CREATIVE CLIMATE:

EAST-WEST PERSPECTIVES ON ART, NATURE, AND THE EXPRESSIVE BODY

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation defends the need for a renewed conception of nature as seen through the lens of an artist. By exploring how the relationship between art and nature has been conceived by 19th and 20th century European and Japanese philosophers (including Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Nishida, and Watsuji), I offer a way of thinking about artistic expression that recognizes the active, expressive character of artistic media and, more broadly, nature itself. Through an analysis of the embodied foundations of artistic creation, I develop a non-subjectivist account of expression that incorporates the climatic milieu. *I maintain that the continuity between the embodied self and its life-world implies that the origin of creativity exceeds the will of the individual. This, in turn, implies that nature and the material on which art draws are expressive.* According to this view, nature is not an indifferent realm of "mere" material and chemical processes distinct from the domain of culture and meaning. Rather, it is a creative climate from which the artist draws and to which the artist contributes. In conclusion, I maintain that this view has the potential to inform a more sustainable and ethically sound attitude towards the natural world.

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For Jade

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ever since aesthetics was granted philosophical legitimacy by Kant in the culminating installment of his critical project, the *Critique of Judgment,* the meaning and significance of art has been one of the most important philosophical problems of modern philosophy. And, currently, understanding the human relationship to nature is becoming an increasingly pressing issue, within both environmental philosophy and current discourses of the European philosophical tradition. Though it might not be immediately apparent, the meaning and significance of art and the human relationship to nature are deeply interconnected issues, a fact evinced by Kant's treatment of them in tandem in the third *Critique*. Beginning with the environmentalist recognition that a deeper inquiry into how we conceive of nature has become exigent, this dissertation explores how nature is conceived through the lens of the artist engaged in the creative process. By examining the relationship between artists and their media as recounted by particular 19th and 20th century European and Japanese philosophers, I offer a way of thinking about artistic expression that recognizes the active, expressive character of artistic media and, more broadly, nature itself.

The interconnection between, and inseparability of, art and nature can be most clearly demonstrated by considering the artist and the act of artistic creation. However, the creation of art has been, and continues to be, an enigma for philosophy. Within the Western tradition, most of the discussions of art have been focused on the artworks themselves rather than the artistic process, and in some cases, discussions of the artist's

significance with regard to artworks have been eschewed outright. Despite its neglect within discourses in aesthetics, the event of artistic creation is a highly fecund topic for thinking through vital philosophical problems such as the nature of perception, embodied action and expression, and, most fundamentally, the relationship between art and nature. Therefore, artistic activity deserves more careful philosophical consideration than it has been given.

The event of artistic creation raises fundamental questions about the relationship between art and nature because it blurs the boundaries between them. It is true that art and nature are often defined antithetically, and so it might seem as if they are exclusive categories. Historically, natural forms and art forms have been defined in contradistinction to each other since natural forms come into existence on their own, whereas art is a product of human activity. In other words, natural products arise "naturally," whereas art is *made*. Aristotle articulates this difference as one between physis and téchnē. Distinguishing between art and nature on these grounds is unproblematic as long as human activity is understood to be fundamentally separate from nature. However, once human activity is seen as continuous with natural activity, this definition becomes less salient. Once human activity is understood as an extension of nature's own life, it is reasonable to conclude that art is expressive of something originating within nature itself. In other words, though human beings are the creators, artworks may be viewed as expressions of nature because human beings are not ultimately distinguishable from nature. This is especially clear when the human body's role in creative acts is acknowledged. The body, which is bound up with the movements of life and its environment, engages a material medium in order to transform it. Thus, art

and nature converge in the artist's body during the act of creation. An examination of the artist's bodily engagement with a medium is, therefore, an integral component of my inquiry.

A close examination of what transpires during the creative process reveals how nature, and more specifically, material media, have the potential to become expressive when they are taken up by an artist. Many artists confirm this when they speak of following the lead of the material with which they are working during the creation of a piece. For instance, Michelangelo is famous for saying that he simply releases the sculpture that is already there within the block of stone. Typically one would expect an artist to begin with a conception for a piece, and then apply it to the stone. However, Michelangelo's statement seems to imply that he is responding to what is suggested by the marble rather than imposing his own will upon it. Interestingly, we find a statement similar to Michelangelo's in the *Zhuangzi,* a Daoist classic, in which a humble woodworker describes going into the mountain forest to examine the heavenly nature of trees. "If I find one of superlative form," he says, "and I can see a bell stand there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go."[1] Both artists regard the material for their art as having its own integrity, inviting them to shape it into an artwork. The renowned Zen Buddhist landscape architect, Masuno Shunmyo, even goes so far to say that when he designs a garden he enters into dialogue with the rocks and plants to "hear what they themselves have to say about how they want to be laid out."[2] But what could it possibly mean to enter into dialogue with rocks and plants? Of course, the "dialogue" between the

[1] Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 129.

[2] Robert E. Carter, *The Japanese Arts and Self-Cultivation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 63.

artist and his materials does not take place in language. However, the material's appeal to the artist need not be interpreted as simply metaphorical either.

Some may contend that whatever dialogue the artist perceives him or herself to be having with material is simply the artist's projection. This contention, however, assumes a certain view in which the rich meaningfulness of human life stands over against a passive and indifferent physical world of mere material devoid of meaning. Certain Buddhist thinkers have challenged this way of thinking by recognizing the living character of all reality, the non-duality of the mind and body, and the dependent origination of the self and the world.[3] Within this context, the radical interconnectedness of all existence and the relinquishment of the ego through the immersion of oneself in the field of experience offer a way to understand how the natural world permeates and guides the expressive activity of human beings. If we abandon the metaphysical framework that reduces nature to "mere" materiality and acknowledge that the very existence of life protests against the kind of reductive, dichotomized thinking this framework assumes, we can gain a better understanding of what artists mean when they say that they are impelled to create by the material before them.

The idea that nature expresses itself through the artist is not new. This is precisely Kant's view of genius articulated in the third *Critique*. However, Kant did not explain in detail just how nature expresses itself through the artist. Other German thinkers following

[3] For studies detailing the history Buddhist perspectives on sentient and non-sentient nature, see: Graham Parkes, "Voices of Mountains, Trees, and Rivers: Kūkai, Dōgen, and a Deeper Ecology," in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, 111-128, eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); and William R. La Fleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, 183-209, eds. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

Kant, such as Schelling and Hegel, did provide more nuanced accounts of the relationship between art and nature in the work of genius. But, due to their adherence to the metaphysical tradition and the privileging of spirit over matter that it entails, they fail to give a satisfactory account of the continuity of art and nature, and of nature's potential to become expressive.

Heidegger critiques the metaphysical tradition and the reign of subjectivity that it involves; however, his desire to avoid a subjectivist account of art led him to neglect what the experience of the artist has to contribute to a philosophical understanding of art. Merleau-Ponty, who looks to artists to exemplify his ideas throughout his oeuvre, provides a valuable counterpoint to Heidegger on this issue. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty's writings on art serve as a fruitful point of comparison with Japanese aesthetic theories, which do not hesitate to discuss the relevance of artists. In fact, for Nishida, the foremost modern Japanese philosopher, artistic activity is often appealed to as an exemplary form of human activity in which one's truest self emerges.

Merleau-Ponty is able to provide a compelling treatment of the artist and aesthetic perception after Heidegger due to his understanding of the self as embodied, and therefore in continuity with the flesh of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, like Heidegger, the self exists as being-in-the-world, a perspective which acknowledges the permeability of self and world through our embodiment. Understanding the self as being-in-the-world is another important point of resonance between modern Japanese and European phenomenologies, and this fundamental insight into the structure of human perception and experience is also essential for articulating the meaning and significance of art and the human's relationship to nature. Because the self exists as being-in-the-world, both

nature and culture thoroughly permeate and shape our experience. Therefore, when the artist creates an artwork, he or she expresses both the ecological and the cultural milieu in which he or she exists. When a medium is taken up by an artist, its living character is allowed to express itself through the corporeal dialogue that takes place between medium and artist during the artistic process. By examining the embodied nature of artistic creation and the active role that media play in the creative process, I develop what I call a "non-subjectivist" account of artistic creation that explains how creative acts are guided by their medium during the creation or performance of a piece. Deemphasizing the artist's subjective intentions in the creative process allows me to demonstrate how nature becomes expressive through the body's dialogue with its climatic milieu. This also allows me to highlight the ways in which human production is responsive to nature and materiality, thereby demonstrating how the generation of art is an activity that is continuous with the expressivity of the natural world.

In order to demonstrate the validity and significance of a non-subjectivist account of artistic expression, I evaluate the ways in which the artist and the relationship between art and nature have been conceived according to the most relevant and influential aesthetic theories since Kant.[4] In part one, I provide an exegesis of the relationship between art and nature in Kant, Hegel, and Schelling. Philosophical aesthetics is grounded in the German tradition, and so it is important to have a firm grasp of the way the problems of aesthetics are articulated therein. Kant, Hegel, and Schelling each develop their philosophies of art in relation to their conceptions of nature. Thus, a

[4] Nietzsche is a key figure that is relevant to my inquiry. However, due to the breadth of figures I will be discussing, I deal with his aesthetics only in passing.

thorough examination of the role of art and nature in their philosophies as a whole illuminates the central questions guiding my inquiry.

Part one begins with an analysis of the unifying roles aesthetics and teleology play in Kant's critical project and his conception of genius in which he famously states that "nature gives the rule to art." The third *Critique* is meant to unify Kant's critical philosophy by demonstrating that the subject's experience of natural beauty serves as a link between the supersensible substrate of nature and the supersensible contained in the concept of freedom. I argue that the important role Kant grants to natural beauty explains the prominence of nature in the workings of genius. Kant explains that artists cannot explain how they are able to produce beautiful forms because that power belongs to an innate talent gifted to the artist by nature. The role of nature in artistic creation also explains why Kant maintains that fine art must look like nature and that beautiful nature, in turn, looks like art. This "crossing" of art and nature points to unresolved tensions in the third *Critique* resulting from the way in which art and beauty mediate between the purposive intentions of artists and the unknowable purposiveness of nature in the workings of genius.

In the remainder of part one, I take up the aesthetics of Schelling and Hegel and the philosophies of nature that they entail, and, as with Kant, the concept of genius and the artist's creative process is the central focus. As German idealists and contemporaries of each other, Schelling and Hegel share a common vocabulary and set of philosophical concerns, but their conceptions of nature, art, and the relationship between the two are very different. The discussion of Hegel demonstrates the hierarchy of matter and spirit within his idealism as it reveals itself in his philosophy of nature and his aesthetics. While

artworks and organic life are both sensuous, material manifestations of the Idea, the Idea is more precisely explicit in artworks precisely because they are free from the contingencies of finite, organic life. I argue that despite the constraints inherent in his idealism, Hegel provides many insights that allow for a revaluation of nature and material. For example, he rejects a reductively mechanistic view of life and recognizes the vital need for art as a sensuous form of self-knowledge. With regard to the artistic process, he acknowledges the key role that media play in the genesis of art. Although, for Hegel, "nature" is in no way active in the creation of art, he provides a clear description of how material, in terms of both the medium and the subject matter, is necessary for artistic inspiration. He explains that an artist takes up something that is externally given and expresses him or herself on that. Thus, Hegel's aesthetics and philosophy of nature are helpful for developing a non-subjectivist account of artistic expression, even though the metaphysical hierarchies of his overall system go against this view.

In addition to Kant and Hegel, Schelling also provides many valuable insights for understanding the relationship between art, nature, and creativity. Schelling understands art to be a fulfillment of nature's own strivings. There is an internal striving within nature to which the artist's drive to create corresponds. Through the creation of art, the artist strives to transform this tension into a harmony. The harmony achieved in art corresponds to the harmony of freedom and necessity, which is also the aim of philosophy. Schelling's views are valuable insofar as he provides an account of the continuity of art and nature in the work of genius. His account of artistic expression highlights the collaboration of the conscious and unconscious elements of creativity, which allows artworks to express more than what the artist may consciously intend. Through the

unconscious, nature becomes expressive in the artistic process; and this, in turn, results in the inexhaustibility of an artwork's meaning. Moreover, the harmonization of freedom and necessity in works of art requires that a degree of opacity be preserved in them, otherwise they would lack the element of spirit that enlivens them. The sensuous meaning of artworks that is beyond articulation is complemented by the theoretical knowledge of philosophy. Together they exhibit the dual strivings and fulfillments of nature. In some ways, then, Schelling's philosophy mediates between the positions held by Kant and Hegel, furthering the strengths of each.

Despite Schelling's insights, however, I argue that, like Hegel, the metaphysical framework structuring the relation between nature, art, and the human subject within his philosophy prevent him from providing a salient account of the expressivity of nature *qua nature*. His philosophy points the way toward an adequate account of creative expression, but his philosophical vocabulary and the metaphysical framework it entails prevent his account from being fully satisfactory. The German idealist tradition conceives of nature within a metaphysical framework in which the human subject stands above nature as a higher, more advanced kind of being. Both Schelling and Hegel view nature as a manifestation of the progressive development of an absolute subject in which spirit and matter are antithetical moments. Despite their attempts to transcend the dichotomy between matter and spirit, when they conceive nature as a manifestation of the development of an absolute subject they reinscribe the difference between them. Even though nature may be granted a preeminent place in relation to art (as is true for Schelling and Kant), or seen as a necessary aspect of the actualization of spirit (as is true for Hegel), nature is still understood to occupy a lower position within a metaphysical

hierarchy in opposition to spirit, or to an infinite subject. Thus, within these metaphysical systems, nature is relegated to an inferior status in relation to human life.

Heidegger recognized the hierarchy of matter and spirit, or, in his terms, the sensible and the intelligible, as the problem of metaphysical thinking in general. Thus, his philosophy of art attempts to think of art independently of human subjectivity and expression. Part two explores Heidegger's radical conception of the *work* of art in relation to some specific claims made by Merleau-Ponty in "Eye and Mind." In the first section, I develop a reading of what the drawing of the rift-design entails, arguing that it is Heidegger's way of describing how the work of art comes into being without appealing to the artistic process. I argue that what he describes using the language of *Riss* and "projective saying" is what is happening when an artist creates. I then connect Heidegger's formulation with Merleau-Ponty's discussion of line and movement in section four of "Eye and Mind" and the writings of Paul Klee. In "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty quotes da Vinci as saying: "The secret of the art of drawing is to discover in each object the particular way in which a certain flexuous line, which is, so to speak, its generating axis, is directed through its whole extent."[5] In the next paragraph, Merleau-Ponty draws from the writings of Klee, saying: "the line no longer imitates the visible; it 'renders visible'; it is the blueprint of the genesis of things."[6] Merleau-Ponty's discussions of the "logos of lines" and the "constituting power" of the "flexuous line" are

[5] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 149.

[6] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 143.

most helpful for elucidating how artists draw out the rift-design. Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the invisible line that provides the inner configuration of things and the structure of their movement clarifies Heidegger's description of the rift-design as a line-drawing or sketch, making it more concrete, especially within a discussion of the relation between nature and art. The carving out of artistic forms in the drawing of the rift is the activity of aesthetic perception. And this drawing is enacted by the artist through the creation of the work—a tracing of the rift that makes both natural and artistic forms truly sensible in a mutually illuminating way. I conclude part two with a brief discussion of the theory of movement developed by the influential choreographer and intellectual, Rudolf Laban. I argue that his theory of movement, space, and embodied "lines of movement" make Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's accounts even more salient by providing a study of the ways in which lines undergird the structure of the body's movement.

The phenomenological approaches of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty mark an important advancement away from the metaphysical approach shared by the German idealists. The phenomenologies of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, thus, serve as a bridge for bringing Japanese philosophy into dialogue with the Western tradition. Since the importance of artists' subjective intentions are deemphasized within Japanese aesthetics, the theories of the self and expressive action put forth by Nishida and Watsuji offer some of the most insightful accounts of the artist and the creative process offered thus far, namely, the expressivity of artistic media—and nature more broadly—resulting from the body's continuity with the world in perception and action. In order to appreciate the thrust of what is being advanced by these philosophers, however, they must be read in light of the trajectory of modern European philosophy. The overview of some of the

major developments within Western aesthetics in parts one and two provides the groundwork necessary to demonstrate what these modern Japanese philosophers have to contribute to the development of a non-subjectivist account of artistic expression. By showing the ways in which metaphysical thinking within the European tradition has inhibited an adequate understanding of artistic creation and the expressivity of nature, the original contributions of Nishida and Watsuji, whose thought responds to but does not share the same metaphysical heritage, are brought into relief. Furthermore, Nishida and Watsuji offer ways of conceiving the historicality of nature and nature's expressivity in art by circumventing the dichotomy between nature and culture pervasive in the European philosophical tradition.

The focus of part three is Merleau-Ponty and Nishida's conceptions of the body and how they bear upon their views of artistic expression. I argue that due to the continuity of the self and world established through our embodiment in the phenomenologies of Nishida and Merleau-Ponty, both acknowledge that a degree of passive receptivity is required for the genesis of art. This receptivity allows the artist to receive inspiration that moves him or her to creative expression, and this receptivity is afforded by the body's attunement to the world through perception. For both thinkers, perception involves the extension of the self beyond the skin, into the field of experience. In Merleau-Ponty's later work, his description of this process takes on an ontological significance in which the body is continuous with the flesh of the world through the intimate relation one has with the world through the senses. In "Eye and Mind" these ideas are used to talk about the artist's engagement with the world, providing the ontological grounding of Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics. Nishida's account of the body is

similar to that of Merleau-Ponty, though his perspective is informed by certain fundamental Buddhist ideas that he reworks using his own philosophical vocabulary. Nishida speaks of an internal/external dialectic of the self-in-space whereby the artist knows that which is "outside" him or her through the dynamic exchange of "acting-intuition." In this exchange, that which performs a creative act is, in turn, shaped by that which is being created. He frequently uses examples of artistry to illustrate this concept, and these examples provide key points of comparison with the aesthetics of Merleau-Ponty, showing the compatibility of their views of the body, perception, and creative expression. Through this discussion, I argue that the continuity of the self and world underlying their theories of perception demonstrates how the body is the site in which the distinction between art and nature is blurred such that artistic expression may be understood to originate from the world-space the artist inhabits just as much as from the artist him or herself. In part three, I also draw upon the work of Watsuji and some key dimensions of Japanese aesthetics to illustrate how climate and the materials with which artists work become expressive during the creative process. By combining Watsuji's discussion of climate with Nishida and Merleau-Ponty's theories of the expressive body, I demonstrate how the artist's receptivity to a climatic milieu enables a material medium to find its own expression in works of art.

I have chosen to take up these particular philosophers because together they comprise a continuous conversation over the last two centuries that exhibits a trend toward a positive revaluation of nature and materiality. Kant's *Critique of Judgment* raised aesthetics to an unprecedented level of rigor, and Hegel and Schelling offer replies to Kant that both challenge the Kantian transcendental framework and elaborate his

concept of genius. The phenomenological tradition marks an important shift in philosophical methodology that both critiques the metaphysical systems of the German idealists and builds upon their legacies. Together Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty offer some of the most groundbreaking theories in ontology and aesthetics of the 20th century. Nishida and Watsuji, two of the most influential modern Japanese philosophers, were heavily influenced by European philosophy, and their thinking offers new and exciting insights into problems that have preoccupied European thinkers. Tracing and critiquing historical descriptions of nature, art, and art-making from Kant to Merleau-Ponty highlights a congenial thread in Western aesthetics, and Merleau-Ponty's work finds its complement in the work of Nishida, and Watsuji. Following this course it is possible to recognize, within the instance of art-making, that the human and the natural are not opposing terms. Rather, they coincide and collaborate. Articulating a non-subjectivist account of artistic expression that highlights the role of the body in creative action in a way that is true to the experience of art-making is one of my goals. Another goal of my project is to present a way of understanding the expressivity of nature in light of the account of artistic expression I have developed. By recognizing how material, not just the human subject, is moved toward expression, I demonstrate the fruitful intersections between aesthetics and the philosophy of nature. Drawing from West and East, my dissertation clarifies the history and vocabulary needed in our moment to rethink the human relationship to nature and what art can be.

CHAPTER II

NATURE'S GENIUS AND THE NEED FOR ART: AESTHETICS AT THE LIMITS OF IDEALISM IN KANT, HEGEL, AND SCHELLING

In his preface to *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (2002), Kai Hammermeister writes, "philosophical aesthetics as a discipline is thoroughly grounded in German thought and, hence, cannot be understood without a detailed knowledge of this tradition."[1] Examining the *discipline* of aesthetics is important because it provides the vocabulary of the discourse and the philosophical framework for how artworks are understood and enables us to identify the aims and scope of our inquiry. Even though aesthetics during the 20th century goes beyond the philosophical framework built by the German aesthetic tradition, revolutionary thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty draw heavily on the key figures who shaped the discourse of aesthetics during the 18th and 19th centuries. Therefore, careful consideration of German idealist aesthetics is needed to understand developments in twentieth century theories of art.

From its inception aesthetics has dealt with art and nature in tandem because they are both inherently material and, therefore, bound to the sensuous. Art and nature's inherent materiality gives them a complicated relationship to knowledge and philosophy. According to the metaphysical schemas of Kant and the German idealists, there is a tension between scientific cognition and philosophy, on the one hand, and the material presentations of art on the other. At the same time, art reveals itself to be its own mode of

[1] Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), x.

knowing, distinct from yet related to philosophy, in which meaning is embodied in a sensuous form. Art has meaningful significance that cannot be conveyed by philosophy.

Though their individual theories differ greatly, each of the Kant, Hegel, and Schelling's philosophies of art are developed in conjunction with their conceptions of nature. The ontological status of art within their philosophies is dependent upon their conceptions of nature. In other words, art and nature must be understood through their relationship to each other. This relationship can be seen most clearly through an account of artists' creative activity. The working artist is the site of the convergence of art and nature. This is evident in Kant's account of artistic genius. Since he privileges natural beauty over fine art, he claims that nature "gives the rule to art" meaning that nature provides the principle that guides artistic creation. This view creates unresolved tensions within the third *Critique*. Kant's desire to unify his critical project led him to turn to aesthetics as a middle ground between the theoretical and practical dimensions of his philosophy. This middle ground opens up the possibility of sensuous meaning—a type of quasi-knowledge enabled by reflective judgments. However, delving into the domain of aesthetics and opening up the possibility of sensuous meaning reveals the limitations of Kant's epistemology as a result of the entwinement of his conceptions of art and nature. This is by no means a failure of the third *Critique*. To the contrary, it bespeaks the philosophical richness of Kant's discussion, the implications of which he did not fully draw out. Rather than solving the riddle of art's relationship to nature, Kant lays out the metaphysical and epistemological problems presented by aesthetics; and these problems chart the trajectory of aesthetic theories to follow.

Kant found himself in need of aesthetics to complete his philosophy. Following in the wake of Kant, Hegel and Schelling demonstrate an explicit *need for art* within their philosophical systems. For both thinkers, albeit in different ways, art performs a vital function for the becoming and self-actualization of the absolute. Though Hegel is among the first thinkers to acknowledge art's claim to truth, for him art's adherence to the material and sensuous presentations of the Idea makes it inferior to the pure intelligibility of philosophy. Hegel provides brilliant insights into the significance of art, and the details of his account of artistic creation provide a more concrete description of the artist's engagement with material than Kant's discussion of genius even though Hegel rejects the notion that nature guides the production of art. For Hegel the production of fine art is guided by the historical-cultural context of the artist more so than nature. Furthermore, he is primarily concerned with the beauty of art (as opposed to that of nature) since his definition of beauty is tied to his conception of the Idea; and the Idea is most fully manifest in self-conscious works of spirit as opposed to natural objects. In nature, the Idea is alien to itself; it is only in works that are "born of spirit and born again"[2] that the Idea becomes tangible and explicit. His hierarchical metaphysics that places material and sensuous meaning below the ideality of Spirit colors his conception of nature and causes him to deny its expressive potential.

Schelling shares Hegel's positive valuation of works of art, but he differs from Hegel in that art and philosophy are extensions of nature's own strivings. Art is the result of a striving to resolve the contradictions present within nature, and Schelling's account

[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art Vol. 1*, trans. T. M. Knox. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 2. (originally published in 1835, four years after Hegel's death); *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch der Wissenschaft, 1970), *Werke 13*, p. 14.) [Hereafter cited as *VüÄ* followed by page numbers.]

of artistic creation acknowledges the role nature plays in creativity in ways similar to Kant. Furthermore, Schelling understands art to be coequal with philosophy for the most part; for him there is no question of "the end of art" in the Hegelian sense. For Schelling, art and philosophy are each necessary and complementary actualizations of the absolute which is itself manifested in and through nature. Despite his positive appraisal of the importance of nature in the creation of art, however, Schelling's understanding of nature itself is couched within a metaphysical framework that relies on a certain conception of the absolute. Therefore, his conception of nature still fails to do justice to the expressive capacity of nature qua *nature*.

In different ways, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling demonstrate the need for art and aesthetics. Sensuous materiality has an important role to play in the fulfillment of philosophy and the generation of meaning. Art's reliance on bodily engagement with material media in the creative process shows us how nature is an integral component of artistic creation. The discussions of the artist and artistic activity in the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Schelling provide insights into the relationship between art and nature in the creative process. However, their metaphysical and epistemological commitments limit the ways in which nature can be understood. In the following discussion, the value and importance of the aesthetics of Kant, Hegel, and Schelling will be elaborated, and the limitations of their views will be critiqued in order to demonstrate the need to go beyond the German idealist paradigm for understanding the creation of art and the nature of artistic expression.

1. Genius and the "Crossing" of Art and Nature in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is considered by many to be the work that founds philosophical aesthetics insofar as it proves that questions of beauty and art are more than ancillary areas of interest; rather, they occupy a fundamental domain of philosophical inquiry. However, the third *Critique* does much more than provide a theory of art. In addition to providing a systematic treatment of the experience of beauty and the sublime in art and nature, Kant addresses the possibility of teleological judgments with regard to nature's purposiveness and attempts to unify the practical and theoretical elements of his critical philosophy. The third *Critique* is "an exploration of the faculty that is meant to guarantee the unity of reason."[3] The faculty that Kant finds to unite reason and complete his critical philosophy is the power of judgment, particularly reflective judgment. Since reflective judgments are not governed by concepts, they are able to bring together disparate aspects of the architectonic constructed by the first two *Critiques.* Kant's desire to unify his philosophy leads him to adopt a particular view of the relationship between art and nature, which he articulates most clearly in his account of the workings of genius. In this section I will demonstrate how Kant's attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge and morality leads him to adopt a particular view of creativity. Then I will show how his view of creativity involves internal contradictions that reveal the limits of his epistemology and his conceptions of art and nature.

[3] Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 21.

In the introduction to the third *Critique*, Kant explains that the theoretical and practical domains are governed by different principles, namely the "concepts of nature and the concept of freedom."[4] After completing the first two *Critiques*, Kant was faced with the problem of how to reconcile the disparity between these two principles.[5] Having dealt with pure and practical reason respectively in the first two *Critiques,* a gap was left open between theory and practice, or nature (the sensible) and freedom (the supersensible). According to Hammermeister, "The third *Critique* is Kant's attempt to bridge this rift through the advancement of judgment as a faculty that mediates between sensuality and cognition on the one hand, and between sensuality and moral action on the other."[6] Summarizing the unifying role the third *Critique* plays in his systematic philosophy, Kant writes "an immense gulf is fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, the supersensible, so that no transition between the sensible to the supersensible […] is possible."[7] However, despite the gulf between the sensible and the supersensible, he claims that they are nonetheless connected. It *is* possible for the supersensible to influence the sensible, and we find evidence of this in our experience of nature and art, even though we cannot have direct knowledge of it.

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[4] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), 9; *Kants gesammelte Schriften* Vol. 5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902-), 171. [All citations to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* will provide the reference to Pluhar's translation followed by the corresponding page numbers of volume five of the *Akademie* edition of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (abbreviated Ak.)]

[5] Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 21.

[6] Ibid., 21-22.

[7] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 15; Ak. 176.

> [T]he concept of freedom is to actualize in the world of sense the purpose enjoined by its laws. Hence it must be possible to think of nature as being such that the lawfulness in its form will harmonize with at least the possibility of [achieving] the purposes that we are to achieve in nature according to the laws of freedom. So there must after all be a basis *uniting* the supersensible that underlies nature and the supersensible that the concept of freedom contains practically, even though the concept of this basis does not reach cognition […][8]

At the supersensible level, freedom and nature are united; and our being rational, moral agents admits of the possibility that our freedom be actualized in harmony with nature's laws. In "Bridging the Gulf: Kant's Project in the Third *Critique,*" Paul Guyer, who in much of his work attempts to reinforce the unity of Kant's critical philosophy, stresses the connection between reflective judgments and the conditions of the possibility of morality. Summarizing his position, Guyer writes:

> The task of the third *Critique* will then be to show how both aesthetic and teleological experience and judgment provide sensuous confirmation for what we already know in an abstract way, but also need to feel and make palpable to ourselves, namely the efficacy of our free choice of the fundamental principle of morality in the natural world, and the realizability of the objectives which that choice imposes on us […][9]

From this it begins to become clear why aesthetics provides Kant with the opportunity to link the theoretical and the practical dimensions of his philosophy. Aesthetics provides a theory of the "sensuous confirmation" we require. As the science of the sensible, aesthetics is the domain in which the sensible and the intelligible become most intertwined and concrete. And yet, it is precisely because aesthetic experience is limited

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Paul Guyer, "Bridging the Gulf: Kant's Project in the Third *Critique,*" *A Companion to Kant*, ed. Graham Bird (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 425.

by the sensible (and is not itself cognition governed by concepts) that it is able to do the work that Kant needs to bridge the gulf between theory and practice, nature and freedom.

It is significant that aesthetics is the domain to which Kant turns to unify the theoretical and practical dimensions of his critical philosophy. Art lies at the intersection of theory, practice, nature, and cultured taste. Moreover, aesthetics occupies a middle ground between scientific cognition—the site of meaning for Kant—and the material side of experience connected to sensation and nature. Thus, aesthetics opens up the possibility of sensuous meaning, though Kant's epistemological paradigm prohibits him from articulating what art conveys in precisely those terms. The new territory mapped out in the third *Critique* opens up aesthetics' potential to illuminate fundamental philosophical insights into the human's place within nature, and his theory of fine art as the work of genius proves to be a crucial hinge point in the development of that insight.

The vital role aesthetics plays in Kant's philosophy raises it to an unprecedented level of philosophical rigor. In order to unify his philosophical system, Kant must establish the independence of aesthetic judgments by freeing them from the reign of concepts, and in doing so he highlights their philosophical significance. By severing beauty from cognition Kant establishes aesthetic judgments as an independent mode of relating to objects that is distinct from scientific cognition. This, even though it was never Kant's explicit aim, allows aesthetics—the power of judging beauty and the sublime—to be valued as its own philosophical discipline intertwined with metaphysics and epistemology.

Kant's establishment of aesthetic judgment as a power independent from scientific cognition is a result of his delineation of a new category of judgment—

reflective judgment. Reflective judgments do not refer to objects of cognition, but rather to the mental powers of the subject. As reflective judgments, judgments of taste are not governed by concepts like determinate judgments are. When making a determinative judgment, the understanding subsumes a presentation of sense under a concept. This involves the harmonization of the imagination's unification of a sense presentation with a concept provided by the understanding. A reflective judgment involves a different kind of harmonization, one that remains active and unresolved. When one judges something to be beautiful, the imagination and the understanding enter into "free play" in which the form of the object unified by the imagination suggests many concepts to the understanding, yet none that are adequate to the presentation. If a concept adequate to the form were to be found, the movement of the faculties would cease. But when judging beauty, the faculties are "quickened" by the form such that the faculties remain in free play and yet still find an accord. This accord of the quickened faculties is accompanied by the feeling of pleasure (§9); the pleasure is precisely the feeling of the harmony of the faculties as prompted by a given sense presentation and is presumed to be universal, though necessarily subjective. In other words, beauty, though it is tied to a given form presented to the senses, does not characterize objects themselves; rather, it characterizes a subjective experience. And yet aesthetic judgments lay claim to universality since the harmonization of the faculties is presumed to occur the same in everyone.

Even though aesthetic judgments are subjective for Kant, they are still dependent on a physical presentation, and this denotes the necessary sensuousness of aesthetic experience. The harmony of the faculties in the experience of beauty only occurs while the sensory presentation is happening since it is prompted by the particular form of the

object. In other words, one can only judge a thing beautiful if one has seen the object for oneself. The form of the object we judge as beautiful has the form of purposiveness without having an actual purpose. Something about the proportions of the lines, shapes, pitches, and so forth, appears purposive, and this form of purposiveness brings the faculties into an accord that persists and causes us to linger over the object in enjoyment of the pleasure we experience with it. The fact that our faculties harmonize in this way when we see or hear different things indicates, for Kant, that it is *as though* these objects were created with the purpose of giving us pleasure, which reveals a kinship between ourselves as free, rational beings and the perceived purposiveness of nature. This point is crucial for understanding how Kant attempts to use aesthetic and teleological judgments to unify his critical project.

The experience of nature holds the key to unifying Kant's critical philosophy. More specifically, it is our ability to judge the purposiveness of nature that enables the unification of the theoretical and practical domains. In fact, Kant states that the "principle of purposiveness" is a transcendental concept (neither a concept of nature nor of freedom) that guides reflective judgments.[10] Both aesthetic and teleological judgments hinge on our ability to judge the purposiveness of nature, whether it be in terms of the form of purposiveness (in judgments of taste) or the causation behind the generation of a natural object (in teleological judgments). However, since teleological and aesthetic judgments are reflective rather than determinate, neither provides any *knowledge* of the purposiveness of nature. Rather, they reveal something about the nature of subjectivity's cognitive powers, namely, the faculty of judgment itself and its relationship to nature and

[10] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 23; Ak. 184.

the supersensible. Even though it is impossible to have knowledge of the purposiveness of nature in itself, our ability to make teleological judgments enables us to attribute purposes to nature by way of an "*analogy* with the causality in terms of purposes, without presuming to *explain* it in terms of that causality."[11] In teleological judgments we adduce the purpose of an object's existence through an analogy with an understanding of causality derived from our own subjective experience. In other words, we judge nature as having been created according to a purpose, even though it is impossible for us to have knowledge that this is the case. Thus, we "think nature as *technical*" in the sense denoted by the Greek téchnē,[12] meaning that we think of nature as having been crafted. This will be important when we consider the relationship between art and nature in Kant's conception of genius because it points to the limitations of his conceptions of these terms and reveals an unresolved tension in his understanding of creativity.

The structure of the analogy involved in teleological judgments parallels our perception of the purposiveness of form in aesthetic judgments. In both cases, there is an analogy set up that compares relationships inherent to the subject to forms of nature. In teleological judgments, the purposiveness we project onto natural objects sets up an analogy between the causal intentions we experience and relationships among elements of the natural world. In judgments of taste, an analogy is made between the subjective conditions of our ability to judge the beautiful (the harmony of the faculties) and the perceived purposiveness of natural forms. Teleological and aesthetic judgments share this same basic structure because they are reflective judgments that indicate principles

[11] Ibid., 236; Ak. 360.

[12] Ibid.

governing the use of our mental powers as prompted by our study of the world (as opposed to providing us with knowledge of objects). In other words, teleological and aesthetic judgments reveal something about our minds' relationship to the world rather than revealing truths about the world itself. As mentioned above with regard to aesthetic judgments, our minds' relationship to the world is one of felt compatibility and belonging. Our ability to experience beauty when prompted by the form of purposiveness indicates, for Kant, that it is as though nature were formed in such a way in order to harmonize our faculties and give us pleasure, and this reveals a kinship between ourselves as free, rational beings and the perceived purposiveness of nature.

The kinship we feel between ourselves and nature in aesthetic judgments is related to Kant's claim that beauty has the significance of symbolizing morality. Kant asserts that aesthetic judgments lay claim to universality because they are governed by the supersensible in us, and the "morally good is the *intelligible* that taste has in view […] for it is with this intelligible that even our higher cognitive powers harmonize."[13] However, it must be made clear that the "intelligible" here is not a definitive concept. Rather, it refers to the moral and rational inclinations of our cognitive faculties. The standard of judgments of taste appeals to the a priori in ourselves such that we are our own legislators of taste in the same way that we are self-legislating "regarding the power of desires" when exercising our moral capacity.[14] Because our self-legislating taste accords with nature, and, in fact, needs sensuous material to prompt aesthetic judgments,

[13] Ibid., 228; Ak. 353.

[14] Ibid., 229; Ak. 353.

it becomes clear how the critique of aesthetic judgment ties Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy together. In the experience of beauty

> judgment finds itself referred to something that is both in the subject and outside of him, something that is neither nature nor freedom and yet is linked in the basis of freedom, the supersensible, in which the theoretical and the practical power are in an unknown manner combined and joined into a unity.[15]

Kant is arguing that there is a fundamental link between the supersensible substrate of nature and rational, moral law, which is evinced by the accord established between the forms of nature (that appear purposive) and the harmonization of our cognitive powers.

The connection between taste, morality, and the supersensible substrate of nature indicates why natural beauty, as opposed to the beauty of art, is of greater importance to Kant. It also sheds light on the importance of nature in the work of genius. Kant famously says that "it must be nature in the subject that gives the rule to art" (§46).[16] Fine art must be the work of genius, meaning that it must be the product of innate talent. An artist needs training, but ultimately it is innate, natural ability that gives rise to beautiful art. "Genius is the innate mental disposition through which nature gives the rule to art."[17] This claim is consistent with Kant's earlier reasoning that holds that aesthetic judgments may not be ruled by concepts. The genius intuits the demands of beauty. Beautiful art cannot be achieved through the application of rules; it can only be created through inspiration that comes from somewhere beyond the artist's ken, and Kant attributes this source to nature.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 175; Ak. 307.

[17] Ibid., 174; Ak. 307.

> Genius itself cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, and it is rather as nature that it gives the rule. That is why, if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan […][18]

In *Kant and the Claims of Taste,* Guyer argues that since neither creating nor judging artworks may be explained through reference to concepts, nature must in some ways be the source of both. Guyer explains that "with this assumption Kant then links the harmony of the faculties to the supersensible."[19] Guyer interprets this linkage as an attempt to provide a metaphysical grounding for the universality of judgments of taste. Usually concepts are the source that provides universality. However, since aesthetic judgments are reflective, Kant points to a supersensible substrate rather than concepts to establish the universality of aesthetic experience.[20]

Lara Ostaric also clarifies that the "nature" active in the genius refers to the supersensible substrate, explaining how this accounts for why the genius cannot have complete knowledge of how the creation of art takes place.

> Creation, on Kant's view, unlike imitation, consists of a special unity of free human activity and nature, where 'nature' primarily signifies the Idea of

[18] Ibid., 175; Ak. 308.

[19] Paul Guyer. *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), 341.

[20] From this we can see how Guyer's reading of Kant supports his interpretation in his later work, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) in which he seeks to demonstrate the consistency of Kant's critical philosophy. Here Guyer argues that Kant's conception of the range of responses had to aesthetic objects goes beyond the narrow formalism suggested by certain sections of the "Analytic of the Beautiful." Guyer's interpretation is an effort to reinforce the connection between aesthetic judgment and practical reason put forth (somewhat inconclusively) by Kant. According to Guyer, Kant "showed how the uniqueness of aesthetic response and artistic creation could be reconciled with the vital role of the aesthetic in the larger morality of mankind." One of Guyer's chief purposes in the book is to show how "the intrinsic and independent value of aesthetic experience" and the "primacy of practical reason" are "not merely compatible but interdependent" (2).

> nature's supersensible substrate. Therefore, nature is not just another aspect of, but rather something that transcends, creative subjectivity.[21]

The role that nature plays in creativity must be beyond the artist's ken due to its link to the supersensible substrate. This idea is also important for understanding Kant's claim that art must look like nature discussed below.

Even though nature guides the production of art in the work of genius, there is, of course, a difference between products of nature and products of genius even though nature is at work in the genius motivating his or her artistic sensibility. Art is something made; therefore it involves concepts. When an artist sets out to create a painting, for example, he or she has it in his or her mind what a painting consists of and what is needed to bring it about. If the artist is working from life, then he or she will have in mind the concept of the thing being painted, be it a house, landscape, still life, or human form. There will be techniques for achieving perspective, colors, and lighting that are true to life. The techniques the painter uses can be taught because they operate as rules guiding composition. However, in order for the work to have spirit, that is, the ability to "quicken" the faculties and pique one's interest, it must be a product of the innate talent of genius gifted by nature, which refers, ultimately, to the supersensible.

Within the workings of genius, the "nature," or supersensible, in the subject collaborates with the artist's technical skill to produce beautiful forms. There is a unity of conscious intentions and unconscious inspiration. Through the collaboration of nature and taste, the genius is able to communicate meaning via a sensible presentation that cannot be totally captured in words. Thus, art somehow exhibits meaningful content in a

[21] Lara Ostaric, "Kant on the Normativity of Creative Production," *Kantian Review* 17.1 (2012): 75-107.

way that is beautiful, that is, in a way that harmonizes the faculties through the presentation of the form of purposiveness without a purpose. In other words, works of genius utilize a sensuous means to present conceptual content (aesthetic ideas) that cannot be contained by the concepts that it evokes. This conceptual content is united with sensuous forms that are composed as a result of the artist's careful attention to the attunement of his or her faculties. The attunement that the artist feels is one that accords with natural beauty. The beauty of art and the beauty of nature are the same beauty insofar as they both involve the same play of faculties. However, natural beauty is given priority because artistic beauty is ultimately derived from nature (as it refers to the supersensible in the subject). That is why Kant insists that the nature in the subject, "through the attunement of his powers," is the source of the rule that guides the production of art. The mental powers that govern taste collaborate with a naturally endowed proclivity for generating beauty in a way that is profoundly meaningful.

The collaboration of natural talent and taste in the genesis of fine art leads to what John Sallis calls a "crossing" of art and nature.[22] Since judging natural beauty and artistic beauty involve the same attunement of the faculties, Kant proclaims that art looks like nature, and nature looks like art. Even though artworks are created with intentions and involve concepts and the application of techniques that function as rules, "the academic form must not show."[23] In order for the work to be beautiful it must not appear belabored as if it came about painstakingly (though Kant acknowledges that artists do, in fact, often meticulously create their works). Rather, it must have the look of effortlessness as is if it

[22] John Sallis, *Transfigurements: On the True Sense of Art* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), 27.

[23] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 174; Ak. 307.

were born naturally. Thus, "fine art must have the *look* of nature even though we are conscious of it as art."[24]

Despite the circularity, or "crossing," of artistic and natural beauty, there is an important difference between aesthetic judgments directed at nature and those directed at art that parallels the dual aspects of innate talent and technical skill in the workings of genius. When we judge artworks, we not only judge their beauty, we also judge their perfection. Since artworks do involve purposes, part of our assessment of them depends on how well they achieve those purposes. When discussing this point, the crossing of art and nature occurs again in an interesting way. Even though concepts are not supposed to come into play in aesthetic judgments of nature, Kant acknowledges that in some cases, considerations of how well something conforms to its objective purposiveness does influence our judgment of it. But when this occurs, "We then judge nature no longer as it appears as art, but insofar as it actually *is* art (though superhuman art), and [so we make a] teleological judgment that serves the aesthetic one as a foundation and condition that it must take into account."[25] Recalling the discussion above, when we make teleological judgments we think of nature as having been crafted with a purpose in mind. Thus, we think of nature as having its own téchnē through which it brings about its forms. However, it is of crucial importance to make clear that Kant does not assert that organisms are the products of an intelligent design—that would be making a determinate judgment out of what must remain a reflective judgment. In other words, we cannot claim knowledge of the objective purposiveness of nature even though our cognition requires us

[24] Ibid., 174; Ak. 307.

[25] Ibid., 179-80; Ak. 311-12.

to conceptualize nature as if it had been created according to purposes. "There is clearly a big difference," Kant says,

> between saying that certain things of nature, or even all of nature, could be produced only by a cause that follows intentions in determining itself to action, and saying that the peculiar character of my cognitive powers is such that the only way I can judge [how] those things are possible and produced is by conceiving, [to account] for this production, a cause that acts according to intention, and hence produces [things] in a way analogous to the causality of an understanding.[26]

Kant's view is that "we are absolutely unable to form a concept of [how] such a world is possible except by thinking of it as brought about by a supreme cause that acts intentionally."[27] In other words, even though we cannot assert that the world is, in fact, a product of creative intentions, the character of our cognitive powers leads us to think of nature as "divine art." Hence, Kant claims that nature, when it is beautiful, looks like superhuman art, and fine art looks like nature.

The intersection of aesthetics and teleology points to interesting tensions within Kant's views on creativity that have implications for his conceptions of art and nature. Of course, nature cannot be art by definition. As something made with certain purposes in mind, art is antithetical to nature. Even though Kant believes we cannot help but think of nature as if it were the product of creative intentions, if he were to actually assert that certain natural forms "are products of divine art," he asks, "how can I still include them among products of nature, when it was precisely because nature cannot produce such things in terms of its own laws that I had to appeal to a cause distinct from it?"[28] Art and

[26] Ibid., 280; Ak. 397-8.

[27] Ibid., 281; Ak. 399.

[28] Ibid., 279; Ak. 397.

nature are supposed to be exclusive categories. However, Kant demonstrates that they cannot be disentangled.

The crossing of art and nature suggests that the activity of genius in the production of art is an extension of nature's own activity. But this sets up a problematic tension between the "nature outside of us" and the nature active in the innate talent of genius. Eva Schaper explains:

> [T]he sense in which nature enters into the production or creation of works of fine art is the sense in which we as human are in our capabilities and gifts part of nature. The contrast between natural beauty and the beautiful in art is the contrast between that which is found in the world—in nature outside us—and that which is intentionally created by artists who are especially gifted by nature.[29]

This remark highlights how the concept of genius complicates Kant's clear definition of art as something made, as opposed to natural objects, which come into being on their own. Since artistic creativity depends on the nature in the subject, nature, insofar as it is linked to the supersensible in us, is actually responsible in part for the artist's creative activity. Thus the products of genius exhibit a naturalness that leads Kant to make his claim that art must look like nature and that beautiful nature looks like art.

The crossing of art and nature becomes more complex when we turn to Kant's remarks about aesthetic ideas in relation to fine art. Kant points out that some works of art may satisfy our taste, though they do not spark our interest due to their lack of spirit. The "spirit" of artworks can only arise if the nature in the artist guides the artist's creation making it a work of genius. Kant defines spirit [*Geist*] "in an aesthetic sense" as "the animating principle in the mind […] that imparts to the mental powers a purposive

[29] Eva Schaper, "Taste, sublimity, and genius," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 390.

momentum."[30] He equates spirit in this context to the ability to exhibit aesthetic ideas. Kant cites the original meaning of the Latin *genius* as "the guardian and guiding spirit that each person is given as his own at birth, and to whose inspiration those original ideas are due."[31] Together these ideas point to a perplexing intertwining of the concepts of nature and spirit in art and the activity of genius. On one level, nature is at work in genius as the rule giver. But, at the same time, this nature in the subject is also what gives the genius the ability to produce aesthetic ideas that quicken the mind and endow artworks with spirit. Thus, genius may be analyzed as a site where nature and art converge. The artistic genius exercises a power gifted to him or her by nature, so in some respects nature is responsible for what enables fine art to be made. And since having spirit is what differentiates truly beautiful art, nature is also what endows artworks with spirit.

Asserting that nature, or the supersensible, guides artistic activity—which Kant's conception of genius surely does—could be interpreted as attributing purposiveness to nature. That is to say, acknowledging the role that the nature in the subject plays in artistic activity makes it seem as though Kant is suggesting that nature is somehow active in the genius during the creation of fine art. This assertion may be maintained if we understand it in light of Kant's desire to link the supersensible substrate of nature with the supersensible contained in the concept of freedom. Earlier it was noted with reference to Guyer's work that Kant's effort to unify his critical philosophy led him to take up aesthetics since art and nature are the domains in which we may enjoy sensuous confirmation of the connection between our free agency and the laws of nature. Genius,

[30] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 181-2; Ak. 313.

[31] Ibid., 175; Ak. 308.

as the site of the crossing of art and nature, unites nature's perceived purposiveness and our inclinations towards beauty (which symbolizes morality according to Kant). Thus, the workings of genius exhibit the unification of the two conceptions of the supersensible pertaining to nature and freedom.

The way Kant's two conceptions of the supersensible are united in the workings of genius is demonstrated when we consider the principle of nature's purposiveness in relation to artistic creativity. Ostaric argues that the convergence of nature and spirit in genius can be identified with the principle of nature's purposiveness (the principle appealed to in teleological judgments). "Because a genius's nature, her sensibility, is spontaneously commensurate with a genius's cognitive capacities, the 'animating principle' of a genius's cognitive faculties, i.e. a genius's spirit, can rightly be identified with the principle of nature's purposiveness."[32] What is perplexing about this is that the genius's spirit is that which is beyond the artist's subjective consciousness, and as such is identified with *nature's* purposiveness. As in the Latin notion, the spirit that gives rise to the artist's inspiration is something given to him or her by nature. Thus, nature's purposiveness corresponds to the genius's creative capacity, which seems to indicate that nature is indeed the genius's creative force. But, again, suggesting that nature is creative challenges the separability of art and nature, and the suggestion that the spirit of genius is identifiable with nature's purposiveness further confuses to the distinction between them.

Within this discussion, what is referred to as nature's purposiveness must not be taken as a determinate judgment about the actual purposiveness of nature. Teleological judgments are decidedly reflective. Therefore, to say that the genius's faculties can be

[32] Ostaric, "Kant on the Normativity of Creative Production," 79.

identified with the principle of nature's purposiveness means that we are making a reflective judgment about the purposiveness of the nature in the genius. Pointing out this connection also helps to explain why genius cannot be taught. If the workings of genius and nature's purposiveness are linked, then that which guides the genius's creative act is beyond cognition because we cannot have knowledge of nature's purposiveness. In other words, the purposiveness we attribute to nature (but cannot have knowledge of) is somehow giving the rule to art through the genius in a way that the genius cannot explain; and the cognitive gap in which the supposed purposiveness of nature operates is what enables the products of genius to look like beautiful nature (as having a purposiveness without a purpose).

The tensions revealed by the crossing of art and nature within Kant's view of creativity have significant implications for understanding Kant's aim for the third *Critique* to unify his critical philosophy. Kant appeals to nature as the source that guides artistic creation because the creation of art cannot be governed by concepts. But, by definition, art cannot be a product of nature. Yet, according to Kant's conception of genius, somehow in artistic creativity the artist taps into nature's own creative origins and perceived purposiveness. But to call nature "creative" is already to blur the boundary between art and nature. On the one hand, creativity denotes an intentional will, that is, a purposiveness. On the other hand, creativity appeals to nature to explain how art can come about without being determined by concepts, which allows it to exhibit beauty—the form of purposiveness without a purpose. The problem is that creativity implies intentionality, and intentionality requires purposes that are governed by concepts. Yet, the creation of beauty cannot be done according to concepts, and the severance of beauty

from concepts is necessary for Kant to link the practical and theoretical dimensions of his philosophy.

Aesthetics offers Kant a means to bridge the gulf between nature and freedom, and the genius is the site in which this link is most explicitly made. By articulating the role of nature in the creation of art, the distinction between art and nature is broken down. The crossing of art and nature that results from Kant's attempt to unify his critical philosophy reveals something about the strangeness of creativity—that it involves purposes while, at the same time, it is expresses things that are not consciously intended.

By occupying a middle ground between scientific cognition and the sensuous side of experience connected to nature, aesthetics opens up the possibility of sensuous meaning—a type of quasi-knowledge that involves concepts but is not exhausted by them. Creativity operates upon this middle ground mediating between concepts and the supersensible substrate of nature. Somehow in art, nature becomes expressive and material has meaning. However, to say this goes beyond the epistemological strictures of Kant's critical philosophy. Despites its self-imposed limitations, the third *Critique* demonstrates the importance and necessity of aesthetics. Kant's rich discussion of genius lays out the problematic of the relationship between art and nature in creative activity in a way that allowed future thinkers to further his inquiry. Though Kant does not fully explain the riddle of creativity, his exploration of the problem paves the way toward a deeper understanding of the role of nature in the genesis of art.

2. Rethinking Genius and Materiality in Hegel's Aesthetics

The crossing of art and nature through the workings of genius in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* points to a puzzling connection between purposiveness and "naturalness" in artistic creativity. While Kant does not solve the puzzle of creativity, he opens up the problem for future thinkers in a valuable way. Hegel's accounts of art, nature, and artistic creativity follow in the Kantian tradition; though, the relationship between art and nature within Hegel's aesthetics is dramatically different from Kant's position. Hegel's aesthetics and philosophy of nature do not involve the same kind of crossing that occurs in the third *Critique*. Rather, the hierarchy of spirit over matter organizing Hegel's absolute idealism allows him to articulate the difference between art and nature in a way that reflects the internal consistency of his system overall. Although Hegel's aesthetics and philosophy of nature are more transparently consistent, this consistency comes at the expense of the richness of the concept of nature within his system. In other words, the hierarchy of spirit over matter that allows for the consistency of his dialectic results in the impoverishment of his concept of nature. However, the implications of his idealism are not solely negative. On the positive side, he understands nature as a vital part of the development of spirit in which it is embodied in material. For him, material is an extension of spirit that exhibits its strivings. Thus, material is not considered to be merely dead, inert substance. Despite his non-reductive view of material, however, his dialectic, in which the external materiality of nature is antithetical and inferior to the inwardness of thought and the universality of spirit, still privileges the ideal over the material. This privileging, which is apparent in his aesthetics as well as his philosophy of nature,

prevents him from acknowledging the expressive potential of nature, broadly speaking. Though, interestingly, in his account of artistic practice he does acknowledge the important role that the material with which an artists work plays in the process of art-making.

Even though Hegel's accounts of art and nature involve a hierarchy that devalues nature and material in relation more spiritualized forms of thought and existence, Hegel's account of the creative activity provides a more concrete description of an artist's engagement with a material medium and subject matter than Kant's account of genius. Furthermore, Hegel's recognition of tie between art and truth, or the Idea, is important for the philosophies of art developed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Thus, a close examination of the relationship between art and nature in Hegel is important for understanding the way in which artistic creativity comes to be understood in the 20th century.

As mentioned, the fine arts trump natural beauty for Hegel since he deems nature to be a "degradation of the Idea" in the respect that it is the Idea external to itself. It is necessary for the Idea to become materially manifest; however, not all material manifestations are equal. Organisms and organic life in general are the first occasions in which the Idea becomes explicitly manifest, and it is only with the emergence of intelligent life—human beings—that spirit emerges as such. And yet, when we look closely at what Hegel has to say about the human body in his lectures on aesthetics, it becomes clear that spirit is more fully manifest in works of art than the actual human organism. The body, still immersed in the finitude of nature, bears the contingencies of materiality. While an artwork is bound to the material, it is able to display the infinity of

spirit by making the medium of which it is composed shine with soul throughout its entire surface, tone, and so on.

By taking up the status of nature in Hegel's aesthetics I will critique the hierarchy of the sensible and the intelligible evident in Hegel's placement of art below philosophy in the development of absolute spirit and his preference for the beauty of art over the beauty of nature. Though Hegel's philosophy of nature has the potential to revise the reductive assumptions about nature and provide an account of sensuous meaning, he still problematically relegates nature to an inferior status in relation to spirit and it products. In the cases of both art and nature, their adherence to materiality is what relegates them to a lower point in his culminating dialectic.

The point of my discussion, however, is not a mere rejection of Hegel. On the contrary, the upshot of my analysis is an elucidation of materiality in his philosophy and a sketch of what I think an adequate conception of nature must entail. By taking up the issue of materiality in Hegel's aesthetics and his philosophy of nature, I will show that there is much to be gained from further critical study of his work in these areas, but that, ultimately, art and nature are not granted adequate positions in his system due to their adherence to materiality, which, for him, makes them inferior. It is my assessment that by placing nature below spirit and art below philosophy in his developmental hierarchy, he fails to do justice to the importance of the role of nature in the creative process and the value of sensuous meaning in works of art.

Before proceeding in my analysis of the status of material in Hegel's philosophy, it is important to acknowledge how his philosophy of nature has been understood in light of interpretations of his idealism. There are two broad trends in Hegel scholarship that

may be referred to as the metaphysical and nonmetaphysical readings. In *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* Alison Stone explains, "Broadly, 'metaphysical' readings contend that [Hegel's] philosophical system sets out to describe the structures of the world as it really is. By contrast, 'nonmetaphysical' readings hold that Hegel's system explicates a set of categories through which we must confer intelligibility upon our experience."[33] Robert Pippin gives the most well-known nonmetaphysical reading in *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*. Simply put, Pippin interprets Hegel as continuing the project of Kant's transcendental logic, disclosing "the conceptual conditions required for there to be possibly determinate objects of cognition in the first place."[34] As Stephen Houlgate notes, "For Pippin's Hegel, therefore, metaphysics and ontology give way to transcendental logic: for being can be understood only by examining the categories through which it is necessarily conceived."[35] According to nonmetaphysical readings, then, on Stone's interpretation, Hegel's philosophy of nature "is no longer a series of descriptions of objectively existing structures; it is now a set of categories for thinking about empirical phenomena."[36]

On the other side, Houlgate is a prominent proponent of the metaphysical reading. Against Pippin's interpretation, Houlgate argues that the identification of thought and being proclaimed in various places throughout Hegel's corpus entails the presence of structures in nature that are typically confined to the category of thinking. Citing passages

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[33] Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 21.

[34] Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 176.

[35] Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006), 138.

[36] Stone, *Petrified Intelligence*, 20.

from both the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, he argues that "the words 'concept,' judgment,' and 'syllogism' name structures in nature, and so in *being itself*, not just forms of human understanding and reason. They are, therefore, ontological as well as logical structures—structures of being as well as categories of thought."[37] When one reads Hegel's lectures on aesthetics and his philosophy of nature, two areas of his system that deal directly with material existence, Houlgate's metaphysical interpretation proves to be more consistent with Hegel's own position. For Hegel, the Idea must become *actual*, meaning that it must take on physical existence, and nature and art are two of the most basic ways in which the Idea becomes manifest. Thus Hegel's position may be described as a type of objective idealism in contrast to the subjectivism of Kant's transcendental idealism that restricts him from making such ontological assertions.

Despite being an "idealist" Hegel does acknowledge the necessary existence of material independent from thought. In light of this, William Maker makes the radical claim in "The Very Idea of the Idea of Nature, or Why Hegel Is Not an Idealist" that Hegel holds a realist conception of nature, which exempts him from idealism full stop.[38] Maker argues that though Hegel may be considered a critical and methodological idealist, he is decidedly not the kind of idealist who takes all of reality to be thought or derived from thought. He claims that the systematicity of Hegel's thinking necessitates the reality of nature apart from thought, and that nature, the other of the Idea, must be *radically* other and not thought-like in essence. While Maker's argument makes a valid point and prevents a simple conception of idealism from being imposed on Hegel, he does not

[37] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 116.

[38] William Maker, "The Very Idea of Nature, or Why Hegel Is Not an Idealist," in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature,* ed. Stephen Houlgate (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 1-27.

adequately account for the rationality of nature and the ideality emergent from it which construes nature in a manner more consistent with the other acknowledged idealist elements of Hegel's thought. The position put forth by Errol E. Harris, in "The Philosophy of Nature is Hegel's System"[39] provides a more accurate stance by defending Hegel against the supposed contradiction of his treatment of nature as an absolute idealist. Against the narrowly idealistic readings of Hegel that reject the relevance of the philosophy of nature, Harris argues that the inclusion of nature within Hegel's system is consistent if one recognizes that in the dialectical movement from logic to spirit via nature, mind is continuous with and emergent from nature, and nature is a necessary moment establishing the dialectical "other" of the Idea. Contrary to Maker, Harris's interpretation is more convincing because it portrays the internal consistency of Hegel's position as a systematic thinker and reflects more accurately the language Hegel uses to describe nature and materiality.

Art and nature, like all things according to Hegel, are determinations of the Idea. He explains, "[T]he Idea should realize itself externally and win a specific and present existence as the objectivity of nature and spirit. The true as such *exists* also."[40] Like art, nature embodies the Idea in material. Within the hierarchy of Hegel's system, however, art and nature are distinguished based on how concretely they embody the Idea. The Idea is present in nature only implicitly, which is why Hegel deems it inferior to art. Though art and nature are similar in that they are both characterized by their objective, external, material existence, the Idea becomes *explicit* only through conscious expressions of

[39] Errol E. Harris, "The Philosophy of Nature is Hegel's System," *The Review of Metaphysics* 3.2 (1949), 213-228.

[40] Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 111; *VüÄ:* 151.

spirit. The *Philosophy of Nature* forms the second volume of *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), following the volume on logic and preceding the *Philosophy of Spirit* or *Mind* [Geist].[41] As the intermediate part of his system, nature occupies a transitional phase in which the Idea becomes alien to itself in space and time. While art is a form of absolute spirit in which the Idea becomes concretely realized, nature is the Idea in the form of otherness; it is the Idea external to itself.[42] Thus, nature, as the "degradation of the Idea," is the Idea "in disparity with its own self."[43] As such, nature is "unresolved contradiction" because its members do not know their interconnection and exist indifferently from one another. However, since nature is nevertheless an expression of the Idea, it exhibits a striving, a movement toward the freedom of ideality. As life develops and becomes more complex, the organism achieves

[41] Along with Harris, George R. Lucas is one of the leading early authors aiming to revive the study of Hegel's philosophy of nature through a revaluation of it. In "A Re-Interpretation of Hegel's Philosophy of Nature" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 22 (January 1984), Lucas attempts a re-interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of nature by comparing his critique of Newtonian mechanistic physics to the Whiteheadian notion of "organic mechanism." Lucas examines Hegel's rejection of the mechanistic view of nature, showing how Hegel does not dismiss all mechanism nor does he embrace pure vitalism. The term "organic mechanism" as Whitehead employs it is used to characterize this middle ground. Other articles defending the value of Hegel's philosophy of nature are Thomas Posch's "Hegel's Anti-Reductionism" in *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 10 (April 2005), and Sebastian Rand's "The Importance and Relevance of Hegel's Philosophy of Nature" in *The Review of Metaphysics* 61 (December 2007). By discussing "what is living and what is dead" in Hegel's philosophy of nature through a sustained engagement with the axioms of contemporary science, Posch points out what the more viable aspects of Hegel's treatment of nature are. Rand's paper also argues in favor of the insights provided by Hegel's philosophy of nature and its compatibility with contemporary sciences by disproving the common charge that the philosophy of nature and Hegel's system as a whole is aprioristically founded. Instead, the author explains that knowledge is something achieved, and within Hegel's view the knowledge provided by the natural sciences is also achieved through the becoming autonomous of individual self-consciousness.

[42] G. F. W. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 13; *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften II* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch der Wissenschaft, 1970), *Werke 9*, p. 24.) [Hereafter cited as *EpW* followed by page numbers.]

[43] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 17; *EpW:* 28.

greater unity with itself and progresses toward self-consciousness. With the emergence of organic life comes the receptivity of sensation and eventually the unity of soul and the inwardness of thought. In the most completely organized and integrated organisms—human beings—spirit finally comes on the scene and begins to apprehend itself as such through its social institutions and cultures.

Even though Hegel understands nature to be a degradation of the Idea in contrast to more concrete forms of spirit, he acknowledges that the earth, as the cradle of life, is necessary for spirit's very existence. Moreover, there are passages where Hegel expresses reverence for the earth. He writes, "we must give the place of honour to the earth we live on. […] We have now come therefore to stand on the earth as our home, and not only our physical home but the home of Spirit too."[44] He views the Earth as a "terrestrial organism" and refers to things like hot springs and volcanoes as its organs. He writes, "just as springs are the lungs and secretory glands of the earth's process of evaporation, so are volcanoes the earth's liver."[45] Contrary to other reductive perspectives, Hegel views the earth itself to be imbued with life. He writes, "I regard mountains, therefore, not as gatherers of rainwater which penetrates into them; on the contrary, the genuine springs which generate rivers like the Ganges, Rhone, and Rhine have an interior life, a striving and a stirring, like naiads."[46] These passages make clear that Hegel rejects a reductive, merely mechanistic view of nature. Instead he believes that the earth itself

[44] Ibid., 104; *EpW:* 132.

[45] Ibid.. 296; *EpW:* 363.

[46] Ibid.

resembles an organism, and its geological and meteorological features exhibit the movements of life.

Though Hegel's philosophy of nature offers a perhaps surprisingly positive account of material being, his enthusiasm for the earth as the home of spirit is tempered by the status he assigns to nature in relation to the arts within the context of his aesthetics. In general, Hegel's dialectic exhibits a pattern in which the manifestations of spirit are ordered according to their concreteness, but his understanding of what concreteness means is somewhat counterintuitive. Paradoxically, for Hegel what is immediate and simple is abstract, and what is more cerebral and ideal is correspondingly more concrete. In progressive order, the most concrete forms of spirit are art, religion, and philosophy. As a sensuous presentation of the Idea, art is the first instantiation of absolute spirit, which is surpassed by religion and philosophy as more fully actualized and universal forms of self-knowledge. As a sensible presentation, the ideal content of artworks can only be expressed through a material medium, and according to Hegel, the reliance on a medium amounts to being encumbered by the contingency of materiality. In contrast, philosophy is supposedly free from such contingency because it is the free movement of thought in accordance with reason. Therefore, philosophy, being supposedly unbounded by materiality, presents the Idea in its highest accordance with itself.

The pattern of the dialectic's movement toward concreteness is also present within the hierarchy Hegel grants to the arts themselves. The arts in which the material dominates the presentation are lower on the hierarchy than those that come closer to the freedom of thought. Architecture, being the most determined by the laws of physics and the material from which it is built, is the first, most abstract form of art, while poetry, as

the art form most expressive of spirit's inwardness unrestrained by materiality, comes closest to philosophy. Sculpture, painting, and music occupy the middle of the hierarchy respectively since each one is increasingly more apt for expressing the inwardness of thought and the ideal content of the concept.

The metaphysical hierarchies organizing Hegel's aesthetics are most apparent in his discussion of beauty. In order for the Idea to express its truth, it must become actual and available to the senses. According to Hegel, beauty is the sensuous presentation of the Idea in which the presentation's form is in complete harmony with its ideal content. He explains:

> Now when truth […] in its external existence is present to consciousness immediately, and when the Concept remains immediately in unity with its external appearance, the Idea is not only true but beautiful. Therefore the beautiful is characterized as the pure appearance of the Idea to sense.[47]

Artworks and products of nature are beautiful when their sensuous presentations of the Idea are the most free and unified with their content.[48] Though both nature and art may be beautiful, Hegel distinguishes between the beauty of nature and the beauty of art on the same grounds that he distinguishes between art and nature metaphysically. Since the Idea is only present in nature implicitly, natural beauty is deficient. On the other hand, artistic genius transforms material into art, making it shine with the vibrant radiance of soul. Hegel famously says that art "has to convert every shape in all points of its visible surface into an eye, which is the seat of the soul and brings spirit into appearance." Thus, "art makes every one of its productions into a thousand-eyed Argus, whereby the inner soul

[47] Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 111; *VüÄ:* 151.

[48] Ibid.

and spirit is seen at every point."[49] A beautiful artwork achieves a perfected unity in which all of its physical components come together to make its conceptual content concretely appear. In this way it achieves the complete unity of form and content, and thereby presents truth to the senses beautifully. Natural forms, on the other hand, have not been refined by artistic intent. Therefore, according to Hegel, they do not display the infinity of spirit. Rather, they are sunk in the finite, ever-becoming cycle of birth and decay. That is why he claims that in nature the concept is only "foreshadowed" and not concretely manifested.[50] The failure of natural beings to fully express their concept externally results, for Hegel, in the deficiency of natural beauty and the need for art.[51] He explains:

> Thus it is from the deficiencies of immediate reality that the necessity of the beauty of art is derived. The task of art must therefore be firmly established in art's having a calling to display the appearance of life, and especially the spiritual animation (in its freedom, externally too) and to make the eternal correspond with its concept.[52]

Though the arts are tied to their material media, the beauty of art is superior to the beauty of nature, according to Hegel, since art ensouls material, allowing the spirit of life to shine forth through its entire surface.

To further demonstrate the difference between nature and art and the superiority Hegel grants to art, we can refer to what he says about the human body. The human body provides a key insight into Hegel's understanding of nature because of its unique

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[49] Ibid., 153-154; *VüÄ:* 203.

[50] Ibid.,129-130; *VüÄ:* 174.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.,152; *VüÄ:* 202.

ambiguity. Our bodies, of course, are decidedly physical and depend on material resources to survive. And yet, bodies enable the existence of spirit—the Idea cannot fully actualize itself except through an ensouled body. Therefore, the human body is unique in that it is both a natural being and an explicit manifestation of the Idea. Hegel writes, "we must not take the identity of soul and body as a mere connection, but in a deeper way, i.e. we must regard the body and its members as the systematic articulation of the concept itself."[53] With this, one is led to ask afresh: what is the difference between the human body and a work of art since both are concrete manifestations and appearances of the Idea? The need to understand their distinction is amplified since in the introduction to his lectures on aesthetics Hegel actually uses the body as an analogy for explaining the special significance of artworks.

> [T]he spirit and the soul shine through the human eye, through a man's face, flesh, skin, through his whole figure, and here the meaning is always something wider than what shows itself in the immediate appearance. It is in this way that the work of art is to be significant and not appear exhausted by these lines, curves, surfaces, carvings, hallowings in the stone, these colours, notes, word sounds, or whatever other material is used; on the contrary, it should disclose an inner life, feeling, soul, a content and spirit, which is just what we call the significance of the work of art.[54]

Despite this analogy, Hegel does make the difference between the human body and the work of art clear when discussing the deficiency of natural beauty. As noted, Hegel likens an artwork to the thousand-eyed Argus in which every point emanates the gaze of spirit. The body, however, being sunk in the finitude of nature cannot achieve this total unity.

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[53] Ibid., 119; *VüÄ:* 161.

[54] Ibid., 20; *VüÄ:* 36-7.

> However far the human […] body makes its life appear outwardly, still nevertheless the poverty of nature equally finds expression on the surface by the non-uniformity of the skin, in indentations, wrinkles, pores, small hairs, little veins, etc. […] From this point of view the soul with its inner life here too does not shine through the entire reality of the bodily form.[55]

Thus, it is clear that the apparent "imperfections" of the body's material finitude falls short of the infinity and freedom of the Idea's expression in art. Hegel understands nature as a degradation of the Idea, an embodiment of spirit that must be superseded by its distillation and refinement in art. Hence, it may be concluded that Hegel does not value nature in and of itself, but only as the means through which spirit is enabled to exist.

The metaphysical hierarchies governing the relationship between art and nature in Hegel's thinking are also evident in his discussion of the artist and artistic activity. While Kant's analysis of artistic genius occupies an important position in his aesthetic theory, Hegel's treatment of the artist within his lectures on aesthetics is quite short and indicates that he is largely unconcerned with artists' individual creative processes. Hegel acknowledges that consideration of the artist and his "inspiration" is necessary, although he does so reluctantly. He writes, "strictly we need to mention this aspect [the artist and his talent] only to say of it that it is to be excluded from the area of scientific discussion, or at least that it permits of a few generalities only."[56] Hegel does indicate within this discussion that artistic creativity is "an enterprise which, so far as the form of knowing is concerned […] is the precise opposite" of philosophical reflection.[57] This comment

[55] Ibid., 146; *VüÄ:* 194.

[56] Ibid., 280; *VüÄ:* 362.

[57] Ibid., 282; *VüÄ:* 365.

implicitly reflects Hegel's general stance on the relationship between art and nature. Though he does not directly state his reasons for asserting that artistic production cannot be treated scientifically, his understanding of nature is no doubt a significant factor. Given the link commonly made between nature and the workings of genius and the intimate link between art and nature in his own philosophy, Hegel's view that nature is the Idea in disparity with its own self inevitably shapes how he develops his account of artistic activity. Since nature is the Idea external to itself, according to Hegel, the activity at work within artistic genius is outside the realm of philosophy due to its supposed dependence on the "nature" in the artist. Instead of appealing to nature, Hegel's philosophy of art analyzes artistic production within the context of culture and the historical era in which an artist lived. His speculative philosophy shifts the emphasis away from individual artists creating artworks to stages in the development of spirit more broadly. His understanding of the individual within the context of his philosophy of spirit implies that the artist is moved by cultural-historical factors more so than what he would deem some elusive "nature" present within the subject as Kant suggests.

Rather than looking to nature or a supersensible substrate beyond the artist's ken like Kant does, Hegel's discussion of genius emphasizes spirit as the source of artistic activity. He states that "the work of art springs from the spirit" and so "it has a subjective productivity as its cause."[58] Even though Hegel's account differs from Kant's with respect to the role of nature in creativity, their positions are similar in that they both understand the creation of art to involve a collaboration of the artist's conscious, rational intellect and an aspect of the artist that transcends his or her individual subjectivity. For

[58] Ibid., 280; *VüÄ:* 362.

Kant this aspect is nature in the form of the supersensible, whereas for Hegel it is the sensuous material of art. Though Hegel deemphasizes the role of nature in the artistic process due to the status he grants it within his system, the way he incorporates material in his discussion of the role of media in the creative process could be interpreted as a more concrete account of the role of nature in the genesis of artworks than Kant's.

Far from attributing works of artistic genius to the nature in the subject, Hegel's own account of genius describes it as the "productive activity" of giving external form to the artist's (rational) imagination.[59] He rejects the notion that the artist is unaware of what he does during the creation of a piece and clarifies the limited extent to which natural or innate ability is necessary for genius.

> [T]he artist must fashion his work not in the exclusively spiritual form of thought but within the sphere of intuition and feeling and, more precisely, in connection with the sensuous material and in a sensuous medium. Therefore, this artistic creation, like art throughout, includes in itself the aspect of immediacy and naturalness, and this aspect it is which the subject cannot generate in himself but must find in himself as immediately given. This alone is the sense in which we may say that genius and talent must be inborn.[60]

It is important to note that Hegel's reference to material refers both literally to a material medium (such as paint, stone, or sound) and the content of an artwork's meaning. So, for Hegel, to say that genius or talent is inborn means only that the artist is naturally inspired to create art by the immediately given sensuous content of the world and has a natural proclivity for shaping the material according to his or her inspiration. He writes, "the genuine artist has a natural impulse and immediate need to give form at once to everything that he feels and imagines. This process of formation is his way of feeling and

[59] Ibid., 283; *VüÄ:* 366.

[60] Ibid., 284; *VüÄ:* 367.

seeing, and he finds it in himself without labour as the instrument proper an suited to him."[61]

Hegel's analysis of the artist is insightful in that he recognizes the role that the material, as both the medium and the content, has for the formation of artworks. Even though he highlights the dimension of the artist's natural proclivities, he explains that artistic inspiration is reliant on material given externally. Inspiration cannot come simply from the artist's subjectivity.

> From this point of view, the position the artist is in is that he enters, with a *natural* talent, a relation with an available *given* material; he finds himself solicited by an external incentive […] by an event to give form to this material and to express himself in general on *that*. Thus the occasion for the production may come entirely from without, and the one important requirement is just that the artist shall lay hold of an essential interest and make the subject matter become alive in itself.[62]

It is significant that he claims that an artist's impetus to create "may come entirely from without." This implies that whatever an artist seeks to express arises not from his or her own subjectivity, but from the artist's engagement with a particular subject matter or material. For Hegel, genius is precisely the ability to work with a medium to give external form to an aspect of truth that resonates in him or herself.

Even though external incentive and material are required to inspire the artist, once the artist is in the process of making the piece

> nothing is to be held back in his subjective inner heart; everything must be completely unfolded and indeed in a way in which the universal soul and substance of the chosen subject-matter appears emphasized just as much as its

[61] Ibid., 286; *VüÄ:* 369.

[62] Ibid., 288; *VüÄ:* 372.

> individual configuration appears completely polished in itself and permeated by that soul and substance in accord with the whole representation.[63]

With this Hegel is describing how the artist must free him or herself in the act of creation such that the universality of what is to be presented through him or her may be achieved by following the demands of the piece in its unfolding. The artist must thus "forget his own personality" and "immerse himself […] entirely in his material, so that, as subject, he is only as it were the form for the formation of the theme which has taken hold of him."[64] Through this process the artist invests the material with his or her subjectivity thereby imbuing it with the ideal content of spirit. The finished product, if it is to be an exemplar of beauty will emanate spirit throughout its entirety, making it akin, as Hegel says, to a thousand-eyed Argus.

Hegel's description of the production of art highlights the ways in which external material becomes imbued with spiritual content, that is, the Idea and the radiance of soul. Through the process of his own creation the artist transforms material into a meaningful work of art that bears forth spirit. In other words the artist ensouls material by lending his or her rational imagination to something externally given. The artist works over what is given bringing the content to fruition. The artist's talent lies in his or her ability to produce an external object that accords with the ideal content animating the work. Similarly to Kant, he claims that the possibility of artistic execution "must be there as a natural gift; otherwise a purely learnt proficiency never produces a living work of art."[65]

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[63] Ibid., 290; *VüÄ:* 375.

[64] Ibid., 288; *VüÄ:* 373.

[65] Ibid., 286; *VüÄ:* 370.

Art's connection to material is what ties it to nature, and that is part of what prohibits it from being dealt with "scientifically." In the creative process the body works with a material medium inspired by a natural inclination to give form to what is felt. In Hegel, we can see again how the artist, as an embodied creator, is the site in which nature and art converge. Hegel's emphasis on the materiality of art and his remarks on the body in comparison with works of art suggest ways in which the body implicitly enters into his account of creative acts. He writes, "while the medium of philosophy's production is thought, art's is actual external configurations. Therefore the artist must live and become at home in his medium."[66] Hegel does not mention the artist's body here, but the body is clearly implicated in what he says. Rather than engaging in the internally reflective activity of pure thought, which is what Hegel understands philosophy to be, the artist lives in his or her medium. A medium, of course, is something sensuous, experienced through the body. To be at home in his or her medium, the artist must experience it as an extension of him or herself. Even though Hegel does not describe it in those terms, that is what is entailed in forgetting one's personality and immersing oneself fully in the material being worked with. The artist, animated by the material at hand, creates a sensuous presentation of the Idea through his or her body's engagement with a medium. The body, which is itself the unity of the concept and material, produces objects that exhibit the same kind of unity, though ones that have been perfected by the conscious workings of spirit. Works of art, for Hegel, are "born of spirit and born again," but it takes an embodied love of a medium for an artist to give birth to art.

[66] Ibid., 281; *VüÄ:* 364.

The relation between nature and spirit articulated by Hegel in his aesthetics and his placement of art below religion and philosophy within the progress of absolute spirit, in addition to the hierarchy he establishes within the arts themselves, demonstrates a pattern in his philosophy in which materiality is made antithetical and inferior to the spiritual—the hallmark of metaphysical thinking. In spite of this, Hegel provides valuable insights into what occurs during the creative process and the important role that media play in the production of art. By examining the relationship between art and nature in his aesthetics, I have shown that there are resources in Hegel's philosophy to combat reductive views of nature and materiality. However, his philosophy alone does not provide a satisfactory account of the vital necessity of nature because the pattern of his dialectic reinstates the problematic metaphysical hierarchies that devalue the sensuous and the material underlying the reductive concept of nature. This hierarchy also reinforces the problematic polarization of art and nature, which conceives them as being mutually exclusive categories. Though Hegel's philosophy of nature does offer some promising avenues to explore, it fails to provide an adequate foundation to radically overturn the devaluation of nature prevalent throughout modern thinking, since he deems materiality and sensuous presentations of the Idea to be inferior to what he describes as more spiritually realized knowledge. An adequate conception of nature must be able to account for the continuity of the spiritual and the material without reifying the distinction between them into an evaluative hierarchy. Dialectical thinking has the tools to deconstruct this hierarchy, though Hegel himself does not employ them to those ends. Schelling provides an account of nature and art that offers an alternative view that takes the framework of absolute idealism to its limits.

3. Schelling on Nature's Strivings and Fulfillments in Art and Philosophy

Schelling's *Naturphilosohie* and early writings on art, including certain discussions within the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, both resonate with and challenge aspects of the aesthetics of Kant and Hegel. Schelling, like Hegel, privileges art over natural beauty. However, unlike Hegel, Schelling's understanding of art is much more tied to nature insofar as nature itself is deemed poetic. Nature is a key element of the expressive power of artworks, thus Schelling is much closer to Kant on this point. As a result, Kant and Schelling's theories of creative genius bear much in common. Along similar lines, Schelling shares Kant's appeal to nature and aesthetics as the unifying element of his thought. However, as I shall explain, Schelling is critical of what he sees as the shortcomings of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel's philosophies, and he offers a unique perspective on the relationship between art and nature that foreshadows the positions put forth by thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Though he is an integral member of the German idealist tradition, as his thinking matures it reveals paradoxes about the status of nature within an idealist framework, paradoxes he was never able to resolve.

For Schelling, philosophy and art can be understood as extensions of nature, and nature can be understood as a manifestation of the Absolute. It must be pointed out, however, that any characterization of Schelling's philosophy as a whole is problematic because his thinking changes as it develops throughout his life. In addition to the shifting nature of Schelling's thought, comprehension of his position on particular issues requires a significant degree of interpretation. Thus, rather than confining ourselves to the project of parsing the details of what Schelling may have thought at certain points throughout his

career, we may use his philosophy as a medium for thinking through the intersections of art, nature, and philosophy—the core issues around which his thought resolves. As Bruce Matthews argues, the development of Schelling's philosophy enacts the kind of organic growth that Schelling sees in the development of self-consciousness throughout natural and cultural history. Thinking along with Schelling we find resources for understanding the continuity of art and nature and, ironically, the limits of the German idealist paradigm.

The way Schelling conceives of the relationship between art and philosophy is tied to his conception of nature. Philosophy and art are complementary modes through which nature reconciles the tension within it that spurs its evolution forward. This means that philosophy and art can be understood as extensions of nature. In *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy*, Matthews reads Schelling's oeuvre as being organized around one fundamental idea, that is, philosophy, if it is to be truly positive and concrete, must itself take on an organic form. This means that, for Schelling, philosophical knowledge must be generated by life's own natural impulses as he understands them. Drawing on Schelling's claim that life is to be understood as the schema of freedom, Matthews asserts that Schelling's "first predicate of philosophy must speak to the self-organizing nature that is our world."[67] Continuing, Matthews writes:

> The unifying power of organic form is precisely what Schelling means to express through the term *Identity*, whose relational structure is incapable of being reduced to the linear mechanics of logic, since it exhibits the same property of reciprocity indicative of the dynamic feedback that structures life's capacity for self-organization.[68]

[67] Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), xii.

[68] Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy*, xiii.

Art becomes a key feature of this self-organization because it is through art that the unity of freedom and necessity is realized. But what is so radical about Schelling is his insistence that philosophy go beyond theoretical knowing such that we actually realize our oneness with nature through our own creative acts. Matthews writes, "This is something that we will only be capable of doing, however, if we become open to the other of logos, with its obscure language of mythos, which speaks with the voice of nature as it 'sensualizes truth.'"[69] This is only possible when the telos of philosophy harnesses "the disclosive power of logos *and* mythos."[70] From this we can see the decisive role art and nature have to play for Schelling and their need to be coupled with philosophy if the highest aims of each of these are to be achieved.

Schelling's desire to articulate a philosophical system that transcends the limits of pure theory is evidenced early on in his break with Fichte. Though he was heavily influenced by Fichte, the impetus of Schelling's own philosophy is an effort to rectify the shortcomings he found in the Fichtean project, namely Fichte's failure to adequately account for the existence of the world external to the I. Critiquing Fichte, Schelling takes what seems to be a rather phenomenological position, arguing that, even though the I is always present for any experience and knowledge to occur, the I finds itself immersed in a world that exists without having been thought of or produced by it. Schelling thus argues for the necessity of a world prior to and external to consciousness. The I essentially marks consciousness's coming-to-itself. It is a realization that arises from out of a previous lack of self-consciousness. Therefore, "this coming-to-itself which is stated

[69] Ibid., 10.

[70] Ibid.

in the 'I am' presupposes a having-been-outside and having-been-away from itself. For only what has previously been outside itself can come to itself."[71] So, even though the I is ever-present for itself once it is realized, it can only be established by being grounded on something having been prior that it was not. Schelling asserts that philosophy's task is to remember what the I has undergone in its pre-individual being and trace the history of its development to its highest achievements.[72] With this we get a very general idea of what Schelling is after in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), which he admits is really an attempt to make the Fichtean system comprehensible.

Schelling claims that neither transcendental philosophy nor the philosophy of nature is adequate by itself. Rather both are needed as aspects of a comprehensive system. This may be taken to be a reflection of the critique he made of Fichte's neglect of the external world, and that the philosophy of nature is an addition that will make up for this neglect. Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* marks his first attempt at elaborating his system independently of Fichte. The driving concept behind its development is the infinite subject. Schelling's project is to give an account of the process this infinite subject goes through on its way toward the full realization of itself. This is not altogether unlike what he set out to do in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, and bears much in common with Hegel's philosophical approach, especially as it is formulated in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806). Schelling's method consists in showing the necessary relation/identity of the subject and object. The subject is infinitely self-positing, thereby making itself into objects, and the movement of this positing *progresses* and "exhausts

[71] F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 109.

[72] Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 110.

itself" as it achieves higher and higher levels of actualization.[73] The philosophy of nature traces the development of the subject through the phases of this process, in which it takes on material form as different objects and life forms, that is, as the subject is taken up into higher "potencies" of subjectivity as a result of achieving higher levels of objectivity. Once the subject has become fully objective at a given stage, it breaks into a higher level of realization as A squared. Once this process exhausts itself and the subject has become fully objective again, then another breakthrough happens, raising the subject to another power, A cubed. Once the transition is finally made to A quadrupled, human being appears.[74] At this point the infinite, free subject is realized, and there is something about this subject that cannot become objective. The various potencies—A squared, A cubed, and so forth—coincide with increasing intensifications of the subject's full being. At the bottom, or beginning, is material being, and at the top, or end, is pure spirit.[75]

This process of realizing an infinite subject in material characterizes Schelling's general understanding of nature's striving toward greater self-actualization and realization of the harmony between freedom and necessity. Eventually, this striving results in the creation of art in which the sought after harmony is ultimately realized.

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[73] Ibid., 121.

[74] Ibid., 124.

[75] As a sort of example, Schelling briefly discusses organisms with shells. These organisms occupy an intermediate phase in the above described process in which inorganic elements, like shells, are still a prominent part of the organism. In more advanced organisms, the inorganic elements, like bones, are on the inside and the being is less encumbered by its physical extension. It is more easily self-moved. Schelling says, "The skeletal system of the higher animals is just this inorganic matter which has now been forced back inside and taken up into the inner life process, which in animals of a lower order (the mollusks) is still external and appears as shell and casing" (Ibid., xx). So the interiorizing of the inorganic elements of the organism demonstrates the process of coming to self-knowledge. The process of integrating the inorganic and finite, into the free, infinity of life corresponds with becoming more self-aware and closer to the absolute.

However, in this harmony tension is nonetheless preserved. There is something about the free, infinite subject that cannot become objective, though Schelling maintains that art is a mode of the expression in which spirit is made increasingly manifest in material. Because there is something about the free subject that cannot be made objective, there is something enigmatic about the artwork that makes it more than a mere object. Spirit shines through it as if one could see the creator in it.[76] At the highest realization of the subject, there is still a fundamental dissonance that remains between the infinite and the finite even when the harmony between freedom and necessity is achieved. The fullest manifestation of this dissonance in art is performed by tragic poetry. What culminates in tragedy is present throughout the entire movement of nature and is thus brought to a climax therein.

Joseph Esposito in *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature* explains that nature is fundamentally at odds with itself, and this internal tension within nature is the driving force of its becoming. According to Schelling, nature is both the product and the productive act that produces itself. However, there must be an ulterior force within it that slows it and requires it to strive against itself, preventing the process of its becoming from completing itself immediately.[77] Quoting Schelling, Esposito explains that we must assume that "there is a 'primordial sundering in Nature itself'."[78] This internal tension, or "primordial sundering," is preserved in the enigmatic quality of artworks, that is, the

[76] Ibid., 128.

[77] Joseph L. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 83, 84.

[78] Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature*, 84.

particular way artworks display the subjective objectively. This internal tension is enacted dramatically in tragedy.

In his essay "Deduction of a Universal Organ of Philosophy, or Main Propositions of the Philosophy of Art According to Principles of Transcendental Idealism," Schelling describes how the genesis of art is continuous with the dynamic strivings of nature articulated within his *Naturphilosophie.* The contradiction inherent within nature described above is shown to be the source of the artist's creative drive. Like Kant, Schelling refers to the genius as the producer of art in which the nature in the human, in the form of an unconscious striving, combines with conscious intent to produce artworks. Schelling gives a detailed account of the creative process in which the contradiction in human being, namely, that of freedom and necessity, finds a sort of equilibrium or resolution in art (Greek tragedy being the principle art form Schelling has in mind). Schelling explains that artists are driven to create in order to "satisfy an irresistible impulse of their nature", and this "impulse originates in a contradiction."[79] The artist is compelled to produce art by a felt inner contradiction, "a contradiction that seizes upon the ultimate in him, the root of his entire existence."[80] This contradiction is innate to the genius as a tension within his or her nature, that is, the nature in the genius. Since the contradiction is innate, the move toward art happens involuntarily, though the creation itself is a free activity. This simultaneously free and involuntary activity explains the conscious and unconscious aspects of the creative process. Schelling maintains that "it

[79] F. W. J. Schelling, "Deduction of a Universal Organ of Philosophy, or Main Propositions of the Philosophy of Art According to Principles of Transcendental Idealism," *Philosophy of German Idealism,* Vol. 23 (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 1987), 206.

[80] Schelling, "Deduction of a Universal Organ of Philosophy," 206.

can only be the contradiction between the conscious and the unconscious in free action that sets the artistic impulse into motion, just as, once more, it can only be given to art to satisfy our infinite striving as well as to resolve the ultimate and most extreme contradiction in us."[81]

As stated above, the artist's impulse to create is the feeling of the contradiction between "the conscious and the unconscious in free action," and when this contradiction is resolved, there is a feeling of harmony. This feeling may be interpreted to be an observation on how an artist knows a piece is complete.[82] The artist feels the satisfaction of the resolved contradiction, and through this feeling the artist knows the piece is finished. Though "Every aesthetic production starts from the feeling of an infinite contradiction," the production of the piece comes to a close when an "unconscious infinity" has been achieved which is the "synthesis of freedom and nature."[83]

Schelling's account of how genius works is very close to Kant's in that it is not something that can be taught. Rather, it "can only be inborn by the free gift of nature."[84] For Schelling, the concept of genius is necessary to explain the artist's ability to perform the logically impossible—that is, the reconciliation of contradiction. There is an element of the uncontrolled in art, something at odds with freedom. This "obscure unknown power" is what "adds the element of perfection, completion, or objectivity to the

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[81] Ibid., 207.

[82] This is consistent with the interpretation put forth by Richards in *The Romantic Conception of Life* where he explains that the contradictions felt by the artist "can only be calmed in the execution of the work of art. As the artist comes to rest in the finished, objective product, he or she will sense the union of nature and self, of necessity and freedom, of—finally—the unconscious and conscious self" (162).

[83] Ibid., 209.

[84] Ibid., 208.

fragmentary work of freedom."[85] But it is only in conjunction with free acts that this power "realizes non-intended ends." This element adds a certain tension to the creative process such that what is united in production "eternally flees from itself," and this is what is signified by the concept of genius.[86]

The impulses of nature at work in the operations of genius that take place on an unconscious level are experienced as an "outside power" that guides artistic creation. Thus, the creative process involves an embodiment of the unconscious strivings taking place within nature described above. Hammermeister provides a lucid explication of this process that is worth quoting at length.

> While nature in its production begins unconsciously and ends in consciousness, namely, that of man, the artistic activity reverses this process by beginning consciously and continuing without consciousness. While the artist certainly decides to create a specific work and to make plans for it, the execution demands that an additional force beyond the control of the artist enter into the work. It is precisely the definition of genius—and all artistic production depends on genius—that the unconscious element joins the conscious effort. The true artist, after he has begun his work, is then visited by an outside power that adds the objective moment to the product, that is, that which transcends the merely personal and consciously drafted.[87]

We might compare Schelling's account of the creative process to Hegel's description of artistic production in which the artist becomes completely immersed in the work during its creation. Schelling's account is much different from Hegel's, however, since for Hegel there are no elements of the unconscious or an "outside power" involved. For Schelling,

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[85] Ibid., 206.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 71.

the unconscious in the subject corresponds to nature and so his account is much closer to Kant's. As Hammermeister explains:

> [E]very work of art conjoins two elements: one that Schelling calls "art" [*Kunst*] and that signifies art in the sense of […] skill, practice and imitation of an established tradition […]; the other that Schelling labels "poetry" and that refers to the unconscious moment that enters the work of art not as a result of the effort of the artist but, instead, as the reflex of "grace" (*System* 459).[88]

Schelling's appeals to an outside power and grace at work in the genius have religious overtones that suggest a transcendent force is responsible in part for artistic inspiration. Moreover, deeming nature itself poetic recalls the crossing of art and nature discussed with regard to Kant. Dale Snow discusses Edward G. Ballard's[89] claim that both Kant and Schelling understand nature as analogous to an artist. Quoting Ballard, Snow writes:

> Kant's effort to understand how human values are attainable and possible in a determined physical universe therefore leads him "to hold that the doctrines in philosophy derived from both the mechanistic analogy and the artistic analogy are coherent and possible within the same intellectual framework." One way to understand Schelling's complex relation to Kant is to see him as having taken what Ballard calls the "artistic analogy" more seriously.[90]

For Schelling, art is an extension and intensification of the becoming of an infinite subject because nature, which is this subject's primordial manifestation, is itself originally poetic. Building on Kant's much weaker notion that our minds cannot help but conceive of nature as if it had been created purposefully, according to Snow, "Schelling is willing to see nature itself as somehow rational and orderly and possessed, in Walter

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Edward G. Ballard, " The Kantian Solution to the Problem of Man within Nature," *Tulane Studies in Philosophy* 3 (1954): 8.

[90] Dale E. Snow, *Schelling at the End of Idealism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 123.

Schulz's words of *analoga* to spirit."[91] When, for Schelling, the nature in the genius becomes expressive through the collaboration of skill and grace, the Absolute becomes concretely manifested in works of art.

The realization of non-intended ends through the collaboration of unconscious strivings and deliberate effort is also what prevents the meaning of an artwork from being fully articulated even though art achieves a higher realization of the Absolute. The inexhaustibility of an artwork's meaning, however, is not a shortcoming of art as it would be for Hegel. For Schelling art is able to manifest the Absolute precisely because its meaning cannot be exhausted; and the inexhaustibility of the meaning of art is due, again, to its ability to incorporate the subject's unconscious history and the active drives animating nature. As Andrew Bowie explains, "The work of art's basic character is an 'unconscious infinity' […] because the meaning of the work cannot be exhausted, even though it is manifested in an object, and does not depend on the conscious intent of the artist."[92] As part of the coming to consciousness of the I, art is a product through which the I comes to understand itself more fully. Bowie points out that the unconscious history that makes consciousness possible "must also be integrated into the articulation of the Absolute."[93] However, this history "*can only be known via its result, not as itself*."[94] Continuing, Bowie writes, "What is being sought is a way of understanding the identity of the subjective and objective, conscious and unconscious, spirit and nature, which must

[91] Snow, *Schelling at the End of Idealism*, 125.

[92] Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 52.

[93] Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* 52.

[94] Ibid.

not be conceived as theoretical knowledge." In other words, expression of the Absolute must not be confined to scientific understanding; it cannot be purely theoretical because the ideal is incomplete if it is not accompanied by the real. According to Schelling and "the early Romantics, with whom Schelling was in close contact in Jena," art is one of the primary ways in which this understanding might be achieved.[95] Art is capable of gasping what theoretical knowledge cannot because it is able to incorporate the unconscious history of consciousness into tangible, sensuous products. Schelling adopts Kant's account of artistic expression in which "the genius crosses the Kantian divide between the subject and nature in itself by being 'the talent (gift of nature), which gives the rule to art."[96] As a result of the special relationship between mind and nature in the work of genius, art is able to manifest the Absolute.

The resolution of the conflict between the conscious and unconscious, and freedom and necessity in the work of art reveals the superior standing Schelling grants to art. At the end of the "Deduction of a Universal Organ of Philosophy" he turns to the relationship between art and philosophy, claiming that "art is the sole true and eternal organon as well as the document of philosophy."[97] It is in art, not philosophy, that the Absolute is *realized*. In art, the unconscious history of nature is actually presented, whereas in philosophy, it is merely described. That is why Schelling claims that philosophy, once it is completed, will led back to the "universal ocean of poetry from which it started out."[98]

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[95] Ibid., 51.

[96] Ibid., 52.

[97] Schelling, "Deduction of a Universal Organon of Philosophy," 215.

[98] Ibid., 216.

Schelling's position on the relationship between art and philosophy, however, shifts in his later work. Hammermeister claims that "[A]rt loses its privileged status in Schelling's thought shortly after the completion of the *System*, although for some time it remains on par with the philosophical concept or comes in behind it as a very close second—a position that resembles closely that of Hegel."[99] In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Art* (1859), Schelling maintains that art and philosophy are both absolutely necessary and require each other to be most fully themselves. Philosophy and art correspond to the ideal and real respectively, but the ideal is incomplete without the real and vice versa. It is true that art manifests the absolute concretely, but it takes the philosophy of art for that reality to be comprehended. "Insofar as the ideal is always a higher reflex of the real, the philosopher necessarily possesses an even higher ideal reflex of that which in the artist is real."[100] Though this suggests a hierarchy of philosophy over art, one need not interpret it that way since both perform vital movements that cannot occur separately. Speaking of the artist, Schelling writes, "The subjective element within him passes over again to the objective element, just as in the philosopher the objective element is constantly taken up into the subjective one."[101] In the foreword to his translation of the *Philosophy of Art* David Simpson notes that, "While Reason is the 'full expression of absolute identity as such' (28), only art can express or represent the synthesis (*Indifferenz*) of knowledge and action, of that which is known in thought with

[99] Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 66.

[100] F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglass W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 6.

[101] Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, 6.

that which can take on form in the world."[102] In some ways, then, philosophy and art complete each other by performing complementary modes of real and ideal realization.

Since art and philosophy are both equally necessary, the Absolute cannot be expressed entirely rationally within philosophy. We have seen how nature exhibits a developmental process in which it becomes an increasingly complex and concrete manifestation of the harmony between freedom and necessity. This process is also reflected in the progress of history, and it is on this point that we can make a clear distinction between Schelling and Hegel's conceptions of the Absolute. Dale Snow explains that "Hegel's entire philosophical endeavor takes place within the framework of the advance of reason towards complete rationality." For Schelling, Snow explains, this is not the case.

> Schelling presents freedom as a drama uniting freedom and necessity, subjective and objective elements, in a way in which and must remain less than transparent, even to the author of the drama. Thus even history is in a sense a work of art, for in order for freedom to be possible, it must contain more than its author could ever have consciously intended.[103]

As explained above, the creative process involves the collaboration of the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the person. Therefore, artworks are able to exhibit the unconscious history of the subject in what is created. However, this exhibition is not one that can be fully grasped in theoretical knowledge, and so art is not transparent in the way philosophy purports to be. When considering the development of history, preserving an element of opacity is required for the preservation of freedom. Snow writes, "in order for

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[102] Douglass W. Scott, introduction to *The Philosophy of Art*, by F. W. J. Schelling (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), xii.

[103] Snow, *Schelling at the End of Idealism,* 122.

freedom to be preserved, its ultimate ground can never be totally revealed."[104] Because nature is not overcome but remains active in works of art, their meaning can never be fully delineated. Though art is saturated with meaning, as sensuous the meaning remains dense and evades the complete clarity of reason.

Schelling's acknowledgement of the limits of rational knowledge and the need for art to complement philosophy have led some to suggest that he had become disillusioned with idealism by the end of his career. Snow maintains that Schelling finds an alternative to idealism in the formulation of his "positive philosophy." Schelling "had conclusively demonstrated, at least to himself, that it was impossible to return to a pre-idealistic metaphysics as it was to remain within the worldview of idealism; the need and desire to go beyond idealism gave rise to what he later came to call the positive philosophy."[105] Bowie describes positive philosophy as a project seeking to go beyond negative philosophy, which "explicates the forms of pure thought that determine what things are, to a conception which comes to terms both with the fact that things are and with the real historical emergence and movement of consciousness."[106] This entails being able to account for the evolution of being itself through its emergence in history. In other words, Schelling was ultimately seeking a philosophy that went beyond mere description in which being is reified. He was seeking a dynamic, living embodiment of truth. Thus, as mentioned above, Matthews claims that Schelling's philosophy is organized around the fundamental idea that philosophy itself must take on an organic form.

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 181.

[106] Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* 13.

It is unclear, however, that an "organic" philosophy that recognizes the limits of reason is completely at odds with idealist metaphysics. While it may be true, as Snow and others have argued, that Schelling's late thought exhibits a desire to go beyond the German idealist paradigm, his thought as a whole remains caught up in a conception of life founded upon some Absolute, whether it be with regard to theology or the philosophy of nature. Despite his focus on the evolving, self-organizing character of nature, art, and philosophy, his thinking consistently appeals to an infinite, transcendent subject at the core of reality. And yet, Schelling's deep recognition of the need to account for the reality of nature already problematizes how his thinking might be metaphysically characterized. The inner dynamic of nature described by Schelling in this *Naturphilosophie*, in which the infinite gradually makes itself increasingly objective, suggests that his idealism is perhaps better understood as a "real-idealism" since "in it idealism itself had a realism as its basis."[107] This is important to keep in mind when thinking about his philosophy of nature generally, since his emphasis on the realist basis of his idealism is what distinguishes his system from that of Fichte and marks a decisive return to nature.[108] The realist basis of Schelling's idealism highlights the extent to which nature must be objectively real despite its being a product of an infinite subject. However, what it means for nature to be "objective" in this context is a matter of some debate. Robert J. Richards in *The Romantic Conception of Life* (2002) notes that Bowie interprets Schelling as being opposed to any objective realist conception of nature. Richards quotes Bowie as saying that Schelling does not see "'scientific investigation in terms of a

[107] Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 120.

[108] Robert J. Richards *The Romantic Conception of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 143.

representation of the objective truth about nature. […] A world of pure objectivity is and will remain inconceivable for Schelling (pp. 39-40)'." Richards disagrees with Bowie, arguing that "On the contrary, for Schelling, the world of nature is completely objective—it is, after all, an object and product of mind." The disagreement between Richards and Bowie hinges upon the various connotations of the word "objectivity." As a product of mind, it is counterintuitive to refer to nature as objective. However, insofar as Schelling's view affirms the material actuality of nature (and, thus, can be considered a type of realism), it is appropriate to talk about nature's objectivity, albeit in a very particular sense that runs contrary to the usual connotations of the word. Bowie claims that "any realist conception of the approach to the absolute truth about nature" is doomed to fail "due to our inextricable role as part of what is to be investigated."[109] This claim is true insofar as we will never have complete scientific knowledge of nature according to Schelling. As explained, his conception of the Absolute does not entail the same degree of transparency as does Hegel's. This claim is somewhat distorting, however, since it downplays the facticity of nature independent from our understanding of it. From a metaphysical standpoint, it is true that nature and mind are inherently linked for Schellling—indeed, nature may be considered a product of an absolute mind within his *Naturphilosophie*. However, this does not nullify the fact there is an objectively real natural world that we can have either correct or incorrect ideas about. Similarly to the debates about Hegel's idealism pointed out above, Schelling's position requires that we acknowledge the material reality of nature even though it is understood as a manifestation of an infinite subject.

[109] Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* 40.

This debate is important because it bears directly on how "the Absolute" should be understood within Schelling's philosophy. In *The Invisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (1996), Žižek presents an argument that challenges the notion that nature is an emanation of an absolute subject according to Schelling. He claims that since in the development of nature consciousness apprehends itself as having an evolutionary past that it is not aware of, this suggests that "Spirit itself is originally not 'within itself' but 'outside itself'."[110] Consequently, "the true question is not how we can progress from the mere notion of God to God's actual existence, but the exact opposite."[111] In other words, we cannot begin with the notion of a preexisting Absolute and then go on to explain how the world is a manifestation of it. Rather, "what comes first, what is always-already here, is the experience of a 'senseless,' pre-predicative, pre-semantic existence, and the true problem for philosophy is how we can accomplish the passage from this senseless existence to Reason."[112] Žižek explains that this inversion in which "Reason is originally 'ecstatic,' outside itself," marks the point "where Schelling parts with philosophical Idealism which is not ready to admit the dependence of logos on its Ground."[113] Žižek goes on to show what is really at stake in the relation between idealism and an understanding of nature in which material, not an absolute subject, is the true ground.

> Idealism is fully justified in its claim that one cannot reduce Culture, the domain of spiritual Meanings, to a simple prolongation of nature – to a more

[110] Slavoj Žižek, *The Invisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (New York: Verso, 1996), 73.

[111] Žižek, *The Invisible Remainder,* 73.

[112] Ibid., 73-74.

[113] Ibid., 74.

> differentiated, 'intelligent', means of biological survival: Spirit is an End-in-itself for whom its physical and biological environs serve as its Ground. The paradox one must sustain, however, is that the universe of 'spiritual' products is none the less rooted in its ground. The present threat of a global ecological catastrophe provides the ultimate proof: the universe of human culture hinges on the unstable balance of our ecosphere.[114]

Schelling is aware of the paradox that nature presents. Understanding how Spirit, the infinite, is emergent from the finite, the material, is impossible without acknowledging that an Absolute already exists subtending the ground of finitude. And yet, the existence of Spirit is utterly dependent on a material environment. Put another way, Schelling's desire to account for the full implications of the depths of the inseparability of freedom and necessity, the spiritual and the material, the subjective and objective, leads him to the limitations of philosophical idealism for grasping the reality of nature and the meaning of art. As Heidegger explains, "Schelling is the truly creative and boldest thinker of this whole age of German philosophy. He is that to such an extent that he drives German Idealism from within right past its own fundamental position."[115]

In this discussion I have shown how Schelling's conceptions of art and philosophy are tied to his conception of nature. Nature, as a dynamic process of development in which consciousness comes to grasp itself more and more fully, leads to the generation of art and philosophical discourse. His account of genius describes the ways in which nature becomes active in the creative process allowing the artist to express more than he or she consciously could intend. Coupled with the theoretical knowledge articulated by philosophy, art achieves the ultimate telos of nature in which the Absolute is embodied.

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambough (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 4.

What is significant about Schelling is his demand that we think nature more fully, recognizing our indebtedness to it in our highest pursuits. In attempting to think nature within the framework of idealism, however, the paradoxes of the metaphysical distinction between spirit and material are brought to a head. Despite the positive contributions Schelling's philosophy makes to rethinking the relationship between art and nature, his position is couched within a limiting metaphysical framework. Though Schelling himself became aware of these limitations, his thinking never quite broke free of them. The development of his thought points the way beyond metaphysical thinking, but it will take future thinkers, such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty—who were very much influenced by Schelling—to take us there.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAWING OF THE WORLD AND EARTH IN HEIDEGGER AND MERLEAU-PONTY

Kant and the German idealists developed paradigms of aesthetics that articulate the place of art in relation to knowledge and the material being of the natural world. The metaphysical and epistemological frameworks shaping the aesthetics of Kant, Hegel, and Schelling are the culminations of the development of modern thinking in which the idea of the self-conscious subject's distinction from the material world arose and became reified. According to Heidegger, the very concept of aesthetics is founded upon the metaphysical distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, which is, itself, dependent upon the view that subjectivity—the domain of conceptual thought—is fundamentally distinct from nature—the realm of sensuous materiality. In "The Age of the World Picture," he explains that one of the five "essential phenomena of the modern age is the event of art's moving into the purview of aesthetics." From the standpoint of aesthetics "the art work becomes the object of mere subjective experience," and "consequently art is considered to be an expression of human life."[1] As founders of the discipline of aesthetics, the accounts of art provided by Kant, Hegel, and Schelling and the conceptions of genius that accompany them reinforce the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, and the subject and the material world, even though, in the cases of Hegel and Schelling, they are attempting to overcome these distinctions. Heidegger's approach to the question of art purposefully avoids discussing what

[1] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1977), 116.

individual artists contribute to the formation of artworks in order to give a more fundamental account of the "happening" of art in relation to the revelation of truth.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger puts forth his revolutionary thesis that the work of art opens up a world. The work of art actively performs the clearing and concealing of beings "as the becoming and happening of truth." In addition to a detailed inquiry into the nature of art, "The Origin of the Work of Art" brings together a number of key themes in Heidegger's later work in relation to his ontology. Artworks cannot be discussed without also addressing the nature of truth, language, and the disclosure of being in general because they are the fundamental ways in which being is disclosed. Heidegger tells us in the addendum to the essay that this entire work "deliberately yet tacitly moves on the path of the question of the nature of Being," and our inquiry into the nature of art may be "completely and decidedly determined only in regard to the question of Being."[2] Heidegger's theory of art is, therefore, an integral part of his ontology.

Within the context of this essay, the clearing and concealing of beings that opens up a world is described in terms of the active striving of drawing the rift between world and earth. The "rift" or "rift-design" (*Riss*) is a key notion that links together language, art, and truth with regard to the question of being. The rift, which Heidegger likens to a line drawing or sketch, describes the structure of the emergence of form and meaning, the tangible means through which being is disclosed in the strife of world and earth set in motion in the work of art. The concept of the rift is a vital touchstone that allows

[2] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstader (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 85; *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Phillip Reclam Jun., 1960), 99. [Hereafter cited as *UK* followed by page numbers.]

Heidegger to articulate the origin of the work of art and the speaking of language without relying on the subjectivity of the artist.

As part of his ontology, Heidegger's philosophy of art attempts to articulate how art opens up a world. But since artworks are the creations of individual artists—a fact that Heidegger never denies—this may prompt one to ask, as Karsten Harries does, "how then is the artist's establishment of a world in the work of art to be thought? What here is his or her contribution? Is the artist, too, not always bound to and by his world? What world then does he or she create?"[3] This way of putting the question is problematic because it implies that artists actually *create* worlds when they create art. Julian Young explains that this way of interpreting "The Origin of the Work of Art" has led some to suggest that granting artists the power to create worlds is "a thinly guised plea for the overcoming of European nihilism through the coming into being of a brave new world to be established by the Hitler-created artwork."[4] In *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art,* Young calls this interpretation the "Promethean" view and maintains that it misconstrues Heidegger's position. He argues that the Promethean view forgets that for Heidegger "'world' is the same as 'thownness' which every human being (*Dasein*) […] finds itself already in."[5] The artwork's 'opening up' of world is, then, not Promethean creation but rather 'thematizing', 'making expressly visible'."[6] Moreover, the Promethean interpretation assumes the very standpoint that Heidegger wishes to move past, that is, the view

[3] Karsten Harries, *Art Matters: A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art"* (Springer Science+Business Media B.V., 2009), 113.

[4] Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 29.

[5] Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 32.

[6] Ibid., 34.

pervading modern thinking in which the work of art is taken to be an expression of a subject. Heidegger writes, "Modern subjectivism, to be sure, immediately misinterprets creation, taking it as a self-sovereign subject's performance of genius."[7] The view that art is an expression of a "self-sovereign" subject exhibits the kind of thinking that assumes that a subject is ultimately separable from its world. For Heidegger, the artist is not the origin of the work. Rather, the works themselves perform the opening up of worlds. Even though the artist is needed to make the artwork happen, the artist does not create the world he or she inhabits. Given Heidegger's rejection of the artist as "the origin" of the work of art, the Promethean reading loses its force.

Though Young's rebuttal is cogent and consistent with Heidegger's view, the artist's relation to the world opened up by the work he or she creates remains unclear in Heidegger's work. Gregory Bruce Smith, summarizing a position similar to Young's, acknowledges the ambiguity of Heidegger's position with respect to artists' relationships to their work. Smith remarks that, for Heidegger, "Great art is not a conscious act, it is 'granted' to the artist by an act of grace that emanates from a mysterious source."[8] This view appears to have something in common with the conceptions of genius articulated by Kant and Schelling. However, in Heidegger's case the mysterious source is not nature or an absolute subject, but the essence of art, which for Heidegger equates to originary language, that is, poetry, according to his particular understanding of it.

Although, for Heidegger, artists themselves do not perform the world-opening activity he attributes to the work of art, he does acknowledge the role of artists' creative

[7] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 73; *UK:* 87.

[8] Gregory Bruce Smith, review of *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, in *The American Political Science Review* 85 (June 1991).

processes in the performance of the *work,* or the active striving, of art. The creation of artworks may be understood both literally and figuratively as the drawing of the rift-design. In other words, the creation of works of art is the "drawing" of the world from earth. Referring to Albrecht Dürer's famous remark that the artist "wrests" from nature the art that lies hidden within it, Heidegger states, "'Wrest' here means to draw out the rift and to draw the design with the drawing-pen on the drawing-board."[9] The meaning of the act of drawing as it is employed here may be understood in two senses. One is to draw something out of its source like water from a well. The other is the artistic activity of making a line drawing with pen or pencil. These two meanings work together to describe how the work of art performs the clearing and concealing of beings, that is, the happening of truth. Through the artistic act of drawing—through the creation of the work of art—the world is drawn out, that is, opened up and set forth.

Heidegger, himself, does not make clear exactly how the "drawing" of the rift performs the opening up of world. Although he admits that artists are needed to perform this drawing, his imperative to avoid reinstating a subjectivist, aesthetic account of art prevents him from explaining how the drawing of the rift actually takes place in the artist's creative process. In the following section I will provide an interpretation of what drawing the rift means in relation to the act of artistic creation by examining Heidegger's concept of *Riss* in "The Origin of the Work of Art" and his essays on language. Then, I will turn to Merleau-Ponty, who frequently looked to artists for philosophical inspiration, as well as the writings of Paul Klee and the influential choreographer and dance theorist, Rudolf Laban, in order to illustrate more clearly how Heidegger's concept of drawing the

[9] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 68; *UK:* 80.

rift-design may be understood. By reading Heidegger alongside Merleau-Ponty and the writings of artists, I propose a non-subjectivist account of artistic creation that demonstrates how artistic activity belongs to the world and things just as much as it does to individual artists. Artworks are generated in response to the dynamic, living character of being, a dynamic that artists are attuned to and take part in.

1. The Drawing of the Rift in Heidegger

The concept of the *Riss* introduced in "The Origin of the Work of Art" appears at critical points in other important essays of Heidegger's later period such as "Language" (1950) and "The Way to Language" (1959). In "The Way to Language" Heidegger emphasizes the dimension of language that speaks by showing.[10] The rift-design is the structure of what language reveals, that is, shows, in its speaking. Heidegger's likening of the rift to a kind a line-drawing or sketch evokes the visual connotations of what it means "to show." He writes, "The rift-design is the totality of traits in the kind of drawing that permeates what is opened up and set free in language. The rift-design is the drawing of the essence of language, the well-joined structure of a showing."[11] In "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Riss* is introduced to characterize the strife between earth and world in an artwork, which is also linked to the speaking of language. In this essay, what it means for language to show in the act of saying becomes clear in the last section, "Art and Truth." Inquiring into the nature of art has led Heidegger to proclaim that poetry is the essence of

[10] Martin Heidegger, "The Way to Language," in *Basic Writings: Revised and Expanded Edition*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 411.

[11] Heidegger, "The Way to Language," 408.

art, and art is the "becoming and happening of truth." In this context the saying of language takes on a more concrete significance by being linked to the *work* performed by art, that is, the striving of world and earth. Heidegger writes, "Projective saying is poetry: the saying of the world and earth."[12] In the drawing of the rift-design, the earth and world are said, that is, shown or brought forth into the open. This saying is projective because it is the *drawing out* of world from earth. The projective saying of world and earth is the speech of language itself as an act of showing. It is in the drawing of the rift-design that world and earth are set-into-work, and their strife actively brings about the clearing and concealing of beings.

There are multiple senses of *Riss* implied in Heidegger's application of the term that reveal more of the ontological implications behind the relation of speaking and showing. William S. Allen explains that *Riss* literally means " 'rift,' 'tear,' or 'crack,' but is also found in the terms sketch (*Aufriss*), outline (*Umriss*), and design (*Grundriss*). Together these valences of meaning emphasize the fact that in separating the world from the earth we draw out its configuration, and in sketching this out we set apart its ground. The sketch and the tear are two sides of the same line."[13] Allen argues that the translation of *Riss* as rift fails to carry the meaning that Heidegger intends for it in his later writings. Instead, he prefers "draw-ing" as a more adequate translation because it connotes the sense of drawing something out of its source (as in drawing blood, for example) as well as the sense of drawing a sketch or outline.

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[12] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 71; *UK:* 84.

[13] William S. Allen, *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Holderlin, and Blanchot* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 72.

In the essay "Language" Heidegger speaks of the rift as the "rending that divides and gathers."[14] The rift draws the "dif-ference." Here he also likens it to a pen drawing or sketch. Within this essay the rift is introduced through Heidegger's reading of Georg Trakl's poem "A Winter Evening," with particular reference to the line "Pain has turned the threshold to stone." Understanding this line requires understanding the role of the rift as a kind of sketch. With regard to pain in reference to this line from the poem he writes, "Its rending, as a separation that gathers, is at the same time that drawing which, like the pen-drawing of a plan or sketch, draws and joins together what is held apart in separation."[15] An outline of a figure creates a border between the figure and its ground. The line is the border where the figure and its ground meet; therefore, the line is both what separates and joins the figure with its ground. The rift of the dif-ference brings beings into the open the same way line creates positive and negative space, allowing the figure to stand out against its background. Heidegger tells us, "The rift of the dif-ference makes the limpid brightness shine. […] The rift of the dif-ference expropriates the world into its worlding, *which grants things*."[16] Lines draw the Gestalt of figures, making them visible, just as the pain of the rift lets things shine forth into the open.

Discussing what the pain of the rift means within the context of Heidegger's essay "Language," Leonard Lawlor explains that the pain "being experienced is not a feeling relative to a human being or a body of a human being; it is not a subjective state of mind. What is being experienced is the fundamental 'rift' or 'tear' (*Riss*) in being itself, that is,

[14] Martin Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstader (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 202.

[15] Heidegger, "Language," 202.

[16] Ibid., 203 (emphasis added).

it is the experience of the difference that joins in disjointure."[17] This important observation helps to elucidate how the drawing of the rift may be understood as an ontological event within the context of the "The Origin of the Work of Art." The drawing of the rift-design as described in "Language" parallels the drawing of the rift between earth and world in "The Origin of the Work of Art" whereby figures are outlined and set forth. Also, the pain that characterizes the rift in "Language" implies the same connotations as does the strife in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Strife is the primal conflict of world and earth in which world is opened up and earth juts out. This conflict performs the clearing and concealing that sets truth to work in the work of art. "Truth establishes itself as a strife within a being that is to be brought forth only in such a way that the conflict opens up in this being, that is, this being is itself brought into the rift-design. The rift-design is the drawing together, into a unity, of sketch and basic design, breach and outline."[18] The establishment of a figure occurs as the strife between earth and world because it involves clearing and concealing simultaneously. Moreover, clearing cannot occur without concealing, and vice versa. Strife connotes the manner through which this dual movement of drawing the rift occurs. As Lawlor points out, however, the connotations of pain and strife in the drawing of the rift do not belong to individual subjects; they belong to the ontological disclosure of truth.

Joseph J. Kockelmans in *Heidegger on Art and Artworks* also connects *Riss* as it is used in "Language" to how it is used in "The Origin of the Work of Art." He explains that the fissure that draws the world and earth "into the source of their unity" and "draws

[17] Leonard Lawlor, *Early Twentieth Century Modern Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 137.

[18] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 61; *UK:* 71.

up the basic features for the clearing and concealing of beings" anticipates what Heidegger will later "unfold as the ontological difference which in the domain of language comes-to-presence as the dif-ference (*diaphora*, *Unter-Schied*) between world and thing."[19] The visual and tangible shaping of the conflict of world and earth carried out in the drawing of the rift-design creates Gestalt, or the unique character and forms of things.

> The strife that is brought into the rift and thus set back into the earth and thus fixed in place is *figure*, *shape*, *Gestalt*. Createdness of the work means: truth's being fixed in place in the figure. Figure is the structure in whose shape the rift composes and submits itself. This composed rift is the fitting and joining of the shining of truth.[20]

In the figure the strife of world and earth finds repose, but in repose the strife is not quieted. Rather, "repose occurs in the concentrated agitation of this conflict."[21] Similarly to the peal of stillness in language's primal calling from out of silence, the strife of world and earth in the figure carries this same intensity. The concentrated agitation of the figure in repose echoes the line from Trakl's poem "Pain has turned the threshold to stone." The rift of the dif-ference that draws the outline of figures carries out the same activity of fixing the figure in place in the work of art. Turning to stone and fixing in place are the activities of the rift-design spoken of by Heidegger in these different contexts as pain and strife.

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[19] Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Artworks* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 175.

[20] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 61-62; *UK:* 71.

[21] Ibid., 56; *UK:* 63.

Whenever a figure is composed by the rift-design it is also placed within a frame. "What is here called figure, *Gestalt* is always to be thought in terms of the particular placing (*Stellen*) and framing or framework (*Ge-stell*) as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth."[22] When a figure is fixed into place it is also put into place. As we have said, a figure can only appear against a background, and so the fixing in place of a figure needs a frame like a kind of horizon that gives it a setting. A setting as a kind of frame always has an historical significance for Heidegger. Again, since the *work* of art is to set up a world, the setting in place of a figure and the framing that it involves can be understood as a kind of world formation. The world one inhabits is a configuration of meanings in a given time. It is what we take for granted as already laid before us, determining what is sensible and meaningful within a community. Young tells us that "'world' is the background, and usually unnoticed understanding which determines for the members of an historical culture what, for them, fundamentally, there *is*. It constitutes, as it were, the entry conditions, the ground plan, the 'being of beings,' which something must satisfy in order to show up as a being in the world in question."[23] A world must itself be grounded, and so it must be set back into the earth. Thus, the setting up of a world involves strife with the earth in which being is simultaneously cleared and concealed.

As stated, the setting up of a world through the establishment of a figure can involves a kind of framing, *Ge-stell*. In the addendum to "The Origin of the Work of

[22] Ibid., 62; *UK:* 71-2.

[23] Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 23.

Art," Heidegger connects his notions of *Riss* and *Ge-stell* with the unfolding of history and the "destiny of Being."

> In accordance with what has so far been explained, the meaning of the noun '*Ge-stell*,' frame, framing, framework […] is thus defined: the gathering of the bringing forth, of the letting-come-forth-here into the rift-design as bounding outline (*peras*). […] Now the word '*Ge-stell*,' frame, which we used in later writings as the explicit key expression for the nature of modern technology, was indeed used in that sense of frame. […] That context is essential, because [it is] related to the destiny of Being.[24]

Our modern world is characterized by an intensification of "enframing" that has hardened the separation between ourselves and the worlds we inhabit. The "enframing" of world in the modern worldview is taken up explicitly by Heidegger in "The Question Concerning Technology" (1955) and "The Age of the World Picture" (1938) to discuss the framework of metaphysics and the emergence of the human being as subject that stands over against the world.[25] For Heidegger, the framework of metaphysics and the emergence of the human being as subject go hand-in-hand and may be traced back to the philosophy of Descartes who, Heidegger believes, marks the beginning of the modern era.[26] The enframing of the modern age results in "art's moving into the purview of

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[24] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 83; *UK:* 97-8.

[25] In "The Question Concerning Technology" and "The Age of the World Picture" Heidegger makes some important remarks about nature and art that warrant discussion. In "The Question Concerning Technology" Heidegger tells us that *physis* is a kind of *poiesis*, or "bringing-forth," like that performed by the artist. Technology, too is a kind of revealing like that which is happening in nature and art. However, the revealing performed by modern technology is not *poeisis*. Rather, "the revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausforden*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such." Heidegger's discussion of technology and the valuation of nature as "standing-reserve" in this essay has inspired much of the work done in environmental philosophy in relation to his work, especially deep ecology, and is closely linked with his critique metaphysics and calculative thinking.

[26] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 127.

aesthetics" whereby art "becomes the object of mere subjective experience" and "is considered to be an expression of human life."[27] As explained above, this reasoning makes clear why Heidegger deemphasizes the role of the artist in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Rather than thinking about art as a product of human expression, Heidegger provides an account of art as an ontological event and the happening of truth.

Although Heidegger rejects the notion that artworks are artifacts of human expression, the establishment of a Gestalt and the opening up of world through the fixing in place of a figure within a frame in drawing of the rift is the result of a creative act. The question still remains, however, as to how the artist is involved in this process. If art is an ontological event, then how is human creativity to be understood? Interestingly, despite his criticism of thinking about creation in terms of artistic genius, Heidegger refers to a quote by Dürer previously mentioned on the relation between art and nature in the creative act. He writes, "Someone who was bound to know what he was talking about, Albrecht Dürer, did after all make the well known remark: 'For in truth, art lies hidden within nature; he who can wrest it from her has it.'" Heidegger then immediately links this statement to the drawing of the rift. As stated above, Heidegger interprets Dürer's use of "wrest" here to mean "to draw out the rift and to draw the design with the drawing-pen on the drawing-board."[28] Heidegger claims that "there lies hidden in nature a rift-design, a measure and a boundary and, tied to it, a capacity for bringing forth—that is, art."[29] He then nuances the meaning of Dürer's statement to clarify that whatever art may be lying

[27] Ibid., 116.

[28] Hofstadter includes the original German of this line in a note to show the various etymological traces of *Riss* it includes: "Reissen heist hier Herausholen des Risses und der Riss reissen mit der Reissfeder auf dem Reisbrett."

[29] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 68; *UK:* 80.

hidden in nature "becomes manifest only through the work [of art]." This is an important clarification because it indicates that neither nature nor the artist is the source of art; rather, it is the work itself that allows art to be seen in nature's forms.[30]

According to Heidegger, neither the artist nor nature is the source of art. Rather, creative acts somehow transpire through the mutual collaboration of the artist and forms prefigured in nature. However, the role of the artist in the creation of art still remains unclear. Immediately before his rejection of genius as the origin of art, Heidegger employs a natural image to describe artistic creativity, thus emphasizing the non-human origin of creation. He writes, "All creation, because it is such a drawing-up, is a drawing as of water from a spring."[31] However, this drawing needs the artist in order to be carried out. Thus, Heidegger's account of the drawing of the rift, while rightfully avoiding attributing creativity to the artist's subjectivity, leads to a fundamental ambiguity in the origin of art. Commenting on this problem, Michele Haar writes:

> Despite suggesting a deeper, ontological *antagonism*, the Riss, the rending-stroke, is still not what unites and separates Earth and world as coming from being itself. The rending which wrenches forth being and brings it to light *initially* seems to come from an artistic act of power, even if this act is in *response* to the overpowering character of being.[32]

Though the source of the artist's inspiration may in some way be ascribed to nature, the artist is needed to perform the drawing of the rift. Given the close tie between Heidegger's views on art and language, we could make an analogy between the creation of art and the speaking of language. Just as human beings are needed to bring "the

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 107.

soundless saying" of language into the "resonance" of speech, the artist is needed to bring the soundless saying of the rift into the resonance of the work of art. As Haar explains, "The Earth, for Heidegger, is a secret sketch of forms. […] The artistic sketch is drawn from nature […] 'Creation' as 'drawing' makes possible features of nature visible which certainly do not exist in outline before their revelation by the work."[33] Haar concludes that Heidegger shares with Dürer the "apparently post-Romantic idea of an art in nature," in contrast with Nietzsche's position, which holds that the Will to power imposes forms onto a preexisting chaos. Haar explains that with Heidegger, art is the disclosure of forms secretly prefigured in nature that have not yet been sketched-out and made manifest.[34]

Though the work may bring out something prefigured in nature, it is only through the creation of the work that a world comes to life and the earth juts out and becomes earth. A similar idea was articulated by Merleau-Ponty thinking along with Schelling in his lecture course on nature. Merleau-Ponty explains that, for Schelling, the relationship between art and nature forms a constructive circle in which we must "pass endlessly from intuition to reflection and from reflection to intuition."[35] In other words, nature leads to art and art leads back to nature in an ongoing cycle. At one point Merleau-Ponty expresses this idea by saying, "We are the parents of nature of which we are also the children."[36] For an analogy, Merleau-Ponty recalls Schelling's image of the satellites of Mercury. "[W]e cannot see these satellites with the naked eye, but once we have seen

[33] Ibid., 110.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the College de France*. ed. Dominique Seglard, trans. Robert Vallier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 47.

[36] Ibid., 43.

them with a telescope, then we *can* see them with the naked eye."[37] The point is that nature comes first, but it is not until it is given voice and expressed in art (understood in the widest sense) that nature is realized as such. There are numerous Gestalts to be found in nature, but they must first be drawn out; and it takes an artist to perform this drawing.

We could say, following Heidegger's interpretation of Dürer's statement, that artistic creation builds upon and takes its inspiration from what already "lies hidden in nature." Even though, for Heidegger, the origin of art is the work itself, the creative act draws upon what is found in nature, upon something prefigured as Haar explained. Therefore, for Heidegger, as well as for Merleau-Ponty as we shall see, the origin of artistic creativity is not reducible to the artist's will or imagination, nor do artists simply reenact what is already given in nature.

In this discussion we have seen that Heidegger seeks to understand art as the opening up of a world, but that he desires to do so without relying on terminology belonging to the metaphysical tradition. This leads him to avoid talking about art as a product of a human subject. While he does acknowledge that art is bound to nature and to the earth, for him, art must be understood in terms of truth, that is, the disclosure of being through poetic "saying" or showing. Thus, Heidegger's discussion of art offers a unique account of creation as the drawing of the rift. However, this leaves the artist in an ambiguous position. How exactly are we to understand what individual artists contribute to the work performed by the artworks they create? Heidegger does not provide an answer to this question. If we want to understand the role of the artist in the drawing of the rift more precisely, we must go beyond Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty, who also

[37] Ibid., 46 (emphasis added).

attempts to understand the creation of art from a post-metaphysical perspective, though he does so by taking up the artist's perceptual engagement with the "flesh of the world" via the body.

2. Merleau-Ponty and Klee on the Emergence of Art from Nature in the Artist's Body

In his essay "Eye and Mind" (1960), Merleau-Ponty, like Heidegger, explores the nature of artworks in relation to ontology. He also, like Heidegger, highlights the significance of line and movement in relation to form, although he does so in dialogue with various artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Paul Klee. Merleau-Ponty's insights into the nature of line, movement and form in relation to these artists' works, including their writings, help to elucidate Heidegger's rather esoteric formulation of how the drawing of the rift occurs through artistic activity. By looking at the writings of da Vinci and Klee in relation to Merleau-Ponty's engagement with their ideas and artworks in his discussion of line, I will show how the study of natural forms and the activity of drawing as these artists understand it can be interpreted as the opening up of world through the "drawing of the rift" in Heidegger's sense. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body in relation to the world will be essential for understanding the role of artists in the formation of works that open up worlds. I will close with a discussion of the influential dance artist and theorist Rudolf Laban, whose philosophy of movement allows the ideas about line and form discussed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty to be understood in relation to the body in profound and interesting ways.

Merleau-Ponty's thinking about perception, nature, art, and the body came to shape the overall character of his ontology. In attempting to find a middle way between the dichotomies of subject and object, mind and body, and spirit and matter characterizing metaphysical thinking, Merleau-Ponty develops an ontology in which the supposed interiority of the subject and exteriority of the world are deconstructed to the point where they occupy the same space. Thus, spatiality itself can be understood as the depth of the visible and the dehiscence of fleshly being. Following this insight, perception can be understood as neither a passive reception of the world via the senses nor a projection of the human mind onto an indifferent, inert landscape. Rather, perception and things arise in conjunction with each other according to the tones and rhythms of nature's own formations. The artist, who has a highly cultivated attunement to form, shapes how we perceive nature by the creation of artworks. It is not simply that the artist represents nature in an artwork; the worlds opened up by artworks affect the way we perceive nature itself. Moreover, the intimate connection one has with the natural world as an embodied being means that the creative acts of artists are rooted within and arise from what is more than human. In other words, Merleau-Ponty puts forth a philosophy in which art is continuous with nature on account of the body's continuity with the flesh of the world in creative perception and expression.

Going beyond Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body provides the foundations for a theory of creativity that accounts for the fundamentally ambiguous position of the artist between nature and the artwork. As Ted Toadvine explains, in *Phenomenology of Perception* nature is presented as "our interlocutor in a corporeal 'dialogue,' as a correlate of the perceiving body that remains 'co-natural with the

world."[38] The body is the site of the reflective self that stands over against nature as well as the "anonymous body" that is co-natural with the world. The anonymous body is pre-reflective and endows us with a "primordial faith" in our ability to perceive the world as it is given. The body is in a seamless continuity with the world, but perception on the level of reflection stands over against it.[39] Our reflective self, the cogito, derives its being from the anonymous body, but the pre-reflective is only accessible through the mediation of reflection, and so there is within the self a tension between ourselves as unique individual subjects and bodies already bound up with an intersubjective natural world. Although there are these two layers to the subject, this should in no way be taken as a suggestion that these levels are exclusive to one another. Merleau-Ponty characterizes the self as a "fold" in being,[40] implying a distinction between the self and world, but a distinction within one sole fabric.

The entwinement of the perceiving body and the world developed in the *Phenomenology of Perception* figures prominently in Merleau-Ponty's essays on painting, as it is the key to understanding artistic expression. In fact, Merleau-Ponty's interest in Cezanne, which he developed in detail in his essay "Cézanne's Doubt" (1945), had already been expressed in *Phenomenology of Perception.* Galen Johnson writes, "Merleau-Ponty, in the *Phenomenology*, quoted Novotny's analysis of Cezanne's art as the attempt to paint the 'pre-world,' the physiognomy of things in their sensible

[38] Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 17.

[39] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge Classics: 2012), 223-4.

[40] Ibid., 223.

configuration as they effortlessly arise in nature."[41] The corporeal dialogue between the self and world is ongoing in artistic expression. In fact, Merleau-Ponty recognizes the special insight afforded by artists throughout his corpus.[42] Johnson writes,

> The painter lends his or her body to the world to bring forth a metamorphosis of the visible, an imaginative expression of the mute meanings and richness of the prereflective world. Merleau-Ponty joins a line of philosophers originating in Schelling and coming forward through Nietzsche to Heidegger who accord special prominence to artistic work in tracing the ribs and joints of being.[43]

In "Eye and Mind" painting becomes an opportunity for an ontological inquiry in that it, Johnson continues, "undertakes a study of modern painting in order to develop his philosophy beyond phenomenology and beyond structuralism toward a new post-Cartesian ontology of visibility and invisibility."[44] Merleau-Ponty's shift toward an ontology of flesh involves an emphasis on depth which highlights the aspects of distance, thickness, and reversibility enfolded within being. It is along these lines that numerous parallels can be found between the philosophy of painting developed in "Eye and Mind" and the chiasm of the sensing and the sensed in the posthumously released *The Visible and the Invisible* (1961).

The body's continuity with the flesh of the world means that the world is opened up via the chiasmatic intertwining of the one who senses and the world that is sensed, and

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[41] Galen Johnson, "Introductions to Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Painting," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 9.

[42] Toadvine notes that in *The Structure of Behavior* Merleau-Ponty already "points toward artists and writers" rather than philosophers or scientist as "examples of fully integrated human existence." (*Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, 25)

[43] Johnson, "Introductions to Merleau-Ponty," 45.

[44] Ibid., 35.

the artist's perception enacts a particularly fecund chiasm integral to the formation of our world and our apprehension of nature. It must be stressed that the artist does not recreate the world existing "outside" by rendering a representation of it. It is through the creation of the work that the world and nature become visible as such. Merleau-Ponty expresses this point in "Eye and Mind."

> The painter's vision is not a view upon the outside, a merely "physical-optical" relation to the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible.[45]

The artist's vision is essentially creative, but the artist's vision belongs to the visible itself. It is a "concentration or coming-to-itself" of visibility, albeit a visibility that only exists in and through creative perception and action. As embodied, perceiving beings, we are part of the flesh of the visible; and because our bodies and the flesh of the world are of the same fabric, we inhabit the depth required for vision such that we are none other than the field we are immersed in.

Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception and the ontology that develops out of it have a corresponding theory of expression in which nature itself becomes expressive through works of art. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the relation between human expression and nature provides a robust account of what is only intimated by Heidegger. Heidegger suggests through his quotation of Dürer that art lies prefigured in nature's forms. Merleau-Ponty's writings on art in relation to his ontology of flesh, especially when supported by artists' writings, give a sophisticated account of how nature becomes expressive through artists' creative activity.

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[45] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 141.

Merleau-Ponty's writings on art in relation to ontology offer a way of thinking about how artistic expressions arise in conjunction with nature's own sense, forms, and patterns. The depth of the visible is the place of the world's flesh, and depth, like flesh, is necessarily relational. The opening up of the visible that enables its visibility can only take place through the chiasmatic relation of the flesh in which that which sees is also a visible body. The body is the site of the opening, or dehiscence, of a world whereby forms take shape and become meaningful things for us. Our task is to understand how the interaction between the seer and the seen manifests form through creative acts. The difficulty of this task lies in unraveling the mystery of vision itself, how it arises from the visible world while also being that which manifests the visible world. One could also state the problem as follows: How does nature guide the creativity of artists, and how does the artist's vision allow us to perceive nature more fully? In other words, how does art "give birth" to the "coming-to-itself of the visible"? Understanding this problem requires that we inquire into the creative visions of artists, for it is in the creative event that there is a "continual rebirth of existence."[46]

Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's inquiries into the nature of art share this basic orientation, though they develop their views on this matter using different vocabularies and sets of concepts. As I have noted, Heidegger does not deal directly with the creative activity of artists. Instead, his view insists that the origin of artworks is art itself through "truth putting itself to work." Thus, he does not give a concrete explanation of the creation of works of art. And so we must ask, as Haar does: "What indeed does the artist

[46] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cezanne's Doubt," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 68.

do as a creator (*Schöpfer*)? The creator must draw (*Schöpfen*) upon the reserve of being which is open to him."[47] Referring again to the statement by Dürer, Haar continues:

> But the Heideggerian interpretation which identifies Dürer's "nature" with being does not seek to know how, "concretely" or practically this wresting is effected. The work is given. The artist's "psychology" matters as little as the empirical biography of thinkers.[48]

It is true that the particular personality or psychology of an artist is not what is most essential for understanding how art comes into being in relation to nature. However, an investigation into the creative process does not necessarily entail this. Although Merleau-Ponty discusses Cezanne's psychology in "Cezanne's Doubt," he makes clear that "a person's life does not *explain* his work." "The truth is that *that work to be done called for that life*." While there may be something interesting about the idiosyncrasies of a particular artist's way of working, that is not the basis of Merleau-Ponty's engagement with Cezanne's practice as a painter. It is Cezanne's preoccupation with how the world is disclosed through the process of painting as an activity of seeing that interested Merleau-Ponty. Cezanne's painting, while it surely involves his personal psychology, is not a product of his psychology. Rather, Merleau-Ponty explains, "The meaning Cezanne gave to objects and faces in his paintings presented itself to him in the world as it appeared to him. Cezanne simply released that meaning [… he] simply expressed what they wanted to say."[49] As a painter, Cezanne lived in order to make art that gave expression to things as they revealed themselves to him. This is why he told Emile Bernard that he desired to

[47] Haar, *Song of the Earth*, 97.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Merleau-Ponty, "Cezanne's Doubt," 71.

make art and nature "the same," and, as Merleau-Ponty points out, "Of nature, [Cezanne] said, 'the artist must conform to this perfect work of art'."[50] Merleau-Ponty's engagement with the work and thought of particular artists is motivated by his inquiry into the same fundamental philosophical questions driving Heidegger. Though, by engaging the actual experiences of particular artists, Merleau-Ponty was able to probe how the so-called wresting of art from nature comes about concretely through artistic practice.

Along with Cezanne, Paul Klee was a key inspiration for Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics. Johnson notes that the writings of Paul Klee were where Merleau-Ponty "found some of the most germinating insights for 'Eye and Mind.'"[51] This is not surprising, as Klee is one of a select group of artists who carried out studies of nature and wrote extensive reflections about his artistic practice. Jürg Spiller compares Paul Klee to Leonardo da Vinci in that they were both detached from "the central features of the historical tradition" in which they were working.[52] Through their independent practices, they sought more than a perfected work of art. Rather than being concerned with the art object itself, both Klee and da Vinci investigated the artistic process and kept extensive notes observing the structures of natural forms and the various components of art-making, including the mechanics of perspective, the expressiveness of line, and color theory. Spiller notes that both Klee and da Vinci recognize that "the artist's approach or creative manner is an independent and complete way of existing in reality and of understanding

[50] Ibid., 63, 62.

[51] Johnson, "Introductions to Merleau-Ponty," 43.

[52] Jürg Spiller, "Introduction: How the pedagogical writings came into being," in *Paul Klee: The Thinking Eye* (London: Lund Humphries, 1961), 11.

it." Moreover, while the artist's creative manner is one among multiple speculative methods,

> [Klee and da Vinci] are led to investigate that particular character […] of the artistic approach, always bearing in mind, however, that this must develop over the whole field of experience. For this reason, Leonardo's mode of thought like that of Klee, covers every aspect of being [… T]here is no moment or aspect of being which can be considered foreign or irrelevant to the experience which is acquired in artistic creation.[53]

In light of this, Klee and da Vinci's reflections upon their artistic practices provide a window into the unique aspects of the world disclosed through the artist's creative comportment, a window that inspired Merleau-Ponty. In "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty seeks the ontological foundations of aesthetic experience, and Klee's insights were well suited to aid Merleau-Ponty in his pursuit. Describing the artistic attitude as he understands it, Klee writes: "What artist would not like to live where the central organ of all space-time motion, call it brain or heart of creation as you will, activates all functions? In the womb of nature, in the primal ground of creation, where the secret key to all things lies hidden?"[54] For Klee, "Art plays in the dark with ultimate things and reaches them."[55]

Klee's focus on the creative process is significant because it illuminates a particular approach to nature that is unlike other modes of engagement. Moreover, the artist's engagement with nature involves a constructive element that contributes to the object of study. Spiller notes that, "Klee translates into the constructive realm insight about growth and mobile processes gained from nature. […] It is in the formative process that the

[53] Spiller, "Introduction," 11.

[54] Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye,* trans. and ed. Jürg Spiller (London: Lund Humphries, 1961), 93.

[55] Ibid., 80.

duality of nature study and constructive compositional approach achieves creative harmony and synthesis."[56] In nature study the artist observes the subtleties of form and the movement that structures the functioning of form. In the constructive compositional approach, the artist brings out the order that naturally exists therein making it visible through an artistic rendering. Nature study and constructive composition achieve harmony and synthesis in the creative process because they are dual aspects or poles of the creative process itself. The study of nature is required for being able to perceive the structure of form, but in order for that form to take on the significance that it bears, the artist is needed to gather what is learned from the study into a work that interprets it through an artistic rendering.

Klee uses a parable of a tree to characterize the artist's relation to the world around him or her through nature study and constructive composition. "The artist," Klee writes, "has busied himself with this world of many forms and […] has in some measure got his bearings in it; quietly, all by himself."[57] He "orders the flux of phenomena and experience," gaining an orientation that Klee likens to the "complicated order" of "the roots of a tree." The artist is the tree trunk, and the work is the "crown" or canopy of leaves.

> From the roots the sap rises up into the artist, flows through him and his eyes. […] Seized and moved by the force of the current, he directs his vision into the work. Visible on all sides, the crown of the tree unfolds in space and time. And so with the work. No one will expect a tree to form its crown in exactly

[56] Jürg Spiller, introduction to *Paul Klee's Notebooks: Volume 2: The Nature of Nature* (London: Lund Humphries, 1961), 35.

[57] Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, 82.

> the same way as its roots. We all know that what goes on above cannot be an exact mirror image of what goes on below.[58]

All the artist "does in his appointed place in the trunk of the tree is to gather what rises from the depths and pass it on. He neither serves nor commands, but only acts as a go between. […] He himself is not the beauty of the crown; it has merely passed through him."[59] This parable depicts the artist as a conduit through which "the flux of phenomena and experience" becomes ordered according the artist's way of perceiving. The work is an interpretation that provides order and form to what arises naturally in the world.

It is not simply the case, however, that the artist imposes order onto a chaotic or meaningless materiality. Rather, the artist gathers together what he or she finds given in experience and translates into the language of an artistic medium, thereby simultaneously distilling or "drawing-out" what is prefigured in experience and transforming it according to the artist's style, that is, his or her interpretive vision where "vision" is understood in the widest sense. "We [artists] learn to see the law that flows beneath. We learn to see the prehistory of the visible."[60] Thus Klee writes: "'As creation is related to the creator, so is the work of art related to the law inherent in it.' The work grows in its own way […]"[61] The work grows in its own way, but the work's coming-into-being is inseparable from the artist who is creating it. The tree is one organism inseparable from the soil, sun, water, and air that support it. In the creative process, the artist is the site where the "roots," that is, the complicated order of the flux and flow of experience, grows into the

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 69.

[61] Ibid., 59.

canopy, the work's unfolding. In order to understand the mystery of how the work *grows*, we need to better understand how the implicit order of things collaborates with the artist's attentiveness to and engagement with that order, so that it may manifest itself in a new, meaningful, and timely way. This is precisely the mystery that Merleau-Ponty was preoccupied with in his essays on aesthetics and that Heidegger indirectly spoke of as the drawing of the rift-design.

So far I have shown how Merleau-Ponty's account of the body's role in creative activity is essential for understanding the ambiguous place of the artist between art and nature. With the help of Klee, we have begun to see how the artist *draws out* nature's forms and transforms them into art. But what about the significance of line in the event of this drawing? Heidegger's account of the drawing of the rift emphasizes the importance of line in the establishment of form. The rift-design as a sort of line-drawing draws out world from earth by fixing a form in place. In creating a work, artists "wrest" from nature a configuration prefigured in it thereby bringing a Gestalt into existence that has the power to frame a world and bring it to life. But how does the literal activity of drawing perform this wresting of art from nature? How does the artist's sketch open up a world? To answer theses questions we must investigate the nature of line and the role it plays in the creation of form in relation to movement, since line is first of all what the artist draws.

3. Moving, Drawing Lines

"Eye and Mind" opens with a quote from a conversation between Cezanne and Gasquet that reads: "What I am trying to translate to you is far more mysterious; it is entwined in the very roots of being, in the impalpable source of sensation." As this epigraph suggests, in the essay Merleau-Ponty interrogates elements of visual arts such as depth, color, and line in order to develop his account of perception and the senses in relation to his ontology. Johnson points out that for Merleau-Ponty, "painting is closer to the palpable life of things than science or philosophy."[62] Thus the arts, and painting in particular, provide a medium for deepening our encounter with the visible and "the impalpable source of sensation." In addition to depth and color, line proves to be a key to the primordial opening and presentations of things. While Merleau-Ponty critiques the conception of a "mechanical, prosaic line," Johnson notes that he also "expresses a new appreciation for the 'flexuous line' as a constituting power."[63] While Merleau-Ponty is critical of Descartes's emphasis on engraving and line-drawing over and above painting on the grounds that color is merely "an ornament," Merleau-Ponty does acknowledge the centrality of line when it is an ally to color. He writes, "We shall see that the whole of painting is present in each of its modes of expression; there is a kind of drawing, even a single line, that can embrace all of painting's bold potential."[64] Further demonstrating this point, he notes that it should not be surprising that often "a good painter can also produce

[62] Johnson, "Introductions to Merleau-Ponty," 45.

[63] Ibid., 41.

[64] Quoted in Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 132.

good drawings or good sculpture." This is not because the techniques are similar; they are actually quite different. Rather, it proves that "there is a system of equivalences, a Logos of lines, of lighting, of colors, of reliefs, of masses—a nonconceptual presentation of universal Being."[65] Thus, he explains that "the effort of modern painting" has not had to choose "between line and color." It has directed its effort "toward multiplying the system of equivalences."[66] The artists who have cultivated a sensitivity to this "system of equivalences" reside close to heart of the visible whereby these modes of expression are entwined "in the very roots of being," where line, color, surface, and depth work together to disclose our textured world of meaning.

As opposed to the prosaic line that is taken as "a positive attribute and property of the object itself," da Vinci spoke of a more supple and subtle "flexuous line" that animates a form. It constitutes the structure of the object, though it cannot be precisely located. Merleau-Ponty quotes da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*: "The secret of the art of drawing is to discover in each object the particular way in which a certain flexuous line, which is, so to speak, its generating axis, is directed through its whole extent."[67] Along with da Vinci, Merleau-Ponty notes that Bergson observed an "undulating line" that "'could be no one of the visible lines of the figure,' and yet 'gives the key to the whole."[68] Lines are essential to the constitution of form. "They are always between or behind whatever we fix our eyes upon; they are indicated, implicated, and even very

[65] Ibid., 142.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 142.

[68] Ibid., 142-143.

imperiously demanded by things" although "they themselves are not things."[69] In her study "The Conception of Line in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty," Sue Cataldi coins the term "in-line" to describe the invisible line that provides the inner structure of an object, as opposed to an outline, which marks its outer boundary. "Even more emphatically than Heidegger," Cataldi writes, "Merleau-Ponty was trying to wedge us away from a conception of line as an encasement or a conception that regards outlines as 'positive attribute' of objects."[70] Though outlines are one type of line that is important for how we see and understand form, in-lines, Cataldi argues, are more essential to the way forms *take shape* in the active sense. "[A]n artist must first bring the outside out-lines out from out of the inside in-lines. Again, the primary emphasis here is on something taking shape and not on something having shape."[71] As opposed the prosaic line, flexuous in-lines are the generating axes of things. They have a "constituting power." Making this point Merleau-Ponty draws from Klee's writings, saying: "the line no longer imitates the visible; it 'renders visible'; it is the blueprint of the genesis of things."[72]

Having cultivated a sensitivity to form, the artist sees a landscape and the things inhabiting it as shot through with in-lines and outlines to be translated into a work of art. Characterizing the artist's way of being-in-the-world, Klee describes in a whimsical way how an artist with cultivated perception experiences the landscape and its scenery.[73] The

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[69] Ibid., 143.

[70] Sue L. Cataldi, "The Conception of Line in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty," *Philosophy Today* (Winter 1988), 330.

[71] Ibid., 331.

[72] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 143.

[73] Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, 76.

wavy motion of the surface of water, the series of arches making up a bridge, a farm field traversed with furrows, the spiral movements of a child's curly hair, or the zigzag streak of lightning can all been seen to be structured by line. Klee's notebooks, as well as da Vinci's, include an abundance of sketches showing how a given form may be understood as a more or less complex set of intersecting lines. David Rosand, in his book *Drawing Acts*, highlights how important seeing form in terms of line was for da Vinci in particular. He explains that:

> [F]or all his deep pictorial concern with aerial perspective, *sfumatura*, and chiaroscuro, he still could conceive of the world as a dynamic linear system. "The air is full of infinite lines," he wrote (about 1492), "straight and radiating, intersected and interwoven, without their displacing one another; and they represent for every object the true form of their cause."[74]

The landscape and atmosphere as well as the various individual forms populating them partake in a network of in-lines and outlines. The entirety of space can be expressed as a complex linear configuration, though not through a mere three-dimensional geometric as the traditional "prosaic line" would have it. Rather, the depth of the visible, to use Merleau-Ponty's language, vibrates with flexuous in-lines that extend beyond the surfaces of things, connecting objects with each other and the space they inhabit, like the warp and weft of the flesh of the world.

Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the invisible flexuous line spoken of by da Vinci, or of the blueprint that provides the inner configuration of things spoken of by Klee, illuminates Heidegger's description of the rift-design. Cataldi even suggests that "Merleau-Ponty's thought on line on the visual arts, influenced though they were by Klee, Cezanne, Matisse, Bergson and even da Vinci, appear to also to have been

[74] David Rosand, *Drawing Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 104-105.

prefigured by Heidegger's discussion of the Open in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'."[75] The flexuous in-lines or blueprints of form articulated by Merleau-Ponty, following Klee, are analogous to Heidegger's rift-design. Cataldi explains that "Analogously, but more abstractly in Heidegger's essay, the rift-design created by the primal conflict does not imitate being, but renders being—the being of the artwork and the being of the truth fixed within each original prefigured opening."[76] The carving out of artistic forms in the drawing of the rift is the activity of drawing world from earth. This drawing enacted by the artist through the creation of the work is a tracing of the rift that open up a space in which line as a self-generating movement takes on form. Clear echoes of Heidegger can be heard in "Eye and Mind" where Merleau-Ponty writes:

> [T]he line is no longer a thing or a representation of a thing. It is a certain disequilibrium contrived within the indifference of the white paper; it is a hollow opened up in the in-itself […] The line is no longer the apparition of an entity upon a vacant background, as it was in classical geometry. It is, as in modern geometries, the restriction, segregation, or modulation of a pregiven spatiality.[77]

The hollow opened up by a "segregation, or modulation of a pregiven spatiality" is directly analogous to the Open created by the drawing of the rift as dif-ference in Heidegger. Furthermore, the disequilibrium that is created in the establishment of a figure upon paper or canvas also echoes Heidegger's description of the active repose at work in the fixing in place of a figure within a frame. A figure fixed in place is not without movement; the strife of world and earth in the figure is heightened in the repose. As

[75] Cataldi, "The Conception of Line in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty," 330.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 144.

quoted above, Heidegger writes, "Repose occurs in the concentrated agitation of this conflict."[78] Merelau-Ponty expresses this idea more precisely when he writes, "Just as painting has created the latent line, it has made for itself a movement without displacement, a movement by vibration or radiation."[79] Klee recognized that line has its own dynamic energy. As fixated movement, it is "charged" with a certain vibration that gives it an active quality. In his notebooks Klee included a few different examples of lines with different energy qualities. Some are flowing and melodious, others are jagged and rhythmic, while others are freely wandering. Accompanying the sample lines, he writes, "The most highly-charged line is the most authentic line because it is the most active."[80]

Throughout Klee's writings we find an emphasis on movement. He is concerned with the functionality, or operation of form—how it *works*. He is interested in the active nature of form, and, therefore, how form is structured by movement. "Genesis as formal movement," he explains, "is the essence of the work of art." In other words, genesis is the movement that actively trans-forms. Line is integral to movement. It is the pathway for movement and its trace. The genesis of form is also the genesis of line. Klee writes: "The primordial movement, the agent, is the point that sets itself in motion (genesis of form). A line comes into being."[81]A drawing is the trace left of the artist's movements. The motion in the body exhibits the same patterns that exist throughout nature. The artist sees

[78] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 56.

[79] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 144.

[80] Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, 105.

[81] Ibid.

movement, line, and shape in the landscape and the forms that inhabit it. The artists reenact the movements of the forms, embodying them through their own styles, and sketch out life. Klee continues: "All becoming is based on movement. […] The pictorial work springs from movement, it is itself fixated movement, and it is grasped in movement (eye muscles)."[82] The perception of line and movement in the world by the artist is translated into a work of art, which is itself a record of the artist's strokes. Once the work is completed, the viewer then reenacts the movements of the lines drawn by the artist in their viewing of the piece, embodying line on yet another level. Rosand also recognizes how movement is involved at all levels of drawing, both for the artist and the viewer.

> Drawing, as we have been emphasizing, is the record of a physical act. Its invitation is, on a primary level, to the body of the viewer, whose own response will necessarily involve a somatic dimension. […] Following the linear patterns of a drawing, supplying continuity to the open gaps between points and lines, we engage the very energies and impulses that went into its making.[83]

This circuit of repeating patterns of movement may be carried further once the movements of the artwork lead the viewer to recognize them in the world and things from whence the artists originally drew them. This, in turn, allows us to experience the lines permeating the field of experience.

There are many manifestations of line that go beyond the clear examples of it in the art of drawing and painting. Phrases in music can be considered lines similar to the way we refer to lines of poetry. Line is an apt metaphor for speaking about these

[82] Ibid., 78.

[83] Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, 17.

phenomena because they exhibit the basic structure of line, though in a non-visual way. While the centrality of movement in form is true across all the arts, this is most obviously the case in the art of dance whose medium is the moving body itself. The Hungarian-born revolutionary dance theorist, Rudolf Laban (1879-1958), developed a sophisticated philosophy of movement informed by his work as a dance practitioner and choreographer that complements and extends the observations on movement and line in the graphic arts that we have been discussing.

Laban is primarily associated with the discipline of dance, but Carol-Lynne Moore notes that "he is an anomaly in the field for several reasons."[84] Laban was first trained as a graphic artist before devoting himself to dance, and towards the end of his career he applied his "theory developed from his dance studies to a variety of novel fields beyond dance."[85] For instance, he studied the movements of workers in factories in order to aid them in the movement patterns of their daily lives, and he researched the connection between habitual bodily movements of individuals and their personal psychology. As a result of his studies, he developed a remarkably sophisticated analysis of the moving body whose insights continue to be utilized by dance educators, practitioners, and even those working in distantly related fields such as physical therapy. The two most notable accomplishments that Laban is known for are his developments of the first notation system for choreography analogous to a written score in music, and his "taxonomy of human movement that provides the conceptual underpinnings for the

[84] Carol-Lynne Moore, *The Harmonic Structure of Movement and Dance According to Rudolf Laban: An Examination of his Unpublished Writings and Drawings* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 1.

[85] Moore, *The Harmonic Structure of Movement,* 1.

notation system."[86] Given the range of his movement analysis and his groundbreaking innovations in the field of dance, his philosophy of movement is a unique theoretical contribution deserving of our attention.

Like Klee, Laban recognized the vital connection between movement and form. He writes: "Forms are closely connected with movement. Each movement has its form, and forms are simultaneously created with and through movement."[87] Laban connects movement with space, claiming that "movement is the life of space."[88] He goes so far as to assert that there is no existence of space separate from movement. Though we may experience space as distinct from movement, this is merely a result of the illusion of stillness. Laban explains: "The illusion of standstills creates an artificial separation of space and movement. Seen from such a point of view, space seems to be a void in which objects—occasionally—move."[89] However, he continues, "Empty space does not exist. On the contrary, space is a superabundance of simultaneous movements." "Movement" is "a visible aspect of space."[90] Permeated by space and in continuity with it, we participate in the "life of space" through our own bodily movements. "From the simplest motion to the artistic creation of dancing, the flowing stream of movement expresses dynamic space, the basis of all existence. All movement emerges from this infinite abyss and

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Rudolf Laban, *Choreutics,* trans. and ed. with notations by Lisa Ullman (London: MacDonald and Evans, 1966), 3.

[88] Laban, *Choreutics*, 94.

[89] Ibid., 3

[90] Ibid., 4.

disappears into it again."[91] Laban's description of the motions of the human body as participating in the "life of space" resonates with Merleau-Ponty's way understanding the depth of the visible and the flesh of the world, and it also rings true with Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world. According to Laban, we are not "in" space conceived as an empty container. Rather, our own movements are continuous with the movements permeating a living, dynamic spatiality. Thus, our movements arise as part of the greater spatial network of which we are part. In light of our discussion of artistic creation that recognizes the ways in which creativity transpires between the artist and nature, we can see how the art of dance, understood according to Laban's perspective, illustrates this same relationship.

Laban had a keen awareness of the form of movement and developed an elaborate vocabulary for articulating it. What is most interesting about Laban's theory of movement for our purposes is his articulation of what he calls "trace-forms." Trace-forms are the intangible forms created by the dancer's moving body. They are like the forms resulting from the lines traced by the dancer's gestures and postures. Laban describes these forms as architecture built by the body's movement. "Movement is, so to speak, living architecture—living in the sense of changing emplacements as well as changing cohesion. This architecture is created by human movements and is made up of pathways tracing shapes in space, and these we may call 'trace-forms.'"[92] Trace-forms involve what may be recognized as the drawing of lines. Although, unlike a two-dimensional drawing, trace-forms are elusively temporal. Laban asserts that the literal act of drawing,

[91] Ibid., 94.

[92] Ibid., 5.

as well as the creative activity of other arts, are in reality the fixing in place of trace-forms drawn by the body's movements. "[T]race-forms are fixed through the movement of drawing and the shaping of different materials. […] The invention of an architectural, plastic or pictorial form is, in reality, a choreutic phrase."[93] In other words, insofar as all arts result from bodily movements, they are the record of the movements that went into their making. They are the crystallization of trace-forms. Laban, as a trained graphic artist himself, used drawing as a tool in his movement analysis. As Moore notes, "Laban systematically drew upon his first career in visual art to develop theoretical models of human movement."[94] In fact, Laban's notation system is built upon the representation of trace-forms within the "kinesphere," that is, the sphere around the body delimiting the range of its possible movements. Using drawing and dance together, he developed a somatic-based choreography that could be recorded using the notation system he developed for the taxonomy of human movement.

The notion of the trace-form articulated by Laban highlights the intimate link between embodied movement and the genesis of form through the drawing of lines. Trace-forms are created not only by lines drawn by the path of the body's movement in the space around the body, they may also be formed by lines within the body itself. Dance theorists studying under Laban and working within the vein of his influence have come to identify specific "lines of movement" inhering in the human physiological structure. For instance, Imgard Bartenieff identifies at least six patterns of bodily

[93] Ibid., 115.

[94] Moore, *The Harmonic Structure of Movement,* 42.

connectivity that may be represented with simple linear diagrams.[95] All human movement is structured according to these patterns of connectivity since they accord with our shared skeletal and muscular anatomy. For example, the head-tail line of connectivity accords with the range of motion of the spine and one's vertical alignment. The head-tail line of movement can be pictured as an invisible line running through the spine and extending out of it in both directions. It twists and bends in accordance with the movements of the spine. All movement engages the head-tail connection in some manner, and certain types highlight it explicitly.

The so-called "lines of movement" identified by Barteneiff according to the taxonomy of Laban's movement theory may be compared to the "in-lines" discussed by Cataldi in relation to Merleau-Ponty's thought. The flexuous in-lines observed by da Vinci and analyzed by Merleau-Ponty and Cataldi can be sensed within our own bodies, guiding and giving structure to our movements. Though these lines inhere in the body, it is not as though they can be physically identified. Just as Merleau-Ponty pointed out with reference to Bergson, the "undulating line" that underlies the structure of forms is not any one of the lines that are visible in the figure. Even though the lines do not have a positive existence, they are felt and observed through our experience of spatiotemporal motion; and we experience them as being in things and structuring their movement nonetheless. Artists such as Laban himself can make the lines structuring movement visible by drawing, and seeing them drawn allows us, in turn, to experience them in ourselves more concretely.

[95] For illustrations see: Peggy Hackney, *Making Connections: Total Body Integration through Barteneiff Fundamentals* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998), 13.

Klee, da Vinci, and Laban show us how line is an integral part of form, both within nature and art. Together, their insights allow Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's theories of art to be understood in new and profound ways. For all of the thinkers and artists we have discussed, line and movement are essential aspects of creative activity and its products. The lines permeating the fabric of space that give shape to things are latent until they are *drawn out* and made explicit in works of art. Artists are needed to perform this drawing, but what is expressed in works of art is not simply a subjective state, feeling, or idea the artist has in his or her mind. The creation of art happens through an attunement to what is prefigured in nature, and artists attune to this prefiguration through their bodies' participation in it. The artist's body is the key in which art, nature, and creativity intersect. The artist performs the drawing of the rift—the activity of generating form through the movement of line—through the movement of his or her body in collaboration with a field of experience and the materials therein. In the next chapter, we will explore the "anatomy" of the expressive body, that is, the way the body enacts itself in relation to its world in order to bring life to fuller expression.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANATOMY OF THE EXPRESSIVE BODY IN THE AESTHETICS OF MERLEAU-PONTY, NISHIDA, AND WATSUJI

In the previous section it was shown that, according to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the creation of art involves more than the intentions of individual artists. Rather, creation occurs as the drawing of the world and earth in which forms that are prefigured in nature are made explicit in works of art. Works of art, in turn, open up worlds in which we see nature and the earth more fully than was possible before the *work* of art had been performed. The discussion of line and movement illuminated how forms, both natural and artistic, come into being through the engagement of the artist's body with the patterns and rhythms of its surroundings. The artist's body is the vital link between nature and art; it is the site of the creative event. In this section, the relationship between the self and world will be explored by examining Merleau-Ponty and Nishida Kitarō's conceptions of the expressive body in relation to Watsuji Tetsurō's unique conception of climate. By showing how artistic media, and nature more broadly, become expressive in the dynamic "world-space" of the body, the non-subjectivist account of artistic creation put forth in the previous section will be demonstrated further.

Merleau-Ponty, Nishida, and Watsuji each offer ways of understanding the self and the natural world that transcend the dichotomies traditionally assumed within discourses on metaphysics. For each thinker, the self extends into the life-space of our common world in ways that suggest nature itself may become expressive through works of art. Many artists' descriptions of their creative processes suggest that artistic inspiration and

expression transpire *between* the artist and the material medium, implying that the artist's subjectivity, as distinct from the so-called "external world," is not the sole origin of expression. Rather, the material the artist works with finds expression through its participation in the artist's vision.

For Merleau-Ponty, expression involves giving voice to sense itself. The body's continuity with the flesh of the world allows being itself to be expressed through the perception and action of individuals. This, however, presents a paradox as to why expression is necessary and how it is possible. The paradox of expression articulated by Merleau-Ponty can be clarified and appreciated more deeply when compared to the account of expression developed by Nishida. Nishida's subtle accounts of acting-intuition (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観) and the dialectic of internal and external perception at work in his notion of the existential body complement and augment the account of expression developed by Merleau-Ponty in significant ways.

The affinities between these two philosophers have been widely recognized, and numerous comparative studies have shown the striking similarities between Merleau-Ponty's notions of the reversibility of flesh and depth of the visible and Nishida's logic of place.[1] Both philosophers give accounts of the body and perception that demonstrate the inseparability of the self and world, and challenge the dichotomies of dualistic thinking that have held sway within the European tradition. Drawing out the similarities between a well-known French phenomenologist and a prominent Japanese philosopher is more than a scholarly exercise, however. Bringing their writings into dialogue allows the contours of their thinking to be brought more fully into relief, enabling us to take their insights

[1] For example, there are numerous chapters on Nishida and Merleau-Ponty in *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*, eds. Gereon Kopf and Jin Park (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009).

further. The intersections between their philosophical projects, coupled with their different cultural and intellectual backgrounds, allow their ideas to collaborate in interesting ways. Their writings on the bodily foundations of expressive action stand out as an area where a comparison of their views may be particularly fruitful. For both Nishida and Merleau-Ponty, the ability to provide an adequate account of expression lies at the heart of the formation of their respective ontologies, and the body proves to be a crucial hinge-point in each of their accounts. In their own ways, Merleau-Ponty and Nishida each seek to articulate an ontology that can account for the significance of the body as an opening onto a textured world of sense and meaning that is continually being transformed through expressive activity.

When the ideas of Merleau-Ponty and Nishida are combined with the work of Watsuji, it becomes clear how the dynamic movement of expression is tied to the material, natural world. In light of Watsuji's conception of human being as "betweenness," the conceptions of expression put forth by Nishida and Merleau-Ponty must incorporate the climatic milieu in which life transpires. Though Merleau-Ponty and Nishida both recognize the expressivity of nature, Watsuji's particular understanding of the essential relatedness of human beings to each other and to the climate subtending culture makes it possible to show how human existence and its various cultural artifacts express that which is more than human in ways that they had not fully articulated. Moreover, each of these thinkers look to artists to illustrate their ideas. Thus, bringing their philosophies together provides an opportunity to further flesh out a theory of artistic creativity that does justice to the complexity of creative acts.

1. Merleau-Ponty on the "Paradox of Expression"

Throughout his oeuvre, Merleau-Ponty continued to revise and refine his understanding of expression. Tracing the development of this concept over the course of his life it becomes clear that providing a cogent account of expression was tied to the core motivations of his thinking. Nishida offers an account of expression that, almost three decades before, appreciates the subtle problematic Merleau-Ponty had probed throughout his career. Nishida's concept of acting-intuition, I will argue, provides a rigorous account of the body's interaction with the world through perception and action that articulates and illuminates what Merleau-Ponty referred to as the "paradox of expression."

I am not suggesting that Nishida is able to resolve what Merleau-Ponty finds paradoxical about expression. Rather, both figures recognize the irresolvability of the tension between experience and expression that gives rise to its paradox. As Galen Johnson explains, there is a

> "mystery," "enigma," or "wonder" that belongs to creative expression intrinsically. It will not go away or disappear; rather, it is a constant and ever-present enigma woven into the fabric of the creative. Fundamentally, this paradox has to do with the passage from experience into expression, whether it be into the work of art, the work of love, or language itself.[2]

Our goal, therefore, is not to resolve the paradox, to get rid of the tension that gives rise to it. Instead, our task is to understand the reason for this tension, why it is intrinsic to the anatomy of the expressive act. This requires us to go deeper beyond thinking about the

[2] Galen A. Johnson, *The Retrieval of the Beautiful: Thinking Through Merleau-Ponty's Aesthetics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 163.

operation of language, for the paradox of expression is a paradox within being itself.[3] Thus, it is an ontological question that requires us to consider the possibility of a "sensible idea" and interrogate the relationships that inhere amidst our bodies between sense and knowledge.

Len Lawlor suggests that "Although we cannot say for certain, it looks as though Merleau-Ponty was going to utilize in *The Visible and the Invisible* the notion of expression to decipher the chiasm."[4] We can see evidence for this in the chapter "The Intertwining—the Chiasm," where Merleau-Ponty asserts that the body, as part of this shared world, is "fascinated with the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life." Applying movement, vision, and touch "to the other and to themselves" it makes "itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside […] and in the patient and silent labor of desire begin[s] the paradox of expression."[5] Expression is a response to a desire which we cannot claim as solely our own. Our bodies participate in a longing that belongs to the very fabric of being. Expression, then, could be described as heeding this desire that is stirring within us.

In order to understand how expression aids in deciphering the chiasm of flesh, we must better grasp how Merleau-Ponty understands the relationship between expression and the perception of things. Again, the paradox of expression is a paradox within being. For Merleau-Ponty, we are expressive as part of a network of things that is larger than ourselves. Thus, we must conceive of expression as originating within being, not just our

[3] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* trans. Alphonso Lingus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 136.

[4] Leonard Lawlor, "The end of phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty," *Continental Philosophy Review* 31 (1998), 15-34.

[5] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 144.

own cognitive reflection.[6] Bernhard Waldenfels observes that a statement made by Husserl "which concerns the proper beginning of a phenomenologically oriented psychology"[7] contains the germ of what Merleau-Ponty came to call the paradox of expression. In this statement, Husserl explains that the task of the phenomenologist is to bring "still mute experience […] to the pure expression of its own sense." This statement, Waldenfels writes, "guides Merleau-Ponty as a leitmotif in the early *Phenomenology of Perception*, through a philosophy of historical praxis, up to the later ontology's philosophy of language."[8] Merleau-Ponty keeps returning to this statement because it engenders what is paradoxical about expression, namely, that expression aims to give voice to that which is mute, and yet pregnant with meaning.

The tension within expressive acts between "still mute experience" and "the pure expression of its own sense" is multifaceted and deserves a thorough investigation. This tension goes to the heart of Merleau-Ponty's late thought concerning the relationship between the self and world as revealed through an interrogation of perception. In *The*

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[6] In "Creativity and the Unconscious in Merleau-Ponty and Schelling," in *Framing a Vision of the World: Essays in Philosophy, Science, and Religion: In Honor of Professor Jan Van der Veken*. ed. Andre Cloots and Santiago Sia (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), Patrick Burke develops an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's thinking about expression along these lines, emphasizing the possible religious dimensions of his theory in relation to the philosophy of Schelling. Burke explains that for Schelling the origin of expression is nature at large, which is itself an emanation of an absolute Subject. Though there is no such Subject at play for Merleau-Ponty, Burke highlights what he believes to be a thread of Christianity running throughout Merleau-Ponty's philosophyas a point of comparison. While there are Christian metaphors to be found in Merleau-Ponty's writings, the movements stirring in the artist that point beyond him or herself need not be concluded to be the work of God conceived in Christian terms. The Christian themes emphasized by Burke are compelling though not ultimately conclusive. The article does bring out some key ideas noting the affinities between Merleau-Ponty and Schelling which point to role of nature in their theories of creativity. (183-208)

[7] Bernhard Waldenfels, "The Paradox of Expression," in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*. ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 89.

[8] Ibid., 91.

Being of the Phenomenon, Renaud Barbaras traces the development of Merleau-Ponty's thinking about expression from the position put forth in *Phenomenology of Perception* up through his later ontology, explaining that the *Phenomenology of Perception* reinscribes a dualism between perception and expression, and correspondingly, between the natural world and the ideality of speech, culture, and knowledge, even though Merleau-Ponty was seeking an account of expression that overcame these dualisms. It is finally with the development of his ontology, Barbaras notes, that Merleau-Ponty is able to articulate the entwinement of perception and the pure expression of mute experience. Overall, the project of bringing experience to the pure expression of its own sense, which Merleau-Ponty constantly affirms, finds its scope and fulfillment only with the ontological enterprise. This expression is conceivable only if it is expression of the world itself, in the sense that expression proceeds from the world, or in the sense that the world is its own expression.[9]

What is paradoxical about expression, when we consider it from the standpoint of ontology, is its motivation and origin. What we aim to express can only come to light through expression. And yet an expression can never fully capture the experience that inspires it. In fact, the model or formula for expression that assumes there is first an experience that an expression aims to recreate and convey actually distorts what expressive acts are. It is only once we attempt to express ourselves that we uncover what our experience is. But, if things already carry within them a meaningful significance, that is, if sense is already infused in the fabric of experience as Husserl's statement oft quoted by Merleau-Ponty suggests, then why is there a need to bring sense to expression?

[9] Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, trans. Len Lawlor and Ted Toadvine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 64.

Furthermore, why are expressions never quite adequate to, or exhaustive of, experience? The paradox lies in the fact that expression is *creative*; it generates meaning at the same time it conveys what is already somehow given. By being creative, an expression puts forth something new that was not originally present even though it is the result of inspiration. Merlau-Ponty says, "in its coupling with the flesh of the world, the body contributes more than it receives." And yet, the body's chiasmatic relation to the world means that our being is more than ourselves. Because we are in a chiasmatic relation with the flesh of the world, our expressions both express ourselves and the content that originates in the world. Our bodies, as a dehiscence of flesh, collaborate with the sphere in which they float such that our creations both exhibit the styles of our individual selves and exceed what we consciously intend.

At stake here is the possibility of a meaningful, aesthetic act that bears forth an intention but is not merely a repetition of something pre-given. Expression arises as a result of the interaction between oneself and the world incited by perception. Our bodies, as the sites whereby perception takes place, open up a depth, the *écart* that manifests the chiasmatic relation. The depth of the field of experience is what enables perception by establishing the fundamental difference between oneself and that which one perceives. And yet, this depth, and the difference between the self and world that it entails, is also traversed by perception. We inhabit the perceptual field; therefore, we are inseparable from the things perceived. "That every being presents itself at a distance, which does not prevent us from knowing it, which is on the contrary the guarantee for knowing it: this is what is not considered."[10] The distance between ourselves and the horizon of objects

[10] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 127.

open to view is required for forms to appear. There has to be a space where perception and action can take place. It is this opening—this dehiscence—that allows for the apprehension of ourselves and the world. For this reason, the depth required for vision is not a distance that creates *separation*. "[T]he thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication."[11] The chiasm of flesh that manifests itself through an opening, or dehiscence, instigates both perception and expression. They are dual movements of a circuit of exchange between the self and the world. This means that expression continues the work of perception to bring forth the meaningful significance belonging to sense.

Perception and expression collaborate as a creative event that both holds open the depth of the field of experience and brings us into greater intimacy with the material world. Thus, we must recognize how expression emerges from sensibility in which the self and world are intertwined. Explaining this idea, Barbaras writes: "Expression is not a veil draped over the world, insofar as it is the very becoming of the world. Its creation is an unveiling; the divergence that it establishes is just as much a coincidence."[12] Being both an "unveiling" and a "divergence," creativity appears paradoxical. However, this apparent paradox is necessary because it captures the chiasmatic relations structuring the activities of perception and expression, and indicates how these activities are essentially *creative*.

[11] Ibid., 135.

[12] Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon*, 66.

In order to more fully understand how expression is emergent from and connected to the flesh of the world must we consider the notion of a sensible or aesthetic idea, that is, some kind of non-linguistic meaning expressed through a sensuous medium. While language is an essential facet of expression, for Merleau-Ponty expression is not only a matter of language. The notion of a sensible or aesthetic idea suggests that there is a logos of things and of the body that works in tandem with the spoken and written word. For Merleau-Ponty, understanding how aesthetic experience can be meaningful requires that we "recognize an ideality that is not alien to the flesh that gives it its axis, its depth, its dimension."[13] In other words, ideality is not applied externally to sense. It must be something arising through the chiasm of the flesh itself. As bodily beings partaking in the chiasm of flesh, we feel the desire to make the "still mute experience" more manifest through expression, whether it be through speech, painting, or some other medium. Our actions are inspired and motivated by the affect that the perception of things has upon us. We are bound up in the world's own striving to express itself. For example, a singer performing a sonata gives voice to what the sonata, itself, expresses. Thus Merleau-Ponty writes: "We do not possess the musical or sensible ideas […] they possess us. The performer is no longer producing or reproducing the sonata: he feels himself, and others feel him to be at the service of the sonata; the sonata sings through him […]"[14] Even though the performer is needed for the sonata to exist, the sonata only exists by being sung; the performer feels as though he or she is at its service. He or she is compelled to do it justice, to fulfill what the performance itself demands.

[13] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 152.

[14] Ibid., 151.

This example shows that creative expression involves collaboration between the self and the sense belonging to things themselves. This collaboration can be best understood by exploring the role that the artist's medium plays in creative expression, which will be discussed in detail below. The crucial aspect of Merleau-Ponty's account of expression that I am highlighting is its implication that creative acts are not expressions of pure individuality. Rather, the intertwinement of the seer and the seen and the role sensuous media play in expressive acts imply that expression is subtended by something that the subject does not possess. Therefore, there is an element of something other than ourselves that inheres in our creations as a result. This otherness implies that expression is not simply a matter of an individual's volition. This, in turn, suggests that there is an element of responsiveness and receptivity involved in expression, and this is precisely what allows our expression to be understood as expressions of the world of which we are a part. "Expression has the form not only of a creative, but also of a responsive expression."[15] (The responsive element of expression in turn implies that it has an ethical component, which will be of interest when Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics are compared to those of the Japanese tradition.) Since there is always something foreign in expression that does not belong to the subject, a certain kind of passivity is required in order for one to be receptive to it. Galen Johnson describes this subtle idea acutely:

> Merleau-Ponty's most delicate and difficult philosophical concept becomes, rather than intentionality, passivity. This passivity, anonymity, or generality in both the artist who paints and the philosopher who thinks and writes means that there is a system of exchanges between body and world such that eye and hand become the obverse side of things and the inside of an outside in which both are enveloped.[16]

[15] Waldenfels, "The Paradox of Expression," 98.

[16] Johnson, *The Retrieval of the Beautiful,* 19.

Passivity, anonymity, and generality can be thought of as that which exceeds the subjective intentions of the individual. Since one's expressive act has origins in the corporeal dialogue taking place between the body and the world it is engaged with, one is guided by the manifold influences of the sedimented layers of the body's history enfolded within the upsurge of the creative event. Therefore the results of an expressive act result in more than one intends or can foresee. "[W]hether one meditates first and then creates, or if one creates and then meditates upon what has been done—there is a laterality, a way of being surprised by the work as if the work itself takes over and overtakes us."[17]

The concept of passivity is so "delicate and difficult" because it exhibits the tension at work in the paradox of expression. It attempts to locate that dark source in us that *inspires* creativity, that to which our creative acts are a response. In a working note from November, 1959 Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Philosophy has never spoken—I do not say of passivity: we are not effects—but I would say of the passivity of our activity [… N]ew as our initiatives may be, they come to birth at the heart of being, they are connected onto the time that streams forth in us [18]

Philosophy has, however, spoken of the "passivity of our activity." This is precisely what Nishida's concept of acting-intuition aims to express.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 221.

2. Nishida on the Expressive Body and the Creative World

The paradox of expression articulated by Merleau-Ponty exhibits the subtly and complexity of the relationship between the self and world in expressive action. We participate in the dynamic movement of expression that is alive in sense itself. Nishida's account of the self-world relation in perception and action parallels Merleau-Ponty's account in significant ways, and Nishida's robust knowledge of the European tradition invites a fruitful comparison of his philosophy with that of Merleau-Ponty.

Nishida is the foremost member of the so-called Kyoto School, and his original philosophy has shaped philosophy in Japan more than any other since him. As a thinker well-versed in the Japanese tradition and various strands of European and American thought, Nishida's philosophy is an impressive fusion of world philosophy. Nishida weaves together many strands of influence from across the globe and numerous historical periods. In addition to being shaped by his own cultural heritage as a Japanese intellectual with a background in Zen, the particular standpoint he developed over the course of his life drew on the conceptual frameworks and vocabularies of German idealism and phenomenology. To a large extent Nishida's philosophical project is to describe the reality disclosed through the Zen experience using Western philosophical concepts and vocabulary.

The undertones of Zen in Nishida are clearly evident in his way of describing the unity of mind and body and the dialectical nonduality of the self and world in perception and action. At the heart of Nishida's worldview is the profound notion of absolute nothingness (*zettai mu* 絶対無), a philosophical re-rendering of the Buddhist concept of emptiness known only through the samadhic awareness realized in meditation. Nishida

developed his logic of place as an attempt to make the vantage point of emptiness philosophically intelligible. What is most germane about Nishida's logic of place for our purposes is its spatial connotations. As embodied beings, our existence is always rooted in a spatiotemporal setting. Nishida uses a form of dialectic to describe the relational character of self and other inseparable from the field of experience. This field, referred to as "place" (*basho* 場所) is the universal in which the self-world relation is dialectically manifested.

According to Nishida, the body is the site of the dialectical universal place. It is the place of the self. At the same time, the body's implacement implies that it is seamlessly immersed in a world that is not itself. As the site of the dialectical universal place, the body is the focal point of the self's "contradictory identity" with the world.[19] The body is the locus of the self, though the self is not locatable in it. In an essay from 1939 given the title "The World as Identity of Absolute Contradiction" by its translators, Nishida writes, "Each individual is an unattainable depth, and at the same time, a fundamental point of world origination."[20] As a point of world origination, our being is continuous with the spatiotemporal world it inhabits. We are situated in the world through our bodily existence, but we open out onto the world through our perception of it, extending beyond the axis of our embodiment in which we are seated.

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[19] The self-identity of absolute contradictories (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一) is a technical formulation Nishida often uses to describe the relationship between antithetical terms that are mutually determining. This formulation is grounded in the Buddhist concept *engi* (縁起), the ontological principle that maintains that all phenomena are interdependently arisen, existing only through their relationship to all other phenomena.

[20] Nishida Kitarō, "World as Identity of Absolute Contradiction," *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy*, trans. and ed. David A. Dilworth et al. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 62; *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*, 19 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979), vol. 9 p. 317) [Hereafter cited as NKZ followed by volume and page numbers.]

Nishida's notion of the body involves a corresponding theory of perception and action. For Nishida, in perceiving the world, the subject is projected outward, as it were, extending into the space where perception takes place. What we call "internal" subjectivity cannot be located anywhere apart from the space that we share with others. Of course, each one of us has a vantage point that is uniquely our own, and so we speak of an "inner" subjectivity and experience. But we also perceive externally in that what we perceive is other than ourselves. What we see when we look out onto a landscape is not a private vision, but one that others can see as well. Furthermore, our so-called inner life does not take place *inside* anything. What is said to be perceived "internally" exists externally, outside the domain of any one person's subjectivity, and it is precisely through this dialectic of the internal and external space of perception that the historical world appears. Explaining this point Nishida writes:

> [T]here is no internal perception apart from external perception. […] The world of perception exists as internal-qua-external perception and vice versa. As something identical in itself, it may be conceived as a world of intuition, which is dialectically self-determining. Our self is submerged in it and at the same time is established by it. Herein we have an objective world for the first time, the world of things.[21]

Conceived spatially, subjectivity and objectivity, or internal and external perception, occupy the same place, or field, and only through the mutual co-origination of the self and world in the dialectical universal place do the self and world become concrete. Summarizing this point, Nishida states, "our selves exist as the self-determination of the

[21] Nishida, Kitarō, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, trans. David A. Dilworth (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), 189; *NKZ* 7: 351.

active world in which inside is outside and outside is inside."[22] With this, one can already hear echoes of Merleau-Ponty.

According to Nishida, the body is the locus of action and perception through which we extend beyond the bounds of our skin such that the limit between the self and world cannot be drawn. His model of perception, therefore, implies that the source of expression must also be reassessed. If the distinction between self and world cannot be definitively drawn, then we cannot say that expression is a movement that begins in the subject and ends in the "exterior" world. Since subjectivity can no longer be said to reside internally, the source of expression must be understood to arise equally from out of the life-space we inhabit. Perception and action also have a temporal dimension insofar as we are situated within history. According to Nishida, "Our bodily self realizes itself as a creative element in the historical world, and historical life realizes itself through our body."[23]

Building upon his view of the body and his insight into the interpenetration of internal and external perceptual space and time, Nishida's concept of acting-intuition (or active intuition as it is sometimes translated) provides an apt account of his view of expression. Since the self and world arise together as the self-determination of the dialectical universal place, our existence is more than our own doing; it is an expression of the historical world. Nishida writes, "We are active bodily as the world's own self transformations."[24] He understands our existence to be expressive by nature; and because

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[22] Nishida Kitarō, "The Standpoint of Active Intuition," in *Ontology of Production: Three Essays*, trans. William Haver (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 82; *NKZ* 8:132.

[23] Nishida Kitarō, "Logic and Life," in *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays By Nishida Kitar*ō (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 134-5; *NKZ* 8:325.

[24] Nishida, "World as Identity of Absolute Contradiction," 58.

we exist in dialectical relation to the world, our expressive acts are expressive of our worlds. Our particular embodiment and the social historical world in which we are immersed guide and give meaning to our acts. Therefore, our actions are determined simultaneously by our own volition and the world in which we live. Observing this point, Kazashi Nobuo writes, "expressive 'acts' are grounded in, and originate from, the socio-historical horizon of being; in this sense, expression is not so much the product of a particular individual but that of the field of socio-historical being itself."[25] At the same time, however, the social historical world is a product of human activity. So as members of a cultural community amidst its own history, we have a hand in making the world that shapes us in return. "Activity," Nishida writes, "must be a productive transaction; and so in productivity subjectivity becomes objectivity and makes things, and at the same time that which is made makes that which makes. It is one transactional process."[26] In other words, our actions contribute to the world's formation, and the world guides and gives meaning to our acts. Thus, the historical world and individuals are bound in an ongoing process of development in which they are mutually determining over time.

Nishida uses the term acting-intuition to describe this dynamic interchange because it preserves the tension within the origin of expression. Our projects are active, volitional expressions of ourselves. But our action is inspired and guided by our intuition of the world through our attunement with it, and so, as with Merleau-Ponty, it has a passive element as well. Thus, Nishida combines the terms acting and intuition to

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[25] Kazashi, Nobuo, "Bodily Logos: James, Merleau-Ponty and Nishida," in *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic Life and the World*, ed. Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 117.

[26] Nishida Kitarō, "The Historical Body," *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy*, trans. and ed. David A. Dilworth et al. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 41; *NKZ* 14:271.

preserve the tension between the volitional and receptive dimensions of expression. Acting and intuiting are the dual aspects of expression forming one continuous circuit of exchange. In Nishida's words:

> Expression entails the contradictory identity, and dynamic transaction, of the conscious act (self) and the world (other). Each conscious act is an existential monad of the world's own self-reflection. Our self-consciousness does not take place in a merely closed up, windowless self. It consists in the fact that the self, by transcending itself, faces and expresses the world.[27]

Even though Nishida curiously adopts the term monad to describe the self as an expression of the world, he makes clear that the self is not windowless. The field of the self is continuous with the world since the self has no interiority apart from the dialectical universal place. Thus, when we act, we intuit the infinite depth of ourselves, which is, at the same time, a point of world origination. This might sound as if the world is created from out of the self, but since the self is empty of its own independent existence apart from the world it inhabits, the intuitive aspect of expression implies that when we act we are following the lead of the particular scene at hand. Our actions are creative and productive, but only as part of a circuit of exchange whereby the historical world determines and is determined by the expressive acts of individuals.

For Nishida, artistic activity is paradigmatic of embodied activity in general; and he often appeals to the artist-at-work as an exemplary form of expression. Thus, art was an important theme for him throughout his career even though he never developed a particular theory of aesthetics. In *Art and Morality* (1923), he integrates a variety of discussions ranging from the relation between the individual and society, law, the will,

[27] Nishida Kitarō, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, trans. David A. Dilworth (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 53.

consciousness, and behavior such that this work is not explicitly on art and aesthetics. Since Nishida did not deal with art in isolation from other related phenomena, Iwaki Ken'ichi explains that "We do not find in Nishida an independent 'philosophy of art.'" However, "he always took up the issue of art, together with religion, at important junctures of his career as examples with which to validate his thought. Nishida's 'philosophy of art' is intertwined with his entire philosophical speculation."[28] Relatedly, in "Truly Nothing: The Kyoto School and Art," Jason Wirth argues that according to many of the philosophers associated with the Kyoto School, aesthetics is not "considered to be an elective problem in philosophy;" rather, it is fundamental and brings to the fore "the site of philosophizing itself."[29] From this perspective, it becomes clear why art is so central to Nishida's philosophizing despite the fact that he didn't develop a specific theory of aesthetics.

Artistic activity, then, is an ideal illustration of the dynamic at work in acting-intuition. According to Nishida, besides being an active, volitional expression, the artist's work involves the intuition of and attunement to the potentials of a given medium and the cultural milieu in which the artist is working. Thus, volitional action and intuitive receptivity come together to form one continuous circuit of exchange between the self and world during the creative process. Aesthetic creation is a prime example of acting-intuition for Nishida because, in the deep concentration that it requires, the artist's subjectivity gives way to the object of its making, thereby demonstrating the dialectic of

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[28] Iwaki Ken'ichi, "Nishida Kitarō and Art," in *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Michael F. Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 260.

[29] Jason Wirth, "Truly Nothing: The Kyoto School and Art," in *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*. eds. Bret W. Davis, Brian M. Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 286.

self and world described above. The "transactional process" of acting-intuition finds a high point is aesthetic creation wherein the artist's entire being is involved in the creative act. In *Art and Morality,* Nishida writes, "When the artist is fully immersed in the horizon of pure visual perception, he spontaneously moves the organs of his whole body and becomes one expressive movement. At this time, feeling wells up within, and the artist himself cannot foretell the direction and meaning of his own expressive act."[30]

Aesthetic creation clearly demonstrates acting-intuition because when the artist is immersed in the production of an artwork his or her aesthetic choices are in many ways a response to the demands of the developing piece such that the artwork is actually determining itself through the activity of the artist. The circuit of expression between the body and world in the space of the artwork's coming-into-being takes place through the artist's engagement with a specific medium. The artist intuits the concrete possibilities of the material at hand and actively shapes it accordingly. Commenting on Nishida's understanding of the role of the body in the production of art, Yuasa Yasuo[31] writes, "the body displays an ambiguity in being both subjective and objective in the world as life-space; now we see this implies that acting and intuiting are moments in an active-passive

[30] Nishida, Kitarō, *Art and Morality*, trans. David Dilworth (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press 1965), 48-9.

[31] Yuasa (1925-2005) is a highly important contemporary philosopher in his own right. *The Body* includes a chapter entitled "Theories of Artistry" that discusses the role of the body in artistic practice in *waka* poetry and the writings of Zeami (1363-1443) on Nō theater. Here Yuasa highlights how the Buddhist notion of cultivation has influenced the training of artists in Japan. In a note (p. 99) the editor explains that artistry (*geidō*) within the context of the Japanese tradition, rather than focusing on "the form and style of a completed artwork" as is often the case in Western aesthetics, instead emphasizes "the form and style of the creative act itself." Thus, Yuasa's *The Body* provides several insights into how artistic practice may be understood from a comparative perspective.

relational circuit between the body and things in the world-space."[32] In this process the artist embodies the spatiality of the artwork such that the artist is inseparable from the creative emergence taking place in that world-space. Explaining this notion, Nishida writes, "in expression objectivity is subjectivity, or rather subjectivity can be seen in the very midst of objectivity. […] It has the meaning of determining and negating the person, while at the same time the person finds his true self therein. This is especially so in aesthetic creation."[33]

Nishida's concept of the transactional process of acting-intuition is related to what he describes as the movement from the created to the creating (*tsukurareta mono kara tsukuru mono e* 作られたものから作るものへ). We do not create ourselves, but we are transformed by our own creative acts since we are involved in a continual exchange in which we make things that in turn make us. In an essay from 1938 entitled "Human Being," Nishida writes, "While thing and self are utterly opposed and utterly contradict each other, the thing affects the self and the self affects the thing […] the world itself, forms itself, moving in active intuition from the made to the making."[34] Nishida's concept of the movement from the created to the creating (or from the made to the making) is meant to capture the positional shift in which the individual born of the natural-historical world becomes the site of the world's own self-transformations. The "world itself forms itself, moving in active intuition from the made to the making."[35] The

[32] Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, trans. and ed. T. P. Kasulis and Nagatomo Shigenori (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 52.

[33] Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, 65.

[34] Nishida Kitarō, "Human Being," in *Ontology of Production: Three Essays*, trans. William Haver (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 144.

[35] Nishida, "Human Being," 144.

movement from the made to the making provides a broader context for understanding the dynamic of acting-intuition taking place on an individual level. Collectively we are participants in an expressive world. Our individual creative acts are inspired by and are responses to the existent meanings given in the world around us, but we also contribute the discourses of culture through our own creative acts that bear the mark of our individual insight. Our expressive acts are motivated and guided by that which we do not ourselves create, although we contribute to the shared milieu that will, in turn, motivate and guide the creative acts of others.

Nishida also suggests in his later work that nature itself must be understood as expressive. Earlier it was explained that Nishida's understanding of the self as a locus of world origination involves a view of perception in which the self extends into the space where the body is situated. Nishida's understanding of expression and the movement from the created to the creating builds on his view of perception and the body to explain how the creative acts of individuals are, at the same time, transformations of the natural-historical world. He maintains that our action involves *becoming things*, and he appeals to the act of seeing as an illustration. Making reference to the German aestheticist Conrad Fiedler, Nishida explains how seeing is a productive activity when it guides the movements of the body as a whole. The artist's vision is paradigmatic of world formation, and the eye's seeing is complemented by the workings of the hands. Nishida writes:

> Fiedler […] states that the hand, taking over after the work of the eye is finished, causes further development. At this time, the hand becomes one with the eye; the entire body becomes the eye, as it were. […] Artistic creation is not mere creation; it is a productive seeing.[36]

[36] Nishida, *Art and Morality*, 26-27.

Connecting the "productive seeing" of artistic creation to his theories of acting-intuition and the expressiveness of nature in the movement from the created to the creating, he writes, "when the sculptor is sculpting and the painter is painting, each becomes a process of seeing only. Plotinus states that nature does not create by seeing, but, rather, that nature's seeing is creation. In this way the artist becomes nature itself."[37] In the dynamic circuit of acting-intuition, we become nature by embodying nature's own creative seeing. "The world forms itself," Nishida writes, by having "dynamically expressive monads as centers."[38] As loci of the natural-historical world's self-transformations, human beings embody the movement from the created to the creating in which nature becomes expressive. Therefore, according to Nishida's dialectic, our actions can be understood as the expression of nature itself.

At this point, the importance of Fiedler's influence on Nishida's aesthetic theory should be noted. Nishida references Fiedler frequently, especially in *Art and Morality*, and his own aesthetic theory owes much to Fiedler's insights. Conrad Fiedler (1841-1895) was a German philosopher interested primarily in the visual arts. While he does not offer a rich ontological account of art and nature, his work is significant because he is primarily focused on understanding art from the artist's perspective during the creative process. Fiedler was close friends with the painter Hans von Marées and the sculpture Adolph Hildebrand, and through his friendship with these artists he was able to gain an intimate understanding of their creative processes. It is largely from his observation of

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[37] Ibid., 27.

[38] Nishida, *Last Writings,* 53.

and dialogue with these men that Fiedler's theory of visual art grew. As a result of his close work with Marées and Hildebrand, Fiedler put forth the original and insightful claim that art is a product of perceptual experience; and the mental operation of perception inspiring artistic creation, though not conceptual, is its own type of cognition. Fiedler was well acquainted with Kant's philosophy, and his work built upon and furthered Kant's ideas, taking them in a new direction. Applying Kant's epistemology to the study of visual art, Fiedler argues that in addition to the scientific, conceptual comprehension of the world, there exists the perceptual, artistic cognition of the world. He claims that both forms of cognition "are separate and autonomous mental processes."[39]

Fiedler makes clear that he opposes the theory that art is the imitation of nature as if nature were something fixed and external awaiting re-presentation. The theory of imitation implies that the artist recreates a second, "ideal" world alongside the real one. Fiedler rejects this notion, claiming that art is the creation of *the* world "made by and for the artistic consciousness."[40] Fiedler writes, "Imitation which aims merely at copying outward appearances implies that one starts from the premise that there is nature in a substantial capital of minted and fixed forms at the disposal of the artist and that the copying of these forms is a purely mechanical activity."[41] This, however, is not what the artist experiences when he or she attempts to really perceive nature. Instead, one finds

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[39] Henry Schaffer-Simmern, introduction to *On Judging Visual Works of Art* by Conrad Fiedler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), xiv.

[40] Conrad Fiedler, *On Judging Visual Works of Art,* trans. Henry Schaffer-Simmern and Fulmer Mood (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 48.

[41] Ibid., 45.

him or herself amidst an "endless profusion" and "vacillating confusion [that] man had taken for granted as simple and clear."

> Artistic activity begins when man finds himself face to face with the visible world as with something immensely enigmatical; […] In the creation of a work of art, man engages in a struggle with nature not for his physical but for his mental existence […] Thus it is that art has nothing to do with forms that are found ready-made prior to its activity and independent of it. Rather the beginning and the end of artistic activity reside in the creation of forms that only thereby attain existence.[42]

From these remarks we can see that Fiedler understands the creation of artworks to coincide with a kind of creative perception in which we apprehend nature more fully. Fiedler could be interpreted as maintaining a position like that of Nietzsche in which the artist creates forms out of sheer chaos, thus running counter to the account of artistic perception and creation espoused by Klee, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger. However, we need not interpret Fiedler as maintaining a strong "Promethean" view as was discussed in the previous chapter. Though he claims that there are not ready-made forms to be found in nature, it is not, therefore, the case that the artist imposes his or her designs upon nature, shaping it into whatever he or she desires. If we understand Fiedler's position through Nishida's interpretive lens, we can see how artistic creation coincides with nature's generation of itself. Since, for Nishida, expression takes the form of active intuition in which nature itself becomes expressive, the artist's generation of forms, as Fielder understands it, can be understood as "nature's seeing." Thus, the creative, artistic cognition described by Fiedler coincides with nature's own becoming.

Fiedler's aesthetics, when combined with Nishida's theory of acting-intuition, further demonstrates the intertwining of individual creative actions and the expressivity

[42] Ibid., 48.

of the world. According to Nishida, "The world forms itself" by having "dynamically expressive monads as centers."[43] As loci of the natural-historical world's self-transformations, human beings embody the movement from the created to the creating in which nature itself becomes expressive. Nishida extends this line of reasoning to suggest that the expressiveness of nature, in turn, implies that material is expressive. Nishida's understanding of the co-determination of the self and world in the form of the dialectical universal place necessitates that all elements of the world-space are part of the expressive body, including physical material. The physical world, according to Nishida, is "historical-social matter" which must itself "be possessed of expressivity."[44] In fact, he writes, "A materiality that is not possessed of the essential quality of expressive form-making is nothing more than a thought materiality. […] Historical matter […] is that which necessarily moves in expressive activity."[45] In acting-intuition, "our intentional acts" develop "from the dialectical self-identity of what is called seeing and what is called acting; it develops in terms of expressive form-making." We exist through our historical materiality, and our expressive actions correspond with the self-transformations of the historical-social matter. When an artist creates forms, he or she is collaborating with material such that the creative act expresses more than the individual's subjective intentions. The act expresses the historical-social-material world of which the individual is a creative locus. Nishida declares; "that the self is born of the world has not been thought with sufficient profundity." When we create art, we are performing the creative

[43] Nishida, *Last Writings,* 53.

[44] Nishida, "Human Being," 164.

[45] Ibid.

acts of the natural-historical climate of which we are born. We actualize ourselves by performing creative acts, and through those acts we shape the world in return.

Following this line of reasoning further, Nishida arrives at his notion of historical nature. According to Nishida, "the physical world is grounded in the expressive world." Therefore, "Nature is within history."[46] This means that the physical world of nature cannot be conceived independently of the ways it is apprehended by historical cultures. And since Nishida understands the self and world to be co-constituitive of the dialectical universal place, he maintains that nature and history must be similarly co-constituitive. Nishida finds a direct connection between the historicity of nature and artistic expression, and he frequently appeals to the production of art to illustrate his theory. The mutual exchange between self and world in the transactional process of acting-intuition is aptly illustrated by the creation of art because the artist collaborates with what is given both materially and culturally, taking it up as the medium for the self to become actualized through its own activity. Nishida writes: "What is called art, with regard to history-qua-nature […] is established in conformity with the side of nature; it is the becoming-nature of the spirit of the epoch."[47] This means that the artist's intuition is drawn from nature, but not "nature" conceived independently of culture. Therefore, according to Nishida, "Nature must […] be thoroughly expressive."[48] The artist is immersed in the world-space that includes all the physical and biological elements of nature that are themselves part of the expressive world. The process of acting-intuition and the movement from the created

[46] Nishida, "The Standpoint of Active Intuition," 100; *NKZ* 8:157.

[47] Ibid., 128; *NKZ* 8:196.

[48] Ibid., 119; *NKZ* 8:182.

to the creating describe the circuit of exchange from which the artist draws, and to which his or her work contributes. Since we embody nature's own seeing, and we are always situated within the context of a historical culture, nature, too, has its own history of seeing itself through our historical acts.

Though Nishida's conception of historical nature has not received any significant attention in the Nishida scholarship in the English-speaking world, it has the ability to flesh out his notoriously abstract "logic of place." Nishida's logic of place is one of the most widely discussed dimensions of his philosophy; and while Nishida maintains that his logic aims at providing a truly concrete account of reality, his own elaboration of the logic of (place) lacks a clear connection to the sensuously textured world of life. Indeed, Nishida's concept of absolute nothing, in which his logic culminates, seems at odds with any sort of concrete determinations that comprise our experience. This, of course, is terribly ironic, since absolute nothing, as Nishida conceives it, is the grounding medium of all that is, though it is nothing in itself. As John Krummel puts it: "the negativity [of the *basho* of true nothing] is simultaneously the positivity of its self-determination that inverts nothing into beings. Because it forms itself, in spite of its formlessness, *basho* still proves to be a positive source of the real."[49] Summing up one of the central goals of his philosophizing, Nishida writes: "I want to conceive, at the root of all things a seeing without a seer." This seeing without a seer may be considered the dialectical universal place of absolute nothingness whereby the world is actualized through its own self-determination.

[49] John Krummel, "Basho, Word, and Dialectics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō," in *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays By Nishida Kitar*ō (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 22.

The connection between Nishida's concept of the dialectical universal *basho* and the world of life of which we are familiar becomes more evident in light of our discussion of the expressivity of nature. In "Logic and Life," he states: "the world of biological life, at its root, is [...] a world whereby historical nature sees by making."[50] Historical nature's "seeing by making" can be understood as a concrete description of the "seeing without a seer" that Nishida seeks. In fact, in the same essay he tells us that that "true life [… is] "determination without a determiner."[51] Life is the self-determination of the world in which historical nature sees by making, and we, as points of world origination, are the loci of nature's own seeing of itself. Through our creative acts we form our world, and the world forms us in return. Therefore, the dialectical universal *basho* is the very movement of life and the proliferation of forms that comprise our world. The process through which historical nature sees by making is directly connected to Nishida's notions of the expressive world and the dynamic interchange of acting-intuition in which the individual both shapes and is shaped by the natural and cultural world it inhabits.

Though Nishida does not refer directly to nature in the circuit of exchange between the artist and medium, if we view his position in light of Watsuji's discussion of climaticity, we can see how climate in Watsuji's sense bears upon the dynamic interchange transpiring in Nishida's account of artistic creativity. In fact, by bringing their views together, each becomes more concrete. Nishida often says, "we think by becoming things, we act by becoming things."[52] If we add Watsuji's notion of climate to

[50] Nishida, "Logic and Life," 121; *NKZ* 8:302.

[51] Ibid., 123; *NKZ* 8:306.

[52] Nishida Kitaro. *Last Writings,* 55.

this equation, we can see how the things one becomes through thought and action must be understood as part of a climatic setting. When we consider the self becoming things during the creative process, we can conclude that the material the artist is working with is participating in the genesis of the piece according to the dynamic interchange of acting-intuition Nishida describes.

3. Watsuji's Phenomenology of Climate and the Expressivity of Material in Japanese Aesthetics

Watsuji is well known for his work in ethics, which is grounded on his understanding of *ningen* [人間], or human being. Human being, according to Watsuji and evinced by the etymology of the kanji compound *ningen*, has a dual-structure, being both individual and relational simultaneously. Central to Watsuji's ethics is the notion of "betweenness," *aidagara* [間柄], which refers to the shared cultural space of human interaction. Conceived in concrete terms, this space must be understood as situated in an earthly place structured by social institutions and infrastructures. In this regard, his ethics is necessarily embodied, a point demonstrated by Erin McCarthy in *Embodied Ethics: Rethinking Selfhood in Continental, Japanese, and Feminist Philosophies*.[53] My focus, then, will be on the tie between climate, space, and embodiment in Watsuji's work. This tie is also the point of significant intersections with Nishida's account of the expressive world and Merleau-Ponty's ontology of flesh and his writings on painting. Through an

[53] Erin McCarthy, *Ethics Embodied: Rethinking Selfhood through Continental, Japanese, and Feminist Philosophies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).

analysis of Watsuji's conceptions of human being and its climatic milieu, I will show how the artist's comportment toward a medium reflects a view in which nature itself is moved towards expression that builds upon Nishida and Merleau-Ponty's theories of the expressive body. Then, I will discuss some examples that illustrate this process in some traditional Japanese art forms.

Watsuji was a professor at Kyoto Imperial University in the 1920-30s alongside Nishida, and the influence of Nishida's dialectical style on Watsuji's philosophy is evident. However, the thinker who had the most influence on the direction of Watsuji's philosophy is arguably Heidegger, with whom Watsuji studied *Being and Time* in 1927. The time Watsuji spent studying and traveling in Europe was quite formative in that it spurred him "to reflect more deeply on the unique qualities of Japanese thought" in contrast with those of other traditions.[54] One such quality is the recognition of the spatial relationality of the human being. Watsuji perceived Heidegger's account of *Dasein* to overemphasize the temporal nature of human existence at the expense of its spatiality. For Watsuji, this was a significant limitation since the sharing of space bespeaks for him the relation of betweenness central to what it means to be human. Watsuji critiqued Heidegger's emphasis on the temporality of human existence because the temporal structure of *Dasein* is tied to its *individual* being-towards-death. Thus, Watsuji believed Heidegger failed to give an adequate account of *Dasein*'s inherent relationality. In an article from 1974, David Dilworth explains:

> According to Watsuji, Heidegger ultimately lost sight of [the spatial and social side of human existence] in the second half of *Sein und Zeit* when he stressed the radical temporality of Dasein's 'Being-towards-death.' In

[54] McCarthy, *Ethics Embodied,* 12.

> the individual's experience, *Sein* is existence for death; but from the perspective of the whole of society, while individuals die, mankind lives and man's world continues.[55]

Watsuji recognized that the temporal and spatial dimensions of human being are equally important, and he was right to point out that the relational character of the self has been more readily acknowledged within Japanese and other Eastern cultures. On the other hand, Western cultures have tended to be more strongly individualist. William LaFleur notes that Watsuji observed that even though Western thought in general had no difficulty seeing that time is intimately tied to the subjective side of experience, space tends "to be thought of as a part of nature or environment and is thus only objectified."[56] It was primarily this observation that prompted Watsuji to write *Fūdo* [風土], or *Climate and Culture*, in 1929.

Watsuji links the spatiality of human being to our immersion in a natural environment. In order to address what he found to be lacking in Heidegger's account of Dasein, Dilworth explains that, "Watsuji emphasized existential spatiality and climate as equiprimordial dimensions of human existence."[57] According to John C. Maraldo, in *Climate and Culture*, Watsuji sought to show how "human spatiality shapes the intentionality of our perceptions and actions, and how climatic zones shape the character

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[55] David Dilworth, "Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960): Cultural Phenomenologist and Ethician," *Philosophy East and West* 24 (January 1974), 17.

[56] William, LaFleur, "Buddhist Emptiness in the Ethics and Aesthetics of Watsuji Tetsurō," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (June 1978), 242.

[57] David A. Dilworth, introduction to Watsuji, *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy*, trans. and ed. David A. Dilworth and Valdo H. Viglielmo, with Agustin Jacinto Zavala (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 226.

of interhuman relations and give rise to distinct cultures."[58] Though Watsuji's anthropological views are riddled with complications, the way his theory of climate integrates the natural environment into the phenomenology of lived experience is highly valuable and anticipates certain insights of bioregionalism. Robert E. Carter explains in his introduction to Watsuji's volume *Ethics* [Rinrigaku 倫理学], "By climate Watsuji means to include not only weather patterns of a region but the natural geographic setting of a people plus the social environment of family, community, society, lifestyle, and even the technical apparatus that supports community survival and interaction."[59] In short, climate encompasses all that goes into shaping the space in which we live. Therefore, climate, as the space of life, is inseparable from human being as *ningen* and must be taken into consideration within any discourse on ethics.

The spatiality of human being underlies its essential relatedness, both to others and to the natural world. Climatic space permeates the self such that the places we inhabit are inseparable from who we are. Watsuji's clearest expression of this may be found in the opening chapter of *Climate and Culture* where he provides a phenomenology of cold, or being-in-the-cold, as one might put it borrowing from Heidegger. In describing what it means to feel the cold, Watsuji gives a description of the relationship between oneself and the atmosphere. He begins by deconstructing the commonplace view that the cold of the air is something distinct from ourselves that we feel when it "presses upon us from

[58] John C. Maraldo, introduction to Watsuji, *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2011), 850.

[59] Robert E. Carter, introduction to *Watsuji Tetsurō's* Rinrigaku: *Ethics in Japan* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 19.

outside."[60] Rather than conceiving the cold and oneself as two separate things that *enter* into relation to each other, Watsuji maintains that the intentional relationship of the self and what it feels *arise together* in the experience of feeling. Explaining this point, he writes:

> It is not true that the intentional relationship is set up only when an object presses [in] from outside. As far as individual consciousness is concerned, the subject possesses the intentional structure within itself and … "directs itself toward something." The "feeling" of "feeling the cold" is not a "point" which establishes a relationship directed at the cold, but it is in itself a relationship of its "feeling," and it is in this relationship that we discover cold.[61]

He goes on to clarify that "it is not the 'feeling' of cold that we feel, but the 'coldness of the air' or [simply] the 'cold.'" Moreover, feeling the cold "means that we are outside in the cold;" but the "basic essence of what is 'present outside' is not a thing or object such as the cold, but *we ourselves*. […] That we feel the cold is an intentional experience, in which we discover ourselves in the state of 'ex-sistere,' or ourselves already outside in the cold."[62] In other words, Watsuji's phenomenology of cold is meant to deconstruct the way of thinking that presumes a stark division between the supposed interiority of one's feeling in opposition to an outside world that presses upon our senses, thereby causing a sensation. His point is that in order to feel the chill of the air we must already be outside in it, and it inside us. There is a mutuality between the self and the air such that the supposed interior of the subject coincides with the space we inhabit.

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[60] Watsuji Tetsurō, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study,* trans. Geoffrey Bownas (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 2; Fūdo: Ningen Gakuteki Kōsatsu [風土：人間学的考察] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shōwa 38, 1963), 8 [the latter hereafter cited as *Fūdo* followed by page numbers].

[61] Watsuji, *Climate and Culture,* 2; *Fūdo*, 8.

[62] Ibid., 4 (emphasis added); *Fūdo*, 10.

After laying out the interdependent structure of the subject and object in the experience of feeling the cold, Watsuji goes on to extend his phenomenological description to include the whole range of climatic features in connection to the land and sea. Summarizing his account, he explains that weather is not experienced in isolation.

> It is experienced only in relation to the soil, the topographic and scenic features and so on of a given land. A cold wind may be experienced as a mountain blast or the cold, dry wind that sweeps through Tokyo at the end of the winter. The spring breeze may be one which blows off cherry blossoms or which caresses the waves. So, too, the heat of summer may be of the kind to wither rich verdure or to entice children to play merrily in the sea. As we find our gladdened or pained selves in a wind that scatters the cherry blossoms, so do we apprehend our wilting selves in the very heat that scorches down on the plants and trees in a spell of dry weather. In other words, we find ourselves—ourselves as an element in the "mutual relationship" in climate.[63]

From this passage we can see that, for Watsuji, "climate" refers to the whole scene of life rich with sensory textures and feelings that come together seamlessly to create the mood of the space of the betweenness in which we find ourselves.

Watsuji's insight into the relationship between culture and climate is profoundly astute and reveals him to be a kind of proto eco-phenomenologist. Perhaps Watsuji's most profound insight is his recognition of how thoroughly the individual is permeated by the world, both natural and cultural. Watsuji's account of the relationality of the self demonstrates the extent to which the individual exists as the betweenness of human being and climate. There is no individual apart from its immersion in the climatic milieu. Within the context of our discussion of the creation of art, Watsuji's phenomenology of climate is useful for understanding the ways in which natural phenomena can directly

[63] Ibid., 5; *Fūdo*, 11.

affect the creative process. Watsuji's recognition of human being's inseparability from climate illuminates how it is possible for elements of nature to become expressive when engaged by an artist. Because the individual exists in the space of betweenness, the artist's inspiration and expression transpire in this space as well. Immersed in the space of betweenness with all its climatic features, the creative act of the artist expresses all the mutually determined elements of the natural and cultural milieu that constitute the place in which the act arises.

Even though Watsuji's intentions in *Climate and Culture* are to elucidate how cultures came to be through their relationship to the places in which they arose, his concepts of betweenness and climaticity have interesting implications for understanding human creativity. Talking about the sorts of food, clothing, and architecture inspired by particular landscapes and weather patterns, he writes: "We have discovered ourselves in climate, and in this self-apprehension we are directed to our free creation."[64] Here he is referring to measures people take to survive and protect themselves from the elements, but there is no reason this insight cannot be extended to include the genesis of art. Climate poses certain restrictions on human activity, but the imposition of climate also provides an opportunity for creative expression similar to the way a material medium both limits and prompts the artist's creativity. Graham Mayeda explains that we discover the freedom of our existence in creative response to the limitations of climate.

> Watsuji points out, the essential limitations of climate on human existence forces us to express ourselves in distinct ways as a response this climate. […] Thus, in climate, we come to understand two things: the climatic nature of human existence and the way in which the distinctive climatic existence is the

[64] Ibid., 6; *Fūdo*, 12.

condition of the possibility for human self-apprehension.[65]

Art is a one of the key modes of self-apprehension produced by a culture. Therefore, the art of a culture will inevitably express the climate of that culture since the climatic milieu subtends all human activity.

One way of understanding how climate comes to bear on artistic expression is through a consideration of the role of the medium in the creation of art. In her article "The Moral Dimension of Japanese Aesthetics," Saito Yuriko explains that one of the key principles that guides Japanese aesthetic design is "respecting the innate characteristics of objects."[66] Simply stated, this amounts to bringing out the beauty inherent in the material being worked with. It means following the lead of the material, working with its inherent properties and forms, thereby allowing it to become expressive of itself. This requires the de-emphasis of the artist's intentions for the sake of responding to the sensuous qualities of objects. Saito cites a well-known saying of the famous haiku poet, Bashō, "Of the pine-tree learn from the pine tree. Of the bamboo learn from the bamboo."[67] For Bashō, this calls for what he refers to as "'the slenderness of mind,' as one has to overcome one's personal feelings and concerns in order to grasp and appreciate the qualities of the objects for what they are."[68] Following Bashō, we may call this attitude "object centered" as opposed to "subject centered."[69]

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[65] Graham Mayeda, *Time, Space, and Ethics in the Philosophy of Watsuji Tetsuro, Kuki Shuzo, and Martin Heidegger* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 48.

[66] Saito Yuriko, "The Moral Dimension of Japanese Aesthetics," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (Winter 2007): 85-97.

[67] Ibid., 86.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

An object-centered approach toward art-making implies that the material medium becomes expressive through its relationship to the artist. But in order for an object-centered approach to art-making to be successful, one must be subtly attuned to the material with which one is working and the larger milieu in which one is situated. Attuning oneself to the milieu involves a degree of self-negation which means that one forgets oneself by relinquishing one's ego in order to allow the dimensions of the life-space to be intuited. However, this does not render the person absent. Rather, the person becomes immersed in the space of betweenness, thereby raising the degree of intimacy with the other constituents of the space. This intimacy is what allows for subtle communication with and receptivity to the others with whom we share a space. Nishida's understanding of the continuity of the self and an expressive world, developed according to the concept of acting-intuition, is helpful for articulating the object-centered relationship between the artist and medium discussed by Saito. Watsuji, rather than providing a robust account of expressive activity, refers to various traditional Japanese arts such as tea ceremony, and *renga* (a traditional form of linked-verse poetry composed by multiple authors) to illustrate this process.

Attunement to others in the performance of tea ceremony and *renga* may be extended to the non-human components involved in other types of arts such as garden design. Watsuji describes how an artist must have a keen aesthetic sensibility to create harmony when designing a garden. The balance among the rocks and plants is not simply a matter of geometric proportion, he claims, but rather, "an accord of 'spirit.'" Just as there can be an accord between two human beings, "so we can see a similar kind of relatedness between a garden's rocks and its moss or even between one rock and

another."[70] Watsuji's reference to the "spirits" of rocks and other elements of nature is not idiosyncratic. It reflects an attitude that has long been a part of the Japanese tradition. Graham Parkes explains that the phrase "following the request [of the rock] is used frequently in a manual on garden design from the eleventh century to "encourage a responsiveness on the part of the garden maker to what we might call the 'soul' of the stone. […] Rather than imposing a preconceived design on the site and the elements there, the accomplished garden maker will be sensitive to what the particular rocks 'want'."[71] This not only illuminates what the landscape architect Masuno could have meant when he said he enters into dialogue with rocks and plants, it suggest that the creation of art requires that the artist "listen" and respond to what the material itself demands.

Another example of the how artistic media become expressive when engaged by an artist in the way outlined by Nishida, Watsuji, and Merleau-Ponty may be found in the writings of the prominent artist and calligrapher, Morita Shiryū (1912-1999). Morita describes how he collaborates with his brush when he paints calligraphy. The brush with which he paints is the "other" that allows him to be. He is not a calligrapher without his brush, and his brush is not a brush apart from its being a tool that enables one to paint. In other words, both the brush and the calligrapher depend on the other to be what they are. The reasoning structuring the relationship between Morita and his brush is analogous to the relationship between the self and climate articulated by Watsuji.

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[70] LaFleur, "Buddhist Emptiness in the Ethics and Aesthetics of Watsuji Tetsurō," 246.

[71] Graham Parkes, "The Eloquent Stillness of Stone: Rock in the Dry Landscape Garden," in *Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2002), 48.

> Because there is no self by itself and no brush by itself, no relationship comes about between some prior 'me' and some prior 'brush.' Rather, we must say that what exists is a whole we may call 'I and my brush.' […] Let us call this single totality *place*. […] This shell called 'I' must split open, this hull must fall off, for the self to be released into a world that is formless and infinite. The self, released and unified with a place, becomes the totality of 'I and my brush'.[72]

Morita's description of the release of the self into the world such that it is unified with its place provides a perfect example of Nishida's account of expression whereby the individual becomes a locus of the expressive world.

More than exemplifying Nishida's account, Morita is expressing elements of Zen integral to the Japanese art of calligraphy. Nishida was quite familiar with the relation between Zen and traditional Japanese arts such as calligraphy, and, as has I have noted, there are many elements of Zen inflected in Nishida's philosophy. Wirth notes that Zen calligraphy "is not merely calligraphy by Zen practitioners, nor is it simply calligraphy with Zen content […] The ink is alive, rife with Dharma energy."[73] It is a practice that requires training so that the artist can embody the proper orientation toward the materials and the level of concentration (*samadhi*) required for the ease and spontaneity that gives Zen calligraphy its special quality. Continuing his discussion of calligraphy quoting from Nishida, Wirth writes:

> [I]n Nishida's words, "The artist thinks through his technique" (AM, 103). "The artist does not think idly without taking up his brush. Only when he takes up his brush and faces the canvas does it become clear how he should paint, and an infinite direction opens up before him" (AM, 104). The brush

[72] Morita Shiryū. "Calligraphy," trans. John C. Maraldo, in *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook,* eds. Johns C. Maraldo, Thomas Kasulis, and James W. Heisig (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2011), 1201.

[73] Jason Wirth, "One Bright Pearl: On Japanese Aesthetic Expressivity," in *Art and Expression: Contemporary Perspectives in the Occidental and Oriental Traditions*. ed. Ananta Charan Sukla (Verlag Traugott Bautz GmbH, 2011), 263.

> becomes the manner in and through which the artist thinks, and thinking itself becomes expressive, much in the vein that Paul Klee spoke of his work as "musing with a line."[74]

Morita gives us a first-hand account from the perspective of an artist of how the artist and medium come together in a creative event allowing the total milieu to become expressive through the engagement with material. His account, as illuminated by Wirth, demonstrates the permeability of the self and world in artistic expression described in different ways in the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty, Nishida, and Watsuji.

4. The Expressivity of Nature: Parallels between Nishida, Merleau-Ponty, and Watsuji

Nishida's account of artistic expression and the existential body resonates deeply with Merleau-Ponty's ontology of flesh and his descriptions of the act of painting. Both philosophers describe a self that extends beyond the skin through the acts of perception and expression. Actually, it would perhaps be better to speak of this extension in terms of the world's permeation of the self. It is not as if the world becomes engulfed by or infused with subjectivity. Rather, quite the opposite. Subjectivity is divested of interiority such that self exists only as the field in which it is immersed. In light of Watsuji's understanding of human being as betweenness, immersed in a climatic milieu, it is clear that the self and its actions are inseparable from the natural-historical world that constitutes it.

The extension of the self into the perceptual field in the thickness of the gaze in

[74] Ibid., 264.

Merleau-Ponty's ontology of flesh problematizes the commonplace view that the subject, or the seer, resides inside the mind and the mind inside the body in a way similar to Nishida and Watsuji's accounts of perception. The body is one with its milieu in that things are "encrusted in its flesh" through vision. Because the body sees, "it holds things in a circle around itself" such that its surroundings are a "prolongation of itself."[75] For Merleau-Ponty, as we saw in Nishida and Watsuji, blurring the boundary between the self and world implies that the source of artistic expression must be understood to arise equally from out of the life-space we inhabit. This insight may be taken further in order to show how nature itself becomes expressive in the creative acts of human beings.

Merleau-Ponty takes up this subject explicitly in "Eye and Mind" where he describes how the painter enters into a corporeal dialogue with the world and things. Merleau-Ponty explains that the painter labors to "circumscribe and project what is making itself seen within himself."[76] Making a similar point in his earlier piece, "Cezanne's Doubt," he quotes Cézanne as saying that when he paints, "'The landscape thinks itself in me […] and I am its consciousness.'"[77] The seer, according to Merleau-Ponty, inhabits the life-space of the landscape perceived, and this implies that nature may be understood to play an active role in creative expression. Ecstatically immersed in the depth of vision, the artist is inspired by the landscape in a visceral way. Emphasizing the latent spatial connotations of the term *in*-spiration, Merleau-Ponty suggests that we take the meaning of the word literally. He even suggests that the movements of inspiration and

[75] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 125.

[76] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 129.

[77] Merleau-Ponty, "Cezanne's Doubt," 67.

expression in the creative process form a circuit that could be thought of as "respiration in Being" itself.[78] The circulation of breath both figuratively conveys and literally underlies the exchange present during the course of an artist's inspiration and expression. Conceiving the creative process as Being's own inhalation and exhalation supports the view that the origin of creative acts exceeds the individual subjectivity of the artist. Indeed, nature itself is expressed and expresses itself through the artist's lived body.

Drawing from and building upon the writings of Klee, Merleau-Ponty takes this insight further, commenting directly on the continuity of human expression and the expression of nature in general.

> In the immemorial depth of the visible, something has moved, caught fire, which engulfs [the painter's] body; everything he paints is an answer to this incitement, and his hand is "nothing but the instrument of a distant will." Vision is the meeting, as at a crossroads, of all being. "A certain fire wills to live; it wakes. Working its way along the hand's conductor, it reaches the canvas and invades it; then, a leaping spark, it arcs the gap in the circle it was to trace: the return to the eye, and beyond." There is no break at all in this circuit; it is impossible to say that here nature ends and the human being or expression begins.[79]

The "fire" that "wills to live" is what incites the artist to create. The artist is moved to paint, to sculpt, to play instruments and explore the potential of a sensuous medium. The "distant will" that the artist intuits is a will that is alive in both the artist and the medium. It is part of the fleshly fabric that unites them. Following Nishida we can say that this distant will wells up from the infinite depths of the self, finding expression through the things we become when we act.

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[78] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 129.

[79] Ibid., 147.

In a working note from 1959, Merleau-Ponty articulates an understanding of the world as a field in which there is a movement where the human becomes nature and nature become human, bearing a chiasmatic structure analogous to Nishida's movement from the created to the creating within the dialectical universal place. "It is not we who perceive, it is the thing that perceives itself yonder—it is not we who speak, it is truth that speaks itself at the depths of speech——Becoming-nature of man which is the becoming-man of nature——The world is a *field*, and as such it is always open."[80] The distance required for vision discussed above that both holds open the depth of the visible and binds the seer and the seen together takes on a new twist here. Saying that the thing perceives itself at a distance from itself demonstrates how the thing makes itself visible in us when we are conceived as coextensive with the field of the world's own disclosure. There is also a temporal dimension of the vortex embodied in the individual's relation to the field of the world's disclosure. Through time the expressions of others become part of the fabric of the historical world in which we find ourselves. Barbaras explains, "There is a common world constituted by sedimented meanings, that is, by acts of earlier expression.[81] In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty writes: "Life becomes ideas and the ideas return to life, each is caught up in a vortex in which he first only committed measured stakes, each is led on by what he said and the response he received, led on by his own thought of which he is no longer the sole thinker."[82] Merleau-Ponty expresses a

[80] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 185.

[81] Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon*, 43.

[82] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 119.

similar idea in his lecture course on nature. Referring to the aesthetics of Schelling, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Nature starts in the unknowable and finishes consciously. Inversely, art starts from certain conscious thoughts and finishes in something that can be perpetually taken up again. […] this idea is germinating in the *Critique of Judgment*, in which Kant shows that the "understanding is at the service of the imagination," and suggests that art consists in the reconciliation of passivity and activity […] [83]

Here Merleau-Ponty articulates Nishida's insight precisely. Creative acts draw on what is given within our natural and cultural milieu and add to them such that they become imbued with diverse expressions of meaning that, in turn, guide the creative expressions that will occur in the future.

Nishida, Merleau-Ponty, and Watsuji are philosophers who recognize the importance of the thinking through body, and aesthetics is of central importance for them as well. As thinkers keenly aware of the interrelation of self and world, they both gives accounts of expression that acknowledge the necessary ambiguity between the active and passive dimensions of creative acts. In an essay from 1936 entitled "Logic and Life," Nishida writes:

> Many people think of expression as merely subjective because they are looking at the world simply as an object. Be the world [itself] must be expressive when we consider the fact that we are in the midst of the world as operative elements […] our bodily self becomes active as a creative element, and the flow of historical life permeates our body. Herein lies the origin of the creative act.[84]

[83] Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes*, 45-46.

[84] Nishida, "Logic and Life," 147, 149.

Merleau-Ponty expresses a parallel idea in the compiled course notes from his lectures on nature from the late 1950's. Reflecting on the philosophy of Schelling, he writes:

> A poetic consciousness recognizes that it does not possess its object totally, that it can understand only by a true creation, and that it creates clarity by an operation that is not deductive but creative. Poetic consciousness, overcome by its object, must get hold of itself again, but without ever being able to separate itself from its history. There is an act of faith in the meeting of passivity and spontaneity, of which the effort of art is the best "document."[85]

Expression proves to be paradoxical because what is expressed has its source in that which transcends the individual in spite of the fact that it takes an individual, whose body is a locus that opens onto a historical landscape, to bring life to expression. Who we are is established through a world that is itself constituted by the sedimented acts of others and the creative climates that sustain us.

[85] Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes*, 50.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Art has always been a part of human life. And yet, a full understanding of artistic inspiration and what transpires during the creation of art continues to elude us. When one enters a prehistoric cave, like Lascaux for instance, and views its sophisticated rendering of bulls, horses, and reindeer, one cannot help but wonder what inspired the people who painted them. Why did the early humans of the Magdalenian era some 20,000 years ago paint, and what was their relationship to their art? We can never know this. But we must ask ourselves: Were they so different from us when we pick up a brush before a canvas? Was art for the Magdalenians radically different from what art is for us today? In "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty states that "the very first painting in some sense went to the farthest reach of the future."[1] The meaning of a work of art, he implies, is never complete. Therefore, he continues, artworks always "have almost their entire lives before them."[2] When we come before a prehistoric etching or painting in a cave, its meaning is still alive for us even though we can never know what it may have meant to the artists who created it. The world Lascaux opens up is one that will be forever foreign to us. But we can still visit it so long as the work exists. We can stand before the paintings of Lascaux on the very ground where its creators stood and experience them for ourselves.

The example of Lascaux is ironic since it is no longer open to visitors. Instead, an exact facsimile has been made to recreate the experience of the cave for tourists. There

[1] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 149.

[2] Ibid.

are many other caves in southern France near where Lascaux is situated, however, that still are open to the public. I had the opportunity to visit many of them in the summer of 2007, and that experience has stayed with me as I have pursued my dissertation research. For many reasons, prehistoric cave art is an excellent case for thinking about the nature of artistic creation and the relationship between art and nature. First of all, it is among the earliest examples of art in existence, and so it is very close to the origin of art in the historical sense. Thus, it offers an occasion to think about the primordial origins of artistic creativity.

Cave art is also a fruitful site of inquiry because it so clearly unites art with nature. Entering a cave, one is enveloped by the earth. The space of the cave is the earth itself, and the paintings that cling to its walls integrate its textures and contours. The cave has an earthen smell, and its temperature is distinct from that of above ground. Thus, entering a cave is an experience very different from entering the uniform white-walled rooms of a museum, though the caves' "curators" still call its various alcoves "galleries." One's awareness of entering the earth is especially true at Rouffignac where the cave contains numerous chambers that stretch for several miles. For accessibility, a small electric train has been installed to take visitors to its far reaches where there are charcoal outlines and etchings of various animals. At the end of one of the long chambers a room contains what is called "the Great Ceiling" which features several drawings of horses, ibex, bison, and wooly mammoths. Within this room there is also a well-like pit so deep that one cannot see to the bottom. In it depths (not accessible to visitors) there is a crude charcoal sketch of a human face. Depictions of humans are far less common than those of animals, and one cannot help but wonder about the significance of the placement of the

drawing. Why was this face drawn in such a deep and dark location? In Lascaux the only depiction of a human is also in a pit. Why were the human figures drawn in the least accessible places? Is it due to the power of the image? If so, what kind of power was the image thought to have? We can only guess, but for roughly 20,000 years the face in the pit of Rouffignac has been there, peering into the darkness deep within the earth. The strangeness of this prehistoric drawing and its placement epitomizes the mystery of creativity.

Imagine walking barefoot for miles underground with only a torch to see by and maneuvering through narrow crevices that would inspire sheer terror in a claustrophobe. That kind of journey inevitably would bring one into a profound intimacy with the features of the cave. Recall how Nishida, Merleau-Ponty, and Watsuji understand the self to be coextensive with the space it inhabits. The cool, dark, dampness of the underground terrain defines the climatic milieu of the cave. In that pared-down environment, charcoal and ochre mixed with animal fat and the shapes and textures of the rocky earth become the artists' media.

Heidegger says, "to create is to cause something to emerge as a thing that has been brought forth."[3] Cave art perfectly exemplifies this given its use of the natural features of the cave. Take, for instance, one of the etchings in Combarelles cave. For the most part, this cave's narrow and smooth tunnels are comprised of yellowish limestone. Near the end of one of the corridors, a shiny, mica-like, oval-shaped stone is embedded in the limestone. Its glimmering quality stands out against the rough, matte texture of the rest of the wall. This unique stone serves as the eye of an exquisitely etched profile of a

[3] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 58.

lioness. For the artist who etched that profile, torchlight surely caught the stone, suggesting an eye. The artist then etched the profile around it so that the shiny stone was perfectly placed to serve as the animal's eye. To create this image, the artist had to let the lioness emerge. By etching that profile, the artist drew out something prefigured in the cave wall, but it took the vision of the artist to see a lioness in the cave. In this way, the artist's vision gives birth to art latent within the earth.

Cave paintings frequently utilize the natural features of the cave as a relief underneath the painting to accentuate the form of the image. Since the walls of a cave are never perfectly flat, and often feature many cracks and protrusions, these add a sculpture-like component to the paintings. These forms are highlighted by the shadows they create. Think of humans in a fire-lit chamber, the flicker of light casting shadows created by the undulations of the cave wall. The shadows suggest running horses or the arc of a bison's back. At Font de Gaume, the only cave with polychrome paintings that still can be visited, the guide explains that the electric light we now use to look at the paintings creates a much different effect than does the light of fire. Electric light does not move, nor does it cast the same degree of shadow. When the tour guide demonstrates this difference for a moment, the effect is striking. Under the natural fire light the paintings seem to become animated, which, in turn, seems to animate the cave itself. The way cave art incorporates the natural features of the cave leads one to speculate that in some cases the prehistoric artists may have been prompted to draw and paint what they did because they saw images in the cave wall the way we commonly see images in the shapes of clouds or the grain of wood. The cave becomes alive when it partakes in visibility. We seers, as loci of the world's own self-expression, as Nishida would put it, draw out forms

from moving light and shadow. Fissures and cracks in the cave walls create lines that add to the emergent composition. Seeing forms emerging from the cave walls, the world and earth's early artists began to draw out the rift-design.

Cave art is an expression of the caves as they were experienced by the early people who visited them. It is fitting that the images they saw emerge from the walls were mostly of animals. The cave, as a natural formation, suggested other natural forms like those of animal bodies. For us visiting the caves today, the paintings seem harmonious with the landscape. They were created from locally obtained material; thus, they are entirely composed of earth tones that match the colors of the land. And since they are immobile "installations," each is inextricably linked to the history of its particular place. The decorated caves depict the land's animals of the past and present in the colors that arise from the materials of that place. This makes the art seem to have been almost "naturally" occurring, as if it was birthed by the place itself. If we think of the prehistoric peoples who painted them as part of the "climate" of the locale, in Watsuji's sense, then the art indeed was birthed by its place. Following Nishida, we could say that cave art is an expression of historical nature, of "nature's seeing."

Throughout this dissertation I have developed what I am calling a non-subjectivist account of artistic creation that emphasizes the active role that materials play in the creation of art. I have also shown that a non-subjectivist account of creativity has implications for how we understand the concept of nature. By analyzing the concept of nature as seen in the relationship between artist and medium within the creative process, I have provided a way of thinking about artistic expression that recognizes the active, expressive character of artistic media and, more broadly, of nature itself. This view

challenges traditional conceptions of nature and material that hold sway in dominant philosophical and scientific discourses. Demonstrating the expressive capacity of material when it is taken up by an artist suggests that nature is neither reducible to a set of physical laws underlying and determining human activity, nor is it simply a socially constructed concept. When viewed aesthetically from the standpoint of an artist, meaning and value arise in the interactions between ourselves and the landscapes we inhabit. Our bodies, which exist in continuity with nature, express a chiasm in being within which meaning arises. Following Merleau-Ponty, we can say that the world is the flesh of the visible with which we seers are intertwined through all our senses; and the fact that we sense leads us to create art in which sense is expressed further.

The most significant aspect of a non-subjectivist account of artistic expression is the recognition that human creativity is always in response to a climatic milieu. The dialogue taking place between artist and medium during the creative process demonstrates how nature both permeates and limits human production. This means that artistic activity is determined largely by the material constraints of a medium. At the same time, the constraints of a medium offer the artist opportunities that impel him or her to create. The material with which the artist works provides the foundation for artistic expression, but it also resists being subsumed by conceptual meaning. The materiality of the medium is what prevents the sensuous meaning of artworks from being fully translated into linguistic concepts, a key point revealed by Kant's third *Critique*. Moreover, through the generation of artworks, the meaningfulness of a climatic milieu is furthered and intensified through the sensuous character of a medium derived from it. Therefore, completed artworks, which utilize natural materials, open up the possibility for

the meaningful significance of nature to be more fully appreciated in general.

The recently coined notion of the "anthropocene" suggests that the entirety of nature exists in the purview of human influence. While the pervasiveness of the impact that humans have had on the Earth and its ecosystems cannot be denied, we should be cautious not to reinforce a reified distinction between humans and nature that is implied in this notion. If we understand human activity along the lines of Nishida's account of acting-intuition, then we must recognize how our actions are expressive of the historical world, which includes nature. Being born of the world, the self is not entirely its own, and neither are its actions. When we create, we are performing the creative acts of the natural-historical climate that gave rise to us. As fundamental points of world origination, we enact the world's seeing of itself through our creative acts.

Describing early humans going deep into the earth to create images that seem to emerge from the cave walls is one way to talk about how nature becomes expressive through art. But if we zoom out and view the Earth from space, the expressiveness of nature in human life is equally apparent. The famous "Blue Marble" photograph of the Earth taken in 1972 had an immense impact on the way human beings understood themselves in relation to the cosmos. In the vast emptiness of space, we are utterly dependent upon the Earth. Our bodies are so completely inseparable from our surroundings that our muscles and bones immediately begin to atrophy in the absence of the Earth's gravity. Everything we do on the surface of our planet is part of an ecological exchange that exhibits, in Nishida's words, the movement from the created to the creating. And, as Watsuji teaches us, human culture is an expression of climate.

Recognizing the deep entwinement of nature and human life at the level of creative acts allows us to understand human civilization in continuity with the natural world. However, this thought immediately presents an obvious problem: If human life is ultimately an expression of nature, this seems to preclude the possibility of human life ever being at odds with nature. Thus, someone might conclude that air pollution, for example, is "natural." This conclusion, however, is misplaced because it oversimplifies the subtle dynamic between the self and world that Merleau-Ponty's paradox of expression, Nishida's account of acting-intuition, and Watsuji's notion of climate articulate. We must be careful to distinguish the normative connotations implied in calling something natural from the simple fact that all things occur within the scope of the natural-material world. The strength of the accounts of Merleau-Ponty, Nishida, and Watsuji lie in their demonstration of the ways in which life is always lived *in response* to the world in which we find ourselves, but our continuity with nature need not imply that we are determined by nature. We exist through a dynamic interchange in which we build upon that which has been given before us. Though our actions are always in relation to the natural-cultural climate in which we live, we must also acknowledge the seminal role we play in shaping our world. We are loci of the world's own expression at the same time that we are actively expressing ourselves. This insight highlights the radical responsibility we have for the world in which we live, which demands that we continually ask ourselves afresh: What kind of world do we want to create? The non-subjectivist account of creative action that I have developed urges that we choose to listen to what materials themselves are drawn to express rather than imposing our own all too often misguided wills upon the natural world.

Experiencing materials as expressive may seem like a radical perspective. However, this notion rejoins with Hegel's description of how the material of an artwork shines with a vibrant radiance that displays its inner soul. We need not subscribe to Hegel's metaphysics of spirit, however, to appreciate the living character of media; the aesthetic experience itself bespeaks the vibrancy of materials shaped by artists.

Art has the ability to change the way we perceive the world. Robert E. Carter, in *The Japanese Arts and Self Cultivation,* puts this well:

> Art moves one beyond surface living, to living in three-dimensions. Its purpose is to render one whole, able to see things holistically. […] Anyone who stands by a Rembrandt or a Van Gogh, or is enveloped at a concert by the music of Bach or Beethoven, or who enters a Japanese garden risks such a transformation. […] Suddenly the world is an enchanted world, and as with all enchantment, one is taken out of oneself, one forgets oneself to be placed in a richer and more congenial and more profound world.[4]

In early drafts of "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty closed the essay by stating, "The painter is as far from despair as from self-importance, and one must wish for humanity many persons who, like him, contemplate the world with solidarity and transform it."[5] As the interconnectivity of our world continues to increase, it becomes increasingly necessary for us to acknowledge the ways our creative acts are shaping the world, and ourselves in return. Artists who cultivate an attunement to and reverence for a material medium bring to the fore the life inherent to their medium and throughout the natural world, and this awareness has the potential to positively transform how we conceive of nature and understand human being's place in the cosmos. As beings born of this world,

[4] Carter, *The Japanese Arts and Self-Cultivation*, 54.

[5] This sentence was the last line in earlier drafts of "Eye and Mind" but was omitted in the published version. This line is analyzed by Johnson in *The Retrieval of the Beautiful,* 20.

we express ourselves through media that are, in turn, expressive of themselves in the dynamic interchange of the creative climates in which we live.

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