

The Artist Unbroken

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A certain standard of approach, methodology, and content in a young artist's early education has been accepted by society at large without any demand for validation and essentially ignored by the philosophical and therapeutic community until dysfunction actually presents itself. What we seek here is to describe some of the constituents of the lived world of a young artist and from that phenomenological description, determine whether the philosophical basis thereof (vaguely articulated though it may be) supports a healthy style of being-in-the-world. We also wish to suggest alternative ways, based on better articulated philosophical tenets, to foster both fine artistry and an integrated, authenticity-directed life, rather than sacrificing one for the other, presumably without recourse.

I. Lived Time in the Life of a Young Artist

We are accustomed to thinking of a child's temporality as uncluttered, fluid, undemanding, protected from and open to the world at the same time. A child's world is one in which life seems most possible. A child who is studying one of the fine arts professionally, however, is usually expected to practice, rehearse, or take class for much of the day. The day, in fact, is planned around those activities. Time is "used" wisely. It is a commodity with certain expectations. Its meaning is given *a priori*, rather than being permitted to unfold, to be discovered. It could be argued that the calculative mode serves the intuitive here; but in praxis, the former tends to subjugate the latter. A world rich in potential meaning is too soon truncated into one with a few sparse ones.

The rhythm of time is interrupted such that it no longer pulsates, alternating among different tempos. A hyper-vigilance can ensue in which one must always be moving quickly, effectively utilizing the time between this performance or rehearsal or lesson and that. Van den Berg's description applies: "For what is speed, if it isn't born by speedy, 'time consuming' things?" (Van den Berg, 1970, p. 123). The child is hurried. Time to tap into the prodigious is short. It must be plumbed before it disappears. The anxiety *in the face of* a world inundated by this sense of impending loss of opportunity due to insufficient time frequently appears at first in an externalized fashion. The child is anxious *about* being late or unprepared for the audition, the lesson, the performance. Upon closer inspection, this anxiety is more about being too late or unprepared for the opportunity to establish

oneself as an artist, in essence to be oneself. In a Heideggerian sense, “Fear-ing discloses this entity (Dasein) as endangered and abandoned to itself.” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 180).

Such anxiety is like a malignancy, however, and eventually can begin to pervade the child’s entire life, rendering her always uncertain, ill at ease, not at-home within the hours and days of her life. An insidious existential angst has the potential of developing. If only an historical time utilized in the service of greater proficiency of the artistic skill is valued, the redemptive, sacred quality of the timeless is marginalized and eventually forgotten. In Eliade’s words, “One is devoured by Time, by History, not because one lives in them, but because one thinks them *real* and, in consequence, one forgets or undervalues eternity” (Eliade, 1967, p. 242).

And there is little attention to remedying the situation as the young artist is usually not taught to live within temporality organically. Rather, there is an external organization which imposes itself on his/her time. Rehearsals, classes, lessons, practice sessions are scheduled by someone else for the group or instructor’s convenience, rarely for the child’s. Both the twenty-four hours in the day and the child’s ongoing time are devoted to product-oriented *endgaining*, to borrow a word from Alexander Technique. The holistic process of living and its contribution to unfolding progress points is foregone. The *means whereby* the goal is achieved, again to use Alexander’s term, is therefore frequently inappropriate, unhealthy, skewed (Alexander, 1997, pp.127-28). Eventually this will be problematic, but frequently the reduction of child to productive machine initially appears to generate at least the appearance of the desired result.

This, however, is illusory. Time lived out in productive blocks suggests that only tangible products have value in life. Now the chance of appreciating and resting without anxiety or guilt in an organic, cyclical time is further marginalized. There is never “enough” time, again objectifying temporality unduly. So time, like any other commodity in demand, is sometimes hoarded. The artist seems pressured, often unable to leave adequate time for anyone or anything other than herself and her art. Irritability in anticipation of an imposing world is not an infrequent occurrence. Sometimes, this unwillingness to allot time to the normal range of human activities is rationalized into a frank inability to perform the act itself. Thus, what began as insufficient time is now transformed into insufficient ability.

Eventually, the human condition begs for rest, however, and then we witness not a healthy sequencing of cyclical and chronological time

in the young artist's life, but rather an alternation of packed, scheduled, product-oriented time with empty, vapid, vegetative time. Many young artists craving the rest which ensues from bathing in unplanned hours of unfolding time have no idea how to dwell in the latter and so artificially fill up their few unscheduled hours with numbing activities. The latter feel familiar inasmuch as they are productive, albeit of nothing more creative than, for instance, a high score on a video game. Doing anything seems less threatening than an unstructured opportunity for being. Cyclic time allows for the possibility of healing insofar as it suggests renewal in its appreciation of rhythmic repetition in life. If one is paralyzed in a temporality perceived as only allowing for the chronological passage of time, this *eternal return* or "starting time over again at its beginning" (Eliade, 1959, p. 78) never has a chance to take the child in the gentle ebb and flow of the temporal tides which at once cleanse (thus allowing change) and comfort (by reasserting the familiar, the at-home).

When we listen to the rhythm or heartbeat of a benign universe, and find its point of resonance with our own existences, we are connected with the world of others. *Satori*, or enlightenment in Zen terms, is that state in which "he who awakes is open and responsive to the world...because he has given up holding on to himself as a thing, and thus has become empty and ready to receive" (Fromm, 1970, pp. 115-16). It is in that clear, aware-ful state that we understand our essential connection with the universe. We are a living, breathing whole. And this sense of belonging mitigates the experience of isolation and alienation to which the human condition is so very prone. But one cannot really belong unless one first transcends the unarticulated, embedded in-itself. And one cannot do this by adopting another's identity. May describes this phenomenon:

The task and possibility of the human being is to move from his original situation as an unthinking and unfree part of the mass...to higher levels of differentiation in which he progressively integrates himself with others in freely chosen love and creative work. Each step in this journey means that he lives less as a servant of automatic time and more as one who transcends time, that is, one who lives by meaning which he chooses. (May, 1967, pp. 234-35)

This does not always happen for the young artist as her connectedness to the universe is oft experienced as totally dependent upon her capacity for

dancing, sometimes literally, to the beat of one particular drummer. Thoreau would have been disturbed. Illustrative of this are most notably music and dance, in which the sense of tempo is crucial to the very performance of the art. Thus, from a very early age, the child finds his ability to be an artist dependent upon his facility of adapting to a temporal structure imposed by the composer or choreographer. The danger lies in not developing the ability to structure one's own life in the face of consistently being judged on how well one can work within someone else's temporal configuration of the universe. This contributes, at times, to artists wandering aimlessly, in the absence of an external tempo, quite literally out of synchrony, during their time away from the rehearsal hall. Perhaps more critically, and sometimes masked by the guise of elitism, it engenders a sense of being disconnected from the lived-world as soon as the music stops. But life is not a game of musical chairs; and there is only so long that one can sit out the times between performances and rehearsals. It is crucial to a lived awareness of our cosmic organicity that we find the beat of that "different drummer," to which Thoreau directed us, which must be as unique as we are individual, at the same time as it shares the rhythm of the world around us.

At first, the time a young artist spends in his art form is frequently experienced as chosen and pleasurable. As the child's teachers or parents begin to notice professional potential, what is initially chosen is transformed into what is expected, even demanded. As this change unfolds, the individual no longer experiences time as his own. Rather, it is doled out to him like occasional interest on a principle he cannot touch. This suggests an erosion of choice. In turn, by not learning how to make choices about how to spend one's time, the ability to discern appropriately in general is compromised. Submission to the schedule and the mentor is the rule. And it is all too easy for dependency upon others to become habitual as well. What often transpires, then, is the external trapping of maturity in the guise of being disciplined in one's artistry coupled with an internal inability to organize, prioritize, essentially choose wisely in other areas of life. This of course produces a sort of iatrogenic ADHD or OCD which is frequently more a dearth of life skills and the consequences thereof than a true clinical disorder—at least at the outset.

Ownership of time (or the lack thereof) as such impacts on ownership of identity. The more we abrogate the exercise of free will, the more it degenerates like a muscle wasted by disuse. As Rollo May describes, "Indeed, the central core of western man's neurosis... is the undermining of his experience

of himself as responsible, the sapping of his will and ability to make decisions” (May, 1969, p. 184). The sense of identity is not experienced as either stable or personally chosen thereby begging boundary issues and insufficient ego defense development. Without boundaries, albeit fluid rather than intractable ones, there is no sense of individuation. Movable boundaries allow healthy contact between self and world. In Perls’ ideology, ego boundaries define the organism (Perls, 1976, p. 7) and are critical structures in understanding that one can change one’s self and one’s environment. In short, healthy, semi-permeable, flexible boundaries enhance freedom rather than detract from it. On the other hand, if one has been denied the possibility of establishing personal boundaries without negative repercussions from an early age, it becomes ego-syntonic to neither establish boundaries nor respect them. There is little discernment between what is toxic and what is nourishing in the world. From this point, it is an easy leap not to establish appropriate defense mechanisms, because to do so implies the right to defend the self in the first place.

The way in which we live time, as it were, is integral to our sense of being at-home in the world. Buckley illuminates the element of “*a joyful struggle for presence within its ever shifting and alternating waves, currents and rhythms*” (Buckley, 1971, p. 209). But how can one be present in a fully aware-ful and ease-filled way, if one’s world is running on someone else’s clock? And if one is never fully present, does this not imply an impending dis-ease of absence, disconnectedness with one’s world? According to quantum physics, time is a human construct, a way of explaining the sequential experience, and as such actually only a paradigm (Jones, 1982, p. 51). And so, if we have the power to co-create our experience of time, it behooves us to do so rather than be at the mercy of any life style which places us at war with a phenomenon we are not even certain has an objective existence. In short, if our young artists are hampered by the way they live time, then we must help them find healthier ways of so doing. If time is a metaphor, then we must make it one that facilitates rather than fragments young lives.

II. Living in the Space of a Young Artist

Rehearsal rooms are like wombs in their size and meaning. Within them, the young artist is expected to take the nourishment of the teaching, to remain protected from the external world until such time as the birth of the artwork is ready to take place, and to mature month by month until “a

star is born...” Perhaps. And that is the critical point. No one counts on a still birth; no one prepares for it; few know how to handle it with any immediacy. The difference between a real still birth and an artistic one is that the potential life in the former is over, leading the mother to begin to move forward, whereas the young artist may believe that her own life is over in the artistic still birth, but that the broken work, a mutation of what she had nurtured and carried to term, is still breathing labored and crippled, taking up space in a way she never expected or wanted. There she is, like a deer caught in the headlights, frozen, unmoving and helpless to re-form this unexpectedly altered mis-creation. Few teachers take the time to teach their pupils how to truly be creative when the mistake happens—when the foot slips, when the wrong note is played, when the line is forgotten. The critical step in the learning process, understanding success as actually built upon failures plumbed for helpful data, is missed. Failure is met, instead, with surprise, confusion, anger, even depression rather than with curiosity and determination. Performance arts are not presentational arts. No one can predict what will happen in real time and space. And if one is never prepared to right this mis-step, it becomes a fall—a fall from grace, a fall even from a meaningful life. We should not wonder why so many of our artists suffer debilitating neuroses and even psychoses if we do not teach them how to abort the fall and stand upright once more. Jager captures this sense of ultimate loss:

Falling therefore is also a loss of lived space... I no longer inhabit the world of sense and coherence... Nothing meets me in this un-world and I cannot move towards anything... The world disintegrates and is emptied of all meaning. (Jager, 1971, p. 219)

String players are sometimes more and more conscious of protecting their fingers in a world which would thoughtlessly bruise them. One bad paper cut and the ability to keep a tungsten string pressed to the finger board for any length of time is nil. Dancers cannot afford injuries to their backs, feet, or legs—their gossamer wings across the chalk-dusted wooden stages. Wind players and singers avoid the occasion for respiratory ailments which could compromise their breathing, blowing, voicing. They do not come by this cautionary approach to their world-spaces from an internal compass. Most teachers have little patience with students who come to lessons unable to perform due to injury or illness. *The play really must go on...* If Jager

is accurate in believing that “exploration stands in the service of *presence* to the world rather than in that of conquest” (Jager, 1971, p. 213), then the young artist is taught to embrace the latter mode as she inspects her world for values or dangers. Thereby, she subdues the world, allowing passage only into certain carefully landscaped spaces. The artist in many ways is never the scout and always the army. But sometimes we need to wander through the world-space and discover without being “careful.”

Yet, the space many young artists inhabit is protected and warm in many ways. A lot of things which they do not earn, but need for the development of their art forms, are simply provided for them within that space. It is as if they have moved into a furnished life rather than setting off into the woods in search of a lot to clear for themselves. And so young artists sometimes grow into adults who do not know how to share space. Space was carved out for them as children, privacy provided in order to study, rehearse, prepare to be in the world in a very circumscribed way. In the lived world, however, people cut in front of you, bump into you, push you out of the way at times rather than sit still and expectant in concert halls, awaiting your command of the space in which they are only guests. What a surprise that other people inhabit this space of yours with the same sense of entitlement, ownership! In this way, space can become a locus for an ongoing power struggle rather than a space in which to grow and share.

On the other hand, once outside-the-artistic-womb, space can seem quite lonely when emptied of mentors, audiences, artistic material. Some artists are moved to fill it with props, people and things who take the role of retinue and nurture-needs, continuing the illusion of the self-sustaining womb. But feeding the void with that which does not satisfy the soul’s hunger for a centered personal identity does nothing more than provide cotton candy buffers between the young artist and his existential angst and *enui* until the gnawing pains of a space experienced as threatening in its vastness, in the very profanity of its otherness, returns.

Groups sometimes come together out of the fountain of shared interests; they can also form out of the pond scum of unprocessed fear. Groups indeed do take up space in a very particular and insular way. Young artists are often accustomed to moving in groups, dance companies, thespian societies and casts, orchestra and chamber groups. Being a part of a group teaches one to navigate life space in a certain way. Groups are more powerful than the individual in moving their worlds on the one hand; on the other, an individual who rarely moves through the world on his own does not develop

the ability to powerfully move that world by himself. Young artists going through adolescence, already a peer-oriented time and space, sometimes are more dependent upon group-think than most. Moving from adolescence to adulthood, in which one is expected to be able to move both within groups and on one's own in equally commanding and functional ways, is not always successful. Sometimes adulthood is postponed by replacing parents with more and more mentors and parental guidance with co-dependent relationships. There are better ways to carve out a safe space for oneself.

Space is warm or cold; we are in a happy or sad space; we feel as if we can breathe again in a space with no baggage pollution or the air is thick with tension. We walk into a place and feel that it is a safe and loving space or we shiver because we feel something dark and foreboding. And the artist's space? It is too frequently dependent upon how someone else left it. Our young artists, again in the service of being obedient to an external authority, have frequently not been taught how to transform their own lived space from unhealthy to healthy, from fragmented to whole. Borrowing from the Native American custom of cleansing a space with prayer and burning sage, our young artists need to learn how to re-claim, re-sacralize their spaces when profane, fallen humanity muddies them. When the rehearsal is interrupted, when the baby cries in the middle of a performance, when a family member's crisis seemingly interferes with the status quo, we must adapt and move forward. Young artists sometimes are paralyzed in their belief that if they need a certain sort of space, it will just miraculously appear for them so long as they will it. The world, however is *co-created*, not solely created, by the individual. There is always a world-pole which has a say in what is going on in our shared space.

Space is where art is presented. The canvas is a space in which the painter converses with life; the stage floor is a space for the dancer to embody life; the three dimensional rooms into which music reaches and retreats are the spaces in which the musician reflects the heartbeat of life as he or she hears it; the stage is the world itself for the actor. So the artist by definition is very sensitive to what goes on in the spaces of his or her life. The fact that the aesthetic spaces which become home to the artist are invaded by audiences with sometimes vastly different agendas than those of the artists themselves is rarely explained to the student artist. He thinks the space in which he creates is sacred and is surprised when his audience brings something profane by which to judge it, some personal need to compare him with someone else, some angry soul through which to speak an uninvited criticism, even some

overwhelming praise from one who lives vicariously through, rather than simply appreciating, the artist's creation. And so the young artist at some point finds her sacred space profaned, soiled, violated. If the artist has not separated *who she is* from *what she does* to some extent, it is she herself who embraces these transgressions. Once this occurs, boundaries are not only blurred and trampled, but the very ability to create is sometimes stifled, even paralyzed by this sense of invasion of personal space. In the course of everyday life, we frequently operate on unwritten, unspoken, but somehow mutually understood covenants about personal space. And so it behooves us to teach our young artists not only how to prepare a sacred space, but how to protect it—and themselves.

III. The Materiality of the Artist's World

The topography of someone's life includes everything tangible in it, but also the terrain in which that which exists does so. The mountain rising out of the sea is different from the highest peak of the Alps. The context of the material is meaningful. As Straus has written, "Sensing is a sympathetic experience. In sensing, we experience ourselves in and with our world" (Straus, 1963, p. 202). And so, we must understand the sorts of things a young artist smells and hears, sees and touches, even tastes in his daily sojourn in the world—but as a gestalt or, in other words, as they relate with each other to form an integrated whole.

The material world takes on the mythology of a particular art form's world of meaning. If I am a singer, I feel the substance of the earth through my vocal cords and ears in a way that differs from the non-vocalist. The air is almost palpable; the sounds of a living earth form its texture. If I am a string player, I touch the world gently with my hands. They tell me more than yours for I am accustomed to seeing through them. Whatever I touch speaks to me; there is a world filled with stimuli that are under your radar but right in the midst of mine. If I am a dancer, I can feel my arms parting the air around me and the ground touching me touching it back. The point is that frequently, for an artist, the material world seems at times more vibrant and at others more intrusive. Sometimes I need the world to be quieter, clearer, softer, more distant. And if I have not realized that my sensibility is somewhat heightened and that there are ways to cope with this quality of life, I become overwhelmed—much like the autistic child to whom the world is just too loud, too big, too rough, too soft... too much.

Artists frequently seek the quiet space and time in which the material world recedes or, on the other hand, increased stimulation to the point that the world-noise actually numbs the sensorium. Broken relationships due to the inability to remain in an intimate space and time, unfinished projects that announce all their nuances until they seem undoable, sojourns into drug and alcohol abuse—can be red flags that the material world seems overwhelming and needs to be tamed by appropriate, but undeveloped defensive or merely alternative postures.

The material world does not hold the ultimate meaning of our existence, but it is the water through which we swim, the mountains over which we climb, the fire through which we are strengthened or destroyed, the air by which we are replenished or merely distracted. In short, it is that which we take up creatively or destructively as we continue the pilgrimage in the search for meaning. Therefore, the way in which we relate to the material world around us (the how) is more representative of our existential temperature than the actual world of materials which we have accumulated around us (the what).

An artist is trained to smooth out the rough edges of her art form. By direct intervention with and manipulation of the artistic material, it changes. The difficult passage in the Sonata becomes fluid; the combination which tripped the foot like a stone unfolds gracefully; the unreachable note finds itself voiced. But the rest of the world is not always so giving. One cannot practice away the splinters and shards, the Pauline *thorns of the flesh* which other people in their free will bring to us. The world is sometimes immovable and it is we who must find a way around, over, or through it. The young artist is often not prepared for this task. Sometimes we witness a sense of what might appear as entitlement as young artists complain that these boulders should not be in their paths. We retreat... and wonder how it is they think we should be able to deal with the very same impediments which they are refusing. We do not realize that we have been taught from the time we were small that obstacles to our goals will appear. They have been taught that there is no excuse for those obstacles. Riffs and dance steps can be learned; but sometimes the light really is red when we would like it to be green and at other times, the person to whom we are attracted finds us no more appealing than a toad. Our young artists are often kept in line by giving them the impression that there is never a justification for not being able to manipulate their worlds. Surely there are other ways to motivate hard work which better reflect a compassionate and authentic being-in-the-world-with-others.

The irony in this is that one might expect the artist to be in a continual Buberian I-Thou relationship with her world. Frequently the I-Thou character of the artist's world screeches to a halt as she emerges from her art form. The rest of the material world, including flesh and blood others, sometimes finds itself in an unwanted I-It relationship with the artist. Since young artists are frequently taught how to manipulate the materials of the world in order to fashion their artistic projects, and to submit to the instructor's will, they often assume that this manipulative bending-to-the-breaking-point of the world to their desire is the only way to deal with it. It is crucial to a balanced life, however, to differentiate between things which one can manipulate/use like a viola string or a leg muscle and things or people which one might do better to honor at the phenomenal level, allowing the in-itself to be and blossom, inviting the clay of the material world to speak its own multiplicity. At first, it may take a bit longer for the young artist to learn her craft with this approach which includes the artist in her work, rather than the teacher-through-the-student-in-the-work. Nonetheless, in the long run, there will be fewer episodes in which something discordant erupts in the form of an hysterical paralysis of the will to create. Marcel describes a critical difference between the ability and inability *to act*:

The person must apprehend himself in it (the act); but in itself it is only an act to the extent that it makes possible this later course of action of the person... It is in the act that the nexus whereby the person is unified with himself is realized... A being who is not unified with himself is in the strict sense of the term alienated—and hence incapable of acting. (Marcel, 1970, p.113)

Thus it is hardly surprising that a young artist, blocked by being disengaged in her own attempt to act, experiences a sense of loss of will and loss of self in the service of fearfully and obediently mirroring a mentor without whom she believes, ironically, there is no access to her art—and ultimately to her self.

IV. Causality/Intentionality in the Artist's World

In one sense, an artist's way of being-in-the-world is one of penultimate, co-creative balance. The artist allows for both *discovering meaning of* the world and *giving meaning to* the world. Or, as Merleau-Ponty quotes

Cezanne in *Cezanne's Doubt*: "The landscape thinks itself in me... and I am its consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1971, p. 17). She listens and speaks, speaks and listens. She touches and allows herself to be touched by the world. Both the artist and the world are respected and honored so that each can flourish and evolve. Each acknowledges that the other is in some way sacred, unique, the possibility of a possibility rather than a concrete and immutable reality. There is an organicity in this co-creative relationship. Both the "I" and the "World" are living, growing organisms who, in part, change because of their interaction with the other.

And we, the audience, rely on the artist to dislodge us from a world conceived as a collection of discrete subjects and objects. We look to the artist for a different vision—broader, wiser, more cosmic—than the one from our solipsistic worlds. The latter breeds a sense of futility and hopelessness, a foreboding that nothing will ever change for the better, that we are condemned to repeat patterns in which, we think, we have no input. Rather than continuing to run the hamster wheel with us, all the while complaining about how tiring, painful, and boring that might be, the artist shows us how to make new choices which will contribute to new directions for our lives. Marcel describes the emptying and filling in an artist's relationship with his work: "The artist seems to be nourished by the very thing he seeks to incarnate; hence the identification of receiving and giving is ultimately realized in him" (Marcel, 1970, p. 92).

At times, however, we confuse the ability to point out the Holy Grail with possessing it already and at every moment. In so doing, we fail to differentiate between visionary guides and saviors. And when we assign the latter status to our artists, we at one and the same time, set them and ourselves up for a fall. We cannot abrogate our responsibility to evolve, delegating the requisite climb of life's mountain peaks to someone else, entrusting another to bring back the gold from the summit. Rescuing others from their lives or waiting around to be rescued from our own is probably a ubiquitous human buffer, an alternative to taking up our existential journeys.

When the hero-artist first shows his or her clay feet, however, we then toss him away unmercifully, albeit unfairly, as he can no longer (even in our imaginations) embody our projections. And so to assume the ideal in the very real lives of artists who are first of all human, and therefore striving toward wholeness themselves, but living like the rest of us with brokenness, is to confuse their purposes. May articulates the difference between the artist and the neurotic in their relationships with this brokenness:

The artist presents the broken image of man but transcends it in the very act of transmitting it into art. It is his creative act which gives meaning to the nihilism, alienation... of modern man's condition... The neurotic feels the same conflicts arising from his experience of nihilism, alienation, and so on, but he is unable to give them meaningful form... (May, 1969, p. 23)

Artists, finally, can only be conduits for our growth. In the end, we are all accountable for our own lives.

In this light, to teach our young artists that they must embody perfection (ironically so that we shall not have to do so) is rather to undermine their more appropriate call to embody the search for authenticity. If we suggest that they strive toward the latter, we are allowing for all the detours and imperfections of humanity and at the same time, calling for the incredible nobility and integrity of the struggle to be... *more*. It is that "more" to which the lived concept of intentionality gives credence, for if I agree that every action involves all the possibilities I bring to the moment *and* those which the other/the world brings to it, then I am in a position for change to occur, for life energy to flow freely.

On the other hand, if we insist upon *perfection*, we posit a *certain* rather than an essentially *ambiguous* world. In so doing, we regress to a simplistic need for everything to be clear, safe, easily understood and quickly fixed. We demand that the artist, essentially, become the new perfect parent who will make all things right in the world or re-align them when they go awry. But ours is an ambiguous world in which multiple possibilities can exist at any given moment, waiting only to be invited or better, intentioned, as it were, into actualization.

By expecting that our artists create perfect works (notice the static noun), we also actually re-assert the viscous, sluggish worlds out of which we have asked them to help us escape in the first place. Paralyzed by a sense of impotence in the face of an imposing world, we begin looking for *some thing* rather than *no thing* to empower us. We no longer attempt to stand out—to ex-ist, but rather to find rest from the living work of becoming.

And what of the artist's *ex-istence*? She might be brought to realize that her only power is, like the rest of us, to hone the power of discernment such that she can aptly choose from the various possibilities of the moment. In that achievement, she becomes the artist-guide, leading us all to realize our own potency in the world. The burden of a false expectation upon her is

thus lifted and she is given one that is quite feasible. It is not the artist's mission, then, to offer an audience the "perfect" rendition of a symphony, a dance, an aria. The latter implies that all things can and should be in a state of having ultimately evolved at all times, that if we only do things in a very particular way, we shall have accomplished life's mission or at least saved ourselves from some unknown terror.

Nonetheless, we cannot make all things right with our personal worlds—or with the world at large—by simply never making a mistake. What is more, "error" is frequently defined in context. And we do not all share the same contexts. Further, once we define our sense of existential ease on the basis of power (perfection is powerful), we will never meet on the same plane, but only vie for the higher handhold. Rather, we must inspire our young artists to bring all of humanity to the table of life in the recognition that the anxiety we all feel in the face of becoming human is not to be projected into wars among each other (jousts of creation or destruction), but is to be worked through in each of our lives. Rosenstock-Huessy describes our confusion:

The soul knows that we move in a world at war to bring peace into it. In every hour of history the recreation of that peace, which was created into the world as its goal from the beginning, is the topic of our fight. (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, pp. 224-25)

The artist is society's reminder of the "right" war—to overcome and to become.

To that end, however, the artist must be free to speak with his own voice. And so the young artist who is trying to live out his mentor's context (insofar as that context defines what is an acceptable, if not perfect, performance) rather than his own is doomed to alienation from self and world. Even if the performance seems flawless, it is then empty. The artist is essentially absent from the performance, giving us only his technical rather than aesthetic prowess. Everyone is confused, expecting the satisfaction which only emerges from engagement and its inherent suggestion of a bond between self and world.

The artist also unwittingly robs the audience of its rightful participation in the artistic when he hold the reins of a performance too tightly rather than ebbing and flowing, listening and responding to the audience. This co-creative act of art is like loving. The gift must arise from the "who"

of the beloved in some way, as well as the “who” of the lover. As soon as a young artist is taught to just present his art as a commodity, his present sense of awareness is no longer very acute. The work of the art, he thinks, has already been completed in rehearsal. Nothing remains except to serve it up like a well-cooked meal. Certainly everyone will consume it and be pleased. But all leave hungry for the gift that was not given, albeit full of something unpalatable and under-nourishing.

In sum, the young artist might do better if she is taught how to gradually and continually widen her circles of awareness so that everything (including her art) in her life is understood as continually open to change and evolution. The world, perhaps, was not in fact created once and for all by a Godspirit who now rests. Rather, if we are truly made in the image and likeness of that which is Divine, we may very well have been offered the work of *continuing to co-create* our worlds. To effect that, we must be free to explore and fail and change. Jaspers believes that “the way in which man approaches his failure determines what he will become” (Jaspers, 1973, p. 23). It is to that becoming that the artist is better dedicated.

V. *The Issue of Dualism*

In walking along the pathways of a young artist’s life, we can sense a certain fragmentation of mind and body in the attempt to discipline one independently of the other. The musician is told that he must practice so many hours per day so that, when the time for performance comes, he will be able to present 80% of the 130% he could produce in rehearsal. Performance problems are thus due to an anxious and unruly mind betraying a disciplined body. We might do better attending to the whole person such that a mental/emotional/spiritual strength develops not alongside, but inextricably intertwined with the physical skills. Instead, the solution offered is often to simply do *more* of the same, rather than taking the time to examine what is broken and then do something *different* instead.

Another reification of dualism in the life of a young artist is the “don’t think, just do” teaching method in which the student is to model the teacher. The rote behavior saves time in the short run, but ushers in a myriad of problems for the long stretch. A student who learns by rote does not know why he is doing something so that it is more difficult for him to solve problems as they arise. Having said that, there is actually a point to immersing oneself in the act of performance because to think a performance through while

performing is to preclude its fluid rendition. However, this is a synchronicity of mind and body rather than a repression of the first in the service of a more effective performance by the latter. And in any event, the motivation of the instructor is frequently speed of learning and rank obedience rather than intensity of focus. Further, if creative and/or individualized thought is understood to impede action rather than facilitate it, the entire learning process is compromised. Instead of learning how to think, one learns how to duplicate someone else's thinking.

The artist who believes her mind must master her body, on the other hand, will frequently become almost masochistic in the pursuit of some ideal. Witness the prevalence of eating disorders in dancers. The body is punished for being hungry by a mind which declares it ugly, uncooperative, bad. The bleeding feet of the ballerina on pointe or the swollen fingertips of the string player learning double-stops are not met with sympathy by either the instructor or the student. If, instead, the mind-body were understood as a whole, each facet working in tandem with the other, young artists might discover less painful, more holistic ways to accomplish the same tasks. As it is, they often fear thinking outside the mentor's prescribed box. Lessons often become like chiropractic sessions, adjustments so that the student can re-align herself with the instructor's spinal cord. Sadly, she will not learn to walk on her own for very long with this approach.

And when something does go awry with our young artists, it is the rare instructor who takes the time to approach the whole child. Marcel warns, "Cartesianism implies a severance, which may be fatal anyhow, between intellect and life" (Marcel, 1976, p. 170). And it is the vitality of freely flowing energy indeed which is gradually drained from young artists trying to accept the discordant dualism imposed on them. Annoyed instructors insist they are not the student's psychiatrists. Regrettably, the point is missed that the student would not need a psychiatrist if he were not being dissected into a disembodied mind or a mindless body.

VI. The Issue of Reductionism

Many teachers and schools catering only to those young students whom they consider to be on a professional track lead very young children to truncate their identities to their art forms. By fourteen, or twelve, or even ten, these children identify themselves by their names and their instruments or art forms: *My name is John and I'm a dancer; My name is Mary and I'm a*

violinist. That a child so young has already defined who he or she *is* by what he or she *does* is less startling than the fact that this concept is both fostered and, in many cases, expected by the most significant adults in the child's life. Unfortunately, such a self-limiting definition compromises the ability to develop a stable and complexly rooted sense of identity which will enable the child to withstand life's challenges. That the evolution of the self is not fostered, but only the progress of the art form, is obfuscated. And although Sartre, among others, points us toward the ultimate relationship between being and doing: "To be is to act, and to cease to act is to cease to be" (Sartre, 1965, p. 452), the implication is hardly that being can be reduced to a circumscribed segment of our actions. And that is our objection: the child is led to believe that the ontological is equivalent to the ontic. He finds himself valued as an artist-in-progress and sometimes only as such. This is potentially perilous developmentally. If a young artist's sense of equilibrium depends solely on how she is evaluated as an artist (which she is made quite aware that she has not even yet quite become), she begins to live for the approval of others. The bi-polar quality of a life lived dependent upon whether the world claps on any given day heralds a structural existential instability.

On the other hand, the young artist may simply find it comfortable to remain within the bounds of that which he knows he can do. At a time when the child should be learning how to problem-solve creatively and explore her world for supportive resources, she does not. In the world at large, this places her either in a very limited and tenuous position of trying to maintain a life which is static, or of never learning how to discern between risks which are pointless, even lethal—and those which are simply part of the climb which is maturation.

Further, it is this reduction of being to doing which becomes the pernicious anemia of the soul. Ironically, the more the artist's sense of well-being and self-worth becomes dependent on any given day's performance, the less she can perform well, thereby defeating the purpose for encouraging the child to hyper-focus on her art form to the near exclusion of most everything else. To continue being creative, one must be centered, growing, rich enough to bear fruit as it were.

As well, one is not helping the artist in the long run by reducing him to a technician. Marcel relegates emphasis on technique to the mode of *having* rather than *being*. It is something which waxes and wanes as a possession. He suggests, however, that artistic genius cannot be equated with anything which can be measured since, "...it is the essence of genius to be

always outrunning itself and spilling over in all directions” (Marcel, 1976, p. 173). Of course technique is important; but technique without an artistry which emerges from a growing, discovering, unfolding human being is *works without faith*, so to speak. The invisible foundation which underlies the visible will not be ignored for very long without serious repercussions for the young artist. Accomplished technique is a vehicle for a larger creative vision. Without the latter, the former is rapid, cold, mechanistic. An artist understood as nothing more than a well-oiled and functional machine who is consistently capable of a marketable product will, at some point in his or her life, implode. Human beings starve without a sense of meaning in their lives. As May points out, “meaning has within it a commitment” (May, 1969, p. 230). And we could add—to life.

Marketability has never really stood the test of time in the world of fine art. Its meaning is equivalent to the insatiable appetite of a child for candy. Product must be reliable, immediately satisfying, and plentiful. Art is most often quite the opposite—new and fresh with each performance, often not at all what one thought one wanted but instead provocative, unique, and what one actually needed after all.

Moreover, to instill in a child that he must be marketable—to the prep schools, the conservatories, the symphonies, the dance and theatre troupes—is to mutilate integrity, if not to outrightly annihilate it. If a young child begins to value being a chameleon, changing her performance/product to appeal to (rather than speak to/touch) the current audience, and moreover if her identity has already been merged with her artistry, she no longer co-creates, but now merely reacts, responds as a machine. One young musician used to madly erase and change his bowings each week because he had two different adult teachers who each insisted that he alone had the best method of playing a particular piece; a young pianist described herself as an organ grinder’s monkey dancing on call to please anyone who asked, breathlessly waiting to see if she had been “good enough” (*good enough for what?* to exist? to not be dismissed as worthless or meaningless? to not warrant punishment by self or others?) on any given day. These are sad commentaries on how we marginalize the souls of our young artists in the service of methods of teaching rationalized to reflect unresolved issues in older generations of artists rather than a sound philosophy of instruction. At its worst, it is reminiscent of the parent who continues to project his or her *angst* in the form of abusive behavior onto the child with the latter forever attempting to please an unnamed, insatiable place in the parent. Why would we not

care for these fragrant young orchards such that the trees of the soul do not wither and die or desperately and impossibly attempt to produce different fruits for every appetite which wanders through the grove? Why would we wish to continue this inept approach to preparing our artists so that they are too fragile to be the keepers of a culture's dreams?

VII. *The Issue of Shame and Guilt*

Why indeed? Somehow there is a broken place in many of our lives such that we rely on accomplishing a desired end as quickly as we can, seemingly before a predatory world can snatch it from our grasp. This is a faithless, frightened stance, which is often passed on to the young artist insidiously in the form of authoritarian rather than Socratic teaching methods relying on shame and guilt rather than on a natural hunger for discovery, growth, and integrity. Tapping into the latter rather than the former is a far healthier motivation for good work. The rationale that the professional teacher does not have time to coddle a student is a meaningless argument when matched with the often damaged and short-circuited careers and lives these young artists have as they grow into adulthood. The position that discipline in the service of a desired end can only be instilled by such archaic teaching methods is circuitous logic at best. Torture is also an effective, albeit inhumane, means to an end. A more integrated, *internalized* discipline can be achieved in other ways. And to hold hostage with shame and guilt his self-esteem is to teach the child dependence on an *externalized* source of discipline, which tends to evolve into an equally externalized sense of self.

Shame is frequently experienced by many young artists when they do not perform flawlessly. More significantly, and this is the red herring, they are led to believe that when this happens, the audience (including teachers, parents, peers, et. al.) now judges them as deficient, without the worth with which they stepped on the stage a few moments earlier. The sad truth is that this does indeed occur to some extent, but mainly because it is orchestrated. If teachers are teaching in this manner, one's peers will all be ingesting this message. If teachers speak to parents about the child's impending failure as an artist, as if that alone is shameful, many parents will pass that judgment onto their children.

And shaming a child seeds something else, what Piers describes as "*impotent rage*—a showing of pseudostrength which momentarily undoes the shame of weakness" (Piers and Singer, 1971, p. 39). When one feels an

impending rejection and abandonment by one's social group with little or no recourse to prevent this from recurring (no one performs perfectly all the time or even most of the time), anger toward the self and toward the world are born. The world is now understood as that which demands the impossible (perfection), and the self appears as that which cannot comply, and thus is irrevocably also impossible as a route to meeting the demands of the world. Rage turned within culminates in a variety of pathologies: self-mutilation, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, substance abuse. Rage turned without implies issues with intimacy, abusive relationships, social maladaptation, loss of impulse control, and outright violence. Shaming has been utilized as a control mechanism for thousands of years, but education cannot be based on control and our children are not machines.

In contrast to shame, guilt does not undermine the very identity of a young artist to quite the same extent that shame does. One is shamed by who one *is* (or is understood to be), whereas one is guilty for what one *does*. And one can atone for guilty behavior more readily than one can transform a shameful self-image. Even so, although the student can mitigate the pressure of guilt, she often does so by nurturing an essentially unhealthy dependent personality which remakes itself to please the world as much as possible.

Confronted, then, with the alternative of an ego-dystonic shame or guilt, the young artist accepts the demand for unquestioned obedience to the teacher. The world shrinks yet again as there appear to be only certain ways to accomplish one's goals. Given that instilled belief, the child (and parents) are hesitant to question the teacher, even when common sense might dictate otherwise. Questioning could garner dismissal as quickly as non-compliance. The authoritarian knows how to wield fear. Further, if there is only one pathway to the goal and the teacher has the map, it becomes career-threatening (translated as life-as-meaningful/self-as-worthwhile-threatening to the young student) to risk losing both. The issues of authoritarianism, shame, and guilt are self-perpetuating for the system which promotes them and self-effacing for the student who attempts to adapt to that system.

VIII. Toward a New Paradigm: Being and Having

Perhaps the most crucial issue of all in understanding the philosophical basis of the way we approach our young artists is that of Being *vs.* Having. As noted previously, the young artist is frequently led to focus on what she *has*: talent, time to hone the latter, an instrument body through which the

talent is funneled, physical objects which help in the execution of the art form, mentors, schools, and even parents who provide the instruction in, geographical locus of, and financial backing for the student's studies. Who the young artist *is*, as we have witnessed, is equated with his artistry on every level. That is to say, the young artist not only is understood to be, first and foremost, a musician or dancer for instance, but the infrastructure of that identity is mainly dependent upon how he performs on a day to day basis. So the being of these young artists is twice truncated, first to *being an artist* and second to *being a worthwhile individual* based on the quality of the last performances and little else.

Hence when whatever these young people *have* dwindles—temporarily or permanently—there is little if any skeletal strength to keep them upright in the world. It is this skeletal infrastructure of identity that might be a better foundation for every young artist's early education with questions like: Who am I ...when no one's clapping? Who am I ...when everyone's clapping? Who am I ...when I'm engaged in my art? Who am I ...when I leave the studio or the stage? Where am I going through my art? What am I expressing beyond what the composer, writer, choreographer might have wished to express? How does my art contribute to a larger vision ...and help in moving from brokenness to wholeness? How do I maintain that larger vision, keep my balance in a world which sometimes projects its own neediness onto me and expects me to be the designated driver of its life? How do I relate to the world as an artist ...without drowning in the other? How do I relate to the world as an artist ...always respecting the other? And, why am I here on this stage in the first place—both for this specific performance and as an artist per se?

Succinctly, better the primacy of Art existing in the service of humanity's transcendent unfolding than the primacy of the artist existing in the service of Art's evolution and development. The latter becomes idolatry, if you will, with the artist serving the god of the artworld and trying desperately to follow all its commandments and refrain from committing any of its cardinal sins. It is in the latter way that young artists lose the beauty and joy of the aesthetic and become, instead, enslaved to a master whose name they do not even know. Once art ceases its call to the freedom of the human spirit to change the world or the self and hence permeate life with meaning, it has lost its *raison d'être* and drowns in the very whirlpool from which it once sought to extricate human consciousness. Frankl reflects that "in finding meaning... we are perceiving a possibility embedded in reality... (which) has

a *kairos* quality, which means that unless we use the opportunity to fulfill the meaning inherent and dormant in a situation, it will pass and be gone forever” (Frankl, 1978, p. 38). It is exactly to this possibility of ex-isting, and in so doing of changing not so much the world but *the self*, that the artist and her act of creating point us. If our artists are to be called “stars,” it ought to be only in this sense of bringing light to the darkness rather than being on display in some artificial media spotlight, as just another entertaining buffer between humankind and its search for meaning within the existential journey.

The artist sees and hears *the more*, and suggests a way for the rest of us to do so. If he does not do that, then he is not a rainmaker but a charlatan, offering a new vision while he remains mired in facticity, unable to see a broader truth. An artist does not necessarily have the answers to life’s ultimate questions but she can point to a better pathway from which to discover them. That is the freedom of artists when they are unbroken but compassionately, gently, gracefully guided by mentors who have gone before them rather than by those who have lost their way and are trying to recover it vicariously. It is, finally, however, not only the responsibility of the teachers of our young artists to find a new and healthier way to mid-wive their birth and growth as artists and individuals—but that of society as a whole, for we all co-create their education and their life situations through our expectations which form the way in which we are present to them as they are attempting to continue the work of creation which first seeded all of our lives.

In essence, we do not *have* art in our lives; rather, we *are* the art in our lives. And to the degree that we cooperate in valuing what the artist (or anyone else for that matter) *has* rather than who he or she *is*, we diminish our own being as well. Thus it becomes vital to the wholeness of our individual and collective lives to re-assess what we are bringing to the feast table of *becoming* at which our young artists are nourished.

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