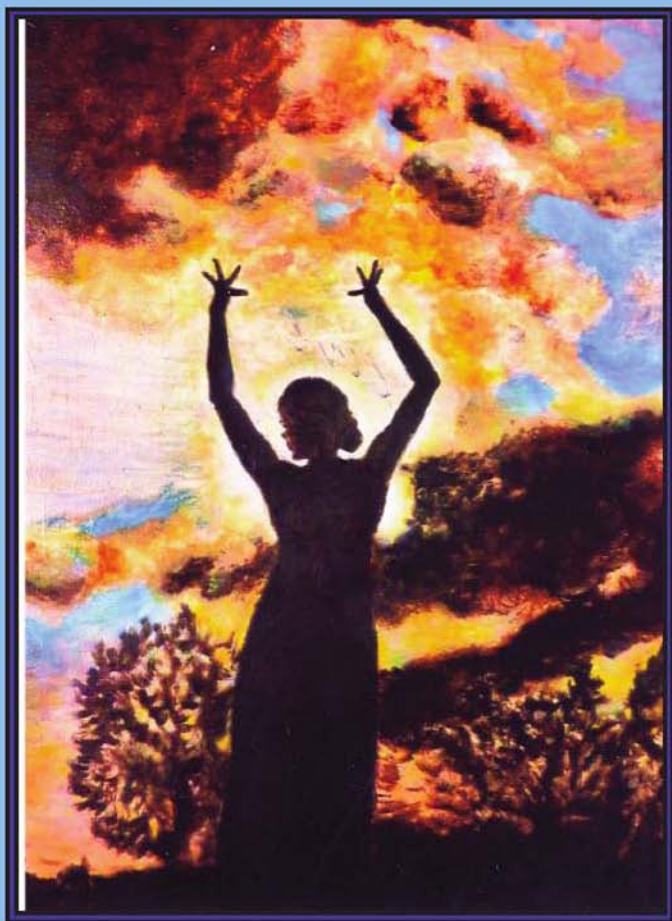


**THE ROLE OF ART
IN THE CONSTRUCTION
OF PERSONAL IDENTITY**



**THE ROLE OF ART
IN THE CONSTRUCTION
OF PERSONAL IDENTITY**
Toward a Phenomenology
of Aesthetic Self-Consciousness

G. V. Loewen

With a Preface by
Farzad Bawani

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Dedicated to all those who participated in the study and in
gratitude for their candor and self-reflection.

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Preface

From the World of the Intelligible to the Imaginatively Sensible

Mundus exemplarium phantasiae est mundus
pulchritudinis

(The world of examples of fantasy is the world of
beautiful)

Fortlage (1836)

Nowhere does the human aspiration for the ideal good reach a higher climax than in the ideas of truth, justice, and beauty, the trinity that rests at the core of both heavenly divine and earthly sublime. It is as though whenever one has strived to imagine, or has struggled to establish an artistic, ethical, or political higher good, this trinity had to be invoked to foster a claim to what may be beyond comparison. Utopian idealists as well as pragmatists have tried to envision or to controvert the superlative character, or the irremediable haecceity of these terms. However, despite their ideal spirit, these concepts are lived by us as part of our existentiality, facticity, and forfeiture. In the world emerging from the human experience with all its resolute or aleatory tendencies, these ideas represent more than just distant destinations for visionaries, and become entwined or overlapping realms of collective and individual experience.

Amongst the three, beauty (*pulchrum*) is perhaps the one closest to our flesh, and therefore to the sentient world of experience known as *mundus sensibilis*. It is in the perception of beauty that one can feel the return of the sensible from vanishing in the transcendental realm of the ultimate, or from the disembodied world of intelligible concepts, *mundus intelligibilis*. It is indeed

beauty immanent to the sensible world as particularly seen in works of art that serves as the object of aesthetics, the philosophical discipline that in the work of its originator, Baumgarten (1750/1988), was meant to serve as “a theory of sensible” and as “advocacy for sensibility” (Hammermeister, 2002:4), in the age of the primacy of reason and rationalism. Baumgarten’s emphasis on sentient world placed aesthetics between epistemology and psychology (Nuzzo, 2006), albeit not so intentionally on his part.

The monograph you are about to read begins exactly from this point, and finally returns to the same point, as though it had never departed from the start. Not being inert, the seeming stillness of this text reflects its endurance against the tidal currents that rise from the world of intelligible to illuminate what in the final analysis seems always to remain obdurately in the world of the sentient. As every discursive tradition is a construction purporting to be an explicative model of the sentient experience, mimesis and subreption become inseparable dialectical partners. The endurance of this text testifies to the author’s enduring apprehension about this dialectic as part of every effort to explain the lived experience of beauty and art. The purpose of this endurance is, however, not to draw an epistemological insight from aesthetics, but to grasp aesthetics as a psychological process from a phenomenological viewpoint deeply committed to first-person experience.

The book opens with what could have been its ending and in a manner akin to counting in reverse, makes its way back through subsequent chapters that examine different moments of artistic experience. Each of the aforementioned can be a schema as much for understanding art as for speaking about self-hood and

aesthetic experience. In these chapters, the text not only displays its great debt to the post-Kantian view of aesthetics, but as well to the internalist-externalist clash of ideas, or the so called Beardsley-Dickie (Beardsley, 1958, 1962, 1982; Dickie, 1964, 1965, 1974, 1988, 1996) debate of the last decades of the past century, that has continued to the present. However, one thing is clear: the text does not rehash this longstanding dispute, as it tries to reconstruct the aesthetic experience from the narrow confines of its on-going contentions. In so doing, it makes no reference to either the debate or to its prominent contenders. It maintains a resolute focus on the key themes of aesthetic experience and selfhood and adds something interesting to the mix - nothing other than imagination.

The text presents imagination as a faculty not for positing, but for re-inventing the world by rendering vivid but exaggerated images of objects. Hence, it begins from what may seem to be akin to Husserl's notions of fantasy (*phantasie*) and pictorial consciousness (*Bildbewußtsein*), wherein "the expectation of the 'not yet' [Noch-nicht] connected with the "now" is fulfilled." (Husserl, 1898-1925/1980) But, unexpectedly the text takes a radical turn to encompass Bachelard's dynamic imagination. Imagination for Bachelard (1942, 1948, 1960/65) is not merely a vivid and exaggerating image maker that can render protean copies from actual objects. Rather, he sees imagination as creative fantasy (*phantasie*) or a world-making faculty with poetic capacity for recreating its own objects and forging make-believe associations that are meaningful to the subject's desire for an alternative world. In this sense, fantasy brings the subject to the world by seeking what is not and cannot be, but what we nonetheless envision and

imaginatively behold whenever we partake in the world of senses. In this manner, a phenomenology of perception gives way to the phenomenology of creative imagination [*“la phénoménologie de la perception elle-même doit céder la place à la phénoménologie de l’imagination créatrice”* (1960:12)] as human reality becomes both invented and fabricated. There is here an affinity with Aristotle’s paired notions of “probable impossibles,” in that Husserl places the emphasis on the probable in the pair, where as Bachelard stresses the impossible. The text fluctuates between these two notions of imagination, perhaps to retrace a connection between the two; a connection that may have to be redrawn, this time only after grasping the experiential meaning of the two notions.

Indeed, relentlessly seeking the phenomenological evocations of current aesthetic theories and notions must be properly recognized as the ultimate objective, and at the same time the reigning methodology of this text. To clarify this point, it is necessary to say few words about the author. Professor Greg V. Loewen, a sociologist and anthropologist by training, is not an easy writer to describe, largely because of the breadth and the intensity of his writing. To make the matter more testing, his present work may not be an easy one to tackle due to the complexity of the subject and the poetic force of his style. Judging by his past writings, I can assert that in his hands, phenomenology becomes more than just another theoretical framework, and transforms itself into an intervention—an hermeneutic intervention to be exact—to interrogate every encounter, text, and subject. Through its application, the author does not simply reflect on a given subject, as is customary in scholarly practice. He instead writes from a quasi-subjective experience of intellectual communion with what

has been written on the topic. In this process, the author intervenes phenomenologically as he engages in a self-reflective reading to share with us his own readerly text, and invites us to do the same. ““Phenomenology,” state Thompson and Zahavi (2007:68), “grows out of the recognition that we can adopt, in our own first person case, different mental attitudes or stances toward the world, life, experience, and text.” Professor Loewen manages therefore to share with us not a set of arguments and counter-arguments, but instead what he sees as the different mental attitudes and stances that may arise from experientially immersing oneself and others into competing notions of aesthetic experience in order to grasp the use of art in the construction of personal identity.

In a time when eliminating human subjectivity and reducing individual experience to well-groomed abstractions of parsimony and rigor, such a reflective style can be a source of inspiration, even illumination. Perhaps this is what is needed to allow us to speak about the different views of constructing a personal identity; by adopting an experiential stance that restores the personal to the notional definitions of personhood. It is perhaps also a truism to say that our understanding of identity is relative to the ways we speak about personhood. Words as much expand our knowledge as conceal the assumptions that shape our perception and understanding of a subject, especially if the subject involves our own self and content of experience. The first downfall of such concealment may be a failure to understand that speaking about the construction of identity is not tantamount to speaking about the construction of *personal* identity. When concepts lose their experiential content, they lose their sense and sensibility for those supposedly living them. As a result, speaking about identity and its

construction loses its sincerity - even though it may not lose its empirical validity - and becomes a notion devoid of depth. "Every human experience," as we are told by Alfonso Lingis (1996:xi), "is not only in the world, ... but also is an experience of the world." Professor Loewen's approach relentlessly brings the experiential out of its notional shadow to remind us of this insight.

Stylistically, this approach cannot be sustained if one abides by the rules and conventions that guide scholarly texts in the presentation, denouement, and extrapolation of arguments and ideas. However, as is often the case, such a style of writing tends to substitute conceptual reasoning schemes for the lived flow of the first-person experience that spirals forth, to partake in our fantasies of self-hood, beauty, and understanding. To avoid this ellipsis, the author writes in a series of allusive digressions, forays, detours, and excursions that lead to sincere, humble, yet ebullient patches of insightful delight. Deeply influenced by Merleau-Ponty's writing, Professor Loewen's text is reminiscent of what Geertz (1983) calls "blurred genres," wherein meaning is grasped from a performative and dramatic point of view and unpacked as "performed meanings." Both Geertz and Loewen are inspired here by Ricoeur, and thus the author creates an intertwined chain of elaborations that expand texts into their experiential meanings. He uses ludic strategies to write not about things, but with them. This 'writing with' them engenders readings that are innovative, improvised, and refreshingly experimental; readings that are as amply reflective as poetic. The result is an interconnected congeries of phenomenological evocations that reflect on theoretical and experiential themes in order to urge us to go beyond what we have known, recognized, and taken for granted. Yet, in my opinion, to

take this text in its fullest capacity, there must be a warning in place: beware, reading might take on the trail of Ariadne to those who have never marvelled about having missed out on something.

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Chapter 1.

Studying Art as a Subjective Subject

1.1 Introduction: Review of The Salient Ideas in the Literature

The question of art and its purpose is a vexed and ancient one. Its query has a Hegelian tone. Rather than add to the copious and distinct disagreements regarding this abstraction, this study asks a more specific question: how are people's experiences of art used in the construction of their senses of self. In other words, what role does art play in personal identity, and how does it play such a role. This query has a Jamesian ring to it. We will follow both a pragmatic and phenomenological line in responding to it. This manner of proceeding has the dual advantage of avoiding the problem of defining what art is and what it is not, as well as dimming the glare of both the discourses of art history and philosophies of art, and the even more imposing pseudo-discourse of the fetish of art as commodities and market artifacts.

Consider the problem of definition. Danto perspicaciously identifies the conflict that arises when one attempts to provide a glossary of characteristics that may be applied to works 'of art,' thereby giving them a new and exalted status. Indeed, the idea that

we can speak of that which gives art its form without saying something also of the content is misplaced; "...the antecedent in the conditional is never really satisfied, for the moment we seek to attach an aesthetic predicate to the work, we find we have attached instead to the content of the work, since the work itself is what it is of..." (Danto 1981:154). The idea of a 'beautiful crucifixion,' as Danto suggests, holds only insofar as we keep in mind that this is merely a representation of what is a terrifying and grotesque event. But therein lies the problem. A great work immediately takes us to the event itself, through its image, and we forget that we are simply viewing a representation. This is the whole point of painting something horrible, or beautiful, in the first place. Art alters the routine quality of every event in that it places an idea in our heads that thence directs our experience of other events similar and even dissimilar to the one represented. Yet the 'transfiguration of the mundane world' is not art's sole effect.

Defining what art is apart from the experience of it is not only an abstraction. The relevance of such definitions to the human lot is questionable. As well, these ideas are not as discrete from the mundane world as they appear at first glance to be, in spite of their reliance on traditionally virtuous rhetoric: "One difficulty with the traditional range of aesthetic predicates as studied by philosophers—conspicuously 'is beautiful'—is that they seem, without jarring our verbal sensibilities, to apply equally to works of art and mere real things: there are beautiful paintings and beautiful sunsets. But it is verging on nonsense to speak of flowers and powerful, though it is straightforward to speak of drawing that way." (ibid.:157). The old problem of form and content is content to leave the forms to themselves. The form is the idea. It is both formal and ideal. It does not touch the world, and the world is not touched by it. The world remains worldly, it 'worlds' without its authentic poles, and

can only align itself in the direction of truth and beauty and the good et al, by using a moral compass defined by these very ideas, but one with which human beings can only point and stare. There are traces of the ideals in both our consciousness and in the world, but they are as Plato's shadows. And we, mere shadows of spirit ourselves, are forever placed in the unenviable position of mimesis—hence the power and purpose of art in its most traditional Western rendering. Art moves us closer to that which is the best, and therefore brings out the best in ourselves. Art exalts, and the being of humanity is made greater.

This may be the case in some abstract way. Yet such a position leaves unclarified exactly how this occurs, or why we believe it to be true, or even why such an idea still has resonance with us today, in an age of critique and hyperrealism. Rather than pursuing the increasingly illusory heights of Being, we recount here how the world is made of both heights and depths of beings. This is how the world worlds itself through art. Danto reminds us of a common template that our research participants often echoed: "Art, if a metaphor at times on life, entails that the not unfamiliar experience of being taken out of oneself by art—the familiar artistic illusion—is virtually the enactment of a metaphoric transformation with oneself as subject: you are what the work is ultimately about..." (ibid.:173). This can only be a template, however, due to the fact that both being taken out of oneself and identifying oneself with a work of art are, by definitions, attempts at objectification and thus retreat from the subjective sense. Indeed, this is what we hope to achieve, as we will see in detail below, by the act of self-projection and identification with art, as if we are more than ourselves. The sense that we must leave ourselves behind, to return to ourselves transformed, involves the liminality not of transformation—which is the effect of the return

and not the process itself—but transfiguration. Nocturnal *Verklärung* aside for the moment, the uncanniness of such a change resides in its objective qualities. It is not that such an object may be measured or even observed by others, but it is the case that most persons can experience such a process, even if they tend to do so via an ipsissimum project or desire. Immediately, the character of transfiguration suggests not the beautiful, which is always at rest, evoking the eternal, but sublimation, which is always on the move, and is ever suggestive of change; "Beauty calms and comforts; Sublimity excites and agitates." (Zizek 1989:228). Sublimation, both in the psychoanalytic sense of an egress from neurosis, and in the physical sense of material making a quantum leap to some other form, evokes the Hegelian *aufheben* just as assuredly as did the idea of the forms themselves. Zizek suggests that what is proposed to us by the distinction between Kantian beauty and sublimity, which is then carried ironically forward and inward to the concept of the unconscious 'itself', is one of attainment of the unattainable: "The paradox of the Sublime is as follows in principle, the gap separating phenomenal, empirical objects of experience from the Thing-in-itself is insurmountable [] but the sublime is an object in which we can experience this very impossibility, this permanent failure to reach after the Thing." (ibid.: 229). Now whether or not we take a Kantian line, which suggests that although aloof to human experience, the Thing is still extant in its own realm—an enlightenment realm now, akin to the capitalist ethic, shorn of much or even all of its traditional religious inclinations or motivations—or one Hegelian, which holds that there is 'nothing beyond phenomenality' (ibid.: 232), we are dealing with the concept of failure. The fallen-ness of such an experience is not only negative, as in Kant, it is utter and final, as in Hegel. Its very 'religiosity' is its own downfall. What is sublime

is still a gloss on what is divine. It communicates via the glossalalia of the aesthetic encounter, where diverse persons from the Babel of language and cultures can yet experience something of the meaning of existence, its authenticity, and its telos, through the medium of art. And art is no mere medium, in the sense that some message is instilled in it and in this installation, the vehicle of communication hermetically transfers the kerygmatic representation of art and life to us as viewers or listeners. Rather, hermeneutically we are called upon to witness to an interpretation, of which we ourselves are an intimate part, and which sometimes does not go beyond our own quasi-subjectivity. In these terms, Žižek responds to the problem of appearance and representation by invoking what will be discussed below as the uncanny: "We overcome phenomenality not by reaching beyond it, but by the experience of how there is nothing beyond it—how its beyond is precisely this Nothing of absolute negativity, of the utmost inadequacy of the appearance to its notion." (ibid.: 233). It is not surprising that in the conceptually post-religious, or at the very least, post-ritualistic period of the enlightenment, that Hegel and others to come withdrew from the festive origins and interpretations which may have lain at the very source of the aesthetic encounter. Danto reminds us of this, as does Gadamer below, when we consider that the appearance of this or that God—Dionysus in this case, after Nietzsche—brings to a climax the sensual and raw inversions of kinship boundaries that served as the blueprint for earlier societies. Though Nietzsche oddly comes across as a kind of diplomat for *prudentia* in his own discussions of such Durkheimian festivals and orgies, Danto strikes at the heart of the matter: "The effort, in brief, was to stun the rational faculties and the moral inhibitions, to break down the boundaries between selves, until, at the climactic moment, the god himself made

himself present to the celebrants." (Danto 1981:19). Of course, there is dual sense of appearance here, which Danto moves on to make much of in his treatise. One, the God 'himself' does not in fact appear as a reality, but only appears as an apparition, a further piece of theatre. Two, this is accepted as the real thing because of the ardor and performance of social inversion which has in fact, perhaps paradoxically, untied the community in a manner that no mere kinship diagram ever could. The 'effervescence' of these orgiastic agapes is one thing, and their corresponding choral unison and 'frisson' is another. It *is* a threat to live like this all the time, but it in fact aids social structure and *gemeinschaftslehre* if it occurs only during specific times of the year, and within quite specific contexts. So, a metaphorical appearance contains the term 'only' or 'mere,' whilst the real appearance contains the success of the ritual. Thus art appears as both an object in the world of objects, and as an objection to our own being, as a quasi-subject in the world of subjects. It is this second sense that is of interest to us in this study, and it is to this sense that research participants spoke. Only a phenomenological analysis of such a process—which is one at first of subjectivity and then objection by the quasi-subject, and finally of quasi-objectivity of the person who has now experienced the full effect of the aesthetic encounter—the god has properly appeared—can outline the crucial moments and experiences of art's purpose in personal life.

Certainly it is also true that we are primed for such encounters in much the same manner as did our ancestors prepare to invert social relation through both planning and imagination. Once accomplished, the powerful memory of these inversions would stay within someone's consciousness in an unlike manner to more mundane events of the day to day. Even the thought of sexual union with many instead of with the one is likely to be at the very

least titillating, playing its part in the fabric of phenomenal 'apprehension'—an anxiousness and a grasping—and drawing our minds to the events to come. The attendance at a gallery, theatre, or concert hall is the formal equivalent of this in modern times. Yes there are still orgies and what have you, but they have retreated from both the realm of art and that of religion. They are no longer necessarily spiritual or aesthetic events, though they may be spirited in the mischievous sense of 'high spirits' and esthetic, in that we seek the sensual for its own sake within them. More important, however, is the idea that it is we who have undergone the crucial change, and the object 'itself' remains constant. Though an imposition to our mundane and perhaps repressed subjectivity—we will refer to this as 'subjection' in the below - the object itself does not need to undergo the ontological shift of becoming a quasi-subject, and indeed, cannot do so without us - because it also continues to reside within the ambits of its own subjection, the twin discourses of 'artism' and commodity fetishism. While Zizek emphasizes the gap between representations, Danto suggests that a kind of closure is also in the works: "For nothing in the appearance need have undergone a change, only one's conception of the relationship in which the appearance stood to the reality..." (Danto 1981:21). Following from this, it stands to reason that nothing in ourselves may have been transformed by art but our self-conception. Or perhaps something inside of us has been exposed, which also always already stood apart and unchanging in the world of self-conceptions. Danto concludes his discussion by suggesting that the function of art in human life in general is to make more transparent the relations we have with the world, with one another, and with ourselves, by "...bringing to consciousness the structures of art." (ibid.: 208). In doing so, we are compelled to listen to our 'consciences', to look more broadly in our 'external world,' to look

more deeply into our 'cultural interiors,' and to unmask our consciences by its 'aesthetic mirror' (ibid.: 208). Art exposes us, then, as what we have always been but have been, in other contexts and by other experiences, unable to fathom. This function of art is likely specific to modernity, as indeed it appears that there were other contextual options offered by previous incarnations of the social contract, most specifically, as we have already suggested, those of a religious character. Certainly the Romantics took art in place of religion, and developed a positive cult around it. In their reaction to the enlightenment critique of the tradition, the Romantic movement found the content of the tradition to be wanting in a similar manner, but its purpose and form to be of timeless value. In this way, art was liberated from its place within the aureum of ritual props and religious contexts required or developed, and ascended into the place formerly occupied by the gods. The church became its own museum, dedicated to itself, and within it, the ownership it exerted over the art objects and images which used to propitiate both the worshipped and worshippers, now sat as the sole reason to visit the church in the first place.

We now have our own personal museums, which are somehow more interesting than ourselves. They extend our presence backwards, as memorializations, and forwards, as projections. They offer the uncanny melange of different times and different lives all called forth to be present together, however incongruous or anachronistic. Most of all, however, they provide for us our authenticity, our 'true self' or at least, our 'best selves.' The gradual individuation of both society and its metaphysical backdrop—the gods themselves becoming more and more made in our image—suggests that only a phenomenological study of the subjective experience of art in personal life will catch a glimpse of what paradoxically unites all human beings over diverse times and

spaces. The cultural imagination has given birth to an *imago mundi* that now resides interior to our biographies. It is to this space, and the contents within it, that the aesthete must sacrifice all other notions of what he might have been, or of what the world be made.

1.2 Current State of the Question in the Literature

Not only laypeople, but art historians, aestheticians, and artists themselves are full of the most personalist kinds of statements when it comes to defining what art is, and hence by what kinds of vehicles one might have an aesthetic experience. Yet these kinds of statements are curiously absent from much of the discourse to this point, mainly finding a marginal home in ethnographic studies of non-Western cultures which are being subject to the maelstrom of rapid globalization. Price found that artists once dubbed 'primitive' do in fact respond with often radically innovative techniques and ideas given their new interface with non-traditional materials and forms, not unlike the *fin de siecle's* fascination with the ironically self-same 'primitive,' which led to the revolutions of art in Western culture (cf. Price 2007:603). She also discovered that personal objects such as gifts were transformed into generalized and abstract objects more suitable for a global commodity market. Previously, Ravenhill had elucidated similar points within another African region, where items that were, by tradition, strictly instrumental in their use value had transformed themselves into those that in fact were sentimental. Thus, they could be sold more widely as stationary items that had only once purported use, but no actual activity, associated with them (Ravenhill 1992:71). Guenther, in turn, suggests that Western notions of art ironically serve to maintain the concept of 'the primitive' because it is this notion that is in fact the commodity. This fetish began during the colonial period and reached its height around 1900 in Europe, but only in the 1990s in

North America. Yet from the perspective of the cultures themselves, the 'emic' viewpoint, the new arts they are producing are wholly contemporary and reflect oft-burning issues of identity and solidarity politics in the face of cultural assimilation or even ethnocide (Guenther 2003:107). Further to this, when cultural groups who have in fact immigrated to geographical locations dominated by the West are studied, art has been used to reassert a group identity, even though this identity is also a new thing, given the radicality of shifting cultural residences (Evans-Cowley and Nasar 2003:97ff). In the case of Latino Texans, the identity politics also ran along a novel rift that had opened up between one's ethnicity and one's sense of individualism, the latter promoted by recent social mobility. In cultural centers such as New York and London, similar issues were seen to have arisen. Gay and Lesbian communities used film festivals to accommodate the internecine divisions within their diverse communities in urban New York and elsewhere, which are often seen from the outside as quite homogenous and based fundamentally on a different sexual preference. This reduction of community must be resisted for obvious reasons (Gamson 1996:232). While (2005:251ff.) found that by doing a network analysis of youth art movements, the ironies of 'young' art in a center that played host to its own sabotage were exposed. In the same way as we might imagine grandparents coaxing their grandchildren to rebel against their parents, London as the center of culture was also the central place for counterculture, the old harboring the new within itself as in a aesthetic pregnancy.

At the same time, other studies on identity and art also moved away from the personal to either group affiliations or abstract notions of personified social facts such as gender, sexuality, or ethnicity. Piller studied multilingual advertising in

Germany and found it to be directed mainly to business and professional elites, where the knowledge of English itself was seen as a status commodity (Piller 2001:155). Bilingualism, but especially with the language of worldwide commerce, was also a key feature of the German elites' understanding of cultural capital. Bourdieu's famous concept was also employed in a study of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra strike of 1996—perhaps timed to coincide with the glare of Olympic hyperbole—where artistic excellence was pitted against economic utility. The freedom of expression of the artist and the maestro was a difficult thing to commoditize for management, and sometimes a difficult aesthetic encounter to digest for patrons of what at the time was widely regarded as one of the world's best orchestras (Glynn 2000:286). These recent sociological and anthropological studies were seen to partake in a wider trend in the social sciences concerned with reversing mid-century ideas about the production of identity as something of an imposition of social fact rather than a production of agency. By the mid-1990s, the Durkheimian view was displaced in American sociology, suggests Cerulo, by the idea that individuals mobilize cultural resources in unexpected ways, creating an agency which can resist dominant discourses of both aesthetics and commodity capital (Cerulo 1997:400 ff.). This shift in research and perception of agency, including that which utilized art or formed itself around identifying with new movements in art, was also studied by looking at the production of certain categories into which hundreds of new dissertations could be placed (cf. Nelson 1997:28ff). This Foucauldian analysis exposed the 'fields' of cultural production and the new manner of making speech acts 'serious' regarding studies in aesthetics.

Yet all of these studies are still abstracted to a level where the idea of personal identity is lost. Few recent studies point in the

direction that our research indicates below. Young argues against what he refers to as the 'aesthetic handicap theory,' in which it is stated that cultural outsiders cannot duplicate, let alone improve upon, the artistic work of insiders socialized within particular traditions. Performance may be one thing—Yo-Yo Ma comes to mind, amongst many others—but actual composition or creation is another (Young 2006:460-61). Instead, Young suggests that cross-cultural interfaces at the level of aesthetics only and ever better what has gone before, although there may be resistance to this through the discourses of art history and the art market, both of which fetishize 'genuine' items. Closer to a subjective phenomenological study is Schildkrout's analysis of body art, where the body is seen as a 'visible interface between self and world,' and one literally carries one's art collection and personal museum with oneself, and indeed, as oneself (Schildkrout 2004:319).

At this point, it would be premature to accept any of the abstract notions generated by such studies at face value. Indeed, their face validity is not what it seems to be, which is also appropriate in the sense that what is given is precisely what does not occur in an aesthetic encounter, which then becomes an experience in that we can understand it as having happened to us and even for or by us, *with* us in the *mitsein* of all intimate encounters. This liberated and spontaneous quality of both enacted art and its momentary public as actors within the aesthetic phenomenon is also, and seemingly primarily, an historical construction:

The great artistic revolution of modern times, which has finally led to the emancipation of art from all of its traditional subject-matters and to the rejection of intelligible communication itself,

began to assert itself when art wished to be art and nothing else. Art has now become doubly problematic: is it still art, and does it even wish to be considered art? What lies behind this paradoxical situation? Is art always art and nothing but art? (Gadamer 1986:19 [1977]).

One can easily understand this shift as being one from representation of other worlds to the representation of this world, from mythicism to a kind of empiricism. Allegory gives way to flat description, and devotion to critique. But this is immediately too facile. Is there no allegory in modern art?

What has not changed, aside from the fact that art still exalts our senses and reminds us that we are not at all everything we think or hope to be, at least in the mundane realm, is that the construction or creation of works of art involve networks and variables which are hardly aesthetic in any esoteric sense, and do not at once suggest to us that art is, through and through, the climax of beauty and truth:

As a result, the title 'art' is a resource that is at once indispensable and unnecessary to the producers of the works in question. It is indispensable because, if you believe art is better, more beautiful, and more expressive than nonart, if you therefore intend to make art and want what you make recognized as art so that you can demand the resources and advantages available to art—then you cannot fulfill your plan if the current aesthetic system and those who explicate and apply it deny you the title. It is unnecessary because even if these people do tell you that what you are doing is not art, you can usually do the same work under a different name and with the support of a different cooperative world. (Becker 1982:133).

The culmination of all of these support networks may well be something that is aesthetically valued, or comes to be so over time. The idea that creativity alone, especially singular creativity, and imagination are fully responsible for the making of art is at best naive. At the same time, there is clearly something made through the artistic process, whether mediocre and imitative, or radically innovative. And these kinds of qualifiers, 'revolutionary,' 'awesome,' 'poignant,' 'critical' are themselves both value judgements which individuals do make but are also allowed to make, and scripts which descend from discourses and authorities much more imposing than what we would usually refer to as individual taste. These 'taste regimes,' as they have been famously referred to, are often hegemonic, dictating our feelings and reactions to what is properly called art, but also what is 'popular art' or 'folk art,' these latter including a dizzying array of local forms ('pure') and even international *mélanges* ('worldly' or 'corrupted' depending on fashionable political preferences). Competing senses of the world, even worldviews, are at stake in this game of judgements. It is reasonable to argue, for example, that the Western canons of art and its serious forms have been carried away by both philosophical arguments, beginning in the enlightenment, and by artists themselves who by the turn of the eighteenth century in Europe, were doing other things than what had been art, at least in its themes. As we move closer to our own time, the trend becomes only more significant and for some aleatory.

1.3 Response to the Problem

In another work, I had the opportunity to detail two new concepts which aid in our response to the problem of aesthetic subjectivity. One we can call 'artism,' the other 'the autist.' They represent, respectively, the discourses of art history and their use as

skill, and the person who worships art for its own sake. The stakes involving the existence of these kinds of conceptualizations are profound, as much of the impetus to consume luxury items—since 1925, the year that over-production began, most commodities may be thought of in this manner—comes from the manufactured desire to arraign one's life akin to one's supposed social superiors. As well, and perhaps coming from a similar impetus, the person who treats art as an aesthetic fetish conjures a cult out of the now occult qualities that art brings to the world. Art re-enchants, but not with a view to making the truth known. The 'autist,' then occludes the path to enlightenment before ever he steps upon it. Precisely because the stakes are so high regarding both the creation and experience of art there are also both genuine failures in its making and thus aborted encounters with these failed vehicles. But there are also contrivances—what is passed to us as if it were art, and what passes for aesthetic experience. This set of artifices would include much of what either fashion or advertising uses as props for a high culture's veneer in order to borrow the status of art and harness it for market or media purposes. Let us take each of these new concepts in turn. Akin to scientism then, 'artism' may be said to contain all of the variants of calculated projects which have as their finite end the imitation of art and of aesthetic experience with the absolute value of borrowing status and thence the possession of Culture. This would include much of philosophical aesthetics, art history, and even the art market in terms of its technocratic knowledge, the interface with the insurance industry, gallery studies and museology, and the very techniques and technologies used by artists throughout history. 'Artism,' in all its variants, is essentially about *techne*, which is ironic, given that the products of such skills sets must ascend to *tyche* if they are to be regarded as great art at all.

What of those who are not artists but who do not attempt to possess the conception of art and artist? This is not because they see no stake in doing so; rather, they understand the stakes to be more personal. The mere possession of a discourse concerning objects, or an objective discourse, however concerned, will not be enough for the 'autist.' This is the person who without practicing any form of artism, and yet also finding themselves apparently without the quasi-autismal abilities that the 'true artist' is said to possess, seeks to imitate what the artist does and what he creates. This is, no doubt, a tall order if one abandons both the objectifying apprehensions of art or the descriptions of the aesthetic encounter—how is it done? what happens to us?—as well as being abandoned by what seems to be the source of art; that particular vision which augments the world and increases our being in it as well as being increased by our creations of it. If imitation is the highest form of flattery, then the autist seeks to make the highest of imitations into an art form. Art is pursued not for its own sake or not because it is the only means of communication available to the artist, but because of one's so-called love of art. We have already seen that both in social reality—art and its public—and in the phenomenology of the perception of art as an aesthetic experience—the object and its viewer or listener or reader—that we need both artist and someone else who recognizes what art is but does not necessarily create it. It is always striking that the one is rarely the other, and this may be the case because the role of the artist is to communicate through art and not about it. The role of the 'autist' is, however, precisely to speak *about* art, either through imitating its very object, or to appreciate it without attempting to possess it, as in artism.

No response to the current literature on the subject of art and personal identity would be complete without an understanding

of the relationship the artist does in fact play to these other two attempts at authenticity through art. As if to counter the weight of specious commentaries on how art occurs, or the place of the artist in society or history, another dubious discourse has arisen which charges the artist with not only the ability to change both the social and the historical but also as the destiny of such dynamics. What this essentially romantic discourse evidences most solidly, through the empiricity of self-report but also the evidence of the sense of the public, is that the artist (as a singular figure or as an aspect of perhaps many of us) has a heightened sense of the affairs of humanity. Akin to the now growing medical understanding of the actual diagnosis of autism—where persons, through a complex neurological interface, are overwhelmed by the sensible projections of the world and cannot sort them out into a usable or sensible language of direct communication with others—the artist is understood as having a metaphoric kind of autism, where his or her senses are hyper-extended in this direction or that, taking in far more than the usual information, and yet being able to represent this process in a new language. Unlike real autism, the metaphorical 'autism' has the weight of an historical discourse to fund its language of communication, but, akin to the medical disorder, when artists over-reach their audience in their work, the effect is not at all unlike the person who, because of the diagnosis and its causes and effects, cannot communicate their experience to us. The newest and most radical of arts is always in this position, though not necessarily forever so. What is much less solid is the idea that because of this ability, which is, perhaps ironically, seen as such a severe disability in others, the artist is said to be of a higher type. This too, can be seen as highly ironic, even hypocritical, given that we also often view the 'disabled,' such as those with autism, to be 'inferior' types of human being. The

hierarchy of humanity, in which the artist as discursive figure occupies a privileged place, is the dishonorable result of this other part of the historical commentary on the character of the artist himself. Sometimes, indeed, the sense that the artist has a specific form of 'autism' which at first glance produces inarticulations and is incomprehensible to the rest of us is linked with a prehistory of the species as a whole.

1.4 Methods

In order to ascertain the Jamesian subjectivity of the aesthetic experience, this project resorted to surveying and interviewing fifty persons, both artists and non-artists alike. The responses used within the study carry with them these respective designations: from transcripts artist or FTA, and from transcripts non-artist FTNA, and nothing more. This study reversed the usual order on instrumentation by constructing its surveys following interviews, though forty of fifty persons participated only in the survey aspect of the study. The following questions became salient, and were included on all surveys, after having been first developed through the dialogue of interview:

What is the role of art in your life, its function, its place, or how do you use art in your life?

How did you become acquainted or engrossed with art, how did it become part of your life, and how important is it and why? Is there anything that could or does replace it?

Do you identify with specific arts or their subjects more than others, and why so? Does this identification have a special meaning to you—what is it and where does it come from?

Does art preserve or evoke memories? Of what sort are they, and are there patterns to your recollections? Do you collect art in any way? Does collection also mean recollection?

Has art ever startled you or made you feel as if something strange has occurred? Have you ever felt transformed by art in some way? What were the contexts of these feelings or experiences and how do you explain them?

Does art make life larger than itself? Do you participate in the process of making art? Is it a projection of yourself into the world?

Though some of these prompts may seem like leading questions, they were developed out of the research participants' own language in response to much more open-ended and mundane queries. All transcripts of both oral and written responses were anonymized and paraphrased. Thus the style of the reproductions of transcripts below will appear to be similar, as if one voice had translated the diversity of tongues available to the researcher. The intimacy and personal detail of some accounts has been, I think preserved to the extent that it could not be identified with any single individual. The advantage of paraphrasis is well known in methodological studies, as it allows the reader to identify with his fellow human beings more strongly, while not glossing over the possible difference of both opinion and experience that are always present in a deep enough pool of humanity.

Aside from interviews and surveys, the study also used unobtrusive methods such as shadowing and eavesdropping upon conversations held by gallery goers, the comments and discussions held by those in the intermissions of concerts or plays, or after concerts on their way out of the halls or theatres. I also watched many hours of documentary film concerning the creation and

production of major art projects, from pop concerts to installations. As well, lengthy documentary series such as 'Voices and Visions', a thirteen part series on famous American poets, were viewed. Much of the artismal footage did not find a substantive place within the brief study below, but it did serve to establish the perspective of what the serious or 'cultured' aesthete might need to know in order to pass as one who had attained the requisite cultural capital and distinction to participate in what Bourdieu has called 'taste regimes'. All of this material, notes, transcripts, extracts from texts and citations from other oral sources such as videotaped interviews contained in popular media were then sorted into categories which at once bore the imprint of subjectivity—they self-referenced in specifically biographical ways—as well as using the language of a wider outlook. These broader patterns consisted of externalizations of what may well be called general concerns of human life. Art was found to be used as a mnemonic device. What must I recall of my past to have a future? This is a question that holds within it not only the somewhat trite ability to learn from one's errors, but more profoundly, the entire idea of identity—where have I been, where am I going, who am I and where have I come from? Identity has its source in cosmogony. Not that any origin myth, however idiosyncratic, needs an empirical veracity. The narrative that springs from these supposed origins does, however, contain enough recollected truth to provide the ground for further adventure and experience. The possession of art objects and images was found to be the concrete thread that weaved these more numinous narratives together. The four categories that were developed were intimately related to this theme of an attempt at historical self-consciousness.

Upon visiting the personal museums of some of the research participants, I asked after the source or experiences which

led them to procure and preserve this or that work of art. Though in almost all cases the 'works' in question were not originals, this was not seen as an impediment to either their personal importance, or indeed to their general pride of place in the wider and objectifying discourses of artism. The recording of a Mahler symphony is as genuine as a live concert, for example, or the print of a Goya as authentic, for the purposes of the persons involved. The question of market value of the actual objects themselves, a compact disk or a printed image was never at issue. The extension of the formal interviews which took place in the privacy of persons' homes provided a vast and rich source of transcript material. It was found as well to contain much more intimacy referring to much wider horizons than were appropriate for this small study and its specific question, but in finding this, I realized that the place of art in personal life was neither quarantined nor suppressed. In fact, the place of art was distinguished by its non-place. Therefore the methods used to construct the categories of memory, identity, projection and the uncanny could have been seen as creating a necessary contrivance. These four analytic categories were recognized by the research participants as salient, but many were also astonished at the manner in which the data worked themselves into such patterns, and persons, once research participants and now readers, became a little self-conscious in their realization that they now were in a position to disagree with themselves, as well as others', interpretations concerning the personal use of art.

As far as the dialogue between the discourse on art and the sociological data was concerned, the four categories provided the rubric to sort what developed into a few hundred citations from major textual sources in the critical philosophical traditions having to do with aesthetics. Phenomenological sources were given pride of place. In a larger unpublished work, the entire detail of this

venture is played out, but here, the core of the analysis is maintained while still being able to shed some light on the question of the purposes to which art is put by regular persons not involved in the construction of philosophical discourses regarding aesthetic questions. The entire project may be summarized methodologically by referring to it as inductive, textual and observational. Through these methods, what was an archive became a reliquary.

1.5 Argument and Summary of the Analysis

The four salient categories of the use of art in personal life were as follows:

1. Art objects and images were used as personal and sometimes idiosyncratic mnemonic devices, including memento mori, to aid mortal memory. The purpose of such a use was to have a sense of one's own history that could be externalized and made into an object in the world of objects. The existential goal of such a purpose was the ability to hold a belief regarding one's relative permanence in a changing life and world.

2. Art was used to aggrandize the self in an attempt to make it larger than life. Mundane existence in the day to day was glamorized by the interaction and possession of art objects and images. There was an increase in one's personal status to be had from their collection and preservation. Self-projection then, became a salient category of analysis because its purpose was seen to be that of creating a trace of oneself on the wider world. If the world mostly ignores us, passes us by, we can perhaps make it attend to our needs, or at least acknowledge our presence, by extending ourselves into and through various bits and pieces of the history of art.

3. Art was perceived as a portal through which one could encounter the 'other world'. The presence of the absence of being

was categorized as the uncanny, and participants were drawn to this function of art as one is drawn into a mystery. this kind of mystery, however, does not call for a solution, only for a participation and an acknowledgement. Similar to projection, the uncanny re-enchants the mundane world and its day to day living on with a larger than life category. This time, however, one is not made larger in the same world, but enters into another world. It was found that however strange experiences involving the aesthetic encounter were, that all of these events were ultimately linked into some troubling or wondrous series of events which had already occurred in what persons' thought be 'only' their mundane life.

4. Finally, art objects and images were used as a means of constructing a personal identity in the present and in this world. Although the other three categories may be deemed necessary to this ultimate goal, identifying with art, or identifying with oneself through art, was the end result of their varied combination. The ambiguities associated with one's past, one's encounter with the uncanny, or the dubious relevance or 'size' of presence in the world at large could be reconciled only by the statement that 'This is me, I have found myself a home in (this or that) art'.

As analytic categories go, none of these are particular to the interaction or encounter with the world of art per se. One can hold a memory of just about anything. Memories are also preserved in all biographical areas through the use of objects and memento mori. Photographs of or gifts from past lovers are a commonplace occurrence in the personal museum, and neither kind of object would necessarily be called art. It is also telling that those of us who wish to be rid of the now disdained memories of these kinds of persons and experience quickly ditch or destroy such objects, as if in an exorcism. We arguably experience the uncanny in all of its suddenness and radicality through the happenstance contexts when

we are less prepared to meet the alien or encounter the absence of being than if we had calculated a visit to the gallery or concert hall. It is true that ancient structures, abandoned houses or other flotsam and jetsam of our ancestors can inspire the trepidation which may foreshadow the irruptive presence of the uncanny, but there are still other moments and events which seem to presage only themselves, as with vivid or waking dreams, *deja vu*, or physiological shifts that are interpreted awry. As well, fields of life that are associated with self-aggrandizement and projection more often have nothing to do with art. One instead thinks of social contexts which might well strike us as art's opposition, or nemeses. Politics, advertising, the military or sports and popular entertainment seem to rule the world of self-projection. The sensibility that generates the fitting combination of theater and commodity—there's no business like show business—can only aid in the quest for a little bit of immortality, one's day in the sun. Art would seem, because of its already marginal or elite commodity status, to sabotage us if we have such a scheme in mind. Finally, one's self-identity most often comes from the looking glasses of one's family and friends, and more rarely, one's workplace or job. Once again, art appears to be normatively on the margins of such a design or set of normativities.

Yet it is also true, as this study attests, that persons who occupy all of these other social niches, use art as a more intensely personal way of attaining these categorical goals. The uncanny of happenstance is usually put down to other things—anxieties about very concrete experiences in the world, perhaps. Memories of other persons fade, and those of us get rewritten, willy-nilly, by the biographical politics of the day. One's friends and families can be fickle, and there is nothing more transitory than limelight. Art was seen by research participants as a more enduring and solid a

companion, and more radical a critic and questioner, than any other kind of historical construct. This sentiment was often echoed by the phenomenological and pragmatic discourses on aesthetics.

No one willingly characterizes himself as only insignificant. We have, for example, 'significant others' in our lives, and thus also perform these same roles or social functions for these others. To be human in this sense is not only to endure the history of what has been human, but also to create anew within communities which, because they change over even a single life course, are themselves charged with the new and sometimes radical. We borrow this experience and homologously ensconce it in the sociality of our encounters with the aesthetic world. We ingratiate ourselves into a new community of objects, texts, and sounds. We remain aware of our general lack of cultural significance, and perhaps, through the encounter with works of art and their discourses, we become more aware of it. At the same time, however, others, human like ourselves, have in fact accomplished these works which we now hold dear to us, as if they are our own, and that justifies our faith in them, in others, and in ourselves. Each one of us then reiterates the human accomplishment of augmenting the humanity of being alive, in the face of our ultimately singular and apparently insignificant presence. The non-artist and artist alike work towards this goal, but it is through art as projection that the former gains something of what the latter is presumed to already have in abundance.

Chapter 2.

Art as Memorialization

2.1 Preserving the Self as Archived Sediment

By far the most copious responses regarding the presence of art in the construction of persons' identities found a home in forms or phases of memorialization. Whether through the work of mourning, of self-gratification or monumentalism—the auto-iconography of personal museums—art objects and images performed a mnemonic function. Research participants were reminded not so much of themselves as mundane roles in mundane spaces, but of all of the unexpected feats or foibles their public characters performed. As well, the sensibility that change must remain unchanged, that time be made timeless, and that what has arrested us with the ever surprising quality of living on must itself be arrested, fueled the interest in the use of art for the purposes of externalizing memory anew.

To surprise ourselves we must be surprised by what already is our self. To take ourselves aback, we must take back what is already ours. In short, we must 'return to ourselves from having been otherwise,' as Hegel famously notes. But it is not so much that we have returned to what we have been. We have of course changed in the meantime. This is the 'otherwise,' but it is not something other than what we are becoming. It is otherwise than

what we have been before, and this prodigality is the character of ongoingness in the world: "For only the fact that an earlier phase preceded this Now and Thus makes the Now to be Thus, and that earlier phase which constitutes the Now is given to me in this Now in the mode of remembrance." (Schutz 1967:47 [1932]). The eventuality of any stream of events is the stuff of all cultural temporalities. We come to know this flux as historicity, both the inertia of history which is not our own, and the history in which we live and rewrite whilst making it our own. The preservation of the self is the manner in which memory manifests history as lived time. Its transience allows for as much opportunity as loss, as we need to forget part of ourselves—and what we may have lived through—to move on with the project of living: "The awareness of the experience in the pure stream of duration is changed at every moment into *remembered* having-just-been-thus; it is the remembering which lifts the experience out of the irreversible stream of duration and thus modifies the awareness, making it a remembrance." (ibid., italics the text's). It is not that we stop the motion of life in order to arrest some part of it which we miss or have in part forgotten. We do indeed forget what much has meant to us at the time it occurred, but this is because we ourselves have changed, and what can become meaningful for us in a similar manner has thus changed. Meaning is also part of the Now and the Thus, and though it sediments within our consciousness, the flow of liquid time erodes its stratigraphy, jumbles its lines and shapes its contours. The sands of meaning are carried away, giving us the impression that they are themselves the vehicles of time. But what remains, the bluffs that tower above the aged river of our being, is where in fact the time of our lives rests. What fossils might be buried there?

If there is an art to remembrance just as there seems to be a skill to recall and a rhetoric to the recollection, especially through narrative, of events now become story or even myth, then there must be a place for art itself within the memorial process. If we recollect to collect our thoughts about what we have been and what it has meant to us, in gazing up at the slopes of sedimented but now incomplete memory, we recognize ourselves through the imagery of what it is to need ourselves to be in the present. We need, in other words, a usable past, and not one which merely recollects or has the status only of myth. Art is one of the perennial markers of memory, difficult to erode by one's own consciousness alone, as it also marks, as we have seen, a culture memory greater than ourselves. It does not pander easily to our individuality, in spite of the great efforts to make it reflect without distortion what we wish it to in self-projection: "On the contrary, it is characteristic of art that what is represented, whether it is rich or poor in communications or has none whatsoever, calls us to dwell upon it and give our assent in an act of recognition." (Gadamer 1986:36 [1977]). Note that we do not entirely agree with its presence in our past, as we can only assent, and not *consent* to its being there. Its being is irruptive in the sense that it is also very much not part of our past, and has become ensconced, descended, and half-buried in our consciousness. And it is the part which cannot be at first seen and recognized that has the greater influence. This is a good thing, due to the influence, also greater than ourselves, of the mode of life within which we struggle to remember a past of our own at all: "We shall have to acknowledge that learning to listen means rising above the universal leveling process in which we cease to notice anything—a process encouraged by a civilization that dispenses increasingly powerful stimuli." (ibid.). Ours is hardly the only river that courses its being

through the world landscape. There is a great flood of modern culture, driven by incessant rains of institutional hegemony and corresponding media within which our own streams of consciousness have to swim. The exercise in self-preservation, the first step to understanding the function of art as the vehicle for self-remembrance, concerns itself with not only making the distinction between what is my past and what is the past of others and of history as an object, but as well the more intimately discerning task of recalling the actuality of things to ourselves, rather than the whitewash of a time-being that caters to the convenience of biographical history, the 'that was then, this is now' variety of memory that forgives itself rather than more radically forgetting itself. It is this latter movement which is more authentic, for in forgetting we know by what we can no longer know that we have indeed become an other person, and not merely someone who has 'moved on,' or 'gets on with their life.' If we must 'die many times in order to become immortal,' then one of the major ways of confronting this serial suicide of selves is through the use of art. The perennality of meaningfulness found in works of art subsists through the plenitude of ever-changing meaning this or that history can take from it. Through this transmigration of meaning, art resists erosion. It is never 'of its time' and only of its time. Art remains as part of the sediment of all histories as part of what is now our time, and we must encounter it within that framework.

Yet there are severe obstacles to preservation. The transience, especially magnified in modern times, of one's residence, relationships, place of work, and even kinship ties amongst members of increasingly smaller families, all play their part in the fragmentedness of auto-memory. We may begin to transpose our ideal life—where we would rather be or what we would rather be doing—into a parallel series of phantasms, running

along beside us like a second shadow. Indeed, dreams proper may often seem to inhabit the landscape of a second life, desired or feared: "Such dreams unsettle our daydreaming and we reach a point where we begin to doubt that we have ever lived where we lived. Our past is situated elsewhere, and both time and place are impregnated with a sense of unreality. It is as though we sojourned in limits of being." (Bachelard 1964:57-8 [1958]). And yet the very endurance of what is both eroded and fragmented attests to more than the influence of inevitable time and change. It also maintains its presence through re-occurring to us as we recur to ourselves. This mourning heralds the next morning. We may mourn the loss of the previous day or life of days, but this regret impels us to the expectation that we as well as our days can be replaced with others, by others. We are thus made persistent in the face of change and dynamic in relation to that which is akin to the undead in us and within the wider world of art. These works "... carry with them in their practice the taint of a nonliving past that they do not quite overcome. In modernist art, death does not appear as the prehistory of the significance that will be unveiled in its wake; it simply persists." (Horowitz 2001:2). The simplicity of this presence is the most plain marker of what has passed but also what can never quite be the past. We are aware that what has passed before us—we have both witnessed this passing and also we have been preceded by it—can be a source of sorrow. We have missed it, on the one hand in the sense that it occurred before our time—and this also includes the sense that we were not what we needed to be, although alive and sentient, 'at the right place at the right time'—and on the other hand we regret its current non-presence, like the lost loves of our more youthful selves, very often guises for that very youth we have also lost in the process.

But that this is no different for living on in general, poses the gravest potential limit on the role of art as the vehicle for memorialization. Art must first undergo with us the therapy of recovery. Just as we have assembled the works relevant to whom we think we might rather be in projection, memorialization uses these works to navigate and chart the history of our being in the world as we have been. This cartographic re-ontology is often undertaken with trepidation: "There is [] an element of undergoing, of suffering in its large sense, in every experience. Otherwise, there would be no taking in of what preceded. For 'taking in' in any vital experience is something more than placing something on the top of consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction which may be painful." (Dewey 1980:41 [1934]). We do not simply replace experiences with others. We never merely replace a memory with another. Memories are not therefore simple surrogates for one another. They persist in a manner that does the marker. They are also not only archived as a casually catalogued mass of detritus that subsists beneath the flow of contemporary experience. They become rather part of who we are, indeed, so much so that they are often themselves the cause of our desire for self-overcoming. They qualify our being in almost a linguistic sense: "... I should like to point out the power that an adjective acquires, as soon as it is applied to life. A gloomy life, or a gloomy person, marks an entire universe with more than just a pervading coloration. Even things become crystallizations of sadness, regret or nostalgia." (Bachelard 1964:143 [1958]). The dynamic tension extant between the presence of what 'simply persists' within us as our own subjectitude which the art of our times both represents and represences can be described as the ongoing tantalus of a now-knowing being who once did not know. The perfection of

hindsight is also part of this mythic rationalization, as we cannot necessarily assume that with distance and perspective we see as clearly as the usual analogy implies. What we do is see differently, and we will see differently again. We rewrite the autohagiographic novel of ourselves in novel ways: "We too, tied down within the same narrow limits, create our own myths, our own style, with greater or lesser relief and authority." (Focillon 1989:131 [1934]). This limitation opens us to the homologous process of artistic creation. We must live on as a character in our own story, but we are not predestined to be only an archetype or a metaphor, as with many literary characters. If we are 'actors of our own ideals,' as Nietzsche famously notes, then these ideals are set within the tapestries of cultural *eidōs* and it is their simple threads which persist in the textile of human history: "And so also the artist must precede with his prosaic novel. Reduced to a police dossier or to a paragraph in a dictionary, how commonplace do the facts seem." (ibid.). Part of the 'undergoing' which is also an undertaking—we bear the corpse of our fragmented memories to the place where they will be simply marked and will thus persist as a collection, not unlike the use of our personal museums of art works in the mode of their being *memento mori*—is admitting to ourselves that this is what we have up until now been. The variety of works of art also bear sometimes mute witness to this avowal: "Thus, the different expressions bear their content in different ways, and this difference is just that between confession and art." (Horowitz 2001:106).

We cannot let the marker become a monument to the morbid and brooding contemplation of only that which has passed. Instead, self-preservation demands that we take its sign as an exhortation to continued life, even if only to increase the gradually ascending surplus of lost meaning. We cannot understand what is marked as a source of ongoingness, as the being in which what is

to be is always present as its self-fulfilling prophecy. If we succumb to this effect of the grave, then "... the uniqueness of the original now lies in its being *the original of a reproduction*. It is no longer what its image shows that strikes one as unique; its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but in what it is." (Berger 1972:21). The persistence of this kind of destiny, that which 'simply persists' and does no more than its mere presence denotes either for ourselves or for itself, commits all human beings who follow in the wake of the dead to be mere reproductions of ancestral, perhaps even apical, originals. Our value then is measured only by our precise and present mimicry of what has gone before us. Rather, the marker, if used as an exhortation to new life and re-created destiny all of a sudden and once again becomes dynamic. It marks time in a new way, at the very least as metronomic rather than merely nomic, the latter simply marking time by giving it the names of the dead.

The famous and startling series of exhibitions called 'BodyWorlds' is a serious attempt at making the dead, not come back to life, but to give their lives in the service of an enhanced understanding of our own, the still living yet still to be dead. The technique of plastination, where the most minute structures of organic anatomy can be preserved in their 'as-if vivisected' form, allows the living to look inside of themselves in an unprecedented manner. One expects the grotesque, even the abominable, but what one sees is the sheer elegance of the systems by which we as organic and conscious beings exist, subsist, and indeed, of what we consist. The mirror has been inverted, the projection now an introjection, the subject a quasi-object anew. Self-preservation has reached a technical height that overcomes the egotistical nomenclature so potently resonant in any attempt of vision of a kind of immortality—this frozen version of what was life can go

on forever and even become personal, hence the humorous comment in the chapter epigraph—only because such exhibitions use the remains of life to teach us the value of what remains alive. Diseases of all kinds are documented, most especially the cancers of 'lifestyle,' or the overwrought organs of hyperextension and stress. There is an intense caveat, almost religious, that life is sacred, and these altered and meta-preserved versions of our bodies are the pseudo-living testament to the effects of what is harmful to life. It is striking that the bodies donated to this scientific and pedagogic cause come from those who have succumbed before their time. A reconstructed vehicle accident victim here, a lung cancer athlete there, the paroxysm of stillbirth still further inside the hallowed gallery of ourselves suddenly vivisected and exhibited. Everything is in order down to the final capillary, the most occluded nerve. The technique approaches a perfection which one used to only associate with the scandalously sciatic brilliance of the artist. It overcomes the loss of the golden age, where in myth we humans consorted with the gods, and in fact we lived intimately with one another in communities which were of a single mind: "Today we look back upon those times with nostalgia, the hysterical nostalgia, doomed from the start to remain unsatisfied, of sophisticated men. We look back with impotent nostalgia upon a time when one did not have to be a genius in order to approach perfection ..." (Lukacs 1974:55 [1910]). Yet BodyWorlds is as much art as it is science, the figures radically sculpted by the post-modern scalpel. There is precedent, of course, for this kind of art, most notably by Watteau, whose museum in Paris is a veritable orgy of grotesquerie simply because the figures are only art and not as intently both lessons in basic if detailed anatomy and more importantly, in the ethics of having one's own body and keeping it within the concise and ritual lines of a Greek temple. But we live

in a time where art also has the function of education. This has been so since the political works of the French revolution, and perhaps before, though the further recedent we travel the more we are impressed by the rewriting of history for propaganda or entertainment purposes than with those pedagogical—Shakespeare's political histories of England and the Classical period come easily to mind here. Artistic license can slide into licentiousness. We cannot be completely smug about our own situation, however, as "Every work of art imposes its own temporality upon us, not only the transitory arts of language, music and dance. When considering the static arts, we should remember that we also construct and read pictures, that we also have to enter into and explore the forms of architecture. These too are temporal processes." (Gadamer 1986:45 [1977]). What BodyWorlds accomplishes is literally the lifetime of our beings, strung out in the lace of our entrails, the gut-strings that play the music of the organism, the clockworks that mark the meter and rhythm of life as we know it. For all time, due to technique, we are confronted with the mastery of our bodies. It is, no doubt, a finite and fragile mastery, complex and highly evolved, but as to what we can compare it with when we consider its complexity and its plane of evolution, we are still ignorant. All we can do is note with both fascination and sobriety that we too are exactly as these figures are, only in movement and flux, where the ingenious sculpture and posing of our bodies apart and in parts gives us only the illusion of perpetual motion.

This is not the only space where an attempt is made through auto-autistry to make what is actually life, or the 'un-life' of the plastinated dead, into a form of art. One is perhaps aptly reminded of the gargantuan rallies of the Third Reich where politics is hypostasized into a greater sociality, or the use of skilled

design in advertising, and there are other diverse examples. But where there is an authentic extension of being, there is not just its extension, but its transformation for its own sake. Art perhaps never exists for its sake without the sake of the transfiguration of both itself and its other, the public or the projectionist, the memorializer, and as we shall see below, the 'uncannist' and the identifier. Art has the effect of a renewed childhood, in that it is during this time of our lives more than any other that we are both amenable to change and to flight of fancy, but also that we are ourselves changing and are changed by the on-rush of socialization and learning: "It is on the plane of the daydream and not that of facts that childhood remains alive and poetically useful within us. Through this permanent childhood, we maintain the poetry of the past." (Bachelard 1964:16 [1958]). Indeed, it was this aspect of self-preservation that figured most amongst all research participants. A mere sample of categories of remembrance through art will suffice. The idea of childhood itself is often prefigured as an initiation to life through art:

One does not know the meaning of mortal life as a child, but one does know intimately the creative act, as all things are new, and the world is constantly filled with wonder. What a joy then, for myself and others who were introduced to art at an early age, to discover that one could create a world which was more than the private fantasy of oneself and a few chums. The artistic creation, however crude, advanced the notion that life was open-ended and mutable. The crayons, paper, water paints and toy musical instruments were the well-springs of recorded play. They became the sources of childhood, after childhood itself passed away. (FTNA).

As well, there was often the sense that art or the exposure to it led to an awakening of sorts, a kind of enlightenment where the light of a new world appears for the first time:

Learning music as a child was as immediately powerful as learning any spoken language. For myself, it was more universal, as I found out later, because musicians the world over could appreciate and communicated through their art whilst not at all being able to speak one another's' native tongue. Is there a native region for music, I do not think so. Similarly for art in general. As such it becomes the historical reliquary for all that is sacred in the human lot. I never became an artist per se, but I still participated in the arts and consumed them. Music in particular became a soundtrack to a life. (FTNA)

For some, the measure of the value of the aesthetic encounter as both a memory and also thus the measure of an anticipatory relationship to future works of art, was signaled by the religious language that responses were often couched within:

I need to keep a record of all that I have been. Life seems so ruthless in its variety that we are swept along in its churning tides. Through my writing I not only archive my experience but it is read through other eyes which then reflect it back to me. Of course I then also become a reader, every text takes on a life of its own. But even so, I find in any series of texts a recorded message that speaks across the vicissitudes of personal history. After all, a biography is a written form of life, quite literally, and one is always rewriting oneself. (FTA).

The act of memorializing, like that of projection, can be thought of as kindred to the artistic act. It certainly attempts to

mimic the process of the creation of a work of art by its seemingly sacred intent and its tropic resonance with the theme of immortality. Self-preservation is not in itself an egotistical venture. Rather, it defines a fundamental aspect of the human character by reminding us that we ultimately cannot have any final and certain expectations of such a process. Of course we are disconcerted by this fact, but it does not dissuade us from the experimental use of preservatives of all kinds. When we notice something of ourselves that either brings pleasure, the esteem of others, or social status within institutions, we would like it to carry on. But the use of art as a preservative or conserving measure responds to existential questions that are neither ad hoc nor are solely oriented to social structures. It instead attempts to address the tension we feel between what we can do and what we cannot, what we think we know about ourselves and what we merely suspect: "Humanity is never totally transparent to itself or reconciled to itself. Men are continually blind to some aspect of man. History is the history of the dramas which arise from this ignorance. As a result, history is like a reproachful presence." (Dufrenne 1973:500 [1953]). If we are upbraided by a history that we only partially understand and yet more partially participate in, then art reappears as an aspect of the lifeworld which seems to overcome the judgement of such a history. It appears always in its essential state, and resists, sometimes uncannily, but more often through the sheer perenniality of its human themes—seemingly the more so within societies with written languages—the vicissitudinal flux and vestigial presence of the past. This is not something, it appears, that we as humans can ultimately accomplish, though we must treat it not merely as a fact but as a challenge. That we do so is both the source of art and the memory that art exists and continues to exist: "Finitude is our lot and yet also our responsibility.

Although there is always something left for us to understand, it seems that we also always possess the means to do so. Consequently, affective categories are still within us, even when we make no use of them. Thus if we are blind to the aesthetic object or if our taste is relative, this is no one's fault but our own." (ibid.). Perhaps the weakness lies most where we lie to ourselves about what is worth preserving, and our own abilities to make use of an art of preservation that preserves that which in the self makes us more than just self-interested.

2.2 Art Objects as Auto-Archaeology

If we need to avoid casting ourselves in the bronze of an enduring but static and idealized archaeological object, imbued with the status of a statue but endowed with nothing more than a catalogue number, we need to confront the problem that "Art is now perpetuated by the effort to introject its own past—which is to say by a mimesis of death." (Horowitz 2001:23). All memorialization consorts with what is previous to us, and that includes what is dead within and without us. The dead live on within us, yes, but also have lived without us 'before,' as it were. Given that we must adorn the living world with a sometimes sanctimonious harmonic in which the dead can once again find a voice—not their own, but one that speaks a tongue we can understand—then "... for the sake of the experience that suffers from an inability to be represented and so stands in a traumatic relation to representation, art carries with the dead." (ibid.). The art of our modern society could be seen as simply reflecting our own preoccupation with the new sense that we may yet, through evolutionary technology, overcome all 'natural human' death. However this may be, given the rush of invention in genetics and cybernetics, and the sense that a new species will have to be adaptive to a new and perhaps degraded environment, it is clear

that we adore, even covet, that which our past has created for itself to communicate with us, and not just in order to continue the conversation of humankind.

In the most general sense then, what has occurred already has also the effect of being 'always' experienced. Whatever may be the new, the 'days of future past' resonate with the dynamic of running onwards. If a new species has a more perfect memory of things, it will also have a better idea of what is to come, whether or not the past predicts the future in any perfect sense: "Because the concept of meaningful experience of which meaning is predicated is a discrete one, it becomes quite clear that only a past experience can be called meaningful, that is, one that is present to the retrospective glance as already finished and done with." (Schutz 1967:52 [1932]). But is anything that is recalled ever truly done with? If something has happened, its happenstance character has passed on, but its potential for re-presencing itself is presumably indefinite, and not so discrete as the moment of the original event. Here, rather blithely, we wander into the same problem that animates our relationship to the valuation of art works, as Berger suggested above. Now, our every memory of events, good or bad, revalues itself according to our ability to recall them as closely as possible, to mimic them, perhaps, or to repeat them in the manner of a theme and its variations. We may well wince at the memory of an event deemed negative for and by us, but the authenticity of the feeling we experience when recalling such and such a happening is a way of making it occur again. In doing so, however, we do rewrite at least our relationship with the past, and more specifically, the version of the past in which we have already participated, most often as some other version of ourselves: "The past is never there waiting to be discovered, to be recognized for exactly what it is. History always constitutes the relation between a

present and its past." (Berger 1972:11). If we have some kind of trepidation concerning our role in past events—and who escapes this kind of bad conscience?—we may be tempted to engage in some kind of whitewash, or mystification, as Berger suggests. Akin to the misguided aperture of egotistical projection, a lens which colors the collections of art works in one's personal museum as extensions of one's actual skill rather than of one's imagined personality writ larger, works of art become mere artifacts for those prone to memorialize their past lives in monumental inscriptions of auto-propaganda. Rather, the power of art is such that it cannot quite be contained by such sepulchers: "The work of art makes the old memory present by means of a manipulation of present experience because the present experience functions as an innocent hiding place for the archaic one. The present is thus not immune to the imagination of the past's future." (Horowitz 2001:108). What is recalled continues to live on as if it is still happening. No event, trivial or profound, only occurs once, and indeed, no event could be said to have an originality if what we simply mean by this term suggests that it can be copied and recopied. Each recollection, as with each addition to the collection of either the projectionist or the memorializer, is its own original or has its own originality. More than this, as with very early memories which merge with both dreams and phantasms, the imagination reworks what had 'actually' occurred some time ago, and often through this reworking the event becomes much more palatable to us if at first negative or, if not, it becomes aggrandized, sometimes to impossible heights of human feeling, which we only wished we had actually experienced. The stakes here are grave enough, as the visions we think we recall often involve other persons' actions or presence. We seek to make them still and deep so that their image does not wander off into another

nook of our ability to remember and perhaps cause us discomfort anew: "Indeed, images are *engravings*, for it is the imagination that engraves them on our memories. They deepen the recollections we have experienced, which they replace, thus becoming imagined recollections." (Bachelard 1964:32 [1958] italics the text's). We cannot predict with certain accuracy the manner in which our imaginations will rearrange the elements of memory, so another function of works of art which can be made to correspond to a museum of artifacts is that we take conscious pride and care in arranging them in a specific kind of display. We are the most important visitor to this kind of art museum, for everything is in its place, as it were, even if there is never quite a place for everything that we might need.

Entire epochs of culture may be said to engage in something similar: "When Hegel spoke of art as a thing of the past he meant that art was no longer understood as a presentation of the divine in the self-evident and unproblematical way in which it had been understood in the Greek world." (Gadamer 1986:6 [1977]). What a horrifying imagination then, that re-called to presence the idea of immediate divinity and thought that humanity could attain it through the single-minded cult of symmetrical and gendered beauty. The Nazi would-be gods on earth had this kind of imagination, and modeled their aesthetic valuation on not the classical world in its own light, but the forms of antiquity and the Renaissance—and can we even now believe the Renaissance was as 'humanistic' as the historians incline?—that were now treated as homologons rather than as incarnations of divinity. As Gadamer continues, this kind of transparency of corporeal ideality "... became impossible with the arrival of Christianity." (ibid).

Yet the aesthetics of the Third Reich, especially in its hyperbolic sculptures and the pedantic mimicry of ancient temples

in its architecture, is actually only the far end of the process in which all memorializers participate. There is a conservation of history, specifically in our cases, one's own, that becomes the absolute value to which all means must unite in pursuit. What better way to preserve the aspired to future against the denigration of the past, as well as the idealized past against the unpredictable future, than to hypostasize the ideal human into an attainable earthly godhead? Aesthesis becomes prosthesis: "The work of the memorial is thus undertaken ceaselessly, as an ever renewed vigil against the change streaming around it. A memorial is not just an object in place of what has been carried away; it is, rather, a countermovement against the movement itself that carries away." (Horowitz 2001:139). We come perilously close to becoming our own 'other Nazis' if we take too seriously the artifactual properties of a work of art, if we see the art around us only as a function of culture or biographical memory, as morbid *aides-memoire*, rather than as true memento mori, which can only mark something or someone we have accepted as part of the work of mourning, and thus as the source of memory itself.

There are also specific physical places in which art stands first as artifact even before we have collected it and then made it do its singular duty of recollection for us. These are the objects that subsist on the margins of people's experience and in the corners of their consciousness, rather than those that exist in the brighter light of official spaces of vitality—the gallery, museum or library, for instance, but also the concert hall and studio. As such, their *in situ* status requires that we excavate them, much as we hope they will later do for us regarding this or that memory they may serve to evoke or even invoke. For the more public works, they can be accessed as marketed commodities or as publicized experiences: "In either case, the works exist in an art world's life in a way that is

not true of works which, continuing to exist physically, can only be found in scattered attics, secondhand stores or little-known churches. These lost works cannot be found by the conventional methods ... [] People who want to experience these works for scholarly or other reasons will not know they are there to experience." (Becker 1982:220). Works which have an existence marginal to the well-trodden avenues by which anyone who collects copies of art to use as memorials are akin to the remains of markers in graveyards without towns, which have survived by virtue of their potentially more durable materials and their occupation of land which may have little property value, not to mention their sometimes magical quality—a caveat confronting the instrumentality of all things capital and material—that warns off those who might trespass upon even the forgotten dead.

Such objects, filling up a littoral plain of spatial marginalia, unknown or occluded in the discourses of artism, and ignored as commodities which can be reproduced and which have a willing franchise of buyers, can, ironically, be both plainly and literally known to us upon rediscovery. The homebuyer who encounters the 'chattel' of previous families, cast aside by the changing drift of other persons' lives, or the more elite real estate which sometimes comes advertised as vending both 'house and contents,' are familiar examples of the romance of the discovery, the nostalgia of the quest for meanings which may link our lives with those who had passed before, whether or not there is any direct genealogical link. Because there are opportunities other than those provided by market or discourse to construct individuated archaeologies, the draw that typically defines avid scourers of the artifactual margins is likened to a treasure hunt. These other objects, which have not yet been appropriated by the characters discussed in the opening chapter, are 'free' in the sense of being untied to the larger fabric of

discursive kinship. We encounter these 'new' objects rather differently due to their undiscovered aura. Not only are they new to us, we imagine that few know of their existence, or perhaps, in the case of artifacts made by families in pre-capitalist social formations—the ad hoc efforts of the folk artist or the farmer who decorates his tools, for instance—no one at all. At the same time, phenomenologically we are drawn by such marginal work closer to the authentic process inherent in all works of art. That we are no longer, for the moment at least, clouded by the trajectories of fame and value that veil well-known works of art, we can also recover the meaning within them through the experience of works which lie naked before us, neither unveiled nor elevated. We encounter the work as something irruptive to our own personal experience: "The time of reading or listening is detached from a vaster time from which it is excluded, as a painting stands out from the wall on which it is hung. When I read, only the time of the work exists for me. When I adhere to the work, objective time vanishes along with the objective world." (Dufrenne 1973:365 [1953]). It may be only our historical or local ignorance that creates the effect of a more objective ignorance—often experts such as auctioneers and appraisers have the minute knowledge of otherwise forgotten forms of art or craft—but within the aesthetic encounter and its implications for the wider world of what one does know is art, these objects end up having a value far beyond what they could achieve if in fact they were known, and all the more so, if they were celebrated in some fashion.

They ingratiate themselves into our consciousness because of our imaginative renderings of others' presumed pasts. Yet we are able to lend credence to this experiment in distantiated observation, the phantasm of empiricism or the extrapolation of experience, because we are, and have, living examples of

something similar to which we can point: "It is not as if I could observationally understand only those whom I directly experience. Not at all. I can imaginatively place the minds of people of past ages in a quasi-simultaneity with my own, observationally understanding them through their writing, their music, their art." (Schutz 1967:104 [1932]). Of course in doing so, we risk immediately and unselfconsciously what we risk only later on in a calculated manner through the museum display; we put at risk the utter intransigence of the object of which we know nothing, and so also the fundamental confrontation that the aesthetic encounter originates in and which is the source of personal transformation. The imagination may be all too rapid in its allaying of the anxiety which the strange must produce in us. Later on, when we have assimilated even the most alien of works, we lose their primary communicative force as the tongues of the dead. Our understanding is too subjective, and thus might not be suitable for artifactual status. These objects might well be destined to become only artefacts, as what we know about them is overloaded with sentiment and romance. If we do only thus, "We have yet to deal with the different forms taken on by this understanding in the different spheres of the social world." (ibid.). Inevitably, this also brings to the fore the problem of what can be defined as worthy of becoming the memorial we seek. Whether or not it is even art becomes an important question—rather pawkishly given that this type of conversation usually only finds a willing home in the company of boors and bigots—because we are aware that if an object fails in its artistic status, it has not the power to memorialize much of anything. It cannot transport us to past ages or lives, and it cannot utter the mortal language of the undead: "Notoriously there is a problem with calling this art and that not art, etc. Especially in the modern day, but I imagine even in past ages when art and the

artist were more associated with ritual and religious observance, the idea of art might not have even existed. All the more so, the sense that art can be used as a form of ritual memory or as a prop for the performance of mourning suggests arts own primordial past" (FTA). The depth of the encounter, as if something other is reaching into your being and transforming it after having transfixed it in its grasp, is perhaps what most reminds us of death itself, as we are stilled by the loss of consciousness and we are also impelled to move on to another kind of being, both in life, and perhaps also in death. Art that is validated beforehand can guarantee this arresting event more securely than can objects about which we may have some doubt, or further, those works which seem to have little artistic merit to the minds of our would-be former selves.

The artifactuality of the most ancient of surfaces and objects cannot yet fit into the usual media of artistic expression and representation. Speaking of the fifty thousand year old cave paintings at Lascaux, Merleau-Ponty admits: "I would be at great pains to say *where* is the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I do a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I *see* it." (1964:164 [1961] italics the text's). Akin to mandalas, the earliest forms of art may well have had a visionary or rite of passage function. More so than meditation, their function may have been imagined to envisage the actual hunt, or perhaps they may have been a portal to the dimension where animals and humans were still intimate with one another. For an eternity this is how it was with both art and life. With the advent of writing and the concept of logos, however, the image's power shifts dramatically, in a way not unlike the power of endurance that had hitherto been the exclusive province of oral

narratives which linked generations separated by the vastness of time. Time becomes history, language becomes text, and art becomes increasingly liberated from referentiality: "With respect to the liberty of the signifieds of the image, the text thus has a *repressive* value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested." (Barthes 1977:40 [1964] italics the text's). The explanatory function of a written language gives didactic instruction—if it were not for poetry, we might all be fated to practice a form of this potent pedantry, whether in science or in literature—and also directed description. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a few words alone are necessary to alter our interpretation of the picture, which then can be ensconced in the thousand further words of our imagination, words that the picture can no longer control.

It is also the same with directed and calculated phantasms both of escape and envy. Memory may serve a self-preservation, which is in fact self-projection inverted. The interiority of a being divorced from the world constructs its own personal museum, but one in which there is a singular and guarded entrance which others cannot attain at any price. There is no admission *to* this museum, just as there can be no admission *of* its actual function. All objects displayed within are the mementos of mourning, but not of the dead. There is no moratorium for the object as 'mori.' Instead, we engage a world that we imagine would or could have been more than it was, and thus also introject a more ideal version of ourselves into that world, either as its source or its result. The memorializer who uses works of art to create a fantasy history sometimes can generate art of her own, as with the novelist who dreams the dream of narrative and of another possible world, even one based on part of her own life. But for most of us nothing but the privacy of the ideal environment is created. Nothing therefore

emanates from such a world, and, at the same time, the world of others is lost to us: "The dreamer in his corner wrote off the world in a detailed daydream that destroyed, one by one, all the objects in the world. Having crossed the countless little thresholds of the disorder of things that are reduced to dust, these souvenir-objects set the past in order, associating condensed motionlessness with far distant voyages into a world that is no more." (Bachelard 1964:143 [1958]). Perhaps this is the stillbirth of a form of art, as when no story retakes the world from its seclusion, or no person returns to the world of fellow-humans to greet once again with the wisdom of a once separate and separated perception. That the memorial of the phantasm also generates great art is indisputable, but what is that awkwardness that cannot come out of itself? What blockade can inhibit the surges of idea and vision that still inhabit every interior of being, every reflection on being-in-the-world? Even the artist who overcomes his own stilled voice relies on the inertia of the history of all humanity, for it is only within this universal conversation that one of us picks up the common torch which had flickered and cindered: "This artist, who is buried in the anonymity of remote ages and who, without knowing it, becomes the ground of an incomparable experience, really has something to say; a humanity in search of itself stammers through him." (Dufrenne 1973:104 [1953]). The world itself continues by this process of recalling itself to itself, and we as well come into contact with the world of art as both representing the larger reality but also as reminding us that what is real is only the barest part of a world which is more past than present. (cf. *ibid.*:136).

2.3 The Personal Museum

The memorializer often appears as a phase of life in the wake of a failure of some sort in other efforts to be discussed below. Indeed, if we do not realize a version of an idealized self in

the wider world, we are thrown back on ourselves as we may have been before we even began. So memory, this time as an instrument for gauging the relative success or failure of past projects of action, vests itself in a combination of our experience of the transformed self—albeit perhaps in the newly denigrated form of over-anxious conceit concerning an overplayed hand; after all, everyone errs and one can always try again at most things—and the artworks which remain around us—'objects of knowledge at hand,' we might call them. There is a regretful relationship between them and us, as for now we do not usually believe that art has failed us in some way, but that we, rather, were not worthy of the transformations that the great artworks we have collected and identified with could have provided. But what is regrettable about such a situation only stays with us as long as either we do not re-engage an altered project—try, try again—or we abandon it altogether as being in fact unworthy of us—the crisis of conscience, in some case, or simply the appearance of the better counsel of others. Whatever may be the case, the end result is that we almost always attempt another project, this time with the apparent hindsight of the collection of works as a memorial to that previous. These artworks now not only have their own history—the objective discourse of art history, certainly, and also an historicism of interpretation and their effect on our predecessors or even other contemporaries—they also have a history with us, and we with them. Until they are utilized in the fashion of the life experiment as elements within a project, even if what we wish to project is in the past as a memorial, artworks are still only themselves, and have had no opportunity to transform their latest public. This very passivity is akin to inexistence, in that although they exist as works, they have not been re-engaged in their careers as aesthetic objects. The opportunity to do so is crucial for both them and us, as their continued relevance and

existence is only assured through the serial transformation of historical public, and our continued viability as a living consciousness can only be secured serially and continuously in our engagement with history proper: "Our life today is shaped in such a way that glances which no one has noticed or words which have been let fall without being heard or understood are coming to be the forms in which souls communicate with one another." (Lukacs 1974:84 [1910]).

The communication of souls, both living and dead, has its most sure reliquary in the artworks which have attained, through once being the sources of these sacred conversations, a high status within the discourses of objectification. Sometimes even artismal discourses can contain their secrets, such as yet those of the market. If part of what is said about art is mute regarding its language, if part of what is seen in art is blind to the visions it makes present, then the saving grace of such discourses is that they can preserve, much in the way in which we ourselves attempt self-preservation through artworks, these self-same works' reputations as 'great art.' As long as this idea of them is what is archived, even the works themselves might fall into obscurity or neglect, be destroyed in times of conflict or through the witch-hunts of strident ideology: "Even if such works fall out of critical favor, their undeniable importance in the history of art assures their continuing value. That value is further supported by the forever dwindling supply; a dead artist will paint no more canvases ..." (Becker 1982:110). Even if works are discovered, authenticated or restored, and exposed as art rather than as autismality, the roster of great art seldom grows qualitatively (cf. *ibid.*). The work we expect the displays in our personal museums of memorialization to accomplish is more like the work of a secured warehouse, which, after all, whatever else they may be in the cultural imagination of

the day, larger and more public museums and galleries are as well. This 'archiving,' the rendering of time as rended and irruptive, arrested and placed in a state of grace outside of history and inside ideals, is the foundation for the next exhibit to take place. Like those always looking forward while time hurries on, we require a stoppage in the play of the historical to acquire a steady vision of 'what the future can hold.' This phrase itself is tantamount to the desire that the future too, what is to come, should only come if it is willing to stay, like all potential lovers that may be here and gone, and who we must come to know as other souls in intimate communication but only *pro tempore*.

What has not yet come holds nothing. This is the bald reality that the archive, through a bold surreality, attempts to address. If the future will not stop of its own accord, hurtling past us, making the momentary present to become the past, we will hold it in and as the past. All history has a hold over us and in this sense it is 'our history.' This is something that is well recognized. But we also have a grip on the throat of history in making this or that worthy of our view of what constitutes our past. If it is to be our own, what bore down on us just now must be tethered just out of reach of further change. It is memory which serves as the rope by which history is tied, and it is the archive which serves as the post to which it is attached. The orbit that history makes of memory reminds us that we can counter the nature of time with imaginative freedom, but also that cosmic forces such as that generate the odd confluence of finite consciousness and yet culture memory ultimately will not be tied down by any finitude other than their own, so much more vast and deep than that of humanity: "But what is this perpetual conflict between freedom and nature? What is the process of the always renewed nonreconciliation between the self-determination of spirit and external determination?" (Horowitz

2001:44). Given that what art is, is itself determined in large part by discourses external to it, its freedom is limited by the character of historical self-understanding. It can no longer live as it once did, in the pure creative act of the moment when it was not yet part of history, either one official or one simply temporal. Yes, art relives itself and its creation each time it encounters a new public as a quasi-subject, but it itself has to have been placed in the path of such a public, and this requires in almost all cases an element of artism of whatever sort. Yet at the same time it is not entirely beholden to what is external to it, for these social forces would ignore or neglect it to its nonexistence if the work had no further aesthetic potency. Thus art fails to be as it once was, but it never fails to transform what *we* once were into the new: "It is instead necessary to treat art's renewal of its commitment to failure as the story of the perpetual self-creation of life through nonreconciliation. It is necessary, in other words, to treat art as historical." (ibid.).

The aesthetic encounter understood is already part of a knowable biography. We must reflect on each experience to make a comprehensive narrative of our own being thrown in the world. We retain some semblance of existential shape, we are 'bodies in extension and motion,' but the dynamism of our form finds its most true vocation in the encounter that impels it to assume a new direction and a new shape. Existential movement is not identical to that temporal, and all the more unlike that physical. Transformations of being and of consciousness, although of more import the greater their cultural or social influence—modes of production or metaphysics, for instance, as perhaps the most forceful—do occur regularly to individuals. These are seldom noticeable beyond the confines of one's significant others or local workplaces, but nevertheless they exert a palpable influence in the

world, however limited. Given that change itself is the only kind of change which is permanent, what needs be reiterated here is that it very much matters what kind of memory we have of this passage, not of time, but of ourselves. No mere simile will do to inscribe the similitude of consciousness and time. Life is not a metaphor for anything but itself, and yet the same must be said of art, as neither art nor life can *be* one another or even be like another. They can only follow each other, and let the other *do* what it must do to be what it is: "The concept of 'dynamic form,' just like the primitive notions which underlie it, remains radically metaphorical. Metaphors can be enlightening, no less in philosophy than in poetry. But philosophizing that ends with a metaphor comes to a dead end." (Sircello 1972:255). We have already seen that what deadens the life of art, and the lives of specific works thereof, is the attempt by discursive artism to mimic art through the artful use of metaphor. As well, autismal efforts which mimic and refer to an original seek thus to become metaphors for it. The artwork is not merely cheapened or hackneyed by such an exposure to 'what it is like but is not,' but, like a living philosophy which must reflect life and the world as it is and not merely speak about the Logos, art is impaled by its pale imitators and commentators. Akin to the repetition, but also distraction, that is built into modern advertising, what we are supposed to focus upon is over-described, over-written in a manner that obfuscates. In advertising, this veiling has the effect of increasing our desire to possess the commodity, unlittered and in its pure state, that is, the state of itself before it needed external help to be sold to us. The autismal quality of graphic design and layout for advertising purposes cannot today be entirely separated from any discourse which speaks of art, precisely because one of its prime functions is to sell art to us as a cultural commodity. Cultural capital is its own aspect of bourgeois

prestige, related to but also relatively autonomous from mere material wealth. Indeed, they do not necessarily go hand in hand although as one sees an increase in wealth one often sees an increase in the fetish of cultural rather than instrumental items. What metaphor says to us here is that these items represent better versions of ourselves, and thus can enhance any archive with their status. Our displays will 'remember' better than those without these items, because we have increased our relative worth in the world and are ourselves now more worthy of memorial: "This last information, however, is co-extensive with the scene; it eludes signification insofar as the advertising nature of the image is essentially functional: to utter something is not necessarily to declare *I am speaking*, except in a deliberately reflexive systems such as literature." (Barthes 1977:35 [1964] italics the text's). Whatever the cause we wish to venerate by recalling it to ourselves through the use of objects as 'nature morte,' the little placards we attach to the displayed works of art make all of them into artifacts. The texts of autohagiography are at once historical in that they define our relationship to a self which is past and the world within which that self took hold of us, but also they commit the objects that serve as the phenomenical devices to the ground of a wider history. We say to ourselves, my narrative began and ended once again with the cinders of an idea, the idea of a better self and a more interesting world: "We should always be clear about what is involved in such a telling: it is an intrinsically inexhaustible process that can go on indefinitely. A storyteller who does not manage to give the impression that he could in principle continue his story is not a real storyteller at all." (Gadamer 1986:144 [1977]). This is what separates the teller from the story, and makes the personal possessive applied to the process in fact refer to the telling of the story and not the narrative itself, in the same way that

epic oral poetry might become associated with a early discursive label such as that 'Homeric.' The stuff of story exists beyond the one who relates it. He is merely a vehicle for the force of allegorical life that permeates the tale, for it is the metaphorical weight and self-identification with the characters and their adventures that allows the listener to discern a meaning which is on the way to self-understanding. Thus the story must communicate to us in a manner we can remember, and its ongoing nature and promise of yet further variants or encounters are the premise by which it speaks:

There is a sense of category in my collection of art objects, and this would include sound recordings and images. Of course there is little so-called 'original' art in this collection, as such items are unaffordable for most people. I tend to organize my things into narratives which tell me of the context of life I was in at the time. In terms of music, for example, I have many recordings which I have not listened to in years, and others which I might never listen to again, and yet I keep them — indeed, keep hold of them because the memories they incarnate still have a hold on me! (FTNA).

The narrative which is committed to the ground of previous experience does not lie dormant, waiting for life only through the careful exhumation of an archaeologist. It takes on a new subterranean life, which we enter into through both dream and daydream. The 'what if' and 'as if' quality of our encounters with these stories are similar in scope to those which we have with the work of art proper before it can become part of our experience as a self-conscious one. The conscientiousness of all historicising cannot exist before the exercises its transformative aesthetic on its public. The unerring privacy of the narratives by which we

resurrect past selves and overcome the sorrow of their loss is kindred with all myths that make that which lies beyond us as real as ourselves: "This means that when stories are told concerning the gods, the very form of transmission implies the moment of continuation—'and so forth'—which goes beyond what has already been said to something that still lies beyond it." (Gadamer 1986:144 [1977]). In this way the history of our own past displays a memory that is always pregnant with the meaning of a possible future, though we do not know exactly what such a future might mean or of what form it may take. To remember the past is to impregnate the present with a future. That our futures are not entirely our own in the same way as becomes our past when lensed through the personal museum of memento mori simply means that the transformative process by which art changes us must also be applied to the events we live through and by which we are also transformed: "Not only personal experience, but also the essential historical experience of our relation to the past: that is to say the experience of seeking to give meaning to our lives, of trying to understand the history of which we can become active agents." (Berger 1972:33). If we can accomplish this transformation, from the inert dust of primordial creation to the conscious flesh of living and dreaming being, we become as the artist, who speaks the voice of both transubstantiation and overcoming, for "... The poet [] has no past, but lives in a world that is new. As regards the past and the affairs of this world, he has realized absolute sublimation." (Bachelard 1964:169 [1958]). As such, the next exhibiting of a self which renders itself anew with each telling does not idly rest on the graves of previous shows, but revisits the displays of her life as a means of re-creation, and not as a form of recreation by itself. She does not approach the mounds of minded meaning with the spade of death, but with the telescope. The hillocks and hummocks of

what lie buried beneath our peering consciousness are there only to give us the better view of stars we hope will become nova: "The phenomenologist must follow the poet. The psychoanalyst is only interested in the negativity of sublimation." (ibid.).

It is not merely the self and its future that are waiting for us over and above these once green hills. The stuff of story as memorial remind us not so much of the passage of time as an objective or cosmic force, and not even of our subjective perception of this passing, which now suddenly and uncannily includes our own. It is the liminality that acts as the threshold between the cosmic and the personal that is recounted with still greater force. That is, it is also the passing and the passing on of the community and culture to which we belong, and which itself is ensconced in a mediative position between us and the wider universe where the strange and anonymous have their homes. It is through art, more than any other cultural creation, that we are made aware that human life is inextricably woven into the larger tapestry of human history: "In all past art, thus we can locate an implicit conception of generations as bound together through representational and affective practices. Succeeding generations were conceived as the bearers of the past in which the past imagined itself overcoming its finitude, and art was the sensuous vehicle of this transmission." (Horowitz 2001:13). The challenge of reproducing a culture is also already and always the challenge of making society anew, from the unmade clay of children and by the apprenticeship of the once unskilled hands of adults: "The making of art was a culture's way of making its future by tending its past, of receiving from its past a mandate and license to preserve that past and pass it on." (ibid.). The accelerated pace of social change in almost every aspect of world culture increases the stakes of this original and fundamental challenge. The world today says to us

that what we know now is *not* what we need to know next, and this is so for the first time in human history. If what we indeed know cannot necessarily be the basis of what needs be known, then an art which only preserves the past is of no use to us. Art must throw us forward, both into ourselves, into the hidden aspects of what we might become, and out of ourselves, into a new world which cannot be represented in the work of art alone. One might say that the character of the aesthetic encounter for moderns is now dominated by the need to predict its outcome, at least in the short term. One can always return to the display, the museums of the world will not be closed to us. But the future closes in on us with more force than a placid recollection of objects and purposes will bear. It is not that contemporary life presents an utterly new species of humanity to us—not quite yet, at any rate—but that it radically foreshadows the fate of humanity in its *accelerando*, in its *subito*. We now know the 'always' of a life where there is no hope of stasis, but also, and more disconcertingly, where what it means to stay the same is exactly what it means to be already dead: "We are always in this position. In our daily life we proceed constantly through the coexistence of past and future. The essence of what is called spirit lies in the ability to move within the horizon of an open future and an unrepeatable past." (Gadamer 1986:10 [1977]). Our 'spirit' must be seen as what lends itself to be changed, rather than what only preserves itself or conserves itself specifically against any kind of change. Yes there is trepidation here, and of course, also a sense of adventure. It is in this sense that both anxiety and aspiration have each other's best qualities as their own. Each inspires the other, each is its other's muse: "Mnemosyne, the muse of memory and recollective appropriation, rules here as the muse of spiritual freedom. The same activity of spirit finds expression in memory and recollection, which

incorporates the art of the past along with our own artistic tradition, as well as in recent daring experiments with their unprecedented deformation of form." (ibid.). In this way the more important movement that our changing reaction to history incurs is not that of either the preservation of the self through a vigilant memorial or even the archiving of past art forms within the forms of the new, but that the process of creation is ever begun anew in the light of what has transpired. No work of art stands alone, outside of both time and consciousness. At the same time, and in the same thought, art stands *for* memory, for those who can no longer speak their narration of the history through which they lived. That they are gone and that their death is the price for their continued, if collective, voice that resounds through their art suggests a kind of general martyrdom: "Art thus gives rise to the afterlife of sacrifice—which is to say history—by occupying the frontier between disciplinary culture and nature at which deathly freedom and the living dead pass restlessly over into one another. It sustains and recapitulates the loss of nature achieved by culture in order to transmit that loss to those who follow." (Horowitz 2001:46). 'Nature' is often seen as the martyr of culture, both through human activity in the world and at an increasing rate, but also and more personally, the 'nature' of what we were as non-cultured or pre-cultured beings in the womb and as infants. This can be overdone, as with parents who relish with their children the reappearance of their own romanticized innocence, but nevertheless there is a clear oblation to be made in pursuit of culture. And art, as the epitome of culture, magnifies and extends this sacrifice which in turn has the effect of making all of us restless, the living and the dead. We are inscribed as the arc of a motion which drives the emotion of a cultured consciousness which also knows what it gave up to become what it needed to be.

This memory too is held within the works with which we surround ourselves, and it too is a fundamental inheritance which causes the work of mourning to be held as a work of indebtedness.

Fortunately, what our kind of sentient intelligence is so skilled at being is the harbinger not of its own demise, but of its continuing return: "For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality of beginning to the most everyday actions. It even dominates memory." (Bachelard 1964:67 [1958]). It is this kind of knowing, which finds itself quite literally in the doings of the day, even if that day is lighted as a space of being or as containing within it the vehicles of aesthetic being, that understands the past as the opening act of the next exhibition. It is this recollection more than any other—that memory exists precisely because we have had to move on and that change is already and always upon us—that gives history any meaning at all, the meaning of all forward-looking. "Man is bound to this future of meaning, because he is himself real and as such becomes himself by making the real emerge and by participating in the adventure of being." (Dufrenne 1973:552 [1953]). Even the sudden partition of the world into what once was 'nature itself' and the new culture of the social contract vetted through an aesthetic consciousness, becomes the harbinger of a new nature—one that we both are a part of through organismic evolution, and are apart from through the recent fruits (their risk and promise included) of this self-same evolution transformed by culture. This new quality of being human, so far as we know unique to us and to our knowing, requires of us that we remember specifically the most human and perhaps humane aspects of ourselves through the use of art: "Just as art is the way in which this affective quality appears in order to constitute both the world and man, so nature and man possess a similar need of art. Through art, man gains his being, while at the same time nature acquires its

meaning." (ibid.). We do not know what will be displayed by us and for us in the exhibits of being to come, just as Weber famously though bitterly noted that we do not know who will live to see these displays, and the form in which they will have to take in order to counter the iron cage of 'mechanized petrification.'

The memory of our experiences of our own exhibitions past will no doubt guide us here. But it would be premature, and perhaps even a kind of ethical error, to assume that in their aspect of failure—to project longitudinally an ideal self to and in the world, or to preserve the countenance of our best actions many of which now supposedly lie only amidst the detritus of autobiographies—that failure is correspondingly the only thing they recall for us. The use of art in making a personal past, as well as making the past of history into a personification, a 'history in which we become agents,' accrues to itself more than a memorial function. It also recreates its own self-understanding. Art in this guise knows itself again to be not only what it once was—the transformer being who turns mere humans into other forms of being in the world, even if momentarily—but that this is what it always was and always will be: For "Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is." (Dewey 1980:18 [1934]).

Chapter 3.

The Project of Placing Oneself in the World of Art

Our kind of consciousness in this way dictates what kind of world we might participate in. The problem of other possible worlds, kindred to the problem of other minds apparently as stubbornly real as my own, is the manifest destiny of any consciousness that would be what it desires to be in the world, and not merely what it may be to oneself. The projection of ourselves into the world through the use of art mimics not the works of art, but the work of the artist. It is a mind that desires control over matter, but also a mind that desires to matter, to have a significance, as well as a mind that knows that it might not, after all matter to anyone.

The mind is the tool of culture. Working on a nature which is no longer our own reminds us that what the world is must be of our own contrivance in order to be regained as our own. This means, above all, that we must place ourselves within the world, rather than only relying upon our thrownness into the world. The artist not only appears to do just that with aplomb, she also seems thereby to create new worlds, which is exactly what we might wish to do through the use of art as self-projection. Apart from the ego aggrandizement this may occasion, there is the more important sense that the world might not be so stringently immutable after all, and that the weight of history is not only dead, but perhaps because of its very demise—the loss of what it was and what it had to have been—it can be reanimated and made into something quite different, something more suitable for humans who live on under its shadows.

This 'as if' quality to our relationship with an anonymous and distanced nature has, over the course of our evolution, become much more a reality than it must have been during the genesis of the social contract. And it was precisely through the ritual use of non-necessary items of culture, the first art forms, that nature began to become culture hypostasized. If these are forms rather than genres, and if they can also express not only themselves, but ourselves through them then, akin to personal identity, all of these merge with one another to form a singular whole.

There is thus an expectation that we, as we mature, mature precisely by following a rubric of normative phases, with more or less precise intervals, in order to construct that very identity we might so proudly call our own. This is merely another manifestation of the paradox of social life, that the community is composed of individuals striving, in part, to distinguish themselves both in, but also from, the larger group. To move yet further from this kind of reproductive premise, the person who wishes for art to become his own must imagine that he can also live a new life which through art, amongst other things, throws his project away from the circle of community in some more radical manner. Like the artist, the subjective 'consumer' of art needs first to more fully understand her life situation. What roles do I play? To whom am I responsible other than myself? Will this or that work of art affirm what the socius expects of me, or will it bring forth into the light an unexpected turn of character? What must I do to take apart the life I now lead, or at least, augment it in a manner unforeseen? We must know ourselves, perhaps ironically, as well as our place within society, in order to step away from such a complex of roles. If the use of art in the construction of a truly personal identity mimics not the art, but the role of the artist and his imaginative

processes, then the works of art that come into our lives are taken by us to be 'as if' they are our own creation. In fact, there is an originality to our collections, as the group or contiguity of objects, texts, and sounds is likely to be more or less unique—pending social class restrictions and space limits in domiciles—in the sense that we may well ask who else has this lot together as I do? Of course, there is always the danger that the person become a kind of autist, collecting together all of the genres which seem to have a common destiny, or are related to one another through historical lineages set out by the discourses of artism. It is a narrow and highly individuated pathway that the regular person hopes to navigate then between the Scylla of mimicry and the Charybdis of obeisance, the one attempting to copy the art, the other to copy the knowledge about it. Even if art remains an object in the worlds of objects, it is also a subject in the world of subjects, not only as a conversation piece, by which we gradually expose ourselves to our guests—both in the literal sense of a visitor being surprised that we own a copy of this or that—but ultimately as an extension of our subjectivity into the world, just as it originally had the affect of an increase of being in the world in general. Thus it has performed the desired for self-projection.

The only error that can sabotage this happy amalgam of desire and art is that we begin to imagine that 'our' art functions in this way for us alone, and further, because we alone are worthy of such a function. That is, we can make the works of art into mere functionaries for our august presence, which otherwise would have been muted by the mundane artifacts of necessary existence. The project of mere ego then, cannot superimpose itself on the thrownness of a projection, lest it carry it away into a kind of scene ironically homologous to the social scene we originally wished to vacate. Rather we must try to pay as little heed to the previous

prejudice of what we wished to be in social life, in order to understand more fully the experience of the aesthetic world as part of our lives. We must, in other words, use art as a means of attaining some kind of 'effective historical consciousness,' which knows history to be both inertia—but through an analysis akin to philosophical reflection—and as a being which makes its own history in the face of tradition, what has been called an 'unhearing historicity' (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1964:189 [1961]). Any maturation of being would follow such contours, though each of us at the same time would extend the undulations of these lines. In fact, the process of art's creation, whatever we may think of the personality of the artist, is the immediate kindred with all human faculties which reach into the world and alter its course. If the lineage of each version of the human claim to be beyond nature is traced back upon itself, as it were, it seems that art stands apart from other aspects of culture, because it speaks immanently to what we imagine to be the nature of humanity. This is an error of sorts, as art is not a product of nature, nor does it necessarily present to us a universal nature of humanity, as it is also a product of history and the culture of this or that region.

The interpretation of art, necessary first in order to make sure that it is this or that work that conforms to my expectations of projection back into the world at large, of course impinges upon and at the same time opens up the process of self-recognition and then self-understanding in all areas of existence: "Art will last long after I am gone, indeed, long after those who brought it into the world and gave it its particular historical place, as a genre or a reflection of their society, and that fact is of great inspiration for me." (FTNA). Of course, there still must be an 'audience' for all of this tapestry of archeological accoutrement—we must recognize ourselves as beings with a specific past, and that that past be

relevant in some manner to how we continue to live at present. It is not, at length, only a flight of fancy that allows us to depart from the routine, but a true extension of our beings into a little bit of the world which is originally constructed only by the forms of mundane life and the expectations of the socius. Escapism which does not elevate us is of a different content entirely. The borrowing of status with the express purpose of social climbing finds its way into the self-projection of the collecting of art, but it is truncated and usually exposed for what it is, because after all, these items are not the 'real' objects of art, but only mass-produced copies thereof. Expressing oneself rather does not involve the desire for social status, but indeed the aspiration to make a distinction between what one truly thinks of oneself and the status one *already* has in the community at large. Instead of a collection of artworks, which affirm our perceived abilities and personality, we situate around us something which initiates a crisis in others' understanding of ourselves, something which 'punctuates the streams of living' (cf. Dewey 1980:7 [1934]). In doing so, we set up a kind of auto-obduracy that fosters the sense that we have to struggle against social norms or even laws to assert an individuated consciousness. Art, or at least copies thereof, is usually both a licit and an inexpensive manner of doing so.

Yet while the image, original or no, does not abscond with the truth of things, it also is not this truth, and knows it. We also have to come to know this, and it is an error of both autistry and artism, as we have already seen, to deny it. This error sometimes infiltrates the sensibilities of the self who projects, simply because this projection also belies our true significance in social relations. *We become larger than life through the extension of being that art provides life.* We must be critical of this aggrandizement, and aware that what we seek to be manifest in the world at large must

become part of that which others will not merely adopt in response to our attempts to aggrandize oneself, but as a manner in which they likewise can reach their own authentic apogees. We might wish to express ourselves, and plan projects of action through phantasm, but it is the very personal use of works of art which give reality to the daydream, as they have been created from a vision which is also not of this world of things, but of the 'as if' quality of all beings in the world of forms. We ask ourselves not what we have been or even what we are, but what we would ideally be, what *form*, in other words, would we take as the perfected 'me.' Is this form available in the imagery of art, or in the cumulative effect of a set of objects, texts, and sounds, which, though they may be historically distant from one another, have come together in my life?

Even so, we still cannot be sure that what has taken shape through our interests really does express ourselves in the desired manner. Part of this problem involves the subjectivity of personal form—we are never quite the same day to day and thus are always adding to our collection of projected visions, or changing our interpretation of them as some fall away and others become more prominent—but beyond this there is the ever-present difference between intent, thought, and action, which affects the artist as much as it does any acolyte of the arts. How then can we be more sure of ourselves as both a thing in the world but also as a consciousness which includes the world but does not let it completely engulf us? What is the means by which objectivity is attained and we can know our own place as a projected self that takes its own place amongst works which already have expressed, not only whatever it is they are said to possess as being a work of art and a vehicle for aesthetic consciousness, but their objective status as meaningful things?

That they have attained this status sometimes well before we have even existed is evidence enough that we are not the arbiters of their ultimate meaning. They are, first and foremost, cultural objects, and our personal use of them is testament to their enduring power. In other words, we seek also, through throwing our projects, to become part of the very culture which has so thrown us without our consent. We seek to give consent to the original arc, to tell both ourselves and the world that this is our path after all, and should or would be no other, and no other's. We are participating in a less-subjective form of being, and that is also our goal—to be counted amongst the objective facts of human existence and not merely be counted by them. It is self-representation as a meaningful being within a cultural framework that we try to master. This representation through artful projection, through the artifice of numbering ourselves amidst the biographical accumulation of aesthetic objects which somehow 'represent' us, necessitates the leaving behind of the self of subjective stature, the feeling being which only feels itself to be worthy of itself, rather than an objective figure, a presence on the horizon of the present day. So, "If we wish to understand representation in the widest sense of the term, we must say that there is representation whenever the aesthetic object invites us to leave the immediacy of the sensuous and proposes a meaning in terms of which the sensuous is only a means and essentially unimportant." (Dufrenne 1973:312 [1953]). Like all forms of desire, the value and ends by which they assure their relevance must always take precedence. The artist, as we have seen, makes the vain desire of mimesis an end in itself, and artism constructs a desireful discourse of possession, akin to a pornography.

Living on as a mere habit within the decorative interiors of commodity or copy is not an option for a humane consciousness.

Speaking of Cezanne as a specific example, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the artist in general "... suspends these habits of thought and reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself." (ibid.). If we do not practice this 'sociological reduction,' we risk making inhuman not merely the structures of the life-world, but all those who in fact are 'installed' within it, including ourselves. It is fittingly ironic that within the process of understanding reflectively these supports and architectures of daily life, from which art exhorts a certain nobility and to which it directs its critique, we must also understand that art is as well a social construct, differing little from any other human endeavour which comes precisely out of that everydayness which the subjective collector wishes to rise above. The fact that we collect objects—images, sounds, and texts—and that these are often cheaply made and inexpensive to purchase, is itself a support role for the arts. There is, in other words, a market for art which extends far beyond the vaunted commodity market of original works or command performances. It is the subjective collector, with her own purposes and personal stakes, including that of self-projection, who makes up the vast bulk of any art market. In collecting and then projecting, we recycle artworks on a massive scale, hoping to make them do our bidding while also hopefully being open to the transformation that they work upon us. It is an exercise in introspection with a view to appearances. It is a rehabilitation of the depth-traces of the spirit with the broad swath of the social horizon as its limit but also its goal. This is why we remain in the same world even when we reduce it to ourselves. This is why art in particular can play such an important role in subjectivity in general.

The artist's project is that of a phantasm, in the sense of Schutz's 'projects of action.' There is a vision and an ideal, but

there is also the under-planned spontaneity and over-planned reaction to the unforeseen. Projection through art, unlike in psychoanalysis, involves no surrogate other as another human being. The artful projection of the subject desirous of difference, both to himself and to the world of the day to day, is born of and is borne on the sense that we should be more than we are at present, that we might even be fated for more because, after all, it is we who have seen the light of these works of art and have brought them together in a more or less unique manner. The question of my destiny in the forms of the everyday world cannot be answered, and is often never broached. Hence this world must be bracketed by the analytic of the aesthetic realm, and the encounters we have with works of art hailing from this eidetically charged sensuality push us to encounter ourselves as a work of quasi-art. This is not so in the grandiose sense of a delusion, but in the sense complementary to the manner in which the art object is also a quasi-subject. We cannot rely on the thrown project as a guarantor of self-projection. We rather must peer upwards along that arc, no matter the possible threat and grimace of the future.

One of those questions is perennially the problem of the other to self, even if he or she be another 'one of us': "What is given to both the acting self and the interpreting observer is not only the single meaningful act and the context or configuration of meaning to which it belongs but the whole social world to fully differentiated perspectives. Only through this insight can one understand how the other self is grasped as an ideal type..." (Schutz 1967:8-9 [1932]). The sense that we wish to project ourselves into the world as more idealized versions of selfhood, is taken directly from the sense that we understand already and always to be the case regarding how the world is projected—'re-presented,' or better still, 're-presented'—through the work of art.

Indeed, the encounter with the other, radically altering or confirming, requires of us that we see the world as the artist sees it, with vision confronting risk: "The joy of art lies in its showing how something takes on meaning—not by referring to already established and acquired ideas but by the temporal or spatial arrangement of elements." (Merleau-Ponty 1964:58 [1948]). Hence both the encounter with the other human and the work of art requires a leap of faith concerning otherness in general. We now place ourselves in the hermeneutic light of doubt, which does not cast a shadow fully upon previous prejudice, but which regards it as a penumbra to the new source of lighted being: "Art exposes the depth of human feeling which lies beneath the surface of what is already too apparent by other means. There is always a silver lining, as it were and thus art makes us more fully human, closer to the totality of being to which we already belong and yet often lose sight of." (FTNA). Whatever we have already experienced, whatever has made it to the level of consciousness—deeper or more transparent pending context—that makes us what we are and, indeed, makes us able to see what we are at least in part, becomes symbolic of our being. These symbols must then become as signs if we are to successfully project our beings into the range of vision that others occupy. Music, art, and literature are already capable of crossing the thresholds that lead to radical otherness.

Art does reflect life more so than the other way around only in the sense that it typifies, idealizes, or extends the reach of worldly life into the other world. This world is not only the world of others to self, but also that otherwise than being-in-the-world-as-it-is. We are artists writ small in the world of beings, but we know that from this self-same world the artist of the other world emerges. The modification of the world of beings by the irruptive presence of the other world of both otherness and of communion

creates a new onto-topology. Each of us attains a certain level of technical prowess, converging on mastery, regarding the norms and forms of social life. We begin to know how to live, but also, we begin to know how we ourselves need to live. We are all made from the material of human sociality, but we take on a form that is specific to the arc of the thrown and being-thrown projects we accrue to ourselves. The details of knowing one's culture as oneself are still the details of the technician of living. In the light of the Being of art, we are called upon to make something more of these details, of the stocks of knowledge at hand that also fill our hands with the history of what is not our own, for even history lived has also the dead hand within it.

Yet just because we are able to project an ideal image of ourselves into the world, and thus have part of that world mirror our presence in a more intimate manner, does not mean that sooner or later this mirror shatters, and we are forced to become once again part of the jagged surfaces of anonymity. We may well feel, after repeated experiences of this worldly rejection, that it would be better to conserve only the private museum, dedicated to ourselves, but more so, to the person that only we know we are or should be. This person is, of course, available to us only through the other, but we might imagine that this otherness can be satisfied through the presence of works of art and not others as real human beings. After all, we might tell ourselves, the creators of these works are the best of the others, and other persons per se like myself or no, are unworthy of my efforts to communicate my best self. In taking this road, however, we make of ourselves at best an ironist, perhaps a nihilist and a cynic, and the art that now surrounds us takes a cynical turn: "In ironic art, every aspiration mocks itself by coming to nothing, thus apparently teaching the lesson of the pointlessness of striving—the ironic artist thus

propels himself backward into the safe position of spectator of his own insincere efforts to make art." (Horowitz 2001:80). Irony, in principle, is not above its own critique. Self-satire is often characteristic of self-understanding. But we must know the intent of the auto-critique, as well as its ends. If one is self-deprecatory about one's foibles, or even flaws, without the sense that these can or should be improved upon, if one has, by virtue of satire, shown us that one has 'given up' the struggle against his own weaknesses of character, or is even mockingly celebratory of them by saying to the world 'what of it?', then we are no further along in our pursuit of authentic projection in, or even interaction with, the world: "The ironic artist, rather than fulfilling the traditional ironic goal of self-dissimulation, refuses to dissimulate himself, preferring to watch the spectacle of the world's self-annihilation." (ibid.). We may well be drawn to artists of this type, if we adopt their attitude as our own vantage point. Moreover, this kind of view is convenient for anyone who distrusts her own ability to be herself with others and within the world, or thinks that 'one's own self' is even less than an other equally truthful mask of social role, but rather is somehow the mask that masks the fact we are very much a panoply of well or badly played role attributes, and that this is in fact a major source of authenticity within the social world: "The ironist sees the deep truth that art is a preserve of that very slight slippage between the world as it is and the world as it may be, and for that reason alone exterminates it lest it disturb his genial indifference." (ibid.). There is no other world of the possible for the cynic, and the world that remains tends to be but a remainder of a previously better world, forever lost, and is thus also a reminder of the generally decayed state of things, including himself. Art itself becomes a sign of decay—as the Nazis pointed at modern art—and the person who continues to produce art as if it were the potent life-giving source

of extended beingness is himself a dissimulator, not an artist but a con artist.

The experience of one's mirrored projection shattering suggests to the newly embittered self that the world cannot be intimate or authentic, and is but an abstraction. As well, those who populate it, my contemporaries, are but strung-out puppets in a theater of semi-consciousness. The ironist would like to pull the strings himself and make others dance to his tune, if he has one, but failing this underscores the absolute anonymity of the world. It will not even respond to our cynicism, let alone our love. The world in fact contradicts our very presence in it, and we cannot make it our own because it does not contain us in the first place. The world is thus populated with abstractions, and we can then abstract ourselves from it. We are obsessed about the product, the work of art, and not its original processes, which come from life itself and the life of the world. We cannot afford to understand art in its self-understanding, because this would inevitably draw us back into the world from which we have abstracted ourselves. The difference between abstraction and interaction is the same between any product and any process. The world must be worked in so that we can live in the world. There is no difference between living and working in this sense. One cannot take ourselves as an abstract or finished product, subject to no further alteration in meaning stemming from the ever new and conflicting polysemous interpretation of all human correspondences, and place it in an equally static world. At the same time, the problem of the shattered mirror of self in the world suggests a solution, or at least, a truth, because the tain of this kind of mirror is the same as that of the world at large. What holds me together as an image so also holds the world-image. We may indeed fall into the error of excerpted abstraction or even cynicism because the things we have used to

construct the mirror at first are also images which seem to make static and timeless works of art from all over the spectrum of human place and history. One may imagine that the interpretation of a work of art that lends credence to the subjective mission of self-projection was indeed the generally agreed upon discursive meaning or yet even the 'original' meaning of the artist's intent. In this way, we can manufacture the pretense of not only knowing the art better, because it is 'our art' and reflects a profound aspect of our self-perception, but that such and such works of art no longer can function as works unless *our* meaning is part of their standard interpretive repertory.

Those aspects of selfhood that we wish were larger than our own lives—the body, the mind, the spirit perhaps, but at least our opinions, tastes, and sense of propriety—take in a disproportionate grotesquerie far outweighing their objective circumstances or even their relative function in our biographies. 'Self-image,' that ironic and even paradoxical idea, provides now the most rapid route to self-projection, the most convenient way to step onto the world's social stage and make others take notice. We remain aware, of course, that what we turn ourselves into is also an image, whatever fantasy we may encourage about the meaning of our new act. This awareness comes from the inability to keep a continuous image extant throughout even the daily cycle of social role contexts. We may have a series of images associated with a series of contiguous or even overlapping roles, but the differences amongst them are too transparent for even the dullest of us to overlook. We begin to wonder, at length, about the sincerity, or even the existence, of plausible meaningfulness that might have accrued to these performances. There may be an augmentation of our faculties which gives the appearance of an extension of being, the kind of thing we seek to imitate from our experience of the aesthetic, but

the idea that what is essentially subjective can be communicated in toto by transforming it into an object in the world is at best naive, and defeats the insight of the source experiences.

That this is a calculated defeat on the side of institutional promoters of the image for the sake of itself is undeniable. But that we ourselves, as individual human beings, should become the walking and driving billboards for subjective skill cannot be countenanced by any serious pilgrim. The mirror of self-projection is wrecked not by being in the world and interacting with others, but by attempting to explain oneself in terms of a symbology which cannot become part of the cultural discourse because it has already been either co-opted, or created, by a campaign which has drastically different motives: "As long as art is the beauty parlor of civilization, neither art nor civilization is secure." (Dewey 1980:344 [1934]). What passes for culture today suggests to us that our subjectivity needs become a *subjectitude*, in which we subject ourselves to the wishes of either fashion either as models or as stagehands, those who stand off to the side of the action but who work the lights and rig other effects.

The shattered mirror of self-projection calls the subjectivity of the thrown project into question. But why should art as well not be subject to thrownness, given that once in the world apart from its creator, it takes on a life of its own that is not at all fully identifiable with the biography of this or that artist, or even the culture of this or that historical period? There is no single meaning to the work of art, even if meanings drawn from it be singular. There is also no single meaning to a life lived. Could not the fragments of the mirror of aesthetic selfhood be telling us something profound, and not merely reflecting a failure or an impasse regarding our desires for a greater public? Just as we hope to make an original assemblage of works of art to bring about the

transformative image of ourselves in the world and have people notice and believe it, we also in our very lives necessarily bring together in an original manner that which by itself is of someone or something else. The world is not our own in the same way that we have not made the history that first made us. Rather, we construct our own worlds, the closer they are to our subjective vision the less fragmentary, given the rationality of the natural attitude or even the rationalizations of various technical and bureaucratic outlooks. The source of our particular collection of the unoriginal or the previously apparent is our sense of playfulness, which in perhaps a more stereotyped form, mimics that of the artist. Recreation is re-creative, even if open to suggestion from fashion and commodity. There is no necessity for what we take into our personal museums to dictate in any final manner how it is to be used or interpreted. Even if whatever balance that is established by ourselves through the interaction and intersubjectivity of works of art in our lives is only temporary, it will create the right moment for the self image to project itself into the world at large. We take the meanings available to us in our culture and history and attempt to make them our own.

At the same time, however, we are not so naive that we forget about our own desires, so that we do not make use of the works that surround us as devices assembled specifically for the task at hand. Projection is a human activity in the sense that it is self-activism, as if we ourselves were the center of a social movement, as if all personal issues were also political in only a subjective manner instead of being properly political as part of a social movement or as a manifestation of some historical situation which has been defined as a social problem: "Art of course is used in such a variety of human circumstances, as a palette of slogans for revolutionaries, as a pantheon of icons for the status quo, and

the like. One must abstract the works of art from their social cause in order for them to become one's own" (FTA). Once the works of art are collected around us in a manner befitting our desire and our understanding of what we wish to become in the eyes of the world, it can no longer suspend the world in an extension of its being. Art then becomes part of the program, as it were, and its newly subjective programmatic use will redefine its relationship to not only other objects in the world but also to the world of art from which it had sprung.

It matters not whether the works co-opted in this manner are 'timeless' or fashionable in that our new use of them changes their own trajectories, but it does make a difference in the status we might borrow from them over the long term. If we too wish to be here for 'more than a day,' then we might well stockpile works which have not been eroded by the shifting and windblown sands of artism, or which have not been too fully immersed in the mimetic desires of the autist. The mirror, once constructed as the vehicle of self-projection will indeed reflect the amount of self-reflection involved in its making, and so it cannot appear to have been too easily or readily made.

Like the autist, the consumer or collector of the present must bank on the notion that some of what is fashionable will yet have an ongoing presence, or will even join the ranks of either what artism understands to be worthy of being added to an aesthetic discourse or that the work 'itself' becomes part of a recognized life's work of an artist.

A further risk presents itself in collecting the potential art of the present, aside from fashion and politics, and this is, ironically, that the works of the day need be constructed as physical objects, and cannot immediately make the leap to images

and copies that are usually consumed and collected by the person searching for a more permanent mortality. In its subjection to becoming part of history, it also renders up an objection to history as it has been seen. The projectionist is hoping then, that what is for now only of the present will fix itself in history as well as freezing that part of the present which is deemed worth preserving. We have already seen that the most salient variable in the subjective valuation of art is that it portrays that which cannot come again. The ethical memory requires aesthetic mnemonic.

We may get the sense that current works have an historical potential because they often appear to us to be already existing in a larger-than-life setting, due often either to their mass market status or their utter marginality. Thus they may also seem to inhabit a time out of time. Given that "... all performance as an act of communication is based upon a series of events in the outer world [] it can be said that the social relationship between performer and listener is founded upon the common experience of living simultaneously in several dimensions of time." (Schutz 1967:175 [1951]). Whether the work affirms the times, is representative of what 'everyone knows' and thus cannot not be popular, or whether it rejects its own time with apparent radicality, the currency of the work is hypertrophic, resting above the crowd that either lingers in the glow of glamour or malingers in the acid of stigmata. On the one hand, the hypertrophy is constructed by a mass market which claims, counter to any kind of discursive or critical evidence, that such and such a work is 'destined to become great.' The unrecognizable work, on the other hand, rests its hypertrophic claim on its very rejection of the current state of affairs, heralding its kinship alliance with the always and already revolutionary lineage of all 'true art.'

Yet perhaps the most salient characteristic of the art of desire is the sense we must have of already being able to have, that is, we must know that we have had a past that holds the present within it, predicts, predicates it, and to a certain extent, presupposes it. While copies of images, texts, and aggregations of sounds in music can evoke a memory of this sort, it still has a phantasmagorical quality. We have already seen how photographic images, most especially those in which we appear as part of the receded landscape of personal history, give us the perhaps ironic sense that we are enduring and that we thus have a claim on the future, given that we have traversed the temporalities necessary to link what is now past with what we are at present. It is the portrait photograph beyond other images which pursues this function, as if we can hold ourselves aloof to the passage of time and even to our own experience of it (cf. Horowitz 2001:142ff). It is another manner in which the art object, or objects which we seek in their becoming art an artful manner of self-projection, hallows itself as the quasi-subject of objectivity. Our projected self-image also desires that same quality, to be the kind of subject which has the immobility of the object, to be larger than its own life could endure. Yet at the same time we must face the experiential fact, also a part of the quasi-subjectivity of our historical self-understanding, that the face in the mirror is not truly our own. It has been obverted, flipped over by our desire to be more than the subject that we are.

So the question that poses itself at this juncture is: are the memories of what I have been the shadows of life, following my living form, waxing and waning with the course of daylight—which itself has its own objectifying shadows—and thus any projection of myself into the world will carry with it an idealized penumbra of 'what should have been,' or, am I myself the shadow

of my own history? "I often collect images of art works that seem to symbolize my own biographical moment. These otherwise would become distant memories, and I want them to continue as if they had never passed away from me. They should rather follow me like 'the wanderer and his shadows'." (FTNA).

These departures from the reality of both the human being as conditional upon its social and historical contexts, and also this being as conditioned profoundly by its temporary nature as both subject and object, was made possible by specific artistic genres. This is likely the most transparent reason why we still look to art first and foremost as the means of personal transformation and projection. In order to move from the shadowy interiority of a being containing a manifold heart to an object in the world, observable and valuable as a thing in itself, it was necessary for the arts to undergo an objectifying transformation. The rest of the interiority that could not at first be captured in the externalizing view of a graphic image was made more of a mystery than as it was originally conceptualized. Psyche, animus, spirit or soul all had their origins in the finite but recirculating pool of Being which, as the newly dead passed on to it, could supply the newly born with their life force. Thus the continuation of human consciousness was assured. There was hence a symbiosis between the living and the dead. As social formations became more organic, the life force of humanity gained an internal complexity, and also participated in the new social hierarchies writ into the other-world.

It is no mystery that historical concepts change over time given the dynamic of the history of the world at large. We may use art to project ourselves into that world, but even in the relatively short duration of a human lifetime the elements of our personal collections of objects of self-leverage will shift their theme and focus, coming more or less into line with previous regimes of both

taste but also of Culture. In other words, we adapt as concepts adapt, and it would likely be an ad hoc response as to whether one follows the other. Yet this idea of change is also a recent one, and given its accelerated pace, a more noticeable transformative variable the more recently we examine our own history. Life swirls around us, rushing by, eddying at points, but still keenly searching for the outlets which flow and run along. We too are hurtling down these currents, and what is current amongst them is but worthy of a glance. What is immediately lost in the rippled waters is a single focus that can see transparently what lies at the bottom of our culture and our being.

Research participants often claimed that art was not merely a part of life but would make that very life more like art itself: "I feel that the presence of art is necessary for us to survive in our fullest humanity. The human project has its details, certainly, but it must also have its themes. We cannot live in the midst of an auto-ethnography, paying attention only to the minuteness of how we live as a people. Art transcends the mundane life by making it into a work like itself." (FTNA). Further, there was also a strong sense that the very definition of a human life, if configured with the contour lines of an art or the arts, would result in something higher or better, even more evolved. "Art has given to me the person that I am. There has been no time I can recall that has been without the improvisations of childish drawing, writing, or acting and playing music which over time, became the more artful performances of the projection of myself into the world, thereby altering both that world and myself within it" (FTA).

The mirror of self-projection, reflective only when what surfaces the tain is constructed, and a reflection only of an idealized or even hypostasized self can also piece itself together. Not exactly 'again,' as it were, because what is reconstructed is not

a resurrection, not a second coming of the glass that lenses beings into some import of Being, but a different and more knowing surface that is now aware not merely of its own fragility and the cost of 'being together'—quite literally, the *mitsein* of the socius and its entrapment of that of intimacy, its threat against authenticity—but also its singularity. In this awareness, might it not seek to become aloof to the singular form?

In its original failure, the projection of the self through others' works of art in itself becomes a kind of artwork, as it replaces a mere image collated and confined by the subjectivity of only experience and is thrust down upon the experiences of others and the limits of social institutions. It is, in other words, a true expression of the living lot of ourselves. After all, "An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which have been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved ..." (Berger 1972: 9-10). In this sense, the images, texts and sounds with which we surround ourselves, hoping that they will grant to us a little of their relative immortality, are now no longer what they themselves were. They are residents of a new time and place. This time is our time, such a place is our own existential space, and now, we ask of them and then of ourselves, can they do our bidding, or must we bend to their collective transformative powers? Perhaps, in amassing this bold new set of cultural objects, though the single items within it not be new, we are saying to ourselves, aside from all that has been said above concerning our cultural insignificances, that we are also, in the end, only a work that needs other works to be complete and new; not a work of art, but that of life. We collect bits and pieces of what we see as ourselves. These items are already mirrors for us, and their sheer contiguity constructs the mirror of self-projection. The project of

selfhood as an aesthetic project is therefore 'only' the work of choosing amongst objects and forsaking their dominant property and contractual relations. Art is the only cultural realm which both has the highest sanction of 'the valued' in society without usually having very much of the sanction of status and wealth in that same society. As such, it occupies the oddly misshapen zone between religion and science, the former having little of either kind of sanction, modern cultural validity or material value, and the latter having potentially both kinds. It is an unenviable position. With no direct competition, art has thus been able to extend itself in various directions, and includes a bewildering menagerie of objects in the world. The forms that modern art take, including the collections of images of ancient art in our residences, are the takings of a globally aware society which, though its awareness is specific and also repressed, no longer disdains the strange simply because it is not 'what one is used to.' Rather, we often seek the strange, the very stranger in ourselves and in others, in order to project what others cannot expect of us. We become not larger than life, but only larger than the life we once led without the extension of being the aesthetic encounter with this new world of objects projects back into our lives. What is present is the great bulk of culture, though it be the tip of an iceberg, and only the hubris of a technique or the pettiness of a technicality can offer itself up as the oblique objection to what we have been. It is not any object that impinges on my private space, in which I must negotiate or move around in order to live, "It is the sensuous itself which is massive ..." (Dufrenne 1973:226 [1953]). It is this sensuousness that obtrudes, exuding an other to self which the usual run of the days fails to recognize, and, in collecting works of art in their myriad form and image, that I now must take into myself as the new reflective surface and standard.

This is, in fact, a new form of publicity, in that it makes public a new form of subjectivity and it posits the 'sale' of a new object. To be solid, to cohere and make sense in the sensate of the objective is to adhere to both the standard of reflection that the art work demands of us as well as to avoid being only a surface. This public face must show itself inside out, reveal its depths of feeling and profundity in the manner art is said to. The immediate danger of all forms of publicity is, of course, that it partakes in meaning only insofar as its value lies in cumulative effect of the works it rests upon. The status of our public self projected through an amalgam of art forms and works then would only place our own being within the vicarious hierarchy which is attached by our subjection to the object to the commodity and its primary status.

Unlike mere commodity fetishism however, the acquisitive means in self-projection occurs before the end, and is not an end in itself. The problem is obviated but not entirely resolved, as part of desire to become as art has come to mean being not only in the presence of art but to be, as far as possible, an artistic presence without becoming an artist proper, shades itself into a fetishism of the self as object. We once again object to ourselves as we stand. We wish to become both adorned and adored. In doing so, we internalize the fetish of the commodity more intimately, and we do so in order to sacrifice meaning in the cause of what can be the more solid. If what we wish to participate in is a recreation of the moment of creation, a new origin of both ourselves into the world and of the perception of that very world when it turns to us—now that it can turn to us as an object which is also a quasi-subject, just like an artwork—then we cannot at all afford to merely transpose our self as image or object into the ruling relations of the commodity and its hierarchies.

Instead of mimicking those who do not aspire to be more than their contiguity with objects—we can participate more or less fully in the status game of the commodity if only we have wealth—there is a sense that at both ends of the social class spectrum one finds the outliers practicing a form of being-without. At the near end, the end which is near to the ground of mortality, we find the would-be artist, the projectionist, using the image-copies of artworks to effect the process we have already described above. At the far end, elites collect actual art objects and artifacts to project a status superior to all those associated with only the mass-produced objects, no matter how dearly bought. It is the middle classes which tend to keep the fetish of the industrial commodities going. The marginal classes cannot afford them, and the elites must surpass them. One might at first glance shun both attempts, though not in favor of the common or normative path, only because they seem to herald only the innovation of Merton, which agrees with the dominant goals but rejects their means because of lack of opportunity or the presence of the influence of structural 'life-chances' variables in their lives for those marginal, or that the very presence of these variables in super-abundance has made their effects otiose for those elite. But there is something we can learn from both attempts at clearing a new space of being in the face of the being of the commodity. They both point to the value of art as a means to transcend the mundane. The elites possess the 'real thing' and the marginals the copy, but the presence of the work of art in its most authentic form is present for both. The image, texts, or sounds transfigure us no matter their media, setting, living presence or recording, pulp paper or cloth binding, print or oil, plastic or marble. The menagerie of secondary media does not take away the transformative power of the work. The aesthetic encounter may still occur. That it does recur in our lives

the more we accumulate for the sake of the new experience first and the projected status of the quasi-subject later on, if at all, is testament to the way in which our imagination can outrun the social limits that the mind has learned, and to which the heart may be committed. It also reminds us that our commitment to such things in no way precludes our change of feeling towards them, in the same way that our collections of works of art, our personal museums, libraries and galleries, concert-halls and studios will witness a serial presence of the sought after and the cherished. In this way, the archive becomes the reliquary once again.

Finally there is, as with all things which involve us in a sacred enterprise the ends of which cannot be known beforehand, a leap of faith that transports us within reach of this new horizon of being. We hope that it will also become the vehicle for the cleaving of Being back into the world of diffuse natures and ambiguous purpose. Just as we cannot alone project our ideals into the space of a faithless world—both in the sense of that which has no trust in us as anything other than what we have been, as well as that which due to its own historicity cannot know a certain destiny—art alone cannot function as the sublimative project for anyone but the artist if we do not act within that self-same world to ensure its continued relevance. We do so by the faithful reproduction of the aesthetic process as a vaunted and valued form of our subjectivity: "But as long as that faith does not exist, the artist can never propose anything but his own faith to whoever wants to listen. His public is only a public and not the masses in general, but it is still a public which tends toward humanity. And this movement of the public toward humanity is possible only through the work." (Dufrenne 1973:70 [1953]).

Chapter 4.

Art's Role in Displacing Self-Consciousness

Perhaps the oddest of the characteristics of which art was said by participants to carry within it was its apparent ability not so much to conjure other worlds, but to bring, radically and suddenly, the otherness of this world to light. That is, the idea of the uncanny has its home not only in the imagination of religion but also that of the aesthetic encounter. Indeed, in order to have fully identified with art, or to have constructed oneself anew through it, participants often felt that they needed to have been displaced by it, turned into something other than what their self had been, even if for a moment, and thus made to be very much ill at ease in the world. This feeling of being away from home, which can slide into a malaise, was prevented from becoming mere torpor. Art, in its irruptive phenomenon, freezes the onrush of phenomenological frames. This absence of motion in itself points directly to the presence of non-presence in the world, for it is the movement of being in the world that reassures us that we are yet amongst the living.

One of the insights the vision of art presents to us is a fuller understanding of the moment of this world's motion. We have already seen that certain works freeze or capture such moments—the painting of scenes as tableaux, the sculpture as pose, the musical work as the expression of a single emotion untrammelled by distraction—but beyond these more transparent and referential examples, there is also the moment of the world's being which is

more rarely related to our being in the world as it is. Indeed, this kind of vision often suggests to us that there is either more to life than we usually give it credit for, or that there is extant, contiguous but not overlapping with it, another life, qualitatively different, and to which access is restricted. The role of art in the lives of worldly persons takes on once again a function similar to species of religion. The next world may be attained only by vanquishing the this-world from one's spirit and vision. Either way, we are involved in an attempt to better ourselves, to make ourselves more beautiful. Nazism was hardly the first incarnation that the world may be made a better place through the violence of expurgative death, although it was the first to link this idea specifically with art and thus make it into both an aesthetics and an ideology. The risk that may then immediately be understood when one experiences art as something possessing *unheimlichkeit* is that it proffers to special persons the seer of its vision. In other words, akin to religious revelation, those who undergo the transformative rite of passage of visionary art might well think that they have been specifically chosen for such an increase in being because they already have some extensive and expansive version of humanity bred into them. If this breeding is associated with anything other than art itself, the consequences of this belief will be disastrous for all humanity. This is the truest lesson of the uncanny in art.

With art, however, we do not need to decide whether or not it is the case that the mundane world needs be overcome or merely extended. Art gives us the option of continuing to live in the world, our being itself both overcome and extended, as in the hermeneutic experience. The transformational quality of the aesthetic encounter is enough, as we have seen, to push us on to a new version of ourselves, as well as having the ability to preserve what it is already about us that will serve as the ground for the growth of the

new. The seeds, the earth, the water, and the sun are contained within the aesthetic experience. What the character of this new species of life will be is of course shaped by many other things, but nowhere else, it seems, do we find the confluence of the ingredients of new life more intensely focused than in the presentiment of art.

Yet to encounter art in this way means something different than the ways we have observed and discussed so far. Art has offered itself to us in a still instrumental form, or at least, a form which we can turn to the use of the extension of ourselves in the world of forms and objects in which art is merely one category of experience. That is, with self-projection, we extend our would-be beings into the world writ larger than we had been written before, and with self-preservation, we extend our beings back into the history of how they have been, representing ourselves and making the world larger in its temporal scope. In encountering the uncanniness of art, however, we are extended into a completely new aspect of the world which was hitherto unknown to us, or unknowable by us. We have no ulteriority here, and indeed, this kind of experience with art makes us feel rather that there is an ulterior nature to art itself, one more mysterious and at the same time more truthful and ultimately more real than the usual run of social realities that we inhabit. This new way of being towards the real usually has a profound remonstrative effect on us, either in the sense of the quasi-moral—one needs to live better or be better than one has, given the new vision of art's overcoming of pettiness—or the existential—I am much more than I gave myself credit for, but this error of estimation is not my fault. The uncanny of art's presence in the world reminds us, perhaps more than anything else, of its usual absence in our lives. We may feel remorse or regret at this news, for knowledge about the absence of the 'larger truth' is

itself not usually taken as good news. But this simple relation of presence and absence does not fully describe the effect of art's uncanniness. Indeed, the oddly circumspect but also invasive and trembling presence of that very absence—we now know it to be true that we have been absented by the presence of Being, that upon our stage has trod only beings like ourselves, and those too much like ourselves have been our interlocutors—is rather better described as 'non-presence,' a kind of *parousia*. There is something missing from both our vision and from our consciousness. Yet we are not immediately comprehending of just exactly what this absence signifies regarding its substance. 'What is the matter?' is a common enough query asked by our compatriots when they have observed in us the charge of the uncanny, but it is just this kind of question that lacks the definitive and substantial response of referentiality. We are, in fact, not at all sure what all this was about, or what has just transpired. We do know, however, that we have been altered, that our substance was originally lacking and it was this absence of the stuff of truth or of beauty, the good, or the spirit that put us 'at risk' for the encounter with plenitude, sometimes playful and sometimes playing. This knowledge itself has its own trembling uncanniness about it, or better, it is our understanding of ourselves as part of the general absence of our ideals in both our lives and in the world that stuns us with the resonance of the uncanny, as it often takes some time after such experiences to 'shake them off,' as it were.

The analysis of art through a phenomenology of the uncanny must proceed from this fact alone: *that the experience of non-presence uncovers the absence of presence in being and world*. There are categories of what was 'supposed' to be present, and what was supposedly present within these aesthetic encounters, as we will see below. But whatever we may make of

what we are missing—have we been morally culpable, are we living in ugliness or self-deprecation, do we know only other versions of ourselves as other persons, are we simply 'uncultured' and ignorant?—it is the radicality of the new 'knowingness' that the presentiment of art makes fully present to us that we must confront. Simply put, we are confronted by art as the beings we have been, without recourse to the use of art as a way in which our beings might concretely improve themselves, either through rewriting themselves as part of the larger world or by giving ourselves a dedicated auto-history. It is this feeling of insubstantiality, borne on the currents which whisk us away from all solid projects or monuments, that disconcerts us the most. We have been shown up to be less than we had thought in a powerful way, but we are not at all sure how to proceed with remedying the situation, and we often end by questioning the value or the relevance of the uncanny, just as culturally we have at length begun to question the once-presumed existence of the otherworldly itself.

The answer appears to lie within this questioning. It is the very immobility, not of thinking, of thought itself, but of discourse and paradigm, either socialized as the culture or learned as a higher culture, that blockades the entrance to any liminal space. We are *too* human in our discourses, in the sense that the fully socialized human being is a co-conspirator employed at the local social prison. It is this interiority of art that lends itself to our perception that the uncanny is something occluded, only partially exposed in the aesthetic encounter, alluded to, but included within our conscious horizon as one glimpses the loom of a distant ship through the binoculars when looking out to sea. But it is not art that occludes. The hiddenness of our beings is hidden within us, and is brought into the lighted space of being through the aesthesia

of encounters with works of art. We have already seen that this state of grace, opposed to the semi-conscious anesthesia of living on, confers upon us not a soteriological privilege—as was assumed in the pre-modern spaces of the sacred associated with religion and all of the works of art that had as their purpose the increase of only Being—but the grace through which we can endure the struggles of daily life.

It is this experience of art, apparently eldritch and even threatening, as an event in an Lovecraftian romance, which actually brings into focus not only the force of art as a lens for life, but all of the rest of our lives, no matter how artless and petty, in a meaningful manner. Art reminds us that life too has meaning. Art is the source, not for life's meaning, but for the uncanny nature of life to be given meaning when life itself is too preoccupied with arranging meaningfulness into norms: "There is one fact that shows that most of my actions do have meaning. This is the fact that, when I isolate them from the flux of experience and consider them attentively, I then do find them to be meaningful in the sense that I am able to find in them an underlying meaning." (Schutz 1967:19 [1932]). No experience is entirely without meaning, Schutz concludes, given that in order to reflect upon an event, we must participate in the key phase of 'having an experience' to make it meaningful for ourselves, rather than merely experiencing events with no further thought about them. And yet the irruptive quality of the uncanny, whether experienced through art or some other abnormative social context, while at once still social upon reflection, is not immanently so. The 'intuition of essences,' akin to *wesenschau*, is not all at once appropriated by the social scene, in the same way that the neighbor cannot immediately become the socius in order for her to render an authenticity to a radical other to herself. So the uncanny must still be explicated along the lines of a

phenomenology proper, and not only a social phenomenology. What lies between these two forms of thought is aesthetics in its phenomenological and phenomenical understandings. It is in fact the depth of social interaction in everyday reality that sets the stage for the profundity of art, for we are very often introduced for the first time to the subtlety of the former only through the latter. Unlike science, however, our subjective encounter with the work of art does not provide as sure a guarantor of predictive certainty. Its presence must rest within our own, and we may well include it as part of the decision-making that must occur in ethical spheres of social action. Just because the nature of the work of culture is given a kind of pre-giveness through art should not suggest that this clarity is fully portable across social spheres, say, from that aesthetic to that ethical, *pace* Wittgenstein's suggestive remark. If it is true that in the realm of artistic expression "... there is no need for a code or convention of interpretation; the meaning is as inherent in immediate experience as is that of a flower garden." (Dewey 1980:83 [1934]), then it is equally true that the flowers in that garden have been socially arranged—the very term garden refers to such a construct—and that implies directly that there must be an a priori and rather formal code by which we can understand the experience to be an immediate one, and not one of or requiring further reflection.

Even such a phenomenon has its uncanniness rooted in the fact that we expect some source of movement that could be demonstrated to be external to the object or to the organism. How is it that we even have a consciousness, let alone a reflective and duplicative one? How is it that the movement of beings corresponds to that of the nature of Being? Without the metaphysics of an idealism which suggests form regulates and 'predates' both appearance and content, an understanding that

cannot in itself explain the concept of form or the cosmogony of the prime mover other than that of a regressive creation, one must look for the apparently unlikely and strangely present non-presence of being within one's own perception. Not an anthropism, not a solipsism, but a recognizance that one is also part of the nature of being even as one rescues the instrumentation of beings by becoming alert to this presence: "... this sense is immanent in the sensuous being its very organization. The sensuous is given first and sense is regulated by it." (Dufrenne 1973:12 [1953]). Immanence is a characteristic of the sacred as well as of the irruptive. In such a sense as that phenomenological, immanence is the character of what cannot be characterized merely as sense, or through the sensate structure of consciousness. Ritual, vision, the solidarity of orison, the glossalalia of diverse tensions come to find a home in the succor of the hypostasized community. All these we search for in art. But they confront us most precisely with the sudden presence of the uncanny that is already within the relationship between art and its public. Art confronts the individuated observer and forces him to consider becoming a double—both as the other in the work, but also as another observer who also encounters the same work. Art serves the hypostatic purpose of ritual for a society that is suspicious of the politics and normative social control of ritual. Yet just because we have the feeling of intensity does not mean we have any formal clarity as to what exactly is possessing us. Indeed, it is this 'oceanic feeling' that Freud famously disdains that contains all of the vastness of the cosmos, yet also all of the vagueness that is echoed in reflection with others about the event after it has been experienced. Persons communicate 'as if' what they knew was the same thing, or as if their experiences of it generated the same feelings and meaning for them. All of this, in sober second light or apart from the group, or

without the markers of art itself, seems quite unlikely, even romantic. So we are left with the sense that what has occurred has indeed done so at the expense of full and certain knowledge of it, and could have only occurred in this manner, whatever rationalizations may be supplied later on.

Yet the sensibility of such rationales should not impinge on the things that they house and sanctify. Present fullness demands of us that we also fully attend to the present in which we encounter the gift of hypostasized consciousness. The task falls to us more fully when we attempt to link the uncanny with the context in which it apparently occurred. Our very objection to the uncanny—in the form of the *ungeheuer* of alienated being, of homesickness or discomfort that exclaims within us that we wish to return to what we know, or can know—is the first and necessary part of action directed toward the object or the work of art that brings it into our field of sensibility. We know first and foremost that it is strange to us, but even this zero degree of experience allows all further ones to evolve. What the ends are include a new knowledge that part of our very selves was also strange to us, and that part of ourselves may well be strange to others. In this estrangement of the uncanny, we are made unfamiliar to what we have been. This is essentially the characteristic of all hermeneutic experience, such as that it at first overcomes prior prejudice by ignoring it, by pretending that it did not exist. In this way, the uncanny short-circuits our expectations, both of our own reactions and of what art might or should be like. It forces us to scramble in front of it, its play is unforeseen, and we have no immediate defense against it.

Whereas the uncanniness of pre-modern art assumes one knows the story well, and thus is prepared in a very different sense for a sudden vision or revelatory inspiration that might occur in its presence. Yet further back, the great pilgrimages of the medieval

period attested to the profound desire on the part of human beings to indeed encounter aesthesis in the form of itself as a sacred subspecific. Art in the service of an organized belief system was able, through the experience of its awesome vaults and spires, to transcend the mere norms of ritual and worship which also took place in the same spaces and within the gaze of the same works of art. Rituals of all kinds, being as well theater, need their stages, props, scripts, and actors. But it is the setting that backdrops and allows the scene to transport us outside of the mundane spheres of social life which have their contrasting settings. At the same time, the sacred is only understandable as something from within which the uncanny may present itself if we do not completely forget the social scenery where such events occur much more rarely. Here, then, is a recipe for the abiding taste of the other-world. But the notion of the threshold for which art is the handmaiden does not include all forms of the uncanny. And in fact the uncanny relies heavily on our imaginations, cultural as these are, but also personal and based on specific sets of experiences no one else has quite been involved with as have we. If part of that which we are to understand as part of ourselves is that we too, within the interiority of being in the world, possess and are possessed by the uncanny, then this other part of our being takes the form of a character from the other-world. Even in modernity, it is the unconscious that speaks to us of this relation metaphorically using the *traumdeutung* of idiosyncratic allegory, but as well the patterned symbolic structure of the culture of the day; the train, for instance, no longer augurs a guise of death to us as trains have faded from the actual landscape, have become quaint rather than threatening and thus have become mute as symbols of the imagination. We thus need a world where its denizens and their scenes have a particular use: "... he could use them to elucidate his problems of the union of soul

and body. I myself consider literary documents as *realities of the imagination*, pure products of the imagination. And why should the actions of the imagination not be as real as those of perception?" (Bachelard 1964:158 [1958] italics the text's). Yet there is a difference here, one that presents itself to us as a different reality. The order of reality corresponds to the nature of order in worlds that are usually set apart, but yet come together through the human imagination. These worlds might be characterized in a number of ways, nature and culture, the mundane and the extramundane, heaven and earth, but in each dyad the other is always present. Their *reality* is indeed of an equal stature, but only because they co-mingle. Culture is one of the adaptive results of nature, the judgement of what is extraordinary based on our knowledge of the routine, paradise our ultimate aspiration for this world and not some other. The true difference between them is marked by the manner in which they are presented to our consciousness: "There is no obscurity of feeling, which knows the expressed object, but only for the understanding, which knows the represented object." (Dufrenne 1973:411 [1953]). As with all things elliptically apophantic, all events that might come to us as epiphanies, it is only our perspective of worlds in collision that allows the feeling of union with the sacred through the vehicle of art's uncanniness to be known without ambiguity: "I encounter art in a manner that leaves me with a wonder if I had any volition at all. Art rather appears to seize me, and the days in which I live, with a grip which at once ebullient but also threatening. It is my life as I have lived it—in terms of how I think about things or what I thought I knew about them—which is called into question in this way" (FTNA). What we are experiencing truly is different in the sense that it comes to us, not in no uncertain terms, but with no terms other than a negation of the quality of living ever onward towards death.

Yet it is our very knowledge of what this latter quality is, both in its overwhelming but finite quantity and its moment-by-moment ambiguity, that allows the feeling of the uncanny to be ironically transparent. The full presence of the present is held within the confluence of the attention it takes to focus on the work of art. Since art challenges our mundane expectations, our predictive and predicative assumptions, we are stilled by its presence. We must contemplate its surfaces or its sonorities, and we must then begin to feel our own presence in a world that has itself been stilled. Perhaps what is generally characteristic of the uncanny in art is this lack of motion, almost as if our heart has been stopped and we are close to a kind of death. The temporary absence of the motion of the world and the dynamic which includes ourselves in its motion is oddly disconcerting. There is an aloneness to our experience while at the same time a very clear awareness that we are not alone, but have been joined by another voice, perhaps long dormant, which awakens itself through our presence.

What is now made real for us is the fact of our existence and the fact of the world, ever ambiguous and ever passing, and the discomfort we feel in the face of reality is that we can never truly find a home in such a world, never truly become at home in language, unless of course we adopt the uncanny into ourselves. This adoption implies that there is a home for what is homeless in humanity, and that this home is within our own beings. If, as Bachelard continues, 'language itself dreams' (op. cit.), then the dreamless dream of living on takes place in and as language, and its significance is held within the reality it can construct, always a moving target, already an anonymity and a question. And this realization takes place not through the language of ordinary speech and writing alone, but in any media in which art finds its own home. The fullness of the present's presence presents itself to us as

irruptive and unwilling to let us unlearn its lesson. Like anxiety proper, the uncanny, very often seen as a vehicle for the former, has a positive existential function for us. It does not know how to 'leave us alone' as do other persons, many of our memories, or even social institutions once they are satisfied in their bureaucratic requirements. The uncanniness of the uncanny is that it is ever-present, waiting pensively in the shadows of the everyday, whose light cannot fully illuminate every space of being as it flickers its way to and from its mundane zenith. Research participants were quite aware that they had been enveloped by the penetrating penumbra of the uncanny in their various encounters with art. The following was suggestive of many other examples:

My father was an authoritarian. This is mincing my words, you might be aware. I once saw a portrait of someone who looked uncannily like him, as if it was painted from an ancestor of his who had sat for it. It reminded me of that famous literary moment in Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles*, where one of the evil ancestors hanging in the gallery is sneering alike to the actual villain that must be exposed. I nearly fainted dead away at the sight of it, and I realized that my terror of my childhood had hardly dissipated, though it had been decades since I had had any contact with my parents. (FTNA).

What was already present comes once again or even only to its full presence in the void of rationalized meanings. Sometimes this presence, and our presence within it, is an abyss, bringing to the fullest consciousness—which also includes the unconscious and the consciousness of others insofar as they are relevant—our character and role in this or that life event. What occurred is what is now occurring to us. We have felt its whole for the first time: "I

never knew how much I loved my wife until I saw Rembrandt's love for his second wife in the art museum in Montreal. The painting itself brought home to me my true feelings, and yet perhaps it was her resurrected presence that admonished me for not showing these feelings as I might have" (FTNA). Indeed, the uncanny reminds us that we seldom feel the whole of any part of our lives, as the onrush of time keeps our focus from discerning the true shape of things as they hurtle by, rather like looking at a river. The foreshortening and distancing of running and coursing water precludes a certain focus, and to rest one's eyes on one spot in the river is to see merely the flow of different waters, constant and continuous. When the aesthetic encounter recreates the work of art as a quasi-subject in the world of both subjects and objects, it immobilizes us as a quasi-object. That we need to know only ourselves in such a moment, but that we come to such a self-understanding through the work of others, and furthermore that it leads to an understanding of an other which had been effaced or forgotten, are the hallmarks of authentic and dramatic living.

As we have seen, it is the uncanny in art, or its active non-presence through some other vehicle equally both at first embodied and secular, that confronts us with the rehearsal of our own being's absence. Just as all farewells are but the understudies for the final exeunt, the uncanny gives us pause because it quite literally forces us to stop living on. The event of the pause is a thinly veiled version of the full stop. Within the swirling play of life, we have found a place to stay stilled, or this space has found us. There is a moment now set aside for reflection, even contemplation: "This activity necessarily reveals the human experience of finitude in a unique way and gives spiritual significance to the immanent transcendence of play as an excess that flows over into the realm of freely chosen possibilities. For us, death is the transcendence of

our own mortal stay." (Gadamer 1986:46 [1977]). That we become, at least in the living memory of others who survive us, ironically immortal relative to what we were able to accomplish solely on our own is remarkable enough. It might even be suggested that it is through the memory of others that such beings as the dead appear once again in some form which has its counterpart as thrown being in the world. A 'being-of-the-world' is no longer in it, but is still from it. Yet a further and more potent immortality occurs through the life's work of this or that departed person, precisely because it is through this work that she joins the history of her common humanity, and may become as well part of the common lot of history. This is more than a 'legacy' in the usual sense, as it also judges its successors, ourselves, as being worthy of the inheritance—this is its gift to us—but also remains in evaluation of our thoughts and deeds in calling us ever toward the community of being which includes the dead—this is its task which becomes then our own. It does so from a particular place, stilled and confrontational, giving forth the event of the uncanny: "In this respect, the aesthetic object has the dimensions of a world, dimensions which defy measurement not because there is always more to measure but because there is nothing yet to measure. This world is not crowded with objects; it precedes them. It is like a faint light in which they are revealed and which everything that is perceptible in this light is disclosed..." (Dufrenne 1973:182 [1953]). Akin to the trophotropic event where the senses are as yet unaligned or have fallen out of alignment, with the world of sense, the inexistent perception of the world of life gives us the impression that we ourselves are no longer quite amongst the living. What has happened to place us here, in the no-man's land of what happens to all humanity, is something that has happened to us. What that something is cannot indeed be merely something

else, for it is like nothing else we know. This kind of something is Nothing, and we are forced to agree with Heidegger's famous remark on the nature of anxiety, when he simply responds that what it was that made him unsettled, that disconcerts us all, was 'Nothing' at all. Yet imbedded in this response is the same tone that inters us within the earth.

We thus are impelled to give the ever-presence of the to-be-absent its due, as a calculated reciprocity for the happenstance of life, where the penumbra of being generally does not bother us even if it cannot, by definition, leave us alone. Once we have done so we can arise again from the shallow grave of insight. We may well move on with some added perspective, but we are always taken aback by any fresh hole in the ground, as we now have the added expectation that something other than ourselves—or perhaps worse yet, some altered and future vision of ourselves?—will emanate therefrom. This is not merely due to our primordial and evolutionary reaction of fight or flight in the face of a strangeness that could well be dangerous, but also to the fact that we simply do not have a language with which to respond to Nothing. We have lost our own names in naming that which has no name, and thus we are given over to it body and soul. The pre-lingual tongue of what reminds us of death but is itself not dead, vigorously borrows our ability to speak. We do not speak on its behalf, but it speaks through us, and indeed, this is why we feel that we have been violated or invaded by its presence, because our own presence is momentarily annulled or at least displaced. Even after the fact, when we attempt to communicate what has occurred to us to others, we lack the language sufficient to make the tale as engrossing as the event itself. Nothing can do justice to the experience of the disquiet of non-being—quite literally this is true in also the positive sense of the proper noun, that is, Nothing *can*

do justice to this event, and does so—rather especially our own: We can speak around the event of our own nothingness. One might suggest that the happenstance of life gives us the audience we need to make public our shared anxieties about what it means to be alive, given that at least part of what it means is to also know that we cannot always be this way. As we mature, there is also an undergrowth akin to the vegetation that manifests as 'the uncut hair of graves.' We study and we are understudied, we take and we become our own undertakers, we know we will suffer, as do the waves, for the apparently limitless ocean ends its motion suddenly.

Nevertheless, we are also born to explore the depths of being, to be taken up short when we encounter its ground, far beneath us. We move about in 'nature' in this manner, but we also construct our cultured spaces to mimic the hierarchy of depths, shallows, grounds, and skies of being. We can use these structures to loosen the strictures imposed on us by a complex consciousness. This does not mean that we do so without apprehension, nor does it mean that we even undertake such a study with our own free will: "The phenomenologist, in this case, will accept the psychoanalyst's image in a spirit of shared trepidation. He will revive the primitivity and the specificity of the fears. In our civilization, which has the same light everywhere, and puts electricity in its cellars, we no longer go to the cellar carrying a candle. But the unconscious cannot be civilized. It takes a candle when it goes to the cellar." (Bachelard 1964:19 [1958]). The flickering shadows on the wall of the foundation of being remind us of none other than the specters of our ambiguous existence. They flash and flare up before us, the chance breezes of movement guttering our light. We are aware, in the depths of our persons, that what we have built upon is no solid thing. That the super-structures of this life hold within them the arts of civilization, and their fruits and their

ongoing labors provide an odd shade of their own. This is because the darkness of the subterranean lets itself be known by an odd kind of light, that of the uncanny. The hieroglyphs on the basement walls are not writing *per se*, but part of the oft furrowed and consternated materials themselves. Striations of script, seemingly primordial, but at least ancient to our own mortal memories, echo no matter where we shed the light. Like the patina on a sculpture, or the intaglio of an engraving, these marks do not function as the markers above them do. They are not present in memorialization, but as the results of sacrifice itself. They are the signs of debt that each of our tests, anxieties, and fears, has written into the walls of our being. In this sense then, our conscious writing does little to either alter the forms of what lies below it, or to cement our persons as quasi-objects. It is well known that all texts, once completed, take on a life of their own. We are always thus in a position of borrowing status from that which is no longer 'our own.' Yet we are in the same basic position with regard to our memories. These too have passed out of our conscious control and action, and have their own lives. Indeed, like any text, memory is recalled and interpreted differently by different people. Text and memory, perhaps brought together in no better form than that epistolary—the diary is too much of a *possession* to function in quite the same manner—combine to give us the pretence that what we have accomplished in life and in art will remain with us in some way, amusing our vanity rather than supplicating our presence.

Memories are like the one who is dead, but they are also of the present and live on as if they were living for all of the others who had passed before them. We are, indeed, given to the uncanny in art because it also re-presences the relation we have with the community of the dead. Though moderns are not linked with them

in a moral manner, we are still very much joined with them in their gifts and burdens they have so bequeathed, and that we still, for now, share a common destiny.

It might very well come as a surprise of an uncanny nature that living on in the face of death, in the midst of death's embrace, we find the loving touch of the living. Consolation it may be for a time, but we learn to accept this new closeness with the growing perspective that we participate equally in both its future loss and its present humaneness. Intimacy is only a waste when it has concentrated itself on the future of merely itself. It must rather be lived as an ongoingness, and not as a goal. This is the image that we see in art, something focused and 'of itself,' emanating a concern for itself as it would do for any who partake in its intimacy, as does the public of any work of art. Art demands that we halt and reflect on existence, and it can do so because of its uncanny force. But it also confronts the meanings we generate, and have generated, regarding what such an irruptive force might mean for us. *Art does not let us rest with what has been known to be the case.*

We cannot allow the work of art to be the work of anything other than human beings like ourselves, but also unlike ourselves in another finite manner. The artist, as we have iterated above, is not a different species but is the embodiment of difference and ambiguity. These ambivalent persons are found the world over, but the most important thing is that they are found in the world, and do not travel to our location from some other, alien orbit. While art can be uncanny, the artist never is. Indeed, we rather look at personalist attempts at ontological displacement as quirky at best, affectations of the most grotesque sort at worst, though we may be given pause by the extremities of being other than can be found in certain psychopathologies, which the Bohemian, melancholic or

Romantic 'temperament' of a certain kind of artist may be inured with. Even so, the artist as a subject in the world cannot at once be an object from which emanates the uncanny. She is too human for this to have any other than a theatrical effect, and one perhaps of bad taste. Deviance in life is merely an acknowledgement of norms in order to transgress them. Deviance is what shows the norms to be real in their effects, and it does not create new worlds. Yet deviance in art produces the new, and its transgression of previous forms of art appears to us as transcendence, often without reference to what has come before. Certainly there is no art which springs *ex nihilo*, but all art fills what was previously a vacuum in our perception. Of course the uncanny in art is a result of its strangeness, while at the same time making it all the more strange to us, but even here, art relies heavily upon the imagination of its would-be public in order for this combined effect to come off: "Imagination makes an object appear which, in spite of its unreality, is so convincing that it seizes and engulfs consciousness." (Dufrenne 1973:354 [1953]). Whether we think of the thresholds between forms of consciousness as quite discrete—as in Schutz's 'multiple realities'—or as always ready to blend into one another—as in James' 'filmiest of screens'—we are active co-participants in the event of the uncanny. What we experience 'during' these events cannot be interpreted as we do dreams or phantasms. Despite both of these kinds of consciousness being co-opted in the efforts to cheaply duplicate the uncanny as *frisson*, to borrow Taylor's term, in vulgar film, it is clear that the authenticity of the uncanny is quite different, and takes on more the quality of a vision. Dreams use a language of metaphor, and though they may warn us of anxiety or even impending neurosis, marshalling our desires and ordering our sub-texts, they use a clearly metaphoric language in their *traumdeutung*. The daydream is a rehearsal for a

project of action, and its language is predicative and predictive, almost scientific, and certainly rational. The vision, rather, proffers us a language that harkens to the non-rational, yet with a presentiment that feels to us, especially today, to be of the irrational. It is an odd and even fearful melange to which our imagination lends credence and thence to which our rational mind must lend reflection. Unlike dreams and phantasms, the reflective mind cannot shake off, perhaps for years, the uncanny effect of the irrational and emotive response we experienced with the original event. The shivers up and down one's spine, the sudden pause in one's thoughts or in our sense of the ongoingness of time in the day to day, are symptomatic of a somatic shift, one that our imagination has not fully come to terms with. To speak then of a language of the uncanny is to attempt to converse with a tongue which utters a pidgin composed of the guttural longings of the dead while being driven by the hysteria of what befits and is beholden to Babel. These are not the conflicting voices in the mind of the schizophrenic which cause an inability to think at all, to be conscious in any rational manner, but are more akin to the throbbing and ever-present, but suddenly noticed, sonority of a Buddhist chant. We can clearly hear the altered humanity in the voices, but we cannot make out what they are saying. Nevertheless, their presence commands our own, and our imagination is imbedded in them, for they are the wont of all human imagination and thus have already and always the lien on our own. Here, we cannot practice like the phenomenologists which know "... the world as their next door neighbor. They are immediately conscious of being of and in the world. But the problem becomes more complicated for a phenomenologist of the imagination constantly confronted with the strangeness of the world." (Bachelard 1964:134 [1958]). At the same time, what is

strange can only be understood because it refers in a negative fashion to what is familiar. It remains a definition of the world as it is because it is a negation of that world. It posits the absence of a world of beings only insofar as it creates non-beings in the world. The uncanny comes to know itself through the world, otherwise it would forever be beyond the reach of our imagination. It cannot be, in other words, truly alien to us, as it is also clearly part of our very humanity:

I did not wish to then admit that what I was so disturbed by was an aspect of myself that I had suppressed, and indeed, the action of the film corresponded to events that had transpired—and in which I had a major role in my own life. These events were both selfish and passionate, but by committing to them I took myself out of the ambit of humane relations, that is, compassion and concern for others. This 'darker' aspect of character I then also believed was not found in everyone, and thus I thought myself to be of a lower nature than my fellow human being. Now I am not sure that anyone of us escapes untrammelled self-will. (FTA).

What is our own, in the moment that the uncanny tears away the world from us, is this deeply naked humanity, including the primordial imagination which raised us above the other animals, yet still 'lower than the angels,' as Bronowski remarked. Nonetheless, in the mean-time of both meanness and mundanity, this imagination takes up the challenge of the uncanny and recreates it in purely human form. This is the case of art. Art stands clear of the babble of the undead, and its presence is a solid response to the non-presence of *auto-parousia*. It does not brook its own demise or incompleteness. Even in joy, we must know how to suffer, or else the uncanniness of what we desire the most will

lose its ability to render itself up as does the naked longing of the lover, the lost and selfless shamelessness of union. Perhaps it is the very nature of the uncanny to present itself as the ever-desiring incompleteness of being in the world. Yet there are plenty of narratives in this research which suggest that uncanniness is also borne on the currents of the whole, that persons feel completed by these para-visions in a manner unlike any other kind of experience, including that of the love of another.

This is so in spite of the fact that we know from experience that the most intimate union cannot last forever. Just as the earliest of memories seem to us recalled as we recall a fragmented dream—belying the historical fact that such a dream may have occurred only last night, and a memory, if real at all, might be decades old—life itself begins to take on the very uncanniness that we had imagined was only irruptive to life. Indeed, this is how we must approach art in the first place, with the tentative knowing that what we already have been has within it all that we might hope to find amongst the creations amounting from, and accountable to, life. Art finds itself created and thrown, as we are, back into the mortal swirl, but its extension of the worlds of possible being as its own self-definition helps us to the self-understanding which comes from not merely aesthetic experience, but the diversity of general experience of which aesthesia is a part: "It is through its intrinsic quality and from within itself that the aesthetic object relates to the real and displays its truth there." (Dufrenne 1973:527-8 [1953]). Given that action in the world of the day to day seems at one end over-calculated, and in its dispensation, almost random or at least miscalculated—the sense that we are always using in some small share our imagination, and thus are always being creative to some small point—the decisive clarity with which the vision of the uncanny breaks in upon our wanderings as the noonday vanquishes

shadow, our pale and doubting partner, seems rather unreal. Its wholeness echoes the choate surface of the work of art, yet "Art is always born [] from the shards of the dead history of works of genius, each one whispering the same sentence in its own dead language: here a humanity intimate with its own nature once breathed its last." (Horowitz 2001:50). There is a brilliant clearing of the mind in front of the uncanny, in the sense that we can see what there is to see. The problem, the aporetic apex of suddenly, after clambering the creviced slopes of an uneven world, finding oneself on the summit, is that our very next step plunges us downward again. We cannot overstep ourselves. We must be our own bridge to whatever overcomes us.

Because meaningfulness is still partial even after being exposed, as it were, to the high noon of aesthetic presence, do we feel somehow betrayed that we not only could not stay longer, figuring out just what it was that gave us such trepidation or such joy? Given that we realize that the meanings we understand to be true to life must be woven as a tapestry, the comingling threads of creative being which make art a living fabric of experience are also not uniform: "Art is only encountered in a form that resists pure conceptualization. Great art shakes us because we are always unprepared and defenseless when exposed to the overpowering impact of a compelling work." (Gadamer 1986:37 [1977]). It matters not the discourse of what is great and what is not, as each of us makes this decision with or without the knowledge embedded in artism or in serious criticism. We cannot say of art as a whole that many are moved, but few are shaken, but with this or that art this is the reality. We do know what we like, but art does not let us rest only with opinion. It takes hold of the imagination in a manner unlike prejudice, and prepares us for the possibility of a hermeneutic encounter. We think we know what it means, but

language, in its polysemous symbolism, has nothing but meanings, and we cannot know them all. If we close off our encounters because the uncanny threatens us, we risk losing all of the meanings that could be conferred upon our transformative imaginations.



Chapter 5.

Personal Identifications with Art

Participants in this research project used art to fulfill an ultimate purpose. If art is itself autonomous and singular, if its individuality is assured by both artism and the artist, then we as human beings wish to become, as art already appears to be. Its singularity of purpose, though not of meaning, seems in stark contrast to the manner in which we are forced to live, within a multiplicity of often conflicting roles and fragmented performances, partial scripts and unlearned entrances, greetings and farewells. We are anything but singular, anything but enduring. In this final substantive chapter, then, we will see both research participants and the discourse attempt something different from the regular course of life through the use of art. Here, we are not searching for a new identity, as in projection, nor recollecting one that is past, as in memorialization. We will not see art encountered primarily through its radical unrecognizability, as with the problem of the uncanny, but rather through the opposite. Here, art will be seen as congenially affirmative of whom we are, not in our disorder and social suite of guises, but who we 'really' are, our 'true' selves. It is this idea—that we not merely desire a singular and enduring countenance that penetrates to the very core of our being, indeed, shows this core to be what is our nature—that lends the same level of radicality to the aesthetic encounter as did the uncanny, though in a different direction. This radicality is authenticity, of being and of the world in which we find ourselves thrown. Art already and always has this authenticity, and thus also

creates a world of its own. This world, and its presence within it, are indistinguishable from one another, and once again this permits us the perspective of how we are often at odds with the world. The world at large most often cares nothing about our presence nor our future, and does not recognize that our past has had to have been lived, that what has been enduring about us is that we are still simply here, and not past.

Yet art presents a challenge to all of those who wish to use it as a role model, for the work of art already is deemed to have transparently what we also think we have in obscurity, and thus its full presence cannot but make ours yet more obscure: "Here is the source of my dilemma, then. For the form with which I would like to measure my emotion threatens to obscure the subjectivity of that emotion before I even start." (Horowitz 2001:136). We approach art for the first time as a kind of supplicant, rather than as one who would possess the power of art and turn it to the transformation of self. What we know about ourselves is that we actually are already who we wish to be. We simply wish to learn from art how to expose this singular being, which is ultimately to say, perhaps, that we wish to learn how to make beings more like Being.

In order to do so, we need not participate so much in the understanding amongst other human beings because we have their works with which to imagine their more general presence as a vehicle for the human conversation. Even if, in life generally, "... the tragedy consists in the fact that there exists and can exist no understanding between men [] in the fact that understanding can exist, that it is within reach, but that it is useless." (Lukacs 1974:112-3 [1910]), the entire reason why human beings have created art is to assuage the misunderstandings that occur continuously amongst the rest of us. We see art as above the petty squabbles of life. Yet the power of art, a power which exists

because many souls have united in their efforts, overleaps such barriers in the fashion of an *aufheben*. In this way too, we wish to use it as a role model. We wish, through the actualization of our true selves, to move freely amongst the worlds that all of the diverse works of art have created for themselves. We wish to move through the world at large as does art, or rather, because art seems to us to be immobile within such a world which is not its own, then we too wish to stoically and perhaps sardonically endure the vagaries of history. To have become a part of a world history is to have overcome the problem that history presents to both subjects and objects in the world. Of course, the situation cannot but change over time.

The seeming endurance of works of art suggests to us, however, that we can learn something vital about vitality, something moving about the dynamic of life and death, and something true about authenticity. This understanding does in fact mirror more closely social reality than we would like to think: "For practical social life it is of the greatest significance that I consider myself justified in equating my own interpretation of lived experiences with your interpretation of yours on those occasions when we are experiencing the same object." (Schutz 1967:171 [1932]). The pragmatism of this effort of course lends itself to the shallow and unquestioning blink by which all mere sociality maintains itself and its orders. If this is exactly what we wish to avoid, or if, at least, this is what we wish to have but in an authentic, deeply felt and certain manner, then we must take the goal of shared experience without the pretense of shared meaning. In other words, we must *identify* with one another, and perhaps we can best do this through the aesthetic encounter: "The experience of 'this is you' can range from the most terrifying intensity of tragic catastrophe to the lightest touch of meaning [] The recognition

that the work of art procures for us is always an expansion of that infinite process of making ourselves at home in the world which is the human lot." (Gadamer 1986:150-1 [1977]). So we are not so much interested in the ideal self, a self that, however true or in place already, must be and only be a good or pure self. This is the concern of projection, as we have seen. Nor are we interested in, once again, the sense that whatever we have been can be rehabilitated, remembered with honor and memorialized. That the self-recognition of extremes might cause us to feel an unease similar to that which is spoken by the uncanny is a risk we are willing to take. What we need to know concerns the character of who we are, and not only that which we share with a universal humanity, *pace* the diversity of cultures and languages: "The 'problem of the self' is, in reality, two distinct problems; one, concerning the *nature* of the self, and another, concerning the *unity* of the self. In modern philosophy, however, it is the latter problem, under the rubric, 'the problem of personal identity,' which has received by far the greater attention." (Sircello 1972:301 italics the text's). Indeed, as Sircello continues, the sense that the solution to the problem of who we are as persons presupposes, but does not entirely coincide with, who we are as human beings, leaves open the portal through which art enters into our consciousness. It also gives us the sense by which we can construct what is actually an autobiography, rather than an ethnography: "The common presupposition, therefore, within which the battles over personal identity have been fought, is that the 'nature' of the self is definable in terms of either of what is phenomenologically 'interior' or of what is implied or presupposed by what is phenomenologically 'interior.'" (ibid.: 302). But interiority also assumes that something other than the self has been internalized as providing at the very least the insulation which delineates the truer self from the world

as a distinctive object, still within the world but also within ourselves, in a way that purely external objects cannot be. Is there actually, though, any object in the world, including other human beings, which is only external to us? One can immediately doubt this, if it were made into a proposition, as our very recognizance of the world and its denizens, conscious or no, requires of us that we take them into ourselves, stereotypes or no: "The other person is the source of the world, but that world is still the world where the other has his place. For the paradox of the world is that it is illuminated for everyone with a certain glow, which may be the light of a smile or the darkness of blasphemy." (Dufrenne 1973:149 [1953]). The world is what we have in common, the meanings it generates are shared meanings, and not only in the cultural sense, but also in that phenomenological, in that we experience lived time as part of the world's worlding. Yet the arts are not at all aloof to making the same kinds of critical abstractions that the human sciences often make, though the former generally do so with greater style and leave the detailed accuracy to the scholar. Science is more patient than art, but art seizes the moment in a way that exactitude would never permit. When art presumes to make transparent the complexity of human relations, it does so at various levels. Perhaps the most obvious mirror for social interaction occurs on the contrived stages of drama, given that these are hardly distinguishable from the reality of the world stage, where each of us has his parts and scripts, as has been well said.

Any theater has an audience by virtue of this latter being able to identify with some diversity befitting the crowd, with the characters on stage. The task at hand is somehow out of our hands, or at least in the ambit of the reciprocity of role and self. We must convince others that we are at first real enough to take seriously, that we can perform a given role, but also, and more importantly,

that we are ourselves and that this self is the reality of source of all performances. We see ourselves in similar situations, or even ones that seem in reality as they are in drama. The exhaustion we feel in the quickened breath of literary and other artistic languages is both a sign of recognition and one of relief, as if we had just finished a grueling task of some kind. The task for us within the aesthetic encounter is to find ourselves. The sense that art as a role model that can focus our sense of inchoate existence as fully portable to other sphere is underscored by scientific writings that take also their subjects from human life. These sciences, however, delineate only the contours of social being and not their specific denizens.

Instead, the search for a singular and enduring identity must take us afar, away from the ligatures of social bonds. For it is, after all, the complex of social roles and the fabric of social reality which inhibit the sense that we can always be one thing and one thing alone. At the same time, society is our home, and the only one a human being has. In the deepest sense, to be human is to be social and one can only be so within the organizations that history has provided through the confluence of the happenstance of birth and region. There must be, we imagine, a way in which identity can be exposed and preserved, a real home amongst the ashes of the social hearth. What we need here is a refuge from the world, and the eroded privacy of much of our modern lives no longer fits the bill. Such refuges are those of interiority, but as we already are aware that what we are 'inside of ourselves' can reflect as well as embody the world, and indeed this must be so for self-understanding to have any perspective at all, we cannot latch on to the first door we encounter. All entrances must at once be unlatched, as we must unhinge ourselves from their frames. For, in entering any portal, we become a self-portrait. It is we who are, at the threshold, the central figure in a frame, and the door has merely

been cast aside as a herald. We desire these entrances as much as we seek the succor of fatal utterance. What we say can then be taken as a true statement of things. 'This is who I am, because this is where I stand.' But our position is defined beforehand by the frame we choose to occupy, and by suggesting that there is indeed choice in such matters we may be saying too much. For unlike the work of art, we have not ourselves created the world we would utter about. It is more a matter of muttering, of muted moments of manipulation, the rationalizations needed to get us through another day. What we seek in identity is our own world and our own significance thus guaranteed within it. For this we turn to art, somehow created in the world and reflective of it, but also excerpted from it and creating anew: "The aesthetic object bears its own signification within it, and by entering more profoundly into communion with the object, one discovers its signification, just as one understands the being of others only by virtue of friendship." (Dufrenne 1973:228 [1953]). If the love of friends often appears as the most authentic space of the social—this is where I can be my true self and show the reality of what I am to an other—then the work of art appears before us as a willing friend. Unlike human beings, the work has no quantitative limits on its friendship. It has time for all comers, and the time it has seems to be limitless in itself. This new world then is perhaps most aptly characterized by the quasi-subjectivity that suggests an infinitude, or at least, an indefinite amount of intimacies. In this way, *the quasi-subjectitude of art is a superior form of being, because within its enactmental complex the subject and object are at once merged, and do not even cohabit*, as they do in human beings.

The source of this merger though is not a mystical one. It can be found in the creative process itself, which, in producing works of art, in fact involves many more persons than just the artist

'himself,' as we have already seen. The combination of all of the little tasks creates the effect of a new world, because the goal of the production of a work of art is a unique goal, albeit still a worldly one. Indeed, one can only compare it to the goal of sectarianism—to create a new world out of the one already extant. So it is a specific kind of social context, one that is already ensconced in the world, a kind of 'ready-made' in itself, that functions to create the vehicle for a new world which is itself the extension of the being that is the lifeblood of the old. The creation of the work of art has the ability to stay focused because it does not come from a single source, and thus its centralizing force—apparent when we as observers encounter it and wish to make such a force our own has its power because it has made any number of persons like ourselves, as well as the artists involved who separate themselves from us because they know ahead of time what is to be accomplished into a singular soul. This soul is at once prescient and already accomplished. It has *all* of the skills, and not just those said to be artistic, to get the job done. This is why the work of art once completed appears to us as having everything we need. It has all the abilities because all of them had been put into its construction. It harbors the safe passage to a new world, one in which we intend to find our true identity, as well as proclaiming its own world, equally new, and with an indefinite number of frames into which we and so many others like us can step.

The most personal kinds of works are, appropriately, those that shield us from our reliance on strongly social bonds that have as their intercourse only the thought of publicity, as in the goal of projection. In these works, the artist has taken great pains to produce an effect seemingly only for herself, or for her intimates if the work is a portrait of some kind, textual, musical or otherwise. But what has been actually effected is an immediate entrance into

the soul of humanity. Our desire is to become as individual as the desire of the artist and her subject. No better is this represented than in the rare case of the nude—indeed, naked would be the better term here—portrait which does not titillate, but embodies the bond of a specific intimacy, and presents a private threshold over which none other may cross. We realize, in encountering such work, 'programmatic' in the most internal sense of the word, that what we are welcome to is a vision that is our own. We may model it on that of the artist, but we may not copy it or possess the one in front of us. There is no easy path, these works remind us, to self-recognition or to self-understanding. The very fact that both involve the other to self, and that one must risk the entirety of what oneself has been by seeking this new world, is testament to their challenges. The self-annihilation practiced by the artist and then exhorted by the work of art is neither of course nihilatory nor nihilist. What is desired is precisely the creation of the new. We both admire and admonish the artist for staying so briefly in one place and time, for having the urge to gallivant to new worlds, even if these do not yet exist. Yet what gives us pause is not the wonder at our human fellows who appear to leap forward without looking, but the fact that we must also make such leaps when we know we have lost the world that we currently inhabit. We must find ourselves, but in all such cases, we must lose ourselves in the process. This is yet another reason why the work of art appeals in this context, because it has found itself without loss. It possesses all that it has ever been, and can only be, and needs only be, one thing.

We learn to live with this new sense that being at home is predicated on the finding of a place which we have created. The distance from our childhood can become a measure of maturity and not only alienation. We are reminded of both the distance and the

intimacy through works of art which hail from our regions, but not necessarily those geographic or even cultural. Instead, art approaches us by way of specific regions of consciousness; the idea of the farewell, for instance, might be one of these, or of the night sky. All of these we have lived in, and thus we have found a home in them. We are not always immediately willing, nor is this or that space one of immediate welcome, but we adapt because we know we must find a new way in order to identify ourselves. Like the old fantasy—half desirous and half anxious—that wonders what it would be like to meet all of one's past lovers in the same room, the idea of emplacement, in a discourse or in an image, closes in around us with the warmth of the hearth, but also with the obligation of confession. We might well like to imagine every intimacy at once, but we would also have to assuage the competing values of each intimacy that always strive for hierarchy, even when they are well or badly performed. This is why we are so content with art, that is, we find contentedness in its embrace, but also we find that its content encloses something we would rather not have to state directly. It makes of reality a metaphor, and thus makes what is done into a symbol that is suggestive of another time and place; what is done may be undone or, better still in some cases, done again.

Though, as Schutz remarked, we 'cannot swim in the same river twice,' there is also the sense that we must delegate the division of phenomenological labor amongst realms of knowledge. This casual remark applies well to the realm of the once intimate, as well as the rare, but also to that which is expressly symptomatic of a certain phase of life and thus cannot be taken as a universal comment on the condition of human experience. Rather, the other well-known casual remark of Schutz in this context—'I can do it again!'—renders the balance, taking into account the realms of the

'stock of knowledge at hand,' as well as that of acquaintance, and perhaps ironically, the hinterland of vague awarenesses. Each of these realms, pushing outward from the ego and falling away from each of us as if we were at the summit of some topographical landform, delineates existential contour lines based on our relative experience and knowledge. Of course, what we think we know may change tomorrow, and this includes the supposed certainties of the intimate life and its others to self, even its significant others, but generally, these regions of socially distributed knowledge and ignorance each posit some kind of quasi-aesthetic quality. They have an effect upon us, and through them we understand, or misunderstand, the qualities of the worlds which they in turn represent. We need not be overwhelmed by the idea that these qualities, akin to universal *a priori*s which have of late found themselves ensconced in neuro-theological architectures, should have an independent existence—not of the perceiver per se, but of the world in which they exist—and thus retain some kind of metaphysical suasion over which the observer, audience, public, or subject exercises no control. Rather, affective quality is a phase, like the phases of growing up and older, in the career of meaning: "Any work of art, once accomplished, exists as a meaningful entity independent of the personal life of its creator. [a] fellow-man who created this work not only as an expression of his [] thoughts but with communicative intent." (Schutz 1967:169-70 [1951]). We know when we are being spoken to by a work of art, whereas our fellow humans often leave us guessing, intentionally or otherwise.

Given that the quasi-subjectivity of the artwork does not deliberately deceive us—it leaves suppression of truth or manipulation of metaphor to the audience—we can say with some clarity that we seek our potential singularity through an object which does not object to our search. It does not set up calculated

barriers to it, it does not try to sell us on another path—the 'road less taken' is best marked by the course of art—and it does not attempt to win us over to its own purposes. Art has no inherent politics, and though a particular piece may well exhibit a political or even ideological critique, it does not have to tell us that we must follow it because it is a piece of art. Its communiqués may have activist intent, or they may merely be descriptions of political equations, which are relatively obscured by other labors like those of media or government or the market, but it never sets itself up as a leader to itself. Its entire relevance and being would be sabotaged if this were so. The work of art ingratiate itself to the work of the mind. Even in sleep, the mind hurries onwards, it under-consciousnesses perhaps more aware of its finitude than we ourselves, waking and reflective, ever quite can be. This kind of dynamic presents to us an idealized version of the disruptive lives of conflicting social roles, of the public and private, of the intimate and the estranged, from which we would like art to provide egress. Motion and action toward the goal of unison and truth is a good thing, we surmise, and we are aware, even if the Romantic inclination to credit the great artist still lingers within our culture, of the numbers of persons involved in creating any art of note. Indeed, the *singularity* of the artist, not her greatness, is the key idea here, because it lends credence to the aspirational supposition that we too, in the presence of not only the created unity of the work, but the sole source by which the work was created, can focus our fragmentedness: "We do not cease to be one, even when we divide ourselves in order to subdue ourselves. And the dialectics of rupture which we perform in order to be mind raises us to the level of the mental without shattering our unity." (Dufrenne 1973:372 [1953]). We certainly do not mind, in other words, the concept of mind, especially when we are said to have one, and not many. In

fact, we disdain the sense that we may be of two minds, or more, as it speaks to us of indecision, sometimes seen as a flaw of character. Further still, those who are diagnosed with 'multiple personalities,' are assumed to have changed their minds rather radically, including regarding their identity. All of this, reflected in our popular culture, our psychopathological discourses, and in our ethics, suggests that we desire union, first with ourselves, and thence with our fellows and perhaps even with our gods. None of this is, however, tantamount to anything that phenomenology might state about a metaphysically prior architecture of consciousness, one by which experience is had and knowledge is thence gained. Art inhabits us, but like the interior of a gallery, it need not rest there in order to be at home in the world. Galleries are mental archives, designed to keep track and protect commodities and discourses, and thus: "... it might be disconcerting for some to discover that where they have been looking for *themselves* (and where some believe to have *found* themselves) is not even the right direction. It might be disturbing to find that the self, and *a fortiori* its unity, is only evident in what one *does* and how one does it." (Sircello 1972:304 italics the text's).

We cannot cloister art once again inside our minds, or wherever, after we have freed it from the gallery wall or the concert hall, the binding or the stage. The fact that art lives on and finds a home—the act that we are most enamored of aside from the work's apparent unity—is testament to its special endurance, an endurance which outlasts the frames of this or that history as well as our biographies. Why would we imagine that we as individuals can contain what entire ages could not? Is it the aesthetic encounter itself that suggests to us that we too can overcome our historical trajectories and free ourselves from all social frames? Yet the very

concept of identity presupposes a specific location, a home, perhaps, where it rests even when it also moves. We can be moved, in other words, by art in its very resonance, its very at-homeness, which we would like to emulate. But we must not give way to unreason in our quest. We will see below that adjusting our arcs, let alone cushioning our eventual fall from the graceful upthrust of thrownness, requires an integrity that shapes itself after the formal integrity of the work desired.

The first thing we must notice about ourselves as we are, in order to understand just what it is that we are hoping to achieve by reclaiming or salvaging an identity through art, is that most of our experiences are neither of art or of the new in any way. On the one hand, such reliance on previous prejudice is absolutely necessary for the pragmatics of living on, as we have seen. "On the other hand, we do sometimes recognize that a lived experience is novel, that it is a 'first' for us. This presupposes a reference back to schemes we have on hand, followed by a 'failure to connect.' This in turn draws the validity of the scheme into question." (Schutz 1967:84-5 [1932]). We do not automatically relegate our prejudices to the dustbin of personal history, but take into account first the likelihood, insofar as we can tell ahead of time, of the new attaining a value dominance over the old. If the new experience is too extreme, or we imagine that it will be both a 'first' and a 'last' time, such experience is much less likely to have a long-term impact on our value schemes, or our pragmatics. There is also the strong sense that we anticipate experience, that events which may be new to us are not at all new in themselves or to others who have either more or different experiences than ourselves. The almost mythic glamour that surrounds the loss of virginity for adolescents in our society is a hackneyed example of this effect, where the anticipation is such that the imagination is over-wrought with a

desire which is also, for the time being, imaginary. Yet the fact that such an event, or the events leading up to its climax, are so media-saturated as well as having a most prominent place in the 'folk' culture of youth, suggest that although the 'first' time is itself a new experience, its value has already been decided beforehand, and thus in fact it does not alter our schemes of prejudice and perception but rather affirms them with some force. If we encountered works of art in this way we would learn little from them, and would certainly search in vain for an altered or exposed purity of identity. And yet we do have to overcome the sense that we have 'seen it before' even in art, for art references in a more or less abstract and ideal fashion the stuff of life, some of which is familiar to us and forms our personal and cultural prejudices: "We discovered that it is precisely this feature of art works and other cultural 'works' that makes them like common sense sorts of expressions." (Sircello 1972:242). Art creates a new venue for sense expressions which are already available in the larger world, in a manner similar to that which holds for the phase of life example just iterated. So where exactly is the difference between what we already know about ourselves and the world and what art appears to know?

For our personal identities, we desire to overcome the sense that we are only participating in the 'role-types' bequeathed to us by larger social forces, dominant or no, as well as recovering the costs or sacrifices we have made for having been made martyrs to the social fabric, at least for the first two decades or so of our lives. The human sciences seem to have little enough interest in such a quest given its individuality and potential narcissism. Science does not distinguish, as does the acolyte of art, between projection and identity. It is to art then that we must turn, for even the 'individual relationship' with a god conflicts with the idea that a personal

identity must come solely from oneself. We do not want to be found wanting when we come home to inhabit the true nature of our being. We do not wish it to be compared as an aspect of being, let alone a unit of organic solidarity. At least within this new space of the spirit, illuminated by its own lightedness of being, we can imagine that we are only ourselves, and that we too have a depth that the socius cannot fathom: "The aesthetic object has depth because it is beyond measurement. If we want to grasp it truly, we must transform ourselves. The depth of the aesthetic object is measured by the depth of the existence to which it invites us. Its depth is correlative with ours." (Dufrenne 1973:398 [1953]). We have been invited, through a sudden dialectic—that which shakes us out of our complacency, or that which is anticipated in a formal an inexperienced way but cannot be described ahead of time—to an intimate dialogue, which has as its goal the process of unfolding self-understanding and the added virtue of comprehending the meanings of this or that work of art. In fact, the work of art has been waiting for this opportunity, in the manner in which a potential quasi-subject can be said to 'wait'; perhaps this can only be imagined as a proclivity, put in place by another like ourselves but one with more foresight and the egotism that accompanies all leaps of faith. It matters not whether the lives united have any further knowledge of one another, as in almost every encounter within the aesthetic realm; they do not, and cannot. Across time and space, existential gulfs of being, and perhaps even cultural barriers, this event is one that proclaims a unison, a *tutti*, rather than a union or a lasting togetherness: "Art from any culture is capable of crossing cultural boundaries. Anyone from any culture, hence, can be placed in the position of reflecting on life in general, but more especially, their own lives in particular. This is how I identify with art. It reminds me of who I really am in the face of

the public mask." (FTNA). At the same time, even if our interpretations will differ, if 'coming to life' means this for myself and that for the artist, this harmony continues between us, as does the dialogue: "It will dwell undivided in several minds, with a claim on every possible mind like a perennial acquisition." (Merleau-Ponty 1964:20 [1948]). Indeed, the longevity of the dialogue is testament to dialogue's risky premises. With any work of art, any meaningful image that may resound within us providing yet another clue on the path to the true selves we imagine extant within us, "... there exists a phenomenological problem with regard to this image, it is to find out for what *actual* reason, by virtue of what active value of the imagination, such an image charms and speaks to us." (Bachelard 1964:188 [1958] italics the text's).

If it is clear enough there is an immediate entrance for the desire of identity to step into with regard to the work of art, then it is so because the work of art as an object only attains its quasi-subjectivity through the appearance of an audience, a public which observes and is also not hesitant about participating in a new creation, that of the aesthetic object. The 'proper gaze' must be seen as one which hopes to find an identity of self within the work, the unison of which we have just spoken. Indeed, we might well understand the previous three ways of using art in constructing personal identities as somehow distracting from this main and final task, that of the exposition of an authenticity to which we can pledge our dying subjectivity. But this would be too stringent an indictment to place on what are in fact other aspects of the same search. It is certainly true that part of the history of art is replete with examples of works whose specific purpose was to allow the spectator's gaze to formulate an identification with the object rendered *within* the work, as in a proprietary landscape which included landowners, or a nude of this or that woman, one with

whom he had slept or no. Generally, however, what we take to be great art is defined as such because each generation can find a profound kinship with it that works its way to the surface from a previously undisclosed depth of being, rather than being part of the onticity of the surface of being in the world, a shallows that harbors only the smallest of creatures, and where the water is fully lit, and every living being can clearly see the others in its pool and pretend that the shadowy depths of unfathomed consciousness lying closely off shore are the stuff of both dreams and nightmares. Rather than this, art plunges us into these depths, with some risk both of sorrow and suffering. Similarly in other art forms, one's expectations must not be simply affirmed or caressed, but they must be alluded to; anticipation and memory must be reminded of their phenomenological relationship, of the fact that they were born as fraternal twins in the womb of consciousness. Gadamer speaks of their being a continuity of expectations that are originally born of our relationship to a history that we may or may not know much about (cf. 1986:84 [1977] where 'declamation' puts the voice of art at risk as being too stentorian an identity, one with which we cannot become intimate). The fact that the social distribution of knowledge and its contents can shift radically over time and does so at an accelerated pace today, allows the work of art in question to move somewhat surreptitiously, surprising us with a new metaphor or parallax, or making something well known into an allegory. The spectator still must actively engage with the work of art, but the history of the narrative is telescoped. The viewer is seeing something that is more akin to a memory or a vision than a true series of scenes which can be relived as they were: "But the phenomenology of the imagination cannot be content with a reduction which would make the image a subordinate means of expression; it demands, on the contrary, that images be lived

directly, that they be taken as sudden events in life. When the image is new, the world is new." (Bachelard 1964:47 [1958]). Thus the art of film, especially through a high technology that emblazons illusion as realistically as possible, attempts to make a new world without regard for the sensibility of the common. If it must reduce a narrative, it can augment the imagery used to speak the song of the myth and make that voice polyvalent, a chorus of additional meanings, and thus extend the powers of the ancient chorus which commented on the plot or called our attention to contradictions in it, foreshadowed, and concluded. The dynamic reintegration of the work of art and our desire for self-understanding into an amalgam of identity is something that takes place as a movement of subject and object, but one in which we ultimately cannot separate the thing we seek from the things that allow us to be so oriented. This process of self-identification carries with it no duty to either artism or the autismal longings of the mimic, nor does it necessarily carry a loyalty to the discourses concerning the arts—though it often must carry some of the knowledge and experience of them: "The identity of the work is not guaranteed by any classical or formalist criteria, but is secured by the way in which we take the construction of the work upon ourselves as a task." (Gadamer 1986:28 [1977]). There is wide agreement on this point in aesthetics, simply because the aesthetic encounter is often seen as being a specific context within the nature of human experience as a whole: "For to perceive, the beholder must *create* his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of elements of the whole that is a form ..." (Dewey 1980:54 [1934] italics the text's). Not only are our encounters with works of art epitomic of

the epiphanies we may undergo with other kinds of experiences, and which may, indeed, be present in most forms of experience which in turn alter our prejudices, there is also an ethical character to the presence of art in our lives that also reminds us of the character of the fellow human being: "Art reminds us to be a better person, to identify with the best aspects of ourselves. If an image is grotesque, it should evoke compassion in us. If it is of a terrible incident, it should invoke our sense of justice. We should be more like art." (FTNA). This likeness is not a superficial one, and we cannot shrug off its metaphor as we would do with those of casual or sentimental verse: "The work is a forceful lover who draws the spectator to precisely those points where he must place himself in order to become a witness." (Dufrenne 1973:51 [1953]). Just as with intimacies amongst humans as pure subjectivities, the quasi-subject of the work of art fulfilled by our presence calls upon us to 'witness precisely' a conjugation which requires of us to be active as well as be the receiver of action. We can feel in both ways, acting and being acted upon, and this homologous unison of lovers embraced allows us to describe more directly the experience of the aesthetic encounter. Needless to say, lovers and friends embrace and make love under the most dire of circumstances, and not always as a celebration of their world. Often, human beings are divorced from their world in radical ways, and seek succor in the presence of others who have also experienced some version thereof. This is yet another reason why art, for modern persons, presents to us the most reasonable access to ourselves, for it embodies the presence and absence of our being by manifesting these shifts as and in an altered world. We can say that what is spoken to us by the works of art we encounter are that with which we are already familiar in some way, but also ideas that are searching and penetrating. They close in on us in their proximity,

but the risk they represent is part of the pleasure of exposition, of the reception of action upon oneself, just as it is with the loving other. That we can present our own versions of the real, often as aversion to the what is real around us, is a unique feat associated only with reflective consciousness, only with a being that is both passionate and compassionate.

Not that we are always acting, or even aware of, our ideals to this regard. It is common enough to acknowledge that when revolutionary or radically political art comes our way, even if its revolution is wholly about form or material, subject matter or performance, we tend to react as if the collective conscience of the society to which we belong was threatened with extinction. Perhaps our defense of this or that sense of what art should be or do for us as a community is related to our search for the ideal self that ironically is oft occluded by that self-same community. The ideals of community do overlap with aesthetic ideals, because the one is supposed to be an ethical guarantor of the good life, and the other a representation that the good life is also sacred because it is both good and thus can be the subject of art. Even social scientists of great note often buy into the relationship between culture and Culture, that is *Kultur*, and its symbiosis which can be seen in forms of *Bildungsleben*. These interests, passions in themselves and also often in a sense vicarious given that the student of the arts might have no artistic ability himself, may be seen as an indirect way of reaching into the self and pulling out a form of authenticity that rivals that which we imagine we receive directly from aesthetic encounters with works of art. Yet there is a challenge here, as what we can aid others in doing does not precisely replicate the experience of doing. There is a distance here that is flattened out after the object which will become fully aesthetic is created. As we have seen, and perhaps no more obviously than in

the textuality of any artwork, the object becomes also another object in the world of the polysemous many to the artist as well as to its audience. The distance that is extant between the regions of consciousness that we have seen labelled as the 'stock of knowledge at hand,' and 'knowledge of acquaintance' is much greater than the gap between our Ego-oriented knowledge of intimacy and the appearance on its horizon of the aesthetic object through the process of aesthesia: "Incomparably more difficult is the reproduction of experiences of internal perception; those internal perceptions that lie close to the absolute private core of the person are irrecoverable as far as their How is concerned, and their That can be laid hold of only in a simple act of apprehension." (Schutz 1967:53 [1932]). The work of art is used as a lever in the opening up of these recesses of being. We have already seen how its uncanniness can foment the frames of our conscious life so that portals understand that they too have hinges, as they swing violently away from their erstwhile extensions of self. The orifice of being, that which emanates an oracular truth in the manner of an ancient temple, is also something that beckons us. Some truths will not be given unless we bodily enter our own corporeal forms, the mind entranced by thought, consciousness examining its cohabitants. Yet this journey, seemingly so intimate and best undertaken as an extended existential solo that overtakes the sometimes clamorous chorus of others, is an exercise in the recovery of meanings which are ultimately communal. It is part of what it means to be human to share our truths with one another. Indeed, they cannot be true as such unless we do so. If self-reflection is an important intellectual 'event,' it carries with it the backdrop that we have somehow forsaken the social bonds that make us charter members of this or that community. The pause necessary for such kinds of reflection to begin and thence for some

of them to seek out art as the *passe partout* and the vehicle for all progress is the sudden knowledge that something we should have known about the other was absent. If it is we who are in ignorance, then it is also the other that is the source of our ignorance, in that she presents to us an incompleteness of being.

These aporia are not merely lacunae as they present a persistent puzzle, and not merely a gap which may be stepped over by other means and through other meanings. This kind of bemusement also affects what we can use as aesthetic leverage. With art that expects us to follow its radical leadership, we may be at a loss unless we recall to ourselves that the media of this 'new' art is already all around us: "The ability to see ordinary material as art material [] thus distinguishes serious audience members from the well-socialized members of the culture, the irony being that these materials are perfectly well known to the latter, although not as art materials." (Becker 1982:50). There are a number of ways in which we experience the presence of the ego in objects, and one of these certainly partakes in the sense that other egos are not only absent, but could never be present, because of their willing or unwilling ignorance—the ignorance of the bigot or the impoverished, and we imagine rather incorrectly that these two cases are often somehow removed from one another—and thus this or that work speaks all the more directly to myself alone. The absence of the other that we feel in the 'special' relationship we might imagine having with an aesthetic object does, however, still have a gravity: "The overwhelming sense I have of art in my life is that of another person. It is both me in an altered form, a better version of myself, if you will, and it is a lover who is different from myself. It is the lover I would have to myself and have myself be. It is my fraternal twin or my sister with whom I can dance or sleep. 'She' replaces all lost loves and is there in my spouse's

absence. Her presence is the lightest weight there can be." (FTA). Its weight is felt because it is not beside us to affirm or to be impressed by our self-discovery. Our triumph might be in danger of being rendered hollow or at least aleatory. We might pretend then to be objective and think that we are merely studying the effectiveness of the presence of art, or that we are part of the discursive accoutrement which attaches itself to every piece known to be art rather than some other kind of object. It is this beauty that impels us to continue to search even though such a task is also at once an *undertaking*. We already know that the self we are at present will be murdered by the encounter we seek. We do not yet know what will be the character of the new self, or what its destiny may be. We do not know if the aesthetic encounter will provide the brilliance we imagine, or that we may have attained this in our intimacies with other human beings. What we do know is that being 'lost in the moment,' with another or with the presentiment of the new self, can be as addicting as any euphoria which speaks to us at once of life and death.

Chapter 6.

Concluding Remarks

As beings who must recreate themselves, we find our alterity in the wisdom and dross of mythic narrative, very tall tales, as it were, with correspondingly more profound homiletic devices. In doing so, we are aware that we will offend our alter egos, because for a time, within each time of stasis, they become altar egos, placed on a pedestal and allowed to preach, rather than replaced by dialogue which is radical and never complacent: "We have in our keeping an angel whom we are continually shocking. We must be that angel's guardian." (Cocteau 1960:66 [1922]). In so doing, we can preserve the presence of the past's perspective, not only an historical past that we have inherited without our will being consulted, but the consultation of the counselor of our own biographical histories, narratives reincarnative of further travels, further shocks, and rebirths. The vision of the artist is the same as that of history, which sees only the changes and never what is called the same. The momentariness of life within the plenum of cosmos and time is not the subject for an historical gaze. The aesthetic object is thus symptomatic of a being in the world which is history, and this is why its character is able to extend the realm of such beings. It is no mere object, as we have seen, and its quasi-subjectivity does not rest within the subjection to another object, that is, its audience, as it demands that we become the quasi-object that subjects also are. If we object to this transformation, we are vain, for it is akin to objecting to history itself: "A work of art is immersed in the whirlpool of time; and it belongs to eternity. A

work of art is specific, local, individual; and it is our brightest token of universality. A work of art rises proudly above any interpretation we may see fit to give it, and although it serves to illustrate history, man and the world itself, it goes further than this; it creates man, creates the world and sets within history an immutable order." (Focillon 1989:32 [1934]). Art thus apports for itself all of the meanings and tasks, as well as all of the talents and gifts, that once were the sole property of religion. In the construction of a cosmogony, a cosmology, and ethics and a morality, in the placing of values in a hierarchy and in responding to existential questions, art becomes the sacred hypostasization of humanity: "Sublimation in poetry towers above the psychology of the mundanely unhappy soul. For it is a fact that poetry possess a felicity of its own, however great the tragedy it may be called upon to illustrate." (Bachelard 1964:xxvi [1958]). It is the very straightforwardness of the everyday, seen only as a set of normative expectations, that denies the would-be of human potential, while at the same time obscuring the will-be of human finitude. To a certain extent, each of these is necessary. One cannot be everything at once, and one must go on living without the immanent threat of the non-living presence that we are content to leave as a temporary shadow. Even so, "In life, only a hopelessly limited mind can believe in the unambiguous in poetry, only a completely failed work can be ambiguous in this sense." (Lukacs 1974:40 [1910]). We may say the same for all of the arts of life which do not have as their ambit the aspiration of human ideals. The practicality of making a life 'work,' when the demand on one's life is that of 'the work,' is too obvious for even art to overlook.

Indeed, this praxis of creation endows life with its imagination, but it is at the same time very much active in the realm where we naively feel the imagination to exist 'by nature,'

the very realm of the aesthetic. For however grand the moment of epiphany may be, and whether or not it is the artist or the observer who feels it and knows its profundity, "... it is also true, that in these moments of simultaneous feeling and thinking, what is being thought consists of a continual dialogue with the world relevant to what is being made. The editorial and creative moment fuse in dialogue with the art world." (Becker 1982:204). We have already understood that the creative process is replete with numerous figures, and just as it begins to cut the fine figure of the artwork 'proper,' it must also immediately be transformed by the spectator in order for it to attain its destiny. This *telos* is no extra-human affair, though it is often understood through the context of the extramundane, something not eminently social in the sense of human intersubjectivity, but, as we have noted, it takes on the mantle of humanity in order to penetrate its depths, bring it out of itself, and justify its own extension of it. In this sense, no other institution can now replace it, or repay it, and art itself is always at the edge of succumbing to the rationale of a species of rationalism: "Art, despite the modicum of heaven it reflects, is something wholly human. As it remains in close contact with man's beliefs, nothing will affect it more injuriously than a rationalized religion. A people without art is a people whose gods are far removed from man and rule him without love." (Gide 1960:154 [1928]). The failure of absentee landlords from time immemorial is a lesson we must bring to bear in our relationship with art and works thereof. Sequestering the history of art in secure facilities and charging for admittance is a symptom of the false valuation of art. We know that such objects are not replaceable, and we know that some of us covet them and seek to borrow status from them. There has been, and remains, a lucrative underground and illicit art market, however much we are told that it would be a challenge for a

criminal to 'fence' stolen work, especially that canonical. Yet the gallery, the archive, or the museum is a guise of 'total' institutions that seek not to transform their denizens, but their visitors. The fact that they also play with effrontery on our anxieties about the rarity of what we will experience, in fact dilutes the nature of aesthetic encounters. It does so by the pretense that only in front of canonical work will one soar above the common lot of life, and that those who do not do so are fated to live commonly, even meanly and meagerly. This sense of both guilt and trepidation, an anticipatory enactmentality that forgets history in order to transpose it into the demonic, does us a further disservice, although there is a response to it that emanates from art itself: "Anxiety about the future robs us of the present, but in the moment of confrontation with death there is no future. The imaginative confrontation with death, therefore, allows the present to be reborn in all its beauty and truth and terror." (Mendel 1974:217). Perhaps this is the finest moment to which art is dedicated, that is, the moment when from whence there is no return, and in the homeliness of our demise, our home is never so far away. This is a moment which cannot be observed subjectively, and the observer who brings himself to the scene does so only by analogy, however heartfelt. No one can tell us what they knew at this time, nor what to do, if anything. We see for the first time the hitherto unseeable, and in this we reaffirm our kinship with the artist: "The modern artist is less a creator than a discoverer of the unseen, the inventor of the previously unimagined that only emerges into reality through him. Yet, remarkably, the measure to which he must respond seems to be the same one to which the artist has always responded." (Gadamer 1986:91 [1977]). Even if death marks the absence of the dynamic of living on, the end of being in this world and perhaps all others that may exist, there is a sense in which art

desires the repose of the death of the subject, as it also entails the ends of subjection, of being objected to, and of being objectified. Resting in this new peace, the work of art reserves its presence for others who have prematurely and in an unguarded moment, let their lease on life to those who rule from afar. These may be experts or rule-enforcers, or even the ideal of the artist as the pure visionary. They may be usurious or envious, marginal or elite. What they have in common is their combined inability to be present in the face of absence. They would rather fully embrace the non-being of the world without Being, and thereby only trespass the boundedness of all that returns unto the world and its spirit. Rather, we must heed the placard's spirit and not its letter, for, "This sign of *return* marks an infinite number of daydreams, for the reason that human returning takes place in the great rhythm of human life, a rhythm that reaches back across the years and, through the dream, combats all absence." (Bachelard 1964:99 [1958]). Not that this eternal return is of the same, and nor can it assume that it will always be as it has been. Too many histories have occurred for the human species not to be aware that its ends as a mode of being, that its participation in the significance of Being or cosmos has a certitude beyond itself. We may feel, in the presence of art, especially significant, as we already are assured that the work transcends history in the sense of it becoming increasingly valued over time. Time does not wither its charms, nor does it erode its market: "But the feeling of significance signifies little. All we have in this case is a potentiality of the imagination; and only when this potentiality begins to be realized in definite ideas, does a real meaning, or any object which that meaning can mean, arise in the mind. The highest aesthetic good is not that vague potentiality ..." (Santayana 1955:94 [1895]). Because of this, and not in spite of it, the irony of art finally comes

to life. Art can make us feel that we have not only found self-definition, but our vocations, our loves, our very being had only needed to be exposed by the encounter with the aesthetic. We are content to leave it there, however, with feeling, vague and dissolute, or with knowing, but as an act of faith and not reflection, or yet of being, which takes its cue from the Being as the world of forms rather than that of those who have formed themselves through living in the world as it is. None of these, in the last analysis, will move us where we imagine we most desire to go: "In original persons, however, such things are elevated to the status of characteristics and constitutive overall personal attributes. Such attributes in turn make a unity of the person and 'save' him from being merely a 'bundle' of activities and experiences." (Sircello 1972:339). To become who we are, as in Nietzsche's exhortation, we must rather know what it means to transcend art itself, and especially, the art of others. Otherwise, the unity of identity with memory, projection, and the uncanniness of there being a life to unify will be lost to us, and is, perhaps, lost in principle, for "Self-unity of this sort is naturally quite uncommon. Almost every individual, whatever his work, lacks not only greatness of soul, but personal identity as well." (ibid.). This is a harsh indictment, but there is a reality to it that must not be casually denied. We have already seen in detail how art, because of the great powers attributed to it, because, indeed, that these characters make up the unity we seek and which we feel is missing in our lives and in our selves, has been beleaguered on all sides by the autismal and artismal abysses of meaning, by the pretense and pretension of all those who worship it 'for its own sake.' But like the marginal whose name was 'Art,' we cannot devote our life and our life alone to the other who has nothing whatsoever to offer in return. Instead, we must play within and without the notion of art, without its full

presence, in order to experience the reason for our feeling of absence. What is it, in other words, that demands of us to seek the self wholly in the other, to become the quasi-object wholly through the now becoming subject, to understand objectivity as intersubjectivity? Only diligent and vigilant creativity in the face of what has been called the ultimate in imagination will free us from such ends: "It is precisely because what we encounter in the creative forms of art is not merely the freedom of caprice or of the blind superabundance of nature, that their play is capable of penetrating all of the dimensions of our social life, through all classes, races, and levels of cultural attainment. For these our forms of play are forms of our freedom." (Gadamer 1986:130 [1977]). Likewise, it is of no ultimate use to us in finding ourselves in the serious discourses associated with art, those of history, aesthetics, or even ethics as a philosophy of standards which take their cues from some of art's ideals regarding what is good and beautiful, what is noble and truthful. Art too, is said to be all these things. The childhood of mature play has a play-mate in child-like awe: "Philosophy is said to begin in wonder and end in understanding. Art departs from what has been understood and ends in wonder. In this end, the human contribution to art is also the quickened work of nature in man." (Dewey 1980:270 [1934]).

By departing from the mundane through the encounter with art, both humanity and its arts are exposed as a singular event. If art departs from the understood, it does so not because it misunderstands the humanity which is its source, but better understands it as being both created in wonder and wondrous creation. All research participants spoke to this sense of wonder and, correspondingly, their astonishment at their own being able to wonder at existence by placing on hold for a moment all those things necessary for our continued existence. More than these

others, art, so often seen as a mere luxury, or as being properly in its cultural place as an elite item of both discourse and market, was rendered subjectively as the most insistent arbiter of the value of human life. It is the suggestion here then, that we pay an even greater heed to what art represents to us as individuals and as a society, without the abstract reckoning of any objectification, and instead within the singular and unified envelope of being which reminds us of the beauty of the absence of Truth.

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