

Adventure, Experience and The Creative Intuition

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Who has plotted the steps toward the discovery of beauty? You have got to be in a different state than common.

Thoreau

When I come home at the end of a work day I am caught up in the cooking of dinner, long distance calls to friends or family, feeding the dogs, laundry, bills . . . all in the space of an evening. My hands cook, my mind thinks of other things, what is next to do. The sun sets, the winds calm, the plants grow, or the snow falls all around me, and I know none of it. As the evening passes and another day begins I feel lost, and disconnected from the world around me. Where is the continuity of my self in the world? The poet, Gary Snyder, working on trail maintenance and simultaneously thinking about other things, had a similar experience. "I was reading Milton", he says, "and I had some other reading, and I was trying to go out on the trails during the day and think about things in a serious intellectual way, while doing my work. And it was frustrating. . . Finally, I gave up trying to carry on an intellectual interior life separate from the work, and I said to hell with it, I'll just work."¹ Snyder is not suggesting that we give up on intellectual pursuits. Rather that we are intent upon things, one at a time.

Concentration and focus upon one thing results in a type of meditation. A relationship is built out of the thing and the self. Discoveries are made. A knowledge of the thing and the self with the thing is gained that is transforming. Let me give an example. When I garden I am intent and attentive to the process of growing and the needs of the garden. In return for my intent and care the world as I understand it is made over again and again through my consideration of the garden. I participate with the world. The coolness of the soil, its dampness. The pebbles in the ground require consideration to make room for plants or seeds. Sunlight and wind move across my face. The life that is present in flowers, trees, worms, butterflies, birds and bees all become a part of my knowing in the garden. This place becomes the world for me, and I exist with it in an inseparable communion. The activity I undertake in the garden becomes who I am. I create and become. I experience, and reflect upon my being. To garden, create, commune, requires my full participation.² Body and spirit are bound together in continuous becoming. Snyder found his own lesson for becoming the same summer he was working in the back-country. He calls it mindfulness:

It is very close to what I am thinking of, in a very obvious way, of the act and the thought being together. And in that sense, there is a body-mind dualism if I am sweeping the floor and thinking about Hegel. But if I am sweeping the floor and thinking about sweeping the floor, I am all one. And that is not trivial, nor is the sensation of it trivial. Sweeping the floor becomes, then the most important thing in the world. Which it is.³

When Snyder gave up the Modern propensity for carrying on more than one activity at a time, maintained by the separate activities of mind and body, he gained "something much greater. By just working," he says, "I found myself being completely there, having a whole language inside of me that became one with the rocks and with the trees. And that was where I first learned the possibility of being one with what you were doing, and not losing anything of the mind thereby."⁴

The oneness Snyder speaks of is what Alfred Whitehead calls participating in the extensive continuum⁵ through creating/becoming; "the realization of events disposed to an interlocked community."⁶ In such a process we return to a more primal state of sympathy of being "present in another entity."⁷ The extensive continuum is the World the self is a part of; the cosmos.⁸ Whitehead claims that our creativity and becoming is one and the same. This is an important connection to make because it helps us to understand that the relationship of creating/becoming to the consciousness of being is indebted to the extensive continuum yet recognized through the individual.⁹ For Whitehead the participation in the continuum doesn't leave off at the individual but involves societies. Each society develops unique cultural

patterns that make legible participation in the extensive continuum, and defines their civilization.¹⁰ Each civilization is advanced by its engagement in the qualities of Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art and Peace.¹¹ The full engagement of these qualities result in a harmonious, involved society participating in and “feeling” the continuity of the World. Engagement is defined by our sense and intent in activities through mind and body.

When Snyder is caught in the body-mind dualism, he is, according to Whitehead’s position, disengaged from experiencing the immediacy of the world and involved in intellectual abstraction. The disengagement of the mind from the body, the person from the experiences of the world, results in a “disjunction” from the extensive continuum and the loss of understanding why we are here at all.¹² Our “disjunction” with the extensive continuum leaves us without the ability to feel, to be “present in another entity.” Snyder’s dualism results from his experience of the “mode of presentational immediacy.” In such a state we rely on knowing the World through the limiting process of sense perception via perspective and spatial shape.¹³ This mode is articulated through the rational intellect and abstraction. It is a type of knowing that can only ever have “a limited sense of perfection” due to the failure to fully involve our intellectual abilities. By employing only our rational processes and knowing things primarily through abstraction we disengage the mind from the body. Although Whitehead could not foretell the manifestation,¹⁴ or the degree of this condition in our era, he anticipated Modern Western civilization’s rejection of the cultural characteristics of Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art and Peace for what David Strong refers to as heedless thinking which encourages “devices” and their consumption.

Heedless thinking is the consideration of the things in the world as a “mere means to some other and more important end.”¹⁵ It is “shallow, narrow and flattened.”¹⁶ This mind set claims does not recognize the inherent meaning or value of the thing itself. Heedlessness results in seeing nature only as raw material ready for use. This use of nature is dominated by a “framework of technology,”¹⁷ supported by a particular idea of “freedom and prosperity.”¹⁸ The “technological ideas of freedom is . . . one of disburdenment,” while prosperity is marked by the objects of a “status symbol.”¹⁹ “The ironic consequences of this vision of freedom and prosperity can be” recognized in the “peculiar way technology transforms or, more specifically, dominates nature and culture. [T]echnology follows a pattern, unique to the modern era, in the way that it gets everything under control”²⁰ through the domination of “devices.” For instance, “[t]he central heating system dominates warmth; it bring warmth under control in ways that wood-burning stoves do not.”²¹ “The device (the central heating system) provides a commodity, one element of the original thing [the hearth] (warmth alone) and disburdens people of all the elements that compose the world and engaging character of the thing. This world of the thing, it’s ties to the natural and cultural world and our engagement with that many-dimensional world of bodily, cerebral and social levels, is taken over by the *machinery* (the central heating plant itself) of the device. . . the device makes available a commodity - warmth.”²² With respect to the mind set of heedlessness, “[t]he ideal device is one where, from an experiential standpoint, a commodity can be enjoyed unencumbered by means.”²³ Devices dominate our existence these days, they are almost our entire reference from which we know life. The ironic characteristic of devices is that they only answer to temporary needs; needs drawn out of our cultural alliance with utility, economics and mindlessness. Our deep and full experience of the world has been exchanged on a grand scale for things such as Disney Land and eco-tourism. Devices result in “alienation” which leads to “disengagement, diversion, distraction and loneliness.”²⁴ Devices are built upon one another, further separating us from the World, from reality. They serve to disguise the fact that we have fallen into endless repetitions of our learned cultural patterns. We see these repetitions as highly creative acts, but they are more like nervous and insecure habits, like smoking; there seems to be no choice but to smoke, no other life than the one being lead at the time. We have sacrificed the defining characteristics of civilization for false securities. In doing this we are disengaged from the extensive continuum and deny our direct and intuitive *being in the world*.

Whitehead’s metaphysics focuses on the creative/becoming that occurs in a general organic process. A process that is more attentive to a universal interrelation than the creation of an artifact. I recognize a strong alliance between the universal creativity/becoming that Whitehead writes of and the creative acts of an individual. This alliance is not manifest in the artifact produced from the creative act, although the artifact is important in another way, but the process itself. The process of creating aids in an

individual's participation in the universal continuum, as a method of manifesting specificity; a moment in the continuum, and resolving duality.

Philosophy claims that creativity is a chief characteristic of the human species.²⁵ I find this position problematic for a complete understanding of the relationship of creativity to the World. Based upon the evidence of biologists, anthropologists and human ecologists,²⁶ creativity is not only a chief characteristic of the human species, it is a chief characteristic of all species and phenomena in the World. In order for creativity to be exclusive to the human species, it would have to be a culturally derived characteristic. Yet how do we explain an infant's creative moments of advance? Is this merely instinct? How do we explain a whale's song?. And what of the beaver who dams the creek? Lightning or rainbows? The biological creates in its evolution, telling a story of its becoming.²⁷ The prairie grouse creates a dance in the spring to draw in a mate, drumming from within his chest cavity, expanding into a colorful and expressive moment. The dance is unique to each bird, providing the opportunity to communicate, commune. I cannot believe as Descartes did, that these animal's activities are merely automated and the rest of the world is inanimate. Creativity does not grow from our self-referential existence, is not unique to us, cannot be developed from civilized laws, Cartesian methods or scientific processes. In fact, creativity is stifled by these conditions and their predisposition to abstraction.²⁸ Creativity is a biological characteristic. Creativity serves as the participatory and eternally linked relationship with the World. Through creating we become. Creativity provides for our full participation in the continuum and allows us to commune, mark, and communicate, and then reflect upon our becoming. We achieve this through making. The world, beavers, prairie grouse, whales and humans all have the ability to commune through making.

Snyder is keenly aware of these modern assumption of creativity when he writes of communication and language. "It would be a mistake" he writes, "to think that human beings got *smarter* at some point and invented language and then society. Language and culture emerge from our biological-social natural existence, animals that we were/are. Language is a mind-body system that co-evolved with our needs and nerves. Like imagination and the body, language rises unbidden. It is a complexity that eludes our rational intellectual capacities. . . .without conscious devise we constantly reach into the vast word-hoards in the depths of the wild unconscious. We cannot as individuals or even as a species take credit for this power."²⁹

Understanding how making and communing is activated by creating is difficult given Modern Western civilization's focus upon devices. In considering our ancient history this activity becomes more clear. In *From Religion to Philosophy*, F. M Cornford explores our early practices of identity, religion and philosophy. Prior to the advanced development of self-consciousness; the distinction of the self to other, Cornford claims, we existed in immediate or sympathetic relationship with other things of the world. After we "lost the primitive sense of constant and continuous identity" we created ritual stimulants to return us to our original and ecstatic condition of pre-consciousness.³⁰ Through these we returned to our original wildness. He claims that we held a relationship of consubstantiality with totems, that served to establish a social group and its customs. "This social group," he writes, "consisting of its human members and totem-species, is defined by the collective function it exercises as a continuous whole. . . the human and non-human species, are not distinguished but considered one and the same. . . [t]heir magical ceremonies are essentially co-operative and sympathetic." Such "magical action consists in actually *doing what you want done*. The rainmakers believe themselves simply to be 'making rain,' not to be imitating rain, so as to cause rain to fall later." Cornford claims that in ancient times custom and nature were perceived as one and the same. The effects of the totemic custom is similar to Whithead's belief that we have an ability to be "present in another entity." An ability for which we still have the potential today. What keeps us from recognizing and activating this potential is the primacy we give to one way of coming to know the world, namely, reason.

Too often we rely on interpretations from philosophers and scientists to explain our past. Yet the World's truth survives and waits for our experience of it. The ancient story of communing with the world has been told through the paintings upon stone walls and in caves. They are narratives of a life of the wild; the human species in full and intentional participation with the world. When our ancestors painted upon

the stone 2,000 to 10,000 years ago, our lives were imbedded in the lives of other's. This biological and spiritual condition required full investment in the moment and place. Painting on the stone was as necessary as hunting. Jack Turner relates a story of coming across one of these painted narratives in the canyons of Utah. "Then, in the last light of day, I was startled by a line of dark torsos and a strange hand on the wall just above the canyon floor. I froze, rigid with fear. My usual categories of alive and not alive became permeable. The painted figures stared at me, transmuted from mere stone as if by magic, and I stared back in terror. . . I was chilled, shivering, though the air was warm."³¹ Turner's surprise of the paintings is the same kind of surprise we experience when we come across a fox or a waterfall in the forest we did not know to expect. The unexpected is brought on by our adventure, it draws us into the experience and we fully feel the moment. We are "present in another entity." "Although spooky and unsettling," explains Turner, "they absorbed us, and we did not want to leave."³² Such an experience is only had when we are not limited by the pre-conditioning of abstract knowledge. Turner's participation in the immediacy of experience allows him to recognize that the paintings are not representations or mere petroglyphs but "pre-presentations" of a social group.

The paintings experienced without the abstracting limits of pre-text are part of the wild landscape we experience. Free from the deadening pre-telling of the thing through guide books or tour guides, we come to the moment on our own.³³ We are transformed by the totality of the experience and we recover a bit of something archaic deep within us, inspiration.³⁴ The painting and waterfall await us, continuously becoming. The fox is as surprised and full of wonder as we, "becoming" it's experience of us. Adventure returns us to the wild and propels us into a creative state.

Creativity is not a chief characteristic of civility, rather a chief characteristic of the wild. We create not out of our belonging to civilization but from our belonging to the world. Thoreau tells us that in "wildness is the preservation of the world." His concern for the preservation of "wildness" has imbedded in it the concern for the loss of origins. The wild, for Thoreau, did not mean wilderness or wildlife, although these places and beings embody wildness. Rather, wildness holds within it the lessons of learning, the inspiration drawn from adventure, not repetition. From knowing the wild we come to know the fullness of the self, all that we are and can become. To lose the wild in ourselves is ultimately to lose our place in the cosmos; to lose the wild is to lose the ability to understand and appreciate all in the world. Gary Snyder claims that "wildness is not just 'the preservation of the world,' it is the world." As such, "[t]o speak of wildness is to speak of wholeness."³⁵ What is meant by "[w]ildness is not limited to the two percent [of established] formal wilderness areas." Wildness is a belonging to a larger whole in both biological and spiritual terms. Turner recognizes the wild as "places where the land, flora and fauna, the people, their culture, their language and arts [are] still ordered by energies and interests fundamentally their own, not by the homogenization and normalization of modern life."³⁶ Wildness is something we grow further and further away from as we become more and more civilized. Yet, according to Snyder, "[w]hat lies between those two brackets [wildness and civility] is not dead and gone. It is perennially within us, dormant as a hard-shelled seed, awaiting the fire or flood that awakes it again."³⁷ We have only elected to turn our cultural patterns away from nature, to break the re-investing characteristics of civilization towards the pre-occupation of exclusively human concerns.

When Turner returned years later to see the paintings in Utah he had lost the sense of the Wild about him. "The pictographs were still wonderful," he says, "but now they were just things we were visiting. I had become a tourist to my own experience. I tried unsuccessfully to recapture the magic of those first moments. I took notes, but they exceeded the power of description. . . Indeed, the more we talked, described, and photographed, the more common they seemed. Everyone was appreciative, impressed, but the unmediated, the raw, and the unique was history."³⁸ Turner did not go to the canyons the second time with the intent of adventure, he went with the goal of verifying some knowledge of a thing he already "knew." Reason and abstraction pre-conditioned and limited his frame of mind. His anticipation had been homogenized by the normalcy of modern life. His experience was mediated not only by the primacy given the intellectual devices of reason, but also our reasoned devices of cultural activity and technology. Upon reflection of this second experience of the paintings Turner says "Photographic reproduction and mass tourism are now commonplace and diminish a family of qualities broader than, though including, our experience of art: aura is affected, but so is wildness, spirit, enchantment, the sacred,

holiness, magic, and soul.”³⁹ He goes on, “[m]aps and guides destroy the wildness of a place just as surely as photography and mass tourism destroys the aura of art and nature.” Later in his life Turner comes across photographs that predate his original discovery of the paintings. “Had I known the locations of the paintings and seen Brimhall’s photographs” He says “there would have been less adventure, no exploration, and no aura - the ‘quality of the presence’ would have been diminished if not erased.”⁴⁰ Turner’s experience helps us to understand that the potential loss of the wild and consequently the demise of the World, is brought about by our activities made separate from the world. We reduce the world’s fullness through our own devices.⁴¹

We can recognize the operation of reason and abstraction in our own experiences. I recall the Grand Canyon. Due to its notoriety, and representation in commercials, guide books and geography classes, we lose the ability to know the place, feel the wild, and its power when we finally experience it. Our expectations and memories already harbor the abstracted idea of the place or event. We cannot get past the abstraction of it we have pre-experienced in order to know it in its immediacy. We look at the object, recognize its material nature as matched to photographs and we return home acknowledging that we have “seen” or “been to” the Grand Canyon. In addition to these distancing conditions we bring with us, we walk around the Grand Canyon with a guide book or a guide to ensure that we see everything of value the place has to offer. The value we are in search of are the norms our cultural conditioning has prepared us to appreciate, not the wonder of the experience we feel when unprepared. There is no *adventure* in this pre-conceived condition, no “unplanned event, the encountering of risk, or otherwise remarkable event.”⁴² What is lost without adventure is “the search for novel perfection;”⁴³ novel perfection being the specific manifestation of the Universal. Consequently we lose the inspiration to create. According to Whitehead the problem entwined in this condition is that “[a]dventure is necessary to the foundation of all theories of man and of society. In art it requires that conventional training be supplemented by novel experiment; in sociology it requires the Hellenic mentality rather than the Byzantine; in the learned world it requires the precedence of speculation over scholarship. But ultimately it too is based upon a metaphysical principle: the principle of process. Each actual thing can be understood only in terms of its becoming and its perishing.”⁴⁴ Where Whitehead insists that the value in our creations is the process, modernity emphasizes the thing itself. The object of the painting, the object of the Grand Canyon. Turner, too, recognizes that it is the objects of the experience that modern civilization preserves rather than the experience. These static things without their whole context lose wildness. Considering the fate of wildness Turner says that he “wish[es] we were wise enough to preserve something more. I wish that children seven generations from now could wander into an unknown canyon and receive at dusk the energy captured by a now-forgotten but empowered people. I wish these children could endure their gaze and, if for only a moment, bask in the aura of their gift.”⁴⁵ In the words of Snyder, “[w]here do we start to resolve the dichotomy of the civilized and the wild?”⁴⁶ Perhaps we should consider the mechanisms that engender it to us.

Modernity substitutes the abstract and flattened understanding of the world for its full experience. Modern education is the “static” portrayal of these understandings. The teacher is the guide, the text book is the guide book. The goal is to ensure that the event or the thing is explained in a way that allows each student to gain the same information. Full experience of the event or thing of the World is substituted for limited abstraction and equality. The world’s fullness is denied and spoiled by the pre-telling, the conditioning of controlled expectations. Within the controlled representations the sense of adventure is lost. Consequently, the transformative and inspiring power of the experience is destroyed by the pre-telling of the world. We are in such a hurry to impart knowledge that we lose the wildness of the self in the world. As such, an entire civilization is lost from the fullness of creativity/becoming. How are we to mend this loss? How do we regain the wild? How do we make whole the duality that plagues us through out our lives? If the wild “is perennially within us,” as Snyder claims, what will be the fire or flood “that awakes it again?”⁴⁷ The awakening will come by allowing others to know the world and their self through the experience of adventure and reflection. Wildness will be regained through full participation in the World. From these adventures creativity is born. Adventure has intent. It is not thoughtless or uninvolved. The intention is the base of the process not the object of the process. When Gary Snyder is invested in the adventure of cutting of trails or sweeping a floor he is bound, mind and body, to an event, to a place and the World. We can discover the interrelation of the World by sweeping the floor, gardening, chanting, meditation, drinking tea. Here again modernity’s abstraction fails to help us understand what

these processes could mean. Yet the intentions, the mindfulness of these adventures, can completely transform our lives. Each can awaken something of the mystic in us. Let me give some examples. Snyder claims that “[w]alking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to mankind. Walking is the exact balance of spirit and humility.” It is “also a teaching of mindfulness and preparedness.”⁴⁸ Reflect upon Wendell Berry’s poem,⁴⁹ “A Man Walking and Singing”:

But the man so forcefully walking,
say where he goes,
say what he hears and what he sees
and what he knows
to cause him to stride so merrily.

He goes in spring
through the evening street
to buy bread,

green trees leaning
over the sidewalk,
forsythia yellow
beneath the windows,
birds singing
as birds sing
only in spring,

and he sings, his footsteps
beating the measure of his song.

The poet Lu T’ung writes of drinking tea:

“The first cup moistens my lips and throat, the second cup breaks my loneliness, the third cup searches my barren entrail but to find therein some five thousand volumes of odd ideographs. The fourth cup raises a slight perspiration - all the wrong of my life passes away through my pores. At the fifth cup I am purified; the sixth cup calls me to the realm of immortals. The seventh cup - ah, but I could take no more! I only feel the breath of cool wind that rises in my sleeves. Where is Horaisan? Let me ride on this sweet breeze and waft away thither.”⁵⁰

Consider Georgia O’Keefe’s ritual reading of the “Book of Tea”, or her daily walks in the desert. Lastly, consider Thoreau’s stay at Walden Pond, or walking in the Maine woods. He was well aware of the potential misunderstanding of why one walks when he wrote: “The walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called, as the sick take medicine . . . but is itself an enterprise and adventure of the day.”⁵¹

From Thoreau’s adventure at Walden Pond grew Walden. From Lu T’ung’s adventure drinking tea grew his poetry. The relationship between adventure and creativity brought together and manifest in an artifact is the link between culture and wildness. When the artifacts are collected and reflected upon a unique language of civilization results. From creativity is produced an artifact which can communicate the Wild, the whole world in a specific thing. We can do our own walking, or follow Thoreau on his journey. We can smell the sage, and feel the dry air of the high desert, or we can discover the World through Georgia O’Keefe’s paintings. This is not to say that the immediate and mediated experience is essentially the same. In the former, we experience the World directly, in the latter we come to experience the world through the artifact in its manifestation of beauty. The creator employing the unique patterns of a particular culture, draws from the immediacy of his or her intuition transcending the thing made in order to return us to the experience of the infinity of the World.

Leonardo Da Vinci, at the dawn of the renaissance, considered these two types of experiences. Da Vinci found wholeness in Nature. Facts most often recognized as isolated measures he saw as “concrete

beings and events . . . infinitely and multifariously interconnected and superimposed upon one another.”⁵² While others of his time were considering what was *necessary* in Nature, DaVinci and Galileo similarly concluded that “Nature is necessity.”⁵³ Drawing from this conclusion, DaVinci who was a skilled scientist and artist, finds that poetry and art *have* necessity. He does not find nature to belong only to truth and poetry mere fable of fiction, because he sees poetry as “a genuine and indispensable organ for the understanding of reality itself.”⁵⁴ He finds that art and poetry are born from the necessity of nature, a condition to which the mind is a part. DaVinci’s understanding of nature was drawn from what he felt and experienced of the World as well as drawing from his intuited “presupposed intellectual sketch.” Through the participation of the mind a “basic relationship between artistic imagination and reality, and between ‘genius’ and ‘nature’” arose.⁵⁵ What the artist communicates, he claims, is the “ultimate foundation” of nature. “True artistic imagination does not soar above nature into the realm of mere fictions or fantasies but, rather, seizes upon nature’s own eternal and immanent laws.”⁵⁶ Years later, Goethe had a similar understanding, “the laws [of nature], manifesting itself in complete freedom and under its own conditions, brings forth the objectively beautiful, which then, of course, must find subjects worthy of comprehending it.” What DaVinci recognizes is that “the creative power of the artist, the imagination that creates a ‘second nature,’ does not consist in his inventing the law . . . it consists in his discovery and demonstration of the law.”⁵⁷ The beautiful manifest in art, is the revealing of nature, “in its highest determination.”⁵⁸ Beauty, if we recall Whitehead’s words, is one of the five characteristics of civilization. Beauty’s “relevance is both to the constitution of nature and the products of a man-made society.” Whitehead goes on to say that “[t]he teleology of the Universe is directed to the production of Beauty. Thus any system of things which in any wide sense is beautiful is to that extent justified in its existence.”⁵⁹ Through the experience of beauty things contribute to a strength of “feeling the whole, and the whole contributes to the intensity of feeling the parts,” arriving at the “perfection of Beauty.”⁶⁰ The “ultimate foundation” of nature that DaVinci recognizes is not merely the various objects of nature but Nature’s process of the ultimate continuum. What turns the Cosmos, the continuum, is Beauty, the manifestation of which we share with all species and phenomena.

Through the creation of second nature we may embody the ultimate foundation; the process of the ultimate continuum. From the artifact beauty is manifest. The experience of beauty allows us to feel the interrelation and wholeness of the World, and return us to the Wild. Thoreau wrote that to “discover” beauty “[y]ou have got to be in a different state than common.” The “common” Thoreau refers to is the modern state of mind. The abstract, utilitarian, scientific and economic treatment of the world. The different state that he intended was the wild, the condition of unmediated feelings of the self and world. It is these experiences that are required for the activation of our creativity. While the activation of creativity is necessary not only for our productivity of beauty but our recognition of it. Recall Goethe’s statement that beauty “must find subjects worthy of comprehending it.” To “discover”, infers that beauty requires the one who experiences, to recognize beauty. Beauty does not make itself known, but must come to be known.

DaVinci’s insight helped to introduce us to the observations the human species has of nature, and how powerful these observations are when the foundation of the World is manifest through art. I will now turn to Jacques Maritain for a thorough explanation of what powers are at work when we create. Maritain claims that “poetry and poetic inspiration’ [s]” primal source is our spiritual unconsciousness or preconscious.” The spiritual unconscious emanates from the soul gaining its power through the filtering of intuitive information to the imagination and finally the intellect.⁶¹ Although the spiritual unconscious involves the intellect, it does not participate in its “instruments of rational knowledge” and “the processes of production of concepts and ideas. . .”⁶² Rather, the spiritual unconscious participates in another “kind of life” that is also “cognitive and productive” which “carries it along toward the manifestation of the creativity of the spirit; and . . . shaped and quickened by creative intuition.”⁶³ The product that results from this creativity is poetry. Poetry, different from the product of rationality, is “knowledge in act”; nonconceptual knowledge.⁶⁴ The type of knowledge that Maritain refers to is an “inherent knowledge . . . immanent in and *consubstantial* with poetry, one with its very essence.”⁶⁵ In the poet creativity acts free from particular aims “for it only tends to engender in beauty.”⁶⁶ In order for this condition to be met the creator, desirous of creating, grasps his or her own subjectivity in order to know. “For poetry means first of all an intellectual act which by its essence is creative, and forms something into being instead of being

formed by things . . .”⁶⁷ Yet the poet cannot know his or herself purely through subjectivity. Maritain goes on to say,

The poet remains empty to himself is he does not fill himself with the universe, the poet knows himself only on the condition that things resound in him . . . In other words, the primary requirement of poetry, which is the obscure knowing, by the poet, of his own subjectivity, is inseparable from, is one with another requirement - the grasping, by the poet, of the objective reality of the outer and inner world; not by means of concepts and conceptual knowledge, but by means of an obscure knowledge . . . Hence the perplexities of the poet’s condition. If he hears the passwords . . . perceives the realities . . . that are the core of actual existence, if he captures those more things which are in heaven and earth than are dreamt in our philosophy, he does not do so by knowing all this in the ordinary sense of the word to know, but by receiving all this into the obscure recesses of his passion. All that he discerns and divines in things, he discerns and divines as not something other than himself, according to the law of speculative knowledge, but, on the contrary, as inseparable from himself and from his emotion, and in truth as identified with himself.

His intuition, the creative intuition, is an obscure grasping of his own Self and of things in a knowledge through union or through connaturality which is born in the spiritual unconscious, and which fructifies only in the work.⁶⁸

From this passage we can recognize that our current practices and the cultural patterns drawn out of modernity’s exclusive reliance upon rational systems for knowledge destroys our ability to “engender in beauty;” to come to poetic knowledge. The primacy given rationality negates the value of consubstantial knowing, and subsequently devalues the immediate experience of adventure, and the feeling of the World and the self in the world. Our work, devoid of poetry, is reduced to only the work of practical and specific aims. As such we lose touch with the transcendental knowing of the self, the ability for the work to be an “instrumental vehicle through which reality is grasped” is lost.⁶⁹

The point of concern for this paper is generally drawn from the question of the way we come to know, specifically the knowing of the world and the Self. The cartesian system committed our path exclusively to the products of logic and reason. Through this path, it was thought, we could find the definitive answers to the unknown in the World. The result, however, is quite different. Yes, we have found cures for many diseases, developed the atomic bomb, traveled to the moon and raised the material qualities of many lives. But the methods required of this system have also fracture and separate the objective aspects of the world and pushed aside the transcendental, the spiritual condition through which we become. Our focus upon the objective has limited our knowledge, as Whitehead warned, to only discrete and isolated things and instances. The effect of this type of knowing is that we experience the world and our selves through only secondary terms of concepts and abstraction. As David Strong points out, these secondary terms, in modernity, have found their way into the objects we make serving as the devices that further separate us from knowing and feeling the immediacy of the World. In this perpetuating program we spiral further away from not only our humanity but more importantly our wildness; the resting place of our poetic intuition. Our lives and experiences are fractured and disengaged. Our days are full of stress, ugliness and hate. We have lost command of the practices and patterns of our civilization and without creativity they have fallen into utter and degenerating repetition. Across the mythical abyss from our constructions of abstraction lies another knowledge. The knowledge of the World and self that is felt simultaneously by intuition and grounded in our spiritual unconsciousness or, as Whitehead calls it, the extensive continuum. The knowledge of beauty through uniquely manifest materiality allows us to know ourselves in the Infinity of the World.⁷⁰ In the words of William Blake:⁷¹

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

We can find our way again to this knowing. We start simply. By seeking out our own experiences of the world, we join the self and the world through adventure, awakening wildness and calling forth our becoming and creativity.

¹ Snyder, Gary. *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964-1979* (New York: A New Directions Book, 1980) p.8

² Refer to Morris Berman's book *The Reenchantment of the World*, p. 70. According to Berman through nonparticipating consciousness "knowledge is acquired by recognizing the distance between ourselves and nature." Whereas participating consciousness is an "ecstatic merger with nature." I believe that we cannot return to a reality that is only shaped by participating consciousness nor can we continue to live in a reality that is only constituted by nonparticipatory consciousness, but we must move between both to provide a grounding for how we are in the world. I call this balance full participation.

³ Snyder, p. 8

⁴ *ibid.* p. 7

⁵ Reese, William L. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996) p. 831.

⁶ Levi, Albert William. *Philosophy and the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959) p. 501

⁷ *ibid.* p. 512

⁸ The Greeks understood Kosmos, World and Beauty to be the same thing. See Frank Stewart's book, *A Natural History of Nature Writing*.

⁹ Levi, p. 503

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 520

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 525

¹² Reese, pp. 830-32.

¹³ Levi, pp. 513-14.

¹⁴ Whitehead claims that the race was awakened into progress by a great deal of perfection. This ideal was an immense advance upon the ideals which the surrounding civilization had produced. It was effective and realized in a civilization which attained its proper beauty in human lives to an extent we have not surpassed before or since. . . With repetition in successive generations, freshness gradually vanished. Learning and learned taste replaced the ardour of adventure. Hellenism was replaced by Hellenistic epoch in which genius was stifled by repetition. . . . For two thousand years the Greek art-forms lifelessly repeated: The Greek schools of philosophy . . . arguing with barren formulae: Conventional histories: A stabilized Government with the sanctity of ancient ceremony, supported by habitual pieties: Literature without depth: Science elaborating detail by deductions from unquestioned premises: Delicacies of feeling without robustness of adventure. (Levi, p. 526)

¹⁵ Strong, David. *Crazy Mountains: Learning from Wilderness to Weigh Technology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) p. 65

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 65

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 75

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 79

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 80

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 80

²¹ *ibid.* p.80-81

²² *ibid.* p. 81-82

²³ *ibid.* p. 82

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 86

²⁵ Reese, p. 147

²⁶ Paul Shepherd in his book *Nature and Madness* discusses this idea in relation to children's development.

²⁷ The proposition of biological evolution aligns with Whitehead's metaphysics.

²⁸ Edith Cobb and Paul Shepherd both dedicated their research to this concern. In different ways they identified the loss of creativity and confidence that was caused by modern culture.

²⁹ Strong, p. 17.

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- ³⁰ Cornford, F. M. *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study In the Origins of Western Speculation*. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980) p. 77-78.
- ³¹ Turner, Jack. *The Abstract Wild*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996) p.8.
- ³² *ibid.* p. 9
- ³³ This condition of deadening or “flattening”, in the words of Charlene Spretnak, is characteristic of modern education. The teacher is the guide, the text book is the guide book. The goal is to ensure that the event or the thing is explained in a quantitatively measured way. Each student is to gain the same information, understand the lesson in the same way. Competency is measured in this way. Experience of the event or thing is denied and spoiled by the pre-telling- the conditioning of a particular expectation. The potential becoming, the transformative powers of the experience, is destroyed by the pre-telling of the world. We are in such a hurry to impart knowledge, for learning, that we miss the potential to become wise through the experience in the world. We lose the wild quality of the self in the world.
- ³⁴ Snyder, Gary. *The Practice of the Wild*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990) p. 13.
- ³⁵ *ibid.* p. 12
- ³⁶ Turner, p.12
- ³⁷ Snyder, p. 13
- ³⁸ Turner, p. 11
- ³⁹ *ibid.* p. 15
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 17
- ⁴¹ Strong
- ⁴² Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, 1986. listing of “adventure” p. 31.
- ⁴³ Levi, p. 524
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 526
- ⁴⁵ Turner, p. 18
- ⁴⁶ Snyder, p. 15
- ⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 13
- ⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 18
- ⁴⁹ Berry, Wendell. *Collected Poems: 1957-1982*. (San Francisco: North Point Press) p. 12.
- ⁵⁰ Okakura, Kakuzo *The Book of Tea*. (Boston: Shambhala , 1993) p. 25.
- ⁵¹ LaRusso, Carol S. ed. *The Green Thoreau*. (San Rafael: New World Library, 1992) p. 30-31.
- ⁵² Cassirer, Ernst. *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963) p. 155.
- ⁵³ *ibid.* p. 156.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 157
- ⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 163
- ⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 163
- ⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 163
- ⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 164
- ⁵⁹ Levi, p. 524
- ⁶⁰ Levi, p. 525
- ⁶¹ Maritain, Jacques. *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*. (New York: New American Library, 1954) pp. 76-77.
- ⁶² *ibid.* p. 79
- ⁶³ *ibid.* p. 79
- ⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 80
- ⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 81. Refer to p. 85 for a thorough explanation of consubstantial.
- ⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 81
- ⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 82
- ⁶⁸ *ibid.* p 83-84
- ⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 87
- ⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 88
- ⁷¹ *ibid.* p. 116