis. Through what could be termed 'rites of signification', the possession of the phallus is proof of the individual's successful passage from chaotic being to cohesive intelligence. The realisation of sexual difference and of the significance of 'phallus' dictates that the child's libidinal investment should turn away from the breast and towards the phallus, now the signifier of empowerment and survival. This necessitates a change in the way the child perceives the mother. The once all-powerful mother must be deposed and exchanged for the more helpless figure of the castrated mother. For psychoanalysis, the concept of the phallic mother arises out of the context where the child disavows the absence of a penis in the mother and attempts to re-attribute the penis to her body, a substitute penis, a phallus then. The phallic woman is thus an Oedipal reconstruction of the pre-Oedipal mother. We find her in various representations where the woman is construed as having a phallus. Her representation takes many forms but can be subdivided into three.

Close to the traditional theory I have just described, phallicism is found in the fantasy of a female holding the phallus inside her body. This is a legacy of Melanie Klein's 'combined parent' where the pre-oedipal child imagines the mother is 'complete' and possessing the penis inside her. The preservation of the phallic mother would be a refusal, on the part of the individual, to accept the mother's castration. Since Freud, psychoanalytic theories have by and large followed such views. They partake in a phallus-centred construction of men and women, which although useful by contributing a theoretical foundation that explains the possible origin of phallicism in the individual, are also limiting as it traps the individual in a polarised dialectic s/he cannot escape. The other two understandings offer more scope for development.

The second form of phallicism in women is probably the most common. The phallus becomes an appendage to the image of the female. Here the construction of 'phallic woman' sees her use objects as prosthetic-penises. The prosthesis goes beyond the graphically representational strap-on. In the film *Alien* (1986), females are the perfect illustration of this: Ripley loads herself with ammunition and a machine gun that triples up as a fire and grenade launcher; similarly, Vasquez carries her oversized gun extended in

front her crotch emulating an erect penis. The theory that constructs and seeks to explain 'phallic woman' as the attempted effort to append the phallus to her body has some drawbacks. The female desiring the phallus would be no more than simulating male biology. She would be in effect desiring that anatomy, thus thinking her own inferior or incomplete (and that of man superior and whole). This theory could be convincing if it were not for the fact that, since Jacques Lacan, men are also constructed as desiring the phallus. From the death-bearing gun to the roaring engine, the male hero is repeatedly portrayed using objects as prosthetic-penises. But while both males and females are now seen as equally desiring the phallus, a second motive for man's superior phallicism springs up. Where the female's performance is understood as a masquerade of a biology that is ultimately not her's, the male's is understood as an extension of his own body reality. The object endowed with phallicism (here the gun or muscles), signifies something very different in both sexes: women fake potency while men embody it. To put it differently, the relationship between woman and phallic object is constructed as one of artifice while that of man is naturalised. 'Without my rifle I am nothing; without me my rifle is nothing' the marines of Jarhead (2005) repeats like a mantra, in the attempt to naturalise the bond that ties the soldier to the weapon. Hence, in phallicism as appendage, the value given to biological difference is replicated on the symbolic level. It is this second case that interests us in relation to *We Need To Talk About Kevin*.

That Eva is endowed with phallic attributes makes no doubt. Eva is the epitome of the superwoman. She displays a strong identification with the paternal metaphor; has rejected the maternal (her own mother as well as motherhood) in favour of paternal agents (work, partner). Yet the narrative suggests that leaving the maternal is done at a cost. She gains social gratification, but she still yearns for that 'other' thing she calls 'new territory'. Eva's 'new territory' is obviously anchored in a patriarchal vision of a very American concept: 'the new frontier'. The concept of the 'new frontier' can be constructed as the conquest of man, or at least as the capture of untouched land driven by 'the masculine'. The 'new frontier' has been the domain where men sought to discover, penetrate and inhabit a space constructed as 'new', virginal. My choice of sexual terminology is indeed not incidental and the colonisation of space as aggression performed upon land or space and all they contain is not new. It is because it is constructed as virginal -that is the worth of its pre-existence is expunged or diminished- that it can be conquered and populated. In her quest for professional and social achievement, Eva actively

follows in her forefathers footsteps. Her company 'A Wing and a Prayer' is no more than the linguistic 'territorialisation' of un-chartered territories that she then sells on to interested consumers for further colonisation. Eva's phallic attributes as a pro-active entrepreneur are easily recognised and praised by the establishment. So is her failure at finding full satisfaction as an explorer. Eva's thirst for the unknown echoes her peers' endemic drive to capture the un-chartered space and bind it to their needs. The perceived obligation to seek out the foreign and customise its differences could be the enactment of one's need to tame or at least understand those archaic spaces in oneself. The quintessential questions of origins and what makes us different from the next person can be played out in the process. The 'new territory' is not, in Eva's imaginary, the domain of woman, but the encounter with the un-chartered within the self that any individual regardless of their sex might wish to investigate. But the question of origin adds a further dimension in her case because of her project of motherhood. Where the foreign may raise issues of archaism in any individual, and call upon memories of the individual's relationship with the maternal, Eva has a more vivid experience than say Franklin has. I am not arguing for an essentialist view of 'woman' as that which biologically rhymes with archaism as research convincingly argues that it is not an issue of sex but of perception of sex (I am thinking of materialist feminism in particular). But I am arguing that Eva's project of motherhood is motivated and supported by her identification with a very western vision of the 'successful self'. I am also arguing that as she initially identifies with that vision, Eva comes to question the bond that ties motherhood to sacrificial.

Eva's attraction/repulsion for the idea of motherhood shows her ambivalence with regards to the thing that has been lost in the game of social advancement, and that she may encounter again in becoming a mother, the encounter with the maternal. Before she makes the journey 'in the flesh' so to speak, Eva's libidinal energy is invested in discovering, territorializing and mapping unchartered geographical spaces. Eva's first encounter with motherhood is symbolic. She constructs the lost maternal as unknown places where she ventures, seeking to calibrate them against a set of conventions which, however original, are nevertheless a coding of her own culture. Eva tames the exotic for the purpose of domestic consumption. A gesture she finds a lot less exciting when it is turned upon herself. Indeed, we could put on a par her professional achievement with the domestication of the female body, that entity of the other-than-man that needs coding and reinserting

in a phallus-centred dialectic. Once her new territory takes the shape of motherhood, Eva is no longer dealing with a phallic object upon which she exercises her authority and orchestrates its mutation, connection, severance and exchange. Instead, she becomes the receptacle of another's phallic agency: Franklin's first and then Kevin's (I will return to this). In the loss of authority over her life project, Eva believes she must choose between 'motherhood' and social arena, as if motherhood was sacrificial. The thrust of the narrative hinges on this belief and her struggle from denial to resistance to acceptance. If we retrace again the steps that took her from successful career woman to housewife, we find clues as to her motivations for joining the cohort of mothers and housewives she disdains. Eva yearns for the exotic, the foreign, for somewhere else than here (Kevin, 392). She yearns for that 'new territory', the un-chartered place that will satisfy her thirst for phallic challenge. Kevin is said to become an answer to her desire for something else, for something different and at the same time the one foreign country into which [she has] been most reluctant to set foot (Kevin, 379). Kevin is a response to a social question supported by western values. For while she prizes herself in 'having' the phallus, Eva also displays an unsatisfaction that drives her to search for a better one, a bigger one, a more meaningful one, whichever way we might describe the race towards the perfect phallus. The promise of fulfilment compels her to overcome her reluctance and accept the ultimate challenge of maternity. As such, it is also doubtful whether her response is not itself a logical outcome to the social conditioning that dictates the form one's phallus may take. In this case, the issue is one of essentialism, as 'woman' is still coded as deriving satisfaction from maternity and motherhood, a coding challenged by Shriver's dramatisation.

Maternity is what Kristeva called 'the metaphor of the invisible' (1977: 31) in her famous 'Heretics of Love'. One of the failures of our modern times would be an 'incapacity of modern codes to tame the maternal, in other words primary narcissism' (1977: 31). The understanding of maternity and symbolic as antithetic, lies here. Primary narcissism is that time that Freud pinpointed in the symbiotic unity mother/child. This dyad is then disturbed and eventually broken by the intervention of the father during the oedipal phase. Freud could not or did not want to elaborate on the importance of this archaic moment for the development of the individual, preferring to make the father the all-powerful maker of the social subject. While some thinkers like Kristeva have, there has been overall a silence from theorists on the objectification of maternity and motherhood, even from those who

sensed the importance of it in the first place. The success of Kevin may partly rest on its fictionalising the riddle of motherhood. Eva's demise denotes the failure of modern times to give her satisfactory social representation as a mother. Kristeva saw two reasons for this failure: one is the reduction of the feminine to the maternal, successfully promoted by Christian cultures, in particular through the image of the impregnated virgin; the second is a reactive rejection of any association between woman and maternal by the feminist movement, when that association means the reduction of woman to such construction. Christian convention denies woman phallic visibility but in the imagery of the mother-with-child. Here lies one of the contentious corner stones of Freudian theory whereby women, feeling short-strawed in their lack of a penis would replace this penis with the desire for a child. The child effectively becomes the mother's phallus from the moment of its conception to that of its surrender (in the good-mother-scenario) to the social. Before and after this time, maiden, old or barren, the woman is without phallus and thus nothing more than a whole, a void without social purpose or meaning. Unsurprisingly, feminists of the second wave in particular preferred to reject such meaning of woman and preferred to promote woman's phallicism in areas other than maternity: fighting for the social advancement of women demanding equal opportunity for instance, or asserting the satisfaction of woman without man (lesbianism). Eva scores on both fronts. While socially successful, she admits her condescension towards mothers, condescension not unlike the feminist feeling of betrayal by women who choose to embrace a life of domesticity, that is a life regulated by hetero-normativity, organised around the control and descent of man. '[C]rossing the threshold of motherhood, suddenly you become social property, the animate equivalent of a public park' (Kevin, 52). From the moment she becomes pregnant, she fears society's disengagement with her phallic distinctiveness (her work, her drive to tame new frontiers), casting her out to a vaguely defined with-child type she refuses to become. Eva is effectively resisting castration, bartering with society to be allowed a half-way house between phallic and castrated, between having or not having the phallus, hanging on to the objects that made her phallic. Kevin should have become the phallus she lacks, making her whole for a time.

Eva's narration of 'Kevin' indicates she could have gone in this direction. The reader often gets the impression that it is Eva who sets Kevin up as her rival (rather than Kevin challenging her as she tells us), by making of him the privileged object of her desire. Throughout the novel, Kevin is

described in sensual and sometimes sexual terms. She is disturbingly curious about her son's sexual development. Examples are countless. She reasons that 'plain fucking at his high school was so prevalent..I doubt it excites him' (Kevin, 145). She expresses satisfaction at Kevin's rejection of 'average sex', no doubt mirroring her own desire for new frontiers. She conjectures on his potential homosexual practice but only as a means to assert his dominance over Lenny. Eva even makes herself the centre of Kevin's sexual excitement, effectively introducing the ultimate sexual taboo of incest into the picture, describing his pleasure when she witnesses his masturbatory activities. She takes an active part in inciting Kevin to see her as a sexual object. Under the cover of helping them bond, she organises a 'date' and dresses up in a dress on which the 'slit up the thigh is pretty high' (Kevin, 273), the same dress she wore to seduce her partner Franklin. Overall, the narration of 'Kevin' shows the ambivalence of the mother's sentiments for the son, sometimes demonised, sometimes sexualised, but never indifferent. Kevin is without doubt Eva's favourite object, the one she endows of much of her libidinal energy. In short, Kevin becomes Eva's substitute phallus pretty much as Freud had envisioned. But it is a phallus that does not satisfy her, to dire consequences. Dissatisfied with the loss of phallicism through motherhood, she slips into a fantasised relationship (Franklin's disapproval tells us that much) where she crosses sword with the only phallic object left to her: Kevin. The novel fictionalises the intersection between the symbolic disenchantment of the adult and the nascent ego of the child. The effect is a combination of hyper-performance interlaced with destructive moments where both Kevin and Eva's structures are put in jeopardy. The novel's intrigue is built over the fight between mother and son for the phallic object. More precisely, until the last moment when Eva capitulates before the son (I shall return to this), the novel describes a mother's battle against the de-phallicising of her self, when the son's gain of a phallus signifies the loss of the mother's. Eva refuses to be sacrificed. It is a battle she initially wins, but at the cost of her son's impaired relationship with phallic organisation. Eva should have acknowledged her missing phallus and Kevin should have replaced the missing phallus. Eva fails to see Kevin as a substitute because she senses that in the project of motherhood, the phallicism of 'mother' is in fact a masculine appropriation of the maternal (Kristeva, 1977: 31) played out on a woman's body. Eva's difficulty is that for once, her conquering untouched spaces does not signify her phallicising. Instead, her conquering motherhood signifies the opposite because the agents of her phallicising are

first Franklin impregnating her virginal womb, and second Kevin whose social becoming validates or discredits the 'good mother' in Eva.

If we turn to Kevin's behaviour, we find that the character signifies the failure of phallicism to sufficiently satisfy his mother. Whether Kevin becomes like her because he is modelling himself on her or whether his persona reflects her desire remains unanswered in the novel. It is nevertheless striking how Kevin's ways echo Eva's sense of perfection. Although she divorces herself from Kevin's methods, we continuously sense her admiration for her son's superior intelligence: the meticulous construction of his self, the hyper-organisation of data, how he accurately perceives, analyses and uses others' vulnerabilities to his advantage, etc. In short, Kevin seems to have mastered symbolic performance to the extreme. He understands its mechanics and is able to deconstruct and manipulate the procedures of his own and others' symbolic performance. This enables Kevin to disempower the less sentient into the skill of symbolicity (that is everybody except his mother) and take authority over their symbolic narrative. But Eva's admiration is shadowed by the question of Kevin's motivations. Kevin's hyper-performing persona translates in his utter boredom. To Kevin, social performance is dumb. By social performance, he means being successful and happy according to pre-established criteria: getting straight As, riding a beautiful bike, dressing right, doing good parenthood, etc. More precisely, Kevin abhors the dumbness of those who buy into such performance unaware of their own conditioning. He proves his total control over his own through consistent deviance from the norm of that performance: he achieves straight B-grades, dresses with clothes systematically two sizes too small, plays good son to the father he dislikes and bad son to the mother he likes, etc. He demonstrates that he has not only grasped the rules handed down to him but also has become his own master, re-writing them in a logic of negation that makes a mockery of and invalidates the system that created these rules. This brings us to the motivations for Kevin's performance.

Eva suggests that Kevin's killings may be an attempt at bringing stimulation in a life with little excitement. Kevin is the product of an environment where his presence is not needed. He is surplus value to a society, a family that has more than what it needs to live well. His path is pre-determined: good parents, good environment, nannies, good education, etc. His job is to respond favourably to those. As his teacher intimates, Maybe he's mad that it is as good as it gets. [...] The country's very prosperity has become a burden, a dead end (Kevin, 333). It seems to me that Kevin suffers from

boredom in the place of the paternal symbolic. The father (his own but also all paternal agents, the school, the law, etc) proves too weak to contain Kevin. What needs to be contained has to do with the quintessential question of how we come to be. Kevin's actions systematically question the limits of the subject, what constitutes him and others as social beings. What Kevin attacks in others is telling and I will take two examples that I think typify his workings: the waitress with the 'poopy' birthmark and Violetta the girl with the itchy eczema.

Every time Kevin questions the limits of being, the thing attacked is detached from the character, magnified and offered as the marker of their battle with the socio-symbolic. If they win, they may have completeness; if they lose, they will be exposed as not quite whole. In short Kevin attacks the phallus. The birthmark and the flaking skin become locations for the limit that separates symbolic and biology. The waitress's birthmark is a reminder of her link with the organic (cruelly prompted by Kevin's choice of 'faeces' to describe the mark), not only in the skin lacking homogeneity but also in the connection with something beyond her control, the mark of her birth, of her making and origin as a biological entity. The itchy eczema is a step towards social agency as the girl can choose to satisfy physical impulse or social imperative. Under Kevin's supposed guidance, Violetta chooses 'a release that was wilder, more primitive, almost pagan' (Kevin, 185), even more satisfactory that she knows she is sacrificing herself to the 'grotesquerie of the consequences' (Kevin, 185): the deformity of her body into something diseased and socially repulsive. Both examples show Kevin's attacks on the limit between social and biological bodies. The sodomy of Lenny Pugh, Kevin's own broken arm, the attack on Celia's eye, his killings piercing the skin and organs of his victims can all be similarly constructed as Kevin's participation and pleasure in the loss of the social body in favour of the monstrous organic, the crude, raw, unprocessed flesh.

I have chosen to consider examples pertaining to the limit between organic and social but could have equally chosen to show how Kevin attacks the boundary between sanity and madness, again the place where social and anti-social (psychotic) are linked and drawn apart. Eva, at the end of her tether, hurls Kevin across the room; Siobhan, once fervently loyal to catholic morals, shies from the very idea of motherhood after babysitting Kevin; etc. He attacks any boundary that gives social performance a semblance of wholeness. Just aslike he damages the socially constructed body, he also aims to defeat the socially constructed mind.

Kevin repeatedly asks the question of what constitutes 'social' in opposition to the non-social: biology, mental illness. He seeks to undo the process by which the individual has negotiated the passage from the one to the other. In undoing the process of socialisation, he communicates an existential anxiety over subjective processes and over the value of social becoming. In concluding that it may be no more miraculous to pull the trigger of a bow or a gun than it is to reach for a glass of water (Kevin, 379), he may be voicing not only his philosophical disappointment vis-à-vis the artifice of social value, but also his failure to find his own humanity. In his affect-less representation of the world (Eva calls it his 'floppiness'), Kevin testifies to the collapse of his relationship with the process of socialisation. His battle is against the father and there is little doubt who is castrating whom in it. But it would be a mistake to construct Kevin solely as an emotionless psychopath invested in slaying phallic signifiers blindly. I would like to finish with a final point and show how beyond the dedicated effort at debunking and destroying phallic performance in general, it seems to me that Kevin aims at another 'castration' than that of the father.

Kevin's mockery of symbolic performance veils his desire to appropriate the phallus for himself. As he plans 'Thursday', carries out his master plan and is tried and imprisoned, we get the feeling that Kevin has effectively won one over paternal agencies and symbolically castrated the father. The last one standing is Eva. Kevin's attacks on Eva are another attempt at taking from her the phallus she defends, precisely because, however tenuous the link and however sarcastic she may be, her defensive attitude represents her attachment to social values. As the mother of a mass murderer, Eva finds that the same social values offer very little by way of protection in confronting what ties her to the crime and responding to society's accusations. Found guilty of fabricating a social monster through bad mothering, she is finally denied phallic privileges. There is little in Eva's re-collective narrative that suggests that she does not, at least partially agree with these views. Abandoned by the father, she chooses Kevin and all he represents.

If we leave aside the obviously sensational nature of Eva's motherhood experience, one might wonder how much of her demise mirrors current social reality. At the end, the novel would suggest that Eva has to choose between two positions: social standing and motherhood. Eva's choice is uncomfortably familiar. On the strength of 'research' proving that children get greater benefit from maternal care when that care is dispensed by the actual mother, there has been much publicity in the media recently, promoting a

return of the mother to the home during the early years of the child. That this should overlap with criticism addressed to the Government for the lack of maternal care for children whose mothers are in employment is not discussed. Moreover, 'research' in fertility is also encouraging women to have children earlier as the younger the body, the more chances of a successful pregnancy. The fact that these views coincide with rising concerns over the costs of fertility treatment for the NHS is again not discussed. Women are effectively encouraged to put their psychical and financial autonomy after childbearing and childcare. Such a return of a patriarchal construction of 'woman' and 'mother' are strongly opposed by researchers like Olivier and Kristeva who demonstrate that '[...] maybe the good-enough mother is the mother who has something else to love besides her child; it could be her work, her husband, her lovers, etc. She has to have another meaning in her life.' (Kristeva, 1997: 334). Yet, Eva's choice to have interests in things other than her son would make her guilty and by extension, the novel would suggest that women should choose between staying at home and having children, and being socially active. In short, the phallic mother causes the demise of the son and her castration is lawful reparation.

That Eva should capitulate at the end of her fight with the son for the phallus would be the disappointment in the novel. From a feminist perspective, there is frustration that a woman who crosses sword with societal organisation to defend her 'womanhood' against disempowerment should lose this fight and be penalised for it. Indeed, at the end of her ordeal, it is unclear whether it is Kevin or she who is punished for his crimes. For while Kevin is imprisoned, he also gains the notoriety he had hoped for and the maternal attention he sought. In a very metaphoric way, Kevin gets what he wants: paternal and maternal recognition. Although free, Eva's demise continues after her son's sentencing, as she loses her social status and is rejected at the margin of the socially acceptable, mother to the mass murderer, to the monster made flesh, necessarily a monstrosity herself. Hence, Eva is defeated doubly in her fight, once by the son who castrates her and once by patriarchal organisation who refuses to 're-phallicise' her. Subsequently, the self-analytic, feisty narrator who accompanied the reader for a big part of the book seems to suddenly turn to putty in the hand of her son and in the face of social hatred. If we saw in Eva the heroine of an unusual epic battle between motherhood and social expectations, she disappoints us at the end, as she abandons ship and leaves us with no hope to ever reconcile woman's split status. Instead, Eva gives up on her authority, accepts her castration

and becomes the quintessential self-effacing mother who patiently awaits the return of the prodigal son. Ultimately, the narrator seems to prove that no matter her efforts, 'woman' has to choose between motherhood and empowerment, as if the two could not co-exist. Possibly, the redeeming aspect is the fact that Eva chooses to speak up and offer the narrative of her story. But it is a poor, clichéd compensation reminiscent of so many women-authors whose only consolation for social erasure was the production of victimised and/or outlaw narratives. In the case of Kevin, outlaw narrative fails to adequately challenge preconceived images of motherhood, but succeeds in depicting the fight the heroine puts up in her plea to gain acknowledgement if not sympathy for her predicament. Eva's sometimes assertive, sometimes hesitant, sometimes contradictory retrospection of events does much to render the conundrum of motherhood. But the revolution stops here. The reason (or one of the reasons) Kevin achieved success was not because of the originality of a narrative saying something new with regards to motherhood. On the contrary, I have argued that Kevin successfully repeats and exposes agreed representations of 'woman' and 'mother'. Kevin achieved fame because of the sensationalism of the story. Had the author chosen to make of Kevin a more average delinquent, would the novel have achieved notoriety? Probably not and quite appropriately, the book is entitled *We Need To Talk About Kevin* rather than 'we need to talk about Eva'. But it is a frustration that what drives the novel's intrigue is not so much the serious question of motherhood and authority, a question in need of attention in a dissuasive socio-political climate now encouraging mothers to go back home, but rather the spectacle of mass murder.

References

- Cameron, James (1986) *Alien*, Twentieth Century Fox.
 Klein, Melanie (1988) *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*, London: Virago; first published 1975 Hogarth Press.
 Kristeva, Julia (1977) 'Hérétique de l'amour' in *Tel Quel*, Winter 1977, 74, pp 30-49.
 Laplanche and Pontalis (1988) *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, London: Karnac.
 Mendes Sam (2005) *Jarhead*, Universal Picture.
 Shriver, Lionel (2003) *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, London: Serpent's Tail.

The Meaning of Feeling: Banishing the Homunculus from Psychology

Joshua Soffer

Current approaches in psychology have replaced the idea of a centralized, self-present identity with that of a diffuse system of contextually changing states distributed ecologically as psychologically embodied and socially embedded. However, the failure of contemporary perspectives to banish the lingering notion of a literal, if fleeting, status residing within the parts of a psycho-bio-social organization may result in the covering over of a rich, profoundly intricate process of change within the assumed frozen space of each part. In this paper I show how thinking from this more intimate process may transform current views of metaphor, the unconscious, and the relation between affect and cognition.

Introduction

Psychological theorizing today, in dialogue with the results of researches in phenomenological and pragmatist philosophy and anthropology, points to an important re-envisioning of the role of concepts such as inter-subjectivity, metaphor, the unconscious and emotion in the functioning of a psychological organization. While today's diverse embodied, enactive approaches (Clark (1997), Damasio (2000), Gallagher (2005), Lakoff & Johnson (1999), Ratcliffe (2007), Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991)) have made significant advances over the more traditional perspectives in psychology which they target (first generation cognitivism, symbolic computationalism), I suggest that these newer perspectives have failed to depart sufficiently from older approaches in one important respect.

Specifically, I will argue in this paper that the capacity of contemporary psychologies to depict a meaning-making organization generating thoroughgoing affectation, interaction and novelty may be hampered by their reliance on a notion of psycho-biological and interpersonal entities as discrete states. Residing within each of the myriad temporary subagents and bits comprising a psychological system is a supposed literal, albeit near-meaningless, identity. While the role of identity in embodied approaches is less prominent than in classical cognitivist frameworks (newer approaches replace the idea of a centralized, self-present identity with that of a reciprocal system of contextually changing states distributed ecologically as psychologically embodied and socially embedded), I allege that a failure of current approaches to banish the lingering notion of a literal, if fleeting,

status residing within the parts of a psycho-bio-social organization may be responsible for the covering over of a rich, profoundly intricate process of change within the assumed frozen space of each part.

What could be the basis of my claim that the diverse assortment of embodied models offered by researchers like Gallagher, Varela, Clark, Damasio and Johnson have in common the treatment of the parts of a psychological organization as ossified centers resistant to novelty, considering that the dynamical properties many of these approaches specifically determine psychological processes as non-representational and non-decoupleable "...variables changing continuously, concurrently and interdependently over quantitative time..." (Van Gelder, 1999, p.244)? And what is a 'part' anyway?

Interaction Before Identity

Let me begin by offering the following thought experiment: What if, rather than an element of meaning (perceptual, conceptual, physiological) being juxtaposed or coinciding with what preceded and conditioned it in the manner of contact between two distinct entities, we were to imagine that the context of a prior event and the presencing of a new event indissociably belonged to the same event? I do not have in mind a simple compacting together of past and present as distinct and separable things, but a way at looking at the relation between a meaning and its background which sees not just the interaction BETWEEN things but the things, entities, parts, bodies THEMSELVES as already kinds of qualitative change, not states but passages, a non-contradictory way of intending beyond what is intended.

I want you to entertain the notion that the primordial 'unit' of experience is not a form that is transformed by contact with another entity, not a presence that is changed by a separate encounter with another presence, but an experience already other, more than itself in the very moment of being itself, not a form, presence or shining OCCUPYING space but already a self-exceeding, a transit, a being-otherwise. What I am suggesting is that there are no such things as discrete entities. The irreducible basis of experience is the EVENT (many events can unfold within the supposed space of a single so-called entity). Events do not follow one another in time (or in parallel) as hermetically sealed links of a chain. Each event does not only bear the mark of influence of previous events, but carries them within it even as it transforms them. An event is a synthetic unity, a dynamic structure devoid of simply identity.

In making this claim, I am contributing to an already rich philosophical discussion on the phenomenal experience of time. This conversation has recently been joined by a number of psychologists (See Gallagher (1998) , Van Gelder (1996) and Varela (1999b)), who support the idea of the *nowness* of the present as differentiated within itself. They recognize that the present is not properly understood as an isolated ‘now’ point; it involves not just the current event but also the prior context framing the new entity. We don’t hear sequences of notes in a piece of music as isolated tones but recognize them as elements of an unfolding context. As James (1978) wrote: “...earlier and later are present to each other in an experience that feels either only on condition of feeling both together” (p.77).

The key question is how this ‘both together’ is to be construed. Is the basis of change within a bodily organization, interpersonal interaction, and even the phenomenal experience of time itself, the function of a collision between a separately constituted context and present entities? Or does my dynamic ‘now’ consist of a very different form of intentionality, a strange coupling of a past and present already changed by each other, radically interbled or interaffected such that it can no longer be said that they have any separable aspects at all? I contend that, even taking into account a significant diversity of views within the contemporary scene concerning the nature of time-consciousness, including critiques of James’ and Husserl’s perspectives,¹ current psychologies conceive the ‘both-together’ of the pairing of past and present as a conjunction of separate, adjacent phases or aspects: the past which conditions the present entity or event, and the present object which supplements that past. I am not suggesting that these phases are considered as unrelated, only that they each are presumed to carve out their own temporary identities.

For instance, Zahavi (1999), following Husserl, views the internally differentiated structure of ‘now’ awareness as consisting of a retentive, primal impression, and protentional phase. While he denies that these phases are “different and separate elements” (p.90), claiming them instead as an immediately given, ecstatic unity, their status as opposing identities is suggested by his depiction of the association between past and present as a fracturing, “... namely, the fracture between Self and Other, between immanence and transcendence” (p.134).

This Husserlian thematic, rendering past and present as an indissociable-but-fractured interaction between subject and object, inside and outside, reappears within a varied host of naturalized psychological ap-

proaches that link time-consciousness to an embodied neural organization of reciprocally causal relations among non-decoupleable parts or subprocesses. While these components interact constantly (Varela (1996b) says "... in brain and behavior there is never a stopping or dwelling cognitive state, but only permanent change punctuated by transient [stabilities] underlying a momentary act" (p.291)), it doesn't seem as if one could go so far as to claim that the very SENSE of each participant in a neural organization is intrinsically and immediately dependent on the meanings of the others. I suggest it would be more accurate to claim that each affects and is affected by the others as a temporary homunculus (little man) or self perceives an object. Varela (1999a) offers "...lots of simple agents having simple properties may be brought together, even in a haphazard way, to give rise to what appears to an observer as a purposeful and integrated whole" (p.52). The bare existence of each of these agents may be said to PRECEDE its interaction with other agents, in that each agent occupies and inheres in its own state, presenting its own instantaneous properties for a moment, apart from, even as it is considered conjoined to, the context which conditions it and the future which is conditioned by it.

Perhaps I am misreading Varela and other enactivist proponents . Am I saying that these contemporary accounts necessarily disagree with Merleau-Ponty's (1968) critique of the idea of the object-in-itself?

...the identity of the thing with itself, that sort of established position of its own, of rest in itself, that plenitude and that positivity that we have recognized in it already exceed the experience, are already a second interpretation of the experience...we arrive at the thing-object, at the In Itself, at the thing identical with itself, only by imposing upon experience an abstract dilemma which experience ignores (p.162).

On the contrary, as different as Merleau-Ponty's and various enactivist accounts may be in other respects, it seems to me that they share a rejection of the idea of a constituted subjectivity encountering and representing an independent in-itself. Mark C. Taylor (2001) characterizes the enactivist ethos thusly; "Contrary to popular opinion and many philosophical epistemologies, knowledge does not involve the union or synthesis of an already existing subject and an independent object" (p.208). In a very general sense, what is articulated by Varela, Gallagher and others as the reciprocal, non-decoupleable interconnections within a dynamical ecological system functions for Merleau-Ponty as the 'flesh' of the world; the site of reciprocal intertwining between an In Itself and a For Itself, subject and object,

consciousness and the pre-noetic, activity and passivity, the sensible and the sentient, the touching and the touched. My point is that current accounts may also have in common with Merleau-Ponty the belief that subjective context and objective sense reciprocally determine each other as an oppositional relation or communication (Merleau-Ponty calls it an abyss, thickness or chiasm) between discrete, temporary and contingent contents. "...that difference without contradiction, that divergence between the within and without ... is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication (Merleau-Ponty 1968 ,p.135)."

By contrast, I assert that the 'now' structure of an event is not an intertwining relation between contingent, non-decoupleable identities, states, phases, but an odd kind of intersecting implicating perhaps a new understanding of intentionality; intentional object and background context are not adjacent regions(a within and a without) in space or time; they have already been contaminated by each other such that they are inseparably co-implicated as a single edge (Try to imagine separating the 'parts' of an edge. Attempting to do so only conjures a new edge). Time itself must be seen in this way as immediately both real and ideal. Events don't speak with their surrounds. They ARE their surrounds; the current context of an event is not a system of relations but an indivisible gesture of passage.² Gendlin (1997b), in his groundbreaking book 'A Process Model', offers an account of the nature of psychological organization which I consider in many respects closely compatible with my own.

He explains:

In the old model something (say a particle or a body) exists, defined as filling space and time. Then it also goes through some process. Or it does not. It is defined as "it" regardless of the process "it" goes through. "It" is separate from a system of changes and relationships that are "possible" for "it." (p.50)...

In the old model one assumes that there must first be "it" as one unit, separate from how its effects in turn affect it...In the process we are looking at there is no separate "it," no linear cause-effect sequence with "it" coming before its effects determine what happens. So there is something odd here, about the time sequence. How can "it" be already affected by affecting something, if it did not do the affecting before it is in turn affected?...With the old assumption of fixed units that retain their identity, one assumes a division

between it, and its effects on others. (This “it” might be a part, a process, or a difference made.) In the old model it is only later, that the difference made to other units can in turn affect “it.” (p.40)

If one assumes separate events, processes, or systems, one must then add their co-ordinations as one finds them, as if unexpectedly...“Inter-affecting” and “coordination” are words that bring the old assumption of a simple multiplicity, things that exist as themselves and are only then also related. So we need a phrase that does not make sense in that old way. Let us call the pattern we have been formulating “original inter-affecting”. This makes sense only if one grasps that “they” inter-affect each other before they are a they (p.22).

Gendlin’s account somewhat resembles embodied cognitive and dynamical systems approaches in its rejection of symbolic representationalism and decoupleability, but I believe there are crucial differences. For instance, in current models, interaction spreads in a reciprocally causal fashion from point to point, whereas for Gendlin, each point somehow implies each other point; each part of a meaning organization somehow “knows about”, belongs to and depends intrinsically on each other part. And this happens before a part can simply be said to exist in itself (even if just for an instant) .

What kind of odd understanding concerning the interface between identity and relation could justify Gendlin’s insistence that the inter-affecting between parts of a psychological organization precedes the existence of individual entities or states? Allow me to creatively interweave Gendlin’s text with my own, and suggest that an ‘entity’ can never be understood as OCCUPYING a present state, even for a moment. Its very identity is differential not simply because its relevance is defined by its relation to its context (embodied cognitive notions of the subject-object relation), but because the essence of the event is this intersection. What is other than, more than an event (its just-past) is built into its own center in such a way that the relation between events is never an arbitrary conditioning the way it seems to be allowed to be in current accounts(as I will discuss in more detail later). That is why an event is better conceived as a transit than a state.

The most important implication of this way of thinking about the organization of meaning and intention is that the interaction between events can be seen as maintaining a radical continuity and mutual dependency of implication. To say that an event exceeds itself , in the same moment and the same space, as both past and present, is not simply to think the now as immediately a differential between the new and a prior context. It is to envi-

sion a new event and the context out of which it arises as BELONGING to, PART OF each other's senses in a radical way, rather than just as externally cobbled together spatially or temporally as a mutual grafting, mapping, mirroring, conditioning between little bodies. This duality within the event is not to be understood as a fracture, opposition or chiasm between an already composed past carried over from previous experience, and an arbitrary element of novelty related to this past across a divide of thickness.

As Gendlin (1997b) argues, 'The continuity of time cannot first be made by things next to each other, because such a continuity is passive; each bit IS alone, and must depend on some other continuity to relate it to what is next to it...' (p.71). For instance, fresh intentional experience does not simply sit alongside a prior context; it explicates the immediate past. Gendlin characterizes this past as an an implicatory whole:

...explication is not a representation of what "was" implicit; rather explication carries the implying with it and carries it forward. An explication does not replace what it explicates. If one divided them, one could try to divide between what is new and what is from before. Then one part of the explication would be representational, and the other part would be arbitrary. An occurring that carries forward is an explicating. It is neither the same nor just different. What is the same cannot be divided from what is different (p.71).

What does it mean to say that what is the same can't be divided from what is different? I would like to suggest that the very being of an event of meaning already is composed partly of that which it is not, that which it is no longer. The role which this 'no-longer' plays isn't just as a duplication of 'what it was'. It is a fresh, never before experienced version of my past which forms part of the essence of a new event for me. What do I mean by this? Not only does a fresh event belong to, carry forward, imply the immediate context which it transforms, but this inter-contamination between past and present operates at the same time in the opposite direction. The carried-forward past which, as I have said, inseparably belongs to a new event, is already affected by this fresh present. What does this imply? Gendlin (1997b) explains, "When the past functions to "interpret" the present, the past is changed by so functioning. This needs to be put even more strongly: The past functions not as itself, but as already changed by what it functions in" (p.37).

It is not as if other accounts do not recognize the transformative character of recollection. It would be pointed out by any psychologist who had digested Merleau-Ponty's lessons concerning reflection that the attempt to return repeatedly to an object of attention in order to preserve its identity hopelessly contaminates the purity of that identity with the sediments of new context. Mark C. Taylor (2001) writes: "Neither complete nor finished, the past is repeatedly recast by a future that can never be anticipated in a present that cannot be fixed. Anticipation re-figures recollection as much as recollection shapes expectation." (p.198).

My claim is not, however, that the past is partially or eventually affected by the present, but that its modification is globally and immediately implied by present experience. The past is inseparable from the future which is framed by it. Because all meanings are referential, they don't appear out of thin air but from a prior context. On the other hand, the past in its entirety is at the same time implied and transformed in present context. There is no past available to us to retrieve as an archive of presumably temporarily or partially preserved events of meaning. As we will see, this view may run counter to current approaches according to which habitual pre-noetic bodily, linguistic and cultural schemas are presumed to shape experiential processes ("...the body in its habitual schemas retains a [pre-noetic] past....that helps to define the present" (Gallagher, 1997, p.144)), and thus to constrain and structure the experience of novelty, without themselves being immediately and globally refashioned in accord with the self-changing direction of intentional movement .

The Literal is Metaphoric

To this point it may strike readers that the argument being made amounts to a quibble. Even if it were to be accepted as correct, what of theoretical and practical advantage is gained over dynamical, embodied approaches by reworking the relationship between an element and its context in the way I am suggesting? How does this amount to more than a shuffling around of dimensional concepts? It is important to understand that it is not just dimensional slots that are being questioned here but the central characteristics of what are considered entities (conceptual, bodily, interpersonal), their alleged power to arbitrarily and polarizingly condition each other as well as, paradoxically, to resist the advent of novelty.

To criticize a system in continuous inter-relational motion for resist-

ing novelty, merely because it is depicted as interactions among innumerable, dumb bits which may only exist for an instant of time, may seem to be a spurious accusation to make. But as I hope to show, this seemingly insignificant property of stasis built into these dumb bits of a dynamical, embodied and embedded ecological system expresses itself at a macro level as homunculi-like schemes, assemblies and narratives (sensory-motor, emotive, perceptual, conceptual and interpersonal) whose creative interplay and thematic consistency may be restricted by the presumption of a distinction between their existence and interaction. (Varela (1991) describes these bits as "...a whole army of neurallike, simple, unintelligent components, which, when appropriately connected, have interesting global properties. These global properties embody and express the cognitive capacities being sought" (p.87).

A prime example of what I mean when I allege that a separation between the existence and interaction of components of such systems polarizes their functioning can be found in the way that current embodied approaches attempt to explain the mechanism of conceptual metaphor. For instance, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) , in their effort to overturn the older view of metaphor as a secondary and inferior linguistic form in comparison with literal meaning, depict metaphor as a rich and indispensable component of abstract conceptualization.³ Briefly , a metaphor is a correlation between conceptual domains, projecting patterns from the source domain onto the target domain. Neurologically, metaphor originates in a conflation between domains, a simultaneous activation of neural schemes in both the source and target.

Johnson insists that metaphors are not formal structures, but embodied and situational. The cognitive domains, or "frames," out of which metaphors are formed "are not fixed structures or images, but rather dynamic patterns of our interactions within various evolving environments" (Johnson,1997, p.156). Even if frames are not permanently fixed schemes, they do have the ability to conserve their structure over time. It is this conservative power that allows frames to define, contain, mirror, map onto, apply to and correlate with particular new experiences. "Conceptual metaphorical mappings appear to preserve image-schematic structure, and , in so doing, they map spatial inference patterns onto abstract inference patterns" (p.156). Lakoff and Johnson (1999) explain:

Abstract concepts have two parts: 1) an inherent, literal, non-metaphorical skeleton, which is simply not rich enough to serve as a full-fledged concept; and 2) a collection of stable, conventional metaphorical extensions that flesh out the conceptual skeleton in a variety of ways (often inconsistently with one another) (p.128). In general, central senses of words are arbitrary; non-central senses are motivated but rarely predictable. Since there are many more non-central senses than central senses of words, there is more motivation in a language than arbitrariness (p.465).

While Lakoff-Johnson believe everyday thought is largely metaphorical, they don't accept that all meanings are metaphorical ("...all basic sensorimotor concepts are literal" (p.58)).

We can extract the following points from Lakoff-Johnson's model:

1) Metaphors are not discrete concepts themselves but correlations between two pre-existing conceptual domains.

2) Metaphors preserve the structure of the source domains that they borrow from.

3) Metaphors enrich a concept's non-central senses with motivated meaning, but a concept's central senses are arbitrary.

4) Not all concepts are metaphorical

The logic of these points can be traced back to the belief, maintained in different ways across a diversity of psychological perspectives, that a concept has an 'inherent, literal, non-metaphorical skeleton'. As Lakoff and Johnson affirm, an entity which inheres as its own state is arbitrary at its core, and can relate to another meaning only in a separate move. Metaphor considered in this way is not an intrinsic property of concepts, but a secondary function that may or may not apply to a particular concept. And when it does apply, metaphor doesn't so much transcend the semantic gap between concepts as co-opt it by grafting meaning comparisons and mirrorings onto originally arbitrary, pre-existing conceptual cores.

To re-think the notion of an intrinsic conceptual state as the differential structure of transit I have delineated in this paper is to change and enlarge the role of metaphor (and to re-define intentionality) in important ways. I have argued that an event (whether conceived as conceptual or bodily-physiological) is itself, at one time and in one gesture, the interbleeding between a prior context (source) and novel content (target). Gendlin (1995) says, in such a crossing of source and target, "each functions as already cross-affected by the other. Each is determined by, and also determines the other (p.555)".

Thus, the weak and ambivalent integrative function accomplished by Lakoff and Johnson's model of metaphor as a correlation between conceptual domains may conceal a more fundamental integration working WITHIN and BEYOND so-called concepts. By this reckoning, all events are metaphorical in themselves, as a mutual inter-affecting of source and target escaping the binary of representation and arbitrariness.

Gendlin (1997a) explains:

Contrary to a long history, I have argued that a metaphor does not consist of two situations, a "source domain" and a "target domain". There is only one situation, the one in which the word is now used. What the word brings from elsewhere is not a situation; rather it brings a use-family, a great many situations. To understand an ordinary word, its use-family must cross with the present situation. This crossing has been noticed only in odd uses which are called "metaphors"...all word-use requires this metaphorical crossing (p.169).

Let's spell out the larger implications of this argument. All events of intentional meaning in-themselves accomplish the powerful integrative function that has traditionally been attributed to metaphoric relations between concepts, not by grafting or mapping one pre-existing state onto another but by bringing the outside inside as the intimate self-transfiguration that is an event's gesture. By contrast, current embodied psychologies appear to maintain an opposition between inside and outside, subject and object, context and novelty, which not even the operation of metaphor (or other narrative structures) can overcome. The integrative potential of conceptual-linguistic consciousness is limited from the outset by the presumption of an irreducibly arbitrary, literal core within entities. Of course, one could argue that, whether or not Lakoff-Johnson's approach explicitly indicates it, dynamical embodiment theories afford the knowledge that there could be never such a thing as a 'strictly' literal meaning, since a conceptual element only conveys meaning through differential, non-decoupleable relations with other elements in a process with no permanent or transcendent center of origin. As Mark Taylor (2001) explains 'Each symbol within these networks is a node in a web of relations. Indeed, a symbol is nothing other than the intersection of relations knotted in nodes' (p.211). In this sense a kind of quasi-metaphoricity already obtains for so-called literal concepts. However, I have hypothesized that for current approaches this relation between a

concept and its wider context is conceived as a conjoining of discrete contents, thereby preserving the primacy of a literal core at the heart of this quasi-metaphorical intersecting.

Consciousness As Its Own Exceeding

How might my claim concerning the intrinsic metaphoricity of intentional consciousness help to shed new light on the wider realms of interactions within which intentionality is embedded, encompassing such processes as the unconscious, bodily affectivities, and interpersonal interactions? Not surprisingly, contemporary approaches seem to view these wider interactive functions shaping intentionality in the same disjunctive terms that they apply to linguistic processes. Gallagher (1998) writes: "There are many pre-noetic [outside of awareness] limitations on intentionality: the effects of the unconscious, embodiment, language, historical traditions, political and social structures, and so on" (p.160). He refers to these as "... happenings that go beyond intentional experience and yet condition that very experience" (p.160). Descriptions from split-brain, perceptual priming, hypnosis and other dissociative studies have been employed to lend support to this idea of a partial independence among processes which are otherwise claimed to be thoroughly interactive.

As was the case with metaphor, what is at stake in all these examples is the question of whether what is presumed to come at intentionality from an 'outside' in the form of semi-arbitrary conditionings, (whether that outside is located as the quasi-metaphoric graftings between conceptual states, the unconscious, the body, or the interpersonal world) is not better understood as arising out of hitherto undiscovered resources concealed within so-called intention itself.

Rather than originating in an invasive, displacing outside, I suggest that psychological processes unavailable to explicit consciousness are nevertheless implied by and belong to it (and vice-versa), not in the sense of a content that arbitrarily contributes to awareness in the manner of interactions between partially independent regions, but as an integral bodily background intrinsic to, but not directly articulated in, each moment of awareness. In this view, the 'hidden hand' of the unconscious, the body and culture conditions awareness not as a separate outside, but rather exceeds conscious control from within each experienced event, as the hidden hand of integral background context (intra-noetic rather than pre-noetic). Gendlin (2000)

puts it this way; “The puzzle about the body knowing our decisions before we consciously know them might make us miss the fact that there is an inwardly experienced body, and that the reflective and bodily-sentient person is much wider than conscious control” (p.110).

While it is easy to identify a present experience in terms of what appears fresh and unique about it, to superficially disassociate its function and sense from a concurrent environment of activity, it is much more difficult to detect the often exceedingly subtle way in which what appears as a break from its context is always partly composed of a modified version of that outside and carries that defining coloration and thematics within itself via its metaphoric structure. The influence of language, culture and biological inheritance don’t operate behind the back of consciousness but are carried forward with it as an intricate implicatory whole; in each moment this inheritance insinuates itself into but (this is very important) is simultaneously and indissociably re-contextualized by its participation within and as the present event (thus it is always a new variation of this inheritance which participates in the event) .

An experienced event carries forward, knows and modifies one’s entire history, leaving nothing of the original behind. The way that each aspect of psychological functioning (including what would be called intentional, bodily-sensate and intersubjective processes) implicates and belongs inextricably to each other part, generates a dynamic network of intersections of intersections, metaphors of metaphors, guaranteeing that the person as a whole always functions as an implicatory unity at the very edge of experience. Consciousness, body and world intersect in this single gesture, co-implicating continuity and qualitative transformation in such a way that intentional experience maintains a unity which recognizes itself, at every moment, the ‘same differently’.

Simply in struggling to write a single line of text on a page, such as what I’ve written here, I find myself experiencing in oh so subtle a fashion a whole universe of moods, thoughts, sensations, distractions that intervene to interrupt the supposed thematic continuity of the writing. This I do in a shifting of attention in myriad ways from what is on a page to what is not and everything in between; in a transit from awareness of conceptualization to sensation to recollection to emotion to action to dreaming, when I seemingly lose my train of thought and, succumbing to creative fatigue, find myself observing visual textures of my surroundings, listening distractingly to ambient sounds, noting the touch of cool air blowing on my skin

from a fan. But how is this bouncing from mode to mode of awareness to be understood?

Gallagher(1998), echoing sentiments of other enactive cognitive researchers, understands linguistic consciousness to be organized into separated fragments of schematized linear narratives which jostle, interrupt and transform each other via parallel interactions. He says that rather than simply being an “orderly successive flow” under conscious control, consciousness is a “hodgepodge of multiple serialities that often disrupt one another”(p.194). I suggest it is not quite either of the two.

The apparent interruptedness and randomness of the multitude of apprehensions intervening in the attempt to read the words you see on this page is not the haphazard competing, clashing or inter-conditioning among schematically organized narrative meanings. It is rather an integral temporal continuation of the already self-transforming thread which constitutes the wandering thematics of my thesis. To be distracted from the narrative text at hand is not to break with the peculiarly integral nature of moment to moment experience, whose continuity is not that of an ‘orderly successive flow’ if such an order is understood as logical derivations of an already composed scheme. It is instead a carrying-forward which re-invents its direction, sense and past every moment, beyond conscious control, without rending the intimate fabric of its anticipative continuity.

Thought has the feel of at the same time a completion and a through qualitative alteration not just of what immediately preceded it, but of my entire history. My most precious and defining superordinate concerns, including my core sense of myself in relation to my past and to others, my ethical and spiritual beliefs, are implied, carried into and through (as always an absolutely new version of them!) all situations and activities, an ongoing silent background which participates implicitly in (and is simultaneously completely, if subtly, reinvented by) the meaning of even my most trivial experiences. Simply to repeat a word, mark, gesture, object of sense ‘identically’ is to generate both a new sense of itself and a new philosophy of the world, of myself, in some way (installing non-propositional reflectivity and interpretation at the very heart of so-called pre-reflective self and inter-self-awareness). The otherness of culture intervenes in each supposed repetition of the ‘same’ word, and this comes from within that event’s own resources as simultaneously empirical (introducing novelty) and subjective (carrying forward my history), embodied and embedded before any conditioning by a ‘separate’ outside, whether that outside be formulated as mind, body or

world. No activity, no matter how apparently trivial, redundant or solipsistic, fails to redefine in some small but complete way my most global perspective of myself, leaving nothing left over of a would-be original pre-noetic past to schematically control the present from behind and outside of it.

The Meaning of Feeling

How can I more precisely convey the nature of this process, this world of integrally and holistically interaffecting texturizations which I say operates from within and exceeds what have been assumed as the irreducible units of bio-psycho-social meanings? I believe it is not possible to adequately grasp its dynamics without coming to terms with its central character as 'felt' or affective. What do I mean here by feeling? The notion I have in mind involves bringing together in a new way traditional understandings of thought and affect. I am certainly not alone in advocating a view of affect and cognition as inseparable processes. While more traditional approaches in philosophy and psychology treated affective phenomena as at best peripheral to, and typically disruptive of, rational processes, embodied cognitive theories such as those of Panksepp (1998), Damasio (2000), Varela (1999b), Johnson (1993), Ratcliffe (2002), Colombetti and Thompson (2006) and Ellis (1995), take pains to present emotion and thought as an indissociable interaction.

According to current accounts, cognitive and affective processes are closely interdependent, with affect, emotion and sensation functioning in multiple ways and at multiple levels to situate or attune the context of our conceptual dealings with the world. According to the newer thinking, affective tonality is never absent from cognition. As Ratcliffe (2002) puts it, "moods are no longer a subjective window-dressing on privileged theoretical perspectives but a background that constitutes the sense of all intentionalities, whether theoretical or practical" (p.290). In affecting reason, feeling affects itself.

I am in agreement with these sentiments, as far as they go. However, I am prevented from enlisting the aid of these ideas in support of my own position by my suspicion that the supposed inseparable relation between reason and affect functions for these writers as a polarity between cognitive states and affective activations, analogously to the treatment of the operations of metaphor I discussed earlier in this paper. In other words, I am fearful that their conceptualization of the role of affect may uphold the very idea of homocultural identity that my notion of feeling is meant to undermine,

thereby acting as a monumental obstacle to grasping a more radical account of affectivity. In any case, the weight of entrenched suppositions burdening the topic of feeling must be lifted in order to illuminate the delicate terrain I am aiming at. It is therefore crucial that I address commonalities among these accounts before I can mark out a route from their thinking to mine. Let me begin with Francisco Varela's characterization of affect.

Varela (1999b) suggests that affective dynamics initiate gestalt shifts in thought and action. Unlike older views, for Varela intentionality is not assumed to rely on an outside mechanism in order to stir itself into motion. Nevertheless, cognition still relies on such intervention in order to significantly change its direction of movement. The general understanding Varela indicates of the relation between affective movement and the thinking which it affects seems to depend on the idea of emotion as the change of a temporarily persisting stance (scheme, state, dispositional attitude). Conceptual narratives are assumed to have a self-perpetuating schematic tendency about them, requiring outside intervention from time to time to produce qualitative change. The processes within a living system, including psychological functions, cannot be counted on to be intrinsically transformational in a way that is optimally adaptive, but must be channelized into changes in direction of action and conceptualization by extrinsic motivating sources.

We find a similar account of the role of emotion in Ratcliffe's (2002) synthesis of Heidegger and neurophysiology. Ratcliffe says emotion and embodiment are "'incorporated as essential components in cognition", but emotion and cognition are clearly not identical; "...emotions and moods are not explicitly cognitive but neither are they independent of cognition" (p.299). They originate as bodily sensations structuring cognition from outside of it. Emotion and cognition can 'conflict' and emotion can "override cognitive judgement" (p.299). Ratcliffe cites Ramachandran's clinical observations of individuals with anosognosia, who apparently distort environmental information which contradicts an internally generated narrative. Ramachandran and Ratcliffe attribute this behavior to damage to connections between emotion and cognitive centers. Ratcliffe concludes from this that, in typically functioning persons, emotion signals from the body are presumed to pack a contentful punch large enough to break through a psychological narrative's resistances where weaker percepts from the environment cannot.

It seems, then, that for Ratcliffe and Varela, intention is a capacity for manipulating objects of thought, but emotion, as valiative valence, provides the criteria for such processing. They are apparently not able to

find the resources strictly within what they think of as intentional thought to de-center thinking processes, because they treat cognition as tending to form temporarily self-perpetuating narratives which can distort or keep out contradictory input from the world. So they rely on the body, in the form of emotion cues, to come to the rescue and bring the stalled cognitive apparatus back in touch with a dynamically changing world. The mechanism of emotion is assumed to intervene in order to infuse a stagnant narrative with a new direction and meaning.⁴ Ratcliffe (2002) asserts: "Without emotional responses, one is not uprooted from a coherent interpretations of events..." (p.306). Although these emotion cues are claimed to be inseparably linked with conceptual processes, this linkage amounts to more of a concatenation between pre-existing states than a more radical indissociability. This may be due to the belief that feeling originates developmentally within the individual independently from cognition, as action readiness circuits that, Panksepp (1998) claims, are "completely biological and affective but..., through innumerable sensory-perceptual interactions with our environments, [become] inextricably mixed with learning and world events" (p.303).

For all their differences, I claim that Ratcliffe and Varela share with other contemporary accounts of affect and emotion what I call the 'adaptationist' presumption that meaning is shaped in a semi-arbitrary way by inputs which come to influence it from a pre-existing outside. The same assumption determining the structuration of metaphoric intentionality, the relation between consciousness and the unconscious, and even narrative intersubjectivity. as arbitrary mapping, mirroring or conditioning functions between literal, schematic states, guides the relation between affect and perception-conception. Damasio (2000) puts it this way: "...as a result of powerful learning mechanisms such as conditioning, emotions of all shades eventually help connect homeostatic regulation and survival values to numerous events and objects in our autobiographical experience" (p.54). According to this thinking, physiological processes of feeling adapt and coordinate with a partially independent cognitive environment, authorizing adaptationism as a causal explanation of origins.

Viewed as an adaptation, emotion is linked to a milieu outside of itself (cognition) and with which the logic of the bond is indirect, partially arbitrary in the sense that it is capable of being made irrational, as is supposedly the case with nonadaptive mutations. There is a partial independence assumed between the participant aspects of reciprocally adaptive interactions. The cobbling can be uncobbled unilaterally. Emotion can aid reason, but can also be dysfunctional. Damasio (2000) summarizes:

Emotions are curious adaptations that are part and parcel of the machinery with which organisms regulate survival. In short, for certain classes of clearly dangerous or clearly valuable stimuli in the internal or external environment, evolution has assembled a matching answer in the form of emotion" (p.54).

In sum, with regard to affectivity, Ratcliffe, Varela, Panksepp and Damasio appear to treat as reified content what could be better understood as transformative process. Hypostasizing and abstracting the intricate movement of experiencing into emotion 'signals' and self-perpetuating narratives, relating to each other in quasi-arbitrary brain-body interactions, misses the internal integrity of meaning processes. An emotion viewed as a schematic signal or cue originating outside of cognition can only be presumed to significantly modify and structure cognitive meaning if one profoundly under-appreciates a more primary mobility structuring (and exceeding) so-called cognitive control from within itself. Specifically, what confirms and reinforces a thinking also always alters the direction and sense of that thinking in a subtle but global way. So-called symbolic processes find their meaning reshaped well before any exposure to a separate bodily, conceptual or interpersonal outside.

By the same token, what would be considered transformational or disturbing to a particular way of thinking could only have sense relative to the orientation of that thinking itself; any modifications of thinking would have to emerge out of the resources of that thinking in a way that preserved an always ongoing integrity and implicatory self-consistency in the movement of experience. What disturbs a perspective belongs to it; the disturbance is born intimately from it. In intending, I am not simply being directed toward 'objects', in the sense of revisiting something that was already there. Experiences don't come at me, they unfold from me and into each other as both a carrying forward of an intentional thematic and a subtle, but global, re-defining of me (and them).

I believe what is needed is a model of recursivity uniting self-referential continuity and absolute alterity, the so-called pre-reflective and the reflective, in the same structure, the same moment. Not a model which looks for the impetus for subversive novelty in supposed effects which are grafted onto and condition states of meaning from outside of them, but as the very core of an event. Let us, then, venture the following definition of affect, applying to such terms as emotion, feeling and desire as well: Every experienced event

of any kind (perceptual, conceptual, bodily-sensory) is an affect, and every affect is a change in affect. If every event of meaning is an advent of qualitative novelty, then cognition is affective not simply in the sense that a background affective tonality, mood or attunement frames the activity as a whole, as “a kind of cradle within which cognition rests” (Ratcliffe, 2002, p. 296), but in that each moment of engagement is an inseparable interbleeding between the continuation (not as a duplicative representation but as an already modified version) of a prior context of attunement or thematics, and a change in that attunement. This implies a rejection of two long-standing assumptions supporting the depiction of affect and cognition as distinct states. Contrary to these assumptions:

1) Intentional experience does not need to be pushed or pulled into action, or change of direction, by extrinsic (pre-noetic) forces. Every moment of experience is already intrinsically affective (self-displacing), assuring that even the most apparently non-emotive, ‘rational’, reflective type of awareness, such as supposedly characterizes affectively neutral empirical accounts, qualitatively, intuitively, hedonically transforms the meaning of what it references. Feelings belong to, operate within, carry forward, and transform what are called conceptual meanings even before any specific experience of bodily activation. This qualitatively transformative effect in moment to moment experience is often subtle enough to go unnoticed, explaining the apparent analytical stability and inter-subjective objectivity attributed to empirical phenomena, the allegedly self-perpetuating coherence of linguistic narratives, and even the illusion of a stable ongoing pre-reflective self-awareness.

2) ‘Raw’ affect is an intrinsically (non-representational, non-propositional) reflective intentionality. So-called bodily sensations of feeling not only manifest the characteristics of metaphoricity and narrative consistency traditionally associated with conceptual thought, but in fact are not categorically distinguishable from what has been called conceptual meaning in any stable way.

Let me elaborate on my first assertion. What do I mean by my claim that what has been called symbolic, rational thought is inherently qualitatively transformational? What finer, more mobile process may be obscured by current notions of linguistic reasoning? Penetrating the veil of the homuncular permeating our language of the things within us and around us is not a matter of discovering smaller, faster, dumber, more interactive ‘bits’ within the units of current approaches, for that would simply displace the

issues we've discussed onto a miniaturized scale. It is a matter of revealing perhaps an entirely different notion of the basis of entities than that of the freeze-frame state. This is where a finely-tuned detection of feeling-in-thought becomes crucial.

Many researchers may agree that, even apart from the specific contribution of the body as they understand it, intentional entities have a qualitative 'feel' in the sense of representing a meaning which is in some measure unique to the individual ('the feeling of what it is like'). It is widely understood today (see Putnam (1990)) that objective fact and subjective valuation are inseparably intertwined such that an inter-subjective, third person science can never entirely eliminate interpretive gaps in communication. I am trying to convey a different way of understanding the 'feel' of things than this idea of a supposedly 'pre-reflective' self-awareness of qualitative meaning. What I have in mind is a notion of feeling which combines and redetermines current understandings of thought, affect and expression.

Prior to any notion of cognition and affect as distinguishable constructs, this idea of feeling as event has its entire effect exhausted in its being just barely more than itself, as just the most insignificant and gentle whiff, feel, tinge of novelty. Within and beyond such terms as cognitive states and bodily affective signs, lies a universe of barely self-exceeding accents, modulations, aspects, variations, ways of working. Not variations or modulations of STATES but modulations of modulations.⁵ The subpersonal, personal and interpersonal worlds generated from (but never overtaking) this intricate process may be clumsily described via the 'homuncular' terminology of patterned interactions between discrete parts, but at the cost of missing the profound ongoing internal relatedness and immediacy of this underlying, overflowing movement.

Count from one to ten and discover how the intent and meaning of this supposed repetition of identical increments shifts in very subtle ways as soon as you begin. Look at the period at the end of this sentence. Notice how the feel, the sense of it (and you) changes immediately and constantly as you continue to gaze as it for a few moments. Can you sense-feel this 'it' undergoing change not as a series of different freeze frame states ('what it is') but as self-exceedings of self-exceedings ('how it changes'), transformations without form? Even the most momentary identification of a so-called state conceals a whole journey of feeling transformations, colorations, hedonic tonalities, remaking each moment my entire past (bodily, linguistic, cultural) along with my whole sense of myself. Yet we name this auto-multiplication

'a' sign . In doing so are we painting a whole vicinity of varying affective textures with one brush? No, the brush itself is experienced implicitly AS this multiplicity even when we are not explicitly aware that we are accessing more than a uniform state. It is precisely the way that a name, a sign continues to be the same differently (meaning that what IT is, and who WE are, is utterly and completely transformed, but in the most exquisitely subtle way, moment to moment, and WITHIN a single instantaneous moment) in our experience of it that allows us to see a name, sign, concept, percept as an apparent unity across these changes, and to communicate it to someone else the same differently as further developments of it, and they to receive the information from us the same differently as even further self-variations, and share it interpersonally, empirically, 'objectively', the same differently (I suggest that the precision of science, as well as the illusion of a constant, pre-reflective self-awareness, rests on this mobile continuity within, between and beyond so-called signs). To overtly RECOGNIZE what had traditionally been assumed as a unity as this ever-developing multiplicity is not to go from stasis to motion but to FURTHER ENRICH an already ongoing process.

Now my second point may become clearer . I asserted that affect is an intrinsically (non-propositional) reflective, quasi-thematically unfolding intentionality. My depiction of the little 'I' implied by a concept as an illusionary effect of an intricate texturizing sequence of affective variations of variations, metaphors of metaphors, gently reinventing itself and me (and undermining from within the alleged constancy of 'pre-reflective' self-awareness) moment to moment the same differently, establishes a gentle tapestry of feeling transformations as the hidden basis of what have been called concepts, BEFORE the participation of specific bodily sensation. And when an evolving situation brings into play the experience of bodily affects, such activations don't add any special capacities of hedonic-aesthetic feeling not already involved in the utterly contextual structuration of thought from the start. What so-called specific bodily sensation contributes is a meaningful quasi-thematic elaboration of the already richly felt, globally self-transforming, fully embodied-embedded unfolding of intentional experience.

If feeling, understood this new way, IS the very core of so-called conceptual and perceptual thought, merging narrative-thematic consistency and global self-transformation, the pre-noetic and the noetic, in the same gesture, then the presumed partial independence of rationality and affect vanishes, and the distinction re-emerges as aspects inherent in each event.

The interaffecting of context and novelty which defines an event simultaneously produces a fresh, particular modulation of change (empirical aspect) and a unique momentum (hedonic component) of self-transformation. From this vantage, the valuative, hedonic (the perceived goodness or badness of things), aesthetic aspect of experience, underlying 'non-emotional' appraisals as well as our sadnesses, fears and joys, simply IS our vicissitudes of momentum of sense-making through new situations, rather than arising from the content of special objects.

Affective valences are contractions and expansions, coherences and incoherences, accelerations and regressions, consonances and dissonances, expressing how effectively we are able to anticipate, comprehend, relate to, and thus how densely, richly, intensely we are able to move through, new experience. If we can believe that a unique qualitative moment of momentum, ranging from the confused paralysis of unintelligibility to the exhilaration of dense transformative comprehension, is intrinsic to ALL events, then perhaps there is no need to attribute the origin of aesthetic pleasures and pains to the functioning of a limited class of entities like bodily affects, even if it is understandable why this kind of assumption has survived for so long in psychology.⁶ From the standpoint of verbal expressivity, what has traditionally been called emotion often appears to be a minimalist art, because it is the situational momentum of experiencing slowing or accelerating so rapidly that feelings seem to distill meaning down to a bare inarticulate essence. When the momentum of our reflective thought shifts in such dramatic ways (acceleratively enriched in joyful comprehension, impoverished in grief, ambivalent in fear, alternately disappointed and confident in anger), such so-called emotional events may appear to be a species apart from conceptual reason, a blind intuitive force (surge, glow, twinge, sensation, arousal, energy) invading, conditioning and structuring perceptual and conceptual thought from without as a background field. It is said that such 'raw' or primitive feeling is bodily-physiological, pre-reflective and non-conceptual, contentless hedonic valuation, innate, passive, something we are overcome by. At other times, meaningful situational change may be intermediate, just modulated and gradual enough that content seems to perpetuate itself in self-cohering narratives. Such situations have been called rational, voluntary, factual, reflective, stable, conceptual, non-aesthetic. However, as I have said, these dichotomies: hedonic versus reflective, voluntary versus involuntary, conceptual versus pre-reflective bodily-affective, are not effectively understood as interacting states of being; they are relative variations in the momentum

of a contextually unfolding process which is always, at the same time, within the same event, intentional-reflective and intuitive-affective.

Am I suggesting that emotion be thought as a 'cognitive' appraisal, cut off from bodily sensation, movement and expression?⁷ On the contrary, it is precisely the treatment of cognition, bodily sensation and expression as separately pre-existing processes (even when treated as mutually structuring each other via 'intentional-affective' syntheses) which I am questioning.

The point isn't that bodily responses to experience via such avenues as the endocrine, autonomic nervous system and the motor pathways are irrelevant or peripheral to the intentional experience of emotion, but that, whether we talking about the experience of so-called conceptual appraisal or bodily sensation, the phenomenological scene of emotion (or any other aspect of bio-psycho-social functioning) does not depend on an arbitrary concatenation or mutual conditioning between discrete components. Prinz (2004), Colombetti and Thompson (2006), Damasio (1999) and others deny such a thing as a totally disembodied emotion, arguing that the feeling of emotion is affected in degrees concordantly with the severity of damage to avenues of connection with the body. I support their larger claim that experiential processes, including what are called cognitive and affective, function as radically, contextually inter-relational. However, I want to turn their views around a bit. Feeling does not depend on the fact that the brain, as a spatial locale and repository of temporary states of content, always has some access to the body, as a separate locale with semi-independent contents.

I have said that feeling functions from within so-called reflective thought, and that bodily affect is intentional. But if both the former and latter are true, it is not because body sensation structures cognition (or vice-versa). Rather, it is because these stratifying abstractions are but inadequately formulated moments of a process of sense-making uniting the hedonic and the intentional prior to any distinction between, or intertwining of, mind and body. Before I could speak of the occurrence of emotion as mental appraisals structured and conditioned by a background field of physiological energetics and behavioral expressions, I would have to re-figure all of these modes, what would be referred to as the "motoric", the "sensate", the "cognitive", as unstable metaphorical figures emerging contextually out of each other over the course of an indissociably reflective-affective global movement of experience which would imply the unraveling of the basis of categorical distinctions currently orienting the understanding of these terms.

When I am frightened, whether I focus on my attitude toward the world, my rapid heartbeat, my facial expression or bodily preparation for action, each of these aspects emerge out of each other as a fully reflective, metaphoric carrying forward and further transforming of the deepening implications of this tentative, confused situation. All these aspects already belong to, and in fact have their meaning ENTIRELY defined as variations-continuations of the thematic unfolding of my sense of the emerging threat, subtly remaking my entire past while always maintaining a sense, no matter how surprising, unpredictable or disturbing a new present appears, of implicatory belonging to this prior history.

Intermingled with my wandering in and out of significant shifts in experiential momentum, from doubts, terrors, and confusions to later confidences and contentments, will be more subtly self-transforming moments whose continual intuitive shifts of meaning, purpose and affective momentum are hidden so effectively that it may fool me into believing that this more plodding progress of comprehension represents the appearance of a different species from that of pronounced feeling, the realm of affectively neutral (or constant) cognitive states. However, such entities as narrative schemes and conceptual forms may in fact have no actual status other than as empty abstractions invoked by individuals who nevertheless, in their actual use of these terms, immediately and unknowingly transform the hedonically felt senses operating within (and defining) such abstractions in subtle but global ways. Feeling, the event, the interbleeding of subject and object, transformation without form: all of these terms reference the same irreducible 'unit' of experience, concealed by but overrunning what symbols, bits, assemblies, bodies, frames and other states are supposed to do. A 'single' sign (whether so-called conceptual or bodily-affective) is already a panoply of intimately changing variations and momenta of felt meanings, in (as) the instant it is accessed, infusing the allegedly conceptual with feeling (and the sensate with intentionality) from within its very core, embodied before any consultation with a separate bodily 'outside'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I suppose the coherence of this paper's claims concerning metaphor, the relation between consciousness and the unconscious, the basis of interpersonal understanding, cognition and emotion ultimately hinges on the reader's detection of what I have inadequately described here

as a world of integrally and globally inter-affecting textures of felt sense-making functioning within, and beyond, what have been assumed as the irreducible units of bio-psycho-social meaning.⁸ Leaving aside many other questions left unanswered by my very preliminary sketch, I anticipate that resistance on the part of readers to entertaining the possibility of a fine realm of experience alleging itself to be both more intrinsically self-transformative and implicatively self-consistent than current views allow for will be tied less to its transformative impetus than its integrative aspects. That is, the claim for the sort of intricate order I have been making cannot fail to arouse the suspicion that, despite my protestations, a closet irrealism, idealism or subjectivism must be operating behind the scenes to justify the radically implicative internal belonging I have emphasized for this perspective.

To the anticipated charge of essentialism I can only answer that, from my vantage, it is current psychologies which appear burdened with the weight of an idealism: their belief in temporary discrete states stifles the intimately interactive potential of their embodied, embedded approaches, by making the whole works dependent on irreducible units of formal resistance and polarization. Events understood as interaffectings of interaffectings, working within and beyond relations among presumed temporary essences (conceptual, affective-bodily, interpersonal), do not achieve their gentle integrative continuity through any positive internal power. On the contrary, they simply lack the formidability of static identity necessary to impose the arbitrariness of conditioning, mapping, mirroring, grafting and cobbling, on the movement of experiential process.⁹

Notes

¹ I support Husserl's depiction of experience as an indeterminate intersubjective movement of temporality. However, I agree with the argument, made in different ways by commentators such as such as Derrida (1973), Gallagher (1998) and Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, that Husserl's retentional-protentional model of time-consciousness slighted the genetic and historical in favor of a transparent present and a historicist time.

² This gesture cannot be reduced to a subjective mechanism of consciousness or objective relations between particles. Like the idea of the interpenetration of fact and value informing phenomenological philosophical perspectives, this is a quasi-transcendental (simultaneously subjective and empirical) claim concerning the irreducible nature of reality and time itself, and operates

both as a pre-condition and a re-envisioning of subjective consciousness and empirical bodies.

³For related models, see Gentner's (Gentner, D., Bowdle, B., Wolff, P., & Boronat, C. (2001)) structure mapping model, Glucksberg and Keysar's (1990) attributive categorization approach, and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory.

⁴For Ratcliffe emotions selectively organize cognition not just by prompting the interruption of a current narrative, but also by facilitating the assimilation of new events into an ongoing context. Ratcliffe (2002) cites Ramachandran's account of patients with Capgras syndrome as evidence that affect can serve to inform the cognitive system that a previously experienced object is similar or identical to a current one.

⁵ This should not be confused with Husserl's perspectival variations in the perception of an object. It is not just in 'deliberately' reflecting upon or changing position with respect to perceptual entities that we modify their content; I suggest that even a certain phenomenological notion of pre-reflective perceptual self-awareness may amount to an abstraction derived from, but blind to, an intricate fabric of contingent reflective change *within* the space of a so-called perceptual aspect.

⁶ Damasio (1996) writes "We came to life with a pre-organized mechanism to give us the experiences of pain and of pleasure. Culture and individual history may change the threshold at which it begins to be triggered, or its intensity, or provide us with means to dampen it. But the essential device is a given. (p.264)". While I agree with Damasio that the capacity for physical and emotional sensation is certainly dependent upon the existence of particular physiological processes, I suggest that the actual functioning of pain and pleasure is not the production of any sort of pre-existing device or content, but is instead the purely contextual expression of the rhythms of momentum of organismic experiencing.

⁷ See Robert Solomon's (1977) work for a representative cognitive appraisal account of emotion.

⁸ Gendlin (1991) has named this more-than-conceptual realm 'the implicit intricacy'. An interesting difference in our approaches is that according to Gendlin, concepts and the wider experiential intricacy which generates them depend on each other. I suggest, instead, that a concept is but an illusory effect of the wider process of experiencing.

⁹ The focus of this article being psychological texts, I have made little mention of philosophers in the phenomenological tradition such as Hus-

serl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, whose writing has been increasingly appreciated as anticipating recent trends in psychological theorizing. The case can also be made that the post-structuralist philosophies of Lyotard, Derrida and Deleuze have strong resonances with the overarching aims of current psychologies(See Gallagher (1997),(1998), Lyotard (1991)). Gendlin's (1985), (1991) critiques of many of these philosophers supports my contention that none of these authors are immune to the homuncular critique I present in this paper.

References

- Clark, A. (1997). *Being There: Putting Brain, Body and World Together Again*. MIT Press: Cambridge.
- Colombetti, G. and Thompson, E. (2007). *The Feeling Body: Toward an Enactive Approach to Emotion*. In *Developmental Perspectives on Embodiment and Consciousness*, W.F. Overton, U. Miller, & J. Newman(eds).New York:Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes' Error*.New York:Avon.
- Damasio, A. (2000). *The Feeling of What Happens:Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*. London:Vintage.
- Derrida, J.(1973). *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans.D.B. Allison. Evanston:Northwestern University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1995). *Questioning Consciousness:The Interplay of Imagery, Cognition and Emotion in the Human Brain*.Amsterdam & Philadelphia:John Benjamins.
- Gallagher,S.(1997).”On the Pre-Noetic Reality of Time.” In M.Dillon (ed.). *Ecart and Differance:Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing* (pp.134-48).Altantic Highlands:Humanities Press.
- Gallagher,S. (1998). *The Inordinance of Time*. Evanston,Il:Northwestern University Press.
- Gallagher, S. (2005).*How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Clarendon. Press.
- Gallagher, S. and Zahavi, D. (2005). “Phenomenological Approaches to Self-Consciousness.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Gallagher, S. and Hutto, D. (in press). “Understanding Others through PrimaryInteraction and Narrative Practice.” In: J. Zlatev, T. Racine, C. Sinha and E. Itkonen (eds). *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Inter-subjectivity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Gendlin, E.T. (1985). "Nonlogical Moves and Nature Metaphors." In A.T. Tymiecka(ed.) *Analecta Husserliana*, XIX,383-400. D.Reidel.
- Gendlin, E.T. (1991). "Thinking Beyond Patterns:Body, Language and Situations," In B. DenOuden & M.Moen (eds), *The Presence of Feeling in Thought*.New York:Peter Lang.
- Gendlin, E.T. (1995). "Crossing and Dipping: Some Terms for Approaching the Interface between Natural Understanding and Logical Formulation." *Mind and Machines*, 5, pp.547-60.
- Gendlin, E.T. (1997a). "Reply to Mark Johnson." In D.M. Levin (eds.), *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and Thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy*. Evanston.II: Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.
- Gendlin, E.T. (1997b). *A Process Model*. New York: The Focusing Institute.
- Gendlin, E.T. (2000). "The 'Mind'/'Body' Problem and First Person Process: Three Types of Concepts." In R.D. Ellis & N. Newton (eds.), *The Caldron of Consciousness. Motivation, Affect and Self-Organization - An Anthology*. Vol. 16 of the series *Advances in Consciousness Research*, pp. 109-118. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Gentner, D., Bowdle, B., Wolff, P., & Boronat, C. (2001). "Metaphor is Like analogy." In Centner, D., Holyoak, K.J., & Kokinov, B.N. (eds.), *The Analogical Mind: Perspectives from Cognitive Science* (pp. 199-253). Cambridge MA:MIT Press.
- Glucksberg, S ., & Keysar, B .(1990) . "Understanding Metaphorical Comparisons : Beyond Similarity," *Psychological Review*, 97, pp.3-18.
- Gopnik, A., & Meltzoff, A.(1997). *Words, Thoughts, and Theories*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- James, W. (1978). "The Knowing of Things Together," In *Essays in Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Johnson, M. (1993). *Moral Imagination:Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*. Chicago,Il:University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson,M.(1997). "Embodied Meaning and Cognitive Science." In D.M.. Levin (eds.), *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and Thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy*. Evanston.II: Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By* .Chicago,Il: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson,M. (1999). *Philosophy In The Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books.

- Lyotard, J. (1991). *The Inhuman: Reflections On Time*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Panksepp, J. (1998). *Affective Neuroscience*. New York: Oxford.
- Prinz, J.J. (2004). *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, H. (1990). *Realism With A Human Face*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Ratcliffe, M. (2002). "Heidegger's Attunement and the Neuropsychology of Emotion." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. 1: pp. 287-312.
- Ratcliffe, M. (2007). "Rethinking Commonsense Psychology: A Critique of Folk Psychology," from *Theory of Mind and Simulation*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Solomon, R. (1977). *The Passions*. New York: Anchor.
- Taylor, Mark C. (2001). *The Moment of Complexity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Gelder, T. (1996). "Wooden Iron? Husserlian Phenomenology Meets Cognitive Science." In Jean Petitot, Francisco Varela, Bernard Pachoud, Jean-Michel Roy (ed.), *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Van Gelder, T. (1999). "Dynamic Approaches to Cognition," In R. Wilson & F. Keil (ed.), *The MIT Encyclopedia of Cognitive Sciences* (pp. 244-6). Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Varela, F., Thompson, E. and Rosch, E. (1991). *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Varela, F. (1999a). *Ethical Knowhow: Action, Wisdom, and Cognition*. Trans. Board of Trustees, Leland Stanford Junior University. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Varela, F. (1999b). "The Specious Present; A Neurophenomenology of Time Consciousness." In Jean Petitot, Francisco Varela, Bernard Pachoud, Jean-Michel Roy (ed.), *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zahavi, D. (1999). *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

William Heyen

BEAUTIFUL MARIA

Jose Porko hit home runs in his first two at-bats
in the World Baseball Classic, then got helmeted.
Dugouts emptied, a few players got upended,
but it was all in fact just a wrestling match
until Miguel Ortiz stomped his spikes down hard
on Porko's temple. A cop phalanx got
Porko's body off the field, fans rioted in the stands

even before knowing the Venezuelan first baseman was dead,
& then, when they heard, burned down stadium & city.
The corporations considered canceling the Classic for a few years,
or perhaps two, or at least one, but then settled
on required seminars for umpires who must learn,
a spokesman said, "to anticipate, and defuse,
problematic situations." There on the teletron

coalesced Porko's grieving widow, red rose in her ebon hair,
drawing her shawl tight round her, praying for calm, for
forgiveness for Miguel, in English, then Spanish, then tongues.
His spirit, she said, demanded strength from her,
& for the Classic to continue. We knew that she would be
properly compensated, but in our memory
Maria is a saint, her every breath sincere, & earned.

CODA

Two seasons later, Maria & Miguel were married
within that chapel where Porko had been eulogized.

SHABAZZ

St. John of the Cross, his “Cloud of Unknowing,”
sings chords of mystical godhead,
thus Shabazz was listening to the audio
before that last game against Moscow.

The words, half understood—Russian
was not his native language—soothed him.
Yes, we are consoled that St. John
comforted Shabazz before his final competition.

What else was in his iPod, if anything,
we’ve no way of knowing unless
the corporation’s lawyers release this information
which is far from likely unless

there is strong torque from the oval office
which is loath to interfere despite rumors
that the President was at the arena
when Shabazz stood under the goal posts

like a god, no, like a humble disciple
prepared to receive the day’s verdict of victory
or death. Now, praising him, some of us
do not picture his fractures or stigmata

that circled the world in those next hours, but
Shabazz hunched over in front of his locker
listening to divine presence, arming himself
for the only struggle that matters.

THE WARRIOR

If you want to know what it sounded like
when his neck broke,
snap a wooden popsickle stick,

or, if you're living in the future when everything is plastic
& the ice cream corporation flash-freezes its plastic
vellumilla & plastic chocomarrow & plastic

bloodberry around a logo-wand of edible plastic,
just ask Cassandra, who was there with me, to crack
her knuckles, as she often does these days

even though her hands are swollen....

There! Did you hear it? The poor bastard
got hit so hard that we winced & figured
he'd been translated into the Great Beyond,

but rumor is that he'll survive. Any chance
you'll walk Cass across the compound to her place?—
she's got welcome-girl duty for the weekend,

& I'm crucial at the heliport right now
where the bosses are coptering in below
rogue clouds that are threatening to explode.

THE FOOTBALL CORPORATIONS

First we saw just his helmet
roll out from the vicious gang-hit,
then realized that his head was still in it,

good old #44, now a gusher
who'd seldom spoken to fans before
or been injured except for when his supplier

knifed him, a superficial wound, that rib-scar
he'd strum while sneering at reporters.
Anyway, when the stretcher-bearers

ran out onto the field, they couldn't configure whether
to load up #44's head, or body, or both together.
I swear I don't laugh much these years,

nobody does, but for a time-out we forgot
which city would be bombed if their team lost,
which country would be forced to transport

2.5 million of its children for slave labor & food
to the other. I heard today that the blood-sod
broke records on eBay, a square inch for a hundred grand.

CODA

#44 was cremated, except for his head,
now encased in lucite at the Hall of Fame.
Visitor, straightarm your way to gain a look at him.
He'll glare into your future like a god.

AFTER THE GAME, 2049

That famous photo of Typhoon with his head
between his knees with the flashback sun
from the mirror behind him—it must have been
a sun exploding in his brain at that millisecond
before he fell forward to block the carpet

& lay dead while the corporation publicists
ushered in more media for what they needed
to spin their message that Typhoon,
a role model, had continued to play hard
despite concussions in the first & second quarters

& in overtime—that famous shot, what a shame
Typhoon couldn't live to sign a thousand photos,
right across that sun, seven letters
that might have brought at least seven figures
for each of his several widows.

Figurations of the Ecstatic: The Labor of Attention in Aesthetic Experience

David B. Dillard-Wright

University of South Carolina - Aiken

Descriptions of “aesthetic arrest,” those ecstatic moments that lift the common sense subject-object dichotomy, abound in Merleau-Ponty’s writings. These special experiences, found in both artistic and mystical accounts, arise from the daily life of ordinary perception. Such experiences enable the artist, philosopher, or mystic to overturn received categories and describe phenomena in a creative way; they become dangerous when treated as the sine qua non of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic arrest, though rare in consumer society, need not be overwhelmed by the flood of information and can still provide fresh glimpses into the world as lived.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s work often draws from examples of “aesthetic arrest”: those profound experiences of the world in which the self is displaced and seen as if from the outside, and the outside, in turn, pierces the subject’s interiority. Merleau-Ponty writes his theory around artistic experiences and builds on them, explaining without mystification how such inversions are possible. Merleau-Ponty’s accounts drip with sexual and religious imagery: he speaks of a “coition” and “communion” between body and world, in addition to imagery of “penetration.” Analysis of these passages shows that ecstasy need not be considered supernatural; rather, ecstasy arises within the daily “intercourse” that people have with things. These ecstatic moments revivify and clarify descriptions of aesthetic experience and should not be shunted aside as somehow beyond the pale of normal perception. Ecstasy should be included in accounts of the aesthetic as serving an important part in the creative process; it should not, however, be treated as an end in itself. Examining Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the ecstatic shows how it overlaps with religious accounts and how it opens an aesthetic ethics for today’s consumer subjectivities.

The texts that first come to mind are the musings on painting from “Cezanne’s Doubt” and “Eye and Mind.” In these striking passages, the artist receives the mute communications of the world through an active passivity. André Marchand wrote, in a passage quoted by Merleau-Ponty that cannot be overexamined:

In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were

speaking to me...I was there, listening...I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it....I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out.

Such statements cannot be dismissed as merely metaphorical: Merleau-Ponty believes that perception works because the body literally does have contact with the world, and that artistic and cultural forms are extensions of the things they describe. Merleau-Ponty notices a paradox inserted within fleshly experience: passive reception of the world's meanings depends upon a highly active component of disciplined attention. A preparatory period of intense contemplative activity makes the instances of "ek-stase" (literally "out of place") described in the essays on painting as well as in the *Phenomenology of Perception* possible. The moment of pure passivity, the moment of suspension in which subject and object inter-penetrate one another, paradoxically requires a great deal of work, the work of attunement or attention, in which the perceiver holds everyday attitudes towards the world and propositions about the world in abeyance. Moments of aesthetic arrest enable a greater clarity, a greater communion with the things to emerge, which can then generate more fluid cultural meanings.

Paul Cézanne said, "the landscape thinks itself in me...and I am its consciousness": this artistic reversal does not happen automatically in some sort of breathless, sentimental way. Not spontaneous in the usual sense of being carefree and unconditioned, Cézanne's realization emerged from preparatory work. Paul Cézanne deliberately planned to have such an experience and expended great effort in its actualization, which Merleau-Ponty emphasizes:

He needed one hundred working sessions for a still life, one hundred and fifty sittings for a portrait...Painting was his world and his way of life. He worked alone, without students, without admiration from his family, without encouragement from his critics. He painted on the afternoon of the day his mother died.

His landscape painting even entailed a thorough study of the geology and copious preparatory sketches, which he subsequently forgot the moment the work proper commenced. Cézanne labored to "germinate" his landscape painting by studying interpretive traditions (he did, after all, spend hours wandering the halls of the Louvre, and geology, itself, constitutes an interpretive tradition) and then abandoned or transformed these traditions in the

moment of encounter with the landscape. The preparatory studies made the attunement possible, allowed Cézanne to see the landscape in front of him. The horizons of interpretive discourse opened onto the landscape itself and this opening onto the present allowed the traditions to mean something for Cézanne in the moment of artistic insight. The preparatory phase, though less sexy, less ecstatic, than the coition itself, reveals the dynamic of aesthetic experience: the world entangles itself with knowers through perception (foreplay) and things implicate themselves with the interpretive traditions that “describe” them. The study of geology allowed Cezanne to see previously unnoticed aspects of the landscape, which were then incorporated into the visual whole encountered by Cézanne and captured on the canvas according to the gleaned insight.

The labor involved in creating the right conditions for the moment of ek-stasis need not always be as strenuous as Cézanne’s artistic fulminations. Sometimes more commonplace attunement facilitates the shift toward the passive reception of new experience, as in the attention needed for enjoying a glass of wine. Wine aficionado Gary Vaynerchuk, in a radio interview, says that people often hesitate to order wine in a restaurant:

Everyone’s passing [the wine list] off because they’re afraid to make the right choice. I’ve never seen anybody do that with a menu,’ he says. ‘You’re not concerned what kind of cheeseburger you order. If you say extra pickles, nobody’s critiquing what you did.

Vaynerchuk hopes that wine drinkers will begin to use fresh terminology drawn from their own experiences to describe the wine that they drink. He loves it when someone says about a glass of wine, “Oh this reminds me of cotton candy I had at the fair in ’84. That’s real,” he says. “The terms they read from Robert Parker, the *Wine Spectator*, that they regurgitate and think they’re cool mean nothing.” The catch-phrases of professional sommeliers keep non-professionals from enjoying the experience, because wine drinking becomes a display of sophistication rather than a pleasurable experience in its own right. This accretion of traditional categories and the subsequent canonizing of a certain language gives the aesthetic a bad name—as the province of high brow ostentation—and creates a cleavage between subject and object, such that the unwitting enthusiast comes to love a certain vocabulary rather than wine, or, better, this particular wine being drunk on a friend’s backyard deck on this particular Spring evening.

A canonical procedure attends the serious drinking of wine: knowing about the agriculture of wines, the regions and varietals, re-enacting the official process of swirling, smelling, and finally drinking, recapitulating the standard descriptions of this or that “bouquet.” None of these activities necessarily impede understanding and appreciation of the wine-drinking sensorium: they may even help to disclose facets of the experience. The problem with expert knowledge only arises when it substitutes for the lived reality.

Received categories often stunt aesthetic enjoyment and constrain creative expression, one of the side effects of formal discourse. Refraining from all speech and sitting in silence may revivify experience, but such meditative practices need not be the only way in which aesthetes (and here I mean this term in a broad sense without its negative connotations) place received categories in abeyance. Postmodern philosopher Mark C. Taylor has remarked that reading and writing can function as meditative practices, that language, too, carries the basic structure of emptiness described by Buddhist philosophy. Language opens a powerful point of entry into the world, like the first thumbnail driven under the peel of an orange that helps to unravel the skin from the fruit. This need not be characterized as an imperialistic projection of meaning onto a previously meaningless world: both language and world cooperate in the gestural interplay of meaning. Viewing language as gestural avoids ossification into fixed categories and allows language to continue to serve as an appendage or extension of the world-as-lived rather than as a substitution for it.

Merleau-Ponty writes in “The Philosopher and his Shadow” that “[l]ogical objectivity derives from carnal intersubjectivity on the condition that it has been forgotten as carnal intersubjectivity, and it is carnal intersubjectivity itself which produces this forgetfulness by wending its way toward logical objectivity.” Language forgets its origins and pretends to stand alone, an ineluctable enigma of words. Husserl and his heirs in phenomenology and associated disciplines allow accreted meanings to fall away, returning again to the phenomena. True, the “reduction...never ceased to be an enigmatic possibility for Husserl,” but this work, this activity towards passivity, holds open the possibility for a true encounter with phenomena rather than a solipsistic “regurgitation” of the same old themes. The painter, the novelist, the religious seeker, and the philosopher can all share in a common mission: all of these personalities seek to encounter the world in a new way, to see with new eyes and hear with new ears (“Let everyone with ears to hear, listen.”).

Merleau-Ponty did not use religious language in the *Phenomenology of Perception* in an accidental or tongue-in-cheek way; rather, Merleau-Ponty re-described the religious within the context of everyday perception. The labors of the ascetic are akin to the labors of the artist in that both seek to heighten their experience of mundane reality. Although Merleau-Ponty does not often address the religious or mystical as such, he does provocatively venture in this direction, as in this passage:

Just as the sacrament not only symbolizes, in a sensible species, an operation of Grace, but is also the real presence of God, which it causes to occupy [la fait résider] a fragment of space and communicates to those who eat of the consecrated bread, provided that they are inwardly prepared, in the same way the sensible has not only a motor and vital significance, but is nothing other than a certain way of being in the world suggested to us from some point in space, and seized and acted upon by our body, provided that it is capable of doing so, so that sensation is literally a form of communion.

Perception conveys the world's intentions (or what Merleau-Ponty had earlier called "lines of force," also described as "moods" or "styles") to the bodily actor in a sacramental fashion, so that all conceptualization draws its potency from a prior dialogue or interplay between person and world. The labor of "inward prepar[ation]" opens a passage through which the setting can act on the participant, in which each subjectivity can be "penetrated by the universe." Although Merleau-Ponty did not undertake such a project, he might have described the Roman Catholic image of the Sacred Heart or the Hindu and Buddhist heart chakra in much the same way. The receptive practitioner is pierced and set ablaze by the world as the heart image opens the systolic and diastolic rhythms of interpenetration that occur in daily existence. The effulgence of the world's activity courses through the veins and orifices of every creature, a process which images of the heart center reveal. Just by virtue of being embodied or by virtue of being a thing, each person, animal, and thing participates in the mutual dance of affectivity.

Phenomenologist Glen Mazis argues for a participatory, affective ethic in his book *Earthbodies: Recovering Our Planetary Senses*. Mazis applies Kierkegaardian existentialism to contemporary culture, arguing that an aesthetic detachment prevents people from connecting emotionally with others and staking a claim in the world. The aesthete, in one of Kierkeg-

aard's stages, applies the "rotation method" to the various situations of life, skipping from one pleasure to the next without ever engaging in a concrete situation, without ever risking emotional attachment. Kierkegaard's aesthete cultivates shallow relationships for the purpose of what Aristotle called utility or pleasure, never wanting to become too involved with that person's problems and emotions. This shallow aesthetic obsesses with control over the situation and manipulates circumstances so that he or she always experiences only what s/he wants to experience. Kierkegaard's aesthete does not have an absolute lack of sadness or pathos or empathy; s/he just determines the precise conditions and moments in which to savor these emotions, like costly bitter spirits. The shallow aesthete collects a storehouse of melancholic, gleeful, or sensual experiences to treasure, while the engaged aesthete remains fully participatory from start to finish.

While the fully engaged person is immersed in the situation, the shallow aesthete steps back, observing her/himself in a detached fashion, as though life were a game or a movie reel. Mazis proposes a re-awakening of our "planetary senses" as an antidote to the shallow aesthetic and a return to responsibility and relationship as a better, more ethical, mode of embodiment in the world. This embedded, relational aesthete knows the world ecstatically, recognizing the "surround" as an extension of the self: I can know the world through the technologies, landscapes, dreams, and animals that share this *Umwelt* with me. Refusing to fly into another region of pure spirit, Platonic Being, or isolated ego intensifies a commitment to this world and deepens appreciation of its mysteries.

Here a problem presents itself with regard to the moments of "aesthetic arrest" in Merleau-Ponty's writings. Certainly no one could accuse Cézanne of practicing the "rotation method": his aesthetic appreciation of the landscape came at a cost, the cost of endless hours of work and a razor sharp focus. Cézanne also labored to overcome an imperialistic gaze, and, if we take him at his word, to allow the landscape to communicate itself on its own terms. But one cannot help but be disturbed by the details that Merleau-Ponty relates without comment: for example, that Cézanne painted on the afternoon of his mother's funeral and had strained relationships with other people. This aesthetic comes dangerously close to a Platonic flight from the world if, indeed, Cézanne short-circuited the process of grieving for his mother and maintaining normal relationships with others in order to concentrate on his obsession for painting. The "rotation method" seems preferable, in some cases, to a singular fixation on an aesthetic object. A

comparison between Cézanne and Saint Augustine on this point shows that both painter and mystic can endanger ordinary relationships through a hyper-aesthetic concentration, or by taking aesthetic arrest as a privileged category of awareness.

Saint Augustine would undoubtedly rail against the accusation that his neo-Platonic Christian mysticism can be called a specialized figuration of the aesthetic: after all, he constantly decries the senses as a source of corruption and vice and the world as a tremendous weight that keeps him from his calling. Saint Augustine could agree that the senses represent a kind of intercourse with the world, but he would find this to be a reason to flee from the senses no less than he flees from sex. Augustine laments his sexual sin with his concubine, “a Carthage girl of low social standing,” who was the mother to his child, and dismisses her after 15 years in a committed relationship. Augustine describes the loss as follows: “The woman with whom I habitually slept was torn away from my side because she was a hindrance to my marriage. My heart which was deeply attached was cut and wounded and left a trail of blood.” Augustine detaches himself from the flow of relationship in favor of a vertical ascent, an ascent towards God and an ascent in societal stature. Contemporary audiences easily condemn Augustine for failing to resist society’s conventions. He should have stayed with the woman he loved: movie plots inform us that this is the way to go about things. In his better moments, however, Augustine resembles Cezanne in that he, also, wants to expose the hidden dimensions of things. Although Augustine seeks to expose the hidden life of God in things and Cezanne the hidden life of nature, both tasks share common features and, in fact, cannot be distinguished without some priveleged point of reference.

The mystical vision that Saint Augustine describes is not far from the moments of “aesthetic arrest” in the writings of Merleau-Ponty. A prime example is Augustine’s description of the vision at Ostia that he experiences along with his mother, Monica. Proceeding by means of gradual steps that resemble those described by Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*, the two undergo an ascent to a moment of “total concentration of the heart” in which they are in direct contact with eternal wisdom:

Step by step we climbed beyond all corporeal objects and the heaven itself, where sun, moon, and stars shed light on the earth. We ascended even further by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at your works, and we entered into our own minds. We moved up beyond

them so as to attain to the region of inexhaustible abundance where you feed Israel eternally with truth for food.

The “flash of mental energy” described by Augustine as the origin of his encounter with Wisdom seems akin to the way in which Cézanne “caught [the landscape] alive in a net.” Augustine and Monica, too, are gazing out at a landscape, from a window overlooking a garden on the river Tiber. Cézanne wishes to capture the landscape. Augustine wants to move beyond it completely, but the process works in a similar way for both people. The outlines of an artistic process emerge in both cases: an initial phase characterized by difficulty and exertion, an intellectual process or scaffolding constructed in order to attune the self to the potential experience, and a final stage in which propositional truths are cast aside in favor of a direct flash of insight. Finally, both men proceed to create accounts of the experience: Augustine in words, Cézanne in painting. Merleau-Ponty would see both painting and writing as gestural attempts to describe the world’s signifying agency.

In the moment of aesthetic arrest, habits of thought instantiated by discursive traditions fall away, and the phenomena are encountered in a fresh manner, in what American philosopher Charles Peirce called “firstness.” The experience of “firstness,” as a contact with the world, however brief, unmediated by sedimented linguistic constructs, enables an overthrowing of old categories (“firstness” in some sense, gives birth to “secondness,” the arising of conflict and tension, and “thirdness,” the domain of organized semiosis). This accounts for the originality in any truly new work of philosophy, painting, or literature: these works describe more faithfully the ways in which the phenomena appear before consciousness, or, better, the ways in which things and bodies affect one another in co-present “communion.” But the above considerations raise the need for an ethics of the aesthetic. Experiences of “aesthetic arrest” overturn ossified categories and bring to new expression previously unnoticed features of the world, but, once created, the artifact, like the gollum of Jewish legend, goes on functioning without the artist who spawned it. In this sense, Cézanne does not seem much different from Saint Augustine, or for that matter, Francis Bacon, in seeking to extract from nature a hidden essence.

Bacon’s writings on proto-scientific dominion, another stalking obsession with nature, employed imagery of rape and torture. Like the inquisitor, Bacon thought that a scientific investigator should “hound nature in her wanderings...entering and penetrating into these holes and corners [of

“nature’s secrets”] when the inquisition of truth is his whole object.” For Bacon, humankind exercises dominion over the earth through science, fulfilling the divine commandment of Genesis. The imagery of rape in Bacon’s works calls into question the logic of “coition” in Merleau-Ponty’s works as well. If the landscape communicates by its silence, and that silence does not even fully come to speech once words have arrived (words themselves as a kind of silence), nothing guards the world’s agency from the intrusions of human investigators. Painting, literature, and philosophy become complicated attempts to despoil the world of its treasures, to transform living presence into dead artifacts which can be collected in order to increase the stature of these human agents.

Merleau-Ponty, aware of this problem, builds a critique of human gestural attempts into his discussion of art and philosophy. The museum transforms “attempts” into master works, ossifying a certain viewpoint into the accepted one, just as philosophy turns thinkers into masters of the past, makes once-living people into proper nouns. The museum kills painting in that it canonizes the attempt, stripping it of its gestural significance. The history of philosophy similarly makes the process of thinking into achievements of thought. A painting, like a work of philosophy, should be valued when it stirs something in the viewer, when it allows hidden aspect of the world’s effulgence to come to light. A healthy attitude towards the aesthetic returns masterworks to the status of attempts and recognizes the gestural nature of all speech, all writing, all painting. All of these avenues of expression, stamped with their incompleteness, leave discourse open to further elucidation. This incompleteness, this opening to another context, makes writing and art valuable. Leaving discourse open, banishing the need for a final statement, for a full grasp of reality, for a complete and total faith, preserves the aesthetic from its imperialistic iterations.

Merleau-Ponty’s problem with the Platonism of Augustine and the existentialism of Kierkegaard is not that they describe coming face to face with an absolute, but that they finally make a leap into that absolute, preferring it over all else, or “sacrificing good faith to faith.” Merleau-Ponty inserts a caveat into his discussion of the similarities between Catholic faith, existential faith, and his own “perceptual faith,” saying:

[i]f commitment goes beyond reasons, it should never run contrary to reason itself. Man’s value does not consist in either an explosive, maniac sincerity [complete fidelity to an overarching idea] or an

unquestioned faith. Instead, it consists of a higher awareness which enables him to determine the moment when it is reasonable to take things on trust and the moment when questioning is in order, to combine faith and good faith within himself, and to accept his party or his group with open eyes, seeing them for what they are.

In other words, whether the faith is socialism or Catholic Christianity, a sober-headed judgment prevents that faith from going too far and preserves a check on the unlimited expansion of a single idea at the cost of all else.

Although the passage quoted above does not directly talk about the experience of “aesthetic arrest,” it provides some guidance for a nascent ethics of the aesthetic. Cézanne might not have gone on a flight out of the world of sense in his search for a “motif,” but clearly there was something of an “explosive, maniac sincerity” in the way that Cézanne stalked the landscape. In his fidelity to the subjects of his painting, Cézanne ran the risk of infidelity to the real people in his life. Still, no one can say whether he crossed the line from “going beyond reasons” to “going beyond reason itself” in his pursuit of painting. Likewise, no external observer can say for sure whether Saint Augustine ought to have paid more attention to the bleeding wound in his side when he dismissed his concubine. Ecstatic experiences beckoned to these “masters” of painting and spirituality, and their responses are recorded in canonical works, works which contemporary interpreters should value to the extent that they open the present to further elucidation.

This leads to another consideration about these ecstatic experiences in Merleau-Ponty’s texts and other ecstatic experiences akin to them. It should be noted that Merleau-Ponty does not hold up such examples as models to be emulated: Merleau-Ponty never suggests that everyone should have a strange experience of being “seen” by trees. Rather, Merleau-Ponty holds up these extreme, poetic examples to show what happens in any and every perceptual event. Much like Merleau-Ponty explores the phenomenon of the phantom limb, the hallucinations of schizophrenics, the experiences of blind people, he also cares about artistic and poetic ways of describing the world. These liminal cases reveal that things send out their surfaces as “to-be-seen” and “to-be-felt,” participating in cultural forms that attempt to describe them. Person and world cross for Merleau-Ponty, thoroughly enmeshed in one another, so that terms like “outside” and “inside,” “transcendent” and “immanent,” “active” and “passive” lose all finality. Such terms exist only as articulations or folds within a larger whole and cannot be conceived as

having independent existence. Each moment of aesthetic experience folds into the next, which means that all aesthetic experiences, from the most shallow to the most vaunted, lie on the same continuum.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy makes it difficult to make absolute divisions between the religious and the aesthetic or between the ecstatic and the ordinary, which should be viewed as a strength of his analysis. Merleau-Ponty did not inhabit consumerist, image-driven society to the same degree that first-world people do today, and the status of "aesthetic arrest" in this milieu is open to question. The glut of images makes it difficult for individuals to attune themselves to the environment, to attend to this particular image on this particular day. The plastic ethereality of images in mass media empties mundane reality of all wonder while sexualizing and romanticizing consumption. An aesthetic ethics of consumerist infotainment would maintain the possibility of aesthetic arrest along the lines suggested by Merleau-Ponty while not allowing corporate images to have the final say when contemplating subjectivity. A brief detour through Heidegger reveals some guidelines today's aesthetic ethics, for an ecstatic ethics that might "go beyond reasons...[but not beyond] reason itself."

Heidegger described objects as "ready-to-hand" [*Zuhandenheit*] and situated objects and relations within an *umwelt*, an environment or surround. Subjectivity, too, arises as part of this matrix of interrelation, and for this reason Heidegger found care to be fundamental. Since all existence happens as embodied existence, and since all embodied existence therefore takes place with others, animate and inanimate, it follows that being-there (*Dasein*) fundamentally entails care. However, a tension manifests itself in Heidegger's work between readiness-to-hand and care: lacking a world, culturally manufactured objects do not merit inclusion as possible objects of concern, and the fact that they exist within always-opening networks of relation does not mitigate this fact. Heidegger himself recognizes this tension between care and objects of use. The problem then becomes to find a philosophy that can bring care even to objects of use and that can make room for a full range of aesthetic experiences even in the midst of consumer societies that create a plethora of images without the attunement necessary for the ecstatic. As images become more prolific and more sophisticated, their sheer number and frenetic pace stunt attention and care, creating a situation in which individuals encounter aesthetic arrest less frequently. Surely one can inhabit a consumerist milieu ecstatically, but current modes of representation encourage a rapid processing of information rather than

an embrace of this particular present. Readiness-to-hand trumps care in this situation, and everything becomes disposable and transposable: this image matters no more than any other, and this moment replaces another without differentiation.

These others I encounter also lose uniqueness as they bury their identity in widely distributed cultural markers (the “dictatorship of the ‘they’ [das Man]”); however, this condition does not erase, but merely occludes uniqueness. The person who would care must then operate against the tide of disposability and move into Gabriel Marcel’s sense of the term, of *disponibilité*, an openness or availability to human and non-human others and to a world in which I participate and do not merely observe. And yet an aesthetic ethics of the consumerist society must take the markers, the surface, the mass-produced seriously: to not take these markers as in some way constitutive of individual personality would suggest that some essence maintains itself beneath the markers. No stable place of reference exists from which to view the person without the consumerist markers: “a search for sanity outside the system is not the goal.” An ethic of care for consumer society should remain open to these images, but it should not allow images to foreclose on a future which is not yet present. Images reveal but they also hide: so the burden of consumer subjectivity is the ethical labor of remaining open to further revelations of the present, to the opening of this horizon onto another, in the hopes that one will be affected, will be opened as one is open to others. “Coition” or “communion” need not be a one-sided imposition of my knowledge onto that other, nor does the consumer image necessarily colonize the subjectivity of others. The markers of identity selected by consumers mask the self, but one person seeks in vain for the ‘real’ self “behind” these images. The masks go all the way down, and, if a revelation occurs, it lies in the fact that the process of unveiling never ends, in a realization that each mask also faces, but not in a final way. Like Hegel’s bacchanalian whorl, a pattern emerges from the maelstrom of referents that each individual chooses to put forward as representations of the self or in place of the self.

Consumer images bundle other cultural referents into a logo/s and identify ideal content with a product, but these images remain in suspension inasmuch as they do not exhaustively conquer the personhood of the one selecting the image. A reserve or gap opens in the slippage between the mediated self and the self as known otherwise (i.e. through interests, relationships, etc.). The image, inasmuch as someone selects or authors it,

must extend from some choice, and as a choice, the image never loses its contingency: the image cannot completely be attached either to a stable self or to an outside entity which it “depicts.” An opposite mistake would be to suppose that the image has nothing to do with the person selecting it, that consumer images are completely free-floating. The histories of individuals, their temporal “thickness,” play a large role in their performance of self and one person encounters another person even in the midst of mediation. The subject writes him/herself through the selection of images, “complies” with these images, and yet also compiles them in a creative way. Both compliance and compilation, which cannot be separated, occur even while conforming to the discursive logic of the display (i.e. the T-shirt, the home page, the sticker or button, etc).

The ecstatic moment peels away the accretions of prior knowledge about someone or something and enables a fresh encounter with the world; without ec-stasis, knowledge would shield the knower from actual encounters, would remain solipsistic. In the moment of ec-stasis, the knower is actually opened to a new experience. Contemporary society must maintain the possibility of the ecstatic in order to preserve the uniqueness of others and the concomitant ethical burden. Categories of thought alone do not safeguard the uniqueness of the people, animals, and things that we encounter. Those who would care must also make a movement in the opposite, more intuitive direction in the willingness to be affected, to put oneself at the disposal of another. This age of consumerism militates against such action, which means that those who would care must actively choose to be passive, must cooperate in the process of listening when it is much more expedient to do otherwise.

Thinking of aesthetics and subjectivity in the twenty-first century begins with a new kind of epoché or reduction. Each unfolding moment offers new openings to understanding, and hence, new openings to misunderstanding. At the same time, each unfolding horizon also opens the possibility for the ecstatic, for the experience of “aesthetic arrest.” Given the glut of media-driven images in the first world and the multitude of moments that constitute daily life, no one can hold all of the possibilities open at every moment. The face of reality simply offers too many vectors for exploration to remain open to them all. Contemporary consumer-citizens must select among the possible vectors or motifs for aesthetic experience, must learn to choose moments of undivided attention and cling to them despite the tide of contrary forces. The epoché in this situation brackets pre-conceptions in the Husserlian sense, but without the emphasis on phenomenology as a

pure, transcendental science: this new epoché brackets the corporate “They” suggestions for how I should live and understand my body and the bodies of others. In an image-driven society, no one can choose whether or not to be subjected to this or that corporate logo or this or that disciplined space (think of the strictures the shopping mall, the roadway places on bodies); freedom within these mediated spaces means holding images and prevailing vectors in abeyance, bracketing them, and continuing with aesthetic projects that may run against the grain suggested by these spaces and images. This bracketing does not simply pretend that these images and vectors do not exist; rather, phenomenological bracketing allows these images and vectors as possibilities without allowing them to gain unconscious purchase. An odd kind of passivity emerges, an active choice to refrain from categorizing the present with received labels. This active passivity allows for the reception of real uniqueness, of moments not reducible to this or that descriptor.

Notes

1. NicholSEN, Sierry Weber. *The Love of Nature and the End of the World: The Unspoken Dimensions of Environmental Concern* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002) 16, 96. NicholSEN takes the term from Joseph Campbell.
2. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945). Trans. Colin Smith as *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2004). PP 373 / PP-F 370.
3. “Ecstasy” literally means “out of place” and, in mystical experience, refers to the sense of encountering a profound mystery that overruns or cancels the ordinary boundaries of the subject. The mystic feels overcome or engulfed by the dark luminosity of the divine. In the phenomenological tradition since Heidegger, ecstasy refers to unity of the three “times” of past, present, and future, which need not be intellectually re-assembled by the experiencer, since they coalesce in Dasein (being there). Ecstasy is a “letting-oneself-be-encountered-by [*Begegnenlassens von*]” the present in the onrush of the future and the traces of the past (Being and Time H. 329). Merleau-Ponty correlates time with spatial horizons experienced by the lived body. Although we may be said abstractly (for Merleau-Ponty, erroneously) to live on the razor’s edge between past and future, we ordinarily do not experience temporality in that manner. Time’s thickness, the temporal horizons of experience, are experienced as a result of topological or spatial horizons. Time is not a series of “nows” but the possibilities and continuities active in

the present (PP 477-479). When I refer to “ecstasy” in this essay, I refer to an intensely focused experience in which an object is seen, heard, or felt (or tasted or touched) “as if for the first time” as a result of the labor of attunement which then ruptures into an openness to the object. The preparatory exercise of attunement makes possible the moment of “aesthetic arrest” in which the object eclipses subjectivity and becomes everything. This sense of the ecstatic has significant commonalities with mysticism but does not imply a flight into a supernatural realm .

4. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. “Eye and Mind,” trans. Carleton Dal- lery, *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) 167.

5. Luca Vanzago. “Presenting the Unpresentable: The Metaphor in Merleau-Ponty’s Last Writings.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (2005): 465-466. Traditional accounts of metaphoricity assume a “one to one relationship of coincidence” between the terms of the metaphor and the terms described; Merleau-Ponty’s model is a different one, in which “language is not simply an exercise in naming things that pre-exist this exercise, but is a way to let the things be.” See also Alphonso Lingis, “Being in the Interrogative Mood,” *The Horizons of the Flesh: Critical Perspectives on the Thought of Merleau-Ponty*. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973) 78-91. Merleau-Ponty preserves ambiguity or indeterminacy at every stage of the journey from thing to concept.

6. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 81 and translator’s note.

7. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. “Le Douce de Cézanne,” *Sens et Non-Sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1948) 15-49. Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus as “Cézanne’s Doubt,” in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston: North- western University Press, 1964) 9-25. I will give the English page numbers followed by the page numbers in the original French when I have consulted both editions. SNS 17 / SNS-F 32.

8. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* 9.

9. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* 17 / 32.

10. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* 17 / 32.

11. I am thinking here of the memorable passage in Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* that begins, “I contemplate a tree.” (57ff). The encounter or “relation” with the tree (what I would here call a moment of “aesthetic ar- rest”) includes its genus and species, its “kind and condition,” its unseen sucking of water, etc., but the moment of ecstasy cannot be limited to any one of these factors. So these thoughts about the tree prepare the way for

the encounter, but the moment itself arises spontaneously and cannot be controlled or induced. Indeed, the desire for the experience must itself be transcended, which is why Buber critiques the word "experience." "Those who experience do not participate in the world. For the experience is "in them" and not between them and the world." (56).

12. "Wine Blogger Makes Choosing a Bottle Palatable." *NPR Weekend Edition*, April 28, 2007. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9839977>

13. "Wine Blogger" *NPR Weekend Edition*, April 28, 2007.

14. Taylor, Mark C. "Masking: Domino Effect." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53.3 (1986): 547-557.

15. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) 173.

16. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* 161.

17. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 246 / 245-246.

18. Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden Fisher (Boston: Beacon, 1963). 168-169. The discussion of "lines of force" in the *Structure of Behavior* is an important precursor to the formulation of the "chiasm" in *The Visible and the Invisible*.

19. Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception* 167

20. Mazis, Glen A, *Earthbodies: Rediscovering Our Planetary Senses* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2002) 97-98.

21. Mazis, *Earthbodies* 96-111.

22. Mazis, *Earthbodies* 179-196.

23. Mazis, Glen, "Ecospirituality and the Blurred Boundaries of Humans, Animals, and Machines," In *Ecospirit: Religion, Philosophy, and the Earth*, edited by Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007): 125-155, 564-566. Mazis, *Earthbodies* 186.

24. Mazis, *Earthbodies* 179.

25. Chadwick, Henry, "Introduction," in Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) xiii.

26. Augustine, *Confessions* 109 [VI.xv (25)] Numbers in brackets indicate marginal notation.

27. Augustine, *Confessions* 171 [IX.x (24)].

28. Augustine, *Confessions* 172 [IX.x (25)].

29. Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" in *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) 39-83.

30. First, Second, and Third appear as metaphysical categories through-

out much of Peirce's writing, but a very clear exposition can be found in "Letter to Lady Welby, October 12, 1904" *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings* (Values in a Universe of Chance), ed. Philip Weiner (New York: Dover, 1966) 381—393.

31. Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* 168; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 246 / 245-246.

32. Merchant, Carolyn, "Dominion Over Nature," in *The Gender and Science Reader*, ed. Muriel Lederman and Ingrid Bartsch (London: Routledge, 2001): 68-81.

33. Francis Bacon, qtd. in Merchant, "Dominion," 69

34. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* 19.

35. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* 179. emphasis in original.

36. Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* 179-180.

37. Dillon, Martin C., *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

38. Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962) 98, 103 [69, 73]. Numbers in brackets refer to German editions.

39. Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* cf. 58, 65, 83-84. [34, 41, 57].

40. Levinas, Emmanuel. "Uniqueness." In *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other* trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. (New York: Columbia University Press): 189-196. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 164.

41. Marcel, Gabriel. "Belonging and Disposability." In *Creative Fidelity*, trans. Robert Rosthal. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) 38-57. See also Translator's note 1.

42. Barnhill, David. "Good Work: An Engaged Buddhist Response to the Dilemmas of Consumerism." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 24 (2004) 55-63. 59.

43. Levinas, Emmanuel. "The Other, Utopia, and Justice." In *Creative Fidelity*, trans. Robert Rosthal. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002) 223-233. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 52 [29].

44. Taylor, "Masking" 548-549. Susan Alexander's otherwise excellent sociological description of the marketing of masculinity stumbles in suggesting that "branded masculinities purposely constructed by multinational corporations" can be contrasted with "what masculinity really means today." See "Stylish Hard Bodies: Branded Masculinity in 'Men's Health' Magazine." *Sociological Perspectives* 46.4 (2003): 535-554. 552.

45. MacKendrick, Karmen. "Eternal Flesh: The Resurrection of the

Body." Discourse 27.1 (2005): 67-83. This article argues that while no stable self can be located 'beneath' the appearances, perhaps the play of images itself represents a kind of stability, i.e. in the fact that another mediated self always emerges. This is similar to MacKendrick's treatment of time and eternity.

46. Vasterling, Veronica, "Body and Language: Butler, Merleau-Ponty, and Lyotard on the Speaking Embodied Subject," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 11.2 (2003) 205-223. 208.

References

Alexander, Susan M. "Stylish Hard Bodies: Branded Masculinity in 'Men's Health' Magazine." *Sociological Perspectives* 46.4 (2003): 535-554.

Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. with introduction by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Barnhill, David. "Good Work: An Engaged Buddhist Response to the Dilemmas of Consumerism." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 24 (2004): 55-63.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translated with a prologue and notes by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

Dillon, Martin C. *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper, 1972.

Lingis, Alphonso. "Being in the Interrogative Mood," in *The Horizons of the Flesh: Critical Perspectives on the Thought of Merleau-Ponty*, Ed. Garth Gillan. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973: 78-91.

Mazis, Glen A. *Earthbodies: Rediscovering Our Planetary Senses*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

_____. *Emotion and Embodiment: Fragile Ontology*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.

_____. "Ecospirituality and the Blurred Boundaries of Humans, Animals, and Machines." In *Ecospirit: Religion, Philosophy, and the Earth*, Ed. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller, 125-155, 564-566. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.

Merchant, Carolyn. "Dominion Over Nature." *The Gender and Science Reader*, Ed. Muriel Lederman and Ingrid Bartsch, 68-81. London: Routledge, 2001.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Le Doute de Cézanne," in *Sens et Non-Sens*. Paris: Nagel, 1948, 15-49. Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen

- Dreyfus as "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 9-25.
- _____. "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" in *Signs*. Trans. Richard C. McCleary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964: 39-83.
- _____. "Eye and Mind," Trans. Carleton Dallery, *The Primacy of Perception*. Ed. James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- _____. "Faith and Good Faith," Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus in *Sense and Non-Sense*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- _____. *Phénoménologie de la Perception*. Paris: Gallimard, 1945. Trans. Colin Smith as *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- _____. *The Structure of Behavior*. Boston: Beacon, 1963.
- _____. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- Nicholsen, Shierry Weber. *The Love of Nature and the End of the World: The Unspoken Dimensions of Environmental Concern*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Peirce, Charles S. "Letter to Lady Welby, October 12, 1904" In *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings* (Values in a Universe of Chance). Ed. Philip P. Wiener. New York: Dover, 1966.
- Taylor, Mark C. "Masking: Domino Effect." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54.3 (1986): 547-557.
- Vanzago, Luca. "Presenting the Unpresentable: The Metaphor in Merleau-Ponty's Last Writings." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43.3 (2005): 465-466.
- Vasterling, Veronica. "Body and Language: Butler, Merleau-Ponty, and Lyotard on the Speaking Embodied Subject." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 11.2 (2003): 205-223.
- Vaynerchuk, Gary. Interviewed by NPR Weekend Edition, April 28, 2007. "Wine Blogger Makes Choosing a Bottle Palatable." <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9839977>

Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist*: Time, Language and Grief

Cleopatra Kontoulis and Eliza Kitis
Aristotle University

Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* portrays a world inhabited by characters whose unified, other-proof subjectivity crumbles around them to reveal the basic fibres of the biological, organicist body as this is mutated across bodies and projected across images. Such sameness and connection are primarily played out in the language and the style used. The paper examines linguistic techniques such as the use of logical conjunction (e.g., and) and causal connectives, such as because, which instead of signaling causality, constantly rephrases the same as an expanded other, thus effectively subverting our common sense perceptions. In this context, the absence of representational means of identity resulting in the redefinition of Lauren's subjectivity on a broader biological plane also reconciles her to the grief felt at her husband's death.

"The Body Artist is about time, language and grief"
DeLillo, 27 May 2003

I

Don DeLillo's *The Body Artist* is a simulation of our fast changing times, and of our perceptions of them that are both baffling and beguiling at the same time. It represents a shift from an embodied model of human (even if machinist) thought to a disembodied, bare, formalized logical, unified system, in which the human being is not seen as an individuated, closed-model system in its own right, but as a component of an all-encompassing, broader system that takes into its purview the whole environment in which the human is embedded, the natural/physical milieu in which it "grows" and flourishes. The human being in *The Body Artist* is collapsed into, or conflated with, this environment as part of its overall, organic structure. *The Body Artist* is a paradigm of the open-system model that the human now is, which allows inputs and outputs with its environment in a continuous flow of nourishment (biological continuity) and an endless flux of information (everything else, such as sociality), discarding all boundaries of a closed, self-contained system. Lauren, who eventually assumes "a generic neutered human" voice (101), discards all individuality, idiosyncrasy and fixed representations (as Lauren Hartke) in a successive flow of mutations

during her body art performance in an effort to be oneness and all at the same time. Art, then, enables Lauren to survive the exigencies of her life (her husband's suicide and the ensuing grief) that she can not endure in her individuated, subjective existence as Lauren Hartke. *The Body Artist* is about the dissolution of time and space; its characters, Lauren and Mr. Tuttle, with their crushed individualities, live in a perennial present that is both past and future at the same time. All this is reflected in its language that resonates an autistic repetitiveness and involution, resembling a digital, pixelated discourse deprived of human agency.

The Body Artist is a minimalist work of art. It is minimal in its plot, minimal in its linguistic resources, minimal in its expression. Its plot is hardly an ordinary one befitting an ordinary story, accommodating our expectations. Nothing much really happens, except for a suicide that is left untold—a thing—(“This is a thing that was going to happen” (58)), nothing moves to a (re-)solution, because nothing is in need of one. *The Body Artist* is a work of silence and emptiness; its language is hollow, devoid of referential meaning, convoluted in its form as it reflects upon itself, and mostly self-representational.

DeLillo predicted the form of *The Body Artist* in a very early interview while referring to Ratner's *Star*: “I wanted the book to become what it was about. Abstract structures and connective patterns. A piece of mathematics in short. To do this, I felt I had to reduce the importance of people. The people had to play a role subservient to pattern, form, and so on” (LeClair, “An Interview” 27). The importance of people in the novel is indeed reduced as their subjectivity vanishes. What remains is the biological minimal but significant, transcendent essence of *The Body Artist* which is reflected in a minimalist transcendent logical (or linguistic) form of essence.

The Body Artist opens with two characters, a married couple, Rey and Lauren Hartke, going about their mundane, daily routine of having breakfast. This mundaneness is reflected in the bare, unadorned, repetitive language of the text. Conversation between them is scarce, thin and languid, and the narrator is invisible as even reporting verbs are down to, “he said,” “she said,” leaving it up to the reader to sense the question, the request, unease or hesitation, in short, to supply the tone and force of their utterances. In the same vein, the reader is not informed of the “why” of things as exposition remains mono-leveled (at a superficial level) and “because”-clauses either vacuously reflect upon themselves or do not resonate human reasoning: “She took the kettle back to the stove because this is how you live a life even if

you don't know it..." (12), "She used the old dented kettle instead of the new one she'd just bought because – she didn't know why" (13), "Lucky we don't normally have breakfast together. Because my mornings" (18), "This man hated who he was. Because how long do I know this man and how long do you know him? I never left" (59). In these examples, "because" does not connect a cause to an effect or reason or explanation or even justification to a state of affairs or to an action. Instead, it is used as a logical connective—i.e., in its merely connective function as a sign of plus—without any further semantic meaning intuiting an inferential process that would reveal human agency. This repetitive, self-reflexive language folds upon itself and resonates a pixelated cyber-discourse that has no agents to give it human perspective.

In like manner, the connectives "and" and "or," both used in a bare logical sense of addition, devoid of any inferential semantic enrichment, do not implicate human agency either. Just as in a logical, two-valued system, sustaining all digital discourse, so in *The Body Artist* alternativity is permissible, signaling that everything goes and everything can be connected rather than divided: She held the strand of hair between thumb and index finger, regarding it with mock aversion, or real aversion stretched to artistic limits... (11). She had a hyper-preparedness, or haywire, or hair-trigger, and Rey was always saying, or said once, and she carried a voice in her head that was hers and it was dialogue or monologue... (16).

Even the metatextual level, which is aligned with Lauren's point of view, is contaminated by this kind of promiscuity: "The lever sprang or sprung" (10). This kind of disjunction is conjunctive in essence. Everything is "something that is something else, but what, and what" (36) "both realities occurring at once" (39). Both disjuncts can be true, just as in a logical, two-valued system, where disjunction remains valid, true, undisrupted. Not so in human reasoning. In human reasoning, disjunction always signals alternativity: either one or the other can be true, but not both as is constantly the case in *The Body Artist*, where the sentence utilizing the conjunction "or" can be p or $\sim p$ (not p) [where p stands for a proposition] as in the following examples:

"[she] read some more or didn't" (23)

"and they come and peck, or don't" (53)

"Wakeful or not. Fairly neat or mostly unkempt. What else? Good, bad or indifferent night" (54).

"He ate breakfast, or didn't" (86).

"His clear or hazy meaning" (112).

Here we know that both things, even if contradictory, can exist at the same time. Such coexistence is what allows Lauren to transcend her devastating solitude by mutating into other lives. "Or you become someone else, one of the people in the story, doing dialogue of your own devising. You become a man at times, living between the lines, doing another version of the story" (20). This permissiveness of language resonates a promiscuity outside its limits, reminiscent of a pixelated, cyber-discourse rather than a human one.

This sense of alliance with everything, reflecting diffused subjectivity, and also reflected in the textuality of the novel as it is virtually compounded by the most fundamental logical conjunctions "and" and "or," resonating simple additivity and alternativity, respectively, is not the only way the novel builds on the idea of connection. Everything rolls into everything else in *The Body Artist* refusing the humanist insistence on separate identity boundaries. "Things she saw seemed doubtful—not doubtful but ever changing, plunged into metamorphosis, something that is also something else, but what and what" (36), constituting possibilities and dislodging human logic and reasoning as we have learned to practice it in our daily routines. Even when individuality is most pronounced, at the beginning of the novel, through personal pronouns that distinctly are meant to challenge any unseemly crossovers ("It was his coffee and his cup. They shared the newspaper but it was actually, unspokenly, hers" (8), "It was her newspaper. The telephone was his except when she was calling the weather. They both used the computer but it was spiritually hers" (12), Lauren echoes Rey, "groaning his groan, but in a manner so seamless and deep it was her discomfort too" (9) and "insert[s] herself into certain stories in the newspaper. Some kind of daydream variation" (14). It is this overlapping of subjectivities that causes Lauren pain for her husband's suicide for she is forced to relive the life she lived with him, but which also liberates her by allowing her to be less herself and thus more impervious to pain. When she loses part of herself with Rey gone, her only recourse to action is to relinquish any claim to any subjectivity at all by appropriating those of others.

Destroying or reinventing the subject has been one of the mainstays of the ethos associated with postmodernism. DeLillo has, from the beginning of his career, tested out Enlightenment concepts of subjectivity, and whether time and place are instrumental in fashioning character at all. In discussing "Coming Sun. Mon. Tues.," an early DeLillo short story, Osteen observes that "the story eschews character development for a studied objectivity and

neutrality; connects plot elements simply by 'then'; remains vague about setting. . . . as if to portray the protagonists' disjointed sense of time and causality" (441). Osteen refers to DeLillo's indebtedness to director Godard who also "cuts out connectives and explanations" (442), with character not being the result of a recursive connection to the environment but that of a motioning forward with no regard to circumstance and reflection, one that creates depthless caricatures. A similar dispersal of subjectivity occurs in *The Names* where there is a proliferation of the conjunction "and." Morris notes that "the 'and' inscribed so prominently in the text calls for a reading based on conjunction, one attentive to all the text" (126). A lack of causal connectives that would reflect causality and a proliferation of the quality of additivity then informs DeLillo's work, who, in *The Body Artist*, does not simply challenge the notions of subjectivity and individual responsibility, as he did in his earlier work, but grinds this notion of subjectivity to its bare essence, not contingent upon representation.

So the language of *The Body Artist* is a language that connects rather than separates, as it reflects possibilities in the broader, universal discourse in which humans partake in some form or other. This connection is also enforced by the repetition present in the novel, which is of two kinds. It either resonates the past, "It took two flips to get the bread to go brown" (8), "You had to flip the thing twice to get the bread to toast properly" (44), or produces linguistic fragments as in autistic discourse (autistic people repeat the last fragment of other's speech so that they can process it [echolalia]), "The white ones. But beyond the trees" [uttered by Lauren], "Beyond the trees" [uttered by Mr. Tuttle] (44) and, in another example, "If there is another language you speak," she told him, "say some words." Mr. Tuttle responds, "say some words," to which Lauren comes back with "say some words. Doesn't matter if I can't understand," only to be echoed by Mr. Tuttle, "Say some words to say some words" (55).

Repetition enhances the impression that the characters cannot be real people enacting unique instances of speech qua énonciations, (Benveniste 223-30), but rather use a very basic signal code. These characters use a barely semiotic language as they blurt out énoncés that get repeated throughout the novel. They are, therefore, not uniquely individuated as unrepeatably subjectivities, but are rather connected with a pre-linguistic and, hence, pre-social thread. This (pre-)linguistic or silent connection is enforced not only by human "matter" as with the passage of a hair (12), but also by the digital culture and discourse in which we exist or subsist—if not live—and

which sustains our immateriality. “Only connect” is the motto of advertising in our sociality, but this connection is ultimately sustained by our organic, biological connection that no dissolution of reality can erase.

Philip Nel taps into DeLillo’s preoccupation with language and outlines his attempt to “develop a modernism concerned with translating consciousness into words” (738). Nel infers from DeLillo’s work “the impossibility of ever attaining that ideal language which literally embodies the material world” and yet, as Nel puts it, “even attempts to create language as direct and as stripped of metaphor as possible . . . veer into metaphor” (739). But for Nel, DeLillo’s consciousness about language and its overriding power spends itself in the stylistic choices he makes. For us, DeLillo’s language, devoid of discursive markers goes beyond stylistic choices and enacts not only a “nonplace” but a breaking down of language that gives way to a commonplace, namely, human subjectivity shared by all. Cornel Bonca’s word, resonating Heidegger, for this commonplace is the “ontological,” which “emerges from a calculated withdrawal from the ontic—from the social self and its cultural manifestations” (65). It is this preoccupation with a bottom-line subjectivity that allows Bonca to call DeLillo an “[un]reliable postmodernist” (59).

II

The breakdown of individuated subjectivity is commensurate with the dissolution of the concept of time as we know it. *The Body Artist* is not located in any specificity of time, and yet it is virtually enclosed in time. Even though there is “a reading of local time in the digital display in the corner of the screen” of the “live-streaming video” (38), this time indication does not situate Lauren in the here and now of Kotka but in a factuality that seems to be unchanging, unyielding to time as concept. And even though Lauren’s piece is called “Body Time” and she “wanted her audience to feel time go by, viscerally, even painfully” (104), it is this excessive stretching of time that negates the very idea of time, the same way that focusing on her body manages to shake off the body.

Time anchoring is very much dependent upon deictic elements and *The Body Artist* is a novel that ignores temporal deixis altogether. To Lauren’s deictic, temporal question, Mr. Tuttle responds with an adeictic, atemporal proposition signifying—if it even does that much—an eternal, and hence atemporal, nowness: “... When did you know him?” Lauren asks Mr.

Tuttle of Rey and he answers, "I know him where he was" (62), as if Rey is still around and Mr. Tuttle is in a position to still sense him around. "Then and now. Is that what you're saying? ..." (62), Lauren tries to clarify and make sense of his involuted speech, or what, in other words, Atchley calls a "stuttering" language (342). She is forced to linguisticize his speech (i.e., to deposit it in proper language), as it was "trapped in tenses and inflections, in singsong conjugations, and she became aware that she was describing what he said to some third person in her mind, . . ." (63). Tenses, just like pronouns, are deictic-anchoring elements grounding the event denoted by the predicate (verb, etc.) in the temporal axis. But in *The Body Artist* all deictic terms, or indexicals, lack reference and are thus turned upon themselves as hollow involuted signs.

The novel's opening line reads, "time seems to pass" (7) and its closing line couples this with "she wanted to feel the sea tang on her face and the flow of time in her body, to tell her who she was" (124). Both references refuse to locate the plot of the novel conventionally in a particular setting, as one would expect, but serve to accentuate a notion of individuality and subjectivity that needs pegging on the temporal axis: "You know more surely who you are on a strong bright day after a storm when the smallest falling leaf is stabbed with self-awareness" (7). Time in *The Body Artist* is a subjectively entertained notion that is savoured in its course by the individual—"Time seems to pass," "Time is supposed to pass" (77, our emphasis)—rather than an external correlate immune to our subjective definitions. Both verbs (seems, is supposed) are propositional attitude verbs modalizing the proposition; in other words, such verbs signify the stance of the individual—the enunciator of the utterance—cast on his or her proposition, that is, on his or her enoncés. Such savouring of time may be all that is real in it, for the "true taste of time passing" is also the taste of the true, as Debord put it (qtd in Blanchard 235).

This refusal of external temporal anchorage also deprives the protagonists of a secure grounding in an outer world that would insulate their unique individualities. They move in a universal, perennially flowing, automated discourse that cannot be anchored to any specificity and, hence, individuality and uniqueness. Right from the beginning of the novel, the reader has the sense of being plunged into a perennial deferral of fixation that is never to come. Even when Lauren affirms her individuality against her husband's, she still lapses into other people's lives as she reads about them in the newspaper or looks into their mundane lives through the eyes

of the ever-present birds:

When birds look into houses, what impossible worlds they see. Think. What a shedding of every knowable surface and process. She wanted to believe the bird was seeing her, a woman with a teacup in her hand, and never mind the folding back of day and night, the apparition of a space set off from time. She looked and took a careful breath. She was alert to the clarity of the moment but knew it was ending already. She felt it in the blue jay. Or maybe not. (22) ...She sat over a bowl of cereal. She looked past the bowl into a space inside her head that was also here in front of her. ... She read and drifted. She was here and there. (23)

Lauren's presumed subjectivity has already collapsed into the environment. The disjunction between Lauren and her self is further intensified by her husband's death and the ensuing grief, causing her the acute but welcoming realization of the loss of her buffered subjectivity.

Lauren's guest, Mr. Tuttle, the baffling character—or rather a simulacrum of a character—that “violates the limits of the human” (100), speaks in other voices and comes from nowhere (has he escaped from an asylum or from cyberspace?), teases the reader's wits and secure commonsense assumptions, predominantly contributing to the novel's dismantling of the subject. Mr. Tuttle, is not inscribed in time, “the only narrative that matters” (92). “Who am I?” is commensurate to “Where am I?” but Mr. Tuttle cannot be placed in time. He has no origin—he was found on Lauren's bed—and no destination as he makes his way out of the novel in the same elusive and obscure way he was introduced, leaving Lauren “to wander the halls, missing him” (96). His language is closed in on itself, a typical function of social or mental impotence: “I said this what I said”, “Somehow. What is somehow?” (56). He “lives” in an evanescent nowness, not only in his speech, but also in his elusive existence as a duplicate of both Rey, who dies, and Lauren, who parades other individualities. Whatever dialogue there is in the novel between its characters is permeated by the simple present, which is not really a tense, that deictic element which pegs speech to a time and an outer reality or even constitutes this reality. The present simple lacks temporality as it does not reference outer facts but rather constitutes the phenomenon it speaks of. It is an atemporal description of an inner intentional, at best, condition of the agent that speaks it. As such, then, the present indicates a constant nowness incapable of referencing any outer, non-textual reality. The present simple is not a diagetive tense creating a narrative, but rather a

textual correlate, as it functions in the frame of the text only, incapable of pointing to a definite unique outer time or discursive instance (See Bolinger, Moschonas). All in all, the language of the novel is devoid of the dynamics that would render it discourse, i.e., the enactment of language (Vološinov 68, 86 and *passim*, Benveniste 217-22).

Mr. Tuttle's atemporal consistency makes for his subjectlessness, for he is not "made out of time . . . that defines your existence" (92). When Lauren protests about Mr. Tuttle's possible resistance to time since "you [we] are made out of time. This is the force that tells you who you are" (92), attesting to the imperviousness of time, she does so not by providing a definition of time in terms of managing or gauging time but in terms of "clos[ing] your eyes and feel[ing] it" (92). Time is of the essence in the novel but it is not readily available to measurement.

The sense of subjectlessness is intensified by the fact that Mr. Tuttle has no language of his own, no origin and no destination, no identity and no subjectivity. He is "like a man anonymous to himself" (95). It is Lauren Hartke who gives him a name because "she thought it would make him easier to see" (48), easier to comprehend and make sense of. Not constituted by our representations, Mr. Tuttle is, therefore, difficult to place in a commonsense "reality" as we cognize it; "all happens around the word seem" (31). Lauren tries to make sense of Mr. Tuttle by placing him into firm representations he always eludes as he flows from one "as if" mode to the next, constantly alternating but hardly ever assuming stable representations. Such representations would enforce stable "as if" existence that would allay the fear of emptiness: "It was always as if. He did this or that as if. She needed a reference elsewhere to get him placed" (45). Mr. Tuttle escapes fixity as a subject, even if a represented one, just as a cyber-entity eludes permanency and stability, originality and duplicity. Just as in cyber discourse we do not know where the original lies for there is no such notion, but all is a repetition of a lost or never-has-been original, all is versions of itself in a flowing reproductive process that respects no subjecthood.

Mr. Tuttle appears to be a recycling of Philip Dick's autistic Manfred Steiner of *Martian Time-Slip*. Like Mr. Tuttle, Manfred is totally asocial, on the pre-rational, semiotic level, on a different time-scale to the other characters, "oriented according to a subjective factor that took precedence over his sense of objective reality" (61). His vision of the mangled world that surrounds him is conflated with the onomatopoeic word "gubble" the same way the word "tuttle" encapsulates the tattling effects of Mr. Tuttle's

speech. Like Mr. Tuttle, Manfred's world reflects the one around him. But while he ends up merging with this world like Mr. Tuttle, he sees only decay, degeneration and death, being the victim of his time ailment (Palmer 164), unlike Mr. Tuttle. Manfred Steiner epitomizes the subjective, what Palmer, following Kristeva, calls "the semiotic," (171) being unable to participate in the reality around him while Mr. Tuttle is no subject at all.

In his atavistic subsistence, Mr. Tuttle has "no protective surface" (90) to secure himself behind, no secure representations to shield him from the poignant unreality of our existence, no secure "as if" existence to carry him through: "He was here in the howl of the world. This was the howling face, the stark, the not-as-if of things" (90). But his state is beyond Lauren's comprehension: "But how could she know this? She could not" (90). And yet she does know and indeed manages to impart this to the readers albeit by sweeping "aside words" (90), in keeping with the general practice of the novel which presents a verbally minimalistic world. Mr. Tuttle is then the postmodernist subject that is no subject at all, but rather, according to Burgin, "a precipitate of the very symbolic order of which the humanist subject supposed itself to be the master" (49). Mr. Tuttle is the very biological residue of our bare existence that has to assume roles in "as if" representations. He has to be named, placed in space and time and made reference of, if he is to appropriate a represented identity. He has to have some simulation of origin and end, if he is to pretend to have a language—rather than be the effect of one, as he now is in his autistic behavior.

In contemplating Mr. Tuttle's relationship to time, "his future is unnamed. It is simultaneous, somehow, with the present. Neither happens before or after the other and they are equally accessible, perhaps, if only in his mind" (77), Lauren echoes Deleuze and Parnet's idea that "he is no more than an abstract line, a pure movement difficult to discover; he never begins, but takes up things in the middle; he is always in the middle" (75-6). Mr. Tuttle in effect dissolves the binarism of "he" vs "she," of "male" vs "female," of "a" as distinct from "b," a binarism that individuates Rey and Lauren into their distinct, even if precarious, subjectivities. But if he effects this dissolution of rigid segmentation, he is both "a" and "b," both "he" and "she," uniting them on a continuum of fused subjectivity, common memory and shared biological constitution. Mr. Tuttle connects them both on the most basic level of existence, that of common memory or history, that of the continued flow of existence, as he repeats their utterances, thus uniting them both in a shared consciousness. But this shared consciousness extends

beyond them over to others via Lauren, who through her art performance transverses other individualities in a continuous flow of mutations. This continuity is what eventually saves her and enables her to search afresh for her subjectivity. But just as consciousness cannot be located in any one single place in the brain, so, too, it is not locatable in any individual uniquely but connects human existence as a whole.

III

Not only does Mr. Tuttle not understand time and language but he also seems to have a problematic relationship with his body, whose everyday functions, like bowel movements, he seems to ignore. We can almost say then that he lacks a body because a body is to be tied to a certain world, because a body must not just be placed in space, but be of it (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*). So he lacks individuality and he also lacks a consciousness, both socially constructed (Vološinov 12). He is an asocial being predating our socially constituted individuality and consciousness, reminiscent of humans but also of biological machines. He is a humanoid with an autistic behavior and speech, which forces Lauren to cry out in exasperation, "All right. Be a Zen master, you little creep" (55). He is an android-humanoid, resonating his environment (Rey and Lauren) but also reflecting back on himself as he cannot reach out to his environment effectively except through receptive Lauren, who, in her more lucid moments, attempts to theorize sensibly about who her guest might be: "If you examine the matter methodically, you realize that he is a retarded man sadly gifted in certain specialized areas, such as memory retention and mimicry, a man who'd been concealed in a large house, listening" (100). Mr. Tuttle inhabits "another planet," what Philip Nel calls a "nonplace" (746), as he is devoid of sociality and functionality, devoid of effective communicative speech and a consciousness even though he is a very basic biological being living "in overlapping realities" (82), with human attributes on loan (Rey's speech).

Mr. Tuttle constitutes a "rhizome" in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of philosophy or Guattari's chaosophy.

A rhizome doesn't begin and doesn't end, but is always in the middle, between things, inter-being, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, exclusively alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the rhizome is woven together with conjunctions: "and...

and... and..." In this conjunction there is enough force to shake up and uproot the verb "to be." Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you driving at? All useless questions. To make a clean slate of it, to start over and over again at zero, to look for a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false conception of voyage and movement. (Deleuze and Guattari 57-58)

In its thinness of plot and its absence of secure temporal and spatial placement, *The Body Artist* is also an "intermezzo" without a beginning and an end, just as Mr. Tuttle lacks a beginning and an end. He just "happens" between things; he shares Rey's and Lauren's subjectivities collapsing their individualities but mostly inter-connecting them in a shared sense of being, in the same memory of being; he comes and goes without the possibility of our tracing him to an origin in his bio-history, without witnessing his end, if indeed there is one. Mr. Tuttle very much "happens" in the middle of the novel, as indeed the novel itself happens somewhere that could be anywhere, sometime that could be anytime. It is in the middle of things without an origin and a secure end, as it is not anchored by any temporal specificity. "Maybe this man," we are told about Mr. Tuttle, "experiences another kind of reality where he is here and there, before and after, and he moves from one to the other shatteringly, in a state of collapse, minus an identity, a language, a way to enjoy the savour of the honey-coated toast she watches him eat" (64-65).

Mr. Tuttle is, then, neither a human, nor a machine, even though he behaves like a recorder, blurting out what he has heard or hears and mimicking what activity surrounds him as if he is the posthuman paradigm in the aftermath of the dissolution of all material reality or a cyborg that has been necessitated by advances in cybernetics. Is he the posthuman machine devoid of all that constitutes humanity, intelligence as we know it, sociality as we enact it, language as we perform in it? DeLillo plays with this notion of the cyborg only to subvert the very idea once the reader is settled with it. We feel somehow that Mr. Tuttle is not a subhuman machine but transcends human nature in its most essential characteristics, its ubiquity, inviolability, resilience and continuity. Mr. Tuttle is not an empty human simulacrum, he does not portray an endless simulation of emptiness, neither is he the expression of transcendent void, but is rather a flowing repetition of essence, be it human essence or biological essence. In *The Body Artist* the two attributes seem to merge in what is most transcendental in human nature

when it is devoid of its sociality and representations. Even if Mr. Tuttle reminds us of a digital homilacrum, his organicist constitution is mutated eventually to Lauren's many transmutations when he is gone. He is grafted onto Lauren's newly acquired ability to get down to the essence of existence, working off all that is transient and alternating between representations in a chameleonic fashion. Lauren's final art performance is imbued with Mr. Tuttle's resonance. Mr. Tuttle and Lauren have now become a rhizome assuring Deleuze and Guattari's inter-de/reterritorialization of the other, very much in keeping with Baker's comment that "in DeLillo's novels characters seem to merge into one another; they can become almost indistinguishable in the course of a short dialogue" (101).

Anticipating her colonization of other subjectivities, Rey calls Lauren "the young woman who eats and sleeps and lives forever" (15). The theme of overall connection is prominent from the beginning, then, when we are at least temporarily assured that the two characters, Rey and Lauren, sport their distinct subjectivities. Very soon, we will read that Lauren's subjectivity lapses into otherness, an otherness which is not distinguishable, but which connects her with everything else: "Her body felt different to her in ways she did not understand. Tight, framed, she didn't know exactly. Slightly foreign and unfamiliar. Different, thinner, didn't matter" (33).

The characters, then, metamorphose into agonists who, failing to communicate in the scarce, logical thinness of their language, assume their inter-connecting subjectivities in their bodily forms on the biological plane. After all, "there's nothing like a raging crap, she [Lauren] thought, to make mind and body one" (35); for the meaning she was after was "so thin she could not read it. There were too many things to understand and finally just one" (35).

DeLillo's *The Body Artist* dissolves all barriers between the self and the other, an independent consciousness and the body it may inhabit. Mr. Tuttle emerges as a biological vessel devoid of emotions and mental states as we understand them and connect them to a mind and consciousness. Mr. Tuttle is emotionally desolate. Even Lauren is not immune to this emotional desolation (which helps her to survive her husband's death) since, under Mr. Tuttle's influence, she struggles to shed any personalizing layers that constitute her subjectivity as she has experienced it in her former life. Lauren, in effect, becomes depersonalized in a way ("Sink lower, she thought. Let it bring you down. Go where it takes you" (116)), consciously reducing herself to the most essential ingredient of her existence, to a "thinness of

address” that has to be biological and organic since she can be many things at the same time or successively, until she is less herself: “I am Lauren. But less and less” (117).

The barriers between herself and others are dissolved as if consciousness is a matter of matter and as if those barriers between the self and the other were totally arbitrary. Mental illness has indeed taught us that they are both arbitrary and precarious. Mr. Tuttle has lost the will to will, the will to be an agent as in mental illness and his perception of time is questionable. Such absence of a sense of coherence points to an immobilized, almost pro-thanatic self. And yet the sense of embodiment is never absent even in the absence of time continuity and action. All this is self constituting subjectivity, which needs movement that can be dissolved into its biological organic rudiments—as in mental illness—and one which does not vanish as if it were a mental apparition possessing its own independent constitution. All this is self for as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “I am no longer concerned with my body, nor with time, nor with the world, as I experience them in antepredicative knowledge, in the inner communion that I have with them” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 71).

IV

If, then, consciousness is a matter of matter, so is the sense of selfhood and subjectivity, both pseudo-epiphenomena on the unfailing, indisputable, sturdy, biological substance; both can be reduced to their organic nature and constitution as they do in Mr. Tuttle and later in Lauren. However, both selfhood and its accompanying sense of subjectivity do not vanish, but are rather deferred and made sense of at this other most essential level of organic substance that is the immutable real and transcendental true. After all, individuality is a purely social-ideological phenomenon and the individual consciousness is a social-ideological fact (Vološinov 12).

Even if there is no fixed center but fluidity in *The Body Artist*, it is this biological essentialism of organic matter, not just contingent but real in a sense, that flows across, leaving no traces or duplicates or images of itself in its passage, but only its actual holistic undifferentiated substance, whether in thinner or thicker form, that spans various formulations, supposedly uniquely individuated, but, in effect, undifferentiated or bound as beads by the same biological thread. Lauren’s art eloquently proves this point. There is no transcendence of the body, then,—why should there be? “The body has never been my enemy” (105), Lauren declares—but a redirection

to the immanence of the biological element in our human existence, when we are “stripped of recognizable language and culture” (107). It is through embodiment that we come to know the world (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Signs). Human beings are united in a universal consciousness made of our common memories, united in the language that defines them (“People saying the same thing” [99]), and just as the sign is a perennial continuity marked by “arbitrary divisions” (91), so, too, humans form a continuity marked by arbitrary individuations. Fixity in biological substance is an irrelevant human construct, as Lauren so poignantly shows us, just as fixity in language is a myth: “Somehow. The weakest word in the language. And more or less. And maybe. Always maybe. She was always maybeing,” (92) enabling her to survive her solitude, “create her future” (98) and regenerate into a fresh subjectivity, to be redefined “in time in her body, to tell her who she was” (124).

The whole novel centers on Lauren’s body art performance, mediated—or rather enlightened—by Mr. Tuttle’s “interference.” What is communicated in and by Lauren’s body art needs no words, no linguistic wrapping or trappings; it is a performance within a society of generalized communication (Vattimo 24-5). DeLillo concentrates on Mr. Tuttle and his primitive, pre-human, pre-linguistic, atemporal and spaceless constitution. It may be that *The Body Artist* views the human element (hark! “element”) as a “component” within the larger biological “system,” a molecular constitution that is allied with the overall biological eco-system, just as in General Systems Theory we try to make sense of the world within a general systems framework. Even if humans are wired on the same circuit, all connecting our supposedly unique individualities to the same outer-controlled system of perennial repetitions, with our subjectivities naturalized, even if we mistake what is its representation for what is real, even if the real has vanished with our blissful naivety and newly-acquired wisdom, what still remains is the biological substratum as the source of all human potency. Even if we now live in a “techno-nature” that has alienated the human element from what was not uncanny, but congenial to it, nature’s force can still penetrate and survive all appropriations. It may be that this biological force can recapture and naturalize what has been usurped from it, just as Lauren accesses new realities via her body transformations: “In a series of electro-convulsive motions the body flails out of control, whipping and spinning appallingly. Hartke makes her body do things I’ve only seen in animated cartoons. It is a seizure that apparently flies the man out of one reality and into another” (108).

Art, then, is a “being in which the expression is indistinguishable from the thing expressed . . . It is in this sense that our body is comparable to a work of art” (Merleau-Ponty *The Phenomenology of Perception* 151). Lauren’s body is both the medium and the subject of her art. It epitomizes the persistent inseparability of art and life, of life through art, an art physically located in the body, and worked by the human element lodged in the body that cannot—and will not—be shed, a body that will not surrender to bleaching and annihilation, a body that resists the immateriality of reality. This body, Lauren’s body, mutated to her from Mr. Tuttle, is the centripetal locus of all evanescent, material reality, an affirmation of reality and a positive negation of an excruciating immateriality. Lauren’s progressive efforts towards her self-inflicted dissolution attest to this resistance to immateriality, an immateriality that is brought about by the ubiquity of the same, by the endless replicas of a lost original, by a cascade of simulacra whose origin is lost in time and space.

Baudrillard claims that the individuated beings that we have become are in fact a promiscuous contagion, undifferentiated in ourselves and from each other, and, in accordance with DeLillo criticism, also undifferentiated from the culture of consumerism that produces us (Baker 82). Lauren resists the habituation to representation that glorifies this contagion. Instead, DeLillo depicts the inescapability of this almost physical continuity and contagiousness that neither duplicates beings or images, nor unites them, but rather affirms this one biological being or super organism of whose molecular constitution the human being is just one component part. In *The Body Artist* we have no “umbilicus of limbs” (Baudrillard 482), but rather an umbilicus of organic substance barely formulated into a human limb, more like the main ingredient of the irresistible perennial human essence, which is biological, lymphatic, rather than mental.

We witness human resilience, then, in the form of a biological, organic resistance to all cloning, social or mental, cultural or intellectual, that can in effect resist all promiscuity produced by “mental involution” or “social implosion” or even “on-line interaction,” as Baudrillard (482) describes this promiscuity. This connection across bodies provides a link with the typical schismatic DeLillian criticism of earlier DeLillo novels that walked a tightrope between a postmodernist stance and a lurking modernism (Baker, Cantor, Carmichael, Lentricchia, Nel) as Laura Martin also so painstakingly documents. Most critics seem to agree that DeLillo’s janus-faced attitude straddles both –isms. He uses postmodernist concerns to a modernist end.

Frank Lentricchia calls DeLillo the “last of the modernists,” one “who takes for his critical object of aesthetic concern the postmodern situation,” (14) where creative art is foregrounded and the opaqueness of the text propagates surface. The very engagement with the idea of art as “specially endowed revelation” (Wilcox 348) gives DeLillo his modernist leanings in *The Body Artist*, which is DeLillo’s only novel where “aesthetic creativity . . . is [not] shown to be absorbed into a culture of consumerism” as was true, according to Baker, for DeLillo’s other novels (82). DeLillo seems to live in the interstices between the symbolism of Being and the trauma of being, between modernist high aestheticism and postmodernist techno-aestheticism. Modernism is premised on the mode of subjectivity and DeLillo does indeed engage with the fragmentation of subjectivity characteristic of modernism. One can even say that his modernist leanings in this novel can be traced through the indisputable, inviolable and invincible connective tissue of human substance. Yet it is an organic, biological ingredient to which his human existence refers. His engagement with biological subjectivity is what makes DeLillo a full-blown postmodernist. After all, DeLillo has forged a corporeal language and his art is sensational and explicitly physical.

DeLillo’s postmodernism has created a body stripped of all the accoutrements of representation, devoid of the representational mirror that gives back to the world a meaning, dissected and analyzed. His postmodernism conveys a perspective of undifferentiated sameness uniting human substance, with humanity appearing as dots against a pixelated panel, very much “the little buzzing dots that make up the picture pattern” as the character Murray Siskind puts it in *White Noise* (51). Even though DeLillo can see little else than this persistent and expanding organic substance as the essence of the human being and even though the reader is seduced into believing that this is one more novel about vacuity and assembly line existence, s/he discovers that the reduction posited leads not to nullity but to a core of sheer being. Cowart notes that “DeLillo’s engagement with the postmodern . . . at least as it is commonly defined, is or has come to be adversarial” (210). Cantor believes that “DeLillo is sufficiently distanced from postmodern existence to want to be able to criticize it, but sufficiently implicated in it to have a hard time finding an Archimedean point from which to do the criticising” (60). This may be true for most of DeLillo’s novels but not for *The Body Artist*. In *Introducing Merleau-Ponty’s Signs*, McCleary draws attention to the fact that, “as the body’s self-awareness as projecting project of the world, consciousness is basically the anonymous, pre-personal life of the

flesh. Carnal self-awareness is the Archimedean point of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy" (xvii). In like manner, Lauren has to reduce herself to non-existence to reach the palpitating life force that can never be erased. The novel pays tribute to this life force that cannot and will not be stamped out.

DeLillo's *The Body Artist* stresses the inviolable real of biology that escapes all contingencies and acts as the potential for all social, cultural or mental transmutations (if the mental, indeed, exists). It seems that the human element thrives on this organic matter which is stripped of all cultural, social and mental overlays even though there is no definitive answer as to whether it is a source of "jouissance" or despair. It could very well be that DeLillo wrote *The Body Artist* as an elegy to the most essential in life that enables us to be human, to this ever-lasting unfailing, organic matter that enables us to aspire to be more than human, the attribute par excellence that makes us uniquely human (Ramachandran). After all, "the mind lags behind nature," as Deleuze and Guattari (6) proclaim.

Whatever significance the novel may lay claim to has to be worked out in collaboration, collusion or even collision with the reader and his or her own perceptions, conceptions, and sensibilities. Like all minimalist works of art, *The Body Artist*, despite its cerebral character, is a profoundly and inescapably interactive piece of work, its interactivity enforced and foregrounded by its minimalist language. Just as interactivity is forced on the spectator of a work of art by empty space, as, for example, by a white unpainted canvas in a painting, so, too, in *The Body Artist*, language, with its paucity of expression and incompleteness of form, becomes the locus of reader engagement and interactivity. The reader of *The Body Artist* is in part an artist him/herself, as the novel does not have an independent life of its own, a fact that may be true to a very considerable extent of all works of art. Its artistry is partly due to the destabilization experienced by the reader, not so much by the plot or its thinness, if not its total absence, but rather by the alienating effect of DeLillo's language. But, despite its alienating tone, its language is sheer poetry that makes the reader feel pain in his/her existence. The language of *The Body Artist* hurts and the reader plunges into uncertainty as s/he is invited to a near-simulated authorship, having to interact with the novel's "thinness of address." Since the language of *The Body Artist* is not just elliptical, but also turned in upon itself, it can be unfolded to be made sense of in unpredictable ways. Messages and meanings derived from this convoluted, self-umbilicalled language can be varied, resonating the reader's sensibilities and bio-histories. The paradox

of this self-reflexive text echoing the reader's concerns is accentuated by the fact that we, just as Lauren does, would like, at times, to dismantle any sense of "normative" time by which we are engulfed. One thing is certain, that "we're caught in time" (Laurie Anderson) and we try to make sense out of our entrapment even by negating our very subjectivity.

References

- Anderson, Laurie. Happiness, as conceived and performed by her, "The Barbican", London, May 2003.
- Atchley, Heath J. "The Loss of Language, The Language of Loss: Thinking With DeLillo on Terror and Mourning." *Janus Head* 7.2 (2004): 333-54.
- Baker, Stephen. *The Fiction of Postmodernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000.
- Baudrillard, Jean. "Telemorphosis." In CTRL[+SPACE]. *Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*. Eds. Thomas Y Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT P, 2002. 480-485.
- Benveniste, Emile. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables, Florida: U of Miami P, 1971.
- Blanchard, Daniel. "Debord in the Resounding Cataract of Time." *Revolutionary Romanticism*. Ed. Max Blechman. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1999. 223- 236.
- Bolinger, Dwight L. "More on the Present Tense in English." *Language* 23 (1947): 434-436.
- Bonca, Cornel. "Being, Time, and Death in DeLillo's *The Body Artist*." *Pacific Coast Philology* 37 (2002): 58-68.
- Brockes, Emma. "Clash of the Titans: Literary Criticism." *Guardian* 27 Mar. 2003: 11.
- Burgin, Victor. *The End of Art Theory. Criticism and Postmodernity*. UK, New York: Palgrave, 1986.
- Cantor, Paul. "Adolf, We hardly Knew You." *New Essays on White Noise*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 39-62.
- Carmichael, Thomas. "Buffalo/Baltimore, Athens/Dallas: John Barth, Don DeLillo and the Cities of Postmodernism." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 22.2 (Fall 1991): 241-50.
- Cowart, David. *Don DeLillo. The Physics of Language*. USA: U of Georgia P, 2002.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome." Deleuze and Guattari 1-65.

- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, eds. *On the Line*. Trans. John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Claire Parnet "Politics." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari 69-115.
- DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. NY: Penguin, 1985.
- . *The Body Artist*. N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- . *Cosmopolis*. London: Picador, 2003.
- . "Presentation of Cosmopolis." Organized by The Times and Foyles, London, 27 May 2003.
- Dick, Philip, K. *Martian Time-Slip*. London: NEL, 1964 [1976].
- Evans, Jonathan, St. B. T., Stephen E. Newstead and Ruth M. J. Byrne. *Human Reasoning. The Psychology of Deduction*. Hove, Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1993.
- Fillenbaum, Samuel. "Or: Some uses." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 103 (1974): 913-921.
- Frith, Uta. *Autism: Explaining the Enigma*. 2nd ed. Massachusetts: Blackwells, 2003.
- Guattari, Félix. *Chaosophy*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1995.
- Grandin, Temple. *Thinking in Pictures. And Other Reports from My Life With Autism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Happé, Francesca. *Autism: An Introduction to Psychological Theory*. East Sussex: Psychology P, 1994.
- Kitis, Eliza. Pragmatics. *The Study of Invisible Meaning in Language*. Thessaloniki: Studio UP, in press [in Greek].
- Kristeva, Julia. "Revolution in Poetic Language." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Trans. Margaret Waller. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1986. 89-136.
- Lakoff, Robin. "If's, and's and but's about conjunction." *Studies in Linguistic Semantics*. Eds. Charles J. Fillmore and D. Terence Langendoen. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.
- LeClair, Tom. "An Interview With Don DeLillo." *Contemporary Literature* 23 (1982): 19-31.
- . *In the Loop. Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1987.
- Lentricchia, Frank. Introduction. *New Essays on White Noise*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 1-14.
- Martín, Paula Salván. "The Writer at the Far Margin." *European Journal of American Studies* EJAS 2007-1, [Online], article 3, Apr. 04, 2007. Oct.

- 01, 2009 <http://ejas.revues.org/document1147.html>.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1962.
- . Signs. Trans. Richard G. McCleary. Northwestern UP, 1964.
- Miller, Laura. "Eighteen Pages of Genius-Then Modernist Mandarinism." *New York Observer* 4 Nov. 2003.
- Morris, Matthew J. "Murdering Words: Language in Action in Don DeLillo's 'The Names.'" *Contemporary Literature* 30.1 (Spring 1989): 113-27.
- Moschonas, Spiros. "Present: the Atemporal Tense." *Glossologia* 9-10 (1990-1991): 151-182 [in Greek].
- Nel, Philip. "Don DeLillo's Return to Form: The Modernist Poetics of *The Body Artist*." *Contemporary Literature* 43.4 (Winter 2002): 736-59.
- Osteen, Mark. "Children of Godard and Coca-Cola: Cinema and Consumerism in Don DeLillo's Early Fiction." *Contemporary Literature* 37.3 (Fall 1996): 439-70.
- Palmer, Christopher. Philip K. Dick. *Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2003.
- Ramachandran, Vilayanur, S. "The Emerging Mind." Series of Reith Lectures of 2003, BBC, Radio 4.
- Rothschild, Michael. *Bionomics: Economy as Ecosystem*. New York: The Bionomic Institute, 1990.
- Vattimo, Gianni. *The Transparent Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Vološinov, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1929/1973.
- Wilcox, Leonard. "Baudrillard, DeLillo's White Noise, and the End of Heroic Narrative." *Contemporary Literature* 32.3 (Fall 1991): 346:365
- Wittmershaus, Eric. "Review of *The Body Artist*." *Flakmagazine* 2. July 2001.

William Heyen
THE GREEN BOOKCASE
(In memory of Raymond J. Smith)

I

At the back of my garage here in the Village of Brockport in western New York State is a small enclosed shed/storage area. On the morning of May 15, 2007, I was sitting beside the seven-foot wood bookcase where I keep literary magazines that have published my writings over the decades—the mags became too many to keep in the house, & I've not had the heart to bequeath them to the recycle container, & they are occasionally useful toward this or that project—when light streaked in from over my right shoulder to create an aura that enveloped the whole rectangle. I had the sudden intuition that case & contents had come to unity, to Oneness, had come to be a work of art.

A *work* in that I keep making it, adding to it (as do the editors, designers, artists, printers, binders who create the magazines themselves). *Art* by way of this object's harmonious intensifications of its own reason for being; its rhythmic colors & textures & geometries; its functionally informed complex of personal & communal memory; its beauty as it invites viewing & may even seem to behold the viewer. Art by way of how it variously engages what might be art's supreme theme: Time.... My dozen other bookcases are much more sure of themselves, are less eccentric, do not have the depth of character of this one....

Soon after my discovery, I wanted someone else to see this unique entity, walk up to it, sit in the rusted & paint-splotched metal chair (itself part of this ensemble) where its companion often sat—left shoulder toward the case, light coming from the right—& even handle/peruse one or more of the voluminous constituent artifacts themselves that he'd arranged, beginning with the top left shelf, chronologically. (In a university rare books archive, he'd seen the magazines in which he'd published arranged alphabetically by magazine title.) Some are so thin that they are hidden. (Imagine the aspirations of even the most ephemeral of these magazines.) He protected most in plastic bags, kept some shrink-wrapped as received. Often there are two copies—he kept no more than two—of the same issue of the same magazine—spondees of the brush in this painting, of notes in this musical composition.

Each magazine, the experiencer could be sure, whether the currently extant & prestigious *The New Yorker* or *Harper's* or *The Southern Review* or *Kenyon Review* or *Virginia Quarterly Review* or *Chautauqua* or *Poetry* or *TriQuarterly*, or the now-defunct *Striver's Row* or *Scimitar and Song* or *The Galley Sail Review* or *Tuatara* or *Rapport* or *Longshot* or *Bluefish* or *American Weave* or *Approach* or *Toad Highway* or *The Husk* or *Motive* or *Trace* or *Jeopardy* or *Our Original Sins* or *Back Door* or *Fragments* or *Fireweed* or *Thistle* or *Desperate Act* or *Potato Eyes* or *The Windhorse Review* or *Crop Dust* or *The Page* or *Triad* (a Texas quarterly that lasted only two issues) or a couple hundred others, gave pleasure & a sense of accomplishment when it arrived from however far. He had at least an illusion of being read. The magazines were at least minimally cared for. Many, especially earlier ones, moved with the writer from place to place, even across the Atlantic (*The Saturday Review* with a couple of reviews that arrived when he taught in Germany in 1971-72) or the Pacific (*American Poetry Review* with his picture on the cover & a suite of poems that arrived when he taught at the University of Hawaii in 1985). Now, here, they & he are home, except for some that are missing—his own collection of his publications is not complete.

On top of the bookcase are three maroon file boxes that hold folded, tabloid-sized magazines, his least favorite format, but these are also part of this sculpture made of wood & words, glue & thread, artwork/story/essay/poetry. But *The Green Bookcase* is still a work-in-progress, too: there may be just about enough shelf-space left to hold the magazines that welcome him during what remains of his pre-posthumous existence. If not, he could add a few more file boxes. Or he could add an "Annex," as the greatest American democratic poet, Walt Whitman, added annexes to his *Leaves of Grass*. William would add a particular bookcase made by his late brother, Werner, a retired cop who loved his workshop & often salvaged odd scraps of lumber he'd find by the side of the road or at the dump. The top of this bookcase is a mahogany plank from a busted-up player piano. Maybe, though, William should revise, should rip saw down to just one copy of each magazine—this would give him at least a third more space. But then *The Green Bookcase* wouldn't hum the same sounds, & the duplicate copies seem to satisfy his need to hoard—he's the son of parents who struggled through the Great Depression.... Maybe, for a good sense of old-fashioned artistic closure, he could just stop publishing in magazines as shelf-spaced closed in on him....

Back to the first person. On the bottom shelf I've kept a clock that Werner made. I hadn't thought about this before, but I'm moving toward him, toward his suspended time, his eternity, magazine by magazine, poem by poem. I've never bothered to replace its battery.

Also in the bookcase is a walnut box with glass sides that contains a large topaz-colored glass turtle given to me by my wife, who found it at a garage sale in about 1980 in her home village of Forestville, west of Buffalo. This terrapin's carapace lifts off. Inside, are several other turtles given to me by family & friends.... The turtle: my often-dreamed totem animal. (If you have time to take a look, see my poem "Annuli"—several of its nineteen sections appear here in *Ontario Review*, #68 [2007]). Let's say that this box is also a little magazine. We'll call it *The Turtle Review*. If it ever ceases publication, no other magazine will be able to take its place. In fact, if it ever ceases publication, it will mean that no one is doing any reading, that even god has ceased to read us.

Ironic, isn't it: my books & broadsides & the hundreds of anthologies that have published me are inside my home in my study. But this bookcase's minor bibliographic "C" items had to keep hot every summer & cold every winter out in the shed. Now I know that when I've passed by it & ignored it, or sat by it or added to it so many times over the years, *The Green Bookcase*—its exoskeleton shaped by an anonymous maker I don't know how long ago—I like to think 1940, the year I was born—in muted but lyrical ways as an organic & growing form, & against the grain of our age of diminishing print culture, diminishing species, was witnessing/describing/defining/imagining itself as a work of art. Like any work of what Ezra Pound called "first intensity," it was readying itself for what I might in time come to realize about it.

II

Afterthoughts/shelf fillers ending with a story & a poem.

i.

I'm glad that *The Green Bookcase* has a back, a frame, that its shelves are not vulnerable from behind.

ii.

I'm glad its exoskeleton is a muted green, the paint original. & I'm glad that this one is painted—all my other bookcases are stained.

iii.

I'm glad that paragraphs fill the shelves of this prose piece, & that I can justify its right margin.

iv.

I'm glad the object is taller than I am (I'm 6'5", it is 7'2"), weighs more than I do (I weigh 200, it weighs I don't know how much more), can see much further than I can. I'm glad it is as wide as it is (42") & that it can accommodate, not counting the top board, 21 linear feet of material.

v.

Its poetry is its 4th dimension. I like to think that it is memorizing itself, its own contents.

vi.

The Green Bookcase is one of two personal possessions I would find it hardest to lose, so imbued is it with memory, faith, meaning.

vii.

I'm glad that it's built strong, that its boards have not warped & probably won't.

viii.

The Green Bookcase came into being & was found by someone who never played a video game, or worked with a digital camera, or had a cell-phone (though he plans to get one), or sent a text-message. He did move from manual typewriter to electric typewriter to computer word-processing & e-mail (thanks to a son versed in techno-things). He doesn't have a blog or a web-site. He harbors no hard & fast feelings against gizmo breakthroughs, would even like to be hip & adept with one of these hand-held combinations that are phones/TVs/libraries/music halls/photography studios/cyber arboretums & zoos/ global positioning systems/ garage door openers & who knows what else, & he could afford one, but hasn't wanted to take time to learn to be proficient with one. He's lived a life with family

& friends, with nature, with students, with hard-copy books. Tom Bissell has written about how all generations of writers have had their distractions. He's wary of but not in despair about machine-generated contemporary entertainment obsessions. Bissell does say, however, "Every literary person, then, is a conservationist in the fight for increasingly endangered consciousness." How much of your own consciousness, or mine, is pixel, how much plankton?

ix.

Some poems, some works of art exhibit
rhythmic velocity. This one does not.
The Green Bookcase exists in a slow flow
of littlemag time, like snow falling through snow.

x.

The little magazines may be thought of as the primary medium of this work. At the same time, *The Green Bookcase* may be thought of as an homage to these magazines.

xi.

Some years ago I heard about, but did not see, an exhibition of artists' palettes. I liked the whole concept, as a revelation of personality, technique, tendency. Now, *The Green Bookcase* has become the palette for this prose piece. Or is it, at least sometimes, the other way around? My mind, as I think about this object, is a palette knife.

xii.

In the preface to my one book of stories, *The Hummingbird Corporation*, I say that I hope these fictions will keep my other writings company, that my poems will now be less lonely than they would otherwise be. I hope that now *The Green Bookcase* will in the same way keep my books & my so-far-unpublished 45-year ongoing journal company, that they will all converse with & help to integrate/complicate/ expand/ ensoul one another. This work of art is part of my bibliography.

xiii.

I've probably written about little magazines dozens of times in my journal. Just now, taking down a volume & reading at random, I spotted

this paragraph from 12/5/90: “Bill Tremblay took ‘The Scar’ & ‘By the Time I Loved Him’ for *Colorado Review*. I’ve said now & then that my love affair with little magazines is over, but the last several months, thinking of how hungry I was back in my early years, & with the luck of writing good new poems & having acceptances from *APR*, *Georgia Review*, *Ploughshares* & others, remembering walking to graduate classes at Ohio University while thinking of submissions & many rejections & then once in a while an acceptance, I feel a low flame again. All those labors of love out there to receive mine.”

xiv.

Many of my writings in these magazines did not make it into any of my books & will not be published again, but these writings—the earliest magazine here is from 1963—peep, like chicks, glad to have been born. They’ve no ambition—some are blind in one or both eyes, some misshapen—but just keep peeping & scratching in straw. They have no future other than to be here, & to welcome visitors.

xv.

I’m glad *The Green Bookcase* has an aspect of contemplation, of repose, even while it holds, as poetry does, all our contraries.

xvi.

Its tone: maybe romantic-elegiac, with a tinge of the obsessive-heroic.

xvii.

It’s a flowing gloom this 4 a.m., a slow wind in bushes & trees. I’m inside in my easy chair, couldn’t sleep much, but it’s a pleasure to be up early, following the ink flow of this sentence, this paragraph. A few fireflies are still winking their phosphor locations. They remind me that a magazine called *Firefly* is part of *The Green Bookcase*. Offhand, I don’t remember its year or what poem or poems of mine strobe from within that magazine, but for just a moment, now, out in the shed & out of sight, *The Green Bookcase* seems to me a gathering place for fireflies. I can almost see it through two walls, & will now go to it to make sure that it is still there.

xviii.

I'm glad that the shelf edges were run through a shaper. As a boy in Nesconset on Long Island I watched my father grind pairs of shaping blades, tighten them into his bit, & then run boards through to create moldings. I'm very aware of the process that gave five boards here their soft-rhyming edges.

xix.

Little magazines, so disposable—but someone was not disposed, in this case, to dispose of them. Walt said that maybe the grass was the flag of his disposition, “out of hopeful green stuff woven.” I guess this bookcase is the flag of my disposition.

xx.

One summer day I was sitting in front of the magazines when I noticed a small translucent spider spinning down from a shelf edge. I thought of course of Walt's “Noiseless Patient Spider” that sends filament, filament, filament out of itself, hoping to connect across the vast distances by way of faith. The poet imagines this spider as his soul. I'm thinking now of a spider spinning down through this prose piece, attached to the title, unreeling itself through the years.

xxi.

Nothing sensational or shocking or overtly symbolic here, no extreme aesthetic behavior, no wings mounted on its sides. It is not painted with flames as though it represented the library destroyed at Alexandria. It has not been invented, but created almost accidentally, almost unconsciously, & discovered. *The Green Bookcase* may hold at least one magazine from each of our fifty states, but it is not emblazoned with stars & stripes & called “America.”

xxii.

I realize that I've been indulging myself in pathetic fallacies here, but to what extent may it be said that an object possesses mind? If I am quiet before this one, it seems to be thinking, or in REM sleep.

xxiii.

The intersection, the *fusion* of literature & the fine arts.

xxiv.

I dreamed that during one of our wrong wars our president died. He'd given a speech in front of a large auditorium audience, & then had had suffered a stroke or heart attack. Secret service men carried him from that place on a stretcher that was *The Green Bookcase*.

xxv.

I think that *The Green Bookcase* does not think of itself as either window or door. I think it thinks of itself at night as a tree, an evergreen, & during the day as a daydream.

xxvi.

Being of such bohemian nature, made of such common materials & being of such quiet presence & import, this work of art is not likely to be stolen or defaced by a madman with hammer or blowtorch. Or, in another century, will it be, for just those reasons?

xxvii.

Peep.

xxviii.

My contributions to all these magazines speak of times when I was in flux, uncertainty (as, in fact, I still am). Even writings that eventually made their ways into my books were revised (& some will be revised again). There is always, as Joyce Carol Oates has said, "Another project that has been begun, another concatenation of indefinable states." As *The Green Bookcase* changes over time—for it will change even when dusted or when someone takes down a magazine & then replaces it—it acknowledges the flux & creativity at the heart of impermanence.

xxix.

I've just noticed that each shelf holds about a decade of my contributions to magazines. *The Green Bookcase* grows to my ground in time & Time something like this:

Top shelf: 1960s
 2nd shelf: 1970s
 3rd shelf: 1980s & *The Turtle Review*
 4th shelf: 1990s
 5th shelf: 2000s
 6th shelf: 2000s & clock

xxx.

This piece of prose, this essay you're reading, *The Green Bookcase*: a poet-friend who read an early draft of it, Roy Bentley, suggested that it might be the basis for a play, the two brothers—one the living retired professor-poet & one the cop-woodworker in his after-dimension—discussing the object. In the end, there might it be, in its shed, alone at night, glowing softly, itself the answer to all the questions put to it. For such a play, should the clock's battery be replaced?

xxxi.

Maybe at some point a third character enters the stage. Yes, it's the brothers' high school coach, an Iwo Jima vet. He says, "What's all this chickenshit crap about a bookcase?" [*Grabs his crotch.*] "I got your bookcase hanging."

xxxii.

By the way, since, to begin with, *The Green Bookcase* itself & this prose piece are so self-reflexive, so self-referential, I've placed in one of the maroon boxes, too, the many drafts of these ruminations. By the way, early drafts mention the second possession I'd find it hardest to lose.

xxxiii.

Notice that I've not centered the three-word title of this prose piece above the text, but have placed it in upper-left position to correspond with the three file boxes. (I'd like to have this title printed in maroon, though one of its words is green. This goes back to the contraries I mentioned.)

xxxiv.

Each of these afterthoughts is a magazine. This one is called *Afterthought*.

xxxv.

I have treasured out my life in magazines.

xxxvi.

Speaking of T.S. Eliot, I don't have *The Green Bookcase* doesn't have a copy of the Autumn, 1967 *Shenandoah* which contains my review of young Tom's juvenilia, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, poems written between his 16th & 22nd birthdays. (I have the review itself in my book *Titanic & Iceberg: Early Essays & Reviews* [2006]—I worked from a xerox copy for this book, & don't know what happened to my copy or copies of that issue of *Shenandoah*, but *The Green Bookcase* will keep its cyclopean eye open for one. Any chance that you have one?)

Wallace Stevens once noted that "some of one's early things give one the creeps." No doubt the old possum felt this way, too. Take for example this stanza from "A Fable for Feasters" which appeared in *Smith Academy Record* (1905). This was his first published poem. The student poet is versifying about a group of feasting monks:

They were possessors of rich lands and wide,
 An orchard, and a vineyard, and a dairy;
 Whenever some old villainous baron died,
 He added to their hoards—a deed which ne'er he
 Had done before—their fortune multiplied,
 As if they had been kept by a kind fairy.
 Alas! no fairy visited their host,
 Oh, no; much worse than that, they had a ghost.

Poem & book are filled with rhyme-stretching, inversion, artificial diction, & everything else about which the Imagists would become apoplectic. But usually, in poetry, ontology recapitulates phylogeny, most aspirers evolve through the same stages, & I can surely top Tom for beginning badness.... Let me find a stanza.... Yes, here's one from a magazine *The Green Bookcase* does harbor, *Approach* 58 (1966). It's the third stanza of a poem called "Lists and Things" about a northern garden on New Year's Day when it is all muck & withered plants:

Two kinds of cabbage leaves
 lie frozen
 as if they shared
 a private joke
 with the slanted sun,
 one, planted red,
 still reddish. I wanted
 to yank them, root,
 heart, leaves
 and all, but a gardener
 anticipates still yet another
 year, and dead things fertilize,
 so I played wise.
 My agrarian nature spoke
 and I left their leaves and roots
 to rot.

At the time, at least, as bad as this is, I did seem to anticipate *The Green Bookcase* as a compost heap for whatever books of mine would, come other springs, grow from it. Though the jacket of my first book, *Depth of Field* (I'll put, self-referentially again, a still shrink-wrapped copy in one of the maroon boxes), which was published in 1970, was green—even my face on the back cover was green—"Lists and Things" was not one of its fifty-three poems. But here it is, still, among other garden scraps but among, too, poems that have managed to keep re-seeding themselves.

xxxvii.

I mentioned above that my other bookcases do not have the depth of character of this one. Cases filled with my chapbooks & books ("A" items) or anthologies ("B" items) seem too sure of themselves, do not have the disheveled charm or sense of evanescence & vulnerability & sheer fortitude of *The Green Bookcase* with its "C" items. *The Green Bookcase* is on the edge of non-being. It is a spell that might too easily, without forethought & fore-seeing, be broken; its life might any moment be translated, like a pickerel from Walden Pond, into "the thin air of heaven."

xxxviii.

Jim Harrison in his memoir *Off to the Side* says that “Perhaps the singular reason young poets are attracted to writing programs is out of loneliness, the need to be in the company of their own strange kind.” We could take this idea in several directions, but I’ll for now take it off to the side this way: maybe *The Green Bookcase* is a writing program; certainly, literary mags are a strange kind, now less lonely & scattered than they otherwise would have been except for this sympathetic home, one that you might, by appreciating *The Green Bookcase*, make secure for them.

xxxix.

I’ve not printed up & placed in the bookcase my contributions to online zines. I’m content to let these be in their electrical ether, even if I sense that they are lonely for body. I’ve not included, either, magazines with reviews of my books, unless I’ve also contributed to these issues.

xl.

Maybe what led to my sudden recognition of what was in my shed was that green has been in my mind. In my upcoming book-length poem *To William Merwin*, I mention Walt’s grass, Thoreau’s green-painted desk in his Walden cabin, a green felt-covered table in Independence Hall in Philadelphia on which I saw Ben Franklin’s eyeglasses, Theodore Roethke’s greenhouse poems, sprigs of cedar in holiday cards sent from Oregon to our family by William & Dorothy Stafford, the gangrene of a moray eel bite, the greening voice of Dylan Thomas; & my poem ends while thinking of Merwin’s translation of *Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*.

xli.

For every acceptance from a magazine over the years, I’ve been rejected several times. If *The Green Bookcase* is a song of acceptance, & it is, it is still hard for me to hear it.

xlii.

By now I feel that you & I and this ensemble—including the chair & this prose piece—have grown together. I’ve been grateful for your patience as you’ve begun to find me as I’ve begun to find *The Green Bookcase*.

xlili.

It is completely by chance that the single metal bookend that I've used to hold up the most recent magazines is green.

xliv.

Speaking of green, if some person or gallery buys this *sui-generis* piece from me, I'll have been paid for all the poems that magazines did not pay for except in the copies that became part of this work. If I do sell it or otherwise place it somewhere, I hope I'll be able to visit it from time to time, add to it, peer into it in ramifying ways. If I sell it to you, say on eBay, by the way, you'll have to pick it up. (I wonder what starting bid I should set, &, if there's a reserve price, how much this should be. Some of these mags are worth 5, 10, 20+ bucks—an early *Wormwood Review*, e.g., with Charles Bukowski in it; an early *Ball State University Forum* with a Raymond Carver story—but is the whole worth more than the sum of its parts? Money isn't the point, but, as James Dickey said to me, “the more they pay, the harder they listen.”) If a gallery paid for it, or at least accepted it into its so-called permanent collection, *The Green Bookcase*, excepting the attack of terrorists or an apocalypse, would not find itself at the curb.... In the end, as I write this, I don't know what will happen to this work of art, but it does seem to have come to calm selfhood so that it does not rely on a particular context: it will continue to embody & exude meanings whether it stands in a penthouse apartment somewhere, or art gallery, or barn. But I hope it will not be misread & dismembered, hope that someone will always become the advocate for it that I have almost accidentally but now of necessity come to be.

xlvi.

Afternote after afternote here I've wanted to say something about the plastic bags, but what? I don't think the magazines have suffered from being inside these ubiquitous & environmentally problematic protectors. They are certainly a part of the texture of the whole. Feel free to open & close & retape them as you see fit. Without them, the bookcase's voice would have been hoarse, its tongues diseased (singular voice, plural tongues). (Note to the succession of curators: feel free to keep or remove some or all of these plastic bags as you see fit. & feel free, in fact, to move *The Turtle Review* to another shelf. But maybe Werner's clock should remain the final statement on the bottom shelf.)

xlvi.

I said above that I've arranged the mags chronologically. I said this thoughtlessly without remembering that, yes, they were at least shelved year by year, but I haven't paid attention to seasons & have often arranged the mags by size & color toward an overall effect/countenance. (& why not, chronology being tenuous in the first place, a poem in a 2004 magazine maybe having been written in 2001, e.g.? & why not, *The Green Bookcase* being a complex of circuitous temporal entanglements & wormholes?)

xlvi.

As I write this particular paragraph—by the way, these afterthoughts are not chronological—my wife & I are celebrating our 45th anniversary (July 7, 2007). As I write, *The Green Bookcase* stands ready to receive new issues of magazines that have accepted me: *Kestrel*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Ontario Review*, *Redactions*, *Review Revue*, *Margie*, *Poetry Kanto* (Japan), & two issues each of *Great River Review*, *The Seventh Quarry* (Wales), & *The Southern Review*. Let me be silly: every time *The Green Bookcase* receives a new magazine, it renews its wedding vows.

xlvi.

Richard Wilbur once said that he knew he was done with a poem when he felt he'd exhausted his present sense of the subject. Over as much time in Time that I have left, this work of art will be exhausting my own present sense of the subject, & then will go on, more competently, on its own until whenever. & now in this prose piece—silliness being one sign—I've almost exhausted my present sense of the subject.

xlix.

Notice that the magazines of the later decades become more spine-colorful. I think that this is to compensate me as I grow grayer.

l.

Do you notice the abrasion on the front of the third file box? I've watercolored it in a little.

li.

Yesterday (10/17/07), while I was making a few last brush-strokes here, my book-length poem *To William Merwin* arrived in the mail, its

cover dominated by Diamond Head rendered in shades of green by artist Harvey A. Warren in 1964. I'll place a copy of this book next to *Depth of Field*. Notice how the mauve-maroon above Diamond Head suggests the maroon file boxes atop the bookcase. Consider how, were you ever to read them, *Depth of Field* (1970) & *To William Merwin* (2007), the only two "A" items in this ensemble, enclose, make circular this work of art.

lii.

Yesterday (March 19, 2008) I learned that *Ontario Review*, after the death of its editor Raymond Smith, will cease publication this spring after thirty-four years. I had poems in its first issue, & then in about fifteen other issues—all here in *The Green Bookcase*—and Ray had accepted poems for a future number. *Ontario Review* is dead. Long live *Ontario Review*.

liii.

Just two more peeps, the story & poem I mentioned.

When I was sixteen & beginning college I developed acute feelings of inferiority. Although in time I earned decent grades & became an all-American athlete, I still held my hand over my face & had to struggle just to order from a waitress at a diner. These often debilitating feelings hung on even into a strong marriage & fatherhood. The routine dismissal of my writing by the editors of magazines certainly did not help solve my self-esteem issues (I like the way the word *issues* works here now), but was manageable. I'd get a rejection, but usually had other submissions in the mail, & had hope for the next batch of poems. But one graduate school year I returned to Athens, Ohio, with my family from weeks of Christmas break at my in-laws' farmhouse in Nashville, New York, outside Forestville. In my mailbox were 8-10 manilla envelopes, each one a rejection. To say the least, I was glum for weeks, for months. It had been hard for us even to afford the postage, but the main thing was that I was not being assured that I was of any worth, that the work I was sending out was actually poetry, that my guilt-ridden all-night writing sessions with cigarettes & coffee were anything more than vain striving & delusion & time taken from family & from more practical studies.

But one day the following summer, back in Nashville, I went to the mailbox—I can still see me on that country road under the century-old maples—and tore open an envelope to read that *The Southern Review* had accepted a poem of mine. Imagine that, the perfect-bound & handsome &

venerable & prestigious *The Southern Review*, founded in 1935 by Robert Penn Warren & others, had accepted my poem “The China Bull.” In later years, as evidenced by *The Green Bookcase*, I’d appear in this magazine fairly often, but I will always be grateful for this memorable acceptance from readers far away who even paid me for my poem. *The Green Bookcase*, as it enters Time, manifests such encouragement from so many. At Ohio University, I’d eventually walk up the hill from married student housing to classes in Ellis Hall while repeating to myself a comforting & consoling mantra that I can still hear—“*The Southern Review*, *The Wormwood Review*, *Western Humanities Review*, *The Writer’s Voice*, *Prairie Schooner*”—as I gained in confidence & *The Green Bookcase* began to come into being.

liv.

Book Store, 2045

It’s okay now, close down, I’m here
 in your city’s dark. It’s okay, I’m here, my poems
 in *The Southern Review* where magazines crowd
 the furthest lowest shelf.

Your city exists these years within a fuchsia haze,
 mass catastrophes just past &/or soon-to-come—
 such stores as yours anomaly, but there are a few,
 within & across my vision. It’s okay,

whether you’re the manager or the last customer,
 so shut the door, step up & out into West 47th,
 get to your train, if it’s still running,
 get to your own family, whatever else you do,

any way you can. I’m content to exist here while gotham
 seems to disappear except for the glow
 from a surge protector feeding the live oak logo
 on the spine of my memorial home.

Rudyard Kipling's Stories of Overcoming Existential Angst through Empathy

Norman Arthur Fischer
Kent State University

Some of Rudyard Kipling's most powerful stories belong to a category we may characterize as narratives of existential-transcendental empathy -- I will also call it strange empathy -- with the strangeness of the empathy arising out of either their existentialism, or their transcendentalism, or both. In emphasizing the importance of empathy in Kipling's work I stand with a specific group of defenders of Kipling. (Dobree 1967, 32-55; Kemp 1988, 92-99; Tompkins 1958, 158-184; Angus Wilson 1979, 264-274; Edmund Wilson 1965, 139-147) All of us try to answer Kipling's critics, not the ones who criticize him on artistic or political grounds, but those who proclaim in various ways that his writing lacks concern for truly human feelings, thus implying that he lacks concern for compassion and empathy (Chesterton 1905, 44-53; Lewis 1965, 99-102; Tolstoy 1993).

Although there are many reasons for such fine critics as Chesterton, Lewis and Tolstoy to agree that there is a certain lack of humanity in Kipling, it is possible that one common ground for their dismay is their failure to see what was seen by defenders of Kipling such as poet T. S. Eliot, and science fiction writer John Brunner, in showing his admiration for Eliot's view of Kipling: namely that it sometimes seems as though Kipling dropped out of another planet. (Eliot, quoted in Brunner 1994) I am not claiming that Eliot or Brunner are existentialists or see Kipling as an existentialist, but only that their appreciation of the strangeness of his account of the human condition allows them to also appreciate an existential quality in Kipling that perhaps could not be seen or could be seen and not appreciated by someone with the more straightforward moral approach of a Chesterton, A Lewis, or a Tolstoy. In contrast, Dobree, Tompkins, Kemp, Edmund and Angus Wilson -- writers whom I agree with -- have all seen the compassion and empathy in Kipling, but have not probed its existential roots, and certainly not its existential -transcendental roots.

Yet the philosophy of existentialism was created by such nineteenth century literary figures as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky, who were, like Kipling, very much outside of the world of academic philosophy in, re-

spectively, Germany, Denmark and Russia. What they shared with each other and with Kipling was a sense of the strangeness of a human predicament in which it is often easier to lead a life of false tranquility, rather than to look within, and see what Kierkegaard called the fear, trembling, and sickness unto death that accompanies the human predicament. For both Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky the way out of that existential fear, trembling and sickness unto death, was transcendence. Nietzsche, too, was sometimes optimistic about there being a way out, and in his early writings, such as *The Birth of Tragedy*, was not always that far away from the transcendent either. All of these founders of existentialism could have recognized in Kipling's stories of existentialism and existential transcendental empathy a theme close to their hearts. (Nietzsche 2003, Kierkegaard 1954, Dostoevsky 1993) My account of Kipling's narratives of strange empathy place him clearly in the company of this more recognized trio of founders of literary existentialism.

Virtually all of Kipling's central stories of strange -- existential-transcendental -- empathy, reflect his interest in, one, an ideal, transcendental realm, often supernatural or religious; and, two, his fascination with suffering, angst, mercy, empathy and compassion, and their existential effects on character. A highly selected list of these stories that combine to one degree or other the ideal, transcendental, supernatural/religious themes with the mercy, suffering, empathy and their existential effects on character themes begins with "The Phantom Rickshaw," and includes "Wireless," "In the Same Boat," "A Madonna of the Trenches," and the triptych "Unprofessional," "The Church that was at Antioch," and "Uncovenanted Mercies."

Kipling's interest in the ideal, transcendental, supernatural and religious often gives his stories an overwhelming sense of otherness. It is their sense of otherness that allows concern with themes of the ideal, transcendental, religious and supernatural, to link up with the themes of suffering, mercy, empathy and their existential effects on character. The key idea in all the strange empathy stories is that what appears to be completely other and alien can be reached, empathized with, and become less other. In all these narratives otherness and the existential angst associated with the protagonists' perception of it, is overcome through the ideal, the transcendental, the supernatural, the religious, and through mercy, empathy, compassion, suffering, and their effects on character. At the heart of these stories is, first, existential realization of otherness, and then striving to overcome it through the ideal, the transcendental, the supernatural, the religious, and through mercy, empathy, suffering and their existential effects on character.

For example, in "The Phantom Rickshaw," originally published in 1888, as Kipling was beginning his writing career in India, when the protagonist begins to empathize with the ghost that haunts him, this may appear at first to be a strange sort of empathy, as indeed, it is. Nevertheless, the human grounding of this strange love story is so naturalistic that most readers can go directly from their experience and naturalistic understanding of love and courtship, to its extension into a ghostly world, and from there step into one of Kipling's first clear expressions of the obliteration of otherness; of the existential angst associated with understanding the fact of otherness; and of the expansion of empathy: themes that ultimately turn the ghostliness of the story on its head. In this narrative the ghostly woman In the phantom rickshaw who haunts the man who jilted her for another woman, does not, from another world, recapture a human love that she loses through death, but rather, because of her ghostly otherness is able to teach the jilting lover how to love in away he never did during her life. She is not so much loved as a woman, as she is as a ghost, as a pure expression of otherness that forces the jilter to confront his existential condition of being alone and unable to identify with another person. She unleashes a force of empathy and identification with otherness. It is not, certainly, in their failed romance in the human world, that empathy is expanded, nor even in their interaction as lovers, when she is a supernatural and transcendental force, and he is still alive. It is in his acceptance of the ghostly world that empathy subjectively expands, although, of course, the reader may or may not choose to go along with the idea that the objective basis for expansion of empathy is the reality of the ghost. It does not, however, matter whether the ghost is transcendental or ideally real. What matters is that in coming back to the jilter, the jilted woman poses questions of transcendentalism that force the jilter into an existential crisis, which, like all existential crises, shakes his being to the root, and is alleviated only through empathy. (Kipling 1986, 172-177)

"Wireless," originally published in 1904 as Kipling began a new part of his writing career, in England, describes a supernatural ideal of expressive power that is achieved only through expansion of empathy. In "Wireless" the sense of otherness takes the form of a supernatural John Keats, going through the throes of expressive struggle to create or recreate "The Eve of Ste. Agnes," through the pen of a suffering and consumptive pharmacist, who does not recognize the similarity of his situation to that of the great English poet, has never read his poetry, and displays physical symptoms of Keats' expressive-imaginative struggle for the transcendent ideal, as his pen

writes down what the supernatural Keats is delivering to him, which is not just “The Eve of Ste. Agnes,” but also the expressive-imaginative power that went into it. The implication is that not only the poem, but also the suffering of the supernatural poet as medium, can bring mercy to his empathic amanuensis. The narrative gains emotive power through its path from a commonplace situation to a situation of existential angst, in which, through empathy, mercy is finally given to the suffering, but not without cost. The amanuensis must suffer in order to empathize with the transcendental Keats enough so that he can bring his message to earth. (Kipling 1987a, 196-199)

“In the Same Boat,” originally published in 1917 at the beginning of Kipling’s modernist period, intensifies and elaborates the otherness, transcendentalism, existentialism, mercy, suffering, empathy scenario. The other here is another life that the two protagonists, a man and a woman brought together by suffering, have lived. At first, their other lives come to them in nightmares, the terror of which has caused them both to become drug addicts. Ultimately, the terrifying dreams are explained to their satisfaction: the nightmares come from real experiences attending their births, and there is a hint that their respective experiences and births were more connected than they appear to be, even when finally explained. But at first it is only suffering that brings the two together, and the empathy they have for each other’s suffering allows them to overcome the drug addiction. But joint therapy toward overcoming drug addiction is not really what the story is about. This story, even more than the “Phantom Rickshaw” or “Wireless,” begins to portray empathy and the urge to identify with an other, as a force that transcends, and indeed is often inconsistent with, all typical expressions of love and friendship. The point is clarified in the poem attached to the end of the story, “Helen All Alone.”

There was darkness under heaven
 For an hour’s space-
 Darkness that we knew was given,
 us for special grace.
 Sun and moon and stars were hid,
 God had left his throne,
 When Helen came to me, she did
 Helen all alone.
 Side by side (because our fate
 Damned us ere our birth)

We stole out of Limbo Gate,
Looking for the Earth.
Hand in pulling hand and
Fear no Dreams have known,
Helen ran with me, she did,
Helen, all alone.

When the horror passing speech
Hunted us along,
Each laid hold on each, and each
Found the other strong.
In the teeth of things forbid,
And reason overthrown,
Helen stood by me, she did,
Helen all alone!

When, at last, we heard the fires
Dull and die away,
When at last our linked desires,
Dragged us up to day,
When at last our souls were rid
Of what the night had shown,
Helen passed from me, she did
Helen all alone.

Let her go and find a mate,
and I will find a Bride,
knowing naught of Limbo Gate,
and Who are penned inside,
There is knowledge God forbid,
More than one should own.
Helen went from me she did,
Oh my soul be glad she did.
Helen, all alone. (Kipling 1917, 103-104)

The poem makes clear the structure of a Kiplingesque drive to strange empathy as a means of overcoming otherness and the existential angst associated with it. (1) It must purify itself of ordinary human emotions. (2)

It is at its strongest when it is generated by suffering and/or mercy. (3) It is usually tied to a feeling for the transcendent or to the transcendent itself. (4) The characteristic feeling it must work through is an existential dark night of the soul, in which everything is lost, and only becomes replaced through empathic identification with an other. Although the poem brings these themes out only abstractly, with the poem's help we can see concretely in the narrative itself that (1) the force pulsing toward empathy and identification with the other does not tie the empathic couple to a conventional happy ending. They go their own way. (2) Empathy is engendered by the mercy and suffering of the two protagonists. (3) Mercy and empathy are seen as impossible without the transcendent link between the couple. (4) On the way to (1) pure empathy engendered by (2) mercy and suffering and (3) transcendence or the idea of it, the couple go through existential despair, in which all normal props of life are kicked out from under them. (99-102) From now on the other four key narratives of existential-transcendental empathy between humans will possess all these features of this paradigm narrative, but we also can see now that "The phantom Rickshaw" and "Wireless," also possesses them in preliminary form. And the four late stories of existential-transcendental empathy read like intensifications of the "Helen all Alone" credo.

"A Madonna of the Trenches," originally published in 1926, well after Kipling's entrance into modernism, is so extreme in its account of transcendental-existential empathy, that it almost makes the other six key narratives appear far too lacking in rigor of application. This is misleading. The three stories leading up to and including "In the Same Boat," in some ways are stronger precisely for their lack of such complete rigor, and the triptych from Kipling's third modernist collection, *Limits and Renewals*, that caps his lifetime exploration of strange empathy, together perhaps make a more complete case for the empathic overcoming of otherness theme than the completely stark "Madonna of the Trenches," which also receives explication through a poem, in this case not Kipling's own, but Swinburne's lines that serve as epigraph.

Whatever a man of the sons of men
 Shall say to his heart of the Lords above,
 They have shown man verily, once and again,
 Marvelous mercy and infinite love. (Kipling 1926, 239)

The events of "A Madonna of the Trenches" are so bizarre that it is almost impossible to retell the story without telling it in the manner that Kipling tells it, enclosing it in another story. The other story is of the mental suffering of Stanswicke, a World War One English soldier, whose suffering comes after the war. In this case it is not only the war and its trenches that caused the trauma, but also the Madonna of the trenches. Stanswicke finally is able to tell his story, much later, under prodding by the same doctor who originally gave him short term treatment. The doctor, meeting Stanswicke again, finally has an opportunity to get the full story from him, and finds out that Stanswicke saw the Madonna, and that he was the only living person who saw her. John, the soldier who loved the Madonna, and with whom Stanswicke was encamped among the trenches, also saw her, after she was resurrected from death caused either by cancer or suicide. It is the vision of the Madonna that dominates Stanswicke's narration of his trauma, and even overshadows the story of John's suicide aside the trenches, which is presented as an effort to rejoin the Madonna. Thus part of the drama is the gradual uncovering of what Stanswicke saw and heard. Because of the indirect way the story is told everything is shrouded in the transcendental apparatus of the vision of the resurrection of the Madonna, and John's suicide aiming for a similar resurrection and reunion with her. The doctor asks Stanswicke "And there is anther thing -- that hymn you were shouting till I put you under. It was something about Mercy and Love. Remember it?" "I'll try....'Whatever a man may say in his heart unto the Lord, yea verily I say unto you -- Gawd has shown man, again and again, marvelous mercy -an' somethin' or other love.'" (Kipling 1926, 246)

"A Madonna of the Trenches" thus reaches the outer limits possible for an expression of a transcendental, supernatural, or religious ideal entity or being that brings empathy and mercy to the suffering. "A Madonna of the Trenches" sets a pattern for the increasingly elliptical modernist style of Kipling's greatest twentieth century narratives, in the way that it unfolds from the commonplace to existential angst, a pattern which reappears again with Kipling's powerful empathy triptych, "Unprofessional," "The Church that was at Antioch" and "Uncovenanted Mercies, all originally published in his 1932 modernist collection to which he gave the existentialist title, *Limits and Renewals*." Here the starkness of "A Madonna" has softened somewhat, without removing the power of its multiple and nuanced expression of the empathy and otherness theme.

In "Unprofessional," the first part of the triptych, and "The Church that

was at Antioch,” the second part, both protagonists who expand empathy and overcome otherness, are unprofessional at accomplishing these tasks. The unprofessional in “Unprofessional” is a humble medical assistant who accomplishes through empathy what the doctors cannot, with their science fiction exploits achieve: the ability to give the woman who is the subject of their experimental attempts to cure her, the desire to live. (Kipling 1987b, 203-205) In the second part of the triptych, “The Church that was at Antioch,” Valens, the Roman hero, stands outside of the world of St. Paul and St. Peter that builds the church that was at Antioch, partly because he follows a pagan God, Mithra, and partly because his job as soldier is to protect the apostles. His world seems mundane compared to theirs, but when one of the crowd he has protected Paul and Peter from stabs Valens, he reveals that through empathy he has incorporated into his Mithraism the mercy that both Paul and Peter embrace. At the end both mercy and suffering are seen as states that can transform characters above the commonplace, and lead them to a purer and stranger empathy for an other. (99-100)

Finally, in the third part of the Triptych, and the concluding story about Limits and Renewals, “Uncovenanted Mercies,” the theme of the ideal realm and its impact on mercy, suffering, empathy and existential throes of character, emerges strongly, when the comic debate between the common place sounding angels guarding an unhappy couple, who were destined never to meet, but who nevertheless meet anyway, turns into truly a debate between real cosmic and transcendental angels. The debate goes from comic to transcendental as we see unfold the existential struggle of the couple to achieve mercies and empathy for each other’s suffering, and to live their impossible covenants, and to achieve even uncovenanted mercy from transcendental forces and from their own existential suffering. (Kipling 1987b, 275-279)

The key idea in all Kipling’s strange empathy stories is that what appears to be completely other and alien can be reached, empathized with, and become less other. In all these narratives otherness is overcome through the ideal, the transcendental, the supernatural, the religious, and through mercy, empathy, suffering and their effects on character. Kipling’s great narratives of strange empathy depict striving to overcome otherness through the ideal, the transcendental, the supernatural, the religious, and through mercy, empathy, suffering and their existential effects on character. “Uncovenanted Mercies” demonstrates again that Kipling reaches heights of expressive power when he depicts strange empathy and its links to the human

existential situation. The angels in "Uncovenanted Mercies" resemble the ghost in "The Phantom Rickshaw," the supernatural Keats in "Wireless," the Madonna of the Trenches, Mithra In "The Church that was at Antioch" and the miracle bringing unprofessional in "Unprofessional." They also play a mercy and empathy bringing role which they share not only these supernatural beings, but also with humans who achieve or inspire unusual empathy, from the ghostly jilted lover in "the phantom Rickshaw," to the suffering pharmacist-poet in "Wireless," to the suffering couple in "In the Same boat," to the Madonna of the trenches, to the woman rescued by the empathizing "unprofessional" medical worker, to the pagan Christian, Valens. all Kipling's strange empathy stories blend the ideal, supernatural and religious theme and the mercy/suffering/empathy and their existential effects on character theme, and in doing so add to the canon of existentialist philosophy expressed through literature.

References

- Brunner, John. 1994. "Introduction" to *The Science Fiction Stories of Rudyard Kipling*. New York: Citadel.
- Chesterton, G. K. 1905. "On Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Making the World Small," in *Heretics*. London: John Lane.
- Dobree, Bonamy. 1967. *Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fantasist*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. 1993. *The Grand Inquisitor*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Kemp, Sandra. 1988. *Kipling's Hidden Narratives*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kierkegaard, Soren. 1954. *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness Unto Death*. New York: Doubleday/Anchor.
- Kipling, Rudyard. 1917. "In the Same Boat," in *A Diversity of Creatures*. London; Macmillian.
- Kipling, Rudyard. 1926. "A Madonna of The Trenches," in *Debits and Credits*. London: Macmillian.
- Kipling, Rudyard. 1986. "The Phantom Rickshaw," in "The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Tales," In *Wee Willie Winkie*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Kipling, Rudyard. 1987a. "Wireless," in *Traffics and Discoveries*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Kipling, Rudyard. 1987b. "Unprofessional," "The Church that was at Antioch," "Uncovenanted Mercies," in *Limits and Renewals*. Harmond-

sworth: Penguin.

Lewis, C. S. 1965. "Kipling's world," in *Kipling and the Critics*, ed. Eliot L. Gilbert. New York: New York University Press.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2003. *The Birth of Tragedy*. New York: Penguin.

Tolstoy, Leo. 1993. *What is Art?* New York: Penguin.

Tompkins, J. M. S. 1959. *The Art of Rudyard Kipling*. London: Methuen.

Wilson, Angus. 1979. *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Wilson, Angus. 1979. *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Wilson, Edmund. 1965. "The Kipling nobody Read," in *The Wound and the Bow*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MATISSE OF MONTREAL

Gregory Phipps

It was an atmospheric night. The mountain glowed so bright the scrap metal twinkled like stars in the centre of a galaxy. The neon rippled up and down the cross at the summit.

Sweating, strung out on drugs and sex, Matisse climbed the steps to the highway. Centre-Ville came into view – slowly, piece by piece, with a sense of reluctance. Once upon time, according to rumour, there had been a law against building a skyscraper higher than the mountain. But these days it looked like an anthill surrounded by dead flower stalks. The tallest building was also the ugliest, a 153 story pseudo-monolith built in the grand grunge style. It had already survived three terrorist bombings. They had pinned one on the West and one on the East, for balance. The other one, the most recent one, was still a mystery. People joked that it had been for aesthetic reasons.

Pulling his overcoat up under his chin, Matisse set off along the sidewalk. The highway was almost empty – electricity taxes kept all but the richest people off the roads, and rich people were few and far between up here.

Up ahead he spotted a prostitute. Their eyes didn't meet – he was too far away. Still, she obviously knew a kindred spirit when she saw one, because she started towards him immediately. At first she looked ugly, then she looked pretty, and finally, as she closed in, he saw that she was old but not without some charm. There was a hint of youth and beauty in her ankles.

"Date," she said, not quite a question.

"right," Matisse said. He didn't need it, didn't want it, but he always went further when the chance came up.

"Room," she said.

"Yes."

The "room" was at the back end of an alley. Not that he was surprised, but he never did this kind of thing at his place. His home was for work, and, besides, Anna was there.

There was a wooden chair, a table, a recliner leaking stuffing, and a mattress with a pink mat – one of those old yoga mats, by the look of it. There was a lamp and a pack of cigars on the table.

As they stripped Matisse asked her name and gave a few compliments,

concentrating, for the effect of sincerity, on the lower portions of her legs. She didn't respond one way or another.

He was drained dry because he'd been with Anna all day, so it took a good thirty minutes to blow it. Not that he minded. He could tell she was impatient, though, so he kept up a steady stream of bullshit, going on about how he'd never had the courage to do this before, but he just hadn't been able to resist her, and he'd give her a big tip, oh, such a big tip. She didn't care about the other stuff, but Matisse thought it was better to mix it up instead of just saying "I know you're getting fucked off because this is taking so long but don't worry I'll pay for it."

Afterwards they sat together on the mat for the length of time it took Matisse to count out the cash.

"Long night?" he said.

"By the time I'm fucking done in my snotty box feels like the inside of a fucking cave in the fucking arctic. But the fucking pricks who keep you forever without getting the fuck on with it are the worst anyway. And the rich fucks with the fucking cars are the fucking worst yet. Last night I had a fucking date that put his gear shift up his fucking ass. No shit. I had to fucking sit waiting for him to settle himself, if you know what I mean. Then he wanted the fucking back door, like he thought we was going to make a fucking chain or something." She laughed and coughed.

Matisse held out the cash. She looked surprised, then afraid. She grabbed it.

"Thanks," she said. Then, "you don't happen to have a fucking Eastern five, by any chance?"

"Why do you want one?" Matisse asked, curious.

She shrugged. "They don't mean shit to me, but some of the fucking dealers find them handy. I don't give a fucking shit about any of the shit myself."

"No. Me neither."

But was that the truth? He wondered about it as he walked home. On the one hand he wasn't political. But on the other hand nothing made him angrier than all the lies and corruption with the city and the West and the East. And wasn't it the duty of the artist to expose the corruption? To expose, to break down loyalties, to – to champion the individual? The phrases felt stale and unnatural, like old chewing gum. Rounding a corner he kicked a dumpster.

"Matti, Matti, roll us a fatty."

Matisse rolled. He was good at it. He could do the whole thing holding the paper up with one hand.

"I didn't happen by any chance see you put syntho-69 in that, did I?"

"Fuck off. I don't do that shit anymore. Fucks up your nerves."

"Which you need. Matti here is an artist. An artiste." The rest of the boys snickered.

Matisse shrugged. "A man can dream."

"You taking classes?" someone asked politely. Matisse didn't even know his name.

"Painting Fundamentals, Intaglio, Photography for Aestheticians, Art History mid 21st century to present."

"Sounds heavy. You at UMME?"

"Cornelius McGillicuddy."

"Fucking hell! How you paying for that?"

"Selling my body."

"Seriously?"

"Well not all of it. Just my choad."

"That's so cool."

"Matti is a sub-arctic motherfucker. That's how he gets laid so much."

"No, it's because I ask questions." They laughed.

"Let me ask you, though. A serious question." It was the guy who had asked him if he was taking classes. "How does an artist deal with the, uh, political climate?"

Matisse glanced at him. His hair was done up in that torrent wave they were all wearing these days, but Matisse liked the look of him. He had a sort of earnestness about him. So Matisse took time to think about the question.

"It's tricky," he said, sparking his incendiary. "You can never be part of the establishment. The successful artist is a failed artist. The moment you succeed you fail. While you're alive, I mean. You have to scrape and eat shit your whole life and hope you make it after you're dead. You can't be an artist living in Centre-Ville taking the train to Europe every other week."

"I don't get it," someone said from the corner. Matisse gave him a look.

"It's simple," he said. "There has to be a delay. What kind of art are you making if the masses or even the critics and rich cunts love it right away? Art that serves the establishment. Facile art. Kitsch. That's all. The delay might be ten, twenty years. Or it could be a hundred or even more. Who knows?"

"Don't eat the fucking thing, eh?"

Matisse blew out a huge drag and passed.

"Only after you're dead?" the same guy in the corner asked.

"Right," Matisse said.

"But you're never gonna die."

Matisse laughed. It sounded forced.

"Don't tell me you believe that shit."

Matisse pitched his joint and took a pull on his flask, swishing the liquid around to wash out the syntho-69. Fuck, he had to kick sometime soon.

A professor walked past and gave him a dirty look. Matisse didn't react.

The skyscrapers rose out of the old campus buildings like blue flames flaring out of cinder blocks. The shapes of Centre-Ville leaned down across the dead trees on the mountain. Matisse checked his watch. He was studious about attending classes. Why shouldn't he be, with the money and all?

The guy from the other night with the torrent wave was taking photos of the ruins where the old Arts Building used to be. Matisse strolled up to him.

"Hey, what are you doing here?"

"Getting some shots," the guy said, without looking at him.

"You've decided to take up art, too?"

The guy chuckled and shrugged. "I guess I did feel whatever you call it inspired after we hung out." He looked at Matisse. "You know, what I wanted to know when I asked about the political is how you deal with the East-West stuff. As an artist."

Matisse took a long pull on his flask.

"Montreal is just one place," he said at last. Not really an answer, but he felt embarrassed. It was a strange feeling.

"Have you ever been anywhere else?"

"Of course not," Matisse said. "Have you?"

"What do you think? But this is the point. The artist has to deal with

... with all of this. You can't ignore it, you know."

"Who's ignoring it? Anyway, I'm planning on leaving."

The guy smirked. "Don't you like it here?"

"I was born here, grew up here, still live here, have never left. What kind of fucking stupid question is it if I like it here?"

"Are you bored with it?"

"I'm always bored. If you're not bored you're boring."

"Where would you go?"

Matisse knew, but he didn't want to say. "I have to go to class," he said.

"Hold a moment. How do you pay for this?" He gestured, and it took in a group of rich shits wearing those fancy baseball caps they all had these days.

"I scam rich sluts. And I deal. Do you want anything?" For the first time it had occurred to him that this guy, whatever his name was, might be an insider.

"Bill was right you know," he called as Matisse walked away.

"Who the fuck is Bill?" he called back.

"From the other night. What he said. You're not going to die."

"We'll see," Matisse said, taking a big pull on his flask.

By the time he got to class he was pretty much done in. But in his experience a little booze never went amiss in the act of creation. His latest work was called "Jesus's Birth." It was his most radical work yet, though he didn't know how to finish it. So far the plan was for it to be a triptych. The left panel was coming along well. There were three monitors lined up together. The ones on the left and right were both running on two second loops. On the left, a close-up of an old woman's face crinkling like a bag into the same look of ecstatic happiness over and over. On the right, a close-up of a little boy's face withering again and again into a look of agony. There was at least four hours worth of film on the middle monitor, though none of the clips were more than two seconds long: a collage of all sorts of shapes and sizes and colours of penises entering the same vagina. Everything was in black and white. Behind the monitors was a Montreal skyline done in lurid detail. If you looked closely you saw the picture was made up of images of copulation – people, animals, even plants. In the middle of the sky, right above the cross, where you'd expect to find the sun, there was a peephole. If you climbed a stepladder and looked through it you saw a picture of Hell, flames and smoke and darkness and people twisted in shapes Matisse had

gotten mostly from looking at old photos of the '88 Quebecois massacre. There was a door off to the right, so small you had to crawl to get through. When you went through it you entered a kind of planetarium room, a space scene. The image of Hell was on the far wall, but here it was just a tiny dash of orange and yellow, no bigger than any of the other stars. You could only really make it out looking through the peephole on the other side.

So that was the first panel. Matisse was convinced it was the beginnings of a brilliant work, though the instructor, as always, was less than enthused. There was a rumour, almost certainly bullshit, that the instructor was Quebecky by descent and secretly one of those nationalists who hold ceremonies in the woods and stuff. He wandered over, glanced at Matisse, climbed the stepladder and looked through the peephole.

"Better," he said. He was the one who'd suggested Matisse model the Hell scene on the massacre.

On purpose, Matisse had chosen a flat overlooking the St. Laurent wall. He stood watching it from his window. The searchlights rotated atop the guard towers. In the glow from the streetlamps Matisse could make out the line of graffiti stretching in both directions, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-wall. Maybe it made a difference.

Anna was watching the TV. She was in a mood. She knew he hated TV, hated even having the fucking thing, and she had the volume turned up louder than seemed necessary considering the room was roughly half the size of the neutral zone in a hockey rink. Matisse's studio, if you could call it that, was in the next room, which was smaller. They shared a kitchen and a bathroom with the rest of the floor.

A Hibby-looking couple sauntered up close to the wall. They pulled down their pants and began screwing, the driver with his hands behind his head, the other with her hands flat against the wall. You saw a lot of that these days – men, women, mixes, all sorts. Probably they thought it was taboo, when in fact at most the guards would shine a searchlight and play a laugh track from one of their synthesizers. Vice had been passé for thirty years now.

"Couple Hibs having fun at the wall," Matisse remarked, to himself, probably.

"Why don't you go fucking join them?" Anna said.

What the fuck's your problem, anyway? But no, her voice was so full of poison that even the obvious question seemed wrong right now.

"I think I'll work for a bit," he said.

He was almost out of the room when Anna spoke.

"I came home this afternoon. The shop closed early."

"Oh?"

"Someone phoned for you."

"And?" he said. He sounded genuinely pissed off and not in the mood, which he wasn't. But then he guessed.

"I thought it'd be polite to take a message," she said, looking at him like he was a pervert uncle she was seeing for the first time in fifteen years. "It was Sharon. I thought you'd like to know. Tell Matti Sharon called. That's what she said. I'm sure it was important. Sorry I couldn't get any more than that. A good secretary would've gotten all the details for you, but fuck, I got the important bit right? Even if I don't know who the fuck she is or why she'd be calling you in the middle of the day. Tell Matti Sharon called. So Sharon called. Just thought you'd like to know. Okay? Sharon called. You got that?" She was crying.

Fuck. "Fuck."

"Yes, I gathered that was the gist of it."

"Well so fucking what?" he snapped. "Tell me that asshole Millard isn't still on the manor, eh?"

"See now, if you don't know the difference you're either a fucking idiot or the biggest asshole this side of Mile End. I hate to have to choose one, so I'll say both."

"Shut your fucking choad-fucking mouth you stupid bitch!" he roared, and then she was up and a switchblade was in her hand, like it'd just sprung out of her wrist.

"I want you to get your stuff and get the fuck out," she said, enunciating every syllable.

He started towards her, then stopped when he saw how white her knuckles were.

"I want you to get your fucking stuff and get the fuck out."

"Anna."

"I – want – you – to – get – your – stuff – and – get – out."

So he got his stuff and got out.

He was sitting behind a post in one of the few cheap terraces in Centre-Ville. He was well and truly fucked. The syntho-69 had landed in force, and there'd also been weed, sniff, a smidgen of romanian revolution, and a

whole lot of dirty booze. No skag, though. He didn't want anything that might make feel him better.

His eyes were following a course: his glass, the bar, the sacks of garbage lined up in the gutter, the palace-like buildings shining in the evening light, Anna and Millard sitting across the way on a classier terrace, oblivious. Occasionally he could hear her laughing. His mind felt like the inside of a piss hole in the snow.

The enabler walked over and gave him his bill. Apparently she had decided on her own that he'd had enough. He pulled out a wad of plastic money and threw it at her.

"Why don't you fuck off," she said. But she still picked up the cash – three times the amount of his bill.

He smudged a streak of booze on the table and licked his finger. The enabler materialized again.

"I'm sorry sir," she said, pronouncing the last word with obvious reluctance. "We need this table."

"I daresay you do. Give me a sec alone and I'll be out of your hair. Cross my black fucked heart."

She made a noise and left.

He picked up his glass and crossed the street. Anna's face shrivelled. Millard turned just as the glass came down. It shattered. Millard's head went one way and then the other. Matisse held the bottom of the glass. He was going to ram into his face. But then a line came into his head: a poet cannot be a murderer. It was like a miracle, a line he'd heard somewhere coming back just at this moment. He stopped, and then ran. At the end of the block he looked back once and got a glimpse of Anna's broken face.

He went to the mountain because it seemed like the safest place. He could hardly breathe. His hand was bleeding. Wading through the grass and tins and other scraps, he thought: a poet cannot be a murderer.

But would he have died?

It didn't matter. There was a line. He could break a glass on the fucker's head, but he couldn't stab his face. An artist couldn't stab.

He stood at the wall, waiting for whoever might come. From here he could see into their flat. Once a shadow passed in front of the window, and it occurred to him that it would be a lot easier for her to see him than the other way around. She could stand and watch him all night if she wanted.

He sold a bag to some woman he saw at least once a week. The strange

thing was she still didn't look too bad. Most regulars ended up looking like something dug up out of one of those graveyards you saw up the town.

A rich cunt pulled up, his car vibrating with a kind of musical hum. Every year their cars sounded slightly cooler than the last.

"Let's see it," the fuck said. The tints on his glasses swirled and dissolved, revealing giant insect eyes.

Matisse just looked at him.

The shithead took out a Western thousand. It caught one of the searchlights and flashed purple. Matisse took out his gear. The asshole took his time on his knees, checking it out. Finally he decided it wasn't quite what he was looking for.

"Awright, you do me," he said, unzipping.

Matisse took him into his mouth for one slurping high-octane sec, and then pulled back and said: "you do know this costs an extra 200, eh?"

"Eh, sure."

"An Eastern 200."

"Fine!" the fucker snapped. "Just get on with it."

Much to Matisse's relief, he finished in under a minute. His cum tasted like stale fertility. Sentimental music came wailing down from above, a guard's jest.

"Why you doing this?" the guy asked afterwards, taking a closer look at Matisse. They never looked closely beforehand, probably because it would spoil the mood.

"I have to pay for school," Matisse said.

"What are you studying?"

"Art."

"You trying to be an artist?"

"Yes."

"You must want it real bad."

"More than anyone has ever wanted anything."

The guy seemed to consider. He put his hands on his hips.

"Do you really need school, though? The artist has to be separate. It comes from in here." He touched his chest.

"Don't be a fucking idiot," Matisse said.

"Shit, just trying to help. Asshole." He got in his car.

When he was gone Matisse punched the wall. The cum was sticky and horrible on his tongue, but it was like something that had come from his own body. Like there was so much poison inside him it was seeping up into his mouth.

For two nights after Anna had kicked him out he'd lived on the streets and slept at the mountain, but then he'd found a room up north near the Park X train station. The room was empty except for a bed and a chair, and everyone on his floor shared the same wash basin, and late at night he could hear the Francex leaving the station.

The first thing he bought when he got some cash was an easel and some painting supplies. He pushed the bed into the corner and set up his studio in the middle of the room. It dominated the space, just as it should.

He was at a bit of a roadblock with "Jesus's Birth," so he tried his hand at one of those post-Ars Moriendi paintings that were all the rage right now. It was nothing really, just a bit of fun, but he managed to get into it, and was surprised at how comfortable he felt with the brushes. These days the subject of a post-Ars Moriendi was always a child in pain, a rather mundane inversion of the original Ars Moriendi paintings, which always dealt with some codger's death throes. The implication of the post-movement was that suffering forms the bookends of life, but that the viewer is free from it, by virtue of being neither too old nor too young.

To Matisse both the original and post-movements seemed stupid and establishment, so while he used the same medieval style in his painting he changed the subject. Instead of a child or a dying geezer, he painted Anna. He wanted to give her an entirely neutral expression, set against a neutral backdrop.

He thought it would be painful, but found it wasn't. He'd included her in plenty of pieces already, and he'd always found it easier to do her when he wasn't actually looking at her. Apparently having her gone altogether helped too.

He struggled with the lower part of her face, though. After a few tries he realized a neutral expression couldn't just be a blank one. A blank look was actually a hostile look. But maybe that was the point? No, he decided. No, it wasn't.

Eventually he settled on a very slight smile. Her mouth didn't look like it belonged in the painting. It was like a sticker in a model train kit that you just stick on some random place because you can't figure out where it's supposed to go. After looking at it from all angles he decided he liked the effect. When he looked out the window he saw the sun was setting, again. He'd been working for over thirty hours straight.

Two hours later he was still awake and holding an empty flask. His

incendiary was upright on the floor next to two unsmokable roaches. He was staring at the painting. "Anna: A Post-Ars Moriendi Concept." He was getting more and more agitated. He'd seen this painting somewhere before, or something so similar it might as well be the same thing. Where the fuck had that been? It was driving him crazy that he couldn't remember, not the least because it could only have been a few places: the new gallery, the old one, the middle one, or in class. Fuck, why couldn't he remember? Or maybe he was just torturing himself. Because, after all, it had turned out really well. So maybe he was just convinced it was too good to be true and he was trying to ruin the sense of good-will by telling himself he'd actually copied another artist's work.

He tilted the flask over his mouth and moved his tongue across the lip. Finally he picked up his blade and slashed a big X across the face of the canvas.

"There, it's done," he said. When he realized part of him actually was trying to figure out whether the X gash had after all improved it he drove the blade again and again into the surface until there was nothing left but scraps on the floor. Carefully, he placed the blade on the easel and went lay down on the bed.

It never occurred to him that it had been an act of violence against Anna. Because it hadn't been.

The inside of the Grand Music shop in Centre-Ville was vintage M.C. Escher. The physics-defying room was a model of organization and shopping efficiency and control.

He walked from platform to platform as fits and starts of music flitted through his mind from the pods mounted on the walls. People in fancy caps and jumpsuits mulled about. Somewhat dapper in his rented denim, he selected a handful of memory chips from the shelves. He was going for quality, not quantity. When he figured he was starting to get conspicuous, denim or not, he strolled towards the exit. As soon as the alarm went off he sprinted. He hadn't counted on the doors locking themselves, and he went ploughing headfirst into the glass. It was theft-proof, and he bounced, his head like a tennis ball lobbed at a stationary racket. He was still conscious when he hit the floor, and he managed to get his blade out before the security landed on him. Afterwards he didn't even remember that he'd grabbed for the blade, which was funny because that was what fucked him.

After three unmentionable days in the holding cell, the guard came and told him he had a visitor. He sat in front of a monitor and Anna's face appeared, looking CG. They still couldn't get it right.

"Is it really you?" he asked.

"I was just wondering the same thing."

"We should've made up a codeword."

"Yes. I can't believe we didn't anticipate this situation."

"It's definitely you."

"It's definitely you."

"Well?"

Anna, Anna's face, her image, whatever, looked reflective. A prism glinted in one eye and then the other.

"I was worried about you," she said.

What a disease I've been, he thought. To her and to everybody else. He remembered a history lesson about parents from when he was a kid. The teacher had been prattling on, and Matisse had raised his hand and asked why they didn't have parents anymore. "Because it was ridiculous," he'd snapped at Matisse, not his favourite student by a long shot. "Two people who's entire lives are devoted to worrying about you. Would you want that?" No, Matisse admitted now. No he wouldn't.

"What the fuck were you thinking?" she asked.

"I was thinking I could get away with it."

"Well, I was going to ask you how your head is but I can see it's working at its usual high level."

"You came here to insult me?"

"I told you why I came here," she said. The prisms glinted again, exactly the same as the last time.

"I can't deal with you," he said. Her mouth opened. "You or anyone else. If I think about all of this too much I'm going to finish myself off just like that. My life," he made a gesture, as if to show the scope of his life, "isn't worth shit. It never has been. The only good part of me is the work. It takes up everything. There's nothing left over. Nothing else is worth shit."

Her head shook from side to side, and her hair left graphic streaks on the screen. "When you say that you know it follows that I'm not worth shit."

"It doesn't follow."

"It does. I care about you. I love you."

"I love you."

"You love art," she spat and crimson glowed in her cheeks. "No, not even. You love your art."

"I'm sorry," he said. He was crying. "I can't help it. When I walk down the street I see the blend of colours and the shadows and the shapes but most of all the way it could all be brought together into something rising right out of this frozen fucking piece of shit we call a world. I dream at night about the frame, the view into something else, something more. It's a vision, right out of my own mind into this world to take it and bring it back inside and then back out again, like a train running a loop but coming out the other end like something you'd only see in a romanian revolution hallucination. It's the dreams at night, the way they tell you everything if you let them. And when I wake up I can't breathe. I can't –" he pressed his hands to the sides of his head. "I can't – I don't want to be some rich famous fucking choad but I do!" He looked at her helplessly. "I want to be an artist."

"Matti," she said softly. "What does this have to do with you needing to go out and steal and do drugs and fuck whores and humiliate me?"

He looked at her for a long moment. The pips came on, counting down the time.

"I want to die," he said.

Softly, kindly, she said exactly what he didn't want to hear, what he couldn't handle.

"You can't. You know that, don't you? Death is dead."

There was only one way out: total self-abjection. Which was easy enough. He cried. He lamented. He informed a roomful of people he'd never met that he was a disease, a toxin, a carcinogen. Nothing he had ever done had ever been worth a tin shit to anybody, not even himself. There were whisky dicks hanging out at the wall who had accomplished at least ten times as much as he had. He was a shit stain on a poison ivy leaf. He was the inside of a leper's anus after it's been raped by a leprophiliac. He was the scab on a skag-head's dick at the moment it breaks as he's raping a girl scout.

The jury looked at him like they weren't sure whether to applaud or cry or lynch him. The judge grunted and suspended the sentence, seeing as nobody was hurt. And Matisse managed to restrain his laughter until he was well and truly out of Centre-Ville.

But theft wasn't like drugs or whoring. He knew the heat would be heavy. When he got back to his flat he found the only piece of mail he'd

received when he was inside was a letter from Cornelius McGillicuddy informing him of his expulsion.

Fluorescent plastic skeletons hung from the trees. They never took the Halloween decorations down. The oratory looked good in the mix of green skeleton light and yellow sun. It was just at that stage in its life where it looked old enough to be majestic but young enough to alleviate concerns about toxins and structural problems.

Matisse spotted the guy with the torrent wave near the entrance. It seemed he was one of those people who just keep turning up, to the point where you start to think it's by design – his, or fate's, or even yours. The camera around his neck made him look pretentious.

"What are you doing?" Matisse asked

"Getting some shots." He held the camera at arm's length and snapped the dome. "I'm doing Montreal."

"Well I guess sometimes you need to drop the hunt for the dolphin's ass and just take a bitch who's been broken in."

The guy with the torrent wave looked confused, but he still laughed.

"I heard you were in the bass."

"I was," Matisse said. "I needed to sort myself out for money one way or another so I pulled an all or nothing at the Grand Music. And I got the nothing."

"That why Anna kicked you out?"

"Mr. why are you so interested in all the things that are fucked up in my life anyway?" Matisse asked, staring hard. Still holding his camera out front the guy turned his head slowly and met Matisse's look. Matisse was the one who looked away.

"Because I know what you need," he said. Without looking, he snapped a photo. "Believe it or not I'm trying to help you."

"That why you're following me?"

"I'm not following you," he said. Again Matisse had the sense that he was earnest. "I know what you need," he repeated. "Do you really want to be an artist?"

"Yes," Matisse said. No matter who asked it in what circumstances, he could never take the question cynically.

"You know the Francex?"

"Sure. I hear it every night."

"We're going to Park de Boot de Ill. You know where that is?"

"I'm sure I don't."

"That's where the Francex leaves the island. You might be interested to know that it passes through there at 800 mp/h. That's the only piece of the plan I'll tell you for now. Be there or be square."

"Are you saying what I think you're . . . ?"

"How the hell am I supposed to know?" he said, turning back to his camera.

"One thing I forgot to ask. How's Millard? Millard's head?"

"Millard," Anna said, saying his name the same way someone leaving a toilet stall would say "clogged" to the next guy in line. "Millard is a train wreck. But I suppose you knew that all along." She tossed down her caffè latte like it was a shot. For the first time he noticed she'd cut her hair since he'd last seen her, in the bass. It was for the better; her hair grew all which ways and turned into a virtual cane wave at the first touch of humidity.

"I'm seeing some new choad," she said, casually squashing hope just seconds after she'd revived it. "An Eastern guy."

"Fuck off."

She sighed and checked her watch.

"How the fuck did that happen?" he asked.

"What a small world you live in," she said.

"You called me here just to insult me," he said.

"In part."

"Here" was a café terrace on the first level of the Richard complex. All around them throwback ramps and stairwells stretched down vistas, like concrete rays shooting out from a concrete sun. Matisse felt out of place, and suspected Anna did as well, despite her front. He only half listened as she went on about the Eastern guy, about how they were really interesting if you got to know them, but, of course, nobody ever did, they were too busy building walls around their lives, shrinking their worlds. And trying to make shite art – she didn't say but might as well have. Suddenly she came out with a strange question.

"Do you know what ethnicity you are?"

There was a smugness to it, so Matisse dropped his immediate response and then spent too much time thinking about it.

"English," he said at last.

She threw back her head and laughed.

"Oh you poor boy you haven't a clue," she said. "Ricardo knows."

It took him a moment to realize Ricardo was the new guy's name. "He's French." She lowered her voice. "He speaks French. Crazy, eh?"

Smiling, Matisse leaned back. It was the bliss of one-upmanship, a once in a lifetime chance to burn your bitch of an ex.

"As impressed as I am by that you have to admit that it rather looks like something along the lines of a heap of gorilla shit next to me when I tell you that I am going to France."

"I guess it'd be different if he was Quebecky . . . there might be problems. Political intrigue," she said, not without wistfulness.

"Anna," he said. "I – am – going – to – France."

"No. No you're not."

"Paris."

"Either crazy or lying. I don't know which one." Giggling, she sparked her incendiary. A joint had appeared between her lips. "We lived together for three years, and I don't even know which one."

"Do you know what Park de Boot de Ill is?"

"Your nickname for your choad?"

"It's where the Francex leaves the island."

"So?"

"That's where I'm going."

She shook her head with a kind of mock pity. He knew exactly what she was thinking: I got him here to show off and make him jealous, and here he is ruining it – not because he isn't jealous, but because this crap about going to Paris is too pathetic to be enjoyable.

"This is good-bye," he said, in a neutral voice.

But was it? It occurred to him that maybe torrent wave had something else in mind. He hadn't actually said the plan was to hop the Francex. But then what else could he have meant? Matisse went over the things he had said. Do you want to be an artist? I want to help you. It's doing 800 when it passes through. The last one was a problem, but, then, he'd said he had a plan.

Going over it all, Matisse figured it couldn't be anything else. And as soon as he'd accepted it, he felt a mad excitement. Paris! The artistic centre of the world! What would it be like? Photos and videos of other places were prohibited, so all he had to go on was stuff he'd read and some vague rumours. Soon he would know.

There should have been a lot to do before he left, but only one thing

stood out as actually important. Back in his painting class at Cornelius McGillicuddy he was greeted by some very strained smiles. He found the instructor and told him he wanted to get his works. The instructor shook his head.

“Displaced, dismantled, disposed,” he said.

Matisse felt the room spin around.

“What, all of them? ‘Jesus’s Birth?’”

“No room,” the instructor said. “Why do you want it anyway? Where would you put it? Hell, how would you even move it?”

“So there’s nothing left.”

“Check the admin building. I think they’re supposed to keep one or two. For records and stuff.”

“Three works,” the admin person said, smiling like he’d just accomplished something.

“Great,” Matisse said. It was better than he’d hoped. The admin guy took him to the records department, a strangely cold room with a bunch of drawers built into the walls.

“Three works,” the admin guy said, pulling out one of the drawers. It only came six inches or so. Inside were two folded up sheets of paper and a piece from “Boondoggle,” a project he’d finished over a year ago. “Boondoggle” had been a puzzle with 200 pieces. Each piece contained a picture of a place, usually a room, with a bed in the middle of it. There was no overall pattern, so all you had to go on was the shapes of the edges to put the puzzle together. But if you looked closely at each piece (you’d need a magnifying glass and some aspirin) you could get the gist of the narrative – which, in Matisse’s opinion, covered basically the entire history of humanity.

The piece that had been left behind showed a white hospital bed with a rotten jack-o-lantern on it. The room looked very hip and fashionable, with slanted ceilings and funny shaped windows in odd places. The furniture was heavy and dark. Stickers and papers full of right-on political slogans were tacked to the walls. There were fans in front of all the windows, and, standing in a corner like a pruned plant, a mystifier blew clouds of water over the bed.

The two papers were forms he had filled out when he’d first been admitted.

He slipped the piece from “Boondoggle” into his pocket and left the forms in the drawer.

The guy with the torrent wave came to his flat to pick him up. He had his camera around his neck.

"What a shithole," he said, looking around the room.

"I'll cut you a new one," Matisse said.

"Easy. Mine isn't any better."

"I don't care," Matisse said. He hadn't taken his blade out, but he was holding it in his pocket. Instead of backing away, torrent wave moved closer and put his hand on the back of Matisse's neck.

"Easy. You're a hot young man. Has anyone ever told you that? You're like Vindaloo with crushed chilli peppers on it. You have to learn to adapt a bit better."

"They'll have to adapt to me," Matisse said. He meant it, too. The more he thought about, the more confident he became. He felt ready to storm Paris all at once.

"I heard you couldn't get your gear back from Cornelius McGillicuddy."

"Where exactly did you hear that?"

"The grapevine," he said.

"I don't care," Matisse said. "There was value in all of those pieces, but it was all just the work of the amateur. The limitations of youth. No matter what you do you come up against them. If a master chef has an unhealthy addiction to salt, then everything he makes will be too salty, no matter how good he is at anything else. Art is the same. If you have some hang-up, it shows up in everything you do, no matter how brilliant it is. I'm moving on."

"What was your hang-up?"

Matisse went through a couple responses before settling on one that seemed to sum up everything.

"Montreal."

Torrent wave looked confused, but he still laughed.

He took Matisse to a café near the very north of the island. The weather was humid, and haze rose off the mainland behind the fibreglass facing and suspended walkways where guards patrolled. They sat in the café for close to three hours, and then all at once the guards disappeared. Matisse had never seen anything like it; it was like walking outside and seeing that all the trees were gone.

"We're for it," torrent wave said. And just like that they climbed a ladder to the top of the wall and then down the other side. Afterwards Matisse

realized he should have taken a moment to check out the view, but he was too shit-up to even stop.

He didn't have time to think about being on the Eastern side for the first time either. Torrent wave took him on a series of buses so complicated and circuitous that he quickly lost track of where they were. All he could think was that the buildings looked more run-down over here.

The sun had long since set by the time they got to Park de Boot de Ill. Crickets were chirping, and Matisse could hear the sea. Not in any definite way, but as a kind of background to the noise in his mind. It was creepy.

They climbed a ladder to the top of a cement platform. They were above a set of railroad tracks that led back into an opening, like a tunnel. The tracks disappeared off into darkness the other way. The last stubborn stars glinted overhead.

"We're here," torrent wave said. He bent and tapped a bell that was hanging from a metal hook. A wire trailed from the bell down towards the tracks. "This is where the Francex comes out. Through there," pointing at the tunnel, "and above ground most of the way until it exits off the Maritimes. By the time it passes through here it's doing 800."

"So how do we do it?" Matisse asked.

"It's tricky. But this bell is the key. The wire is hooked up to the track aways down in the tunnel. When the train's coming the track starts vibrating. The wire starts twitching. The bell rattles a bit. Then, at the right moment, it dings. That's when you jump."

"Jump?"

"Yes. Not up. You just want to drop down. Not that it makes a difference for you, you understand, but you want the maximum impact. If you're early it'll just run you over and nobody will notice. If you're late you'll ricochet off the top. Picture a baseball going foul off the top of a bat. But if you're just right you'll be spread across the front of the windshield like diarrhoea from a guy who's eaten nothing but strawberry jam for the last week."

"Sir what the fuck are you taking about?"

"What are you talking about?" He suddenly looked very hard and very certain.

"I don't know I could be mistaken but it seems I just heard you say something about me jumping in front of the fucking train."

"And you becoming an artist. Did you hear that part too?"

"No, actually I didn't."

"Because it was implied. How are you going to be an artist if you're not attuned to subtlety?"

"You're fucking crazy," Matisse said, laughing.

"Am I? It seems to me not so long ago I heard you talking about how the true artist can only reach the people after he's dead. And here you've been cutting away your life piece by piece, like some crazy savage chopping off bits of his body because he thinks it'll cure his flu. No shut up, I know exactly what I'm talking about. And you're not dying you're just driving yourself into the ground. You'll just sink lower and the heat will come heavier and finally security will pin something on you and that'll be that. I'm giving you an opportunity."

For the first time Matisse noticed that he had expressive eyes. Strange, but up until now his face had usually made Matisse think of a cat sitting in a sunbeam. But he didn't look at all like a cat. How could he have thought that he did?

"This is your chance for political art," he went on. "Living hyper-politicized art pushed to its extreme, right out there on the avant garde edge. Western artist sacrifices himself in the Eastern zone. At the extremity of the island. His dreams of Paris are splattered across the windshield of the Francex, an indictment of all the rich cunts curling their toes luxuriously as they pour champagne and settle in for the jaunt to Europe. Montreal is a prison. In-your-face art. It could be a new movement. And you want to die. You want to want to want to want to die. Don't you?"

"Yes," Matisse said.

"But you're afraid?"

There was a pause during which Matisse seriously considered the question. "How can I be?" he said at last. "I can't, can I? I can't die."

"Not that I know of. That's the point. Your insurance will get it, and you'll be back in a Paris minute, as they say. Back and better than ever and famous. A famous artist. Or maybe," he said, "you are afraid?"

Matisse could only stare. The thing was, fear hardly seemed relevant to the bizarre direction this thing had taken. In some fucked up way what he was saying even made sense, but the logic, if you could call it that, felt strange and foreign. This wasn't Matisse's artistic vision.

There was a faint noise, something that made you think of metal stretching. The bell gave its first rattle.

"It's coming!" torrent wave said. He advanced, his camera held high. Matisse looked at his face, so different from what it'd been before, then at

the camera.

"Fucking lying piece of shit!" Matisse screamed, and he waded in, his blade out. Torrent wave shrieked and tried to run, but there was nowhere to go. Matisse swung the blade and torrent wave jumped backwards and fell down onto the tracks. The bell rattled, dk, dik, dick, ding! and Matisse got an aesthetic view of his eyes watching him as he crouched on the tracks with the camera limp in his hand. The torrent wave had become sweaty and dishevelled.

There was a roar and a rush and the Francophonic Express passed in a frenzy of silver and light. It was gone in a second, like a piece of debris snapped into a black hole. Only the rear lights showed far down the line, until they too disappeared as the train moved off onto the mainland.

Very slowly, Matisse walked forward. He was afraid of what he was going to see. But there was nothing. No blood, no pulp, no sign that there had been a man there less than a minute ago. The tracks were empty. Matisse just stood there, flexing his hand. Something was wrong. Then he realized: what had happened to the blade? It too was gone. After thinking about it for a moment, he dug up a memory of throwing it away just after the train passed. But he couldn't be sure if it was real or not.

"Jesus Christ! Was that a deer?" the first mate cried. There was a liquid shape at the bottom of the windshield, like a splodge of paint. In the middle of it was a tuft of hair.

"That, my friend, was a person," the driver said. He thumbed a button, and the dry clean came on. The stain disappeared, the hair dissolved. One strand hung on for a second like the last leaf in a fall windstorm before it too dissolved.

"Shouldn't we stop?"

The driver had been wondering this himself, but hearing the first mate suggest it he decided against.

"Nah, no point. We'd sit here waiting for security to show up and then they'd just tell us we can't do anything and might as well go on and that would be that. Only difference is we'd be a good three hours late getting into Paris."

The first mate nodded. The driver's fingers moved across the control panel – which looked as cool now as it did when he'd first seen the inside of the Francex cockpit, as a kid. He turned on the intercom.

"Ladies and gentleman we encountered a mild obstruction on the

tracks. I just want to assure you that this will not cause delays.”

He touched another button, and winked at the first mate, who still looked a bit uneasy.

“It’ll be fine,” he said. “It was probably just some stupid kid playing around. Happens a lot, I’m sure. His insurance will get it.”

Bryne Lewis Allport

POSTCARD

On front, at first,
is the tightrope walker
in precarious dress and garish position,
a contrast of trailing ribbon
and clinging color.
She travels the uncharted air
in correspondence between
far-reaching map points,
making postage-stamp landings.

But her trick
is this length of wire,
a piece of metered rhyme,
timed and careful.
A performance over duration,
her risk is netted
by the smallness of the open space,
an address of delivery
with a designated door
already open in reception.

Her may-be
is only said in brief,
not a place, but a perch impermanent;
her body shapes the comma
in confidence of the ending period.
Perhaps the most balance can speak of possibility
amounts to a postcard
while I have been hoping
to send you a longer,
better letter.

Faulkner's Tragic Realism and the Impossibility of Theodicy

John Pauley
Simpson College

The details of evil will sink any attempt at theodicy. But details of evil are usually- or even necessarily- lost in the abstract discussions of evil in philosophical texts. Hence this essay looks at the details of tragic fiction, specifically in some stories by Faulkner. The initial analysis endeavors to show that fiction gets us closer to the reality of agency than philosophy and so it then gets us closer to the reality of the evils that haunt both individuals and cultures (the two cannot be adequately separated). Finally, the details of the evil analyzed reveal that human beings are actually capable of a self-destruction that annihilates the very grounds of human agency and identity: Faulkner's tragic fiction reveals that self-destruction is written into the necessary components of agency and identity.

Introduction

Hume, in his relentless discussion of the problem of evil, implies that any theodicy is rendered impotent in the face of an adequate description of evil.¹ Freud implies something similar in many places, although he does not care much for the details of the topic.² There is considerable promise in this approach but philosophical description of the evils of the world generally collapse into a quasi-abstract discussion of the *categories of evil*; in other words, the old saw account of natural and moral evil. Hence, philosophical descriptions of evil in the world tend to lose existential grit and, in the process, that horrifying urgency that real evil engenders.

Hume also implies and then directly states that the poet has a better handle on the details and at least in this case the cliché is right: the devil is in the details.³ It is not surprising that Dostoevsky's bit on child torture from the *Brothers Karamazov* is included in many philosophical anthologies. For the most part, I think its inclusion has more to do with what philosophers would call "providing examples" instead of providing arguments. Hume is right that the poet has a better handle on the details but the poet also might have better arguments in the form of descriptions. In this essay, I will argue that fiction provides better reasons for rejecting any theodicy than does philosophy: this is for the simple reason that great fiction necessarily keeps us closer to human reality in the world than is possible in philosophy.

Hence my purposes here are not directly centered on the traditional problem of evil in relation to traditional forms of theodicy that hope to dissolve the dilemma. My purposes are to reveal details in the kinds of evil that are imbedded in a few great works of fiction; in this case I will be examining some works by William Faulkner. The argument against any theodicy is really the nature of the characters' circumstances in the world that end up revealing intricate and inescapable aspects of human reality. My interpretation of these circumstances will describe evils that make a human endeavor at theodicy psychologically and existentially impossible.

I cannot be merely assuming that fiction writers are the best describers of the human circumstance in the world. Much of my essay is an argument for this view, but a few introductory comments are in order here. It may very well be the case that what is inherent to fiction is inherent to human consciousness and human experience in general. This speculation might be analytically contained in the notion that an adequate imagining of the world is a sort of experiencing of the world. Great writers are those who can imagine the world more real than it is or, more plainly, they make their world resonate with the reality of the actual world in ways that are constitutive of human agency. The very possibility of fiction rests on the absolute imbeddedness of the human agent within a human context (within a world of experience). Imbeddedness is harder than it seems because its creator must eschew- at any and all points- that sort of "abstraction" that Hegel protested against: a character conflated with his or her particulars (qualities).⁴ Fiction cannot be "about" various characters; it must *be those characters*.

We can put the same points in a more mundane way. The characters in fiction exist in a world of relations (an historical world) that makes comprehensible their acts and potentialities. Even in the most shocking and surprising turn of events, the web of relations, that stretch forwards and backwards, allow for the ongoing plausibility of spoken words and events. Stories work or fail, first and foremost, according to the basic ontological truth of the inseparability of agent and world. At the same time, this point must be consistent with or even epistemically bound to relentless ambiguity as a boundary against "absolute comprehension." The world of fiction must also eschew, as in an adequate focus on the actual world, the notion that any life can be fully comprehended: that is, interpreted in such a way that ambiguity just vanishes. The ambiguity of life is more or less the same ontological fact as the ambiguity within fiction. If these points

are correct, and they do demand more detail, then it will follow that the conditions of fiction are also the same as the conditions of human agency. If this conclusion is true then it will have to follow that fiction writers are the “best describers” of the human condition within the world.

Snopes Being Snopes

Contingency is necessarily written into any narrative because it is an inescapable aspect of human reality. Frequently, the notion of contingency is understood as external to the agent: unpredictable events in nature and society. Certainly this is one central component of contingency and it helps to make up any mature version of what it is to be human in the world. Contingency, however, is also internal to the agent; our intentions for ourselves and others are disrupted by aspects hidden from ourselves. Insofar as knowledge of ourselves is opaque we can be driven by psychological features that we do not understand and if we did understand all of those features we would be fundamentally different sorts of beings. Symmetrically, it is impossible to construct any narrative of a human life that proceeds on the basis of a full and transparent self-knowledge. If narrative is the form of self-knowledge, then interpretation is the method of self-knowledge. And since no interpretation can ever be complete, it follows that a full and transparent self-knowledge is impossible in both human life and fiction.

In a narrative, the world and characters unfold in ways both predictable and unpredictable, but what is unpredictable is distinct from what is implausible. Internal aspects of a character that are opaque to that character leave traces in the world. What that character will be led to do on the basis of those hidden internal aspects is related to additional contingencies. The more a narrative synthesizes the unpredictable with the plausible, the more it grinds down into human reality. Abner Snopes in Faulkner’s story *Barn Burning* is an exemplar case to examine in relation to the above points.⁵ There is no question that he is burdened by a resentment and envy that is beyond both his control and his understanding and unfortunately (for himself and others) that resentment and envy are let loose on the world.

As Snopes sets out one evening to torch Major De Spain’s barn (the Plantation owner, in essence the master), the story pulsates with his incredible determination. The reader cannot help but to get the sense that Snopes literally “could not do otherwise.” For Snopes to stop, sit

down and think to himself, “perhaps what I am doing is grotesquely self-destructive and ruinous for my children” would be for Snopes to be someone other than Snopes. He would not be out of character; he would be an altogether different character. Someone with the self-knowledge that made for an awareness of self-destructive acts for exactly what they are (which has to be conditional or hypothetical) would never have arrived in this circumstance. In every character, within every narrative, both in fiction and in reality, there are necessarily parameters to what we can expect from that character (although we cannot always see these parameters). At some point we reach the limit: we cannot expect or even think that x could do y because that would require x not to be x. That Snopes is enraged with violent and negative emotions, some of which are opaque to himself, just means that we can expect some set of violent acts within various idiosyncratic dimensions. And these points lead us directly to the sheer ambiguity of responsibility. In “real life” we generally want to blame arsonists, but in Faulkner’s story we cannot do this.

Society, however, needs unambiguous praise and blame: it needs a naïve version of “free-will” for legal and moral conventions to function. The ambiguity of responsibility gets worse when we realize that Snopes’ horrifying emotions and attitudes have been formed by the social world he inhabits. Major De Spain, the object of Snopes’ envy and resentment is precisely the sort of person that Snopes would like to be. In short, the cause of Snopes’ violent emotions is what also forms the core of his orientation to reality. It is hard to think of any case of envy or resentment where this is not the case or it is hard to think of any emotions that do not find their cause at least partially in their object. A person who seeks to retain the unambiguous sense of free-will and responsibility might claim that Snopes could have become a different sort of person than the one he became. But the point is that we do not really know this. In fact, in becoming any sort of person it is a tautology to say that no one can opt out of the constraints of context (which involve all sorts of elements outside of our control and knowledge). Snopes’ context is clearly quite contained. The point is not that Snopes bears no responsibility for burning barns; the point is, instead, that whatever *degree of responsibility we assign him is grossly ambiguous and underdetermined by the narrative.*

To argue that any agents’ actions have been formed by the social world he inhabits is really nothing more than a banality and so we need to advance the discussion. To go back to Snopes, his emotions are seething,

and heavily seasoned, it appears, with hatred and this is the result of an ongoing cultural *meta-story*. Everyone in this culture (more or less) has a place and not just due to some series of historical accidents or causes. Meta-stories provide the ultimate and transcendent explanation for why the world is as it ought to be. No one can tell the meta-story exactly or all it once because it has too many branched versions. But one crucial aspect of all meta-stories is that they cannot withstand much in the way of existential pressure. The aspect of vulnerability is due to the fact that meta-stories are constructed from lived narrative and have absolutely no connection to any other reality because there is no other reality (besides the one we live). In other words, human beings know very well that historical accident explains a lot about social roles and limits and that the meta-story merely excuses the arbitrary nature of the roles and limits. At some level, not too far away from our better selves, is the knowledge that the meta-story is a story that we are telling ourselves. Symmetrically, the naïve version of free will and responsibility is told out of a need to cover for our desperate lack of self-knowledge: this is one way that the meta-story of free will functions. At least, however, the meta-story works on the surface of things and, in the meta-story under consideration here, Snopes is at the very bottom of the social world because he ought to be: he is white trash. Snopes is not supposed to prosper; it is antithetical to the right order of reality. Hatred can then be layered on top of envy due to impotence in the face of what is accepted as a meta-norm.

Faulkner is not just vividly aware of the existence of the meta-story; he is vividly aware of the way it distorts human life and, at the same time, can be easily punctured. When punctured the response is an immense violence and horror because to puncture the meta-story is to reveal the ambiguity and uncertainty at the heart of sacred moral truths and codified ontologically based social orders.

The truly unforgettable scene where Snopes wipes the shit off his boots onto Major De Spain's white French rug contains all that is needed to create serious damage to the meta-story. On the one side the meta-story has no ground whatsoever and on the other side it is very nearly impossible to overcome (in day to day life). Symmetrically, Snopes is both doomed and a serious danger to the social order (an element of the meta-story). To be in the same room as De Spain's wife-bursting in on a domestic scene that is presupposed to be distant from *his* reality-is enough to make every inherited truth precarious. Snopes' presence is a moment in time

when things are just not the way that they ought to be but it did not take much to produce this state of affairs. All that was needed was one near lunatic straying from the path and this just opens the door to a myriad of possibilities in how the slender meta-reality can be punctured. The fact that this reality is slender and slight is what ironically explains the violent reactions when it is threatened and given that it is threatened easily we can expect violence often.

Meta-Story as Anti-Story

The way I am describing it, the meta-story is the anti-story. It imposes an enormous force on the socio-historical development of human agency and, in the process, distorts it. The anti-story is a ground and component of tragedy in Faulkner's work; we have already seen some of this with Snopes. We come to know that Snopes has, in a way, seen through the meta-story, but we can also see that he has to act out the meta-story (as the role he has to play).

I need to emphasize here the manner in which the meta-story is the anti-story. Narrative is, at the very least, a description and interpretation of agency and agency is always imbedded in social and historical reality (which is itself a narrative). The roles that are inevitably created through society and history- that is, through relations and subtle forms of causality- are reified in the meta-story: so we have an addition to the considerable pressure that already exists in the social/historical world for persons to take up some role. Meta-stories always say or claim something about how this world can be explained in relation to some other reality. Consequently, the meta-story is not open for question. Insofar as narrative and so human reality are shaped and constituted by directly lived reality, the "world of appearances", the meta-story destroys, inhibits, or distorts agency necessarily.

As I remarked previously, we can feel Snopes' resentment and envy; if we add the idea of the meta-story as anti-story and if it is reasonable to claim that Snopes has glimpsed the sheer made-up quality of the meta-story, then we can conclude that he has a kind of meta-envy and meta-resentment. He is caught in the absurd human trap of hating what he wants to become. Another way of saying this is to realize that Snopes sees through the meta-story as false but at the same time it has already formed the center of his orientation. He has resentment concerning the necessity

of his resentment. There is perhaps no better combination for radical emotion and self-destruction. In fact, the very possibility of this extreme envy and resentment is premised on the fact that the meta-story has formed the center of Snopes' orientation to reality (his own self-concept). He is envious because he is white trash but to be white trash is to take up a role in lived reality that is supported by the meta-story (some people are simply not meant to succeed).

And yet, we are presented with a profound puzzle. How does the meta-story survive when it literally cannot be grounded? (Actually, its groundlessness is its strength.) Given that I am presupposing the philosophical view that no meta-story can ever be reasonably grounded or finally defended in any sense, the nature of the previous question becomes starkly psychological. (Once we make this turn, all tragedy is bound to become a matter of psychology; at the very bottom- instead of good versus evil, or man against the cosmos, we get man against himself.) I think Faulkner has an answer to this question or at least he portrays characters and narratives that provide an answer. We must, however, go deeper into the nature of human agency and consciousness before we can arrive at a satisfying account of why Faulkner's tragedy seems so astonishingly real.

It seems that we awaken, very slowly, to the fact that the meta-story is an ineradicable aspect of the human condition. The nature of our own form of consciousness dangles the very dangerous bait of the meta-story right in front of us. As we make ourselves into the objects of our own consciousness, which is what it means to be a "self" in the western tradition, at the same time we *seem* to free ourselves of the social/historical world. We become objects or entities separate from the world and this is nothing more than a proto meta-story. In fact, given that we are objects of our own consciousness we seem to free ourselves in many ways; the most obvious is "free will," the gross abstraction that flies in the face of the real possibility of self-knowledge.

An awareness of awareness, our selves as the objects of our own consciousness, is already a meta-move and a new form of "self-interest." At the social and collective level, the notion that the roles and orders of society would be reified and ontologically bound is a result of a self-justifying present in self-consciousness. Self-justification, in turn, implies a *way* of justifying and there is no stronger move than to justify from another level of reality (and we already seem to have a third person view of our selves). This form of justification is far better, that is, much more

psychologically defensive, than revealing self-justification as nothing but an element of self-awareness. The worst possibility, for psychological defensiveness, is the move to make our justifications existential; this is to make a justification from nothing but the meaning and interpretation of lived reality and experience. In fact, some might see this as the edge of nihilism.

Nietzsche, as is well known, attacked the notion of truth with a vengeance and what he really had in mind is justification from the standpoint of the meta-story.⁶ Instead, Nietzsche turns to art as the anecdote, the expression of the will to power, which always and everywhere welcomes the world of appearances, and so stands in opposition to Platonic and Christian truth. In other words, art depends on the immediate and sensuous world of appearance: a world that does not succumb to “redemption.” A theodicy on Nietzsche’s view is anti-art because a theodicy always has to deny the immediate world. An “explanation” of suffering and evil assumes some other reality behind this one and so the explanation is necessarily external to this world: it is for these reasons that Nietzsche dismisses “Christian Tragedy” as an oxymoron. Clearly, on Nietzsche’s view the Christian or Platonic meta-story precludes or destroys art and so precludes or destroys tragic fiction.

What this truly great contribution to aesthetics misses or obscures is the problem noted in the above. The meta-story, the tendency to the thesis of an external and ultimate meaning, is written into the nature of human consciousness. And this fact, a fact that is social and historical as well as ontological, creates the possibility of a kind of deep human tragedy. I have already discussed the tenuous nature of the meta-story and Nietzsche’s points also illuminate why this is the case: under bright light-in Snopes’ case no more than the desire to be a fully human agent-the meta-aspect of the story collapses into a pure social order controlled with force and violence. Given that the social order is underwritten in every case by a meta-story, the characters who challenge it are bound to its essential center of orientation. Snopes desires an economic share. In this case, the economic share is what it means for him to acquire agency, but the economic share comes with a very pervasive meta-story that precludes him. Hence, Snopes hates what he wants to become. This is one of the ways we can describe Faulkner’s notion of the “human heart in conflict with itself.” And, as we will soon see, the world of Joe Christmas takes us deeper into this bitter reality.

Bitchery and Abomination

There may not be a more harrowing tale in all of literature than the story of Joe Christmas in Faulkner's magnificent *Light in August*.⁷ The narrative reveals human reality on several levels but for the most part it goes deep into the nature of self-destruction as written into the nature of human agency and human society. Once again, this complex insight relies on both the ambiguity and inevitability of the meta-story and its penetration into the narrative of lived reality.

First of all, and as we all know, the deck is stacked against Christmas. From the standpoint of sheer contingency, he is not exactly lucky: orphaned, hounded from the start by a sadistic/fanatic grandfather (Doc Hines), suspected of being black in a radically racist social world, and sexually involved with the most problematic (for himself) person and so on (and it should be noted that these contingencies *become* interrelated). One might say that these are mostly "misfortunes" but what is not a misfortune is the nature of his tragedy. It is not just that Christmas is unlucky or that he is finally destroyed; it is not just that "bad things" happen to him (this would be a relief). The elements of his tragedy consist in that which would destroy any human being, and not just some particular human being, according to the normative/ontological dimensions of human existence; in other words, what is constitutive of human existence is turned against itself. Perhaps the most terrible element of the novel is the apparent fact that our nature might be turned against itself is an aspect of our nature.

I am assuming that the reader is acquainted with *Light in August*. What follows is an endeavor to properly analyze the above points and not so much by pursuing the story event by event but by arriving at a hypothesis concerning how the tragedy of Joe Christmas is even possible as a piece of narrative.

Each and every one of the "misfortunes" mentioned above graze the surface of the meta-story and some actually threaten its core truths. Consequently, Christmas is radically dangerous to the existing social reality and we can conclude from this that many others would present the same dangers. The rules and ways of the racist culture are fitted and contoured with the support of multiple meta-stories; these tie together even where they overtly conflict (through acts of self-deception and denial). Racial segregation is the way the world ought to be and not just the way the world happens to be. Complete with its violent horrors, racism is part of

the right order of the world. Christmas, as he is suspected of being black while appearing white is walking ambiguity and this eats away at the thin tissue of the meta-story; that there could be such a walking ambiguity threatens to reveal reality as opaque and not responsive to the mythically clear meta-story. Christmas is ontologically and epistemically corrosive in his very being.

On Faulkner's account of human reality, Christmas cannot form a self-concept that is somehow entirely outside the scope of the dominant cultural meta-stories and social realities. It is impossible to argue against Faulkner here because everything we know, in our most sober and mature accounts of human circumstances, plays this truth back to us. We confirm it over and over again in every narrative. Christmas' accelerated tragedy is really his own self-image, his own self-concept, as they are shaped by the elements he is trying to escape. Given the social realities, and the meta-stories penetrating into them or being constructed out of them, Christmas then must be self-destructive. It is not simply that he does not like himself (which is usually drivel); he suffers from a self-hatred of the worst kind, an ontologically bound self-hatred. The very forces that are actually destroying him and pursuing him with a nearly incomprehensible violence are the same forces that make up his center of orientation. Hence, at the end of the story, at the end of his life, Christmas is *tragically exhausted; that is, he is surrounded by reality as an enemy to that reality while at the same time being shaped by that reality*. And perhaps, by the end of his life, Christmas has even come to believe that he gets what he deserves. Such a self-hatred is only possible as it is deeply social and supported by meta-stories; no purely "personal" dysfunction could cut down this deep. To be saved, Christmas does not need help from others, he needs a different world.

Christmas's agency-his capacity for ratiocination and rational action-is more or less obliterated by the above dialectic. He might be able to represent an opposition to the meta-stories if he had any social or cultural levers to pull. But then he is not just powerless, he is inevitably pursued to be destroyed. He is not destroyed in the way or for the reasons that we might destroy a wild animal (which is bad enough, but banal). Instead he is pursued out of all the dark ambiguities that cannot be overtly tolerated in his social world. His mere existence challenges the pure reality of various moral truths and ontological orders that are suspected, even by those who hold them, to be opaque and deeply flawed. But these themes are even darker than they seem.

Christmas's actual death in the novel has a profound power as the narrative works to show how human beings both reveal and conceal reality or the components of their own narratives. The murder is also hauntingly odd as the astounding beauty of the prose conflicts with the ugliness and horror of the scene. Percy Grimm murders Christmas as a kind of symbolic and religious act; he is standing up for and performing a ritual which re-orient us back to the meta-story and away from the ambiguities. Grimm is another representation of the manner in which the meta-story has such incredible power over action and thought even as it is groundless, ambiguous, and shabby. For Grimm, the killing seems to be a kind of ritual purification; the religious component is not hard to see as he butchers Christmas. But Grimm is also a gross pretense, the extent and noise of his violence conflicts with the possibility of true conviction. His act, the murder and castration of Christmas, is the most desperate act of the novel (and that is saying a great deal). The sheer effort of denying reality through the meta-story surrounds the reader with a profound sadness not just for Christmas, but for our selves as human beings. The "sacrifice" of the outsider, the person with no power, a stilted and ruined identity, and who "gets what he deserves," is the story of human society renewing itself while at the same time destroying itself.

Clearly, the most problematic meta-story in *Light in August* is Christianity. What is revealed here is nothing short of horrifying, although there is some dark comic relief in the fanaticism (which is, by its very nature both comic and incredibly dangerous at the same time). When Doc Hines appears toward the end of the novel, the reader starts to put together his relentlessly sadistic and so perverse role in Christmas' life. In combination with the obstinate violence of McEachern, Christmas is surrounded by what looks like the total perversion of religion. But there is a strong possibility here that what we have is not a perversion of religion; instead we might have just another *version* of a meta-story as it attempts, desperately, to fill in the real human world of contingency, accident, history, and ambiguity.

What I would like to emphasize here concerns two essential points. The first is that Faulkner seems to be presenting the strong possibility that there is no such thing as Christianity. The second concerns the vicious possibility that, at the same time, Christianity is part of the causal background that forms Christmas's self-hatred.

Let us examine the first point. That there is really no such thing as

Christianity is nothing more than the reversal of the causal arrow with respect to how this meta-story is supposed to have originated and continues to get new life. According to the champions of the meta-story, the causal origin is in some supernatural event, the meaning of which gets transmitted through history and yet somehow remains over and above history (included are explanations for why some suffer). The possibility presented in *Light in August* is that Christianity – in any and all its forms- is nothing more than a reification of various and dominant social wants and patterns. Hence, once again we can expect that from certain perspectives the meta-story is going to look ridiculous and indefensible: this is for the simple reason that it so overtly supports the social realities in question.

The obvious objection to the possibility here raised is the one that goes: “yes, that episode in Christian history is unfortunate (all that racism and violence!), but it has nothing to do with the *essence of the religion*. *Gradually, Christianity would have to emerge from bigotry, dogmatism and outrageous violence.*” This is an unfortunate response if only for the reason that no one can possibly untangle “Christianity” from its social history anymore than we can untangle the “essence” of a person from that person’s social history. One would like to say: Christianity is whatever it appears to be and what it appears to be is strictly empirical/historical. This view concerning how to understand the reality of Christianity is perfectly symmetrical to Faulkner’s historical/social account of the human person. And these points cut down to what I have been calling the “center of orientation.” Christianity, as a meta-story, necessarily works against humanity-*even as it exerts positive moral influence*- because it pretends to transcend history. But the transcendence of history, as Faulkner always knows through the construction of his characters, is the destruction of narrative and so human agency. A world in which the notion of a transcendent order was never even questioned would be an insane and perverse world.

An even not so careful reader of *Light in August* is bound to notice that Christmas does seem to overtly reject Christianity and this sets up the conclusion that Christianity cannot make up any part of the center of his orientation. This conclusion does not follow from the premise. First, what we end up “rejecting” might have already formed various features of our thinking and experiencing, especially if what we reject is socially pervasive. In fact, Christianity as a meta-story would be impotent and useless if it really did transcend history (because inconceivable and so vacuous). Only as it is taken up into social and historical life does it become anything at

all and then the categories that are formed from its social and historical life can go everywhere. Given that Christianity is the “worldview” we can expect that it has found its way deep into the very manner in which we experience the world and our selves.

Truthfully, there is no way for Christmas to really separate out Christianity from the racism that has determined his self-hatred: the very beginning and end of his existence. Doc Hines and Percy Grimm are acting out the dictates of the meta-story and all of it is related, in one way or another, to Christianity. Certainly God *is* white and there is then no way to escape the suffocating pervasiveness of the shadow of this God: an ironic version of the awful saying that “God is everywhere.” So, wherever Christmas looks he has to see himself as the object of suspicion, and the enemy of the whole plan and pattern of reality. To join in with this plan is to voluntarily destroy himself. There is no other way to make peace with the burden of his enemies. In other words, that he is an enemy of reality is written into reality and this is a result of the meta-story. As always with Faulkner, it is the sheer fact that he has made it this long that is astonishing. And, what seems even more astonishing, is that Christmas never turns himself completely over to hatred; what is consistently the object of hatred- in the ways described above- can never hate as much or as deeply.

Finally, with respect to the tragic story of Joe Christmas, there is a ubiquitous element of all meta-stories: individuals “get what they deserve.” Clearly, Faulkner is turning this notion on its head, but the novel is drenched with this awful background theme and belief. Opposite views, say that some people *never* get what they deserve or that what people actually get has *nothing* to do with what they deserve, or finally that we have *no idea* what it means for anyone to get what she deserves, are all contradictory to the notion that the world is as it ought to be. As Faulkner sees agency and identity so closely tied to history, the same will be true with respect to whatever form of “justice” that is dished out. On this view, what happens to people is always burdened by time and history. To be a person who is, by definition, an enemy of all social reality (part of the meta-story) in combination with the aspect of the meta-story that claims that “all people ultimately get what they deserve” is a nightmare that cannot be fully comprehended as a nightmare; that is, Christmas must think within the same categories even as he suspects that such categories badly misrepresent his own circumstance.

Sutpen Creating Sutpen ⁸

There is a strong sense in which Snopes orbits Sutpen. All things considered, Sutpen is a consolidation of multiple themes in the ongoing cultural meta-story in which Snopes also participates in around the edges. Perhaps most importantly, they share the original experience of their own radical inferiority in this social world. Sutpen describes to General Compson his humiliation, as a child, in being sent around to the back of the plantation home. The social world is, however, underwritten by a meta-story and the one prevalent theme, already seen with Snopes, is the reification of roles. These roles have a cosmic stamp even as they are ambiguous. Hence to reach his design Sutpen must take on the task of self-creation and this includes both a magnificent will to power and core elements of self-annihilation.

Self-creation is another aspect of an emerging meta-story but it needs two sorts of explanation. The first concerns how it is possible in any sense. The second concerns how it can be achieved by an individual human being in a particular circumstance. The answers to both questions are haunting and finally empty. There really is no sense in which self-creation is possible and so the identity of the person who endeavors to this feat is bound to be haunting and empty (in some ways, profoundly inscrutable). Or, even worse, the emptiness of the endeavor is necessarily perverse and radically self-defeating.

In a previous section, I argued that meta-stories are written into the nature of human consciousness. Self-creation is the greatest of the self-defeating endeavors of consciousness and it also sits at the pinnacle of meta-stories. Insofar as the self can become an object of consciousness, insofar as we can “see ourselves” as distinct from others, we can also see ourselves as entirely free from history and society (this is all a matter of “seeming”). An answer to our first question is then self-creation is possible (merely as a self-deceived endeavor) through the very nature of self-consciousness. And there exist certain social/historical conditions that can make the endeavor urgent. In Sutpen’s case, the urgency hangs on and around the idea of flourishing in the only way a person could flourish in his culture: to be a member of the plantation class. A radical division in forms of life, within societies, is often the ground of the envy/hatred complex and so finally the ground of the urgent need for self-creation. The alternative for Sutpen is a Snopes like existence. While there may be other possible alternatives, there are no clear reasons for thinking that Sutpen sees these as possibilities and there are no reasons for thinking that the range of possibilities are other

than what is overtly present in social reality.

I have claimed in the above that self-creation is a form of meta-story. I now need to specify the precise nature of Sutpen's self-creation and how it is an aspect of a meta-story (the anti-story). We should take it as an axiom that the very possibility of narrative presupposes an individual history in synthetic unity with a social history. By "synthetic unity" I am alluding to the Kantian notion of a proposition that combines two distinct elements but still contains necessity. Here I mean to say that individual history is incoherent without a socio/historical world (the condition for meaning at all) and yet there remain various aspects in which an individual can be understood as an individual. If my reasoning is correct here, then it must follow that self-creation is a meta-story or at least an aspect of a meta-story. To put it bluntly: self-creation defies the synthesis of individual with history and this is to defy the conditions of meaning. To defy the conditions of meaning is ultimately to defy what we call, most confidently, "human reality." Persons who defy reality will be crushed, which is not to say that their endeavors are uninteresting. But what needs more discussion is the manner in which Sutpen self-creates, the precise form of his self-creation. It is not so radical as to assert a total, across the board disconnection from everyone else; if this were the case then the self-creator would literally become a non-entity. For even to use someone is to admit to some connection to her and it is to admit to a connectedness to a world. Sutpen, I think, tragically self-creates in that he believes he can cut ties with anyone or make ties with anyone and select only the consequences of those ties that are consistent with *his plan*. Self-creation of this sort starts the entire spiral downward into tragedy.

Sutpen's self-creation as meta-story is also easily punctured existentially. Even from the standpoint of the first person, the doubt surrounding self-creation has to be immense. "Seeing oneself" as free from others is a surface aspect or what we might call a mere claim or assertion; hence the connection between self-creation and the will to power. On the other hand, imagining precisely *what it is or what it means* to be in some sense outside the range of possible (unwanted) consequences is finally impossible. One would have to be able to see oneself as outside of the temporal causal chain and then we run out of imaginative space. The meta-story of self-creation resembles the Christian story as it starts and ends as mere assertion. No one really comprehends it and so when seen in an awkward moment the elements of the meta-story are revealed as absurd.

All of the above points can be seen as Sutpen tells his story, in parts, to General Compson. As most people will do, Sutpen tells his story with an authority that subtly dismisses the fact that all narrative is interpretation. Sutpen differs from others according to the force and deliberateness in which he asserts and then acts. The tidal wave of disaster that awaits him is already present in his narrative. His attempts to deny the possible consequences of his past are the result of already realized consequences of his past that he is in the process of dismissing. In short, he has to deny his identity to achieve his identity and this is the self-defeating truth of all self-creation. "I am entirely in control of what I am and what I become" is nothing more than the result of some historical circumstance where the meta-story and one's place in it are exaggerated (a social, cultural, or economic urgency bearing down on the human person). Sutpen's own undoing is ultimately the endeavor to deny the very possibility of having an identity at all; he is, in the endeavor to self-create, a self annihilator.

In the above, I mentioned that the endeavor of self-creation is tied closely to, or depends on, the will to power. The fact that human identity necessarily depends on having a history and being, more or less, conscious of that history also presents- at the same time- the possibility of flatly denying that history shapes or determines anything at all. One might say that this assertion is easily made; in fact, everyone makes it in some sense, but only the Sutpens of the world act and behave as if it is really true. And this requires an enormous will to power. Sutpen shoulders on into the future with only his clean notion of the future as motive. His life comes to resemble and finally encompass a venture of great proportions and given that his possibility is already tied into the components of human consciousness and hence human identity, his venture is also our ever possible venture. Finally, however, Sutpen is a beautifully wrought tragic figure who must meet a violent death due to his outrageous and all too human recalcitrance to let go of his clean and shiny future. As he obliterates connections to others, and so their humanity, he also obliterates his own humanity and agency. His demise mirrors the demise of his tattered, tired, and shabby culture.

Again, we know in our more sober moments that all aspects of self-creation are part of a meta-story. The relationships between self-creation as meta-story and Christianity as meta-story are multiple and varied; in fact, the manner in which they intersect and are tied together could present a whole sociological standpoint on America. Obviously, however,

this project cannot be undertaken here but we can determine an essential element in both meta-stories. Both are meta-stories if only because they hold to the claim that the individual human being *somehow* transcends her socio-historical circumstance. To flatly deny this claim is to be purely contentious. It is better to make the point, especially in relation to Faulkner, that the self-conscious endeavor to transcend our circumstance or that there is some agency doing this for us (or will do this for us) is to shred the fabric of narrative.

In conclusion on Sutpen, we once again have a strong sense of psychological and ontological discomfort in determining that he “got what he deserved.” With the truly human figure, imbedded in a tragic circumstance, this entire meta-category is challenged as grotesquely inhuman. We literally do not know how to make it fit with the reality of human life and narrative. Clearly, the clean version of “desert” belongs to some meta-story that was a causal element of the tragedy in the first place.

Quentin Killing Quentin ⁹

The tie between Sutpen, the self-creator, and Quentin Compson, the self-annihilator, is profound and subtle enough so that it is hard to articulate. It seems, however, that the commonality circles around the conditions of narrative and agency: the conditions for being a person at all (and for having a story of any sort). Tragedy can then be seen as movement toward the annihilation of agency.

If, on the surface of things, Sutpen has only a future, then Quentin, on the surface of things, has only a past. But this is on the surface of things because there is no future without a past and there is no past without a future: this is no more than a tautology. To put the point in Kantian terminology: human experience and agency presuppose time as the form of intuition. Neither Quentin nor Sutpen can, in any sense, live outside of time with just a future or just a past, but their peculiar histories and psychologies aim them in the direction of this futile and desperate task. Quentin lives as far out on the edge of agency as any character in literature and this just means that the manner in which he experiences himself and the world is entirely out of joint with the nature of normative human experience.

The tragic figure who seeks the obliteration of the future is, we might confidently say, already dead: suicide is not a radical break with what has

been occurring to and within that character. And it is not just the suicide of an individual. It is the suicide of the species because it is the denial or annihilation of what is constitutive of agency. To dwell in the past, especially one that is in tatters or never really existed (as imagined) or to yearn for the past, always betrays a profound sorrow and misgiving about that past. At its fever pitch it is the recognition, however inchoate, that whatever transpired in the past is already enough to destroy the possibility of a future (from within that peculiar consciousness). What is worth remembering, which is itself a condition for having a memory at all, is inconsistent with a future; clearly, this is Quentin's circumstance. The limits of action are bound by the imaginative conception of what is not just possible but worthy of being actual for that agent. Quentin's idealized past, together with the recognition that it is not an ideal past, creates the ground for a sorrow that leads to self-annihilation. One might say the same is true of his culture, the background and possibility of his own particular past.

Human beings are, of course, agents; that is, our lives are intentional and meaningful in relation to a temporal background (a history). "Agency," as far as we can hope to understand it, is necessarily historical and forward looking. A history is what allows for the creation of agency. What I did yesterday and the day before is the only way to understand what I did at all and those things that I did are what constitute the elements of my current and future self. (One should also be warned concerning the search for the origin of the self: this is meta-nonsense.) The future is also analytically contained in agency as "to do x" is first to have some sense of intentionality and this is to have wants, desires, and so forth, all which presuppose a future. The future is therefore constitutive of being, our normative ontology (as well as a finite limit to that future) and it is also constitutive of the possibility of consciousness. The human agent does not just live through time. The human agent experiences himself or herself as *having a past and having a future as constitutive of having being in the world*.

I said in the above that what is worth remembering is a condition of memory. In other words, "what is worthy of remembering" has to be present for memory to take hold and become formative in consciousness. At the overtly conscious level what and how we remember is structured and conditioned by what we understand as valuable or non-valuable about our history and our possible future states. Quentin can no longer recover what is precisely or unambiguously valuable about his past in relation to

what is possible for his future. Identity is then jeopardized because the connection between past, present, and future is jeopardized. Insofar as what is valuable has come through a social world, a background and context, we come to realize that identity is precariously built on normative relations to others and their histories. This is where the structure of narrative in literature reveals what philosophy treats mostly as an abstraction. Locke found the condition of identity in *memory or the stream of consciousness, a connection between parts of consciousness (memory)*, but what he failed to realize is that memory analytically contains what is worth remembering; in short, it contains character. This is what Faulkner does realize and this is the key component of how one form of tragedy is possible: the tragedy of the walking dead.

But it is not just value and valuing that makes human identity possible. Identity also determines and is determined (back) by the *nature* of memories. And here we can take another step into the depths of Quentin's tragedy. To say that value and valuing make memory possible is too general; we might say that it is the *how and why* of our memories that really allow for memory to even begin. We never "just remember" in any deliberate sense; there is always a how and why to acts of remembering that are as much ingrained in the nature of the person as they are in the nature of society. This how and why of remembering constitutes the character of both persons and societies.

Quentin has come to remember in ways- the how and why of his remembering- that are inconsistent with the possibility of a future. His suicide is then written into his remembering. His suicide is then written into his past. And here we must come face to face with a horrifying reality. Agency can be destroyed from within its own components. The possibility and reality of our sinning, the Christian human nature since "the fall" and the key to unlocking all related theodicies cannot unlock this horrifying reality. Quentin has not gone astray or failed to hear the call of righteousness, nor does he have some "tragic flaw" as some method to tragedy; he has, instead, lost the grounds for being a person.

In the second section of *The Sound and The Fury*, we are confronted with the activity of a mind more so than any series of events that would constitute an external narrative. From the internal narrative, we see that Quentin has come to occupy the jagged edges of reality. The reason is not hard to find. His overall desperation has led him to comprehend time as an object instead of a condition of life. As such Quentin does not seem

to be entering time as a normative human agent but he is standing on the outside looking in. One cannot help but to see this mental illness as being related to every word that Quentin speaks in the text. Once Quentin regards the past as representing the impossibility of a future, he is at the end point of agency. Finally, Quentin's tragedy is difficult for any of us to imagine. His suicide or his self-destruction is actually his *self-realization*. It is hard to imagine anything as sorrowful or anything that could cut deeper as a possibility of the human condition.

The last set of points I want to make in this essay concern the connection of the above with what I have been calling the "meta-story." In my view, the meta-story is deeply implicated in the tragic circumstance. In this case the diseased elements of the meta-story can be found in aspects of memory or, if the reader can pardon the expression, the urge for a meta-memory.

In one very important sense all memory is already meta-memory. Our center of orientation to reality while shaped by the social world in all its forms and varieties is still burdened with "the self" as an independent sort of entity that faces the world. Hence, there is a sense in which all memory has to be solipsistic. The notion of the self as an actual entity that stands apart, both ontologically and epistemically, creates the possibility of radical disorientation and also the discouraging psychic see-saw between "the individual" and "the community." There has never been a more grotesquely false dilemma. From the platform of the self Quentin is then able to conceive his own struggle and history as being loaded down with an importance or significance that it just doesn't have. From here we can reach the true nature of nihilism.

Quentin, it seems, wants to attach a meaning to his memories and his history that circles around, however haphazardly, the meta-meanings of his culture: a vision of honor, chivalry, and so forth. These meanings and virtues exist only insofar as someone acts them out; they are, in no sense, written into the fabric of reality. Furthermore, there is nothing going on between Quentin and Caddy except the painful or horrifying incapacity to acquire appropriate intimacy. The meta-dysfunction occurs at precisely the moments where Quentin wants to invest that relationship with something greater, something beyond both of them, something that could only be worked out in death and so on. This desire for the "something more" or "something of greatest significance" is- in the end- nihilism. Consider the following passage from the mouth of Mr. Compson at the very end of the Quentin section.

Someday in very disgust he [man] risks everything on a single blind turn of a card no man ever does that under the first fury of despair or remorse or bereavement he does it only when he has realized that even the despair or remorse or bereavement is not particularly important to the dark diceman and I temporarily and he it is hard believing to think that a love or a sorrow is a bond purchased without design and which matures willy-nilly and is recalled without warning to be replaced by whatever issue the gods happen to be floating at the time no you will not do that until you come to believe that even she was not quite worth despair....¹⁰

This looks like the real article of nihilism and in a sense it is. But there is also a sense in which Quentin has to take his father's "advice" but cannot. He has to take his advice if he is not going to fully renounce the world because once you set out a meta-meaning and then you come to realize, even if in an inchoate fashion, that such a meta-meaning is illusory, the full force of world renunciation becomes a strong possibility. Nihilism depends, for its very possibility, on the meta-story.

Now, to move back to the connection between the meta-story and memory, the proper point to make is that there is none. *Rather, we should say, that the meta-story annihilates memory because it does not construct value out of experience but instead lays it on top of experience as an abstraction.* From within consciousness and life there is not anything to remember and this is to say, finally, that we can destroy our own memory through our temptation for meta-stories and narratives. Quentin has not remembered his past; he has reconstructed it in such a way that it cannot answer to reality.

Conclusion

At the center of meta-stories is, inevitably, the notion that there is *something* that explains everything: the idea that reality, especially human existence, has at least a guide (if not a plan). Such a view is deeply tempting and, in ways I have described, an intrinsic element of human consciousness. But this *something* that explains everything is our undoing as it prompts us to give our lives a kind of significance that experience can neither comprehend nor handle. The very nature of human consciousness

contains its own reason for self-deception and self-destruction.

What Faulkner's stories show us so deeply and permanently is the very precarious nature of the meta-story and so we can see it as an aspect of human consciousness and the human social world and not as an ontological coating to our reality. One wonders: how else, under what other form of delusion, could human beings become so interesting as to be their own worst enemy? Human existence is such that we live to constantly disarm the possibility of self-destruction but without end because the possibility is built into what it is to be a human being.

The danger to the social world- many people might say- is the absence of religion and some corresponding morality. Of course, there is a sense in which this claim is true, but it is only skin deep. As Faulkner has *shown us* -and as irony of the best sort would have it- the meta-story (that wraps up religion and morality in crucial ways) can only sustain us as far as we can manage a self-deception or denial of reality in the face of a Joe Christmas or Abner Snopes. In other words, in narrative fiction of the first order, we come to insights concerning evil in the human world that cannot be "explained" from some external standpoint. In fact, the evil cannot be explained at all except insofar as we recognize its nature as being written into the human condition.

Notes

¹ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 95-107.

² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 1961), pp. 22-52.

³ Hume, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

⁴ Hegel, "Who Thinks Abstractly," in *19th Century Philosophy*, edited by Forrest Baird (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003), pp. 101-104.

⁵ William Faulkner, "Barn Burning" in *The Short Story: 25 Masterpieces* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 264-281.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, translated by Francis Golffing (New York: Anchor Press), pp. 82-146.

⁷ William Faulkner, *Light in August* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

⁸ William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

⁹ William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 177-178.

A Transcontinental Journey brings Transcendental Understanding

Existential Psychology East-West. Edited by Louis Hoffman, Mark Yang, Francis J. Kaklauskas & Albert Chan Colorado Springs: University of the Rockies Press, 2009. 408 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9764638-6-3. \$34.95. Paperback.

Reviewed by Robert Garfield McInerney

Existential Psychology, East-West (2009) is too important of a contribution to existential psychology to merely summarize as a whole; therefore, I will additionally highlight certain chapters (chosen idiosyncratically) while generally reviewing the entire book.

This compelling book comes to us partly from the hands-on work done in mainland China and Hong Kong, in March of 2008, when “a group of United States graduate students and their professor journeyed to China to engage with Chinese psychologists about the theory and practice of existential psychology” (p. 95).¹ They wondered, “how a Chinese perspective offers fresh insights for existential psychology” (p. 95). The journey, which began as literally transcontinental, now in book form, is potentially *transcendental* as it moves us beyond the sedimentary thinking that plagues any longstanding philosophical tradition (i.e., existentialism).

Many chapters actively engage existentialism with the diversity brought by others who have been traditionally outside of existentialism’s paradigmatic comfort zone. The work, then, provides a beginning and corrective step in a desirable and needed direction.

The reader is first offered a lovely *Poetic Preface* by Tom Greening that establishes a mood of humility; perhaps the reader is wise in the striving to know, but foolish and forewarned if seeking *the* truth in any one perspective. After all, how else can we begin the embrace and celebration of *otherness* except with an openness to alterity and difference? And so, the mood is set for various authors to facilitate a dialogue between existential philosophy/psychology with parables of Jesus, film analysis, depth psychology, postmodernism, as well as Western and Bahamian cultural myth. This fine book additionally provides thoughtful biops, and practical application.

Louis Hoffman, one of the editors, adroitly sets the next stage as his beginning chapter ultimately reveals why existential psychology is, at its structural core, amenable to cultural diversity and synthesis. Hoffman exposes the critical tension many of us in the field have long realized – existential psychology has not been active enough in taking up cross-cultural perspectives. This is a sad fact perhaps easily remedied, for as Hoffman reminds us, existential philosophy is by its very nature eclectic, and following the seminal work of Kirk Schneider (2008), it works best as an *integrative* psychotherapy that adapts to our diverse backgrounds.

The existential structures of human existence, as Hoffman explains, are not ethnocentric or prescriptive. Embodiment, for example, recognizes and interprets any kind of lived bodily experience: gendered, transgendered, darker or lighter skin, bigger bodies, smaller bodies and so on. The existential givens of human existence, Hoffman suggests, are a hospitable framework in which to cross boundaries and interrelate with others. But, if any of the existential givens are made into a metanarrative that reduces, measures, predicts and controls, they then become oppressive. Hoffman writes: “The givens themselves are merely conditions that often spark people into creating these grand metanarratives” (p. 11).

Interspersing his chapters with quotes from some of the most influential existential thinkers in history, Hoffman manages to both embrace, and move beyond, orthodoxy, as he tells us, “the ongoing mission of existential thought should be to continuously develop and expand existential thought. Existential therapists should fight ardently to assure that existential thought never becomes stagnant” (p. 59). Hoffman leaves us ready to journey further, across an ocean of ideas, now no longer stagnant waters, but instead an ebb and flow of an “intercultural dialog” (p. 59).

Just as this book has multiple trajectories, it has multiple beginnings. Part I, is decidedly an overview using theoretical and practical chapters; Part II leads us to the *East-West* discourse proper, with *Existential Psychology Dialogues in China: Beginning the Conversation* (Dyer, Kaklauskas, Dow, Saxon, Chan, Yang & Hoffman, 2009). We are presented a brief historical background regarding China’s political and theoretical development and then, to the prospect, “that the Chinese participants would examine models of existential-integrative psychotherapy within their own cultural context and understanding of psychology” (p. 99). Problems of translation, Western individualism, and cultural taboos are pointed out

not pessimistically, as if we cannot understand each other, but as places where we must strive to critically examine our assumptions about any representation of otherness. Moreover, potential censorship from the Communist government is another concern raised in this chapter. Still, the authors “hope that if existential thinkers demonstrate appropriate respect for cultural differences that it will not be deemed a threat to social harmony” (p. 105). The authors understand the *East-West* dialog as a “window of opportunity” and they show us “how Eastern thought might sharpen and improve Western existential psychological theories” (p. 103). A fruitful synthesis emerged, we are told, as the Chinese participants “recognized the value of individual choice, but valued the choice to prioritize the collective. Thus, choice and the recognition that one must own one’s choices are shared by both cultures” (p. 108).

Eric Craig’s *Tao, Dasein, and Psyche: Shared grounds for Depth Psychotherapy* was a pleasure to read. This chapter continues a main theme of the book: that despite the seeming disparate concepts that have been formed deep within a culture’s development, there are common grounds upon which to foster understanding. Craig uses our cross-culturally “distinct languages of being” in hopes of further understanding each other (and otherness) within “the complexity of unity and diversity” (p. 113). Well-written and scholarly, Craig steps deeply into primary and “foundational matters regarding the nature and practice of psychotherapy” without leading the reader into overly abstruse reflection. He does this by showing the “important confluences between three specific approaches to depth psychotherapy: classical psychoanalysis, daseinanalysis, and Tao psychotherapy” (p. 142).

Existential Themes in the Parables of Jesus by Mark Yang allows us to traverse the boundaries between Christianity and existentialism. Yang states: “it is my passionate belief that existential psychology and philosophy share much more commonalities than differences with Christian teachings” (p. 177). Yang juxtaposes Jesus’ life of existential authenticity and responsibility relating that, “We all have our own destinies to fulfill” while reminding the reader that “Christians are called to be *like* Jesus, not to *be* Jesus” (pp. 193-194). To be *like* Jesus means, for Yang, to identify and remember, through parable, the existentially grounded life of the Christian messiah. Jesus struggled in existence, in part, because of the hellish, and all-too-human consciousness (shaped by others) as well as greed, jealousy and power (Sartre, 1989;1956). But, to be like Jesus, to do

as Jesus did, Yang recounts, is to make meaning of our struggles; some may recognize in their struggles the beatific sacrifice of much of it, and endure, even thrive.

Albert Chan's (editor and author) *In Harmony with the Sky: Implications for Existential Psychology* explores the cultural tension between collective views on self *with* society and individualistic views of self *in* society. Using a fascinating case example, Chan wonders "how much China's way of collectivism stifles individual's authentic self as proposed by existential psychotherapy" (p. 320). Chan states:

I believe that individualism and collectivism are continuous variables. No person or community can be characterized as being entirely one or the other. At its best, the collective society allows families and communities to share life experiences, care, love, cooperation, responsibility, and meaning closely with one another. At its worst, collectivism can suffocate creativity, freedom, individual and collective growth. (p. 323)

Living authentically in the face of persecution is a theme found in Ilene Serlin's elegant chapter on the film *Brokeback Mountain*. She interprets the film through the lens of existential (social) alienation and authenticity: "Both men live a secretive double life, and neither is able to commit authentically to either life" (p. 302). Serlin states: "I see this film as showing the enduring power of love. The director set out to sympathetically portray the challenges of two men in love and the human need to live an authentic life" (p. 304). Ultimately, Serlin's goal is to demonstrate how archetypal themes and myths are, in therapy, potentially healing to those struggling with our society's sometimes rigid distinctions of proper sexual identity and behavior. Serlin tells us "We should be as informed as possible about the nuances of all kinds of love and be aware of our own biases and perspectives" (p. 299). Serlin offers an lucid account of Western film and myth, and uses Carl Jung and Rollo May to support her premise that "a mythic approach to psychology aims to help people deal with the real complexity between individuation and adjustment to reality, freedom and fate, and multiple selves and identities" (p. 303).

Junkanoo: A Bahamian Cultural Myth by Heatherlyn Cleare-Hoffman is an excellent example of the unreserved reach of this book beyond conventional notions of *East-West*. Cleare-Hoffman explains,

“Although located in the West and heavily influenced by British culture, *Bahamian culture rightly falls between the East and West* (p. 366). Bahamian culture is, “more collectivist than...most Western cultures, but more individualist than China and most Eastern cultures” (p. 366).

The reader is invited to appreciate that “Families across the Bahamas celebrate Christmas in its usual fashion: church, gifts, food, and time with the family” (p. 363). And then, “As it turns from Christmas night to Boxing Day, people begin to venture downtown for the festival” (p. 363).

A brief, formal introduction to Bahamian culture and the history of the Junkanoo leads the reader to an existential analysis of myth. Here Cleare-Hoffman draws a comparison between individualist and collectivist cultures (a theme that runs throughout the book) and the competition (individual) and celebration (collectivist) that is part of the Junkanoo. She relates, “From an existential perspective, the goal is not to solve the paradox, but to accept it and integrate both aspects” (p. 368).

Another dichotomy pointed out is the constrictive and expansive tendencies of any culture. Cleare-Hoffman clarifies that Bahamian culture may err on the side of “too expansive” but suggests, “Junkanoo provides an important, healthy expression for the expansiveness tendencies in the culture. It also provides a particularly important illustration in that it connects the expansiveness to meaning” (p. 370). This chapter ostensibly ends the book’s journey (aside from the annotated bibliography; a great inclusion). Interestingly enough, the Bahamian culture and myth, not fully East or West, ends up appropriately representing the open, holistic and synthetic character of the entire book.

In sum, the linear destination, and implied arrival, “East-West” does not do justice to the book’s breadth and concern. The reader will be mused, but not bemused, by this book as *bricolage*—as it makes use of many perspectives to re-understand and re-invigorate existential thought (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and provides a text where the practical and poetic merge (de Ceateu, 1984). It is, thankfully, not a “how-to” book nor does it attempt to offer some essentialized account of exactly what is shared by all. Rather than simply crossing an ocean (which, as we sadly know, may lead to enslavement), this work is an *oceanic* journey as William James (1902) described. With no firm anchoring, existence is unmoored in the complexity and splendor of diversity. This is a good thing, as this book attests. In fact, using Ed Mendelowitz’s line on Kafka from his erudite

chapter entitled *Building the Great Wall of China: Postmodern Reverie and the Breakdown of Meanings*, this wonderful book is, in its entirety “the inspired act of creation out of notable decay” (p. 346).

Notes

¹ Louis Hoffman, PhD and many other distinguished scholars from around the world created the *First International Existential Psychology Conference*. The conference took place on April, 2, 2010 in Nanjing, China. For more information, see here: <http://www.societyforhumanisticpsychology.com/spring-summer-2010-1/china-2010>. The Second Annual Conference on International Existential Psychology is set for Shanghai, China, on May 24-27, 2012.

References

- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2000). “The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research.” In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1-42). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- James, W. (1902). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York, NY: Longmans Green.
- Sartre, J.P. (1989). *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. Vintage Press. (Original work published 1947).
- Sartre, J.P. (1956) *Being and Nothingness* (H.E. Barnes, Trans.). New York: Washington Square Press. (Originally published in 1943)
- Schneider, K. (2008). *Existential-Integrative Psychotherapy: Guideposts to the Core of Practice*. New York: Routledge Press.

Contributors

Bryne Lewis Allport earned a MA in Theology from the University of Scranton, recently won first place in the “Love at the Mutter” poetry contest run by The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. She currently lives in Greene, NY with her three children.

Elizabeth Bradfield [How/ where to include this note? All poems are from *Approaching Ice* (Persea, 2010). Other pub credits are noted beneath the individual poems.]

Elizabeth Bradfield is the author of *Approaching Ice* (Persea, 2010) and *Interpretive Work* (Arktoi Books, 2008), which won the 2009 Audre Lorde Prize and was a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award. Her poems have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Believer*, *Orion*, *Poetry* and in many other journals and anthologies. A former Stegner Fellow, she is founder of the grassroots-distributed and guerilla-art-inspired *Broadsided Press* (www.broadsidedpress.org), which still runs. Bradfield grew up in Tacoma, Washington, and has lived in Alaska and on Cape Cod. Today, she works as a web designer and naturalist and lives in Truro.

DeRobertis?

David B. Dillard-Wright teaches philosophy and ethics at the University of South Carolina, Aiken. His work explores the lived body and its relation to ethical questions, especially regarding non-human animals and the environment. He is the author of *Ark of the Possible: The Animal World in Merleau Ponty* (Lexington Books: 2009).

Julie Dunlop, a recipient of Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry prizes and a Virginia Center for the Creative Arts fellowship, teaches writing at Central New Mexico Community College. She wrote “Cavern” and “The Current, the River, and the Rain” during a month of rain at Vermont Studio Center in October 2009. Appearing in journals such as *JAMA*, *The Threepenny Review*, and *Quiddity*, her poetry often explores the places where internal and external landscapes merge.

Fischer?

Mark J. Fratoni Jr., Department of Psychology, Duquesne University

I originally wrote this paper for Dr. Leswin Laubscher's Derrida & Psychology course. I would like to thank Dr. Laubscher for giving me the unique opportunity to study Derrida in such depth in a psychology department and for giving me advice on publication. I would also like to thank Dr. Ezequiel Pena for encouraging me to submit my paper to the International Society for Theoretical Psychology conference.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mark J. Fratoni Jr., Duquesne University Psychology Department, Room 905, Rockwell Hall, 600 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15282. Email correspondence should be sent to fratonim@duq.edu.

Gambaudo?

William Heyen is Professor of English/Poet in Residence Emeritus at SUNY Brockport, his undergraduate alma mater. A former Senior Fulbright Lecturer in American Literature in Germany, he has won NEA, Guggenheim, American Academy & Institute of Arts & Letters, and other fellowships and awards. He is the editor of *American Poets in 1976*, *The Generation of 2000: Contemporary American Poets*, and *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*. His books include *Pterodactyl Rose: Poems of Ecology*, *The Host: Selected Poems*, *Erika: Poems of the Holocaust*, and *Ribbons: The Gulf War from Time Being Books*; *Pig Notes & Dumb Music: Prose on Poetry and Crazy Horse in Stillness*, winner of 1997's Small Press Book Award for Poetry, from BOA; *Shoah Train: Poems*, a Finalist for the 2004 National Book Award, and *The Confessions of Doc Williams: Poems from Etruscan Press*; and *The Rope: Poems*, *The Hummingbird Corporation: Stories*, and *Home: Autobiographies, Etc.* from MAMMOTH Books. Carnegie-Mellon University Press has published his first book, *Depth of Field* (LSU P, 1970) in its Classic Contemporaries Series. Etruscan Press has recently published *A Poetics of Hiroshima*, a Chautauqua Literary & Scientific Circle selection for 2010.

Richard Hoffman is the author of two collections of poems, *Without Paradise* and *Gold Star Road*, as well as the memoir *Half the House*. His latest book is *Interference and Other Stories*. He is a Writer-in-Residence at Emerson College in Boston.

Gregory Phipps grew up in Windsor, Ontario, and currently resides in

Montreal. He has forthcoming critical articles in *The Henry James Review* and an anthology of essays on David Foster Wallace. His favourite writers include Henry James, Emily Dickinson, Graham Greene, and James Joyce.

Nathaniel Rivers is a Ph. D. candidate in Rhetoric and Composition and the Assistant Director of Professional Writing at Purdue University. His research areas include professional and technical writing, public rhetorics, and the intersections of cognitive science, anthropology, and rhetorical technique, which his dissertation explores.

Jerome Rothenberg is an internationally known poet, polemicist, translator and anthologist with over eighty books of poetry and ten assemblages of traditional and contemporary poetry such as *Technicians of the Sacred* and *Poems for the Millennium*. *Triptych*, his thirteenth book of poems from *New Directions*, appeared in 2007, and a nineteenth-century prequel to *Poems for the Millennium*, co-edited with Jeffrey Robinson, was published in January 2009. Poetry publications for 2010 include *Gematria Complete* (for Marick Press) and *Concealments and Caprichos* (for Black Widow Press).

Michael P. Szipiora earned the B.A. and M.A. in philosophy at San Jose State University, and the M.A. and Ph.D. in phenomenological psychology with a concentration in literature at the University of Dallas. He was a member of the Psychology Department at Duquesne University for over twenty years. He is currently Core Faculty at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Areas of his teaching and publication include phenomenological philosophy and psychology, archetypal psychology, and narrative.

Josua Soffer is an independent writer in psychology and philosophy. His research focuses on a critical examination of the relation between identity and interaction in postmodern theory. He is currently interested in the role of affectivity in embodied psychological approaches. Recent publications include *Sense and Affect* (University Press of America, 2003) and *What is a number: re-thinking Derrida's concept of infinity* (JBSP, 38(2), 2007). ADDRESS: 5701 N. Sheridan Rd. #29R, Chicago, IL 60660, USA. Email: joshsoffer@uron.cc

Taylor?

Jeremy Tirrell is a Ph. D. candidate and Graduate Lecturer in the Rhetoric and Composition program at Purdue University. His primary research area is the intersection of technology and rhetoric. His most recent works explore the use of open source software in writing education and the production of geographical histories through digital visualizations.

