Section One

Preceding
Chapter One

Subtle Relations — thinking 'in' between (interval)

To ponder upon relationships of exchange between an observer and temporal artwork, and upon such occasions as possible sites for encountering immanence or transcendence is to dive straight into the great debate concerning appropriate distinctions between sentient and insentient matter.

A discussion of interrelationships is often premised by a general understanding of the entities' individual constituents. For example, the interaction between a body sitting on a chair is approached with an assumed concept of 'body' and 'chair' prior to the evaluation of their relationship — that of the body sitting on a chair — taking place. This process reflects scientific methodology, and is founded upon what is different or separate and therefore creates distinct types of physical material (individuation), not upon what is common or shared between 'types' — potential points of interaction. Predicated on absolute difference rather than potential similitude or collusion, this approach privileges the hierarchical structure of the physical world as proposed by mechanistic world views before any consideration of exchange commences.

This mode is one of limitation, the body's limits of experience already dictated by scientific and metaphysic discourse. Potentiality is suppressed, as it encompasses such unsettling sites/sights as the unknowable and the wondrous extremes of the 'absurd,' the 'unscientific' and the 'impossible.'

The question arises: if immersed in this scheme, can members of contemporary mainstream societies even know how to recognise, even register via sensory organs, an entity operating differently to the prior potentiality it has been allocated in the day-to-day world? That is, how does one recognise being operating beyond/outside of/in difference to its prescribed conceptualisation that includes demarcations of limit for possible expression? The perceptive functions for such recognition to take place would be under-active, non-perceptible, repressed — perhaps not even evident to, or a constituent of, a subject whose identity is conditioned, created and maintained by limiting schemes of mechanistic scientific discourse.

Sliding straight down the slippery dip constructed by dualists to keep distinctions between 'types' of matter split into mind (consciousness)/brain (body), it becomes apparent that this divide (/) has a nebulous constitution. The distinctions are arbitrarily constructed by scientific understanding of what constitutes consciousness, how it is understood to be displayed and at what point it is manifested as conscious self determination and experience
(constituents of 'free will'). Underlying and predicking the
construction of the borderlines between sentient and insentient life
is the assumed fundamental distinction between matter as physical
and mind or consciousness as psychical. Constructed in this way,
matter and psyche are understood as ontologically different entities.
That is, their fundamental essence, their ground of being, their
'being/becoming' or basic nature arises from different substances.

If such a distinction is assumed, the problem arises as to how such
entities interact. Where or what is the common ground, or
mediating principle that allows for interaction? Such Interactionist
theories have been the crux of the mind-body problem, resulting in
much circuitous discourse, as the very oppositions set up by the
underlying ontological distinctions make an experience of
interaction inevitably contentious and irresolvable. Alternate
programs for interactions are proposed and refuted, depending upon
which term of the dualism is privileged within the particular
methodology being promoted, e.g. a materialist will privilege the
phenomenal tangibility of matter over the intangibility of
consciousness. Placing interaction in the physical brain is a
materialist's least radical proposition; their most, that all process are
physical and consciousness is simply the physical brain.

Hence, the proposition of interaction between matter and
consciousness will remain difficult as long as one set of the opposing
terms is privileged over the other. In this way, the introduction of a
third term, to bridge the gap and provide a middle term (thus
reconciling the dualism) was conceived of by Descartes in the
originating moments of ontological distinction between mind-body,
he proposed the Transcendental — a religious orientated interface
allowing for interaction. Coincidently Buddhist and Esoteric
doctrines privilege treading what they term the 'middle path.' It is a
state of consciousness and relationship to the material world that
harmonises positive and negative polarities or pairs of opposites,
conditioning rational discourse. Such a discipline is considered
difficult to ascertain and involves the cultivation of a different states
of consciousness. This is a praxis to which this paper will return.
Suffice to say that in theory and practice dyadic polarities and the
creation of a third term to fill the 'in-between' confront both
Western, Eastern and Esoteric discourses to some degree. In the
West, with the 'death of God,' Descartes' divine intervention no
longer mediates, and the interval between mind and body stretches
to abyssal dimensions.

It is the ontological distinctions that limit the way in which
interaction may be considered and, for the purposes herein, such
distinctions will only allow material, phenomenal (sense-based)
understandings of exchanges between observer and artwork.
Therefore I will subject this form of substance metaphysics to its
own limiting schemata and embrace the concepts of process
metaphysics that opens wide the potentialities of interaction: a proposal that makes borderlines serpentine and porous and unnerves the I/eye identity.

The I/eye, the subject at the centre of their universe, a subject constructed by substance based philosophies based on solid universals, allows for an easy delineation of being premised upon Euclidean mathematical points in space, atemporal, static positions from which the subject surveys the field and its objects. With the eye of reason, an eye assured of superiority by its subjectivity, the subject is empowered to apprehend, value, and re-present the real. With the ontological distinctions and the I/eye domination suspended, investigation into psychic interaction with matter becomes a subtle ground of shifting borders.

Process Metaphysics — The Fundamentals of Fluid Ground

In accordance with general given principles of this diverse body of thought, it is propositionally accurate to assert that matter or substance are things in this world, but their fundamental mode of being is actually a becoming, that is, it is processual.\(^1\) This runs counter to substance philosophies bound by concepts of universals that give rise to ontologically distinct groups.

Process philosophy allows for the distinctions between subject/object to become one of degree rather than a quantifiable difference in substance. Interaction is considered to be a network of interrelating vibrations and processes: thus the circuitous dialogue surrounding how ontologically distinct entities can interact is no longer at issue. The fundamental mode of existence proposed is one of continual

process, with smaller microprocesses considered together to form larger macroprocesses.

This scheme is in general allocated a developmental impetus. Processes evolve and combine with other processes to produce novel and creative variances that will, if suitable, supersede the conditions from which they evolved. The elements of creativity, novelty and innovation are fundamental to the continual cycle of process, for it is the emergence of these features, their dynamic production, that initiate new types of forms of potentially greater complexity. In turn these forms, exhibiting stability, will allow for further variability as processes continue in unceasing interaction. This perspective on process, however, need not embrace a teleological impetus, indicative of hierarchical evolutionary schemes, but could be considered as random manifestations, spreading horizontally. The debate around the development of consciousness and its linking to 'evolutionary' models of innovation and superiority is a significant consideration when undertaking projects focused upon the possibility of 'other' modalities of perception being operative and accessible to subjects. Such concerns pitch transcendent consciousness against immanent consciousness. Models for reconciliation of such interaction have been proposed. One such proposition argues that if the vertical arrow of 'evolution' is combined with the horizontal circle of immanence the ensuing formation and movement could easily be conceived of as a spiral: a symbolic representation that is often employed to represent the reconciliation of transcendence and immanence in a harmonious manner.\(^2\) The spiral itself is conceived of as being an infinite process, stretching both back and forward in/through time. The motif of the spiral will be returned to in the last section of this paper.

In Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy, Nicholas Rescher argues that process metaphysics offers serious alternatives to irresolvable problems undermining substance metaphysics.

The paramount value of process metaphysics, however, lies in its providing not just a means to avert various philosophical difficulties but a distinctive and illuminating window on the world. For this approach has an importantly true-to-reality aspect. It invites us to regard what we see when we look around us, not in the light of an aggregation of perduring things but in that of a vibrant manifold of productive activity. It pictures the world not as a museum where objects are displayed but as a show where things happen — a theatre, as it were, in full productive stir. In this way, it offers an instructive and productive alternative to

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the substantialist approach that has left its deeply problematic imprint upon mainstream philosophical tradition.\(^3\)

Rescher stresses throughout his text the primacy of activity within the tradition of process philosophies, explicating how the various doctrines do not reject the existence of substances but, rather, view them as constituting a sub-level of processual dynamics and, as such, they cannot be the essence, fundamental ground, of the 'real.' Rescher goes on to claim that Process philosophy has the capacity to 'fuse into one' the polarities created by substance ontologies. These polarities include unity/duality, stability/change, transcendence/immanence: in short the very polarities upon which Western language, culture, society, politics et. al., are constructed.

Without following the tributary of relationships between process philosophy and science that enfold the creation of the 'new sciences' where such streams of thought meet, and the historical impetus for such interactions (e.g. Henri Bergson's and Madame Blavatsky's search for concepts correlative to a modern science) it is necessary to mention in passing how recent developments in physics support a universe constituted by processes. Much has been written (and sensationalised) about how quantum physics and Chaos theories will and do change perspectives as to the nature of the world and universe in which human kind exists. At molecular levels and beyond, quantum physics disputes contiguous material units, positing the existence of only patterns of interaction which contain the potential to exhibit stability. It is this term 'exhibit' that brings me back once again to perception, and the central role it plays in determining meaning and value within the diverse frameworks of life. The link between knowledge and perception, belief and perception, person and perception are processes that create and sustain what is generally understood to be the 'real.' The history of science shows that it has been the privileging of sensory perception that has created the 'real' in which the majority of Western contemporary peoples exist. It is also general knowledge, however, that other cultures (and pockets of Western society) have valued equally, and accepted as 'real,' experiences outside of rational, sense-based perception. The potential of these other experiences has been known since time immemorial, tangentially touching logical, linear measurements of life.

Is it possible to access these modes of consciousness through the contemplation of temporal contemporary art practices? Is this the site where transcendence and immanence synthesise? What abilities of perception, what mode of body-mind is required to attempt such an interaction? What conception of self is premised in

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such an exchange, and how, if at all, can such experiences be communicated?

It will be argued that adopting a view in which process forms the ground of being allows navigable paths to be constructed (albeit temporarily) into/onto such mobile ground, and perhaps even to create occasions for a folding or fusing of the transcendent and the immanent. Such a conceptual framework mirrors the lived mechanisms constituting modalities of life — that image of how the physical system of the body is understood — in particular the complex system of interacting processes, both regular and irregular, of bodies that interact within themselves and, via extensive motion, with other temporal bodies.

The experience of temporal aesthetic objects as moments of perception and recognition, inherently fluid and alien to rationality is contained and constructed in the 'stable' environment of the gallery. Like the control group in scientific experiments, exhibition spaces adopt a clean position with uniform methods of display and structure against which an art practice's degree of radical effect is measured. They are invested in maintaining a separateness from the everyday, and are set up on the pretence of containing potentially special moments, like those experienced by divine contact in a church or temple. The gallery privileges static motion of both viewer and object, isolating moments of aesthetic experience and, for the large part, denying the subject the opportunity to relate for any length of time to a work (i.e., lack of seating, heavily socially coded and cold environment). Temporal works instil in the silence an active fluidity mirrored in the active physical fluidity of the viewer (both internally and externally) as well as offering potential extensions to life beyond the gallery borders — movement, chaos, materiality, composition, decomposition. Sequencing the 'special moments together,' the flow of perception and life processes are unified to identify process and temporality as the place of collusion between the subject and the object. It is for this reason that process metaphysics offers an applicable ontology when considering aesthetic experiences.

Tracing the development of process philosophy through Western traditions, Rescher begins predictably in Ancient Greece with Heraclitus (c. 540—474 B.C.) and continues to unfurl a chronological linear trajectory, a conventional cartography. In *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead*, George. R. Lucas Jnr notes that American Charles Hartshorne (1897—) considers the tradition to have begun with Ikhnaton in Egypt in 1370B.C. Interestingly, the Theosophical discourse of H.P. Blavatsky locates Egypt as an ancient keeping place for the 'Mystery teachings' that form the foundation of their philosophy, a philosophy heavily conditioned by forms of process
metaphysics. Whilst contemporary support for Hartshorne's claim may be insubstantial, Lucas does flirt quietly with the questionable lineage before proposing an outline of more 'concrete' foundations. This comprises three stages of development for Process Philosophy of a more recent (and therefore verifiable) nature:

1 — Evolutionary Cosmology's, encompassing Enlightenment figures and emerging Romantic Naturphilosophie (another significant conceptual influence of Theosophy);

2 — Interaction of Evolutionary Cosmology's with Romanticism and Idealism;

3 — British and American Realism.5

From this dissection of Western process philosophy, it is two figures from the last section that have begun and will continue to re-sound at intervals throughout this paper: Henri Bergson (1859—1941), and Alfred North Whitehead (1861—1947).

They will be cited in company with figures from Japan, in particular Watsui Tetsurō, Nishida Kitarō, Nishitani Keiji, Dōgen Kigen, Yuasa Yasuo whose philosophical-religious discourses can also be understood as inherently processural. It has in fact been largely recognised by theorists interested in creating cross-cultural dialogues between the philosophical traditions of the East and those of the West, that Process Philosophy is the point (albeit mobile) at which the large ideological and ontological divides are brought closest together.

Propositions raised by both Bergson and Whitehead are receiving a revival of critical attention at present (especially in relation to the cross-cultural dialogues mentioned above), and echoes of their thinking can be traced through various concepts constitutive of what is embraced under the umbrella of the 'postmodern' in contemporary Western society: for example the emphasis on 'becoming' central to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work.

A general tendency of the postmodern has been the refutation, undermining and re-evaluation of the avant-garde projects of modernism. In a simplistic sense, postmodernism can be understood as a reaction against (yet paradoxically dependent upon) modernist utopian projects. These dialogues, and their conditioning by authoritative, patriarchal ideologies, have been challenged with stylistic devices such as plurality, self-referentiality, erasure, parody

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5 Lucas, The Rehabilitation of Whitehead 23-34.
and eclecticism in an effort to de-centralise the knowing subject and disrupt the stability of linear narratives, albeit that partaking in this call-and-response style reaction against modernism exhibits exactly the same foundation of the avant-garde projects forming modernism — each was a reaction against/ development of the preceding 'radical' disruption. Philosophically, the postmodern is characterised by the developments of Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction. The attempts to de-centre the subject (which continually appear never to be sufficiently 'radical,' or to sufficiently erase or subvert identity) can be understood as a continual process of de-stabilisation. If all is in constant process there can be no centre to act towards or react from — all is in flux. Postmodernity presupposes a fluid ground (reflected in the inability to propose conclusive definitions for its multifaceted project) that privileges heterology and plurality, and therefore could be understood as a philosophy of process by its very nature. Postmodernism's paradoxical position in relation to modernism, its moves aimed at undermining Modernism's grand narratives, may be viewed as recapitulating reactionary motives that are discussed by Lucas as formative causes for Process Philosophies — dissatisfaction with the dominant ideologies. The postmodern bind, however, is that, even as it critiques modernism, its 'new' adventure is being co-opted into modernism's established system. Lucas proposes process philosophy as revolutionary movements reacting against the dominant discourse.

I have suggested that process philosophies arose in the main as revolutionary movements — as critical reactions against the perceived inadequacies of dominant cultural presuppositions and modes of thought. If this is correct, we must conclude that this is a revolution not yet fully understood or appreciated, let alone consummated.⁶

The system embraced by process philosophy places all in flux, not only the boundary lines between sentient and insentient beings but also human knowledge, where concepts such are truth and fact also acquire mercurial properties. Mercury the Roman deity of communication (Greek — Hermes), carrying messages between worlds represents the lightening flash or spark of pure idea. Idea as active and intuitive, communication as active, perception as active, truth as active. The emphasis is on movement as embraced in terms like 'becoming' and 'lived.'

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⁶ Lucas, The Rehabilitation of Whitehead 47.
Henri Bergson

French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) focuses upon the division between matter and spirit in his work Matter and Memory. Within this text Bergson proposes a method that diminishes (but does not escape completely) the dualisms inherent in Western conceptualisations of matter and psyche. Bergson's central point is to establish that all matter is an aggregate of images, images that are not static, but continually interacting.

We will assume for the moment that we know nothing of theories of matter and theories of spirit, nothing of the discussions as to the reality or ideality of the external world. Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed. All these images act and react upon one another in all their elementary parts according to constant laws which I call laws of nature ....

One image remains distinct from all others, argues Bergson, and he identifies the body as particular, because it is known not "only from without by perceptions, but from within by affections," this image is "my" body. The body is conceptualised as a centre of action, whilst the objects which surround it are perceived within the limits of the body's potential action upon them. Thus, Bergson establishes the following definitions for matter and perception:

I call matter the aggregate of images, and perception of matter these same images referred to the eventual action of one particular image, my body.

My body then acts like an image which reflects others, and which, in so doing, analyzes them along lines corresponding to the different actions which it can exercise upon them.

Essentially, perception takes place in the object, it is a facet of matter and not an image formed 'internally' within the body and then projected outwards and onto the 'external' image. As A. R. Lacey notes in Bergson, "The image of the object is 'of' it in the sense of constituting it — 'partly,' because the image will embody only one point of view." Images exist whether they are being perceived or not (no matter in what way or from what particular angle they are being perceived). The difference between matter and perception is

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8 Bergson, Matter and Memory 17.

9 Bergson, Matter and Memory 22.

10 Bergson, Matter and Memory 49.

not in kind — perception is not an act of consciousness distinct from matter (they are not two ontologically different essences) — but of degree.

But the separation between a thing and its environment cannot be absolutely definite and clear-cut; there is a passage by insensible gradations from one to the other: the close solidarity which binds all the objects of the material universe, the perpetuality of their reciprocal actions and reactions, is sufficient to prove that they have not the precise limits which we attribute to them. Our perception outlines, so to speak, the form of their nucleus; it terminates them at the point where our possible action upon them ceases, where consequently, they cease to interest our needs.  

Therefore, Bergson not only places perception 'in' the object, but notes that perception, as registered by a subject, is conditioned by the conceptual limits ascribed to the object by that subject. That is, perception involves movements of reduction and selection in relationship to the 'whole' of matter. We do not simply perceive what is there in its totality (because this totality extends beyond limits of form in 'insensible gradations') but we perceive only that which we can accept as belonging to the potentiality of the object. Within this framework consciousness is located within things, and the Western dualism separating matter and spirit, object and subject respectively, is rejected. Matter no longer waits for the penetrating consciousness of the subject to activate it as intelligible, it is ascribed its own self-vitalising principle.

This form of interaction, where perception is understood as being in the object, whilst sensation is located in the body, is distinct from the category of pure perception, a theoretical, idealised perception that does not incorporate memory, and is therefore entirely immediate. How such pure perception is to be rendered conscious is not entirely clear.

Following on, matter is not only understood as indistinct from consciousness, but as active on unconscious levels. To quote D. N. Rodowick:

Comprehending Bergson means understanding that all matter is Image, and that the universe is defined as the whole aggregate of images acting and reacting to one another on all their surfaces and in all their parts. In this holistic picture, interiority and exteriority are only relations among images.

\[12\] Bergson, Matter and Memory 209.


\[14\] Rodowick, Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine 29.
All matter is interconnected, not in a static fixed manner, but within time and movement. *Durée* (duration) is the term employed by Bergson to express the unified exchanges of matter, the essential fluidity of pure becoming as distinct from a mechanistic sense of time — a series of distinct moments of homogeneous measurement. *Durée* is heterogeneous, not a 'set' of images ('set' being characterised by repetition of constituents sharing similarities), but rather it denotes a 'whole' that, as already mentioned, is in a continual process of interaction upon all facets, not only those selected for conscious apprehension. For Bergson sets are understood to 'appear' temporarily closed, whilst the 'whole' is open and in flux. Bergson proposes two forms of consciousness: virtual consciousness that pertains to the 'whole' of duration, and consciousness that is the 'set,' reflecting the 'whole' in a selective and reductive manner. Consciousness that selects and creates 'sets,' is a consciousness mediated by memory — memory-images — the point between pure memory and pure perception. As Bergson writes memory-images are a constituent of perception, "that complete it as they interpret it," as well as of pure memory from which it "begins to materialize."15 Thus consciousness is, on the one hand, understood as a constituent of the 'whole' of images and, on the other, as a reflection of particular 'sets' drawn from this whole and mediated by memory. Memory is perceived as being located outside the corporeal brain, differing in kind to perception (this is Bergson's dualism) and as Lacy points not necessarily implicit in consciousness: "memories can be unconscious, and that consciousness is not an essential property of psychical states."16 Memory is inherently linked to time, since continuation cannot be perceived without conscious recognition of the past that preceded it and of the 'addition' of the present. Bergson argues that the present is continually negotiated, 'filled,' by the past; the agent of this negotiation is memory. Two types of memory are outlined: 'motor mechanisms' or habit memory and 'independent recollections' or picture memory. Habit memory is not privileged in Bergson's framework, as it does not represent the past, but repeats its patterns or 'acts it'.17 Pure memory is not conscious (it is also referred to as the Plane of Dream), but the intermixture of memories and perception that arise together in contemplation of an object are conscious. Memory allows for the past to inhabit (and define) the present.

Bergson argues that duration, the interaction of matter in its essential fluidity, is brought to conscious awareness by intuition.

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15 Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 133.

16 Lacey, *Bergson* 134.

Reason reflects static spatialisation of time (the sequence or series — Zeno's arrow); whilst intuition is understood to mirror the mobile, fluid and nebulous qualities ascribed to the pluralities of 'becoming.' In short, intuition is thought to best apprehend the rhythms or vibrations of duration. This temporal realm is primarily related to Spirit in Bergson's framework, with the spatialisation of selected images (sets) related to conventional definitions of matter (as solid form, separate from consciousness). Intuition is the mode of consciousness privileged by Bergson for interacting with the 'whole' of reality of which duration is an essential feature. Contemplation of the 'inner life' was given as a practice suited to grasping the essential fluidity of reality, and its essential life force \textit{\'{e}lan vital}.\textsuperscript{18}

**Intuition as Method**

Gilles Deleuze examined, elucidated and enlarged upon Bergson's project in \textit{Bergsonism}.\textsuperscript{19} Within this text he defines Bergson's method as intuition, stating that it is "neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy, but a fully developed method, one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy."\textsuperscript{20} As lived experiences duration and memory do not provide a modality by which it may be known to consciousness (as evidenced by the previous discussion). To this end Bergson proposed Intuition as the method by which duration be apprehended. As framed by Deleuze, Intuition is a method that potentially embodies multiplicities of meaning, and plural aspects of becoming. Therefore, rather than an instantaneous revelation, intuition as a method is proposed as a process through which relationships between meanings are elucidated.\textsuperscript{21} As a mobile method, Deleuze argues that "Intuition presupposes duration, it consists in thinking in terms of duration."\textsuperscript{22} Intuition is understood to identify problems through a process of discrimination identifying incongruence and so, when a problem is stated correctly, the solution will be found

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\textsuperscript{20} Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism} 13.

\textsuperscript{21} Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism} 14.

\textsuperscript{22} Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism} 31.
within it. The essential divisive movement of intuition returns into coherence.\textsuperscript{23}

Intuition is not duration itself. Intuition is rather the movement by which we emerge from our duration, by which we make use of our duration to affirm and immediately to recognise the existence of other durations, above or below us.\textsuperscript{24}

It will be later considered that distinguishing types of durations is also by intuitive recognition, and that perception of the various rhythms of 'its' temporal process and the contemplation of temporal art practices places the 'subject' in a conducive space for such a praxis (that could also involve the perception of 'imperceptible gradations' between images). If such duration is held as essentially spirit, then these exchanges may be contemplated further as cultivating occasions of immanence and transcendence. It shall be strongly suggested that the representation of these intuited rhythms of duration are most fittingly communicated through metaphoric or analogous means. This will be discussed in relationship to the work of another French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. For the moment, the following is given by way of consideration of how Bergson's conception of matter has been applied as an interpretive tool to aesthetic practice and the viewer's interaction with art 'objects.'

\textbf{A Bergsonian approach to an incomplete Duchamp}

In "The Time Machine: A Bergsonian Approach to «The Large Glass» Le Grand Verre," Lucia Beier discusses Duchamp's notorious work that oscillates between commenced and complete — occupying the ultimate in-between state, the incomplete.\textsuperscript{25} Through an analysis that relies on duration as proposed by Bergson, Beier constructs Duchamp's Glass as primarily exemplifying the inability to literally and 'statically' represent a perpetual becoming, a lived duration.

Beier maps Bergson's concepts onto the iconography of the work in the following manner. Duchamp selects a 'blueprint' of an engine to metaphorically represent a human body: its motion depends upon the imagination and interaction of the viewer, thus the

\textsuperscript{23}Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism} 115-116.

\textsuperscript{24}Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism} 33.

\textsuperscript{25}Marcel Duchamp The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass): \textit{La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (le Grand Verre).} 1915-23. Oilpaint, varnish, lead foil, lead wire and dust on two glass plates (cracked), each mounted between two glass panels in a steel and wood frame. 272.5 x 175.8cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art.
possible motion of the *Glass* relies on the viewer's duration. Beier notes that the spectator is relied upon to "complete the work and bring it back into the realm of the living and flowing." It is the spectator's perception of potential movement that activates this resolution.

When the spectators perceive the possibility of motion in the *Glass* they involve their own duration as processes.\(^{26}\)

An active perception is required to animate the work, completing the potential illustrated figuratively by the imagination and "maybe even smash it." As the *Large Glass* is glass, the translucent and fragile nature of the materiel creates a ground in perpetual flux, one's visual perception of the work will always embrace a feeling of temporal process, recording the passage of events behind the work whilst constructing meaning, activating the machine and projecting upon it a culmination of its process.

Beier relates Duchamp's 'bride' to instinctual matter (or intuition as Instinct 'subject to reflection') as conceptualised by Bergson. Rendered directly by hand she sits in a predictable contrast to the geometric bachelor machine, representing the intellect.

In this little drama between Intuition and Intellect Duchamp is searching for unity and resolution not to his internal conflicts but to the intellectual problem of what goes into the creation of a work of art... they are two separate processes that enter into creation.\(^{27}\)

The analogy is extended to embrace the distinction between two types of universal order discussed by Bergson — Vital and Geometrical. Overall, however this analogical interpretation relies heavily upon the great conventional dualism: man - intellect - culture / woman - intuition - nature. The distinction in kind between perception and memory, as well as the difference in degree between 'matter' and consciousness is accorded no centrality in Beier's interpretation. The *élan vital* (Vital Impetus) is discussed as the creative cosmic process that annuls the discontinuity between the Bachelor's Intellect and the Bride's Intuition, but Beier does not stress the ontological position taken by Bergson, that formulates all matter as Image continually in a process of exchange with other Images. The static division between viewer and art object remains, whilst Beier highlights the viewer's position as integral to the continual creation of the piece, the *Glass* is still discussed in terms distinct from the viewer's subjectivity and identity. This perhaps reflects Beier's reading as primarily embracing Bergson's ideas as


\(^{27}\) Beier, "The Time Machine" 197.
outlined in *Creative Evolution* rather than *Matter and Memory*, which is not referenced.

Beier's approach positions the viewer as central to the conception and creation of the artwork's meaning as proposed at its commencement. Its unfinished state (as abandoned by the artist) lays open its future: it is always and forever in a process of approaching completion. As an object stuck in-between, refused finality in the world of finite form, this example draws attention to the viewer's activity, highlighting the exchange between 'object' and 'subject' as lived within both a particular space and time. Within this exchange the 'meaning' of the artwork is made manifest, a meaning that is in itself processual. Each viewer participates as an active element in the work, allowing for a continued re-inscription, with their individual experience just one of many, to be repeated time and time again; allowing no definite, no absolute conclusion to ever be ascribed to the work. As surely as the viewer is cast in an active role in the work's creation/duration, they are also undermined by repetition (perhaps this could be conceived of forming a particular type of 'set'), their individual consciousness is annulled in the ever rolling field of passing viewers. The work implicates the viewer in a process in which no one imaginative closure is ascribed greater value than another; the viewer's participation is mechanistic, their presence expected, their individuality negated. This mechanistic role sits in an uncomfortable relation to the wider conceptualisation of duration, and perhaps it is this paradox that Beier refers to as the difficulty of representing duration.

This reading of the *Large Glass* does however provide an excellent illustration of the active relationship between viewer and object easily conceived by the intellect and sensory awareness. Duchamp's game with the sinister edge was to raise the subtle interaction between Images (subjects and objects) to a higher level of experiential consciousness, and then negate the individual's now conscious authority: an ironical play in which processual dynamics remain the only fundamental rule whilst disrupting the project of linear discourse, absolute meaning and cohesive/final narratives.

The central concern in this reading is the manner in which the artist interceded in the often unspoken relationship between viewer and object, the maintenance and creation of meaning that such interactions produce, the exchange of affect and effect. Without recourse to closure, the cyclic round of exchange was emphasised in a nihilistic fashion. The artwork makes the viewer perform for it, and not the other way around, as generally expected. This turn dramatises the very relationship between subject and aesthetic object which is being considered within this paper, as an exchange where both art and the viewer are becoming and dissolving *ad infinitum*,
both as Images or matter-consciousness held within an expansive network of subtle relations.

**Bergson — Deleuze: Cinema and (as) Duration**

Bergson's work has been brought to critical attention in postmodern thought by a reactivation of his concepts by Gilles Deleuze. It is more possible to fly to the moon with paper wings, than to offer any authoritative, coherent and easily accessible outline of Deleuze's project with regard to Bergson (let alone his entire oeuvre) herein. Therefore this small section will aim to outline and reference small parts of Deleuzian Bergsonism in regard to the conception of matter and duration, and cinema as a process 'representing' these concepts. Deleuzian concepts of the body (Section Two) and of aesthetic experience (Section Three) shall be discussed later on in this paper.

Following Bergson, Deleuze embraces an understanding of images as fluid:

External images act on me, transmit movement to me, and I return movement: how could images be in my consciousness since I am myself image, that is, movement? And can I even, at this level, speak of 'ego,' of eye, of brain and of body? Only for simple convenience; for nothing can yet be identified this way....It is a state of matter too hot for one to be able to distinguish solid bodies in it. It is a world of universal variation, of universal undulation, universal rippling: there are neither axes, nor centre, not left, nor right, nor high, nor low....\(^{28}\)

In discussing this infinite 'whole' of matter (Image) from which 'sets' are selected for conscious articulation, Deleuze employs the term 'plane of immanence,' which is also referred to in the *Cinema* books as "the machine assemblage of movement-image." For Bergson matter was considered an aggregate of images, for Deleuze this *flowing matter* is indistinct from what he terms the movement-image. Deleuze distinguishes two types of Image as indicated by the titles of the cinema works — *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. The movement-image is discussed as giving an indirect image of time, and is likened to the 'shot' that links these movements through the technique of montage; whilst the time-image gives a direct image, and is understood as a constituent of the 'interval' between shots, that 'suspends' the viewer. Within the two *Cinema* volumes Deleuze presents four commentaries on Bergson. The first two focus on movement and change, the three material aspects of subjectivity and 'wholes' and 'sets' as previously discussed. It is within this first commentary that Deleuze posits cinema's applicability to 'representing' duration.

The model would be rather a state of things which would constantly change, a flowing-matter in which no point of anchorage nor centre of reference would be assignable. On the basis of this state of things it would be necessary to show how, at any point, centres can be formed which would impose fixed instantaneous views. It would therefore be a question of 'deducing' conscious, natural or cinematographic perception. But the cinema perhaps has a great advantage: just because it lacks a centre of anchorage and of horizon, the sections which make it would not prevent it from going back up the path that natural perception comes down. Instead of going from the acentred state of things to centred perception, it could go back up towards the acentred state of things, and get closer to it.\(^{29}\)

Thus Deleuze reasons that cinema presents an image in motion of duration, that film as a media records the complex and continual process of differentiation and integration that assemble 'sets' from the mobile 'whole.'\(^{30}\)

Deleuze's basic extension of Bergson is Image = movement. The plane of immanence is conceptualised as being made up of light, and Deleuze discusses the movement-image as being comprised of "lines and figures of light."\(^{31}\) Thus the aggregate of Images (matter) is light and therefore implicitly movement.

We may therefore say that the plane of immanence or the plane of matter is: a set of movement-images; a collection of lines or figures of light; a series of blocs of space-time.\(^{32}\)

The movement-image is conceptualised as presenting three varieties, each one analogous to a material aspect of subjectivity, that together form the Image of subjectivity. First, there is the perception-image:

When the universe of movement-images is related to one of these special images which forms a centre in it, the universe is incurve and organised to surround it. We continue to go from the world to the centre, but the world has taken on a curvature, it has become a periphery, it forms a horizon.\(^{33}\)

The special image refers to the body and its faculties of selection that perceive only that which is of interest to it from the plane of immanence. When related to the centre of indetermination this creation of a 'set' results in the formation of a reaction to the perception-image. The 'interval' takes place between two types of image, and it is within in the interval that the potential actions and

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29 Deleuze, Cinema 1 57-58.
30 Rodowick, Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine 10.
31 Deleuze, Cinema 1 60.
32 Deleuze, Cinema 1 61.
33 Deleuze, Cinema 1 64.
effects of the perception-image upon the special image arise. This is
the action-image.

The operation under consideration is no longer elimination, selection or framing, but
the incurring of the universe, which simultaneously causes the virtual action of
things on us and our possible action on things. This is the second material aspect of
subjectivity. And, just as perception relates movement to 'bodies' (nouns), that is to
rigid objects which will serve as moving bodies or things moved, action relates
movement to 'acts' (verbs) which will be the design for an assumed end or result.\footnote{Deleuze, Cinema 165.}

The third material aspect of subjectivity is discussed as falling within
the interval created by the previous two. The affection-image is
primarily considered to reference how the 'subject' experiences itself
'from the inside.'

It relates movement to a 'quality' as lived state (adjective). Indeed, it is not
sufficient to think that perception — thanks to distance — retains or reflects what
interests us by letting pass what is indifferent to us. There is inevitably a part of
external movements that we 'absorb,' that we refract, and which does not transform
itself into either objects of perception or acts of the subject; rather they mark the
coincidence of the subject and the object in a pure quality.\footnote{Deleuze, Cinema 165.}

This indicates that a subtle residue of what has gone unperceived
nonetheless interpenetrates the 'subject' and gives rise to qualities of
the inner life. It is this interval that potentially opens onto the
plane of immanence, whilst acting as the relational process between
perception and action. For Deleuze not only are we understood as
'subject' assemblages of these three varieties of the movement-
image, but cinema is also understood to combine these three types of
images. For Deleuze the cinema has a unique relation to duration.

This explanation has stopped short of delineating further varieties
of the movement-image and of an in depth analysis of the time-
image, however, its presentation has focused upon considering
essential elements of this conceptualisation and why Deleuze
privileges cinema in the 'representation' of duration as discussed by
Bergson. As explicated by Rodowick quoting Deleuze;

Its derivation of images from movement presents blocs of space-time as "a mobile
section of a Whole which changes, that it, of a duration or of a 'universal
becoming.'\footnote{Rodowick, Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine 86.}
Chapter Two

Esotericism and Theoaesthetics

And yet to perceive spirit even in inanimate matter or to strive to see, through innumerable "signatures" scattered throughout nature and discoverable in our soul, the rungs of Jacob's ladder uniting heaven and earth — this is what esotericism is concerned with, and the Greeks had already said much on the subject. In the end, it is a question of reconciling transcendence and immanence.¹

Western Esoteric traditions provide the platform for the concept of subtle matter-consciousness that this research explores.² In particular the manifestation of modern Theosophy, founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (known since her death as H.P.B.), presents a concept of subtle bodies influenced by Neo-Platonic Western Esoteric traditions, scientific reasoning (18th-19th century rationalism/evolutionism) and specific ideas adopted from Eastern religious and philosophical traditions (e.g. re-incarnation).³ This presentation of subtle bodies is particularly inviting for application to a consideration of aesthetics and subject-object interaction as Theosophy has historically had a substantial influence upon


²Wouter J. Hanegraaff provides the following summary of the historical use of the term 'Esotericism':
The adjective "esoteric" dates back to antiquity. While Aristotle is often credited with having invented the term, it was first introduced around 166 C.E. by Lucian of Samosata. "Esotericism" as a substantive however, is a relatively recent invention. It was popularised by Eliphas Levi since 1856, and was subsequently introduced into the English language by the Theosophist A.D. Sinnet in 1883. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 384.

³As discussed by Christopher McIntosh, the Theosophical society had a predecessor in a short lived cult the Théosophilantropes founded in 1796. Christopher McIntosh Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival (London: Rider and Company, 1972) 46-48.

Joscelyn Goodwin provides the definitive history of the occult groups and ideological developments that preceded and influenced the formation of Blavatsky's society in The Theosophical Enlightenment. His concluding propositions include emphasising the role Theosophy played in introducing Eastern ideas to Western Esoteric ideas into an enlightenment framework, and the subsequent development of this synthesis into 'New Age' discourse. See Joscelyn Goodwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) 379.
modernist art practices. But before embarking into a consideration of this area of theoaesthetics (and the possible sites of transcendence/immanence it may accord) and of the subsequent 'a/theoaesthetics' as developed by Mark C. Taylor, a consideration of Esoteric philosophy, its domain and constituents, is warranted.

As the foundation upon which Theosophy took shape, and therefore providing key ideological elements and a particular hermeneutics, Western Esoteric traditions colour not only Theosophy's discourse but contain within it an appropriate methodology for application and interpretation of praxis. That is, models for potential methods of application and interpretation of its texts are contained within, and are central to, the tradition itself. It is the praxis that such teachings proffer that will be employed in the consideration of contemporary art practices later in this investigation.

Esotericism in contemporary context

Western esoteric philosophy — as Wouter J. Hanegraaff points out — has historically been the victim of academic marginalisation, a point also made in the Preface to Access to Western Esotericism by Antoine Faivre, who writes:

Since the Academy, by definition, is curious about everything, it could have long ago established both a curriculum and a research program devoted exclusively to esotericism. At least two obstacles stood in the way.

First of all, the transdisciplinary character of esotericism is hardly compatible with the separation of the disciplines, which resemble well labelled jars lining a pharmacy shelf. In the past few years, it is true, the use of communicating vessels has somewhat modified the situation, although genuine transdisciplinarity is still often confused with casual pluri- or interdisciplinarity. The second reason relates to the first. Vast areas of our Western cultural history, obscured a priori by theological or epistemological positions, were deliberately omitted, abandoned to the curiosity of eccentrics or even cranks and to capricious handling, which only increased the distrust of serious, albeit somewhat prejudiced investigators and established thinkers vis-à-vis this peripheral domain. The distrust is so pervasive

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Roger Lipsey, An Art of Our Own The Spiritual in Twentieth Century Art (Boston and Shaftesbury: Shambala, 1988).

5 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 384-470. See also Joscelyn Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment.

6 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 381-383.
that many scholars are still wondering what esotericism is or whether it truly merits study.\footnote{Antoine Faivre, \textit{Access to Western Esotericism} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) ix. Antoine Faivre holds the Chair in 'History of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe' at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Religious Studies Section, Sorbonne, Paris. It is the only one of its type in the world, being founded in 1965. In the same preface cited above Faivre draws attention to a Hermetic Academy, founded in the USA in 1980, by Professor Robert McDermott, as being the only similar university based program he is familiar with. Specialist schools have been developed in relationship to particular groups of adherents aligned to specific teachings clumped under the term esoteric. For example, The University of the Seven Rays (based on the work of Blavatsky and Alice A. Bailey), offers a Master of Science in Esotericism (M.S.E) and Ph.D in Esoteric Studies. The degree programs however receive no accreditation recognised by conventional University programs. This University operates in Europe, America, Russia, New Zealand and Australia teaching via correspondence, Internet and through visiting lecture series and conferences.}

Esotericism is then, a discipline (theoretical and practical) being 'rediscovered' (or perhaps 'uncovered' is more fitting term) by academic institutions in the latter part of the twentieth century. As a parallel philosophical, ideological and spiritual history that has tangentially flowed alongside and within Western and, some scholars argue Eastern philosophy, esotericism's transdisciplinary contents belong everywhere and nowhere in particular. Such a subject matter can be understood to create a harmonious interface with methodologies of investigation that support a process orientated approach to subjectivity.

Since post-structural theorists like Michel Foucault (1926 - 1984) have highlighted and critiqued contemporary social organisation from the perspective of power relations — specifically the circulation of power through carceral grids or networks, with the sites of overlapping and places of slippage delineating the abnormal or 'other' that undermine the regulating netlike structure created by dominant institutions — 'postmodern'\footnote{'Postmodern' as used herein refers to a multiplicity of discourses across divergent disciplines that are not homogeneous in any real sense except that they have been developed in the later half of the twentieth century and tend to place themselves in opposition to, or define themselves against the tenets of modernism. The term is used with the full weight of this 'movements' multiplicities and diversity of projects and postulates in mind. It is in no way suggested that it is a unified project of definite outline and constituents. In fact the inverse is assumed.} theorists have become increasingly obsessed with shedding light upon these sites or 'other' spaces (the light of reason nonetheless!). That which falls outside the net, outside the narrative, that which inhabits the fissures, where identities obscure, these so called border spaces, and 'in-between' places are the very fluid ground of contemporary theory. Considered thus, 'otherness' is paradoxically no longer other, but central to the diverse and developing theories collectively termed
'postmodern.' In such a milieu, it is then not surprising, that esotericism is receiving renewed attention, and that its relegation to the sideline of religious studies is being expanded to include wider concerns of the humanities disciplines. Esotericism is not, however, 'new' in its influence on the development of mainstream Western philosophy and science, in fact one could argue that practices that constitute the forms of esotericism in Antiquity — Hermetic, Gnostic, Chaldean, alchemic, astrological — were originally conceived as scientific (the 'traditional sciences') and then as primarily philosophical when empirical evidence pushed them from a praxis into metaphysical speculation.

On the horizon of contemporary theory all disruptive, hidden, transdisciplinary currents that embody an otherness recognisable (from a de-centred centre) and discussable within the constraints of the dominant language are a boon. The study of Esotericism may be approached from within these bounds, but to do so is to risk robbing it of its inherent mystery, deflating symbology and metaphor rich in significance into narratives as flat as late nineties optimism. To write about esotericism, and not to engage in its practice, is to present only one side of the coin. For esotericism, like forms of Eastern religion, embodies a praxis, a method of training the mind-body to 'read' the texts in perceptive states which are not exclusively rational. The development of such intuitive, imaginative states is a training, an initiation process, from which flat signs metamorphose into three dimensional (and Theosophists would argue four dimensional) signifiers, whilst the practice of de-coding, of understanding and intuiting is continually developed. Static objects live and transmogrify by interaction, the page becomes a multi-dimensional universe — it is a quixotic mirror, reflecting the interpreter and their tools, with no stasis available, a form of metaphysics in action that may appear in many modes, the most common being the written, visual and aural.

Consequently, on many fronts the nature of the academic thesis and traditional academic study do not entirely suit excursions into the Esoteric (and most sites of investigation into the amorphous postmodern discourses). And it must be presupposed on the behalf

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9Such distinctions between theory and practice are also evident within the Esoteric corpus itself. For example, Brian P. Copenhaver discusses the distinctions developed by Walter Scott, André-Jean Festugière, Garth Fowden and other translators and commentators of the Corpus Hermeticum between 'technical' and 'philosophical' (to use Fowden's terminology) Hermetica. That is, between discourses containing reference to magical, alchemical, astrological practices and those that only present theoretical argument (or at least can be considered to do so). See

of the reader that the presentation of Esoteric ideas herein has resulted from both theoretical and practical, rational and intuitive/imaginative research on the part of the author, that an attempt has been made to honour the integral nature of esoteric disciplines in undertaking such research methodology.

It is for this reason that the praxis of engaging not only theoretically but physically, phenomenally with temporal (contemporary) art work is an essential element in the development of the ideas herein, and equally unfortunate that such experiences must be for convention's sake reduced to a language which forever betrays the multi-levelled complexity of the phenomenal senses and the possibility of the supra-sensual.

Esotericism per se

To invoke the term esoteric is to dually locate an exoteric: the within and the without, the exposed and the covert. "Esoteric" is generally assumed to mean secret or hidden but, as Faiivre points out, not all esoteric discourses are passed through the cloisters of initiation to the chosen few.  

This has never been more the case than in contemporary society with the advent of the 'New Age' (generally understood as emerging during the 1970's), its mass marketing, and re-presentation of every Esoteric, Eastern, Hermetic, and Occult theory possible. The plethora of discourses available to the layperson is enormous. What does remain veiled, however, is the interpretation of such discourses. It is the training and development of intuitional and imaginative facilities of perception that characterises the key to studying and unveiling an Esoteric hermeneutic. Methods for interpretation are of course also offered up and writ large amongst the New Age popular titles, for example Shakti Gawain's Creative Visualisation (1979) has been in reprint since 1982, and remains on the best seller lists. In brief, it is a manual for the development of visualisation techniques for meditation practice. Considering texts such as this, in one sense both the tools and the teachings are widely available. What allows the esoteric to escape mass consumption and regurgitation is speed.

For consumerism instant satisfaction is requisite — however Esoteric philosophies and development of intuitional, imaginative capacities required for the interpretation of such discourses need a physical-mental discipline that requires time to develop. No doubt the mass consumption of esoterically derived spiritualism will

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10 Faiivre, Access 5.

11 'New Age' being declared as early as the 1920's—and in fact derives many of its underlaying postulates from Djwal Khul (Tibetan Master) recorded by Alice A. Bailey, during the same decade. See Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 95.
proffer adequate and meaningful insights to the partaker. However
the type of meaning gleaned will be directly reflective of the
perceptive sensitivity and accumulated depth of relationship that
the investigator has established with the selected material. This is
perhaps one way in which the Esoteric will continue to be veiled by
degree of interpretive skill.

It is this perspective — to view the texts not as given containers of
information, accessible through reasoned logic, but rather as
encoded and multi-levelled means of communication that maintain
no stasis, but communicate deeper and deeper levels of
understanding of the ground of being, the nature of the universe —
that lends Esotericism and its relationship to a bodily knowledge,
one that is lived through both body and mind. Esoteric models for
interpretation are premised upon the ever mobile characteristics of
both viewer and object. So whilst 'Esotericism'— seen collectively
as a body of knowledge — may be placed as 'other' in relation to
Western philosophical cannon, its nebulous boundaries and
ideological morphism blurs the demarcation of clear perimeters.

Faivre, discussing modern Hermeticism notes that a:

Hermesian reading of the world is necessarily a plural reading. The caduceus of
Hermes is plural because it is constituted of a bipolarity whose symbolism reflects
back to a ternary.¹²

Perhaps Hermes can be considered to exert influence over the entire
postmodern project, with plurality, multiplicity and diversity the
paradoxically unifying elements among its diverse practitioners and
products. A Hermesian influence is certainly acknowledged as
conditioning this paper, with amorphous and fluid boundaries
being attributed to the interaction of subject-object.

The mediator Hermes-Mercurius plays here an essential role inasmuch as either
with him or by him the complete break between subject and object disappears.
Unification is brought about by the mediation of an energy principle that is seen to
assure order in the cosmos and unification of the subject.¹³

The 'unification' brought about by Hermes' action as mediator (the
mythological governor of relations and crossroads, amongst other
things) is not achieved via linear or reductive methodologies but, as
Faivre outlines in the constituents for identification of esoteric
thought per se, with an underlying premise to consider Esotericism
as a frame of mind:

¹² Antoine Faivre, "The Children of Hermes and the Science of Man" in Hermeticism
and the Renaissance; Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe.

¹³ Faivre, "The Children of Hermes" 433.
We should consider it a frame of mind, a style of imaginary, through which circulates a tincture permeating diverse materials to give a specific hue.14

Following on from Faivre's view, this paper will indeed adopt the inherently paradoxical Hermesian methodology.

Distinguishing the Esoteric — Faivre's rule of thumb

Faivre postulates a series of characteristics that, in his opinion, need to be present in order to ascribe the term esoteric to any given discourse. The following short extracts outline Faivre's divisions and characteristics in his own locution.

Correspondences:

Symbolic and real correspondences (there is no room for abstractions here!) are said to exist amongst all parts of the universe both seen and unseen. ("As above so below").... These correspondences, considered more or less veiled at first sight, are, therefore, intended to be read and deciphered. The entire universe is a huge theatre of mirrors, an ensemble of hieroglyphs to be decoded. Everything is a sign; everything conceals and exudes mystery; every object hides a secret.15

Living Nature:

The cosmos is complex, plural, hierarchical — as we have just seen with the idea of correspondence. Accordingly, Nature occupies an essential place. Multilayered, rich in potential revelations of every kind, it must be read like a book. The word magia, so important in the Renaissance imaginary, truly calls forth the idea of a Nature, seen, known and experienced as essentially alive in all its parts, often inhabited and traversed by a light or a hidden fire circulating through it. Thus understood, the "magic" is simultaneously the knowledge of the networks of sympathies and antipathies that link the things of Nature and the convert operation of these bodies of knowledge.16

Imagination and Mediations:

The two notions are linked and complimentary. The idea of correspondence presumes already a form of imagination inclined to reveal and use mediations of all kinds, such as rituals, symbolic images, mandalas, intermediary spirits... It is the imagination that allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols and images to develop a gnosis, to penetrate the hieroglyphs of Nature, to put the theory of correspondences into active practice and to uncover, to see, and to know the mediating entities between Nature and the divine world.17

14 Faivre, Access 19.

15 Faivre, Access 10.

16 Faivre, Access 11.

17 Faivre, Access 12.
Experience of Transmutation:

Transformation would hardly be an adequate term because it does not signify the passage from one plane to another, nor the modification of the subject in its very nature. "Transmutation," a term borrowed from alchemy in our context, seems more appropriate. It should be understood also as "metamorphosis." It consists in allowing no separation between knowledge (gnosis) and inner experience, or intellectual activity and active imagination if we want to turn lead into silver and silver into gold.18

In addition to these four core elements, Faivre delineates two 'relative' conditions; the Praxis of Concordance and Transmission:

This shows up in a consistent tendency to try and establish common denominators between two different traditions, or even more, among all traditions, in the hope of obtaining an illumination, a gnosis, of superior quality.19

Emphasis on transmission implies that an esoteric teaching can or must be transmitted from master to disciple following a preestablished channel, respecting a previously marked path.20

From this list an emphasis on activity is clearly marked, the activity of acquiring gnosis, the activity of nature, the activity of the imagination in deciphering the multiplicity of symbols of divinity. In particular, attention needs to be drawn toward Faivre's highlighting of a particular style of imagination to achieve activation of these characteristics. Delineated by a leading authority on the religion and culture of Islam, Henry Corbin, mundus imaginalus is identified by Faivre as a faculty 'of the soul' that allows for perceptive relations to be established between the divine and the individual via the utilisation of intermediaries. In this "invisible" realm of mundus imaginalus Faivre argues that the "eye of flesh" can "not alone give access" to the intermediary realms.21 It is this creative imagination that is understood as a visionary faculty that enables 'understanding' of multiple meanings to be comprehended. As a faculty of the mind, the creative imagination is distinguished by Faivre from the 'imaginary,' understood to refer to myths and symbols that permeate discourses, consciously or not.22

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18 Faivre, Access 13.
19 Faivre, Access 14.
20 Faivre, Access 14.
21 Faivre, "Introduction 1, "Modern Esoteric Spirituality xvii-xviii.
The emphasis on activity presents processuality (as outlined in the previous chapter) as marked amongst the fundamental basis of the criteria. In fact, it will be argued that esotericism in general, and modern Theosophy in particular, embrace an ontology premised upon process metaphysics. The core elements of 'Living nature' and 'Correspondences' point directly to such a conclusion, as well as being influential upon the particular philosophy of nature, especially popular in Germany during the Romantic Era — Naturphilosophie — that in turn influenced Theosophical, Bergsonian and, through the re-activation of Spinoza, Deleuzian texts.

This emphasis on nature is a concern that was also linked to aesthetics. One only needs to think of the 'Sublime' as discussed by Kant and depicted by Caspar David Friedrich, that is carried into modernism as an elastic aesthetic quality stretched onto abstract practices — notably Barnett Newman's — in an effort to attribute meaning and therefore value. The aesthetic representations of nature become themselves a mediating imaginary, a gnosis awaiting interpretation.

The ephemeral condition of 'living nature,' its physical processes of increase and decrease, ecological networks of interdependence, direct attention to the temporal nature of its individual 'symbols' and the repetitive (cyclic) nature of its types, presenting life as transitory and time as infinite. Thus time's passage, duration, can be identified as an essential element of 'living nature' and as a particular focus for contemplation upon esoteric concepts of relations between subject and object.

Wouter Hanegraaff makes a criticism of Faivre's characterisation in light of the active sense integral to its characteristics. Noting that the methodology of identifying core elements within works does not allow for the transformation and change of either the identified concepts or the introduction of new principles, he argues that:

It would seem to imply that, in principle, no new development of the tradition which began in the Renaissance period can possibly lead to the emergence of new characteristics. A 16th century worldview is presented as the defining norm; and further development can never lead to more than the addition, at the very most, of further non-intrinsic elements. However, one might object that such new additions might eventually become so important that they be regarded as intrinsic elements of the new development.

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24 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 401.
The categories that Faivre selects as identifying the esoteric are assumed as fixed by Hanegraaff, who argues that these traditions are contemporary and therefore open to the creation of new defining tenets as they develop. The fixed nature of Faivre's identification kit does not incorporate the potential for new delineating principles to develop. However, Hanegraaff's reading can also be considered as a narrow reading of Faivre's system, that, although identifying shared features of Esoteric discourse, does not necessarily exclude developments of these features. As these are proposed as conceptual characteristics, the interpretation and exemplification of such characteristics are necessarily open to multiple readings and usage. As such, they continue to develop and be adapted to suit differing agendas, as the concepts themselves cannot be foreclosed.

Hanegraaff also illustrates how Faivre distinguishes occult sciences (astrology, magic etc. and Christian esotericism) as distinct from the field of Esotericism considered from a historical and theoretical perspective to which his methodology of characteristics is suited. In contradistinction to earlier methodologies proposed by Faivre, the latter no longer includes characteristics that would allow for the more practical undertakings represented by the terms 'occult' and 'spiritualism,' that engaged the popular imagination of the West so forcefully in the 17-18th century to be considered as 'esoteric' in his utilisation of the term. In Hanegraaff's words, the methodological elements that previously allowed such a formulation "seem[s] to have vanished from his later definition." Part of Hanegraaff's project in the aforementioned text is to introduce Reformation "spiritualism" and the practical occult sciences as an additional factor in the identification of esoteric practices, as well as (and this is centrally important for Hanegraaff's argument) an essential element required to create a methodology through which the New Age religion may be interpreted.

Such a consideration is also useful herein, as the practical participatory disciplines of the esoteric (generally termed 'occult sciences') will be shown to provide examples of frameworks that create methodologies able to influence the development of states of creative imagination and intuition that in turn effect the 'subject's' interaction with the 'object' of aesthetic experience. That is, the physical body (and its non-sensory extensions) will perceive relations between subject-object not apparent to the general mode of visual perception used in every day life through practices central to the deciphering of esoteric script (experimentation, interpretation, meditation, creation). By choosing to focus upon a temporal script,
the commonly perceived activity of the substances under 'surveillance' will mirror the covert fluidity of the 'viewing subject.'

Theosophy

Since the eighteenth century at least, the term theosophy (from theos — "God" and sophia — "wisdom") has been employed in a similar sense as the term esotericism, to signify a hermeneutic — an interpretive method of the divine. One however, that not only encompasses the relationship of the individual to the divine, but also considers the ontological and cosmological underpinnings of such relationships.

Theosophy opens esotericism to the entire universe and by the same token renders possible a philosophy of nature.

A form of gnosis is recognised as contained within the universe and the individual (and indeed their interaction) that constitutes an intended purpose, that is illuminated to the seeker via imagination and meditation.

The Theosophical Society, as founded by H.P.B., sought to encourage the development of theosophers through three-fold objectives (the number three — the already discussed ternary of Hermes — holding substantial religious and occult significance):

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour,

To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.

To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

As a 'child' of its time, Theosophical literature is masculinely gendered to an alarming degree, which is ironic considering the central role played by women within the society, and indeed those women's roles in wider emancipation issues and activities.

Central to the foundations of the disparate occult groups including the Theosophical Society in particular, is the idea of a philosophia perennis (perennial wisdom). This concept presupposed a

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27 Faivre, Access 23-32.

28 Faivre, Access 24.

29 Adopted by the Theosophical Society in 1896.

30 This term is attributed to Leibniz, although Faivre dates the concept to the sixteenth century with the work of Agostino Steuco. Faivre, The Eternal Hermes 97.
developing tradition of teachers of a universal wisdom, that may include representatives of deity status or individuals aligned esoterically with differing religious faiths but, considered esoterically, their doctrines continue the same spiritual teachings.\textsuperscript{31} Such a belief could be proposed as influential in the development of comparative religion as a field of academic study and certainly it laid the conceptual path for Blavatsky’s early mappings of Eastern ideas onto Western esoteric frameworks.

That the Tradition is conceived as continually unfolding — and part of this process is the deciphering of the signs and symbols of the physical universe — creates a sympathetic link to scientific investigation into natural phenomena. It has been argued by many authors, including Hanegraaff, that Theosophy adopted the terminology of Modern Science in an effort to distinguish itself from Christianity and materialist doctrines.\textsuperscript{32} Henri Bergson also adopted scientific terminology to elucidate his philosophical views on ‘creative evolution’ and perception, as in the famous sugar cube meditation to evoke one example.\textsuperscript{33} Therefore, science in its most materialist form provided the social and cultural frames against which Theosophy defined itself, whilst embracing its terminology in order to legitimate (in a rational sense) their religious perspective.

This perspective is infused with what Arthur O. Lovejoy termed the ‘temporalization of the Great Chain of Being,’ occurring in the Eighteenth century and fuelled by Romantic ideology. Lovejoy notes how the complete and static chain of being — an idea founded upon Platonic metaphysical theology — was animated via the influence of philosophers including Hegel, Schiller and Shelling to produce a ‘program of nature, which is being carried out gradually and exceedingly slowly in the cosmic history.’\textsuperscript{34} This becoming in Theosophical frameworks affects all matter-consciousness, and Hanegraaff attributes Blavatsky’s particular interpretation of Karma and reincarnation as having its origins in this “temporalization of the Great Chain of Being,” and also notes that the idea of historical

\textsuperscript{31}Faivre gives the following genealogy of teachers of the ‘Tradition’ as being common to those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: “Enoch, Abraham, Noah, Zoroaster, Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, the Brahmins, the Druids, David, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Sibyls.” Faivre, The Eternal Hermes 97.

\textsuperscript{32}Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 480; 443/449; and Godwin, The Theosophical Enlightenment 307.


progress as evolutionary development embraced by the Theosophical Society was not a general tenet of 'traditional' Esotericism prior to this period.\textsuperscript{35}

Theosophy regards change and process as the indispensable instruments whereby the Real becomes actualised in the world and thus can be realized.\textsuperscript{36}

When Nous or the Divine Mind, (that is, 'energy' which directs, creates and constitutes all forms is consciousness) is manifested on the physical level of Theosophy’s septenary based cosmology, it is matter-consciousness.\textsuperscript{37} The physical universe is activated by the Logos and is both intelligent and intelligible. Such a conceptualisation brings into harmonious play the metaphysical distinctions of being and its contra, becoming. Theosophists equate an ideal Reality with a timeless archetypal world whilst this 'idea' is activated and actualised within the physical world via dynamic processes. It is less a founding either/or but rather an inclusive both/and. Faivre discusses this refusal to pit being against becoming as indicative of esotericism in a more collective sense.

It does not mean placing Being and Becoming back to back, the simple and the complex, the One and the multiple, nor giving in to the dialectics of dualising and reabsorbing ... but to think that everything, as Western esotericism has always known, takes place in an ensemble of forces opposed in a living tension.\textsuperscript{38}

The concept of being reflects the macrocosm of the absolute, whilst becoming reflects the manifesting energies (of which everything is constituted) as symbolised by Hermes’ Caduceus.

Symmetry discovered via contemplation of correspondences is a strong aspect of this ideology, not only via celestial anthropomorphism but also with symbolic forms. Geometric and numerical abstractions and musical analogies, inspired by Pythagorean and Platonic ideas of harmonic order are understood to reflect universal law. This particular practice and belief has had a far reaching influence in the development of the arts. In particular modernist formalist abstraction can be seen as the result of a search for pure immanence in the purity of form.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{35}Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture} 463-472.


\textsuperscript{37} "The manner in which the one becomes three (while remaining itself one) unfolds by natural progression into seven (a,b,c,ab,ac,bc,abc)." Sellon & Weber, "Theosophy and The Theosophical Society" 323.

\textsuperscript{38}Faivre, \textit{Access} 45.
\end{footnotesize}
Such a program of unity-in-diversity and struggle to find the counterpoint between being and becoming so often set against one another, seems contrary to interpretations of modernist aesthetic projects inspired by Theosophy (and maintained by a theoaesthetic).

Mark C. Taylor discusses both the linking of aesthetic and religious ideology beginning with the Jena group (including Herder, Goethe, Schliermacher, Schiller, Novalis and Schelling) and Theosophy's position within this history, with particular reference to the influence of Hegel upon its discourse. Under the title *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture and Religion*, Taylor discusses Theosophy's influence upon non-objective abstraction (disfiguring) and this perceived movement of negation employed to render the divine perceptible via the purity of its forms.

The will-to-abstraction is a will-to-purity, which in turn, is a will-to-immediacy.³⁹

The influence Theosophy exercised on the founders of modern art and architecture is so great that it is impossible to comprehend their work without an understanding of its basic tenets.⁴⁰

The reductionist program undertaken by avant garde movements of modernism (as depicted by conventional 'art history') are read to have continually sought to represent essential 'being.' However, when focus moved from this more 'spiritual' impulse to consideration of 'pure' form and colour, the result was a flat formalism, the type championed by Clement Greenberg.⁴² Being reduced to an essential materiality the aesthetic was no longer infused with correspondent analogical thought. This program of abstraction and reduction was reflected ultimately in the malaise of failed utopias that now characterises modernism.


⁴⁰ Taylor, *Disfiguring* 52.


Following on from tracing this collapse due to the failure of non-objectivity (born of a Theaesthetic impulse), Taylor then moves forward to posit an A/Theaesthetic, which involves in his words, "an ethic of resistance in which irreconcilable differences are repeatedly negotiated." The borderlines drawn by Taylor re-map the ambiguous modernist - postmodernist divisions, and likewise his creation of an A/Theaesthetics relies on the preceding Theaesthetics as postmodernism relies on modernism for both its existence and title. That is, as dual terms A/Theology and postmodernism are essentially defined and created by the preceding ideological constructs from which they seek to distinguish themselves. Both sets of terms are ultimately caught in a dyadic relationship that refuses rest, resolution or cohesion. Such dichotomous positions attribute a static objectivity to modernism's search for purity of form, reflecting a metaphysics of being whilst the polymorphous projects and irreconcilable nature of postmodern meta-narratives reflect a infinite movement of becoming. It would seem that Theosophy's cosmology conceiving being-becoming as inextricably inherent in each other has been dislodged via the de-spiritualisation of modernity's search for ultimate essences via visual form. That is the abstract projects of Modernism, understood as being influenced by Theosophy, are characterised as searching for universal beings (static) whilst the multiple tributaries of postmodernity can be considered to reflect the infinite possibilities of becoming (fluid). The active being-becoming relation created by correspondent thought basic to Theosophy has been lost in the reductive process of modernism itself. From one perspective A/Theaesthetics can be seen as an attempt to re-introduce this relational emphasis.

Taylor realises that the positing of an A/Theaesthetic as a direct opposition to Theaesthetics "repeats [the] binary or dialectical structure that Theaesthetics presupposes" but seeks to avoid such dyadic positioning by recourse to A/theology providing a position (that is not a position) between the transcendent program of purist abstraction and the immanent satiation of pop art and popular culture. It is described in the following terms:

Thus a/theaesthetics does not break with theaesthetics in order to introduce something that is supposed to be totally new. To the contrary, a/theaesthetics borrows artistic strategies from the theaesthetic tradition to recall something that is terribly old.... A/theology explores the space between the alternatives that define the Western ontotheological tradition....

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43 Taylor, Disfiguring 318.

44 Taylor, Disfiguring 316.

45 Taylor, Disfiguring 316.
The strategies discussed by Taylor, the undoing of theoaesthetics from within by figuring what it leaves unfigured, relies heavily on deconstructionist paradigms and gap-inhabiting moves synonymous with post-modernism. It is the inability to distinguish A/theology programs from what can be understood as postmodernism's collective agenda, that positions A/Theoaesthetics in a dichotomous relationship to Theoaesthetics (modernism), despite Taylor's awareness of the danger and moves to circumnavigate dyadic relationships,

A third term is needed to negotiate this coupling, to begin to speak outside the dualism delineated by Taylor, for it seems that A/Theoaesthetics can only speak from within the poles. Such a position is not nearly as problematic if the poles themselves are conceptualised as fluid, rather than static, markers. Such an orientation is introduced in the third chapter of this first section, titled 'Sunnyata' which introduces and explicates a position of viewing object-subject relations from Japanese philosophical traditions, which can be also viewed of as indicative of a process approach towards matter-spirit. This involves a radical de-centering of the subject, in order for conceptualisation to be removed from Western frames of dichotomous references. Such a process approach to decentralisation is ascribed by Taylor (somewhat glibly) to the practice of A/theoaesthetics:

Beginning never begins and ending never ends. Thus, all time is the meantime of the always already, and all space is the nonsite of the between that is nowhere. Forever underway in the absence of the Way, every arrival is a departure, and every location a dis-location.  

Before moving on however, it is useful to note some seminal points where Theology and aesthetics have been conjoined as marked by Taylor. Such a historical tracing is useful, because it answers questions as to why and how the expectation for artistic pursuits to be aligned with and indeed explicate religious or spiritual goals and purposes originated in Western post-Enlightenment consciousness. Commencing with Schleiermacher's views on the interrelationship between religion and 'artistic awareness,' Taylor notes:

The insistence on the close relation between religion and artistic awareness reflects a common eighteenth-century tendency to associate aesthetics with perception and sensation instead of reason and conceptual thought. Religion, however, is not just any sensation but involves a unique intuition in which the "original" unity of subjectivity and objectivity is apprehended. 

46 Taylor, Disfiguring 319.

47 Taylor, Disfiguring 22.
This returns us to Faivre's words that opened this chapter, noting Esotericism's concern with reconciling immanence and transcendence, the subject and the object. As noted by Taylor, for Schleiermacher the divine and the human meet in the 'creative activity' of the imagination (as previously proposed by Faivre). Such an imagination is distinct from the category of the Transcendent as devised by Kant, or the Transcendental Idealism of Schelling, which were both devised as bridges between ontologically distinct matter-consciousness.

Taylor also discusses how Hegel's program for aesthetic education was very influential on the writings of Blavatsky. In short, the impulse to knowledge (gnosis) via aesthetic experience and education, as proposed by Hegel, provided modern Theosophy with its teleological perspective. As Taylor writes:

The threefold rhythm articulated in Hegel's philosophy — unity, loss/fragmentation, and return to unity — constitutes the structural foundation of all Theosophical systems. In other words, philosophical theoaesthetics and Theosophy are formally indistinguishable. Moreover, philosophical idealism and Theosophical spirituality agree that the telos of the psychocosmic process is the discovery of the implicit identity of the human and divine. In view of such profound similarities, it is possible to understand Theosophy as a popularized version of Hegelian theoaesthetics.48

In one sense, the 'New Age' can be understood as embracing Theosophical ambitions. Rather than aesthetic pursuits however, it is the new sciences that are being grafted onto, and considered implicit to, cosmological and individual development. The creation of such discourses is an increasingly flourishing profession, and an often cited program for universal renewal (optimism/evolutionism). The idea that it all fits together, unity-indiversity — the cosmic jigsaw puzzle — and the search for the elusive pieces, whether through scientific development, mediations and interpretation of 'ancient' spiritual discourses, the creation of a new synthesis of the discourses — are all re-capitulations of modern Theosophy's program. The contemporary social surface is, in many ways, a crude rendering of modern utopic visions spurred by millennial fervour, however on another level the 'New Age' offers sites where the dialectic of opposites, the esoteric and exoteric, the modern and the postmodern, the transcendent and immanent collide and interpenetrate in our everyday lives. Noticeably, the dominance of the aesthetic as a utopian force has not been maintained but, rather, science has been cast in a utopian modernist robe. Perhaps a Theoscience or A/theoscience? a 'New Age' paradigm?

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48 Taylor, Disfiguring 54.
The project of Theosophy and the revival/continuation of its program in contemporary 'New Age' thought can be viewed as indicative of its own original positioning between the exoteric scientific and the esoteric spiritual, with its re-capitulation late this century suspended between technological globalisation and the proposed New Age. Theosophy's foundations supported both ontological being and becoming, so to it can be understood to reflect both the theoesthetic and the a/theoesthetic, embracing modernist paradigms whilst at the same time annulling them from within through its recourse to processuality and esoteric interpretive methodologies.

It seems that there would be more people today to take theosophy seriously because our epoch considers ever more seriously the possibility of a connaturalty of our spirit and the universe. In other words, we do not exclude the possibility that some of our images reflect hidden structures of this universe and that the great founding myths correspond to them.... Thus it remains that the theosophic glance can be extraordinarily fecund, counter balancing dualisms and ideologies of all kinds.... Thanks to theosophy also, the fragmented, splintered "multi-verse" becomes the universe once more, a world bearing meaning and composed of living pluralities.49

Summary

The purpose of the previous section has been three-fold (of course!). Firstly to elucidate the nature of esotericism, provide parameters for the understanding of its meaning and scope, and, most importantly, to establish it as a frame of mind that will be activated in latter considerations of contemporary art practices. Secondly, it sought to briefly locate Theosophy within the larger history of Esotericism, and provide the basic premises of its discourse that support a concept of the body that will be elucidated in the next chapter. Thirdly, it aimed at introducing the interrelations between aesthetics and theology, that is the historical links between concepts of aesthetic experience and ideas of transcendence and immanence.

Although Theosophy is identified as the point of departure for these considerations, ideas integral to twentieth century process philosophers (Bergson), Romantic philosophers/German Naturphilosophies, and 19-20th century evolutionists (and many more) conspire to lead one into a garden of theoretical delights, from which no exit is possible. The similar hue of these theories, visible from tangential angles, tells no linear story of development. A typical history, premised upon staged influence from one to other is undermined by debates about origins, diverse manifestations, simultaneous occurrences in different geographic locations and a

49Faivre, Access 32. Please note that 'theosophy' used in the context of this quote does not refer directly to the Theosophical society but rather the form of gnosis contained within the universal and cosmological relationships to the individual. Such signs are 'unveiled' by contemplative practices.
rampant cross-fertilisation and recapitulation of ideas that results in a truly trans-disciplinary exploration. Therefore, the nature of this paper will be to oscillate between bodies of thought, utopias and dystopias. Processuality remains a common element and whether spiritual or physical origins are tied to this notion of flow, movement, change depends entirely on the thinker. It is, therefore, a conceptual link, a style of view shared by these bodies of thought. To translate this from a frame of mind into a frame of perception is to consider perceptive schemas other than the ocular. As a modern development of Western Esoteric philosophy Theosophy re-activates the idea of subtle bodies whilst striving to remain sensible to empirical science. Such a modality of being is conducive to arguing for perceptive 'senses' other than the five of corporeal physicality. Similarly, and discussed later, the contemporary philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer concepts of bodies extensively and intensively founded on ideas of process and unbounded by physical form.

Considered collectively, esotericism, process philosophy, theosophy, theoaesthetics, a/theoaesthetics, are indeed frames of mind, and styles of the imaginary that figure and re-figure (to adopt Taylor’s terms) the viewing subject’s position in relation to the cosmos, or the divine, to the great 'other,' or Universal Principle about which 'nothing can be spoken.'

To be open to ... to be opened by the bleeding trace of the wounded word is to suffer a disfiguring for which there is no cure.50

These were Taylor’s final words on the project of A/theology. By adopting a perspective in which the solidity of the subject and object were not accepted a priori, but rather as durations of stasis amongst a continual flow, the melodramatic tone would be robbed from his angst tinged declaration.

Why is to be opened, necessarily to bleed, with its connotations of loss of life force? Why does such disfiguring need to be cured?

Perhaps the only dis-ease (inharmonious relation) is the practice of figuring subjects and objects as ontologically distinct. According to alternate conceptualisations (such as the esoteric) that propose matter-consciousness as ontologically similar, subjects and objects are inherently open and the relations of interpenetration (figuring-disfiguring) are the very nature of their existence. As Esoteric traditions have maintained, the perception of such exchanges requires a particular frame of mind, a way of viewing the universe that activates the mundus imaginalus.

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50Taylor, Disfiguring 316.
Chapter Three

Sunyata - emptiness/openness - as Ultimate Reality

Taylor's wound bleeds, because its conceptualisation incorporates fear. To be opened in such a manner that subject and object stop meaning or, phrased alternatively, interpenetrate to such an extent that individuality, 'subjectivity' is threatened, is to encounter an all-consuming altarity, that cannot even be defined as alterity, because it swallows such distinctions. It is a place in which the individualising mark, the ego, the very sense of a self constructed upon relationship to an 'other' forgoes its power. Such resignation of superiority, such an act of humility has got to signal the nebulous constitution of boundaries. One necessarily bleeds if one remains addicted (even subtly) to the identification of self through any external referent whatsoever. This is the blood of borders (identification/substance) leaking away, and to follow its passage is to open onto the field of sunyata.

Sunyata is one form of the Sanskrit root Sunya that signifies 'the void,' the 'empty,' the 'open,' 'nothing,' emptiness,' 'openness,' 'nothingness.' It refers to the Buddhist state of ultimate reality, described by Zen scholar Masao Abe as distinguished from a Judaeo-Christian transcendent ultimate Reality ('God'/ 'Heaven-Hell') in the following manner:

It is not that ultimate Reality stands in front of us, but that we are standing in the ultimate Reality. The ultimate Reality is not an object to be reached, but the ground which is unobjectifiable. Hence it is without form. Sunyata precisely indicates this unobjectifiable ultimate Reality.²

Abe traces the influence and development of sunyata as an ontological concept back to the Second Century A.D with the 'middle path' (Madhyamika doctrine³) developed by Nāgārjuna⁴

2Masao Abe, Zen Comparative Studies, Part Two of a Two-Volume Sequel to Zen and Western Thought, ed. Steven Heine (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997)147.
3Also called the Shunyavada school of Mahayana Buddhism.
4Nagarjuna (100-200) was an Indian philosopher whose principle writings include Twenty Verses on the Great Vehicle; Treatise on the Middle Doctrine; and Treatise on Relativity. (Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 504).
from the preceding central precept of Mahayana Buddhism dependant origination.

In Nāgārjuna all value judgments arise from vikalpa, human thinking, which is a discriminating, bifurcating, and dualistic way of thinking. To him, this vikalpa is the source of human suffering because people are attached to it and grasp discriminating and dualistic thoughts as true and real. If we are free from vikalpa and awaken to the emptiness of dualistic discrimination, then we are emancipated from suffering through the realization of sunyata.5

Essentially sunyata is the 'way' or non-dual ground that is 'beyond' dualistic conceptualisation. Therefore, once again within this thesis, the English language and Nāgārjuna would argue that any language based on intellectual understanding, inadequately grafts and grasps this idea: its fundamental dyadic structure betrays the very non-dual concept that it is employed to elucidate. As Abe represents Nāgārjuna's position:

The process of human knowledge based on language is perversion. It is necessary for us to retrogress from attachment to thinking and judgment to the realm of non-discursive intuition. In so doing we face reality prior to language. This is the realm of 'emptiness.' Emptiness indicates the reality of the world in intuition apart from language; therefore, there is emancipation from suffering caused by attachment to discrimination. Accordingly, Emptiness is not only a philosophical notion, it is also a religious and soteriological one.6

Intuition is presented as the mode of understanding required to 'grasp' sunyata; similarly, as previously represented, intuition was also presented by Bergson as the mode of consciousness most able to apprehend the 'whole' or, as Deleuze describes the 'whole,' the plane of immanence. Perhaps an equivalence exists between the Deleuze-Bergson postulation of a plane of immanence and sunyata as presented by Nāgārjuna? At a fundamental level, what both conceptualisations share is the rejection of dyadic and discriminating knowledge as correctly representing the border between and therefore the very nature of subject and object. The interdependence of subject and object is central to both ideas.

To accommodate this resistance towards discriminative language, the practices and development of the Madhyamika school included methods of body-conscious cultivation aimed at overcoming dualistic and inducing intuitive thought. Before exploring specific examples of these methods however, a discursive explanation (as flawed as it is) of dependent origination will prove useful to understanding sunyata as ground of being.

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5 Abe, Zen and Comparative Studies 45.

6 Abe, Zen and Comparative Studies 46.
The doctrine of *Madhyamika* influenced in particular the Chinese Hua-Yen (*Kegon* - Japanese) Buddhism and *Chan* (Zen - Japanese) Buddhism. Both forms and their specific styles of representation of *sunyata* will be referenced later in regard to 'representing' *sunyata*. In passing however it is important to note the shared heritage of Nāgārjuna's doctrine.

Dependent origination, sometimes referred to as co-dependent origination (*Pratītya-samutpāda*) is a core element of Buddhist practice. Stressing that all life is interrelated, it negates the conceptualisation of individual self-existing. As Abe writes "Everything is mutually dependent and co-arising and co-ceasing." The realisation of this interdependence is an aspect of enlightenment as advocated by Gautama Buddha.

It was Nārājuna who gave this intuitive wisdom of emptiness a logico-philosophical foundation. And, in Nārājuna, this logico-philosophical foundation of the wisdom of emptiness was inseparably connected with the reinterpretation of the Buddha's view of co-dependent origination.

Causality — understood in a linear framework of cause and effect — is made impossible by dependent origination, as it negates the existence of any self-existing cause or a self-existing reaction. Co-dependent origination can not posit causality, because both cause and effect and interrelated having no self-existing constituents. In a often-quoted explanation Nāgārjuna uses fire to explicate co-dependent origination. In the following Abe re-presents this metaphor.

We know that fuel is the cause of fire and fire the effect of fuel. Let us now ask the further question, Which came first, fire or fuel? If we say fire came first, we face the logical absurdity of fire burning without 'fuel.' If we say fuel came first, we face the logical absurdity of identifying a cause without knowing about the effect. If we say they appeared together, then all fuels will have to be simultaneously on fire. In Nāgārjuna, dependant co-origination in the true sense is realised when the self-existent entity of each and every thing is completely negated and realized to be empty.... Fire does not empirically 'originate' in fuel. Rather, it denies the existence of any self-subsituated entity. In other words, that statement simply indicates the function of originating dependently without any independent entity. Thus we come to know that in Nāgārjuna, the realization of Emptiness is inseparably connected with the law of dependent co-origination.

Central to *sunyata* and its informing precept, dependent co-origination is an act of double negation. That is, the negation of negation, e.g. the negation of the concept of non-being (itself a

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7 Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies* 94.
8 Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies* 105.
negation of being). In this way, double negation is not nihilistic but affirmative in what Abe terms the 'absolute sense' as distinct from a relational sense.  

10 Sunyata or emptiness is realised via this same process of double negation in relation to being and non-being.

If emptiness, however, is simply distinguished from 'being-non-being' it is not true emptiness because it stands against being-non-being and thus turns into something merely called 'emptiness.' To be true emptiness, emptiness should not attach to itself and must empty itself. Only when emptiness empties itself and takes forms of being and non-being freely can it be called true emptiness.... Since emptiness as the pure activity of emptying incessantly empties everything including itself, there is nothing outside of this pure activity of emptying. Everything is included in this activity of emptiness and each, at each place and at each time, is absolutely negated as well as absolutely affirmed.  

11 This activity of emptying is understood as the 'True Self' and, as indicated in the aforementioned Abe quotations, there is no outside of this emptying process. To identify the emptying self, is to observe from the outside and therefore return to a dualistic mode of thinking.

Just as 'becoming' can embargo 'being,' but not vice versa 'emptiness' can embrace 'becoming' but not vice versa. Since becoming can embrace 'being,' 'emptiness' as the pure activity of emptying can embrace both 'being' and 'becoming.' This is realized only when the Aristotelian form of the 'subject-predicate' mode of thinking is completely overcome. Ultimate Reality is realized in the dynamic realization of emptying. However, as soon as the pure activity of emptying loses its function of self-negation, that is, negation of negation, it turns into 'emptiness' in noun form and the Ultimate Reality will be lost. Incessant self-emptying is essential to the realization of true emptiness.  

12 As illustrated by the above quotation, sunyata denotes not a fixed state of attitude or concept of being/becoming, but a practice or process of continual emptying that enables realisation in an active sense of the ultimate reality. It is to be conceived as a verb rather than noun. As such it does not either exclude or include forms, but remains free from both and therefore able to incorporate both in expression. Similarly, the attainment of Nirvana (Sanskrit), generally understood as signifying a state of absolute bliss, is understood by Nāgārjuna to also be an illusion, and therefore to experience sunyata one must not become attached to the state of nirvana but, having achieved this state of realisation, return to samsara, the cycle of existence, of desire and attachment. For Nāgārjuna, sunyata includes both realms and, as a dyadic pair, subsumes both as well. This reversibility of causation that underlies sunyata and in particular the concept dependent co-origination is

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10 Abe, Zen and Comparative Studies 107.


12 Abe, Zen and Comparative Studies 109-110.
therefore developed by Nāgārjuna to include transcendence and immanence, the sacred and secular.\textsuperscript{13}

**Alternate conceptualisations of Sunyata: Heidegger, Taylor, Deleuze**

To follow this more general account and definition of sunyata, a discussion of Newman Robert Glass's text *Working Emptiness: Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought*,\textsuperscript{14} is undertaken to acknowledge that different perceptions of sunyata exist and enable these different understandings to be considered with regard to their communication and presentation through visual art. These divergent approaches include an interpretation utilised by Mark C. Taylor and an application of Deleuze’s thought that picks up on a theme previously hinted at, that of the similarity or conducive applicability of Deleuze’s work and sunyata in relationship to the cultivation of states of body-conscious and meditation techniques. In short, the mapping of Deleuzian psycho-physical concepts onto the ontological ground of sunyata. With these particular interpretations of sunyata, an accompanying example of its application as an interpretive tool for aesthetic appreciation shall be examined.

Glass posits three readings of sunyata: ‘the working of presence,’ ‘the working of difference’ and ‘the working of essence.’ The first two readings correspond to interpretive traditions embraced and represented by Heidegger and Mark C. Taylor. Both of these scholars’ work exists in relationship to that of the Japanese Kyoto school of philosophy, whose most well-known proponent in the West was Keiji Nishitani. Comparative work between Heidegger and Nishitani has been a central domain of East-West philosophical discourse for some time, whilst Taylor can be read as approaching sunyata via a contrary reading of Nishitani.

The third interpretation proposed signifies Glass’s work of mapping Deleuzian-inspired concepts of desire and affect onto another particular interpretive tradition of sunyata, that emphasises ‘Buddha Nature’ and this is elucidated through a reading of work of Dōgen Kigen. According to Glass, the first two readings are predominant in postmodern theological and Buddhist studies.

Current work in postmodern theology and Buddhist studies, then, tends to emphasize two workings of emptiness or nothingness: the working of affirmation,

\textsuperscript{13}Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies* 100.

presence or positive (co)dependent arising and the working of negation, difference or negative (co) dependent arising.\textsuperscript{15}

In approaching his discussion of the divergent models of sunyata, Glass specifically notes his particular emphasis is not upon how "one thinks emptiness" but the "nature and function of emptiness within the thinking process" stressing that sunyata is not in itself a subject for thought, but a very part of the thought process. From the outset of Glass's methodology the concept and its practical application interpenetrate. This is reflected in Glass's selection of the verb 'work' in the delineating titles of all three models being proposed.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{The Work of Presencing}

Emptiness, as conceptualised by Heidegger and re-presented by Glass, is best understood not as a subject of thought or 'a thought' but as an 'unthought.'

The nature and functioning of this emptiness (the un-thought) determines the nature of what shall be thought-not, of course, the subject matter to which it turns, but the structure of thinking itself by which the subject matter will be organized, arranged or orientated.\textsuperscript{17}

Glass extends this interpretation of Heidegger to include the following ramification:

It will remain un-thought (not addressed by thought) because of the nature of the un-thought (the working of emptiness which conditions thought); not because one chooses not to think it, but because the thinking process itself, governed as it is by the working of a specific unthought/prethought/emptiness, precludes perceiving or formulating it.\textsuperscript{18}

This extension of Heideggerian 'unthought' exhibits a similarity to the 'third moment of materiality' delineated by Deleuze that recapitulates the work of Bergson. As a selective agency, perception has a limiting function, which utilises only what is recognised as relevant to the subject. It is a reductive faculty, selecting from the 'whole' what can be recognised or 'thought.' Anything that 'escapes' or remains 'outside' a subject's perceptual orientation remains 'unthought' (including most commonly, the framework for thought) but is also nonetheless, constitutive of the selected thought. The 'whole' from which the 'part' was selected remains implicit in the

\textsuperscript{15}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 3.

\textsuperscript{16}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 4-5.

\textsuperscript{17}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 6.

\textsuperscript{18}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 6.
creation of the 'part.' Glass's interpretation moves Heidegger's
presencing closer to a Deleuzian framework whilst also reflecting a
noted move in Heidegger's conception of nothingness, as evidenced
in a reading of Cézanne where nothing is proposed as being implicit
in things, as opposed to an earlier reading of Van Gogh where
Heidegger stressed nothing's work in creating and maintaining
borders or frames.19

Before further consideration of Glass's Deleuzian moves, the 'work
of presencing' should be delineated as a specific interpretation of
sunyata as proposed by Glass.

In the beginning of his commentary, Glass notes that several terms
are employed by Heidegger to discuss emptiness. Some delineate
products or structures, whilst others stress activity, still others reflect
an ambiguity between noun and verb, implying both uses. This
dual activity is one reason why Glass states that he chose 'presence'
as the 'umbrella' word to represent Heidegger's interpretation of
sunyata. The second reason allows Glass to position his discussion
within contemporary postmodern thought and thereby activate an
implicit discrimination from another dominant school of thought:

the postmodern critique of presence is now part of the context within which the term
"presence" has become a general term used to characterise the work of a variety of
thinkers: Husserl, Ricoeur, and Gadamer within phenomenology and hermeneutics;
Thomas J.J. Altizer in postmodern theology; and Keiji Nishitani within Buddhism
are among those who have been classified. The consistent critique of presence could
be seen as one of the defining characteristics of the postmodern theology of Mark C.
Taylor ....20

The selection of the term presence clearly allows Glass to set up a
dyadic relationship between Heidegger and Taylor whilst
simultaneously entering into wider postmodern debates.

Succinctly, presencing is understood to represent the tension
between product and process, a tension that Heidegger understood as
fundamental to thinking. For Heidegger, the opening which so
wounds Taylor allows the possibility of 'radiance' — or the 'possible
presencing of presence itself'.21 It is through thinking about that
which is prior to thought, that Heidegger posits the idea that
openness is necessarily a constituent of its definition. As Glass
notes, Heidegger proposes several different ways of approaching the

19Glass, Working Emptiness 23: cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of
and Row, 1971) 33.

20Glass, Working Emptiness 16

question of what is prior to thought, including "waiting" and meditative thinking. The openness implicit in the definition of thinking is drawn from Heidegger's discussion of "questioning" as a mode of thought, as the "piety of thinking." That is, central to the thinking process is the act of questioning in a manner sensitive to the material being used, "Questioning arises from a waiting upon that is sensitive to the next step."\(^{22}\)

Glass delineates a third approach to thinking by Heidegger that is substantiated through consideration of his hermeneutics. Simplistically paraphrased, this argument notes language as a relation between Being and beings, and that a dual nature of both 'going into being' and 'coming out' is inherent to every sentence. Again, presencing is exemplified by the tension created between oscillating noun-verb relations. It is within this relationship, that Heidegger proposes that (as explicated by Glass) "the opening is maintained and the presencing occurs."\(^{23}\)

Presencing has its origins in the tension created between world and things as they alternate between revealing and concealing. It is by attention to boundary, border, edge, difference that we let the artwork/thing work, and subject/object duality collapses (or is simply not created). The danger here is that presencing can be turned into an aesthetic experience. This happens when the play of the artwork is fixed: Being is then turned into a being and the artwork into a thing. The work of the artwork (which is the play) "opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force." It is this play that keeps thinking opening and which an aesthetic experience closes. Presencing, then, rests upon a maintenance of the play that is possible when one highlights boundary/difference. \(^{24}\)

The optimistic attitude attributed to 'opening to presencing' is keenly exemplified by Heidegger's notion of 'gift.' Glass describes it as follows:

Heidegger's nothing is not a simple void, or an absence of things, but has a specific function.... The function of the nothing of the jug (which is holding) is complemented by the function of the clay vessel (which is pouring out). These two functions intersect in the jug's gift: the pouring out of the holding.... In a general sense, when thing and nothing come together in balance (perhaps appropriately), a gift is created. The gift or work of the work of art might be seen in similar terms: a spilling out of what was once held.... Persons may be similar to Heidegger's jug. Just as the jug's gift is 'pouring out of the holding,' so too with artwork and persons. The gift of


\(^{24}\) Glass, Working Emptiness 28.
persons (perhaps best seen in the poet) is also a spilling out, or gushing forth, of the "holding" of nothingness.\textsuperscript{25}

Considering the above, Heidegger can be understood as providing an interpretation of \textit{sunyata} that views 'openness/emptiness' as offering a potentially positive poetic occasion. The 'work of presencing' is signified in a general sense by a creative metaphysical tension out of which 'spills' an apprehension of the ontological framework.

\textbf{The Work of Différance}

Mark C. Taylor proposes the following similarity between \textit{sunyata} and différance — the concept expounded by Derrida and adopted and developed by Taylor:

\textit{sunyata} [emptiness] and différance can be understood as the differential that forms and deforms all differences. These differences, paradoxically, both constitute and subvert every identity.\textsuperscript{26}

For Taylor, that which is necessary for 'something' to come into being, that which is prior to thought, or un-thought is a 'nothing,' a 'line of difference.' For Glass, the difference between Heidegger's presencing and Taylor's 'difference,' is that for Heidegger the tension or 'play' of nothing incorporates a unifying 'poetic non-duality' that aims at reconciling opposites, whilst for Taylor the spaced opened/inhabited by this nothing is depicted in more violent terms: it is a tear, a hole, a gap, all terms that carry threatening connotations within patriarchal Western discourse.\textsuperscript{27} As Glass summarises:

In Heidegger that which guides decision-making is the wish to maintain a poetic mode of presencing while in Taylor it is the recognition of the edge/rift/tear/difference which must not (or rather cannot) ever be suppressed.\textsuperscript{28}

As with his approach to Heidegger, Glass traces the development of Taylor's conceptualisation of emptiness, firstly highlighting its depiction as "an interdependent opposite of fullness," citing \textit{Deconstructing Theology} (1982) as the basis of this position, and then turning to \textit{Altarity} (1987) and \textit{Tears} (1990) as representative of emptiness as a non-dual 'crack' or 'gap.' This difference both divides and unites: it is an edge in constant transition, being drawn

\textsuperscript{25} Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 22.

\textsuperscript{26} Taylor qtd. in Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 51: Taylor "Orthodox-y Mending" \textit{Thought} 61/240 (March 1986)167.

\textsuperscript{27}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 38.

\textsuperscript{28}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 38.
and re-drawn and therefore forever eluding concrete apprehension by consciousness.

This gap, wound or difference is a negative that cannot be negated. It is unknowable, in that it forever eludes our grasp. It is forever deferred and cannot be brought to presence.\textsuperscript{29}

For Taylor the movement or 'work' of emptiness as deciphered by Glass is differentiating not unifying. The 'gap' of emptiness tears identity, and is positioned as an integral, primary constituent of self. How this acceptance of an internal 'difference' is played out within external relations is subject to scrutiny by Glass, who can find no evidence or logical necessity that requires one to create respectful relationships with the external otherness after apprehending their own internal otherness.\textsuperscript{30}

In his analysis, both Heidegger and Taylor's representations of emptiness or unthought contain an inherent split between a theoretical understanding of emptiness and a practical application of this understanding. This differs greatly from the previous account of sunyata gleaned from the work of Masao Abe, that stressed the necessary practical aspect of achieving Nirvana and therefore grasping sunyata as a distinctly mental and physical discipline. Although indicating theoretically different methods of approaching the phenomenal world, both Heidegger's and Taylor's models do not necessarily result in an ethic of action.

Viewed together the breath is split, with Heidegger representing the exhale, the 'spilling' and Taylor the inhale of otherness. They represent two different interpretations of co-dependent arising, the affirmative and negative, and as such could be understood as two sides of the same coin, two parts of the one process.\textsuperscript{31} It is the space between inhale and exhale, the still moment of 'held' breath, or the ridge between the two sides of the coin, that re-presents the threatening silent and subtle action that bridges the is/is not dialectic adopted by Heidegger and Taylor. It is this elusive differential that undermines both Heidegger's and Taylor's desire to slip outside the dialectical: within the bounds of these metaphors it represents a 'space' of subtle interchange, an interrelationship that is necessarily implicit in the realisation of sunyata. In short, their respective interpretations can be viewed as not centrally embodying the process of double negation identified by Abe as integral to the realisation of sunyata.

\textsuperscript{29}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 43.

\textsuperscript{30}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 58.

\textsuperscript{31}Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 61.
The third model proposed by Glass inherently embodies a notion of practice in its representation of emptiness or what is prior to thought. The ground of being is necessarily constituted via internal and external interrelationships of a subtle nature.

Approaching Visuality — Bryson and Sunyata as a Field of Perception

In a well-known essay, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field" Norman Bryson adopts sunyata as an interpretive framework for consideration of the 'gaze' in relation to understanding subject-object interrelationships as represented by selected visual art practices. The concept of sunyata that Bryson presents is drawn from Nishitani and his mentor Nishida and, as such, can be understood as indicative of the is/is not approach underlying both Taylor's and Heidegger's conceptualisations. Bryson's reason for considering sunyata is similar to the reason for which it has been embraced herein: it provides a conceptual framework that comprises a radical decentring of the subject. Specifically, Bryson moves beyond the more well-known Western frameworks offered by Sartre and Lacan, drawing attention to the Cartesian underbelly of their thought.

My argument will be that the line of thinking that passes from Sartre to Lacan in crucial respects remains held within conceptual enclosure, where vision is still theorized from the standpoint of a subject placed at the centre of the world. Although that centralised subject is progressively dismantled by Sartre and Lacan — and the direction of their thought is unmistakably towards a radical decentring of the subject — there seem to me to be areas in which the standpoint of the subject as centre is actually retained; the result of that residual centering upon the standpoint of the subject is that vision is portrayed as menaced at the vestigial centre, threatened from without, and in some sense persecuted, in the visual domain, by the regard or Gaze.

My position in regard to Glass's presentation of Heidegger and Taylor reflects Bryson's position regarding Sartre and Lacan: that the de-centralisation, the immersion, the interpretation of sunyata is not radical enough. What leads me to the idea that Heidegger and Taylor also retain a Cartesian influence is the emotive quality of their interpretations, this is also noted in Glass's reading. Heidegger's optimism and Taylor's terror each give away the centrality of the subject, whose emotive states are used as a filter through which emptiness and nothingness are conceptualised. In Buddhist disciplines such 'defilements' (emotive states) are

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'emptied' (removed / transformed) though the training process that leads to the realisation of sunyata. As such, these states would not exist to colour an interpretation of it as an ontological 'field.' Although explicitly aware of the extreme implications for subject-object interrelations inherent in sunyata, Bryson too, unfortunately undermines such an understanding when discussing art practices as representing it. On the one hand, he is acutely aware of the effect on boundaries proposed by 'emptiness' and its processual dynamic; on the other, he maintains substance-based interpretations of the 'artwork' and the 'viewer' when discussing their interaction. On sunyata he writes:

The entity, as a conceptual category, is found unable to withstand the critique of sunyata, and transposed to the field of sunyata both the subject-entity and the object-entity literally break up. Stabilising the entity as a fixed Form, with a bounded outline, is possible only if the universe surrounding the entity is screened out and the entity withdrawn from the universal field of transformations. The concept of the entity can be preserved only by an optic that casts around each entity a perceptual frame that makes a cut from the field and immobilizes the cut within a static framework. But as soon as that frame is withdrawn, the object is found to exist as part of a mobile continuum that cannot be cut anywhere. Moved onto the field of sunyata or radical impermanence, the entity comes apart ... it cannot be said to enjoy independent self-existence, since the ground of its being is the existence of everything else.34

When considering exchange upon this 'expanded field' Bryson notes that only a technique which undermines the 'frame' can stand in for representing sunyata. At this juncture, the influence of différence, as proposed by Derrida and adopted by Taylor, can be seen within Bryson's discourse. In discussing the Ch'an style of flung-ink painting, Bryson positions the practice as embodying to its 'fullest expression' a technique that undermines the 'frame':

In the case of the flung-ink painting, Ch'an's solution is to disfigure the image, the bipolar view, by opening on to the whole force of randomness. As the ink is cast, it flies out of the enclosure or tunnel of the frame, and opens the image on to the field of material transformation that constitutes the universal surround. The flinging of ink marks the surrender of the fixed form of the image to the global configuration of force that subtends it. Eidos is scattered to the four winds. The image is made to float on the forces which lie outside the frame; it is thrown, as one throws dice. What breaks into the image is the rest of the universe, everything outside the frame.35

In Bryson's conceptualisation there is still an 'inside' and 'outside' of the frame. The flung-ink is described as distinct from the force or 'body' that throws it, and it is considered very much the static remainder of an act that includes randomness: there is no indication that the image itself continues to exhibit properties of

34Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field" 97.
impermanence. The image (object) remains separate from the subject (artist/viewer), although Bryson argues that an understanding of the universal ground of being is illustrated within its production via the submission of gesture to chance. Bryson is proposing that something being out of an individual subject's control provides an opening through which *sunyata* enters. The general lifestyle advice of 'being open to chance' takes on a deeper meaning here, inviting identification of opening of 'self' or 'subjectivity' through chance acts. The 'rest of the universe,' 'breaks in' — *sunyata*, emptiness, the ground of being — is not presented by Bryson as already implicitly 'there,' or constitutive of the frame itself. The 'subject' and 'object' must be presumed to have distinct 'hard' borders if the universe must 'break' through them. This is not a presentation of subtle degrees of subject-object interpenetration, of impermeable boundaries always already in flux which could be understood to underlie the concept of radical impermanence. The Duchampian gambit of chance adopted by Bryson reflects an idea of submission or resignation on behalf of the artist. It does not present the act as interdependent of the force which created it, the 'matter' which sustains it, or the 'subject' that interprets it.

Though Bryson acknowledges 'forces' in his interpretation they remain subservient to the 'frame.' The focus is still on the boundary, its rupture, defilement, evasion. It is not perceived as a momentary perception of static 'universal' forces. To exert the radical shift that Bryson so clearly desires necessitates the shift of emphasis from the 'frame' to a focus upon the 'forces.' This would enable a 'centralising' of impermanence as well as for a greater degree of understanding of the interpenetration of subject-object. The act of flung-ink would not be conceived and discussed as separate to/from the body which enacted it. The static image would be re-activated. The frame would not be separated from either that which it frames or that which it excludes. Bryson's dyadic distinctions are perhaps nowhere more evident than his proposing *sunyata* as a 'field' that one 'moves onto' this presupposes a distinction from the field on which subject and object exist. *Sunyata* takes on a transcendent rather than an immanent flavour, where a change in body-mind consciousness necessitates a changed understanding of subject-object interrelations. Also, this invests the subject with the power to 'move' the object of consideration or the style of consideration ('gaze'), and therefore implies that the subject remains 'solid' whilst changing perspective, not that the perspective view the subject as fluid. Lastly, while Bryson places the subverting element as a technique of production, perhaps it can also be considered as a technique of reception. Therefore not only would

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the artistic strategy be understood as 'opening' onto the field of *sunyata* but the perceptive state of the viewer would be understood to compose this field as well.

It is to a consideration of *sunyata* as understood with emphasis on 'forces' rather than 'frames,' that the concluding part of this chapter shall turn. For it is within such a consideration, that the radical decentralisation of subject-object interrelationships may be glimpsed, as well as mode of representing such relations that require conceptualising both 'object' and 'subject' as active. The break between the theory and practice of the is/is not conceptualisations of co-dependent origination is overcome.

**The Working of Essence**

This third reading suggests that any attempt to describe emptiness in terms of thinking or objects misses the point — emptiness needs to be approached instead in terms of affect, emotion, force or desire. 37

Glass finds support for the proposition of his third reading of *sunyata* — 'the work of essence' — in the Tathagatagarbha Buddhist literature. Within this discourse and Gadjin Nagao's commentary on it, Glass identifies a discussion of emptiness which is not restricted to interpretations of co-dependent arising.

Nagao introduces the term "subtraction" here to distinguish the working of emptiness in Tathagatagarbha thought from the dialectical working of emptiness associated with co-dependent arising and Madhyamika... This chapter draws on Nagao's use of subtraction but uses the term "essence" or "Buddha essence" to describe that which is revealed through subtraction. The third working of emptiness is then a two-step process of subtraction/essence (or rather one process with two aspects). "Tathagatagarbha" can be translated as the germ, seed, embryo or essence (garbha) of the "thus gone one" or Buddha (Tathagat). 38

Buddha essence as a movement of subtraction challenges co-dependent origination's basis upon is/is not dynamics. Something cannot be negated and affirmed in the same instance if this process of emptiness involves a subtractive movement. In Glass's third reading, this understanding leads to a recognition of forms as not 'primary' in the understanding of emptiness. That is, the realisation of emptiness 'within' or 'as the ground' of things is not a central concern, rather the realisation of emptiness 'alone' delineates this third approach. Maintaining that the difference between *sunyata* as analysed in relationship to co-dependent arising and Buddha essence is the difference between the 'zazen of the student and the


zazen of the Master. Glass presents the first as being a 'true' but not complete understanding of the teaching:

To sum up, the Tathagatagarbha is not seen by ordinary people as it is hidden from view by defilements. These defilements are not dialectically negated ("is/is not") but dissolve (or are subtracted) in meditation practice. At this point Buddha essence is revealed. There are then two steps involved which correspond to the two wisdoms of emptiness: first, defilements are subtracted (because they are empty); second, attention or awareness is shifted from defilements to essence. This essence is the genuine sunyata.

Glass seeks such an understanding of sunyata by reading the work of Dōgen (1200-53) through this lens of Buddha essence. In doing so he arrives at an understanding of sunyata that necessarily changes the very affective mode of the individual. The "is/is not" understanding of emptiness leads to an understanding of enlightenment as 'detachment' from defilements/form, whilst the Buddha essence approach subtracts, transforms or somehow eliminates these defilements through the practice of meditation, leaving the individual with a reconstituted internal affective mode. Glass equates these two movements to Dōgen's "cutting the root of thinking" (subtraction) and "dropping off of mind and body"(reorientated affective mode). This change in affective mode necessitates a change in orientation toward the world of external relations: the split between theory and practice, the conceptual and physical (highlighted by Glass with regard to Heidegger and Taylor's work previously), is not so readily evident within this framework. The second stage of practice necessarily implies that the realisation of emptiness is not a purely intellectual undertaking, and that the body and mind participate in this realisation.

Perhaps the idea is not to see the same things and then understand them differently but to see differently in the first place. From this second perspective the problem is not attachment to things, but creation of things. The problem is not discrimination between things but their formation in the first place. It is not that a Buddhist with a mature practice thinks, sees and senses the same way as before but is not attached. Rather, it is that Buddhist practice changes thinking, seeing and sensing radically and that non-attachment follows as a by product of this change. It is not that there are forms out there, and the Buddhist is not attached to them. It is that for the Buddhist forms are no longer primary.

Glass proposes that the work of essence allows one to conceive a world in which forms are not primary. As previously outlined, Bergson identifies the body as a "special image," one that selects and

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39Glass, Working Emptiness 63-64.
40Glass, Working Emptiness 67.
41Glass, Working Emptiness 67-72.
42Glass, Working Emptiness 74.
exerts influence upon the forces (of the whole) which constitute and pass through it. The 'gap' between these two movements opens the subject to the 'whole,' and it for this reason that Bergson conceives the body as a "centre of indetermination." It is this interval as constitutive in the "body image" that enables Deleuze (in his discussion of cinema) to consider living things as a "formation in the acentred universe of movement-images." Central to these propositions is the idea of matter as fluid and force, not form, as primary.\textsuperscript{43}

This perspective shifts emphasis from conceiving 'entities' to conceiving 'forces,' and as evidenced by Bergson-Deleuze's identification of intuition as the faculty most suited to perceiving the 'whole.'

The grandiose Leibnizian or Bergsonian perspective that every philosopher depends upon an intuition that its concepts constantly develop through slight differences of intensity is justified if intuition is thought of as the envelopment of infinite movements of thought that constantly pass through a plane of immanence.\textsuperscript{44}

The plane of immanence is conceived of as the "absolute ground of philosophy," a mobile, formless, "image of thought."\textsuperscript{45} In a phrase suggestive of the process of double negation of sunyata, Deleuze and Guattari define the Plane of Immanence as "the nonthought within thought."\textsuperscript{46} The subject can be understood as being more aware of this plane, of this ground of thought and its movement/forces when engaged in meditative practice, because the 'defilements' — concepts, forms — have been negated via a process requiring active focusing upon duration, movement and force. Meditation as understood to open the 'subject' onto/into the ground of being — sunyata.

The change required to view forces and not forms as primary requires a change in sensitivities. It requires the intuition to be active, enabling the body-mind to become conscious of duration, its rhythms and forces. It is to be argued that such a shift is brought about by body-mind cultivation practices, including those of meditation on visual forms. The geometry of the mandala, traditionally used in Buddhist meditation training, can be considered as holding the potential of activity that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to geometric abstraction.

\textsuperscript{43} Deleuze, \textit{Cinema 1} 62.


\textsuperscript{45} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{What is Philosophy?} 35-37.

\textsuperscript{46} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{What is Philosophy?} 59.
From the depths of time there comes to us what Worringer called the abstract and infinite northern line, the line of the universe that forms ribbons, strips, wheels and turbines, an enitre "vitalized geometry," rising to the intuition of mechanical forces, constituting a powerful nonorganic life. Painting's eternal object is this: to paint forces, like Tintoretto.  

Glass presents a similar position with regard to the possibility of meditation enabling different types of consciousness including the intuitive to be experienced. This understanding presents the more mature student as experiencing intuitive states with less defilements than that of the novice.

To support his priviledging of force Glass re-reads Dōgen's work on Zen practice as involved with working the force or affect, rather than the thought (or non-thought); a shift is not from one style of thought to another, but from one 'nature of desire' to another. The realisation of emptiness involves a transformation from craving to compassion.

My position is that thinking and perception cannot be separated from desire and affect, and that the key to the cultivation and maintenance of a perceptual field in which emptiness not form is primary lies in the working of desire and effect.

It is to the work of Deleuze and Guattari that Glass turns when considering these two types of desires. In particular, he discusses the distinction drawn by Deleuze and Guattari of life as a 'plateau-being' and life as a 'climax-being.' The former signifies a process of becoming more of what one already is, of continuity in the selected and rejected forces of the whole (stasis); the latter of becoming something new, of further opening to forces, of engaging to a greater conscious extent with the fluid Image (movement). The experience of meditation is proposed as the 'space' within which these lines of being intersect and, as such, it is within the gap between thought and action that becoming takes place. This can be considered the very same interval that Bergson-Deleuze identified as the centred centre of the 'whole,' a centre of indetermination. The 'gap' in process is "transformed into a space of becoming."  

Unfortunately, although Glass's proposal allows for a departure from form-centred understandings of sunyata or emptiness, it does not completely refrain from incorporating dualistic structures into its method. Whilst undertaking the discussion of a Deleuzian classification of desire, Glass sustains dualities between being and

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47 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 182.

48 Glass, Working Emptiness 85.

becoming, possible and potential, pleasure and desire, and relegates 'Buddha essence' to one side of the duality.

The difficulty is that one can know little about the realm of the potential (Buddha essence) from the perspective of the realm of the possible (one's present state of coding: sensitivity to forms), because the realm of the potential lies outside present coding and thinking. We can only ever use our present state of thinking (the possible) to think about what we cannot not think (the potential). The move from the possible to the potential (from forms, pleasures and defilements to positive desire and essence) requires decoding (again, burning off karma or dissolving defilements) and recoding... There is consistency in understanding only through commitment to a particular direction: toward pleasure or desire, toward being or becoming, towards form or essence. Each is a process but they move in different directions. ⁵⁰

However, Glass's conceptualisation does incorporate an understanding of sunyata as embodied, it is understood as an approach to essence by 'thinking through effect.'

The work of emptiness investigated here manifests itself as much in seeing and sensing as it does thinking ... the work of emptiness should be understood to include visual and affective dimensions.⁵¹

Just as the nature of desire's distinguished by Glass — craving and compassion — are attributed a difference in degree, so too Glass argues that awareness of emptiness is characterised by an increased sensitivity to forces. The perception of increasingly subtle variations is understood as an outcome of meditation practice. Therefore meditation practice is intimately involved in the cultivation of a perspective that decentralises form and refocuses upon the effect of force, the exchange and interrelationship between forms.

An elaborate discussion of Glass's proposed role of meditation in the cultivation of sunyata and its effective relation imaging subject-object interpenetration moves one from ontological presuppositions into discussions of the cultivation of body-consciousness whilst opening questions about what type of consciousness and body is being discussed. As such it is at this point that I shall draw an arbitrary close to Section One — Preceding, and hold the consideration of meditation over to Section Two — Interciding.

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⁵⁰Glass, Working Emptiness 88-89.

⁵¹Glass, Working Emptiness 7.
Section Two

Interceding
Chapter Four

Transient Body-Mind, Immanent Body-Mind

As Descartes’ doubt separated the mind from the body, theological disagreement as to the location of the soul with regard to the corporeal structure was rampant. The Christian tradition’s preference for a trans-corporeal soul which would survive the disintegration of the inherently sinful flesh must be viewed as significant in relation to the privileging of a mind located in the brain (the most unknown, seemingly complex and ephemeral of corporeal structures) over the body and the creation of a Transcendent to mediate between the two. Be this as it may, even after the debunking of God and Descartes’ (and his followers) preference for divine interaction as the linking element, questions concerning modes of interaction and the locations of consciousness/spirit within the physical frame have remained a bone of contention within a plethora of contemporary philosophical and religious debates.

The location of divine interface with human subjects is, as previously mentioned, inherently linked to substance ontology. As self-consciousness no longer holds as the ground of being, subjects are not only de-centred in relation to 'themselves' and 'others' (within/without) but also in relation to the divine. With God dead the divine is no longer a mediator. Not only are the mind and body separated, but the theological banter that informed the initial separation has been dismissed. However is a de-centred self-co-ordination to be achieved within contemporary postmodern times?

As already discussed Process Philosophy proposes an alternative to the substance ontology informing the above. Theories of interaction methods abound but, as Rescher outlines it, the Process Philosophy model reflects Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro’s grounding of fundamental existence as interaction in space — the life-basho — for it 'sees'/ prioritises the process of interaction not the identity of the object within itself.

As process philosophers see it, processuality can reflect the open-endedness of the world's physical and psychological continuities. The identity of things is discrete (digital); that of processes is continuous (analogic). Things are what they are, each standing apart in discrete separation from the rest in its individual identity. Only processes have an identity that is open ended and flowing, with one item capable of sliding into another.¹

It is this idea of sliding, flowing, moving interchanges between matter and psyche that have no distinct borders and occur on the

¹ Rescher, Process Metaphysics 53.
same plane (immanence) that characterises the 'assemblage' as proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. These assemblages however are heterogeneous entities, not secured to the unifying hierarchal structure and 'evolutionary' propulsion (with the unsavoury taint of failed modern utopias and the atrocities of fascism/communism) elucidated by Rescher as characteristic of certain types of Process Philosophy. They are, however, modes of organisation, prescribed attributes of power — intensity, speed and movement — and as such can be understood to exhibit processural characteristics.

Ethological Bodies

The type of 'assemblage' becoming proposed by Deleuze and Guattari is explored by Moira Gatens as a type of body in "Through a Spinozist Lens: Ethology, Difference and Power." Gatens considers its potentiality as follows:

The human body is radically open to its surroundings and can be composed, recomposed and decomposed by other bodies. From the perspective of modal existence, such encounters with other bodies are conceived as good or bad depending on whether they aid or harm our characteristic dynamic or kinetic constitution. The complexity of any particular mind — and Spinoza does not deny that animals have minds — depends on the complexity of the body of which it is the idea.2

Remarking on Spinoza's influence upon Deleuze's conception of thought and body, Gatens brings attention to Spinoza's rejection of transcendent being and his conception of the human being — both mind-body — as attributes of nature, implicit in a dynamic whole, whose other entities can be defined only by variables of movement, with which it is in constant interchange.

Specificity of body is mediated by temporality: individuation is circuitously developed and decomposed and forever fundamentally comprised of 'other' bodies; permeations of border membranes extending and contracting to rhythmic impulses of force. For Deleuze, the study of these relations and their potentiality for effect and affect is Ethology.

Ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterise each thing. For each thing these relations and capacities have amplitude, thresholds (maximum and minimum) and variations or transformations that are peculiar to them.... Every point has its counterpoints: the plant and the rain, the spider and the fly. So an animal, a thing, is never separable from its relations with the world.... Lastly ethology studies the compositions of relations or capacities between different things ... a question of knowing whether relations (and which ones?) can compound directly

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to form a new, more "extensive" relation, or whether capacities can compound directly to form a new, more "intensive" capacity or power.³

Under such a gaze, Gatens notes that distinctions between sentient and insentient are "not of interest." The only distinctions between 'things' are dynamic or kinetic.

If we understand rule-based morality as one which addresses itself to molar subjects, then ethology may be understood as offering an ethics of the molecular — a micropolitics concerned with the 'in-between' of subjects, with that which passes between them and which manifests the range of possible becoming."⁴

For Deleuze, a praxis was also essential to inhabiting the Plane of Immanence in a Spinozist manner.

Thus, to be in the middle of Spinoza is to be on this modal plane, or rather install oneself on this plane — which implies a mode of living, a way of life ... it has to be constructed if one is to live in a Spinozist manner.⁵

Ethology is a process approach to existence as exhibited in temporality, a methodology that underlies practical approaches to matter and mind by Process Philosophers in general and can be considered a constitutive element of Esoteric approaches to fields of manifestation for all 'being.'

In short, if we are Spinozists we will not define a thing by its form, nor by its organs and its functions, nor as a substance or a subject. Borrowing terms from the Middle Ages, or from geography, we will define it by longitude and latitude. A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity. We call longitude of a body the set of relations of speed and slowness, of motions and rest, between particles that compose it from this point of view, that is, between unformed elements. We call latitude the set of effects that occupy a body at each moment, that is, the intensive states of anonymous force (force for existing, capacity for being affected). In this way we construct the map of a body. The longitudes and latitudes together constitute Nature, the plane of immanence or consistency, which is always variable and is constantly being altered, composed and recomposed, by individuals and collectives.⁶

Deleuze's "unformed elements" reflect Bergson's material universe, the plane of images from which perception — via its limiting, reductive process — stabilises and creates borders for the image informed by what is of interest to a particular subject. In the state of unformed elements, the image (matter) can be understood to have no such borders. Returning, also momentarily, to the form of the


⁵Deleuze, "Ethology: Spinoza and Us" 625.

⁶Deleuze, "Ethology: Spinoza and Us" 629.
spiral, Deleuze's longitudes and latitudes could be seen to be analogous/allude to a network of interactions that would, if stabilised, reflect such a form, a form found plentifully in Nature. Spirals are not necessarily symmetrical and, as exhibited by the earth's elliptic arc, are both variable and open to constant alteration by forces of affectivity. Bodies, as drawn from the unformed elements are attributed the characteristics of both the Plane of Immanence and perception. They are, therefore, 'in-between', or could be understood as interceding between undifferentiated matter and solid forms. They are understood to exhibit a perceptual stability of constitution whilst their inherent qualities of movement —affect and effect — continually expand and contract borderlines, whether this action is perceived empirically.

It has been noted by Elizabeth Grosz, that these types of bodies may be of value to theorists, especially feminists in attempting to 're-conceive' the body outside of binary opposition.\(^7\) This is, arguably, a position embracing a similar aim to that of the Process philosophers, whose project has also historically been the dodging of dualities. Lucas has argued that Process Philosophy, although having a discursive inheritance from antiquity, is primarily the construction of philosophical models during industrialisation as a direct revolt against a mechanised world view, and in particular Newtonianism.\(^8\) In general terms, mechanised concepts of the body and, in particular, the female body situated in a less-than (<) relationship to the male formed the basis for feminist intervention and subversion of dominant discourses. These projects share similar disillusionment and reactivity towards hierarchical structures, and, considered from this very general perspective, both projects continue to 'battle' within (for there is no without) a language premised upon binary divisions that remain anathema to their aims for representation.

It would seem that the practice of Ethology contains the potential to suspend binary distinctions: if there is no centre from which to project onto and survey the surrounds, there can be no stable location of self or other. However, what complicates such a seamless reading is the fact that ethological models are premised upon measurement — of affects and effects, of potentiality, intensity — thus begging the question of the scale upon which measurement is predicated and of who is doing the measurement. It would seem

\(^7\)Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994) 164. Grosz also notes feminist discourse is also suspicious of the potential for Deleuze and Guattari's concepts to cover "male appropriation of whatever is radical and subversive" and to negate the terms and issues that have previously formed and positioned feminist discourse, such as, gender, other, "identity"). Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* 161-162.

\(^8\)Lucas, *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead* 74.
that, as soon as a model for distinguishing an image from another
appears (albeit with a propensity for amorphous borderlines), the
question of evaluation and delineation remains complex even in
the land of flux. Nonetheless, by their inherent lack of reductive
structure, such nebulous models remain conducive and applicable
to projects that oppose dominant binary-based divisions.

Linkages form across an expanding and contracting plane, a plane of
immanence: their fundamental mode is one of extensity along two
axes — dynamic and kinetic. It is here, at this point of dispersion,
that I wish to consider the mobile assemblage becoming of Ethology
as the type of framework (a mobile frame) required to activate a
particular modality of interaction also founded on processural
dynamics — the non-sensory based perception of the subtle body. It
is this that is proposed as interacting with temporal art practices,
giving rise to the consideration of aesthetic interchange as an
Ethology.

Subtle Bodies

Process philosophy provides a conceptual ground upon which
ccepts like Deleuze’s development of Spinozist Ethology and
(with Félix Guattari) the Body Without Organs and assemblage can
take place.9 These modes of being embrace aspects of extensity that
belong to a tradition of conceptualising matter-minds-becoming that
has existed in various forms for thousands of years: subtle bodies.
The subtle body is recorded within the cultures of India and China,
amongst the indigenous people of North America and Africa,
Polynesian Kahunas, ancient Egyptians and Greeks, Incan and early
Christian cultures.10 The number of bodies are debated and vary
according to specific traditions.

In the teachings the Ancients always considered man in his relationship to God, the
universal field of energy. If matter and spirit are polar opposite levels, then it is
implied that there are other levels in between, reflecting a gradual transition from

9The characteristics of a Body Without Organs are discussed by Deleuze and
Guattari in these terms: “The body is now nothing more than a set of valves, locks,
floodgates, bowls, … A BwO is made in such a way that it can be occupied,
populated only by intensities … It is not a space, nor is it in space; it is matter that
occupies space to a given degree — to the degree corresponding to the intensities
produced … defined by axes and vectors, gradients and thresholds, by dynamic
tendencies involving energy transformation and kinetic movements involving group
displacement …” A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia trans.

10David V. Tansley, Subtle Body: Essence and Shadow (London: Thames and
Hudson, 1977) 5.
one state to the other, and that these levels or planes of energy are the Divine Field in which man manifests.\textsuperscript{11}

Apart from these ethno-specific examples, the subtle body has been represented in esoteric bodies of knowledge, in particular, holding a central position in Theosophy, the movement founded in 1875 by Russian Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (known to Theosophists since her death in 1891 as H.P.B.). It is the Theosophical conception of subtle bodies that is being discussed herein, a concept that has borrowed heavily from Hindu traditions. At its earliest presentation within the discourse, the subtle body was referred to as linga-sarira (Sanskrit for 'model-form,' signifying impermanence).\textsuperscript{12} The vast majority of the information outlined below comprises the basic understandings of what constitutes the different types of subtle body in Theosophical schemes as derived from texts by H.P. Blavatsky\textsuperscript{13} and Alice A. Bailey,\textsuperscript{14} the latter acting as an amanuensis or 'channel' for a Tibetan Master, Djwai Khul.\textsuperscript{15} Underlying their conceptualisation of mind-body is the following fundamental principle.\textsuperscript{16}

Central to all Theosophical discourse is the belief in an omnipresent and eternal 'Principle' (Parabrahman). This is the 'One About Whom Naught Can Be Said" of the Alice Bailey (Djwai Khul) literature, an absolute that is beyond conceptualisation by human beings. The solar system is conceived of as smaller part of this larger

\textsuperscript{11}Tansley, Subtle Body 17.


\textsuperscript{13}H.P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled Vol I & II (1877) and more directly The Secret Doctrine (1888).


\textsuperscript{15}The Tibetan, Dwai Khul is understood to be an Ascended Master, member of the Great White Lodge of Masters that oversee the evolution of this Solar System. Alice A. Bailey channelled the messages for the Tibetan—'he' is therefore understood as the author of the texts.

\textsuperscript{16}The basis for this characterisation has been drawn from Sellon and Weber, "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society" 311-329.
absolute, it embodies a universal Oversoul and is referred to as the "one in whom we live, move and have our being" (also an oft-occurring passage from the Bailey series, perhaps adapted from Acts 17:28 "For in him (God) we live and move and have our being").

Infinite and eternal, the absolute source is manifested through (and is) the cyclic interplay of energies that give rise to differentiation. The contemplated interaction of pairs of opposites (subject-object, spirit-matter) leads to 'unveiling' a synthesising gnosis (the middle path), and this re-unification is attributed by Theosophical cosmogony to evolutionary development, thus creating an infinite teleological universe. For Theosophists, evolution is the realisation of unity within diversity, whilst involution is the movement from unity to diversity.

Theosophy's adoption of an evolutionary cosmology — with both the individual and the greater universe perceived as continually partaking in an infinite evolution — combines elements of Eastern philosophy (in particular reincarnation and the Law of Karma), Western scientific discourse and the Esoteric philosophia perennis. This eclectic concept of evolution is central to all Theosophical discourse, as Hanegraaff notes:

In Blavatsky's synthesis, progressive evolution functions as the great Law of Nature; ... the theory of evolution emerges as fundamental to all aspects of Blavatsky's thought, whether pertaining to the 'physical' or the spiritual domains. It accounts for the development of the universe and of the planet; for the history of humanity and of religious consciousness; and for the development of the human soul before birth and after death.

This perspective necessarily implicates 'knowing subjects' as becoming aware of their position within this evolutionary framework and then consciously choosing to cultivate or assist their own development (and, considering the interdependence of all things, the entire 'evolution' of the greater 'being'). Theosophical literature, at all times, encourages students to avoid blind belief and accept as 'true' only that which they themselves have experienced as truth.

17 G. de Purucker, Occult Glossary 826.


19 The study of these energies is the work of an Esoteric Astrologer.


21 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 471.
Since it stresses that the task for humanity is to become aware of its innate spirituality, to give it sovereignty in life, and to use it as the basis for action, it is not enough to grasp the essentials of the Theosophical worldview intellectually. Principles must be practised in daily life, used as the grounds for choice, and pursued for their ethical consequences in all human relationships.\(^{22}\)

Theosophy does not support any ontological difference between spirit and matter, mind and body, subject and object. Rather the polarities represent differing degrees of manifestation of the same energy principle. Processuality is therefore central to the spiritual program of modern Theosophy, as is a relational metaphysics, an ontology dependent upon the infinite interplay of different (but ontologically same) matter-consciousness.

Subtle bodies are reported to be invisible to physical sight, but are understood however to be apprehended by clairvoyant perception or the more respected (in Esoteric traditions) intuitive consciousness. They are visually described as interpenetrating sheaths of colour. I will refer to them herein as 'bodies' but it must be stressed that this does not imply the traditional distinction from mind, but is premised upon the ideas of matter and mind as not being ontologically separate. Subtle bodies, as represented in the Theosophical model, are comparable to Process Philosophy's models. For example, in the physical body as generally experienced the mind is conceived of as an inherent constituent of gross 'matter' and, as such, is located in different intensities all over (and through) the physical body. The physical brain can be understood as a localisation of great intensity.

In Theosophical literature the physical or gross body is identified as the lowest, densest manifestation of matter-mind. This body is one of a series of bodies which interpenetrate and exceed the preceding one in what is conceived of as a development into ever finer vibrations of matter. Theosophists identify three bodies manifesting upon the physical plane — the Physical/Etheric body, the Astral body and the Mental body [see fig.1]. Early Theosophical texts often referred to Physical/Etheric and Astral bodies collectively as the Astral body or linga-sarira. In the writings of Alice A. Bailey and A.E. Powell, which appeared in the early decades on this century, the distinctions as outlined above were clearly in place.\(^{23}\) These three bodies represent the 'lower' sections from a totality of seven, with

\(^{22}\) Sellon & Weber, "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society" 327.

the energies of the higher four 'bodies' being of such refined degree of subtlety that they are unable to inhabit the physical plane. Together the seven subtle bodies correspond to the Seven Planes of Perception [fig.1] (sometimes called the Seven Systemic Planes), from which they are said to draw their matter-consciousness. Following the Law of Correspondence, the Seven Planes of Perception reflect the Seven Cosmic Planes [fig.2] of which the Cosmic Physical Plane comprises the Seven Systemic Planes of our solar system .

Each plane of perception is divided into seven sub-planes. The planes are labelled Adi (Divine), Anupadaka (Monadic), Atmic (Spiritual), Budhhic (Intuitional), Mental (Manas), Emotional (Astral), and Etheric/Physical. These also correspond to seven Chakras or 'wheels' (Sanskrit) formed in Etheric substance and located up the spine, that operate as the transmitters of energy from the subtler planes to the physical body: Crown, Ajna, Throat, Heart, Solar Plexus, Sacral, and Base.24 [See fig.3 and fig.4]

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For a thorough popular psychology perspective see, Judith Anodea, Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self (Berkeley: Celestial Arts Publishing, 1996).
### The Seven Cosmic Planes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cosmic Logic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Cosmic Monadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Cosmic Atmic</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Cosmic Buddhic</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Cosmic Mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Cosmic Astral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Cosmic Physical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Systemic Logic  
- Systemic Monadic  
- Systemic Atmic  
- Systemic Buddhic  
- Systemic Mental  
- Systemic Astral  
- Systemic Physical

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**Figure 2.** M. Temple Richmond, "The Seven Cosmic Planes." *Sirius.* (Mariposa, Source, 1997) 24.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtle body chakra</th>
<th>Number of petals</th>
<th>Associated element and/or properties</th>
<th>Cosmic category or 'tattva'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sahasrara above the head</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Abode of bliss (Sat cit ananda)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajña between the eyebrows</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>mind (manas)</td>
<td>Mahat = Supreme Principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishuddha throat centre</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ether, space Activates hearing</td>
<td>Organ of cognition: ears Organ of action: mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anahata heart centre</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Air, movement Activates sense of touch</td>
<td>Organ of cognition: skin Organ of action: genitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipura navel centre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fire, expansion Activates sight</td>
<td>Organ of cognition: eyes Organ of action: anus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svadhisthana below the navel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Water, contraction Activates organ of taste</td>
<td>Organ of cognition: tongue Organ of action: hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mūlādhāra base of spine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Earth, connection Activates sense of smell</td>
<td>Organ of cognition: nose Organ of action: feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Madhu Khanna, "Subtle Body Chakras." *Yantra: The Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity.* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979) 120.
Etheric

Directly encasing, and considered as an extension of the physical body on the physical plane of consciousness, is the Etheric body, called the Sidereal body by Paracelsus (the assumed cosmological links are implied by the title). Comprised of interconnecting threads of energy the matrix is termed the Etheric Web in Theosophical nomenclature. It is what is commonly referred to as the Aura in New Age Religions discourse, appearing to clairvoyant sight as scintillating colour fields (the colour representing personal qualities and emotion) around the physical body. Inhabiting the higher four sub-planes of the Physical Plane of Perception, the Etheric incorporates and exceeds the lower three sub-planes comprising the physical body [See Fig.1].

The Etheric forms a counterpoint to the nervous system, and is the interconnecting Nadis — 'conduit, channel' or 'vein, artery' in Vedic cartographies of the body and similarly considered the points of light that form the Meridian network of Chinese acupuncture. Both the Taoist philosophy (from which acupuncture has developed) and the Vedic philosophies of Hindu culture propose an essential life force termed 'chi' and 'prana' respectively. The Nadis are the pathways along which this universal energy travels. Chakras are the larger 'wheels' created by the crossing of many Nadis or channels at the one point [fig.5]. They are intense points of activity at which it is understood that the union of matter and spirit is made perceptible to consciousness — impressing on the physical body the energies from other planes of perception. As a being develops they are said to unfold the Chakra's petals (it is common amongst Buddhist and Indian symbology to represent the Chakra by Lotus flowers: each Chakra or flower is attributed a specific number of petals that are to be unfolded — [see fig.6]) to awaken intuitive (Buddhi) perceptive abilities, emotional and mental qualities. Chakras are also allocated correspondences with the seven planes of perception and hence their unfolding reflects the development of a 'being' along a spiritual path. If such a journey is considered in terms of increasing accesses to alternate modes of perception, the awakening of chakras is correlative with a greater sensitivity to external stimulus, intuitive consciousness and non-sensory perception.

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The entire cosmos is perceived as an Etheric Web of intersecting energies, out of which the physical world is manifested. A contemporary externalisation of this concept is the Internet — The World Wide Web — lines of energy carrying communication along a network across the Earth. As a whole, the physical globe itself is seen to have similar energy centres (Chakras) and conduits, and their relationship to the placement of ancient ruins and sites of worship is well documented. The planetary energy of any given moment (including celestial cycles) conditions the quality and amount of 'energy' available for absorption into the Etheric/physical body. The physical body is governed in Esoteric Astrology by Gemini the sign of the twins, a symbol of duality and hence the dual constituency of Physical and Etheric substance forming together the Physical plane of perception (which physical/Etheric bodies inhabit). For Esoteric astrologers planets and zodiacal configurations act as an interface for the subtle energies that constitute the cosmos. Thus understood as such the study of 'Esoteric Astrology' is concerned with the relationships and interactions of these energies. Gemini is discussed as reflecting the dual nature of the physical plane, from which is said to arise humanity's conflicts that ultimately lead to efforts to resolve or harmonise the dualities. This process is understood to be the main goal or purpose of incarnation on the physical plane within the Earth Scheme. The discovery and cultivation of a 'middle way' is the proposed method of achieving harmony of the pairs of opposites.

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26As well as founding forms of divination such as Geomancy and particularly prominent in arts of alignment, for example Chinese Feng Shui.
Such a process desires to make fluid the definite borders that enable sharp distinction and separation. The dualities are conceived of as inherent in physical/Etheric matter and reflected in the polarised concepts that underlie existence, for example, social interaction; good/evil, male/female, right/wrong, true/false, as well as dyadic pairs forming the ground upon which languages are built. It is Gemini’s role to liquefy opposition and, to achieve this, it is understood to activate the energy of the esoteric planetary ruler of its constellation — Venus. Venus, takes its name from the venous circulation of blood, i.e. circulation through veins, of the body and hence also rules the physical body’s circulatory system, therefore reflecting on a smaller scale the circulation of energy via conduits of the Etheric substance in the greater world. As previously discussed, these relationships represent a central element of Esoteric philosophy, the theory of universal correspondences reflected in the Hermetic maxim ‘As Above So Below.’ Essentially the relationship is not between part and whole: that is, the physical body is not seen as a part of the larger ‘world’ but as a whole world in itself that reflects on a smaller scale the larger world. It is at one and the same time a world within a greater world. The relationship is then a mirror, whole reflected in whole, with the smaller whole (usually scientifically identified as the ‘part’) being a microcosm of the greater macrocosm. Manly Palmer Hall, Theosophist, outlines the microcosmic and macrocosmic relationship as follows:

To understand the doctrine of the Macrocosm and the microcosm [sic], it is necessary to restore to these words their original attributes. Both words primarily signify wholeness and correspond to the Leibnitzian theory of monads and the atomism of Leucippus and Democritus. The Macrocosm is a vast monad, the microcosm a relatively smaller monad similar in design but less in quantity and contained within the larger organism …. Man is a microcosm when compared to the universe, but a macrocosm when compared to some single organ within himself. According to the Pythagorian doctrine, “wholes” are not actually composed of parts in the sense of fractions or fragments, but in reality of lesser “wholes,” which are termed “parts” only when compared to the greater unity which they conspire to make up …. Macrocosms are, therefore, built up of aggregations of microcosms; and the whole is similar to the parts and the parts to the whole, the difference lying in magnitude rather than in quality.29

27 A.A. Bailey, Esoteric Astrology 343-370. See also Alan Oken, Soul-Centred Astrology (California: The Crossing Press, 1990) 172-177.


Manly Palmer Hall (1901—) member of Theosophical Society and author of seminal texts including An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy: Being an Interpretation of the Secret
The Etheric body stands in such a correspondent relationship to the Etheric body of the earth, universe, solar system ad infinitum, and is conceived as a transmitter and receiver of 'information' from all other planes of perception and perhaps even other Cosmic Planes. It both 'down loads' the communication from the 'higher' levels of perception, while connecting to and communicating with the greater web of etheric matter extending through out the wider solar system.

Astral or Emotional

The next body and plane of perception is the Astral or Emotional. Blavatsky provides the following etymology for 'Astral':

The designation Astral is ancient, and was used by some Neo-platonists, although it is claimed by some that the word was coined by Martinists. Porphyry describes the celestial body which always joined with the soul as "immortal, luminous, and star-like." The root of this word may be found, perhaps, in the Scythic Aist-ait - which means star, or the Assyrian Ishtar, which, according to Bernot, has the same sense.\(^{30}\)

This etymology again reflects macrocosmic and microcosmic correspondences developed between the human and celestial body.

This is the subtle body that reacts in an emotional sense: all desire emanates from the Astral plane of perception. It is understood to colour the pure idea coming from the Mental plane of Perception, that results in the creation of an ideal — an idea infused with specific emotional energy from the corresponding subject. It connects the 'Mind' with the Etheric/physical body and so it is through this body that all sensation (experiences on the physical plane) is transmitted to the mental body. It embodies the emotional aspects of the thinking process and is considered the most fluid body. It is also considered to be the body in need of the most repair, balance and control within contemporary societies, and is identified esoterically as the site from which most dis-ease (caused by imbalances) originates.\(^{31}\)

In *The Astral Body and Other Astral Phenomena*, Arthur E. Powell identifies the following functions of the Astral body:

The functions of the astral body may be roughly grouped under three headings:-
1. To make sensation possible.
2. To serve as a bridge between mind and physical matter.


3. To act as an independent vehicle of consciousness and action.\textsuperscript{32}

The Astral body and plane is viewed as originating sensation, as an intermediary level of consciousness between physical/Etheric and Mind (manas) the next plane, and as an independent form of consciousness, capable of perception and action emanating from and specific to the Astral plane. Astral consciousness can therefore both be seen as a distinct mode of consciousness-matter and as sitting in relationship to other modes of consciousness-matter. On the physical plane the Astral body is said to primarily work through the Solar Plexus Chakra, located (in etheric substance) just below the rib cage and above the navel.

Mental Body

Interpenetrating and exceeding the Physical/Etheric and Astral bodies is the Mental body, corresponding to the Mental plane of Perception. 'Mental' in this scheme refers not to mind as distinct from matter, but to a certain type of matter-consciousness. It is also termed the Manasic body, and Plane of Manas — manas, a Sanskrit word, whose root means "to think," "to cogitate," "to reflect."\textsuperscript{33} This body is composed of essentially mental matter:

The mental body is built of particles of the four lower sub-divisions of the mental world, i.e., of mental matter which corresponds to the four lower sub-divisions of astral matter, and to solid, liquid, gaseous and etheric matter of the physical plane.\textsuperscript{34}

Described as the source of all pure thought, the higher three sub-planes are termed 'Higher Abstract Mind' and the lower four sub-planes 'Lower Concrete Mind.'\textsuperscript{35} The Mental plane and Mental body are said to emanate intelligence not only in a rational manner (lower four sub-planes) but also in an intuitive-mental sense (higher three sub-planes). Meditation is understood in many traditions (in particular Mahayana Buddhist and Raja Yoga) to be the method of building clear communication pathways between the upper and lower abstract mind, and between all three bodies (Physical/Etheric, Astral and Mental) and their corresponding planes of Perception.


\textsuperscript{33}Purucker, \textit{Occult Glossary} 95.


On the Physical plane, the Mental body is said to work through the Throat Chakra located below the neck, at the top of the chest region.

Buddhic, Atmic, Anupadaka and Plane of the Adi (Logos)

The plane that exceeds the Mental is the Intuitional (Buddhic) of which Blavatsky and Bailey (Djwhal Khul) note that there is no corresponding manifestation in matter on the physical plane. This is said to be because its energies are too refined to inhabit the dense material comprising the physical universe. However, this intuitional plane is perceptible to people who — through the practice of cultivation via meditation, or other applicable initiatory rites — have created within their perceptive schema an ability to access this plane and their corresponding Intuitional subtle body. Hence the alternate title for this plane of perception is the Buddhic Plane. As discussed previously in Theosophical evolutionary discourse, the human kingdom is part of a cosmic being that is evolving ad infinitum via the cultivation of states of conscious awareness. Breaking human history, its physical and perceptive developments up into 'root races,' it is the plan of the current 'sixth sub-race of the 5th root race' to unfold intuitive abilities and initiate contact with the Buddhic realm on a wide scale. It is here that one enters into Theosophical evolutionist concepts, that involve for the most part intensely complex cosmological relations that extend beyond the Earth's solar system. Based upon a spiral configuration of ascending development through increased ability to perceive and manipulate subtle energies, an in depth configuration of this system can be found in Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1962) and Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888).

In general, the higher four planes of perception do not have a correlative 'body' located within or perceptible on the physical plane, although some traditions dispute this. The higher planes are inhabitable when the individual evolution has transcended the lower three planes (called collectively the 'personality'). Thus, implicit in the foundation of subtle bodies is a belief in 'life' after the dissolution of the physical gross form which, as stated earlier, is considered as matter manifest at its densest level.

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The Atmic or spiritual body/plane, the Anupadaka or Monadic and the Adi or Plane of the Logos; Adi from the Sanskrit meaning 'The First, the primeval' as such may be viewed as planes in which matter-consciousness is at its most refined. The substance (matter-consciousness) of these planes are reflected in the denser matter-consciousness of the lower planes. Their activity in relation to an individual's form-consciousness and perception is perceived only by highly developed 'initiates' on the physical plane. Nonetheless their placement in this scheme implies transcendence of the physical form (i.e. physical death) and the possibility of developing multiple perceptive and material states after death. That is, not only 'life' after death, but a matter-consciousness state that allows for continued conscious exercise. Powell writes of the Atmic Plane that:

The man feels as if he were everywhere, but could focus anywhere within himself, and wherever for a moment the outpouring of force diminishes, that is for him a body.

What is remarkable about this conception of subtle bodies, their extensive states of perception, is the comprehension that dynamic and kinetic rates of vibration are used to signify the different planes of perception, states of matter-consciousness. There is no

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37Atmic is derived from Atman: ('self' or 'Self'). Context of use determines whether it refers to empirical self or the 'transcendental Self'. Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 40-41. In Theosophical cosmology it is used to refer to Universal spirit or the divine Monad.

38Anupadaka is a Sanskrit term meaning "parentless" or "self-existing", and is applied to self-created gods, and Dhyāni Buddhas. This definition has been drawn from; H.P Blavatsky, The Theosophical Dictionary [1893] (New York: The Theosophical Publishing Society and Los Angeles: The Theosophical Co., 1930) 25.

39The Monadic plane is so called to reflect the placement within it of a monad, that is 'a spiritual entity which to us humans is indivisible because its essential characteristic is homogeneity ... Monads are spiritual-substantial entities, self-motivated, self-impeled, self-conscious, in infinitely varying degrees, the ultimate elements of the universe.' Purucker, Occult Glossary 108-109

40Adi; Sanskrit, meaning 'The First' or 'primeval'; Blavatsky, Theosophical Glossary, 1973 edition, 6.

41Logos; Greek term, defined as "The manifested deity within every nation and people: the outward expression, or the effect of the cause which is ever concealed." Blavatsky, Theosophical Glossary 190.

fundamental ontological difference in the 'type' of matter-consciousness only a difference in degree, in intensity, in motion or interaction. The parallels with a process perspective are evident, as is the similitude with the operation and distinctions between light and sound. On the other hand, although there is no difference in the 'type' of substance, its dynamic and kinetic action (re-action), its ethological attributes — as understood in a Deleuzian-Spinozist manner — function to allow for distinctions in the quality of matter-consciousness. Theosophy adheres to a quality of density scale; that is, matter-consciousness is described in texture orientated metaphors and similes — coarse, dense, gross, refined, ephemeral — the more subtle a matter-consciousness is understood to be on a physical scale, the more 'sensitive' it is on a perceptive scale. In his work on qualitative differences Bergson maintained a dualism between perception and memory, arguing that they are different in kind, whilst advocating that matter and spirit differ only in degree. This perspective would seem to be reflected in the Theosophical concept of subtle bodies, each sheath being distinguished by its quality of vibration, its density of matter-consciousness. Spirit and matter are seen as ontologically the same, with only difference in degree between pure spirit and gross matter.

For Theosophists, the human being is already plural, comprised of multiple interpenetrating bodies, that lend no absolute solidity to the subject because they are always in a state of flux and interacting/reacting with 'external' stimuli. They are both extensive and intensive, lie in a transcendent and immanent relationship to a 'self-conscious' subject, and privilege intuitive over rational faculties of consciousness. Subtle bodies posit potential mental/consciousness faculties all over and through the physical body and so-called 'space' whilst not denying the brain as the primary location for cognitive occurrence (receptive to an intense degree of Mental substance). The concept of the subtle body is the ground from which Ethology takes flight.

Subtle bodies quite easily lend themselves to a discussion of the interaction between 'subjects' and temporal art practices, for this notion supports the idea that the space between viewer and object is alive with interaction. Because of their 'fast' kinetic vibration — visible to the naked eye (as opposed to the slow rates of more static, 'fixed' objects e.g. 'painting') — temporal works are more easily measured by ethological methods. When coupled with the idea of the subject's body being subtle, one is confronted with a mass of vibrational interaction of a continual, active nature. The temporal nature of the human body is, on a very superficial level, mirrored by the temporal nature of the art work. At the more complex end of this scale, ethology identifies no distinction between subject and object: the highly temporal nature of both entities is measured only in terms of their ability to interact and effect change in intensive dimensions. As created by Theosophical frameworks the subtle body
is a highly sensitive matrix through which perception and communication occur; specifically, as the Astral body acts as a processual unit between the Mental and Physical/Etheric, the majority of art practice would then be understood to communicate through this particular bodily vehicle.

With only the extensive and intensive properties differing, the privileging of the physical brain as the site within the body where consciousness/spirit is located is collapsed. The body can be understood as not only a perceptive membrane on the physical level, but also on the emotional and mental levels. The interpenetrating levels of consciousness that constitute 'matter' dissolve the matter/mind division. Matter is perceived as the manifestation of different types (degrees) of consciousness, and as such, delivers sentience of some type to everything on the material plane. The environment becomes essentially a myriad of changing and interpenetrating borderlines between these vibratory sheaths. Individuation occurs as a result of developing degrees of consciousness to co-ordinate and form aggregational units, but the fundamental ground of being is constituted by the same processual element of energy, thus reflecting the esoteric maxim "All in One: One in All."

How the modes of consciousness are interacted with, achieved, visited, accessed and re-presented is the question of this paper.

To support the concept of subtle bodies is to challenge (once again) the privileging of the mind, abstraction and the absolute in the interaction between the Divine and the nasty flesh of Christianity. It allows the physical body and its inherent extensity, temporality and materiality as much possibility for perception and representation of ethereal and sublime subjects as is traditionally ascribed to pure abstraction. Subtle bodies propose an individual with many interpenetrating modes of perceptive activity through which multiplicities of interactions and pluralities of becoming could occur. As a permeable interface, the subtle body weaves the physical and psychical together, spreads the surface and deepens the potentiality — with a subtle body there is no limit to what one is capable of except that which is created by the privileging of rational or linear ideas.

To counteract the limiting function of rationalisation in this schema, Theosophy privileges the intuition as the mode of communication most suited to listening to the subtle realms.

**Eastern Body-Mind**

Reflecting the triadic structure of the first chapter, a discussion on concepts of the 'body' as understood within process based ontologies
is not complete without examining an Eastern perspective of mind-body interrelation. This example is drawn from the work of Yuasa Yasuo which specifically discusses Watsuji, Nishida, Dōgen and Kūkai’s conceptual developments of figuring body-mind, subject-object interaction within their practical philosophical systems.

The Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō(1889 - 1960) developed an ethics in which the person (ningen) was central to a consideration of intersubjectivity between space and body. In a commentary upon his work, Yuasa highlights the etymological underpinnings of ningen as signifying a different construct of the idea of person than what is most commonly assumed in the West. It refers not to an individualised subject but, rather, to a space between subjects, meaning "between man and man." This betweenness is characterised by interactions between humans and the space in which they live; a life-basho, (the Japanese term translates as field, topos, place, locus). As Yuasa argues, Watsuji posits space as fundamental to being (as opposed to the temporality proposed by Heidegger with whose work Watsuji was familiar). Therefore the concept of the human being, an understanding of the nature of being cannot be undertaken without inclusion and understanding of existence within the spatial basho, the human's position as 'in-between.'

For Watsuji the individual exists within a double structure, being both individual and social. Temporality is considered as fundamental to the understanding of an individual human's existence whilst spatiality is constructed as fundamental for a being in the social world. As Yuasa points out, bearing this in mind, Watsuji creates a scheme where both temporality and spatiality 'can proceed together,' but does inherently privilege the fundamental mode of being as a being in space, the life - basho.

To exist in betweenness is to exist within the life-space. Furthermore, to exist in a spatial basho means nothing other than to exist as a human being by virtue of one's body; I exist in my body, occupying the spatial basho of here and now.46

Watsuji’s concept of being denies ascribing a privileged position to self-consciousness, prohibiting any belief in the mind being more

43In keeping with Japanese conventions the surname or family name is written first, followed by the individual or personal name


45Yuasa, The Body 38.

important than the body in an ontological hierarchy. As the fundamental mode of existence in the world, space consciousness enables temporal events within space to emphasize the mind-body acting and being acted upon in unison. Sense perception is not viewed as an act apart from the mind, self-consciousness is not a privileged method of knowing.

For them, what is known through the senses must be immediately the mind.\textsuperscript{47}

In regard to Watsuji’s 'between' and the relationships of subject and object, the meanings created through their interconnection are perceived on various levels: Watsuji terms the interconnection a "carnal interconnection," and distinguishes it from "physical or psychological relatedness, nor even their conjunction."

This 'carnal interconnection' is a term that inhibits the mind-body unity from being divided and ascribed different value preferences within the perceptive framework of 'being-in-the-world.' As Yuasa interprets it,

Watsuji says human relationships are neither psychological nor simply physical, nor even the conjunction between the two. From the outset, we are not to think of the body apart from the mind. In other words, the fundamental mode of being human must be grasped as the unity of mind-body or the 'oneness of the body-mind' (shinjin khinyo).\textsuperscript{48}

As explicated by Yuasa, Watsuji’s thought provides conceptual propositions that question the primacy of individual self-consciousness. In so doing it positions the inbetween of subject and object as fundamental to any experience of existence. This being the case, the boundaries of subject-object as conceived of from a self-conscious position are no longer applicable. It would seem that within this framework, the subject-object becomes an inseparable unity a "oneness of body-mind (shinjin ichinyo)."

In summary, considering Watsuji’s work in relation to general Western concepts of subjectivity, Yuasa highlights the following difference:

As already stated, we may recognise in Watsuji’s view of the person an emphasis on space as the basho of human existence, thereby stressing the spatial existence of the body. In the traditional Western view of humanity on the other hand, time (or

\textsuperscript{47}Yuasa, The Body 46.

\textsuperscript{48}Yuasa, The Body 48.
historicity) is generally constituted to be more important than space, the mind more important than the body. 49

This emphasis on the body is represented in both Nishida Kintaro’s concept of ‘being’ and in Dōgen and Kūkai’s construction of ‘body.’ It is necessary only to briefly introduce Nishida’s ideas here, as intuition maintains a central position within his concept of body and a larger elaboration upon this framework takes place in the Intuition section of this chapter. It is sufficient to mention here that Yuasa presents Nishida as considering the self-conscious mode of being as inauthentic and the basho dimension as activating the true self through a two-way process of ‘active intuition.’ Nishida also presented the body as embracing instrumentality: not only do instruments extend it but from the position of activity, the body itself could be understood as an instrument as Yuasa explicates:

An instrument is a thing and the world is the interconnection of things in their totality.... Here, if we grasp the human being-in-the-world with respect to bodily action, the self is primarily inseparable from the body; the body always accompanies a human being’s instrumental nature and, moreover, the instrument’s being has its foundation in the being of things as objects. Ultimately, the world is the total interconnection of the being of things. Consequently, as a being-in-the-world seen from the aspect of the body’s objectivity, the human being is a knot or a node in the reticulate interconnection of objective beings, in the network of self-body-instruments-things-world. 50

This concept is perhaps somehow related to Deleuze and Guattari’s work on assemblage becomings and certainly opens up the subject beyond the borders of the corporeal membrane. As an extensive network of interconnection, parallels may also be drawn with the Esoteric idea of an Etheric Web.

Yuasa critiques Watsuji’s inadequacy in not providing a clear delineation of what constitutes the state of ordinary self-consciousness and the state of basho (an attempt is made by Yuasa within this text with reference to Heidegger and Husserl). Yuasa also points out that Nishida did not explicitly state how one was to move from the state of self-consciousness to the basho vis-à-vis nothing, whilst this process was central to Dōgen’s practice. 51 For Dōgen the process of ‘transmigration’ from self-consciousness to the basho dimension is achieved through meditation practices that focus upon cultivating particular states of consciousness. These techniques are also to be elaborated upon later in this chapter, however here it is relevant to note the centrality of these practices for Dōgen’s concept

49 Yuasa, The Body 42.
50 Yuasa, The Body 54.
51 Yuasa, The Body 123.
of body-mind, and that the privileging of the body over the mind distinctive in Watsuji's approach is present within Dōgen's.

Dōgen's perspective was influenced by Kūkai52 (774-835) a legendary figure of Japanese culture, associated with founding what is called Esoteric or Shingon Buddhism. The informing principles reflect Indian influences derived from Tantric Yogic sutras whilst its form developed from Chinese traditions.

Kūkai developed a series of stages of mind that need to be cultivated in the process towards satori or enlightenment. Unique to this theory is Kūkai's proposition of "the dharma body expounding the dharma."53 This is a development of the third body of the Buddha as presented in the Mahayana teachings — the ultimate or absolute Buddha. The preceding two bodies of Buddha within the trinity are the incarnate Buddha (nirmāṇa-kaya) and the reward body of the Buddha (sambogha-kaya). The dharma body is the cosmic body, beyond form and matter, and constitutes what is understood as the 'true body.'

As previously conceived by Chinese interpretations Dharmakaya is represented as transcendent esoteric knowledge. Kūkai posited that it was not only possible to know the process of cultivation for satori but that Dharmakaya spoke this knowledge, this dharma to each student of cultivation. That is, the voice of the ultimate if perceivable within the mind's interior.54 Kūkai's essential proposition was that becoming Buddha was possible within a corporeal body, in "this very body."

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52Kukai also known as Kobo Daishi.

53Dharma: "From the Sanskrit dhr ("to sustain, support, uphold"). An open ended term with many related meanings: appropriate ritual, duty, truth, and the elements of ontology; also law, righteousness, property, that which is proper, fate, that one's role in life is metaphysically determined, that the orders of human life and of the universe are intimately related and interactive .... The normative sense of dharma in Buddhism began with Buddha's teachings in which dharmas are ethical prescriptions .... Dharma is also associated with true doctrine, and so, once again, with the teachings of Buddha. The texts which record the teachings were called dharmas, .... By association Buddha was called a dharma, and the Buddhadharma led to the Mahayana idea of dharmakaya or "body of dharma," that is, the Buddha as absolute underlying reality. There is a second Buddhist identification of dharma with reality, the Buddhist doctrine of aggregates supposes that eality is composed of many elements. These elements are called Dharmas and existence is viewed as a flux of dharmas." Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 172-173.
Kukai qtd. in Yuasa, The Body 132.

54Kukai qtd. in Yuasa, The Body 132.
This body is my body, the Buddha body, and the bodies of all sentient beings. They are all named the “body” ... This body is, no doubt, that body. That body is, no doubt, this body. The Buddha body is no doubt the bodies of all sentient beings, and the bodies of all sentient beings are no doubt the Buddha body. They are different, but yet identical. They are not different, but yet different.55

The point of commencement for cultivation in Kūkai’s scheme is investigation of sexuality and it is here that the influence of Tantric Indian traditions (that involve movement and ritual in its cultivation methods) upon Kūkai is most evident. As noted by Yuasa, *Tantra, giki* refers to "rules of iconography... methods of ritual offerings and incantations" in Japanese.56 This interpretation indicates the way in which interpenetration with Dharmakaya was entered into. These techniques include creation and mediation upon *mandalas*,57 formation of *mudras* (hand gestures) and the recitation of *mantras* (sacred words/sounds). All three processes intimately involve physical participation. In short, their practice enables entry into a transcendent-immanent realm of Dharmakaya.

As Thomas Kasulis notes, Kūkai’s concept of body includes the physical form, Dharmakaya (Sanskrit), and "the products of thought, word and deed — that is pattern, letter and gesture."58 Therefore the entire universe as conceptualised in a Western framework is a constituent of 'my' body and, similar to Western Esoteric philosophy’s concept of 'living nature,' its elements are expressions and gestures for interpretation and representing 'my' indicative nature. The Law of Correspondences can also be seen as working within this framework. The Buddha’s body is the cosmos and Kūkai’s body is the Buddha — all interpenetrating and acting within and 'being' it.59 Kasulis offers an appropriate explication of Dharmakaya (Dainichi) that stresses the processuality inherent in this conceptualisation of body-mind.

We must take care not to construe Dainichi's personhood in the Western sense of soul or ego identity. Given the general Buddhist perspective of no ego, we can say that Dainichi is not an agent who acts but the act itself. Dainichi, like any person, is not what has body; he [sic] is the corporeal process. Dainichi is not what has speech;

55Kukai qtd. in Yuasa, *The Body* 156.

56Yuasa, *The Body* 137.


59Kasulis, "Reality as Embodiment" 169
he [sic] is the verbal process. He [sic] is not what has a mind but the mental process. In short, Dainichi is not a thing but an event.\textsuperscript{60}

Esoteric Buddhist practice aims at harmonising with the acts of Dharmakaya. Kasulis notes that this is why reality is treated as a resonance or a vibration within Kūkai's metaphysics. Mantras, mudras and mandalas can be considered as tools used for cultivating conscious alignment with Dharmakaya.

In summary, Kūkai presents \textit{satori} as achievable right now because as Dharmakaya is all universal embodiment he is also present within my corporeal body and it processes. As opposed to the more cerebrally orientated Buddhist practices, that emphasise mental control over the desires of physical existence, Kūkai does not posit negating the body as an essential part of the process towards \textit{satori} and privileges it within his framework for cultivation.

Without abandoning this body,
One attains supernatural power over the object world,
Wanders freely in the state of the great void.
And, moreover, accomplishes the Bodily mystery (\textit{shin himitsu}) ...
If you want to enter Perfection (Siddhi) in this life,
Comply with (your Buddha's) empowerment and contemplate on it.
After receiving the Mantra (of your Buddha) personally from your reverend teacher,
Meditate on it until you become united with it. Then you will attain perfection.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{Summary}

In general the three types of bodies discussed within this chapter all present an understanding of body that does not support ontological distinctions between the physical form and consciousness. In their specific conceptions each present corporeality as permeable, open to effects and affects that stretch its influence beyond its physical bounds. It is these types of bodies that are proposed to inhabit the shifting 'grounds' discussed in the previous chapter. Constituted of the metaphysics discussed in the Preceeding section, and by their own definition implicit in their processuality, these are the bodies that defy subject-object duality. How, if at all, their effects can be measured, and the practices proposed for the cultivation of consciousness required to recognise the subtle effects and affects produced by such bodily interaction, are the focal points for the next two chapters.

\textsuperscript{60}Kasulis, "Reality as Embodiment" 172.

\textsuperscript{61} Kukai qtd. in Kasulis, "Reality as Embodiment" 179.
Chapter Five

Subtle bodies: the object of surveillance by Parapsychologists

A much maligned science, the study of parapsychology has persevered for over 100 years. Parapsychology, or psychical research, is the study of paranormal phenomena. That is, experiences and their causes that cannot be explained in terms of direct causality by contemporary scientific discourse. As such parapsychology could be understood to embrace a type of experience historically referred to as magic, understood as manifesting physical results by a subject who by thought, intent, ritual, speech, or other such symbolic action covertly interacts with another physical object. The positioning of magic as a key issue for parapsychology is noted by John Beloff who, in a history of parapsychology, notes the influence of occult thought on its development and indeed selects the Renaissance (a time of great development in the occult sciences) as the commencement point for his study, following which he marks the Scientific Revolution — sparked by Galileo and solidified by Newton — as creating the boundaries between what was to be considered normal, and what was to be paranormal in the scientific disciplines.

From our point of view, its [the Scientific Revolution's] significance lay in its uncompromising mechanism or determinism which left no room for free-will or, ultimately, for any intervention of mind in nature be it humane or divine ... [it] disposed of the awe and mystery with which an unfathomable nature had been shrouded in the past and, more particularly, of the possibility of any extraneous interventions whether by the Deity or by the caprice of any other supernatural agent. It also discredited the residues of magical thinking or practices derived from esoteric, occult or obscurantist sources.

It is the agenda of mechanistic frameworks of reality to denigrate studies of phenomena not explainable within their parameters, and to position such studies as having dubious methods and merit. It is the studies undertaken by Parapsychologists that have endeavoured to account for the type of body and its effectual abilities discussed in the previous chapter. Although the examples chosen for discussion drew upon different cartographies of subtle bodies, all shared the same perspective of de-centring the physical frame from being the single most important boundary when considering definitions of the self. In such challenges to direct physical causation — a subtle mind-matter — forces and actions are proposed as providing the

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3 Beloff, Parapsychology 9.
network along which affect is carried between units generally understood to be discontiguous, but are ultimately presented within the frameworks of subtle material as not supporting objects or subjects as having closed physical borders, but rather as continually involved in a process of subtle interchange. Similarly, parapsychology can be understood as a study of such forces, affects, mind-matter.

Mesmerism, a strong preceding influence for contemporary parapsychology, also delineated a subtle material, in this case a fluid, as a fundamental ontological principle that disrupted materialist definitions of existence. This fluid was not delineated as purely spiritual or purely material but, rather, its ambiguous nature could be considered both or understood primarily as one or the other: this enabled Mesmer’s ideas to be adopted and elaborated upon by diverse proponents seeking to unify science and esotericism/religion, as pointed out by Hanegraaff.⁴

Mermerism was founded by a Viennese physician, Anton Mesmer who, in a doctoral thesis De influxu planetarum in corpus humanum (1766), posited what Faivre describes as "an invisible fluid that flows everywhere and that serves as a vehicle for mutual influence among heavenly bodies, Earth, and living things."⁵ Apart from formulating theories to account for paranormal phenomenon, Mesmerism was primarily a healing art. As such its founding concepts are similar to Chinese qi or Indian prana. Beloff notes its similarity to qi-gong, a branch of traditional Chinese medicine: both Mesmerism and qi-gong involve the redirection of what is considered to be the universal life force. For qi-gong this is an energy, for Mesmerism it is a magnetic fluid.⁶ In mesmerist practice one healing technique, developed by the famous French practitioner J. P. Deleuze, involved the creation of magnetised bottled water which the patient would drink: this healing modality is still practiced today.⁷ Of course one can also count amongst conceptualisations of universal energy or force Bergson’s élan vital — the creative force of the Divine to which is attributed fluidic properties.

Hanegraaff situates Mesmer’s fluid within the following context of ideological development:

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⁴Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 434.
⁵Faivre, Access 77.
⁶Beloff, Parapsychology 36.
⁷Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 486.
Mersmer's fluid is a modern manifestation of long-standing speculations about a "subtle" agent, deriving ultimately from the Artisotolian and Stoic concepts of pneuma and the Platonic ochêma. These ancient authorities became foundational for a complicated cluster of traditions, which include medieval theory of medical spirits (natural, vital, animal) and the neoplatonic concept of the astral body. These theories of subtle matter are prominently represented in western esotericism (which is, of course not surprising given its many expressions of Naturphilosophie on a neoplatonic/hermetic foundation), and Mesmer's indebtedness to the occult sciences has been recognized by his enemies and defenders alike.\(^8\)

Unlike the practitioners in these earlier traditions, Mesmer subjected this subtle matter to scientific forms of investigation. In fact, it could be argued that, similar to Theosophy's objectives, Mesmer utilised the methods, procedures and discourse of scientific reason to study phenomena that were categorically rejected by the same scientific world view. Whether conscious or not, this strategy sought to create a validity for the existence and study of subtle matter through its method.

Parapsychology incorporated the perspective and practice of investigating subtle matter by utilising a scientific methodology from the Mesmerists, and also embraced their central concern for seeking reconciliation between scientific and spiritual discourses.

David Ray Griffin draws this historically ridiculed 'science' into a consideration with contemporary postmodern studies in Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality,\(^9\) describing the postmodern worldview in the following way:

The call for a postmodern worldview, by contrast, is a call for one that would keep the gains of modernity while overcoming some restrictions within the modern paradigm that were not essential to those gains. In brief, a postmodern outlook would retain that peculiar combination of empiricism and rationality that has been fundamental to the scientific progress that has distinguished the modern West from other cultures. It would retain this rational empiricism, however, while overcoming those assumptions — such as the equation of perception with sense-perception and the more general belief that all causal influence is between contiguous events — that have led defenders of the modern worldview dogmatically to deny well-attested facts, such as those of parapsychology.\(^10\)

A founding Director of the Process Studies Centre, at the University of Claremont, Griffin draws upon Whiteheadian process metaphysics to construct a viable ground upon which discussions of parapsychological phenomena can take place. This is a site where the sceptics' heckles are laboriously examined, then rebuked by the

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\(^8\)Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 433.


\(^10\)Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 34-35.
same logical process with which they were initially created and previously sustained. That is, Griffin methodically examines the arguments of materialism and dualism, identifies problems pertaining to each philosophical approach, highlighting those that are shared by both. By drawing attention to these issues (in a logical manner), Griffin systematically undermines the foundations of materialism and dualism. The unresolvable contentions and inadequate formulations of the materialist theories examined by Griffin collectively undermine the substantiality of each theory. At the conclusion of this evaluation, Griffin identifies the 'root' of the mind-body problem to be the ontological distinction between matter and consciousness developed by dualists and 'taken over' by materialists.\textsuperscript{11} The dismissal of materialist and dualist arguments becomes possible through the door thrown wide by process philosophy.

Parapsychology also creates a portal through which ideas from Esoteric traditions (such as influence at a distance and 'life' after 'death') can leak into more ratified and serious scientific and philosophical domains, highlighting their processural underbelly (suggesting that the Esoteric Traditions are Western Philosophy's underbelly — their Etheric body). Griffin is careful to construct parapsychology as a phenomenon supporting a naturalistic theology (Spinozist) as opposed to the supernaturalistic beliefs embraced by Descartes \textit{et. al.}. In his discussion of the shared problems of the dualists and materialists in relation to mind-body divisions, Griffin inevitably draws attention to the difficulty in creating borderlines between sentient and insentient matter.\textsuperscript{12} With the capacity for experience and self-determination as characteristic of sentience, he notes that previously considered insentient matter is being proved by science to be comprised of molecular units that exhibit these very qualities, whilst also noting that to question the assumption that matter is devoid of experience is to question a fundamental precept of mechanistic world views which in his opinion are an underlying element of modernity.

This argument builds on the fact, ... that nature as portrayed by modern science not only does not suggest a clear place to draw a line between sentient and insentient things, but also suggests, with its evolutionary continuities, the probability that no such place exists. This suggestion, that experience and spontaneity may go all the way down, has been increasingly supported as the scientific study of nature has become increasingly subtle. To give only a few examples: more and more ethologists are rejecting a behavioristic approach to nonhuman animals, saying that experience must be attributed to even quite low-level animals, such as bees, to make sense of

\textsuperscript{11}Griffin, \textit{Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality} 128.

\textsuperscript{12}Griffin, \textit{Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality} 122-123.
their behavior. Researchers have even found evidence that bacteria, the lowest forms of life, make decisions based on memory.\textsuperscript{13}

Griffin does not embrace the belief that things at every level of existence have experience, and excludes 'objects' like telephone books. Rejecting the more radical position that Ethology offers, Griffin converts Panpsychism\textsuperscript{14} into what he perceives as a less hierarchal model — Panexperientialism. Griffin understands 'pan' to refer not to all things but all individuals who are defined by spontaneity or self determination. Considering 'psyche' as denoting a 'higher' mode of conscious experience, Griffin adopts 'experience' to reflect his argument that non-sensory perception is fundamental, not a selective evolutionary development. In so doing Griffin is adopting a Whitheadian concept of 'pre-hension.'

If all individuals, even those without sensory organs, can have experiences of other things, then obviously some form of non-sensory perception preceded sensory perception.\textsuperscript{15}

All 'individuals' no matter of what complexity or intensity are attributed a fundamental non-sensory mode of apprehension and expression. This mode of consciousness however is conceived by Griffin to be "for the most part" unconscious: it is the degree of intensity which, in this framework, is equatable with emotion that allows for the pre-hensive to rise up to conscious awareness.\textsuperscript{16} The pre-hensive can be understood to embrace qualities of immediate apprehension traditionally ascribed to intuitive modes of perception.

From a panexperientialist point of view, emotion and perception are simply two sides of the same process. To perceive something is to be causally influenced by it, to exert causal influence on something is to be perceived (prehended) by it.\textsuperscript{17}

Griffin's demarcation of Panexperientialism as being opposed to Panpsychism contradicts his construction of distinctions between two types of individuals and the criteria he employs to enable the division. Only complex organisms with a dominant individual constituent are considered to be "true individuals" capable of

\textsuperscript{13}Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 132.

\textsuperscript{14} Panpsychism: "the theory that everything that really exists in the world is a mind or consciousness", from the Greek, everything is possessed of Soul. Bullock, Modern Thought 625. See also Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 545-546.

\textsuperscript{15}Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 137.

\textsuperscript{16}Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 143.

\textsuperscript{17}Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 145.
spontaneity and self-determination, whilst aggregational organisms, with a multiplicity of individuals of equitable power and experience, are not individuals in the same sense and, as such, are not represented by the 'Pan' of Panexperientialism. This division is reliant upon the very hierarchical order and privileging he was keen to avoid, one which relies on the development of and privileging of 'higher' levels of consciousness created by emergent evolutionary complexity.

Although it is a more conservative approach to intensive relationships, devised with distinctions still in place between matter and consciousness (premised upon dominance of visual data), Griffin elucidates a fundamental connection between all matter-minds that is not as evident in the Gatens, Deleuze and Guattari inspired Ethological universe. By positing pre-hension as fundamental (an activity or propensity not a particular or universal) Griffin constructs a complex web of non-sensory communication as a fundamental ground of being. It is the 'Etheric Web' of Esoteric philosophies which carries non-sensory data (only non-sensory to a general visually dominated conscious awareness) allowing for the manifestation of influence at a distance and other 'paranormal' occurrences traditionally studied by parapsychology.

According to the panexperientialist ontology, in fact, the causal interconnectedness of the world is constituted by an infinitely complex web of nonsensory perceptions.

Parapsychology can therefore be understood as a practice that adopts scientific methods of investigation when studying subtle bodies, with modes of consciousness such as the pre-hensive proposed to fill the chasm between non-sensory perception and perception of non-sensory occurrences by conscious awareness. When placed in a Theosophical framework, this science could be understood as an attempt to 'measure' or ratify as 'real' the functions of matter-consciousness on Etheric, Astral and Mental and Buddhic levels of the Planes of Consciousness, and their impact upon the physical world. As with Theosophical literature, Griffin proposes that the majority of non-sensory perception remains un-perceived by rational consciousness. Similarly, Griffin's model also implies planes, with the pre-hensive attributed a basic ground level, on top of which other modes of consciousness (i.e. rational) have been developed. This implies a consciousness of depth from which experience 'arises.' Not only does Griffin's framework privilege extensity across a physical plane, but it stacks its development vertically. However, this model does not advocate 'evolution' as necessary to the development of non-sensory or intuitive

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18 Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 133.

19 Griffin, Parapsychology: Philosophy and Spirituality 142.
consciousness (as Theosophical frameworks do): individual complexity has no bearing on the pre-hensive, and in fact may be considered as detrimental to the access of such activities of consciousness.

The nature of non-sensory perception and the way its affects/effects are brought to awareness has been perceived as the role of intuition in disparate countries, civilisations and philosophical traditions. Parapsychology represents a moment when Western scientific frameworks were brought to bear upon its occurrence. Interestingly, Henri Bergson’s project of revolt against mechanistic models of life, that embraced processual dynamics, also privileges intuition as the mode of consciousness required to perceive the fluidity of the ’real.’ This concept of the ’real’ includes the concerns of parapsychology — non-sensory perception as exhibited in influence at distance (telepathy) and survival after physical decay.

Like Theosophy, Parapsychology can be seen as an attempt to bridge the polarities of science and religion, with the underlying aim of proposing scientifically respectable models of existence in order to challenge materialist and mechanistic concepts. Henri Bergson was very much a part of this moment and can be seen as having influential relations with both occult and parapsychological projects of the day.

Always sensitive to the charge that he was doing irreparable harm to the scientific tradition, Bergson insisted that his metaphysical philosophy was not merely an appeal to an inner and profound life, but also an attempt to “re-create the bridge, broken down since Kant’s day, between metaphysics and science.” What Bergson was trying to do in large part in the generation following 1889 (and this only becomes clear with the appearance of Creative Evolution in 1907) was validate esoteric ideals through empirical and rational means.20

To elucidate only the parapsychological interest at this point, Bergson was actively engaged in supporting and promoting investigation into the paranormal. Even during its heyday, Parapsychology was far from being an accepted area of study, and many scholars refrained from interaction with its societies and projects for fear of damage to their reputations. 21 However, Bergson championed the cause, joining the Institute Psychologique Internationale and the Institute Général Psychologique in 1900. In addition to these local associations, Bergson accepted an invitation to join the Society for Psychical Research (founded in Cambridge in 1882) in 1909, and was elected President in 1913.


Robert C. Grogin considers Bergson's oeuvre within the context of occult and parapsychological investigations of the time:

Henri Bergson, a philosopher of mysticism and a theoretician of the occult, was something more substantial than an isolated academic writing learned articles for professional journals. From his highly influential chair at the Collège de France he was uniquely positioned to lead the attack against mechanistic science and to transmit occult ideas on mysticism and vitalism to the public at large. From this platform of respectability Bergson could transmit those ideas to the public in terms that carried prestige, and in the process, enter into some of the major controversies of the period.\(^{22}\)

Grogin's thesis considers telepathy and survival after death as the primary themes of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, in which Bergson elucidated his theories concerning matter (image) and memory (spirit) and the role intuition plays in apprehending duration. The overall argument was pitched against mechanistic models of mind-body interaction and the result was a psychophysical parallelism (the belief that each psychical process has a corresponding physical process). For Bergson, memory exists independently of the physical brain and such a concept is useful to arguments supporting survival of consciousness after death.\(^{23}\)

Grogin's text clearly illustrates the role that parapsychology played as a bridge between esoteric and religious concerns and science. Bergson can be understood as a figure whose work embraced an approach towards the synthesis of science and religion to both popular and academic attention. It is quite evident that parapsychology was influenced by the same Esoteric tradition and scientific impetus out of which Theosophy grew, and Bergson's oeuvre sits in an intended relationship to both, their ideals of subtle bodies allowing for both extensive and intensive relationships constructed in schemes of interpenetrating planes, and both were premised upon the intuitive faculty. Bergson noted that telepathy probably operated at such a low level of intensity that it remained unperceived by consciousness.

Amongst Western philosophers, it is Bergson who has contributed the most toward developing an understanding of intuition as a method of perceiving the ontological foundation of being. It is intuition and its cultivation, that will allow for an ethological/subtle exchange between viewer and artwork to be registered by conscious perception.

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\(^{22}\) Grogin, *The Bergson Controversy* 98.

\(^{23}\) Grogin, *The Bergson Controversy* 57.
Chapter Six

Intuition: subtle actions and creative perception

Intuition is the obvious other of ratiocination logical intelligence and, as such, is both constructed and maintained by rational discourse. Excluded from Western epistemology, feminised and — by extension of this gendering — ridiculed by the power brokers privileging rational methodology, it is a form of (il)logic that has been relegated to a dim corner. It shares this murky location with other subjects deemed 'wishy-washy' like innate religious experience and, by extension, aesthetic appreciation, especially the sublime of Immanuel Kant. This has been the dominant idea of intuition embraced by Western society since the Renaissance.

If intuition is considered the opposite dyad of reason then it can equally be coupled with process philosophy, the latter being the other of substance philosophy. The affinity of this correspondent coupling may be borne out in consideration of Bergson's work, in particular the positioning of intuition as the faculty most able to perceive the reality of the world in its fundamental mode of fluidity, prior to any process of selection and abstraction into subjects and objects.

That which is commonly called a fact is not reality as it appears to immediate intuition, but an adaptation of the real to the interests of practice and to the exigencies of social life. Pure intuition, external or internal, is that of an undivided continuity. We break up this continuity into elements laid side by side, which correspond in the one case to distinct words, in the other to independent objects.¹

In general, both Esoteric and Eastern conceptualisations of intuition present a more favourable bias, often attributing a higher status in relation to logical thought to this mode of consciousness. It has also been noted that the faculty of consciousness understood as intuition is central to Esoteric and Eastern understandings of the mind-body interrelationship and of an ontological mode of 'being' in the world. Further, the development of intuitive consciousness is understood to enable the grasp of the ground of being, a process in which subjectivity and objectivity are dissolved. In short, intuition is considered within the frameworks discussed herein as a valid form of sense perception, and a means of acquiring knowledge that permits a reconsideration of subject-object interrelationships.

Considered thus, intuition can be viewed as the most applicable mode of consciousness for apprehending not only process in general and the Real as envisaged by Bergson but, in particular, the subtle processes of exchange typified in subject-object interrelationships as

¹ Bergson, Matter and Memory 183.
conceived by process ontologies. As a fluid mode of consciousness, it could be positioned as most apt to engage with and apprehend the fluid becomings of subjectivity and objectivity as embodied in temporal art practices.

The following continues the triadic lines of investigation previously adhered to, but with the Western Process and Esoteric perspectives on intuition being exemplified together in the adaptation of Bergsonian ideas on intuition to a meditation on Esoteric symbolism by a Hermetic Christianity. Although not isolated from these considerations, the Eastern perspective, shall be presented as a second model, its specific conceptualisation not linking directly across streams in the direct manner that the aforementioned does: rather, it centres on consideration of intuition and its function from the perspective of Japanese philosopher Nishida Kintaro.

It is hoped that the examples discussed herein shall further delineate intuition as a mode of consciousness necessarily active in the perception of temporal modalities of being ('becoming') and, therefore temporal art practices. The similar understandings conditioning interpretation of intuition will cohere to form a ground from which the intuitive may be considered as a viable perceptive modality for aesthetic interpretation. Thus activating intuition in the light of its etymological underpinnings; in and tueri, Latin — to look at.²

Esoteric Intuition

In A Treatise on White Magic Djwhal Khul (D.K.) via Alice A. Bailey discusses what he [sic] terms the 'esoteric sense.'

We have seen that the objective of all inner training is to develop the esoteric sense, and to unfold that inner sensitive awareness which will enable a man [sic] to function, not only as a Son of God in physical incarnation but as one who also possesses that continuity of consciousness which will enable him to be interiorly awake as well as exteriorly alive. This is accomplished through developing the power to be a trained observer.³

The esoteric sense is defined by D.K as a state of mind that requires detachment from 'form' (subject-object) requiring the ability for observation outside of such relations. Implicit in the above-cited quotation is the recourse to intuition as a constitutive faculty of consciousness of the 'esoteric sense.' The Ageless Wisdom

²Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 345.

³Bailey, A Treatise on White Magic 609.
Teachings, as the Bailey teachings are known, embrace the following understanding of intuition:

The intuition (as the philosopher understands it) is the ability to arrive at knowledge through the activity of some innate sense, apart from the reasoning or logical processes. It comes into activity when the resources of the lower mind have been used, explored and exhausted. Then, and only then, the true intuition begins to function. It is the sense of synthesis, the ability to think in wholes, and to touch the world of causes.4

As previously discussed, intuitive matter-consciousness is the constituent of the fourth Plane of Perception, the plane of Buddhi that, following the esoteric law of correspondences is reflected in the sixth Plane of Perception, the Astral. It is for this reason that perceptions and affects of the Astral body would greatly participate in any sensitive exchange with artistic practice, its matter-consciousness inherently attuned to sense stimulation and emotional evocation. With the development of intuitive consciousness, the domination of the emotionally polarised Astral body would be subdued in order for the clear reception of intuitive perceptions to take place within that body. This process is achieved through the cultivation of detachment from emotional states precipitated upon subject-object dualities. The increasing awareness and use of intuitive faculties results in what Bailey/D.K. calls the "detached observer."

Working from within the Bailey tradition, Maureen Temple Richmond characterises intuition as a process that requires a perceived interrelationship with the 'whole,' and notes the requirements for such perception involve cultivation practices with regard to thought and action.

Clearly, the intuition functions to reveal specific knowledge, though that knowledge can only be apprehended within the context of wholeness ... The capacity to capture Buddhic impression requires a degree of deliberate control over processes of normal thought and areas of nonverbal consciousness that exist beyond even the higher subplanes of the Mental Plane.5

Interestingly, the understanding of intuition requiring the context of the 'whole' in order to function, is extended in the understanding that, as a faculty of consciousness, intuition is necessarily orientated toward 'group' cognisance rather than individual subjectivity. This leads Richmond to the characterisation of intuition as "the perceiver...

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4Bailey, Esoteric Astrology 516.

of wholes and the relations within it." Similarly, Bergson also presents intuition as the faculty required to perceive the 'whole.'

In general Theosophical and Hermetic cartographies consider intuitive consciousness as a faculty active between and inclusive to variable degrees of reason and the assumed incomprehensible state of immersion in the 'absolute.' It takes on the role of an Antahkarana (Sanskrit) — the path or bridge — that serves as a medium of communication between the two. In this sense it can once again be seen to correspond with the Astral body and Plane of Perception.

In the Hermetic Tarot the intuition of the 'reader' is required to pass divinatory communication to the seeker. Intuition operates as an intermediary path between strangers and as a tool for translation purposes. Aside from divinatory purposes, the cards portray the "game of life" and are a teaching tool that pictorially illustrates the Esoteric wisdom teachings. Meditation upon the cards' individual images and the relationships between them as they fall in the game, reveal layer upon layer of esoteric knowledge. The key to unveiling the symbolic knowledge requires the development of the intuitive faculties. Initiation into the esoteric teachings was premised upon a structured development of the student's intuition as guided by a

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6 Richmond, Sirius 54.

7 Antione Faivre defines Hermeticism as follows:
"In English, the word "Hermeticism" (adjective "hermetic") designates a) the Alexandrian Greek texts and teachings (called Hermetica) from the beginig of our era, associated with the name of Hermes Trismegistus, as well as works and currents directly inspired by the Hermetica, chiefly from the sixteenth century onwards; b) Alchemy; c) Both a) and b) simultaneously and in general manner most of the forms taken by modern esotericism (e.g., Christian Kabbalism, Paracelsism, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy)." Faivre, Access 53.

In this context the more specific reference is to Christian Kabbalism and the Alexandrian Greek tradition.


9 In this context 'antahkarana' is understood as outlined by Richmond below, however, divergent etymologies have been given for this term. See Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 26.
Antahkarana: A fusion of two Sanskrit words, antara (between) and karana (cause), this word signifies the channel of subtle matter connecting the ephemeral personality with the soul, the spiritual triad, and the monad. Richmond, Sirius 369.

10 Tarot: a noun of obscure heritage, first appearing in the fifteenth century and believed to be derived from the Latin rota 'wheel'— similar to the meaning of Chakra.
Master. The images on the cards contain a multiplicity of specific esoteric meanings but remain simple but odd diagrams of generic characters, life events and cosmic constituents to the uninitiated. The 22 Major Arcana cards present archetypal energies: e.g, Fool — Temperance — The Star, and the 56 Minor Arcana are divided into four suits — Cups, Wands, Discs, Swords — which represent more mundane activities and resemble the contemporary playing card deck. These suits are ascribed elemental correspondences: Cups — water; Wands — fire; Discs — earth; Swords — Air, and their relationship to one another in a spread can be considered in terms of the phenomenal effects the elements have upon one another.\textsuperscript{11}

Intuition is viewed esoterically as a form of consciousness superior to the intellect (third Plane), and what is commonly understood as clairvoyant consciousness (mediated through the sixth Astral Plane and therefore open to the 'illusion' of emotion and desire).

Intuition arises in a person by their clear reception of energies from the fourth Plane of Perception, the Buddhic realm of pure intuition. The clarity and incidence of intuition being brought into the everyday physical world depends upon the conscious development of the lower three faculties through meditation on Esoteric texts like the Tarot.

Within the Tarot, the eighteenth card, The Moon, represents intellectual consciousness. Contrary to the binary divisions of mainstream Western philosophy, the rational intellect is herein represented by feminine not masculine attributes — Moon and water — whilst the following card, The Sun, represents intuition. These ideas are drawn from an Anonymous author, identified by Antoine Faivre as Valentin Tomberg, a Russian professor of Law,\textsuperscript{12} in Meditations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism. Tomberg continues the deliberation on the Moon card with a lengthy and rich discussion of the card's symbology — two dogs, two towers, crayfish in stagnant water, the moon — by questioning the apparent negative and retrograde movement suggested by the images. For example:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11}See: Palmer Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages, ch. CXXIX.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{12}Faivre, Access 98.
\end{flushleft}
Further, just as the crayfish moves backwards in swimming, so does human intelligence move backwards, i.e. in the direction 'effect-cause,' when it is engaged in the act of knowledge that is proper to it. 13

Much of Tomberg's meditations are built from Henri Bergson's concept of intuition and the élan vital (life force immanent to nature) developed in Creative Evolution.

For Bergson intuition is a lived act, one tied by its nature to temporality (duration) and is therefore the most appropriate mode through which to comprehend the real. Within a Bergsonian framework, states of consciousness are perceived not as things but as processes, constituted by various rhythms that change in every moment by the deductions and additions of memory. The Moon represents Bergson's intelligence-matter whilst The Sun represents its pair, duration-spirit.

Briefly, Bergson proposes planes of consciousness that range between a plane of action to the plane of pure memory, the latter described as akin to the plane of dream. Differentiation between the planes is by degree, whilst differentiation between the two activities of consciousness — memory and perception — are in kind. Still dualist in nature, Bergson positions memory as the interaction between spirit and matter, whose duration is to be considered most clear to the 'inner life,' whilst memory remains mixed with perception in conscious everyday experience, and must be treated separately: its pure form theoretical rather than practical. For Bergson the temporal is spirit and therefore it would be in the intuitive contemplation of temporal works that illumination of an immanent or transcendent nature could most evidently take place, rather than in the contemplation of 'static' geometrical or expressive abstractions as privileged by Western art history. The privileging of geometric abstraction may have developed from Pythagorean geometry and its numerological cosmology, another tangent of Western Esotericism.

Bergson's links to Western esotericism, occult circles and fraternities (so popular during the period 1880-1920) extended beyond his participation in parapsychological research to include familial associations. His sister Mina, was married to Samuel Macgregor Mathers, the leader of the Order of the Golden Dawn during the 1890s, its most popular years. The Golden Dawn was a hermetic group founded in England in 1887.14 Bergson was also reputedly a member of the 'Thirteen Club,' an exclusive membership of thirteen members who met on the thirteenth of every month to

13 [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 494-5.

14 Grogin, The Bergson Controversy 40.
discuss psychic phenomena. While not openly supportive of the more radical mystical occult practices, Bergson's work can be viewed as embracing similar processual and anti-mechanistic frameworks. He was most certainly acquainted with the ideas and practices (if only in theory) that supported the occult revival in the West during the later part of the nineteenth century. Groin notes:

According to his brother-in-law, Macgregor Mathers, Bergson was not in the least bit interested in magic: "I have shown him everything that magic can do and it has had no effect on him." Nevertheless, psychical research was every bit as much an integral part of the occult revival as mysticism, spiritualism or magic, and despite attempts to claim a special distinction for it, it was generally recognised as a branch of the occult by researchers themselves.

Another aspect of this revival was the popularity of hermetic Christianity, Valentin Tomberg clearly exemplifies this tradition and its support for Bergsonian ideas.

The 'inner life' of which Bergson speaks is most clearly the intuitive contemplation of consciousness. Overall, in Esoteric philosophy intuition is the 'creative light of consciousness' as Tomberg noted, whilst intelligence is the reflection of the sunlight. As the analogy suggests, they are not separate modes of consciousness, but intuition is a constituent of intelligence just as the sunlight is of the moon's light. Within Tomberg's contemplation of the arcana that lead down this path, intuition is defined in its relationship to Hermeticism as follows:

the alliance of active wisdom and active intelligence, which is the theme of the nineteenth Arcanum of the Tarot and which not only underlies Hermeticism but is the very reason for existence.

Tomberg goes further to explicate intuition's role as a bridge between "intermediary gnosis" and "intermediary magic," between the supernatural and the natural, between the divine and the everyday and between faith and reason.

Esoteric philosophy in general depicts intuition as an interpenetrating mode of consciousness, of higher regard, but forming the basis of intellect. It is best suited to apprehending the spirit because of its ability to apprehend fluidity and temporality, perceived to be the essential nature of the world. Intuition also serves as a bridging modality utilised in teaching. Its centrality to the whole discourse of Hermetic philosophy, its role in illuminating, making the texts active:

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16 Groin, The Bergson Controversy 43.  
17 Groin, The Bergson Controversy 530.
to arrive at intuition, without which Hermeticism is something merely literary ... of doubtful literary value. It lives only from intuition, and without intuition it is something dead. And it is this dead thing alone that is seen by people of faith and people of science, who are genuinely astonished that there are people who take it seriously .... And they are not at all mistaken: without the invisible current of intuition, Hermeticism is indeed only an improvised assemblage of heterogeneous elements of science and religion.18

Faivre’s previously discussed description of esotericism as a frame of mind also reflects these concerns. It is a frame of mind that adheres largely to a process view of existence out of which develop central ideas concerning interaction, such as the theory of correspondences. However, rather than the term intuition, Faivre uses “active imagination” to denote the faculty that enables perceptive relations between the individual and the divine. Similarly to Bailey/D.K.’s conceptualisation of intuition, this active imagination is also described by Faivre as a faculty of the soul.19 In both cartographies the faculty acts as an intermediary between the ‘whole’ and part, the macrocosm, the microcosm, the divine and the individual.

Gilles Deleuze’s adaptation and elucidation of Bergson’s idea of intuition has previously been discussed, however a brief reiteration of the fundamental perspective is worth repeating in this context. For Deleuze, Bergson’s conceptualisation of intuition functions as “one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy.”20 On a basic level this refers to Bergson’s casting of intuition as a discriminatory faculty due to its ability to distinguish between differences in kind and differences in degree.

The fact is that Bergson relied on the intuitive method to establish philosophy as an absolutely “precise” discipline, as precise in its field, as capable of being prolonged and transmitted as science itself is.21

Deleuze proposes that intuition determines the relationships between Bergson’s concepts of Duration, Memory and élan vital: that is making them possible to be known, to be manifest as knowledge. Attributed three "acts" or "rules," Deleuze defines the method as one that problematises, differentiates and temporalises. These three "acts" are selected to depict how we can contemplate or "move" from meaning to meaning, the intuitive method therefore defines intuition as a lived act.22

18 [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 540.

19 Faivre, Modern Esoteric Spirituality xvii-xviii.

20 Deleuze, Bergsonism 13.

21 Deleuze, Bergsonism 14.

22 Deleuze, Bergsonism 14.
Tomberg adopts the essence of this position in a passage on the Second Acarna when he notes that:

the fundamental thesis of Hermetic epistemology (or "gnoseology") is that "each object of knowledge demands a method of knowledge which is proper to it."23

Bergson can be seen as working towards bridging science and mysticism by proposing a faculty of consciousness in a manner that appeals to scientific investigation — that is, proposing in a methodical manner, that the logical faculty to apprehend to apprehend the essential fluidic nature of existence is the fluidic matter-consciousness of intuition. Tomberg elucidates how Bergson's work can be adopted to suit the 'live' nature of esoteric texts, such as the Tarot, reflecting the process of 'discovering' layer upon layer of meaning in one text as concentration and meditation are developed.

The seemingly disparate philosophies of Theosophy, Hermetic Christianity, Bergsonian 'Matter and Memory' and Deleuzian Bergsonism, all arise from a ground of process dynamics, and privilege intuitive modes of relating and responding to the 'world' in order to participate in what is understood to be its essentially fluidic nature. Such a ground has been an integral part of Eastern philosophical-religious discussion for thousands of years, and it is to specific examples of intuition as embodied within a Japanese philosophical framework that this thesis now turns.

23 [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 42.
Intuition: Nishida Kitarō

In general, Eastern philosophy and religion have regarded intuition as an equal (if not more reliable) faculty of consciousness in relation to reason. The development of intuition has been linked to the ability to apprehend the nature of reality and to reach the level of consciousness termed enlightenment. It can therefore be understood to embrace both cognitive and spiritual purposes, which is similar to its positioning in esoteric thought.

For the West (and America in particular) the most direct discursive manifestation of Eastern intuitive consciousness is the Zen Buddhist Koan (of the Renzai sect). Used in the development of meditative consciousness, these riddles defy intellectual reasoning and motion toward more intuitive reckoning, as exemplified by the well known example "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

However, it could be argued, that the Zen Koan presents intuitive consciousness within a dominantly mental domain, and that its practice does not necessitate any relation to the body. For this reason, I have selected the work of Nishida Kitarō, rather than that of Dōgen, to exemplify a perspective of intuitive consciousness implicitly involved in the active unity of mind-body.

Watsuji Tetsurō's concept of the life-basho, as elucidated by Yuasa whilst constructing a 'picture' of the type of body involved in an Eastern mind-body theory, has previously been discussed. In continuing his debate, Yuasa discusses Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), one of the most well-known modern Japanese philosophers in the West.

Nishida’s concept of the body embraces activity as fundamental to 'being,' producing a process-based ontology, in which both action and perception are central elements. Like Bergson, Nishida designates a specific type of perception as fundamental to being — intuition.

Roughly defined, acting intuition is to act based on intuition; Nishida's underlying contention is that the two moments of acting and intuiting are always simultaneous and inseparable ... we can say that acting intuition also indicates a fundamental mode of being. It may be said that the self, as a human subject, exists by associating itself with the world through the relational structure of acting intuition.24

Acting/intuition is designed to bridge the fuzzy border space between the subject/object division. A lived ambiguity is posited by Nishida because of a person's ability to both perceive (subjectivity) and be perceived (objectivity). Nishida outlines an active body

24Yuasa, The Body 50.
consciousness in which the subject aspect of human beings is related to the objective aspect of human beings, setting up an active-passive circuit of relations between the body and "things in the world." As such space and its implicit occupants — 'other s' — are presupposed with this framework.

Constructing dual layers of consciousness — dark and light — Nishida formulates the basho vis-à-vis being as analogous to ego-consciousness, perception of object and self, whilst underlying this and 'forming' the fundamental ground which "supports the totality subject-object relationships" of the light consciousness is the basho vis-à-vis nothing. This layer of dark consciousness is described as consciousness immersed at the bottom of consciousness:

"To immerse consciousness in the bottom of consciousness" is to look existentially into this layer of the dark cogito not apparent on the surface of consciousness.

Nishida argues that, once moved from the basho vis-à-vis being to the basho vis-à-vis nothing or from light to dark consciousness, the active-passive circuit between world and body is reversed. Intuition becomes active whilst action towards the world becomes passive. The basho vis-à-vis being involves intuition in the field of ordinary experience, whilst the basho vis-à-vis nothing transcends ordinary existence and, as such, requires what Yuasa deems "the acting intuition in the self as basho." This distinguishes respectively between the self as inauthentic and the self as authentic. This idea reflects the general privileging of intuition as the perceptive faculty most able to apprehend the fundamental ground of being. For Nishida, such comprehension can only be achieved from within the infinite deep states of the dark consciousness dark or basho vis-à-vis nothing. It is within this layer of consciousness that the undifferentiated force of being is manifested. As Yuasa puts it:

As they enter into the layer of dark consciousness, the general forms of conscious acts, like thinking, willing and emoting, converge into, and are reduced to, "unifying force" of the undifferentiated interiority of experience.

By the process of inquiring into the interiority of the self, intuition becomes an active state. Nishida argues that the only difference between states of perception is one of degree. Conscious acts

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26 Yuasa, *The Body* 60.


resound on the different layers of light and dark consciousness, but two types of intuitive apprehension condition their reception and apprehension.

These two types of active intuition reflect two meanings for intuition that are embraced in Watsuji’s use of the term. Yuasa highlights that it is used both in terms of sense intuition and to describe a more creative intuitive faculty, intellectual intuition, and he selects the following quote from Nishida to define intellectual intuition:

"The intellectual intuition is nothing more than a further enlargement and deepening of our state of pure experience. That is, it is a disclosure of a great unity in the process of a developing system of consciousness. That a scholar acquires a new insight, or a moralist a new motive, or an artist a new imagination, or a religious figure a new awakening, are all based upon a disclosure of this kind of unity."

This intellectual intuition is therefore comparable to intuition as understood in the esoteric and Bergsonian frameworks, including what Faivre delineates as active imagination.

The authentic self (self qua basho) is reached by extinguishing ego-consciousness and its action directed towards the world through the process of acting intuition. In this transformation passive intuition becomes active and action passive. In this way intuition can function as a unifying force enabling apprehension of the fundamental ground of being. However, it must be stressed that this process is not purely mental but — as envisaged by Nishida— involves the unity of body-mind.

Accordingly, to grasp human being-in-the-world in the form of the acting intuition is to grasp the structural relationship between the self and the world in light of the modality of the body. For acting means to act on the world by means of or with a body; and intuition, as previously noted, means to understand, as well as to accept, the Being of beings found in the world and to do so through the body’s perceptual functions.

Therefore, within the unity of mind-body, self consciousness is overcome and a state of self qua basho achieved in which acting intuition now allows for interaction without self-consciousness, and the ambiguity between self subjectivity and objectivity is overcome. Nishida calls this state "self without being self" and "oneness of body-mind" (shinjin ichinyo) is achieved. Furthermore, the actualisation of this process is actualised 'through' the body.

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30 Yuasa, The Body 66.
For the "historical life" the stream of creative intuition that springs from the ultimate, absolute nothing, "actualizes itself through our bodies."\(^{33}\)

Yuasa posits two criticisms of Nishida’s ideas: the first, as previously noted, that Nishida does not adequately define or propose the methods required to move from the basho vis-à-vis being to the basho vis-à-vis nothing; and, second, that the influence of Kantian epistemology was too strong, leading Nishida to attribute passivity to intuition within ordinary consciousness, thereby maintaining a Western privileging of logic.\(^{34}\)

As presented by Yuasa, Nishida’s concept of acting intuition delineates an intuitive consciousness acting across dual layers of consciousness. It is then reasonable to assume that this process involves the comprehension of internal and external extensities of various degrees of intensity and force. Ultimately, acting intuition and its process of apprehension are understood by Nishida to enable a realisation of the Being of beings that resides at the base of consciousness, within the body.

This concern with establishing an identity (which is a non-identity) with the ground of being explicitly refers to sunyata, as discussed in the first Section of this thesis. By way of conclusion to this section, it is appropriate to return briefly to Masao Abe’s elucidation of sunyata and the positioning of the faculty of intuition in this ‘framework.’

As disclosed by Nāgārjuna, in order to experience sunyata (emptiness), language, created and sustained by the dualities of subjectivity and objectivity, needs to be overcome. The method for this overcoming was described in the Mulamadhyamakakarika as involving a ‘regression’ to what is prior to language, to non-discursive modes of thought. Abe terms this realm of emptiness and non-discursive thought, of what is prior to thought, intuition.\(^{35}\)

Emptiness indicates the reality of the world in intuition apart from language; therefore, there is emancipation from suffering caused by attachment to discrimination.\(^{36}\)

It is the intuition (emptiness) that is sought to be cultivated through meditation practice.

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\(^{33}\)Yuasa, The Body 72.

\(^{34}\)Yuasa, The Body 72-73.

\(^{35}\)Abe, Zen and Comparative Studies 45-46.

\(^{36}\)Abe, Zen and Comparative Studies 46.
Summary

Both Eastern and Western concepts of intuition locate it as a mode of consciousness, linked to ontological perspectives. It is viewed either as the fundamental mode of consciousness the first move towards the basis of perceptive existence, or as a level of consciousness 'higher' than that of logical consciousness, the next rung on the evolutionary ladder. Both vertical positions can be accessed and developed by a process of conscious cultivation that are thought to speed up what is perceived to be an inevitable development. Generally, the two themes of development of human consciousness and spiritual development are considered in tandem, "enlightenment" or "illumination" being used to describe the achievement of such progress.

What is also embraced by all the perspectives on intuition offered herein is not only the positioning of intuition as a faculty actively functioning between the individual and the divine, between the subjectivity and objectivity of the self (in Nishida's acting intuition), and, indeed as the faculty required to collapse binary distinctions, but also the idea that intuition requires and/or intimately involves a way of 'looking' at the world and self. This mode of looking extends beyond the visual sense to bodily apprehension, and so uncovers the subject as a sensate membrane, absorbing and projecting affect and effect with other such subjects with nebulous borders. This mode of looking, disclosed in fluid metaphors, is the very perception developed through meditation training. It is a mode of looking that not only requires mental cognition but also physical practice to achieve an intuitive view. Intuition is the perceptive faculty required to apprehend the subtle exchanges of temporal becomings.
Section Three

Exceeding
Chapter Seven

Cultivation

As a thread continually being pulled from out of the weave of this paper, the methodical practice of cultivation underpins the way in which esotericists and Buddhists interact with the phenomenal world. Such practices enable them to go ‘beyond’ the world of appearances into/onto the transcendent and immanent realms envisaged by their particular belief systems. These practices enable these realms to be inhabited simultaneously in the phenomenal world, thus their practice also affects the ethics of the individual in relation to how they interact in the world as it redefines their understanding of the subject-object relationship. These practices may then be understood as a bridge, an embodied bridge with the individual’s body-mind intimately utilised for facilitating the interpenetration of the realms of being. Like the distinction between subject-object, within these frameworks the distinction between transcendent and immanent also becomes blurred (fluid). If taken literally to represent a bridge, the body-mind invokes a transcendent reading of the relationship between the alternate realms, whilst the physical participation required by this body-mind to enact the perception of the alternate realm proffers an understanding of the relationship as immanent. It is perhaps appropriate to invoke both senses of relationship, by using the term ‘interpenetrate’ to discuss this practice in which transcendent realms are interacted with through physical practices within the phenomenal world, and which can be understood therefore as constituting a physical, immanent experience.

Active imagination and intuition are the two prime facilities of the cognition that are understood as enabling the realisation of this embodiment to take place and, as mentioned previously, these faculties can be developed through meditation and initiation (training as outlined by the specific tenets of the tradition the practitioner is undertaking). This consideration of cultivation focuses initially upon its practice within Eastern frameworks, with particular emphasis on its interrelation with artistic practice as discussed by Yuasa and Odin in relation to Shingon Buddhism. Secondly, the contemporary artist Marina Abramovic’s practice will be discussed since cultivation models both inform the genesis of her practice as well as offer ways in which the viewer may enter into dialogue with the works. Within this framework, cultivation is then, not only a practice to be undertaken by the creator, but also by the co-creators — the viewers.

Yuasa begins his discussion of cultivation by noting the difference between Eastern and Western understandings of the term, the main point being that the East embodies the mind-body relationship, and
so enables "a practical project aiming at the enhancement of the personality and training of the spirit by the means of the body," whilst a Western understanding places emphasis on the physical praxis, that is not necessarily linked to any 'mind' or 'spiritual' development.1

In the terminology of contemporary philosophy, when one cognizes the mode of Being of beings in the state of non-ego, one will be able to know the configuration and the meaning of the real. This cognition — that is, the "observation of dharmas in no-ego" — unfolds only through "practice to reach the state of no-ego." Consequently, there is no separation here between cognition and practice. "Herein we find a cognition that does not distinguish the theoretical from the practical, that is, a cognition of actuality itself. It is this which characterizes philosophical cognition in Buddhism."2

Here, Yuasa presents the perspective proposed by Watsuji in The Practical Philosophy of Early Buddhism, which clearly indicates a mode of metaphysical inquiry that implicitly requires the involvement of the body-mind, as distinct from a disembodied mind. The quotation also draws attention to this perspective's belief that body-mind unity is required for the "cognition of actuality," for the understanding of the ground of Being.

For Buddhists, such cognition requires cultivation via meditation practice. In an esoteric Western framework, cultivation practices are generally referred to as a process of initiation, and also require what could be understood as styles of meditation practice. Certainty the Alice Bailey/D.K. teachings advocate meditation activities which are highly influenced by Buddhist practices. In the following extract Yuasa describes the centrality of cultivation practices in Buddhism, and their necessary application for cognising the ground of Being.

What we usually call religious cultivation in Buddhism is the "precepts" and meditation, the former meaning the control of one's desires by the imposition in everyday life of constraints upon one's body-mind. This corresponds to labour in Christian monastic life. We may call this the "outwardly directed practice," orientated toward the external world .... In contrast, we shall refer to the stages of contemplative cultivation represented by samadhi (meditation) as "inwardly directed practices".... Cultivation's ultimate goal is wisdom (prajna), seeing the true profile of Being in no-ego. Buddhism contends that this goal can be attained only through cultivation. When a self becomes connected to the invisible, ultimate point of primordiality or no-ego, when one becomes, as it were, an authentic self, the person comes to command a new perspective on openness (Offenheit) and will cognize the true meaning of the Being of beings. Such is the teaching of the Buddha.3

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1Yuasa, The Body 85.


3Yuasa, The Body 98.
Meditation is therefore considered as an inward directed activity primarily associated with in the West with an activity of the mind — the Latin etymology of the term meaning "to think over, consider, reflect." But, as shown within Eastern contexts, this activity is considered to require both body-mind participation and, indeed, the distinctions between body and mind are implicitly ambiguous. In the West, meditation has been employed in purely religious contexts, often in relationship to meditating upon a Biblical Scripture, whilst other terms to signify focused attention of an inner nature are employed when discussing considerations of philosophy, for example; reflection, contemplation and study; whilst, in the East, where no sharp delineation between religion and philosophy is constructed, meditation — as a term delineating a method of inquiry and the cultivation of states of consciousness — is commonly used as an approach to both inherently interrelated spheres of philosophical and religious knowledge.⁴

The 'objectivity,' assumed in Western terms like 'study,' is not excluded by the term meditation, even with its intrinsic relation to religious practices. In fact, one of the reasons a student undertakes meditation practice is to consciously develop the detached state of no-ego, as previously discussed. Although not analogous to a scientific Western usage of 'objective' as a mental framework, detachment does denote a process whereby the personality or ego concerns of the individual are 'overcome' in order to reach a greater understanding and interrelationship to the 'whole.' That is, it does involve a cultivation of the personality, especially in regard to identifying emotional states and their accompanying shifts in perspective. The recognition of these shifts in perspective is done by consciously cultivating a state of disinterested observation; to observe, acknowledge and not to react in an emotional way, which is understood as 'grasping' onto the object of consideration and therefore concretising its temporal nature. In this way, objects of consideration arise and pass by in a continual stream, whilst the individual recognises them as maya (or illusion) and does not react to them. The resulting change in alignment brought about by this recognition is understood to bring the individual closer to the centre of authentic self. Yuasa positions Nishida's ideas regarding the "basho vis-à-vis being" in relationship to this understanding of meditation in the following:

Eastern meditation, whether Buddhist or Yogic, asserts in various ways the idea that beyond the dark unstable region of the emotions, there exists the dimension of the authentic self. Samadhi, a deep stage of meditation, is a psychologically stable, exalted and transparent state of emotional ecstasy. Nishida understands

⁴Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion  468.
the state of the genius’s ecstatic pure experience, filled with creative inspiration, as the state of the "basho vis-à-vis nothing."\(^5\)

Through these accumulative training practices the individual’s subject-object ambiguity, as experienced in the world, is overcome and mind-body unity achieved as is the revelation of the authentic self. Central to all cultivation traditions stemming from Yogic and Buddhist origins, is the understanding that the meditation process is comprised of different stages. For example Kūkai wrote The Stages of Mind (jūshinron) as a delineation of the Esoteric Buddhist's framework of development. These stages may include the use of breathing techniques, visualisation exercises, mantra recitation and different stages in concentration development. In the case of Shingon Buddhism ritual ceremony is also part of this cultivation process, particularly in relationship to developing paranormal powers or influence.

For them, performing Esoteric Buddhist rites is called a "cultivation method" and these rites have efficacy only when performed by a person with magical ability attained through meditation. \(^6\)

This consideration of rituals that may involve more active physical movement than what is executed during seated meditation (Dōgen’s zazen) is useful within this context for two reasons. First, it introduces methods of artistic production or "artistry" described by Yuasa as being able to be considered as a form of meditation, and secondly by extension, this physical process of creation enables one to consider temporal art works, suffused with apparent motion, to be considered as worthwhile 'subjects' for meditative contemplation. The viewer's very physical 'presence' is set up in relation to the resonance and rhythms of the temporal work. The viewer may perhaps enter into conscious interpenetration with the temporal work, via cultivation techniques, thereby registering the subtle interactions of their exchanges. In short, the temporal nature of the art work and its interrelationship with the temporal nature of the viewer may become perceptible to the individual (this obviously precedes the total unity of the state of Samadhi) as subtle dynamics of affect and effect through cultivation training.

To begin with the concept of artistry as a form of meditation and cultivation of body-mind unity: in a commentary on Zeami (1363-1443) an influential developer of Japanese Nō drama, Yuasa notes the following relationship between training in an art form and the cultivation of body-mind unity.


\(^6\) Yuasa, The Body 97.
Training, it seems, is discipline for shaping one's body into a form. Art is embodied through cumulative training; one comes to learn an art through one's body. We all have had such an experience in sports, for example. Training or disciplining means to make the mind's movements accord with the body's.\(^7\)

Similarly, Bryson discusses Ch'\an (Zen) flung-ink painting and calligraphy as resulting from this activity of body-mind unity:

In the case of the flung-ink painting, Ch'\an's solution is to disfigure the image, the bi-polar view, by opening onto the whole force of randomness... The flinging of the ink marks the surrender of the fixed form of the image to the global configuration of force that subtends it... The framework of script and calligrapher is cut across by another term that stands for everything outside their circumscribed enclosure: the rest of the universe, the field of emptiness that subtends the entities of scribe and script and annihilates them as freestanding and independent forms.\(^8\)

The cultivation of the flung-ink technique is what enables an image to be produced that expresses the unity of subject and object as experienced by the artist. It is presented as a 'result' of cultivation training, but is also understood to embody, in its static form, the attitude of the body-mind that produced it and the field of sunyata that supports it. As previously mentioned, this attitude of body-mind and its relationship with the ground of being is mediated by intuition. This is exemplified by the following interpretation of Zeami's legacy by Yuasa, in which the form of body-mind can be understood as utilising Nishida's active intuition.

Zeami presents a serious point for a theory of body-mind. Art cannot be achieved through conceptual, intellectual understanding but must be acquired with one's body through training (keiko).\(^9\)

Zeami identifies physical participation, of a particular cultivated type as enabling mind-body unity to be achieved, whilst also highlighting the very physical participation required by the artist in creative work. Through the performing of artistry the subjective-objective ambiguity disappears and enters into a relationship in which its activity is passive and intuition is active. Such a process enables body-mind unity and the grasping and representation of the unity 'behind' things to be brought into and constitutive of the artwork being created. That is, the works are not merely representations of sunyata, they are sunyata.

Both the creation and contemplation of mandalas have been used for enabling mind-body unity, and opening the creator/viewers awareness onto the field of sunyata. In discussing the

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\(^7\)Yuasa, The Body 105.

\(^8\)Bryson, The Gaze in the Expanded Field 101-104.

interrelationship between Whitehead's theory of symbols and the mandala practices of Shingon Buddhism, Steve Odin notes that the mandalas do not simply depict an understanding of this interrelationship but are it:

By this view, there exists a common ground between our perception of the images of emptiness, so that the symbol and meaning of the symbol are fused by one intensity of emotion. Therefore, each image discloses the void just as the void reveals each image, such that symbolic form and formless emptiness shine forth through each other in a reciprocity of symbolic reference.10

Esoteric Shingon Buddhism presents the position that words themselves cannot adequately represent dependent so-origination, sunyata or deity and so privilege mandalas as enabling this function. As clearly outlined in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism: A Handbook for Followers,

A Mandala must also be seen as complete within itself for every part is holographic and expresses the whole. Since ancient times it has been recognized that words alone cannot completely describe the vibrational essence of a particular deity. Generally a mandala is a picture that describes the universe, or part of the Universe, but it can be a set of statues (like a Toji), a temple complex (like Koyasan or Borobudur in Java) or any three dimensional representation.11

Mandalas form the basic tenet or precept of Shingon Buddhism, and Kūkai (Kobo Daishi) delineated four types: Maha-Mandala — which expresses the entire universe and includes all other mandalas; Samaya Mandala — vows formed by hand gestures (Mudras) or holding of symbolic objects (e.g. swords, flowers); Dharma Mandala — words, written texts (sutras) and language used to communicate the teachings of the Buddha; and Karma Mandala — actions of everything in the universe, "the actions of the Buddha to teach and save people.12

Clearly mandalas are not restricted to the intricate geometric representations that typify the artform. The last style described by Kūkai, the Karma Mandala, very clearly reflects Shingon's central teaching of "becoming a Buddha in this very body." That is, Realisation may occur within the activities and forms of daily human life, in the actual physical world of human activity.


12Yusei, Shingon Esoteric Buddhism, 33-34.
Approaching one's life from the perspective of actively creating a lived mandala, provides an inspiring attitude towards the manner in which one lives the life (creates the mandala), and such a perspective would include ethical and moral as well as aesthetic repercussions. This extension of an understanding of mandalas — as existing in the activity of three dimensional existence (that does not exclude two-dimensional representation) — opens up interesting considerations relating to the symbolic power of material elements and the conceptualisation of living things, including the body, in Shingon. The specifics of this system are discussed in the next chapter, where elemental materials as symbol and metaphor are more directly focussed upon. Suffice to mention here that a widening sense of mandala symbolism is embodied by Shingon, and it is this understanding that is carried into an interpretation and understanding of temporal art practices engaged with herein. In particular, the idea that the activity constituting the mandala involves interaction between 'subject' and 'object' and the very dissolution of such bi-polar forms, via contemplation, into the void; that the process itself is constituted by consideration of temporal agencies.

Odin argues that, read through Whitehead's theory of symbolic reference, Shingon Buddhism presents a "truly postmodern philosophy of the human being as an animal symbolicum."\textsuperscript{13} That is, that humanness is intricately wound up in symbol production and reception, and that the very nature of the universe itself can be understood as symbolic form. Central to Odin's argument is Whitehead's postulation that two systems of perception — the causal and sense (immediate) — can be unified or understood as correlated, that they are not mutually distinct modes of perceptive interaction with the world, that casual and sense perception exist in a circuitous relationship with each other, with movement possible in both directions. This necessarily implies that sense perception is not excluded, or does not need to be mediated by causal perception in order for symbolic apprehension. This notion of two perceptive states being mutually operative at the same time echoes the general Eastern metaphysical belief that the physical and the metaphysical are not exclusive 'zones' of experience, and that they interpenetrate and coexist.

In traditional Eastern metaphysics, there is, then, no sharp delineation between the metaphysical and physical dimensions. They are two mutually permeating regions in a continuum: cultivation is a process in which one's soul progresses gradually from the physical to the metaphysical dimension.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Odin, "Postmodernism and Aesthetic Symbolism" 195.

\textsuperscript{14}Yuasa, The Body 217.
Therefore the modes of perception required for apprehension of physical and metaphysical 'matter' — although delineated as different 'types' or 'styles,' causal-sense, intelct-intuition — can also be understood as existing interpenetratively, with cultivation understood as actively increasing the degree of receptivity to the more subtle or metaphysical environment. Further, that symbolic means may be employed to enact both conscious and unconscious perception of the metaphysical. Odin gives the following example of the reciprocity between perceptive modes in a discussion of a set of symbolic images representing the Tao (Chinese, void):

Each image is a symbol of tao, yet it does not merely point to tao but actually leads to a unity of feeling between the symbol and the meaning of tao. Each image embodies tao just as tao presents each image, so that they mutually illuminate one another in a reciprocity of symbolic reference.\(^\text{15}\)

To shift frameworks for a moment, we might compare this idea of reciprocity to that of images in Bergson. For Bergson, the cultivation of intuition via consideration of the inner life permits images to be read as embodying the 'whole' from which they are selected by perception. Similarly, these images not only represent the tao, but are tao in their very materiality. Cultivation of the intuitive faculties is required in order to perceive these shifts in symbolic operation.

Odin distinguishes Shingon Buddhism from its predecessor Kegon (Hua-yen) Buddhism by citing Kūkai's focus upon practical methods for realisation of the interpenetration of many and one distinguished in the Kegon teachings. That is, Kūkai advocated practical, physical methods for cultivating consciousness, with emphasis on the everyday life, visual stimulus and physical movement. This relationship is practically experienced through cultivated consideration of mandala art.\(^\text{16}\)

By this view, the ultimate truth-function of mandala art in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism would be to manifest the beauty of hidden depths, by eliciting the vast undiscriminated background of causal interrelationships which haunt those sensory objects clearly discriminated in the foreground focus of attention.\(^\text{17}\)

Odin notes the similarity between Whitehead's and a Buddhist understanding of this foreground/background demarcation, with the foreground labelled by both appearance whilst the background constitutes Reality. Within Whitehead's theory of symbolic

\(^{15}\) Odin, "Postmodernism and Aesthetic Symbolism" 198.

\(^{16}\) Odin, "Postmodernism and Aesthetic Symbolism" 202.

\(^{17}\) Odin, "Postmodernism and Aesthetic Symbolism" 207.
reference art is sensory objects occupying foreground and their "vast undiscriminated field of causal interrelationships" the background.18

Expressed alternatively, it could be understood that the sensory objects represent the densest vibration of matter-consciousness as understood in an esoteric framework, whilst the subtle matter of which it (and the rest of the universe) is constituted remains in continual interrelationship with other aggregates of matter-consciousness in the background of perception. Thus the realisation of the background of the sensory artwork reveals ultimate Reality. In Whiteheadian and Shingon Buddhist thought, art is a powerful, dynamic device enabling the metaphysical to be discerned within the physical. The requirements for such an event or occasion include cultivation techniques on behalf of both the creator and the viewer of the artwork. Such a process-oriented view, although not excluding the 'ah' moment of revelation (samadhi) positions this ultimate experience within training frameworks, whilst more general Western models of aesthetic experience are influenced by the Kantian sublime (a term which expresses an inability to transfer apprehension to comprehension) are presented as overpowering instances not necessarily occasioned by any precursive development, but initiated by instant realisation within the subject of the consuming nature of the object which they are viewing. These are seen as single isolated occurrences — the light bulb flash, the stab of terror — rather than the result of accumulated training and the detachment of the self from the world of appearances. In the Eastern perspective the metaphysical realms are cultivated as part of everyday consciousness by the everyday will of the individual whilst, in contrast, Western experiences of the metaphysical are conditioned by a sense of being moved beyond/against one's will by an exterior agent (God), and as having no power over the nature or the occasion of the transformational experience. It is a 'static leap' (sudden shift from one realm to the other), whilst a more process-oriented development is a fluid movement, involving increased degrees of perceptive awareness of the Ultimate, such that final immersion is achieved.

Emptying and Exchanging: Marina Abramovic cultivating body-mind

The body as a site not only means that the body is not divorced from its mind, neither does it mean that the body and mind are in a state of static 'harmony'. It is

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18 Odin, "Postmodernism and Aesthetic Symbolism" 208.
the site where in a dynamic process of mutual making (an unmaking) the body continuously forms the mind while at the same time the mind shapes the body.\(^{19}\)

In 1975, Belgrade-born artist Marina Abramovic lay on the floor of Galerie De Appel, Amsterdam, titled her head backwards and screamed until she lost her voice. This performance — *Freeing the Voice* [fig.7] — belongs to a trilogy that also included *Freeing the Body* 1975 [fig. 8] and *Freeing the Memory* 1975.

Each work in the triad sought to stretch levels of physical endurance in an effort to purify or to 'empty' body-mind.

These performances reflect Abramovic's interest in the metaphysical and religious realms as experienced within indigenous cultures (including Tibetan Buddhism), and this interest would eventually lead to her adopting an attitude that envisaged her practice — and the later co-authored works with Ulay (Uwe Laysiepen) — as being "aimed to move both the artist and viewer along a pathway of enlightenment."\(^{20}\) Whether or not such an ambitious aim is justified in regard to the experience of the viewer, this perspective does position the viewer and their physical-mental interface with the artist and the artwork as an implicit consideration in Abramovic's practice. The earlier performances especially utilised shock techniques in a effort to engage and draw the viewer into dialogue with the often confronting concerns of the artist.

The elements of ritual purification in the *Freeing* series included repetition of sound and action. Previously *mantra* and *mudra*, ritual sound and gesture were delineated as a facet of Shingon Buddhism. In Abramovic's performances, the repetition of sound or action is also employed to activate a transgression of consciousness which enables intuitive modes of comprehension with the Divine (in its multiplicity of conceptions) to be experienced.

Abramovic uses repetitive movement in *Freeing the Body* [fig.8] whilst dancing to the rhythm of a "black African drummer."\(^{21}\) She

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\(^{21}\) "I move to the rhythm of a black African drummer", is the wording Abramovic uses to describe the performance. This reflects a certain romanticisation of indigenous culture, and I wonder about the ideological underpinning of the need to mention the skin colour of the musician. It would seem that Abramovic was not only blinded by the black cloth wrapped around her head during the performance, but also by romantic Occidental conceptions of the 'primitive' and its relationship to the 'spiritual'. This is also reflected, when considering her entire oeuvre in the type

of equation she makes between diverse spiritual traditions, and her assumption that she can 'plug in' at any point to their methods of worship.
swirls, her head wrapped in black cloth, until she collapses from exhaustion — the dance lasts eight hours. The performance is perhaps inspired by the Malawiyya (Whirling Dervish) performed by Sufi mystics. As they spin in ever-increasing velocity, they whirl away from their earthly bonds and reach immersion with the infinite. Abramovic's dance also reflects contemporary art discourse of the era by decentralising vision in her performance. The discourse surrounding such a strategy reverberates well into the 1990's, with the popularisation of post-structuralist thought decentralising the subject, and its dominant mode of perception.

*Freeing the Memory* is a work of auto-association: its repetition involves the rhythm of words uttered by Abramovic. It reflects the popular and academic interest in psychoanalytic discourse — both in respect to its role in de-centering the subject, and in opening 'spaces' through which feminism and discourses of alterity may challenge and or subvert the Symbolic. Abramovic enacts an 'emptying' program for the mind, through the process of speaking whatever thought arose in her mind and — adopting what could be understood as a basic Buddhist tenet — not grasping these thoughts but witnessing (or acknowledging) them and letting them pass. She illustrates the arbitrary nature of language embodied in the circuitous babble of thought — the 'chattering monkey mind.' Freeing the Memory marks a step away from the influence of Western mystic traditions and an emphasis on purifying the sinful flesh through punishment (that are best exemplified by performances like *The Lips of Thomas* 1975 [fig.9], in which direct physical action, such as whipping, is self inflicted), and a move toward cultivating a stillness of body-mind through less violent and more contemplative means.

These three performances are but one instance of Abramovic's project of emptying that extends into her latter concept and project of *Cleaning the Mirror* 1995. From the violent, literal enactments of ritual purification to more metaphorical and poetic illustrations of emptying, a desire to experience altered modes of consciousness has propelled Abramovic's practice. Central to her performances is an understanding of the body as subtle, as linked through extensive and vibrational networks to the entire universe. *Dragon Heads* 1990 [fig. 10 & 11] set snakes seeking paths of heat and energy across Abramovic's body. This required perfect calm on behalf of the artist, as sensing tension would set the snakes into automatic self-preservation behaviour, resulting in strangulation of the artist. There was an occasion when the performance was cancelled because

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22Chattering monkey mind' is a common Buddhist expression for the mind before it is stilled by meditation practice.
the organisers, nervous about the apparent danger of the performance, had requested a dress rehearsal (in a space taut with their own tension and fear). Abramovic's face had turned blue before the grasp of the boa was calmed by Abramovic relaxing herself sufficiently to quiet the snakes. This intervention required a direct change of body-mind energy.\(^{23}\)

The *Dragon Heads* performance illustrates the many lines of symbolism and belief that infiltrate her work. To represent only surface layers, the snakes' movement across the landscape of Abramovic's body raises conceptions of the earth as also mapped by these lines of power (geomancy — the study of such power lines includes Chinese Feng Shui, placement of objects to effect the most prosperous relationship to the earth's energy). Snakes themselves are a universal symbol replete with diverse meaning, from representing wisdom of the Goddess to the well known 'evil' sin of Genesis. The Caduceus of Hermes/Mercury, with the double serpents (duality) crossing the central axis (alchemy, *axis mundi*; Hindu *Sushumna*) represents the interplay and synthesis of opposites, of ascent and descent, illness and health. Ultimately it speaks of balance, the crux of Abramovic's concerns regarding contemporary society and the environment. Healing by achieving an appropriate balance of the dualities is also inferred by the serpents of the Caduceus, a theme that resounds through Abramovic's practice, exemplified by her use of crystal.

The *Dragon Heads* performance not only commanded calm on behalf of the artist but also required it from the audience — their own effect on the environment influencing the snakes' reactions. In such a performance the audience is asked to not only control their own responses but to take responsibility for them and their potential effects.

More contemplative examples of Abramovic's utilisation of the subtle body are evident in work from the late 1980's and early 1990's, where a physical-psychical existence is invited to perceive subtle levels of vibratory, kinetic communication. *Crystal Cinema* 1990 [fig.12] and *Wounded Geode* 1994 [fig.13] require the viewer to sit silently contemplating crystals. Each work requires the viewer to assume slightly distorted modes of sitting; *Crystal Cinema* asks the viewer to crouch on a crystal miner's stool, whilst the chairs in *Wounded Geode* are unnaturally high, feet left to dangle in the wind, like a child's in a high chair. *Wounded Geode* also introduces the additional element of positioning chairs at either end of the table, enabling two viewers to participate at once. Such works are

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constructed to enable the viewer's body-mind to come into a conscious perception of the active relationship between the object and themselves — their mutual effects.

Abramovic's practice does involve an eclectic re-mapping of strains of various religious and spiritual practices into the discourse of contemporary art practice. The validity and/or cultural sensitivity of such a program shifts along with the current political and aesthetic discourse. In the late 1990's Abramovic's practice is dangerously tipped towards the scorned 'art therapy' category as well as to so-called 'New Age' religion that, at its most unfavourable, presents 'watered down' and adapted Esoteric and Eastern traditions for mass Western consumerism. However, to read Abramovic's practice only through this lens is dangerously reductive: she activates something entirely foreign to the more commercial New Age enterprises, she denies the quick fix, and side steps instant satisfaction demanded by consumerism by explicitly requiring the viewer to enter into a relation with her objects that asks for sustained periods of quiet contemplation and often physical interaction. In short she presents methods of cultivation for the viewer's body-mind. This is not, however, to say that her work is free from the 'allure' of the other, but it activates this allure in potentially productive ways, by privileging intuitive and imaginative relations with the work.

Abramovic seeks to externalise the subtle body to rational consciousness by providing sites where it is explicitly privileged. Activation and realisation of this body is of course subject to experiential levels, and Abramovic suffers no less than any other artist from an inability to control viewers' perceptive experience and interpretation/interaction with her work. It is however, the viewer's body that first reacts to Abramovic's practice; whether through a violent nausea at smelling and seeing angst ridden text in pig's blood across a white wall (even if one finds the idea and execution of the work boring and twee, the physical immediateness of its constituents directly effect the body, overriding rational or aesthetic analysis), or through the contact made by the feet as they slip into Shoes for Departure [fig. 14], rough rose quartz crystal slippers for the contemporary Cinderella or Prince charming. These shoes promise different journeys than those of the everyday step, journeys of the intuitive body-mind.

Abramovic enacts emptying. Personal self-cultivation is undertaken as an invitation to others to also participate. Abramovic's sculptures are not complete, are not 'art' until for instance, the viewer rests their head, chest and groin against the smooth pillows of crystal in the Dragon [fig. 15 and 16] series. Thus positioned, the viewer may feel the tension of assuming such vulnerable physical positions within the highly rigid gallery environment. Abramovic's practice is best approached in a private viewing, however, the public
encounters draw attention to the codes informing subject-object interaction within museum practice. Thus positioned, the viewers are asked to stay, to elongate the amount of time they would normally spend ‘looking’ at art, and to consider the relationship that is being enacted between themselves and the object. In so doing, they are asked to become aware of their body-mind, to cultivate stillness so that this awareness is possible. For Abramovic, art is perhaps one of the last places where the undervalued intuition may be activated for the explicit aim of experiencing alternative states of consciousness. Although removed from the ‘everyday’ her practices are not removed from wider social and environmental issues. Rather, they situate a concern for subtle exchanges and the cultivation of body-mind harmony within this polemic.

In addition to the curative aspect there is a cosmic dimension to the intentionality behind the work. In the traditional view about sympathetic substances, the reason that certain materials or forms have the power to heal is because they participate in an energy line that is like a cosmic voice harmonising in the music of the spheres. Much of Abramovic’s work has been involved with attuning herself to that line and performatively following it wherever it might lead.24

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Chapter Eight

Fast and Slow Aesthetics: the dynamics of subtle interpenetration

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it will present a discussion of elemental materials (particularly water and fire) and their effect on the viewer through imaginative contemplation or aesthetic meditation. Second, the rate and rhythm of such exchanges between viewer and temporal work will be considered. It will be argued that the perceptions of subtle affect and effect can be registered consciously if the viewer has consciously cultivated their active imagination/intuition. Therefore, the art work can be considered a temporary focal point for a consideration of the horizontal and vertical extensity of matter-consciousness.

Elemental materials often form the basis for temporal works created by contemporary artists. As previously noted, the fast rate of change exhibited by these materials echoes the dynamic flux of the corporeal viewer. Thus the transient flux and interaction of elemental materials provide for easily observed occasions of temporal dynamics and also open links to the body of the observer, whose own transient form can be understood physically (water and air) and metaphorically (earth and fire) to be comprised of the same substances. This way of considering the body establishes a reciprocity of substance between viewer and object.

A discussion of material elements through the force of their own conceptual histories necessarily animates the imagination/intuition, the communication of such interaction with material elements results in metaphoric expression. It is Bachelard's understanding of the ways in which one enters into a dialogue with the elements and the nature of the interaction that will now be focused upon. The resulting metaphors of such interaction will be tangentially represented, but their subject matter it is not a central concern: the focus remains on the process of interaction, and the artwork's potential for generating further interaction and Bachelard's positioning of reverie as a practice that elicits a 'space' in which subject-object distinctions become ambiguous.
Bachelard and Elemental Reverie

Elemental materials are significant components in how the body-mind, its physical substance and processes, has been conceived. For example, the life force or energising principle of the body has been envisaged as a fire by Vedic cultures, as an invisible fluid by Mesmerists and as an airy substance — prana — in Yogic traditions. These concepts also present the body-mind as being composed of different mixtures of the four elements. Such a belief is also evidenced in the humours of European medieval medicine, whilst Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) understands the body-mind as constituting five elements (water, wood, fire, earth, air) and cues for dis-ease are also proposed on a consideration of the balance of these properties exhibited by physical and mental functioning.

Outside these direct corporeal correspondences, the elements are also extensively enclosed within elaborate systems of meaning within esoteric discourse. Most fundamentally the traditions of Alchemy, Tarot, Astrology (both Western and Eastern) all present the elements as participating within a system of cosmological, spiritual, psychological and physical correspondences. Similarly, Esoteric Buddhism considers the body of Mahavairocana, the Buddha-body to be comprised of the elemental materials that are understood as the forces constituting the universe.¹ These relations are drawn through the 'way' of looking as distinguished by Faivre, that requires the active imagination. This praxis, or mode of looking, is embraced by Gaston Bachelard with the term reverie: Bachelard's consideration of the elemental materials include many references to esoteric conceptualisations of their nature, and the method implicitly dismantles distinctions between the material and the observer, as will be shown. The type of approach or interaction with the material elements that utilises active imagination/intuition makes possible the apprehension of durée and the temporal whole delineated by Bergson.

¹ Yuasa, The Body 149-50.
Bachelard undertook a consideration of material imagination in an attempt to provide a "psychoanalysis of objectivity" as clearly stated in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*,2 and within its pages he includes scathing references to reverie — "reverie represents futility" and "When we turn inwards upon ourselves we turn aside from truth."3 However, as outlined in *Water and Dreams*, this methodology of observation was designated inappropriate to the subject matter.4 It is for this reason that Bachelard refrains from using the term psychoanalysis in the title *Water and Dreams* and both this text and the subsequent *The Poetics of Space* represent a turn from psychoanalysis towards a phenomenological perspective. This change in orientation is presented by Colette Gaudin in the following manner:

In a word, the phenomenological approach is a description of the immediate relationship of phenomena with a particular consciousness: it allows Bachelard to renew his warnings against the temptation to study images as *things*. Images are "lived," "experienced," "re-imagined" in an act of consciousness which restores at once their timelessness and their newness.5

As Bachelard put it:

In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* I have suggested classifying the different types of imagination under the heading of the *material elements* which inspired traditional philosophies and ancient cosmologies. In fact, I believe it is possible to establish in the realm of the imagination, a *law of the four elements* which classifies various kinds of material imagination by their connections with fire, air, water or earth.... A material element must provide its own substance, its particular rules and poetics.6

Bachelard develops an understanding of the types of imagination classified around the four elemental materials. A dominant element or "fundamental oneiric temperament" is often identified by Bachelard as the informing 'principle' of the particular author's

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3Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* 4 and 5.


6Bachelard, *Water and Dreams* 3.
work. For example Nietzsche's disposition is aligned with air and
heights, as well as exemplified as utilising a particular type of
imagination, the dynamic imagination (an imagination concerned
with movement and force). As this example notes, the four
elements are attributed to types of imagination as distinguished by
Bachelard, and this mapping of material elements onto psycho-
physical expression reflects the influence Jung's work on archetypes
and alchemy.

Firstly, imagination is defined with a reference to Nietzsche's
'superman,' this figure exemplifying 'evolved' man [sic] that has
developed authentic "will to power" and become a creator.⁷

The imagination is not, as its etymology suggests, the faculty for forming images of
reality; it is the faculty for forming images which go beyond reality, which sing
reality. It is a superhuman faculty. A man is a man to the extent that he is a
superman.⁸

The above two quotations allude to the elemental materials as
containing and performing particular effects; that is, they could be
understood to exhibit particular rhythms, speeds and force. This
notion of speed is one that will be returned to later and, along with
considerations of density, it forms a distinguishing measure for
delineating different types of material imagination — the pace and
force of material effect.

Prior to distinguishing different types of material imagination
Bachelard distinguishes two different modes of imagination. This
first division occurs between formal imagination — that which
pertains to forms, beauty, the surface — and material imagination —
images which arise from examining 'hidden roots' of formal
imagination, the "inner recesses of substance."⁹ Noting that it is
difficult to separate these two modes in reality, Bachelard does
identify the latter as the defining characteristic of reverie and reverie
implicitly involves quiet contemplation. It is also distinguished

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⁷Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion 523.

⁸Bachelard, Water and Dreams 16.

⁹Bachelard, Water and Dreams 1-2.
from the state of dream by its focus upon a single object, and the
extensity in all directions that this contemplation emanates.

The reverie works in a star pattern. It returns to its centre to shoot out new beams. ¹⁰

It is also seen as a state of perceptive consciousness that requires a
process of cultivation

The Bachelardian reverie, far from being a complacent drifting of the self, is a
discipline acquired through long hours of reading and writing, and through a
constant practice of "surveillance de soi." Images reveal nothing to the lazy
dreamer. ¹¹

As presented by Bachelard and discussed by Gaudin, reverie enacts
an expansion upon the universe, blurring the limits between
'subject' and the 'world.' Providing a cosmology rather than an
ontology, imaginative contemplation — 'reverie' — is understood
to expand the "dimension of the universe." ¹²

Reverie reconciles the world and the subject, present and past, solitude and
communication. There is only on requirement: that it seek written expression,
whether through original creation or through an encounter with an already existing
poem. ¹³

As illustrated above, Bachelard believes poetics to be the most
appropriate medium through which to communicate
interrelationships with material elements. This privileging of
language reflects Bachelard's perspective that language forms the
ground of being, "the immediate mode of becoming." ¹⁴

In the final analysis the true domain for studying the imagination is not painting; it
is literature, the word, the sentence. How little form matters then! How dominant
matter becomes! What a great master the stream is! ¹⁵

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¹¹ Gaudin, *Gaston Bachelard* xxviii.


¹³ Gaudin, *Gaston Bachelard* xxxv.

¹⁴ Bachelard, *L'invitation au voyage* 7-13 re-printed in Gaudin, *Gaston Bachelard*
20.

¹⁵ Bachelard, *Water and Dreams* 188.
Bachelard's form and matter dualism underlies this privileging of language. Optical vision and the creative expression reliant upon this sense faculty — the visual arts — is affiliated with the formal imagination and a concern for surface and beauty; whilst material imagination is discussed as going beyond the surface, to deeper realms of substance and is affiliated with the written word, that carries within it an inherent separation from a visual object, through its position in a language system. This applicability is born out by Bachelard within a discussion of the material imagination of water.

I will devote this conclusion almost exclusively to the most extreme of my paradoxes. It will consist of proving that the voices of water are hardly metaphoric at all; that the language of the waters is a direct poetic reality; that streams and rivers provide the sound for mute country landscapes, and do it with strange fidelity; that murmuring waters teach birds and men to sing, speak, recount; and that there is, in short, a continuity between the speech of water and the speech of man. 16

Liquidity is a principle of language; language must be filled with water. 17

Such dualism between form and matter/visual art and literature is not necessary if the very nature of the matter that comprises the form is liquefied through a process philosophy perspective. As presented, such a perspective enables matter-consciousness to be considered as forming a fluid ontology, in which the surfaces of objects and subjects are considered as porous and always already in a process of interpenetration. As the delineating concept used by Bachelard, depth would, if viewed by such a perspective not perceive different 'types' but different 'intensities' of the same matter-consciousness. Understood thus, the material imagination would be equally at home contemplating surface as it is substance. Similarly, the cultivation of active imagination would enable a water 'stimulus' to enable the viewer to access dimensions of reverie, the attitude of approach being the significant factor, not necessarily the 'object' or 'form' under contemplation.

16Bachelard, Water and Dreams 15.

17Bachelard, Water and Dreams 192.
Reverie is held apart by Bachelard as enabling a dissolution of the boundaries that separate subject and object. In particular, reveries of water are most suited to that task.

Because we fail to de-objectify objects and de-form forms — a process which allows us to see the matter beneath the object — the world is strewn with unrelated things, immobile and inert solids, objects foreign to our nature. The soul, therefore, suffers from a deficiency of material imagination. By grouping images and dissolving substances, water helps the imagination in its task of syntax, a continual linking up and gentle movement of images that frees a reverie bound to objects.\(^{18}\)

This presents a Bergsonian approach to understanding the fluidity of the 'whole' which is obscured by the solidity attributed to objects ('images'). That the solidity of form is presented as incongruous to "our nature" reinforces the understanding of ultimate reality, the ground out of and upon which form is built as being essentially fluid.

For Bachelard then, images are lived, enacting becoming. They exist in an ambiguous relationship to the viewer, both being an 'object' of their consideration and their becoming. Images 'reverberate.' This term was adopted by Bachelard from a phenomenologist Eugène Minkowski. It is understood as a category or property of the universe, a dynamism or flow of life force understood as 'silent' but "sonorous waves."\(^{19}\) Thus this fluidic wave interpenetrates form and space. It interpenetrates the viewer and opens them to the cosmos.

The opening produced by reverie is presented by Bachelard as exhibiting both horizontal and vertical extensity, with each elemental material suited more specifically to one line of becomings over the other. The following example of horizontal opening is taken from Water and Dreams and again represents this fluid element and the human being’s shared characteristics in which, when considered in reverie, the unity of their mutual becoming is perceived.

\(^{18}\) Bachelard, Water and Dreams 12.

Strengthened in this knowledge of depth of material element, the reader will understand at last that water is also a type of destiny that is no longer simply the vain destiny of fleeting images and a never-ending dream but an essential destiny that endlessly changes the substance of being. From that point on, the reader will understand more intimately, more painfully, one of the characteristics of Heracliteanism. He [sic] will see that the Heraclitean flux is a concrete philosophy, a complete philosophy. One cannot bathe twice in the same river because already, in his inmost recesses, the human being shares the destiny of flowing water. Water is truly the transitory element. It is the essential, ontological metamorphosis between fire and earth. A being dedicated to water is constantly falling away. Daily death is not fire's exuberant form of death, piercing heaven with its arrows; daily death is the death of water. Water always flows, always falls, always ends in horizontal death.\textsuperscript{20}

This discussion of a subject's relation to the element of water, clearly reflects a Bergsonian concept of matter-consciousness. The matter (image) upon which the subject focuses is selected from the greater 'whole': a 'whole' that is open and flowing. As the subject is not ontologically distinct from the matter-consciousness of the image, they share a fluid destiny in a mutual becoming of affect and effect. On matter in its pure state (without the selective consciousness organising it into 'sets') Bergson writes:

Matter thus resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and traveling in every direction like shivers through an immense body.\textsuperscript{21}

The vertical death of fire that is mentioned above, is further elucidated below.

Fire is for a man [sic] who is contemplating it an example of sudden change or development .... Less monotonous and less abstract than flowing water, even more quick to grow and to change than the young bird we watch everyday in its nest in the bushes, fire suggests the desire to change, to speed up the passage of time, to bring all of life to its conclusion, to its hereafter ... it links the small to the great, the hearth to the volcano.\textsuperscript{22}

The vertical movement (called the axis of sublimation) is linked to transcendence whether upward to heaven or downward to hell. Nietzsche, who was noted before as being considered a poet of the air and not of fire, is also presented by Bachelard to express vertical becoming. His is viewed as not only a material imagination, but a

\textsuperscript{20} Bachelard, \textit{Water and Dreams}  6.

\textsuperscript{21}Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}  208.

\textsuperscript{22} Bachelard, \textit{The Psychoanalysis of Fire}  16.
dynamic one, whose core characteristic is mobility. This is reflected in Nietzsche's idea of non-teleological becoming, that disputes any possibility of "fixed 'being." This consideration leads Bachelard to declare within Nietzsche's work the gift of nothingness:

Nietzsche is indeed the typical vertical poet, the poet of the summits, the ascended poet... Nietzsche's air is therefore a strange substance: it is substance devoid of substantial qualities. It can thus characterise being as suitable to a philosophy of absolute becoming. In the realm of imagination, the air frees us from substantial, internal, digestive reveries. It frees us from our attachment to matter: it is therefore the matter of our freedom. To Nietzsche, air provides nothing. It gives nothing. It is the vast glory of nothingness. But is not to give nothing the greatest of gifts? The great empty-handed donor frees us from the outstretched hand of desire. It accustoms us to receive nothing, and thus to taking everything.  

Here is a presentation of becoming, of opening that resonates with the concept of sunyata, the state of nothing achieved through the overcoming of desire. This glimmer of reciprocity between the two concepts is perhaps directly manifested through the cultivation of a similar mode of imaginative/intuitive consciousness when contemplating subject-object interrelationships.

For Bachelard reverie enables the perception of subtle forces, of reverberations of elemental matter that inhabit the essential becoming of life. In his discussion of the elements, reference to types of sound and force are employed to capture the essence of the becoming. For Bachelard:

The imagination is a sound-effects man [sic]; it must amplify or soften. Once the imagination is mistress [sic] of dynamic correspondences, images truly speak.  

It is this metaphor of listening to the image and its exchanges with other images, albeit a viewer or other artwork directly inhabiting a shared space, that will be elaborated further. A Deleuzian perspective, considering the affects and effects of intensive and extensive force, forms the basis of this next (and final) turn in this consideration of subject-object interrelationship.

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24Bachelard, An Oniric Temperament: Nietzsche re-printed in Guadin, Gaston Bachelard 42 and 47.

25Bachelard, Water and Dreams 195.
Deleuze and Guattari: Fast and Slow Aesthetics

If one had to define the whole, it would be defined by relation. Relation is not a property of objects, it is always external to its terms. It is also inseparable from the open, and displays a spiritual or mental existence. Relations do not belong to objects, but to the whole, on condition that this is not confused with a closed set of objects. By movement in space, the objects of a set change their respective positions. But, through relations, the whole is transformed or changes qualitatively. We can say of duration itself or of time, that it is the whole of relations. 26

The relationship between subject-object/viewer-artwork is now to be approached with a consideration of the dynamics of fast and slow exchanges. It is a consideration of the perception of these forces by a viewer who has cultivated a body-mind relationship that enables them to 'see' in the manner expressed by Bergson, Faivre, Kûkai, Bachelard, Deleuze and Guattari. This involves the exerted effort to consider both the works and themselves as forces in a continual relationship of exchange. Deleuze and Guattari present an understanding of the work of art as "blocs of sensations," admixtures of percept and affect that exist in themselves. Art is therefore understood as "standing up alone" because the "compound of sensations" which constitute it, "is preserved in itself." 27

Percepts go beyond perceptions, they are independent of the subject who experiences them, in the same manner that affects are distinguished from feelings or affection by their movement beyond these subjectively mediated experiences. Therefore sensations (percepts and affects) are presented as 'beings' independent of any lived being, existing in themselves. 28

The role of percepts is of particular interest for a consideration of subtle relations, as Deleuze and Guattari succinctly summarise when discussing the forces infusing abstract painting, whose domain is specifically understood as making the imperceptible perceptible.

In short, the area of plain, uniform color vibrates, clenches or cracks open because it is the bearer of glimpsed forces. And this, first of all, is what makes painting

27 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 163-165.
28 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 163-164.
abstract: summoning forces, populating the area of plain, uniform color with the forces it bears, making visible the invisible forces visible in themselves, drawn up figures with geometrical appearance but that are no more than forces — the forces of gravity, heaviness, rotation, the vortex, explosion, expansion, germination, and time (as music may be said to make the sonorous force of time audible, in Messiaen for example, or literature with Proust, to make the illegible force of time legible and conceivable). Is this not the definition of the percept itself — to make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become?29

Both percepts and affects are defined by their ability to 'exceed' the subject. Phillip Goodchild defines the specific meaning of effect as used by Deleuze and Guattari as "a feeling or emotion that exerts a force; a pure, pre-personal state of emotion that is not defined in relation to a consciousness that experiences it; a capacity to affect or be affected."30

Percepts and affects are intimately interwoven with the process of becoming, this interrelationship between the subject's becoming and the object's becoming is exemplified by the following discussion. Deleuze and Guattari draw 'objects' and, by way of reference to Cézanne, art in particular, as a meeting point for vision and contemplation — the equipment of becoming.

*Affects are precisely those nonhuman becomings of man, just as percepts — including the town — are nonhuman landscapes of nature.* Not a "minute of the world passes," says Cézanne, that we will preserve if we do not "become that minute." We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, becoming zero.31

Whilst representing that which exceeds conscious being, the percept and the affect nonetheless, are not excluded from perception of it. As defined by Deleuze and Guattari the very aim of art is not only to wrest the percept from perceptions and the affect from affections, but to compose these sensations in a manner that makes visual, makes perceptible the forces of other modes of being. This aim however, does not present a plan for how the 'viewer' is to approach the

29 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 182.


31 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 169.
previously unforeseeable and unperceivable forces. It is at this point, that the previous discussion of techniques of contemplation and creative imagination can be understood as offering an applicable method of interaction, forming a 'bridge' between the perceptions and affections of the subject and the affects and effects existing in an entirely independent compound of sensation, mode of being. However, it should be remembered that, although the art work as a 'bloc of sensation' is defined as independent, its becoming is also the becoming of the subject as the previous quotation attests.

It has hopefully been made clear in previous discussion that perception of subtle effects is potentially achieved through the dual process of changing conceptual attitudes towards matter — considering matter-consciousness as fluid — and by actively undertaking various cultivation methods in order to invoke the intuition/imagination. As above, Deleuze and Guattari present contemplation as the mode by which becoming world is achieved. Becoming universe embraces the material becomings of Bachelard, becoming zero is perhaps comparable to the becoming empty of sunyata. We will return shortly to matter and the void. First, becoming, as used by Deleuze and Guattari needs to be qualified in its particular relationship to art.

The affect goes beyond affections no less than the percept goes beyond perceptions. The affect is not the passage from one lived state to another but man's nonhuman becoming ... becoming is neither an imitation nor an experienced sympathy, nor even an imaginary identification. It is not resemblance, although there is resemblance. But it is only a produced resemblance. Rather, becoming is an extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations without resemblance or, on the contrary, in the distance of a light that captures both of them in a single reflection ... this is not the transformation of one to the other. This something can be specified only as sensation. It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernability, as if things, beasts, persons ... endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an affect ... art itself lives on these zones of indetermination. 32

It can be said that Deleuze and Guattari position art itself as inhabiting the ambiguous realm of porous distinctions between subject and object. Positioned thus, contemplation upon art, in an effort to become consciously aware of subtle becomings, opening and exchanges, is made all the more applicable, as the very definition of

32 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 173.
art incorporates ambiguity and indetermination as its ground. These zones of indetermination are understood as being produced by cosmic forces. The art work also by its very nature does not remain separated from the viewer, its indeterminacy enacting upon the viewer, yielding a 'shared' sensory becoming.\(^{33}\)

It should be said of all art that, in relation to the percepts or visions they give us, artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound.\(^{34}\)

Deleuze and Guattari note that the void is also sensation. In a reciprocal relationship, the interpenetration of void and sensation is presented as analogous to the relation between sunyata and form as previously discussed, with the void being implicitly constitutive of sensation.

However, blocs need pockets of air and emptiness, because even the void is sensation. All sensation is composed with the void in composing itself with itself, and everything holds together on earth and in the air, and preserves the void, is preserved in the void by preserving itself. A canvas may be completely full to the point that even the air no longer gets through, but it is only a work of art if, as the Chinese painter says, it nonetheless saves enough empty space for horses to prance in (even if this is only through the variety of planes).\(^{35}\)

Sensations are differentiated from the material by their ability to exist independently of the material; therefore transient materials may produce percepts and effects that exist "in the eternity that coexists with this short duration."\(^{36}\) This is possible because the material has entered into the sensation — not the other way around, as is generally assumed — and therefore can be understood to share the sensation’s characteristics of exceeding the meditating subject. Bachelard’s understanding of the material imagination, as enabling the extension and creation of new universes for the contemplating subject, is echoed in this material becoming. The relationship between material and sensation, as distinguished between technical and aesthetic aspects of oil painting, is proposed as inverting the

\(^{33}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 182.

\(^{34}\) Deleuze and Gauttari, *What is Philosophy?* 175.

\(^{35}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 165-167.

\(^{36}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 166.
relationship: the former presenting the sensation as realised in the material, the latter the material realised in the sensation. These two poles are not presented as mutually distinct, with the possibility of combinations and multiple degrees of co-existence a feature of the discussion; however, the underlying premise is that, when the material can be understood to have entered into the sensation then, the aesthetic plane of composition, an "infinite field of forces" (the only plane of art), is entered into, and thereby inscribes the material sensation with a 'thickness,' that the plane of technique (which is absorbed by the plane of composition) cannot ascribe. It presents the work as exceeding the frame of subject-object relations.

This is painting that no longer has any background because the "underneath" comes through: the surface can be furrowed or the plane of composition can take on thickness insofar as the material rises up, independently of depth or perspective, independently of shadows and even of chromatic order of color (the arbitrary colorist). One no longer covers over; one raises, accumulates, piles up, goes through, stirs up, folds.

The material acquires a palpable force with the potential for multiple becomings quite independent from the seemingly closed, framed surface of the image. These becomings of sensation, or "modalities of a being of sensation" are understood to configure three main varieties of compounds:

the vibration, which characterises the simple sensation (but it is already durable or compound, because it rises and falls, implies a constitutive difference of level, follows an invisible thread that is more nervous than cerebral); the embrace or clinch (when two sensations resonate in each other but embracing each other so tightly in a clinch of what are no more than "energies"); withdrawal, division, distension (when, on the contrary, two sensations draw apart, release themselves, but so as to be brought together by the light, the air, or the void that sinks between them or into them like a wedge that is at once so dense and so light that it extends in every direction as the distance grows, and forms a bloc that no longer needs support).

The first resonates within its own state; the second and third respectively enact a coupling or opening/splitting.

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37 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 188

38 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 194.

39 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 168.
Movement, exchange, duration lay at the heart of becoming and therefore characterise the modalities of sensation. Metaphors drawn from music are used extensively by Deleuze and Guattari when discussing the activities of these forces — refrain, transposition, modulation, repetition. A particular Bergsonian analogy between 'musical beings' and 'living beings' is also referenced by Deleuze and Guattari to highlight these activities as fracturing individuating tendencies towards closure.

Movement, as a constituent of being, a 'substance' of being, forever opening the individual onto the infinite fields of force, disallows the existence of subject and object. It is that which draws 'us' into the compound of sensation and onto the plane of composition that enacts a further opening into the infinite cosmos.

It should be said of all art that, in relation to the percepts or visions they give us, artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound.40

As such the melodic metaphors which underpin this discussion of sensations and their various compounds (art works) can also be extended to signify the viewer's relationship of mutual becoming with them. The viewer can be understood as 'hearing' the vibratory affect of sensation, equally the artist can be understood as constructing new 'harmonies' and 'rhythms'.41 For Deleuze and Guattari go further to equate sensation with pure contemplation and to illustrate the idea return to considering the interrelationship of matter and sensation.

Sensation is pure contemplation, for it is through contemplation that one contracts, contemplating oneself to the extent that one contemplates the elements from which one originates. Contemplating is creating, the mystery of passive creation, sensation. Sensation fills out the plane of composition and is filled with itself by filling itself with what it contemplates: it is "enjoyment" and "self-enjoyment." It is a subject, or rather an inject. Plotinus defines all things as contemplations, not only as people and animals but plants, the earth, rocks. These are not Ideas that we contemplate through concepts but the elements of matter that we contemplate through sensation.42

40 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 175.
41 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 176.
42 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 212.
Therefore, it is contemplation that enables the viewer to enter into the sensation and to perceive its vibration or the form of its compound. It is also possible that, having entered consciously into this relationship, the 'subject' may not only feel the forces/vibrations of their own becomings but may also exert some control over their manifestation. That is, the degree of body-mind cultivation may even enable the viewer to actively control the fluctuations of their own affects. As the artist is a creator of new harmonies, so the viewer is also a creator of new harmonies through the combination of their own forces (those temporally framed) and those of the artworks (also temporarily framed). Perhaps the greater degree of harmony achieved between these centres of force/sensation, the greater the degree of interpenetration; the viewer aware of becoming with the temporal thickness on the plane of composition.

Deleuze and Guattari consider effects to indeed be harmony. Therefore becoming-other does necessarily imply a interrelation of the subject's 'harmony' (effect) and the 'object's' harmony (effect). This recourse to sound metaphors invokes Eastern (particularly Vedic, Chinese and Shingon Buddhist) and Esoteric traditions that conceptualise the source of being/becoming and all matter including light, as cosmic vibration. These traditions are multiple and complex with, for example, musical esotericism interwoven with geometry, numerology, astrology, as evidenced within Cabbalistic and Alchemist groups from the pre-Renaissance to the present day. 43 Both Esoteric and Eastern traditions however, posit a general correspondence between the 'source' and audible sound as experienced in reality. Musical scales are viewed as microcosmic reflections of the macrocosm. This consideration of all matter as vibration/sound opens not only these antediluvian discourses but also gestures towards current debates in the New Sciences, where physics in particular is being touted as the place of reconciliation between metaphysical concepts of matter-consciousness and the

scientific. However, in specific relationship to music none of these discourses can be adequately represented within this context; suffice to note that music, as both metaphor and 'agent' of being/becoming, is included in consideration of both past and present subject-object interaction. Deleuze and Guattari's representation replete with musical analogies, not only plays out a postmodern de-centering of visual sense but also conjures up the aforementioned debates.

To return to an exhibition situation, and the subject's conscious interaction with art object: if becoming implies both sensation and 'subject' entering into a compound of becoming, then within this compound their different rates of force would interact. If a 'subject' was trained so to not only perceive but also to regulate their flux of forces then a greater harmony would be established with the bloc of sensation. That is, the 'subject' would not only perceive the rate of temporal relations being enacted but may possibly adjust their own perceptive response to accord greater harmony with the art work's affects — perhaps this would increase the rate of exchange, perhaps it would slow it. From this process they would however, have gleaned a perception of the rate of force of the bloc of sensation, its temporal dynamic. This is the invitation extended by Maria Abramovic when the viewer is asked to participate in the Dragon series.

**Praxis: Between is Action**

What I propose as a potential beginning for such a praxis is indeed exactly what many art practices covertly desire: a consideration leading to an awareness (and eventually a control) over the process of looking from the perspective of body-mind unity. On a mundane level, when visitors enter a contemporary art gallery they are challenged to 'look' in a different way from what is required in the everyday experience of Western culture; with cacophonies of images constantly vying for attention. In short, the pace of viewing is required to slow down, one is requested to 'fix' upon an object for longer amounts of time than what feels 'natural.' For most, this would be a difficult task that inevitably leads to a response of indignation, with the viewing public feeling alienated as the request
for a change in 'viewing' technique is neither openly stated, nor are any methods of training or encouragement for an attempted 'focusing' offered. In general, the public expect to 'get it' (the artwork's assumed singular meaning) instantaneously, like the generic light bulb being flicked on. Gradual realisation through extended periods of observation/relaxation is not promoted within the general culture and particularly, within gallery contexts as a method of producing productive active engagement with the work. Viewers are requested to be passive, not active, in gallery environments. However, activity of the intuition and imagination is exactly what is required, rather than being enveloped by a passivity of mind and body.

Visitors must be encouraged to not only reflect upon the appearance of the work in an empirical manner, but must be opened to finding a different relation to it through the practice of reverie, the working of the active imagination. Society's distaste of the 'ugly,' 'decay' and 'depth' in general (except when employed for shock or novelty value) perpetuates fast visual interaction. Perhaps this is because the slow pace of viewing required to elicit conscious perception of subtle interaction readily threatens the subject's independence and identity with its potential for manifesting openings, de-framing, emptying. For Deleuze and Guattari this is the very role of art, and 'slowing down' is that which separates the subject from the 'whole' or 'oceanic chaos.'

Art indeed struggles with chaos, but it does so in order to bring forth a vision that illuminates it for an instant, a Sensation.  

Perhaps the viewer is unconsciously aware of this potential (is this perhaps the underlying reason for Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetic of potential?) and as reason-valuing subjects, steer well clear of it. Materialism and its accompanying values also inform viewer's approach to art, their method of looking. This is evidenced quite succinctly by the millions who flock to see the Mona Lisa as well as those remarks so often heard muttered under breath in contemporary galleries — "it's just a pile of dirt!," "they are only

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44 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 204-205.
paper cups!" "I could do that!" Value is scarcely attributed to the imaginative/intuitive and ideational methods that composed the works, but mostly pinned on reputations and material construction/techniques that either represent visual 'reality' or, paradoxically enough, embody time through sheer complexity and detail of techniques. Fast is a good method of viewing but not for creating valuable or good art it seems.

There is, therefore, a need to raise awareness about the nature of visual responses, highlighting that they are not necessarily automatic, and that different qualities of viewing can be cultivated and adopted. In essence, such an active engagement would involve an action upon the rhythm of exchange, the kinetic and dynamic states of matter-consciousness. That is, the subject's matter-consciousness is being adjusting and being adjusted by the matter-consciousness of the art objects.

This exercise in visual awareness would eventually be extended to the entire mind-body, attuning other 'senses' to the influence of 'visual' stimulus (such is the practice of contemplating mandalas or Yantras) leading to a conscious perception of the more subtle exchanges. Through the awareness of the perceptive extensity of their 'body' such a process would enable an individual to become increasingly aware of the dynamics of exchange inhabiting the 'clear' space 'between' themselves and the 'object,' and between each of the objects sharing the same gallery space, perhaps even acknowledging that the designation of where their body ends and the object of contemplation begins is increasingly difficult to locate.

The Aesthetics of Speed

If Ethological and subtle models of body-consciousness are adopted then interaction is measured on kinetic and dynamic axes. To adopt these is to propose that matter-consciousness affects other matter-consciousness at divergent degrees of intensity, at different speeds of collision, at divergent degrees of interpenetration. Subject-object relations become conditioned by faster and slower rates of absorption and repulsion. As previously noted, galleries privilege 'static motion' of both viewer and art work. They are invested in creating a 'between' separating subject and object. If viewing is made active
through the cultivation methods discussed, then this actively enables the viewer to interact with practices in a temporal manner.

The viewer becomes aware of and partakes in the temporal thickness of the plane of composition, as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari: they are aware of exchanges of force. The artwork, or 'bloc of sensation,' must first be apprehended, in particular its effect and percept felt. It is too simplistic to suppose that a object be considered fast or slow on the rate of the viewer's perception and recognition of it — this is a surface concern. If a viewing modality is stretched and focused through contemplation, then not only will the viewer's own rhythmic forces slow but — if following the positions of the Process, Buddhist and Esoteric philosophers discussed herein — the viewer's ability to utilise intuitive and imaginative matter-consciousness increases and the 'depth' and degree of conscious interpenetration with the artwork also increases. It is from this perspective that the dynamic rate of force of the artwork can then be considered in a temporal capacity, as being inherently dynamic, as fast or slow. The stiller the viewer, the more active the artwork. The longer one contemplates a work, the more aware one becomes of its different effects and affects, and one's own different affects and effects. Works that may have initially repulsed become enchanting; those that elicited immediate pleasure may sour, being less able to sustain an elongated tension of vision that enacts 'active' contemplation.

Temporal artworks, made from materials that have highly visible change processes, present the most conducive subjects for a study of these subtle relations. They have the capacity to make an awareness of the rhythm of exchange, the inherent activity of matter-consciousness, more readily perceivable to rational states of consciousness. The viewer need but to enter into their seen movement through active reverie to open onto and perceive a glimpse of the fluid 'whole' from which this image was drawn. For the individual experiencing a glimmer of the 'whole,' the shadow side retains its de-stabilising, de-framing, and challenging implications with regard to independence and identity. Temporal, process-based works in particular contain the potential for opening out the artwork's act from instant into duration.
Summary

At a very minimum level, a viewer that approaches an art work with a preparedness to open their subjectivity to potential 'subtle' effects would at least tease out material analogies and interrelations regarding visual form and structure 'between' themselves and the objects around them. They would be 'looking' with an intuitional interface that both includes and extends the entire body-mind. This approach requires the viewer to consciously register their own ever-changing material rhythm as well as possibly being acquainted with methods for enacting change upon it themselves. Perhaps it is at this point of cultivation, that one could be understood as undertaking the work of creating and viewing their lived experience as Karma Mandala, a perspective that ultimately overcomes subject-object division and reveals a multiplicity of becomings. As a 'whole,' the subject-objective interrelation becomes a boundless interchange of vibratory exchanges, with the 'viewer' perceiving the interpenetration of the subtle effects and affects and being aware of their inherent nature as becoming 'other.'

The apprehension of fast and slow exchange between aesthetic objects and viewers requires the cultivation of the mind-body in its entirety as a sensate membrane and a different attitude the process of 'looking' — one that challenges assumed notions of the passive glance and seeks to stretch the duration that the optical membranes focus upon a particular object. It is within such stretching, and extension of visual contemplation into the realms of reverie, meditation, active imagination that the subtle exchanges are given time to exhibit their intrinsically effective potential. It is argued that, through this process, the aesthetic force of the 'object' changes in accordance with the 'deepening' level of apprehension. This can only be illustrated by practical application. Thus galleries must enable viewers to comfortably spend extended amounts of time 'listening' at an art work. Only through such activity can the pulse of the artwork reveal itself in contradistinction to the pulse of the viewer, even as their temporal destinies intersperse.
Chapter Nine

*Subtle Crossing — The Exhibition.*

What has not been taken into account as yet, in this meandering consideration, is the impact of multiple individuals and objects within a single space. Curating — the practice of placing objects together in particular relationships within a specific space — also requires listening to each particular work's rhythm, as well as a projection of possible exchanges created by their juxtaposition including the effect of the particular rhythm of the exhibition space. Not only do the exchanges between observer and artwork inhabit the space, but also the exchanges between object and object and observer and observer.

The awareness of this continually expanding field of interaction has the potential to create a deafening cacophony for those perceptive to subtle sensation. It is well known that autistic people register sensation to an acutely high degree. Hearing is often the sense most affected, with sufferers able to register a telephone ring loud and clear across vast distances. Such distraction and awareness of activity across extensive planes overloads physical endurance and, as with the case of autism, sufferers withdraw into 'a world of their own' in order to survive and escape the continual bombardment of their senses. Biennales of Contemporary Art present the viewer with a less serious but still fatiguing example of sensory overload. After even briefly experiencing the many many works it draws together, who can not but reach a saturation point where the affective impact of any work is significantly lessened, because the viewer has shut down their sensory and perceptive faculties due to overload?

If one aims to encourage viewers into reverie, into opening up perceptive capabilities, it seems important therefore to group small selections of divergent yet harmonious practices together. As a curator, unless one has selected entirely extant work (which is a difficult task if requiring work of a temporal, installation based nature), a certain element of discordant risk is inevitable. The curator will not know the sense, the rhythm of the work until it is completed just prior (sometimes minutes) to the exhibition's
opening. Further, they can not know the overall pulse of the exhibition until it is also entirely installed. This is where the curator befriends intuition.

*Subtle Crossing* aims to present work that is as harmoniously divergent as possible within a small project. There will be scientific based experiments of Allen Giddy (extant work), fragile installations of natural material by Emma Rooney (not yet created as I write), a lyrical short film exploring memory by Anna Fraser, and the intricate *Rangoli*, a traditional Indian ground work created by Pushpa Dakshinamurthy. Traditionally these artistic practices do not sit well together. Film, in particular, is a difficult medium to sensitively introduce into a group exhibition environment. Its particular sound and light requirements need to be gently accommodated with the more stationary and 'fixed' pieces.

What informs the selection of the work however, is a shared concern for subtle relations. *Clock* [Fig 17] by Alan Giddy, a piece unfortunately unavailable for the exhibition, is however indicative of his concerns. A wood block is placed in close in relation to a light source, that will within three hundred and fifty years have evaporated the wood (through particle dissipation of light), as projected by Professor John Smith of the University of New South Wales. The futility of endeavours that seek to preserve form against this flow, against the strength and effect of light is Giddy's point. Through consciously focusing upon such subtle effects, of presenting a measurement of time not bound by hours but by rates of dissolution of wood, the viewer is required to consider elongated periods of time, as well as to consciously watch the 'imperceptible' transformation take place.

Emma Rooney's practice is suffused with ritual. Firstly, the ritual of collecting her materials, parts of plants, feathers, etc. Secondly, the detailed ritual of combining these elements into parts of the installation, e.g. the hammock made out of hair nets or the net created from pine needles. Thirdly the exhibition installation itself — where materials are drawn together, placed precisely in relation to one another to create an overall piece — is a ritual undertaking, where position, relation, and sensitive understanding of the inter-effects of materials is carefully considered. Rooney creates gentle
work, whose harmony is entirely suspended in the relations between materials, their subtle and temporal constituents highlighted through unrepeatable compositions [fig 18].

Anna Fraser's short film *Evidence* revolves around the editing faculty that people use to filter their environment, memories, actions, perceptions. A link is established between this editing practice and identity. Through its subject matter the film asks one to consider the constructions of self and how this understanding of self is perpetuated in every day life. The dynamic and temporal media of film however, establishes subtle relations with the viewer, that gently effaces these constructions.

Pushpa Dakshinamurthy creates *Rangoli*, using a technique that is passed down the female line from generation to generation. These complex design are created using lime and white-stone powder, flower petals and rice flour [fig.19]. Created to celebrate Hindu festivals, public and private ceremonies including 'blessing' domestic spaces, the *Rangoli* designate a site where prayer is performed. Each *Rangoli* is created for specific spaces and purposes, with these elements reflected in the completed design. As works for contemplation, *Rangoli* combine elements of sacred geometry with a temporality of material to evoke relations with the greater forces that direct the universe.

The viewer is encouraged to enter into reverie with these works (as a 'whole' or individually) and limited portable seating shall be provided to encourage longer viewing time. This seating is in no way ideal for everybody (the elderly in particular may find it difficult to use) and this failing to provide adequate physical support for long periods of time is keenly felt. However, short of re-designing gallery spaces and exhibition furniture, it is the most that could be achieved under the present circumstances.

The viewer is encouraged to interact, to 'plug into' each work, each naturally engaging to different degrees reflecting the level of cultivation reached and the resulting degree of sensitivity of each viewer to subtle effects. As argued before, temporal art works are a good place to consider such an active perception, because their inherent and visibly physical rate of change is much more apparent
to conscious recognition than works made from materials that, although temporal, are presented in slow relation, e.g. painting and drawing with traditional materials. Temporal and process artworks open out the act of viewing from instant into duration.

Many exhibitions have presented artworks selected for their quest and ability to communicate metaphysical perspectives —The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985 (County Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles, 1986); Negotiating Rapture: The Power of Art to Transform Lives (Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1996); Spirit and Place: Art in Australia 1861-1996 (Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996) and Beyond Belief: Modern Art and the Religious Imagination (National Gallery of Victoria, 1998), to name only few. *Subtle Crossing* does not present artists who explicitly seek to represent the 'spiritual' per se, but rather endeavours to present and combine practices that will encourage an intuitive and imaginative consideration of subject-object interaction by the viewer, that does not reject the possibility of these considerations leading to meditation on being-becoming.

It is hoped that if, naught else, extended periods of time spent contemplating artworks in the manner discussed herein would lead to a recognition of the whole body's (and not just the mind's, the eyes') relations with the works. *Subtle Crossing* is presented as an opportunity for the entire body (and not just the mind) to consider the approaches to art discussed herein.
Figure 18. Emma Rooney, *S ... Pin ... S* 1995. (detail). Poppy petals, a flat pebble, beeswax, cotton thread and poppy seeds.
Figure 19. Pushpa Dakshinamurthy, Rangoli 1998. Powder of white stone, lime, rice and flowers.
Conclusion
Conclusion

The chief of our active faculties by which we penetrate the world of these "correspondences" is the imagination, the vis imaginativa. This can have a physical effect on our bodies or even beyond them, but is equally an instrument of knowledge or gnosis.¹

The artist is a seer, a become.²

He who longs for life, knows that immortality is hidden in transciency.³

This paper sought to speak of a mode of interacting with artworks that is intimate, subtle and requires a fluid conception of matter-consciousness, choosing three focalising discourses that essentially share a belief in the power of active imagination/intuition as 'unveiling' the subtle forces that exchange between and rupture subject-object distinctions. It has been primarily concerned with presenting three approaches to viewing the world of appearances and the 'ground' which supports it. The concepts of transcendence and immanence have intimately accompanied this journey, as one cannot speak of opening the subject without confronting larger metaphysical dimensions and their assumed position with regard to the subject (being dispersed). Temporal relations carry within them the mortality of their subject, and it is the recognition of this failure of form to ultimately sustain the life and close the form that belies its autonomy and leads one to contemplate the role of process and exchange in subject-object relations. Process infuses and carries its course through matter-consciousness and this reflection opens out to considerations of the nature of being-becoming.

Transcendence and immanence, being-becoming are often held as two alternate propositions but, as Faivre identified, Esoteric discourse strives to reconcile these dualisms. Theosophy was seen as posting an ultimate source that manifested through processual becoming. The subject here is held as a dynamic force which extends them vertically and horizontally and every degree in between. This figure is conceived as both a vortex and a spiral that interrelates through a process of emptying and filling, extending and contracting.

The spiral opens movement to all directions, whilst denying the possibility of absolute repetition. It is itself a motion of perpetual becoming that is already being. Within its ever increasing and

¹ Faivre, Access 67.

² Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 171.

³ Abbot Yusei Arai, Shingon Esoteric Buddhism from 'Aspiration IX' 140.
decreasing turns it is fluid process. It is the mobile apex of the cross formed between vertical transcendence and horizontal immanence, the point from which the viewer observes their subjectivity permeate the objectivity of the form of their focus, and vice versa.

At the very heart of this conjecture is the centrality of relations in establishing the subject's concept of self, of identity. Any positing of subtle dynamic interpenetration between subject-object at once heightens the importance of relation in regard to ontological considerations, because its process becomes constitutive of the subject. This is exemplified by the perspectives of Buddhism, Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari discussed herein.

It has been argued that it is not enough for one to understand theoretically the potential for subtle exchanges of effect between subject-object, but that the whole body-mind unity is necessarily involved, and therefore any approach to considering this subject should attempt to engage matter-consciousness, considering exchanges between a viewer and contemporary art work, presented as a fitting site of exploration. Contemplative modes of consciousness are privileged in the consideration of aesthetic objects, and the cultivation of intuitive, imaginative modes of contemplation is proposed as central by all three discourses discussed herein, in the ability to consciously register the subtle exchanges. The mind-body unity is established through cultivation, and observed as creating and responding to subtle effects in the exchanges that take place between artwork and viewer. Viewers need to be encouraged to cultivate their active intuition and imagination as a methodology for interacting with art work. It is these faculties that will evidence subtle exchanges and open the viewer beyond the simple limits of body and mind.

This approach to artwork requires active cultivation, time and patience as the development of all sonorous relations do. The dawning of instant meaning, absolute surety of purpose, and slick superficial surfaces are foreign to this type of endeavour. Thus, the glance must be elongated into the vigil. The desire for instant satiation must be suspended for more subtle and gentle exploration. The body as a entire sensate matrix must be engaged and heard as well as the mind.

Opening this conclusion were three quotations: the first from Antoine Faivre, indicates that the imaginative relations established through subject-object contemplation involve not only changes in body-consciousness, but that they enable gnosis — that is, through the contemplation of the effects the observer can enter into knowledge producing relations, ontological, cosmological, universal knowledge — knowledge of self.
The second quotation is drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* As an artist is perceived to create blocs of sensation, to enter into dialogue with, and represent the fluid 'whole,' so too the artist is a seer because of their going beyond framed perceptive states, beyond general lived relations to enact an encounter with "the mutual embrace of life with what threatens it." Seers are defined by their ability to perceive that which cannot be viewed by everyday consciousness, and the wisdom that such perception bequeaths. In entering into relations with an artwork, the viewer is necessarily also a becoming-seer, through the mutual becoming of subject-object.

The final quotation, from Abbot Yusei Arai, is a Shingon Buddhist aspiration, that identifies transience, the temporal process as intimately evocative of ontological revelation, the realisation of immanence bound up in its process and knowable through contemplation.

The combination of these three perspectives — of imagination as an active function that effects mind-body and potentially creates knowledge, the ability of artist and viewer to enter into relations with the metaphysical through contemplation of aesthetic object, and the processural nature, the temporal qualities of matter-consciousness as enclosing and offering realisation of unbounded self — signal the three aspects of that have driven this research. The desire to view imagination and intuition not as passive, indulgent pasttimes, but as dynamic knowledge creating faculties utilising both mind and body; the potential for both artist and viewer to open to the 'whole' in mutual reciprocity without fear of annihilation but in accord with a general understanding of this whole as constituting subjectivity and objectivity in the first place; and thirdly, that the simple act of viewing temporal artworks (in the cultivated manner discussed herein) can reveal profound understandings of metaphysical sagacity.

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4 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 171.
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Subtle Exchanges
Cultivating Relations with Duration
Eastern, Western and Esoteric Approaches to Contemplating Art Practice

Jay (Jennene) Johnston

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Honours)

University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury August 1999
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
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Dedicated to Eunice Eva Voysey (1910-1998).
The hour is striking so close above me,  
so clear and sharp,  
that all my senses ring with it.  
I feel it now: there's a power in me  
to grasp and give shape to my world.  

I know that nothing has ever been real  
without my beholding it.  
All becoming has needed me.  
My look ripens things  
and they come toward me, to meet and be met.

I live my life in widening circles  
that reach out across the world.  
I may not ever complete the last one,  
but I give myself to it.  

I circle around God, that primordial tower.  
I have been circling for thousands of years,  
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,  
a storm, or a great song?

Rainer Maria Rilke  
The Book of Monastic Life [1905]. trans. Anita Barrows and  
Joanna Macy in Rilke's Book of Hours, Love Poems to God  
# Table of Contents

- **List of Figures**
- **Introduction**
- **Section One**
  - 1 — Subtle Relations
  - 2 — Esotericism and Theoaesthetics
  - 3 — Sunyata — emptiness/openness
- **Section Two**
  - 4 — Transient Body-Mind, Immanent Body-Mind
  - 5 — Subtle Bodies: the object of surveillance by Parapsychologists
  - 6 — Intuition: subtle actions and creative perception
- **Section Three**
  - 7 — Cultivation
  - 8 — Fast and Slow Aesthetics
  - 9 — Subtle Crossing — The Exhibition
- **Conclusion**
- **Bibliography**
List of Figures


Figure 2. M. Temple Richmond, "The Seven Cosmic Planes." *Sirius.* (Mariposa, Source, 1997) 24.


Figure 4. Madhu Khanna, "Subtle Body Chakras." *Yantra: The Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity.* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979) 120.


Figure 18. Emma Rooney, *S ... Pin ... S* 1995. (detail). Poppy petals, a flat pebble, beeswax, cotton thread and poppy seeds.

Introduction
Introduction

In a word, the spiritual in art is not contained in the work but unfolds in the real and imagined worlds of the work's viewer.¹

In a language alien to, and forever undermining its purpose, this thesis aims to consider the potential for perception of the subtle exchanges of viewers and artwork; subject and object. Such a project necessitates an examination of ontologies, concepts of the body, perceptive schemas and modes of consciousness that ultimately destabilise the assumed solidity and individuality of 'subject' and 'object.' Therefore the logic, reason and empirical observation upon which academic styles of research are usually modelled are not entirely suited to this project, albeit that they are the most effective modes of communicating its exploration.

It will be argued that exchanges of subtle effects are continually taking place between a viewer and object and, by extension other objects and viewers, that the space 'between' subject and object, generally assumed to be 'empty' is actually alive with interaction. Considered thus, the borders separating subject-object, that also create and maintain their identity are called into question: positing a 'viewer' and an 'artwork' as discrete entities becomes problematic. The premise adopted in this regard considers ascriptions of identity as momentary apprehensions of wholeness. The perceived borders are however considered permeable and what is understood as the 'subject' and the 'object' are otherwise engaged in a dance of interaction. The borders defining separate identity considered amorphous, fragile and forever moving within a state of flux.

Section One — Preceding introduces Process Philosophy as a the basic ontological perspective underlying this reflection of subject-object relations. Following this more general outline, three conceptualisations of subject-object interaction are considered (Western, Esoteric and Eastern). Throughout the paper, reference will be made to and between these three areas of focus, with comparison and contrast of their discourses as a central feature of the project. It has been a goal of this research to present trans-disciplinary (philosophy-religion-contemporary art) and cross-cultural (East-West) perspectives. The three models selected reflect this ambition. Firstly that of Henri Bergson, and the re-working of his concepts by Gilles Deleuze, presents a predominantly Western Process perspective on subject-object relations. Chapter Two explores Esoteric approaches towards subject-object relations, with

emphasis placed on considering the particular frame of mind that this discourse requires for viewing the world, as identified by Antoine Faivre. This chapter also aims to introduce and consider the role of the artwork in activating and representing experiences of transcendence and immanence. Eastern perspectives of subject-object relations are presented in Chapter Three, with the focus on exploring the concept of 'Sunyata' as ground of being/becoming and the differing interpretations of it, including a Deleuzian reading of its meaning when applied of subject-object relations.

Section Two — Interceding begins in Chapter Four by presenting a discussion of three types of body-mind proposed by the preceding three sites of investigation. Fluid, permeable and inherently 'open' to the 'universe,' these models of subjectivity do not support ontological distinctions between the physical form and consciousness. Following on from this, the effects on and of such bodies are examined, as well as previous methods of measuring and methodologies of how one comes to know and consciously directs this subtle body. Chapter Five focuses upon Parapsychology as an attempt to approach subtle matter-consciousness from a scientific perspective. Chapter Six examines the methods of perception proposed by Bergson, Esotericism and specific Eastern philosophies — active imagination and intuition.

Section Three — Exceeding, commences in Chapter Seven with a consideration of the process and practice of cultivation required to activate intuition as a faculty able to perceive subtle effects. This consideration of cultivation focuses mostly upon Eastern practices, with emphasis on the interrelation of cultivation and the creation/contemplation of visual art works. The material imagination as delineated by Bachelard is the subject of Chapter Eight, highlighting the role of metaphor and imagination/intuition in the viewer's relation to aesthetic experiences. This is directly followed by a consideration of these shared subtle exchanges created and realised in aesthetic contemplation as discussed by Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The ever-changing material rhythms of both viewer and object are understood as interpenetrating in a relation of mutual becoming: the perception of the rates of these exchanges as presenting a perception of art not purely visual but also durational. Finally, Chapter Nine introduces the exhibition component of this project: physical and mental engagement are a feature of the contemplative practices represented within this paper, and it is hoped that the exhibition at least gestures towards the central concern that the cultivation of the perceptive states required to perceive the subtle exchanges between subject-object is a practical activity. The exhibition aims to give the reader/viewer occasion to consider the ideas herein and their own relation to contemporary artwork. Hopefully it gives an opportunity for an artwork not to be 'read' for fixed meaning but for 'meaning' to be created through the viewer's conscious temporal interaction with it: viewer-artwork in
lived exchange, interwoven in an aesthetic embrace bounded by duration.