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Art in the light of knowing a cognitive approach to the creative process

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ART IN THE LIGHT OF KNOWING:
A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Fine Art
in the College of Arts and Humanities
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

Art can be an elusive concept. Neither an outsider nor a professional artist is immune to abstractions in the attempt to describe it. Every individual must necessarily come from their own, unique perspective. The obstacles that we experience in defining the essence of art can be better understood if we see them as a gauge for our historical period. Given the limits of our contemporary conditions, it seems impossible that we may ever overcome the vast chasms that imprison us. We are discouraged to build bridges, at almost every turn, by the suggestive hopelessness of the abysmal distances between us.

The series of work that I have developed for this thesis is a reflection on limitations. Whether we find them in the creative process or within the simple contemplations of our life experiences, thinking on our limits can lead us to a heightened cognition where we may find a lofty expression of human freedom. If art is to have a proper role in human culture, human individuals must begin to solve the problems of our limitations through the freedom that cognition affords us. We can begin by thinking imaginatively. Although difficult, it is quite possible to imagine reality. Beyond the mere production of beautiful objects, art is the very current that warms human beings to the reality that surrounds us. Artists can become involved by attempting to immerse their life in a new light of knowledge. With this sentiment, inspiration can begin offering us flight towards unreachable heights. The path that leads us, then, to an authentic concept of art will also take us into the world of another just as elusive: spirit.

DEDICATION

For the Father, Whose love and wisdom is our organization.

For the Son, Whose passion for us is the heart of my fixation.

For the Comforter, Whose soft whispers nurtured the hope towards this conversation.

For humanity, that knowledge might lead us to the grace of our formative foundation.

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Last but not least, I could not have come this far without the love of my family. Mom, Dad, Alice, Brian, Albert, Margie, Carlos, Christian, Alexis, and Abuela and to all those whom I have not named:
I love you all very much.

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INTRODUCTION

Most people do not readily speak of possessing a desire to be limited. Such an appetite would seem counter-intuitive to the general concept of “desire” and that quality of human life that aspires to manifest its dreams and accomplish its goals. It would be in opposition to the condition of individual freedom with which we have come to identify ourselves. Yet, we would be quite limited in our ability to comprehend concepts if it were not for the presence of limitations—like the limiting definitions of words, for example. The attempt to grasp, through thinking, all of the boundaries that bind us can prove to be very frustrating. Some might even deem it impossible. If the reader were to attempt it at this moment, it would introduce the potential for a multitude of digressions and, thus, create a pause in the communication of ideas in this paragraph! It would be prudent to continue the train-of-thought at this point.

In thinking about our limits, one should be wary of being overcome by their legions. The seeming impossibility of this task can easily deter our resolve. We should keep in mind, however, that it is through thinking that we are able to cognize our limits. Thinking should admit to us that, whatever boundaries may be present throughout our experiences, it is by becoming increasingly conscious of them that we are granted an ever greater mobility. By way of the activity in thinking, we can confront reality and lead human freedom to find its greatest expression in the cultivation of individual volition.

The series of work that I have prepared for this thesis is, in a large sense, a reflection on limitations both technically and philosophically. Initially, I had experienced a block in my creativity. My passion for drawing was beginning to weaken along with my potential to be inspired. I had arrived at a level of technical ability with which I was pleased and, yet, I felt constrained by this

arrival. Suffocated by all the ideas I was mulling over for this series, I was tempted to abandon drawing and try all sorts of things. This urge, however, was as much a dead end as the myriad of ideas I was juggling. I felt boxed-in by these two forces. On the one end, it was the rigidity of ideals trying to find a perfect way to express themselves in my artwork while, on the other, the anxious eagerness to start making work kept nudging me away from drawing. I decided to focus and delve head-on to the challenge set before me: how could I regain the creative forces to continue drawing when they felt so stymied?

The most immediate and obvious answer was that I needed to change the approach to my work. Since I was determined to keep drawing as an outlet, I needed to identify those ideas that I could productively address through this new project. One of them was my issue with the conventional foundations of drawings. The ground on which a work is often created forces an artist to either ignore or reckon with this rectangular enclosure. Throughout the course of my drawings I had noticed that I was not fond of the propensity to fill up the entirety of this rectangular prison. It was not that I was incapable of doing so; I simply enjoyed being aware of the relationship between the rectangle, the drawing and the development of gestalt when the inclination to completely engross paper with activity was sensitively opposed. Consider Figure 1 as an example. Although this idea was not fully considered at the time of making these drawings, its presence is still apparent. The crayon marks in the drawing on the left indicate a late withdrawal from the tendency to occupy space while the crayon marks in the drawing on the right evidence a much harsher opposition to this susceptibility. Note, however, that the use of a bluish wash in the background of the drawing on the right came primarily from the desire to intensify gestalt principles. Despite this, I could not completely avoid the impulse to occupy space that I tried to oppose.

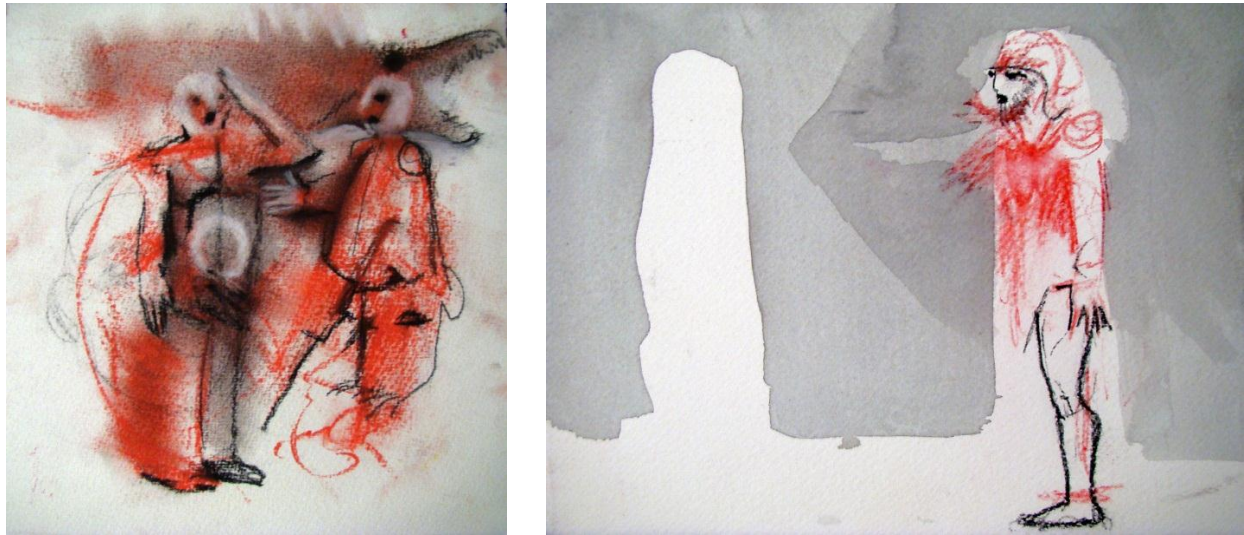


Figure 1: Example of the struggle against the impulse to occupy space

I became much more conscious of the struggle against this impulse when I began to work on the series for this project. Alongside this, I chose to confront my challenge by experimenting with new materials. For one, I knew that I wanted to assimilate my work with thread somehow. In order to move thread through paper, I thought it necessary to use eyelets and eyelet punches to stabilize any threadwork and to maintain the longevity of the paper. Another element with which I thought to experiment was paper itself. The idea of pasting pieces of paper together to produce shape and form or to introduce color, by painting the pieces with acrylic paints or washes, piqued my interest. Lastly, I also courted the idea of using actual objects like paperclips, zippers, and scissors in some of the works. Engaging the challenge to stir up my creativity with these ideas helped to loosen the limits that my creative block was imposing on me. Eventually, I was able to gain more breathing room to become inspired again.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Sometimes, biting off more than we can chew cannot be helped. This is especially the case when concepts that deal with the spirit are approached in language and communication. The variety of ways that people experience these concepts is not only influenced by geography and culture. Individual experience also sets limits on this variety. It is not very difficult to come across a conversation with a stranger—particularly one involving any subject matter that either party takes personally—that leaves us with a bevy of knotted thoughts and emotions that can be, at least, somewhat unpleasant. What exactly makes such an experience possible? Can it be as simple as the result of an interaction between two persons with conflicting perspectives? Would it not be possible to experience just such a bevy without a stranger's physical presence? An author's words in a book might suffice, but there we would be confronted by the physicality of type on a page. Yet, in reading we may readily find that activity that presents our consciousness with the same elements as those involved in a conversation with another person. Surely, given the prowess that the faculty of imagination can afford, it is more than possible to engage in an event within the structure of individual experience which would be analogous to conversation. Where, then, might we find the source wherefrom the notions of this discourse flow? When we engage another person in conversation, any concept which is new or unfamiliar to our experience can be elaborated on by that person. How, then, can we approach an elaboration of new concepts if we come to them on our own?

Finding Inspiration in the Joseph Beuys and Rudolf Steiner Connection

The research I had begun once I started this project led me to discover the artist Joseph Beuys and his theory of “Social Sculpture”. Beuys articulates, “My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture, or of art in general. They should provoke ideas of what sculpture *can be*, and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone” (qtd. in Moffitt, 109) My sentiments on the creative process found a kinship with Beuys’; I felt strongly that art and creativity were simply not extravagant qualities that were used by special people to make beautiful objects. Rather, I held the presence of these two as inner, spiritual agencies that played major roles in every individual’s ability to cognize concepts and ideas—especially any that were new or unfamiliar. In investigating these faculties during my creative process, I had come to discover a meaning to the word “art” that was not often applied to it. It was a pleasant surprise, then, when I encountered a book by John F. Moffitt, titled *Occultism in Avant-Garde Art: The Case of Joseph Beuys*. In the book, Moffitt reveals an intense connection between Beuys’ and the life of a philosopher who has had an ample influence on my work as well: Dr. Rudolf Steiner (105-106).

Object

The discovery of Beuys opened up a fondness for his art that motivated me. This led me to the idea of anchoring this inspiring encounter by dedicating a work to it. Going off on this newfound relationship I created the work seen in figure 2, titled *Object in Response to Rudolf Steiner’s “An Appeal to the German Nation and to the Civilized World”: An Homage to Joseph Beuys*. In *Object I* released a lot of that anxious feeling that gave the impulse to lead me away from drawing. This was a necessary step in order to move on to the rest of the series. More of an exercise in releasing a

distracting anxiousness, *Object* functions as an anchor for the impulse that is working in me towards another, separate series of work. Including it here, however, is important in presenting a step that was necessary for the continuation of the rest of the project.



Figure 2: Object in Response to Rudolf Steiner's "An Appeal to the German Nation and to the Civilized World": An Homage to Joseph Beuys

Although this work is philosophically connected to the series, it is still lacking much in aesthetic considerations. As seen in figure 2 it is unfinished. I thought much about whether or not to include it in this thesis and concluded that it needed to be shown and mentioned. My struggle with the rectangle is still present here as is the preoccupation of filling up space. The wooden box that I

built for it was the largest wooden object I have made. Close inspection of it will reveal inexperience in working with wood and a lack of austere professionalism in its construction. I intend to build a new one that will be better both aesthetically and in execution.

I refer to it as *Object*, for short, and this is quite a fitting name for it. The materials I used make it more sculptural and object-oriented than the rest of the works in this project that are based on paper and image-oriented. The star is made of papier-mâché which is a material that only adds to the third-dimensional nature of this work. Undoubtedly, this stemmed from being inspired by Beuys'. I became so immersed in this admiration that I even took on his inclination towards sculpture. It would have been clumsy of me, however, to misread this attraction by completely changing my artistic discipline. One of the strengths that I have discovered about myself as an artist is my love for images and pictures. For this reason, the rest of the works in this thesis remain broadly two-dimensional with some third-dimensional elements sparsely spread throughout.

Approaching Reality through Percepts and Concepts

Despite these weaknesses, the philosophical weight that *Object* bears on the rest of this project was too much to exclude. "An Appeal to the German Nation and to the Civilized World" was an essay that Steiner had written after the end of World War I. In it he expressed the concept of the three-fold social organism that addresses societal concerns with the development of three autonomously inter-related systems: the economic, the political and the cultural (Steiner, "An Appeal"). This concept was a major inspiration for Beuys', especially in his political activities (Moffitt, 131). The reference to this concept in *Object* is located at the center of the nine-pointed star. Beuys' often used felt and fat in his artwork as central themes, due to their relationship with the

concepts of heat and warmth (Moffitt 151). The basis for the use of these motifs can be found in the most compelling story regarding Beuys' life.

In the year 1940, at the age of nineteen, Beuys joined the German military and eventually became a pilot (Moffitt 129). During one of the winters of World War II, Beuys crashed his plane and on this experience recounted:

Had it not been for the Tartars, I would not be alive today. They were the nomads of the Crimea, in what was then no-man's land between the Russian and German fronts. . . . Their nomadic ways attracted me of course, although by that time their movements had been restricted. Yet it was they who had discovered me in the snow after the crash, when the German search parties had given up. I was still unconscious then, and only came around completely after twelve days or so and, by then, I was back in a German field hospital. . . .

[When I hit the ground,] I must have shot through the wind-screen, since it flew back at the same time as the plane hit the ground; that saved me, though I had [sustained] bad skull and jaw injuries. Then the tail [of the plane] flipped over, and I was completely buried in the snow. That's how the Tatars found me. I remember voices saying "Voda" (water), and then [I perceived] the felt of their tents, and the dense pungent smell of cheeses, fat and milk.

They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt, as insulator to keep the warmth in. (qtd. in Moffitt 130).

The fundamental impact of this encounter had a significant effect on Beuys' and his conceptual approach to art.

In *Object*, I appropriated Beuys' use of felt in honor of this conceptual relationship. Three pieces of felt were hand-made by crocheting strands of wool and then felting the pieces by washing

and drying them. The colors black, red and yellow were chosen to represent the colors of the German flag, Beuys' native country (Moffitt 127). Paperclips were used to attach the felt-pieces to the star. In the same way that Beuys' use of felt housed principles of heat and warmth, the paperclips in *Object* facilitate an illustration of the cold, ruthless binds that were prevalent during the period of the World Wars and strangled Beuys—and the German nation—to near death (Moffitt 129-131).

The three felt-pieces are separated from each other and arranged in a curving form that is meant to embrace the idea of wind or air in motion. Consequently, the relationship of the felt's colors to the German flag becomes more ambiguous in this way. Many Germans would likely see this work and—by way of their experiential life—easily connect the colors to the concept of their flag. One might imagine that they would have a hard time not doing so. If a different person who has no experience of Germany encounters the same concept in the colors of the felt, it would be by way of their conceptual life—that is, their ability to perceive and think through ideas. The difference between these two scenarios is that one assumes the concept of the German flag as if by force while the other *discerns* the concept by thinking through the content of their life experiences.

By imagining the possibility of these two different hypothetical situations—those of a German and a non-German—we can understand that the presence of the concept of the German flag in *Object* must be reckoned with and should not be denied. Truthfully, one can only be blind to its presence. When we look at an object, the concepts that we meet in the act of thinking are not mere abstractions that are subjectively projected onto our observations. The objects of our impressions are only a fraction of the reality of that which is observed. In his book *Intuitive Thinking*

as a *Spiritual Path*, Steiner assigns the word “percept” to refer to “the immediate objects of sensation” or “the *object[s]* of observation” (54). Regarding percepts, Steiner emphasizes:

It is quite arbitrary to consider as a totality, a whole, the sum of what we experience of a thing through perception alone, and to regard what results from a *thinking* contemplation as something appended, that has nothing to do with the thing itself. If I am given a rosebud today, then the picture that offers itself to my perception is limited to the present moment. But if I put the bud in water, then I will get a completely different picture of my object tomorrow. And if I can keep my eyes turned toward the rosebud, then I shall see today’s state change continuously into tomorrow’s through countless intermediate stages. The picture offering itself to me in a specific moment is but an accidental cross-section of an object that is caught up in a continual process of becoming. . . . It is completely unrealistic to grasp at accidental elements and to declare, of the picture revealed at a particular time: *that* is the thing. . . . It is just as untenable to declare the sum of perceptual characteristics to be the object in question. Certainly it would be possible for a spirit to be able to receive a concept at the same time as, and unseparated from, a percept. Such a spirit would then never think of regarding the concept as something not belonging to the object, but would ascribe it an existence inseparable from the object. . . . It is not due to the objects that they are initially given to us without the corresponding concepts but to our spiritual organization. Our whole being functions in such a way that for everything in reality, the elements flow to us from two sides—from the side of *perceiving* and from the side of *thinking* (80-81).

If artists are to understand this aspect of reality, then concepts and thinking must necessarily play an essential role in creating and evaluating any work. Formalist theory, for example, is based on

the conviction “that aesthetic values can stand alone and that judgments of art can be detached from other considerations such as ethical or social ones” (Barrett 107). This theory, though, fails to admit that aesthetic values are defined differently in varying parts of the world and at particular points in history. Thinking on that observation reveals that aesthetic values *cannot* stand alone. At the very least, they require culture and history as foundations for their expression. This definition of Formalism, then, is not grounded in reality. It is blind to the fact that its ideas could not have taken shape in a tribal culture, for example, or during the Renaissance. It could only have been developed within its foundations in culturally-relevant concepts and historically-punctual thinking. Regarding concepts, Steiner explains:

For thinking beings, a concept arises from the encounter with an external thing. The concept is that part of a thing that we do not receive from without, but from within. *Knowledge, cognition* is meant to accomplish the balance or union of the two elements, inner and outer. A percept, then, is not something finished or closed off. It is one side of the total reality. The other side is the concept. The act of knowing (cognition) is the synthesis of percept and concept. Only percept and concept together make up the whole thing. (*Intuitive Thinking* 85).

The felt-pieces, being placed at the center of *Object*, stand as a gate that invites one in to the work’s *conceptual* composition. In strictly considering aesthetic presentations—as is often the case when an artwork is critiqued on its formal composition, for example—we are only offered an incomplete picture of any work. Only by synthesizing what we obtain through thinking can we experience its totality and, therein, find its reality.

Thinking about Thinking

Given what might be perceived as an awareness of the ideas in the previous analysis, it should be noted that a great deal of the visual concepts in *Object* have only become clear to me after the work was finished. I did not set these ideas up meticulously and execute a detailed blueprint for this work. Instead, I advanced in a manner that preserves a role for intuition. Only after contemplating *Object* and the circumstances involved could I then reflect on the thinking that occurred during its creation.

This particular characteristic present in thinking is precisely why I emphasize it in my work. Steiner confirms this wonderfully in writing, “It is because thinking is based on our own activity that we do not observe it in everyday spiritual life. . . . I can never observe my present thinking; only after I have thought can I take the experiences I have had during my thinking process as the object of my thinking” (*Intuitive Thinking*, 33-34). When I look at my artwork, I must realize that I am also thinking about the thinking I have done when I created it. All art must be confronted by its spiritual element *along* with its physical element. By denying or ignoring either presence, we do no justice to the significance that art has for human beings.

THE MORAL CURRENT

Past experiences play an important role in beginning any creative endeavor. To draw a heart-shape, for example, one could not proceed without referring to the mental picture that has been formed out of the past perceptions of our individual experience. Support for this is found if we imagine the varied types of expression we would encounter if we asked a number of different people to make a drawing of a heart-shape. It should not be too difficult to picture the assortment of heart-shapes that we would potentially see: skinny ones, full ones, some simple, others complex, etc. Combine this with the creativity of variations in mark-making, shading, perspectives and other principles found in drawing and we can begin to realize the range of expressions we might discover. The less we establish any rules to the assignment, the more potential there would be for unique approaches to the concept. Finding two drawings exactly alike would be difficult. It would be likelier to find some that are similar. Despite the boundaries set by the concept “heart-shape”, the limits of its interpretation can be overcome by the interpreter’s range of experience and imagination.

Being inclusive of our subjective, inner experiences throughout the world process should enable us, then, to understand reality more truthfully than by limiting the foundations of knowledge strictly to the observation of external processes. After all, that which would unify the wide range of heart-shaped drawings as imagined in the previous example would find its source in both the individuals’ previous, outward perceptions of heart-shapes *and* their inward skill in understanding and expressing its concept through the thinking presented in their drawing. Limiting the sources of our knowledge to the processes observed in the external world would cripple the human capacity for experiencing what remains hidden to sense-perception.

The Limits of Modern Science Regarding Our Moral Condition

A strict concentration on surface processes is the ideological condition of our modern-day sciences. We can witness it at work in the attempt to gauge human consciousness by measuring the presence of electromagnetic frequency (Lockley and Morimoto 212). There are countless other examples that we can study to exemplify the lassitude encountered in scientific exploits. Consider the story of George Price, a scientist of astronomical intelligence, written by Oren Harman. In his book, *The Price of Altruism*, he tells of George Price's search to find "the answer to the riddle of the origins of pure, universal goodness" (363). Given the trials that Price endured throughout his life, resulting in his eventual suicide, the story serves as a sobering account of our modern condition's limits to understanding reality. Even Price's mathematical equation, one that epitomizes the prosperity of social behaviors as a result of the social environment in which they are found, can only serve to portray an externalized picture of what is observed (Harman 209).

The character of this equation is such that it does not acknowledge the residing potential in individual freedom. Its deterministic spirit makes no room in its comprehension for the presence of free will. Applying the laws that are found in the scope of the inorganic sciences to the development of organic sciences only fails to understand that the relationship of those laws are completely transformed within the living (Steiner, "A Theory" 82-83).

The explanation for social behaviors like altruism in the manner of Price's equation, for example, arrives at a conclusion about something that is connected to organic processes with knowledge derived from inorganic processes; this conclusion only casts a shadow that is shaped according to the knowledge of external forces, eclipsing the inner experience of human reality. A world-view based on such an ideology may be accurately described as *inhuman*.

Contemporary developments associated with Darwin's theory of evolution only increase this vexation. Contemplating the existence of mammary glands in this vein, for instance, does not render as accurate a picture as it does for the throwing of a stone. As Harman states, "If Nature was bloody in tooth and claw, a ruthless battle fiercely fought beneath the waves and through the skies and in the deserts and the jungles, how could a behavior that *lowered* fitness be selected? Survival of the fittest or survival of the nicest: It was a conundrum the Darwinians would need to solve" (Harman 3). The modern state of science is such that it cannot proceed beyond the enigma presented by the presence of mammary glands in Mammalia because it restricts all knowledge to the observation of percepts.

Unfortunately, an honest understanding of Price's equation only achieves another description of the external without the *experience* of the internal. Finding a real solution to this conundrum must be inclusive of the organic-spiritual wisdom in humanity. Unless we admit the frailties of feeding our world-view on a strict diet of mechanistic processes, the idea of pure altruism will forever remain a mere chimera. Modern science must be transformed by the inclusion of human, spiritual experience into its considerations of the world. Otherwise it will only succeed in reminding us of the estrangement which our mental life suffers in relationship to the spiritual nature of its constitution.

Connecting Morality to Art

Goodness and morality are concepts that we meet within the spiritual side of our life experiences. Having received a Christian upbringing from my parents throughout my childhood, I rebelled against it during my teens as most adolescents do. I came back to Christianity later on in life, however, out of my own volition. That experience cannot be explained through the mechanics

of mathematical equations or physical processes. Certainly, there is much that we encounter as humans which cannot be explained in this fashion. This more spiritual current of my life-experience is a major influence throughout my creative process.

The two works that follow best exemplify this influence. As artists, our moral dispositions should be given just as much consideration as our creative and intellectual ones. It is in the moral current that we find the dynamic of inspiration. Why else would we decide to do anything if we did not feel it had any significance? What reason would we have for investing our precious time into something if we did not believe its purpose sacred?

Let us proceed to a possible objection against this idea. That we can allow other, less noble, interests (money, sex, power, fear or hatred, as examples) to become the motivations for our actions does not fundamentally negate the fact that inspiration springs from our moral current. We should strive here for a proper approach towards the concept of inspiration and not sully its lofty character by mistaking it for our *drives*. Maintaining our conceptions of this character by thinking on the relationship between inspiration and intuition, we can encounter an idea that may help cognize inspiration. Steiner provides insight into this, explaining:

Only if blind drives are reckoned to belong to the human individuality can we see a criminal deed, or evil, as an expression of individuality equivalent to the incarnation of pure intuition. But the blind drive that drives someone to commit a crime does not come from intuition. It does not belong to what is individual within a person. It belongs to what is commonest, to what is equally present in all individuals and out of which we must work our way with our individuality. What is individual in me is not my organism, with its drives and feelings, but my own world of ideas that lights up within this organism. My drives, instincts, and passions

establish no more in me than that I belong to the general species *human being*. The fact that something conceptual expresses itself in a special way in those drives, passions, and feelings establishes my individuality. Through my instincts, my drives, I am the kind of person of whom there are twelve to the dozen; I am an individual by means of the particular form of the idea by which, within the dozen, I designate myself as *I*. Only a being other than myself could distinguish me from others by differences in my animal nature. I distinguish myself from others by my thinking, that is, by actively grasping what expresses itself in my organism as conceptuality. Thus, we cannot say that the action of a criminal proceeds from an idea. In fact, what is characteristic of criminal acts is precisely that they derive from non-conceptual elements within a human being. (*Intuitive Thinking* 153).

Approaching the concepts expressed here in regards to inspiration and intuition in this manner will help to develop our experience with them.

Figure 3 introduces the work titled *Ephesians 6:12*, or *Ephesians* for short. The frustration with the conventional framing of drawings is clearly addressed in this work. In contrast to *Object* in Figure 2, the form created by the perimeter of *Ephesians* delivers a presence that reads like a body as opposed to a field. The composition of visual elements establishes a more dynamic presence than it would have if the image were placed within a rectangular sheet of paper. One can see how counter-intuitive that direction would have been simply by looking at the photograph in Figure 3. The soft shadows cast on the wall generate an interest in the work's form because it can be interpreted as being separate from the wall. If this white space were part of the work as a rectangular frame, it would be difficult to sustain a purpose for it.



Figure 3: Ephesians 6:12

Along with its visual presence, the verse that inspired *Ephesians* furnishes a metaphor for its conceptual structure. This work may be defined as a reflection on the dynamic presence of the concepts within the words that Paul has written and the manner in which they live in regards to my own spirit. In this verse of the epistle Paul advises the Christians of Ephesus to prepare themselves, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (*King James Version*, Eph. 6.12). Paul reminds the people of this church that the inner struggles experienced by mankind are not against any physically-oriented thing but powerful, spiritual authorities of great evil. The reminder is just as valid today in a society that concedes very little of real, spiritual activity in life and focuses mostly on the surfaces of experience. In fairness, I should confess that my intention is not to rail against this characteristic of our modern condition. Ultimately, we can only begin relating to the world around us by way of observing external phenomenon. This method has provided and still provides a great benefit for mankind. Human experience meets inspiration through both the ability to observe the world and the ability to interpret the occurrences we see in it. My concern lies in that, while there is much to reap from the observation of external processes, humanity might easily move from phenomenon to phenomenon without much considering the activity which interprets our observations: thinking.

Thoughts on Christ Triptych

It may be unusual to say that it was the application of thinking that led me back to Christianity, but that would be a precise description. One usually hears a story about a poignant experience or the word “faith” when someone speaks about their spiritual foundations. Even though I could easily tell such a poignant story or speak about the importance of faith, it was thinking that

threaded all of my experiences together. Religious experiences are not often spoken of in this way and, yet, it is not possible to allow the impact of these experiences work through one's entire life without the presence of thinking. The emphasis on thinking's presence in everyday life, an activity that can help us "grasp the essence of the spirit in the form in which it *first* presents itself to human beings", is given as a metaphor in my work with the use of thread (Steiner, "Intuitive Thinking" 136). The thread in *Ephesians* serves as an emblem for the bond that thinking establishes in our observations.

The use of this material can also be seen in Figure 4, *Thoughts on Christ Triptych*. The subject matter of the triptych centers on the attempt to experience spiritual activity as something that works in concert with our observations of the world. The only way to begin investigating this spiritual activity is from the standpoint of our individual condition and our own observation of thinking. In respect to the relationship between thinking and physiological processes, Steiner observes that "[o]ur organization suspends its own activity—it makes room—and, in the space that has been made free, thinking appears" (*Intuitive Thinking* 137). This quality in the experience of thinking is referred to in the section on the right of *Thoughts on Christ Triptych*.



Figure 4: Thoughts on Christ Triptych

The Right

The figure on the right was drawn so that it would appear to be tied up by the threads sewn through the paper. Similarly, when thinking is intensified in us, our physical activity is restrained by its presence (Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking* 137). The inflamed state of the figure's head corresponds to the imaginative power in thinking that liberates us from the external world and enables us to fashion fantasies and delusions. The separateness of our subjective, individual perspectives is the seat from which this imaginative power in thinking can take on a specifically human condition. It is the facet of imagination that allows us to begin contrasting ourselves and the world so that we may gain knowledge of it. Many might not express that the separation between them and the words on this page is "imagined". Nonetheless, it is precisely this power of imagination that is not often

understood. In imagination, we are not only susceptible to delusions. We are also capable of thinking about the world in a way that is concurrent with reality. While our physical body actually appears separate from the printed words on the surface of this paper, it is through our spiritual organization that we can also lift the words' essential form from our experience of the external and thread this essence within the essential form of our being. It is much easier to delude ourselves by imagining fantasies than it is to imagine reality. That character in our thinking that weakens our relationship with the authenticity of the external world restricts our capability to be in concert with reality.

The Left

In contrast to this, the section on the left of the triptych represents that character in our thinking that manifests itself in mechanical processes. The figure there has a white, diamond-like shape present where there might be a head. Its multiple limbs are another unusual aspect of its presentation. The lacking presence of a body that should connect the limbs introduces the idea of dispirited, erratic action. In this manner, it was my hope to portray the human capacity for error which stems from our human organization. We first come to misconceptions—that is, thoughts and ideas that are disconnected from the body of thinking—and, then, act on them. The ingenuity of an individual's investigation and evaluation of their previous thinking is not led by the enactment of biological processes. Steiner clarifies this by pointing out that biological processes can only reveal the body's condition when the activity of thinking takes place and that only in the *content* of a thinker's thoughts does this activity find the source as a motivational power (Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking* 35). To establish our cerebral processes as the foundation for thinking activity is as

unsound as worshiping a doctor's brain for the proper diagnosis of a patient's condition. Such an ideology can only find itself at odds with the *heart* of the matter.

The Center

In the New Testament, Christ describes the inevitable trials that will be experienced by those who choose to become His disciple. On the purpose of His arrival on earth he has said:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” (*King James Version*, Matt. 10.34-40).

The significance of these words contains the concepts that underscore the triptych's fulcrum.

Christ's sword is best understood by approaching it as a metaphor as opposed to its literal definition.

The beautiful pair of dressmaker's shears is a play on both the literal interpretation of “sword” and the conceptual composition of the author's words.

Bound in a wooden box constructed to the shear's specifications, the genuine purpose for using the scissors is given in the fact that this special tool is intended for use by those who work with dresses. The shear's specific purpose analogizes Christ's living work in our modern times.

Christ is the fashioner of the great promise that is intended for humankind. In the New Testament, Paul writes that it is Christ that has brought down the barriers between the different races of man

and is working to clothe each one of us in a new garment of heavenly relationship (*King James Version*, Eph. 2.8-22). The forcible bonds experienced by members within races and families have been pierced and cut apart, as if with shears. As a result, human beings have been graced with a vast potential for renewal by way of a spiritual liberation from our ancestral bloodlines.

The inspiring power found in the illustrative use of the word “sword,” as given in the previous verses of the Gospel of Matthew, enable our inner organization to interpret it in an appropriate light. Imagination surely plays its part, but not in the fantastical sense of the word. Our imagination is more than capable of approaching the inspiration that served the Gospel’s creation. In drawing near to this inspiration, the potential to mislead ourselves through interpretations that are inconsistent with the Gospel’s actual meaning is lessened. Instead, the richness of our life-experiences is heightened. We might then find ourselves on the path towards a fuller, cognitive connection with the world in the light of the genius that relates the percepts we observe in the fixed condition of a segment of time to the more dynamic fullness of the concepts we meet throughout the whole of experiential reality.

The reliability in the definitions of words is the foundation used to arrive at their creative applications. We would otherwise have no basis from which to depart in thinking. Definitions, however, should not imprison our interpretations of language within the strictness of literalism. Only by harnessing a composed, temperate state of artistic freedom in thinking can we extend ourselves towards the intuition that thinking can afford.

Confronting the Presence of the Moral Current

Up to now I have ventured into certain topics and ideas that may cause some readers to be alienated due to the particularly Christian subject matter. I do not intend this and I hope that those

who feel this way might remain open-minded towards the ideas developed in this thesis, regardless of the readers' ideological background. Great difficulties arise when we begin to communicate ideas that we encounter in one of the currents so closely related to our organic constitution: Morality. As a Christian, I have come to certain ideas of the world and its spiritual evolution that I possibly might not have met if I had been born in another part of the world and raised with a different set of moral ideologies. The fact, however, that there exists varying streams of morality in every part of the world where human beings dwell should not splinter our humanity, but strengthen it in unity. Even atheists, who act according to the ideas derived from the perception of a world absent of any gods, are unable to escape this moral current in life. The significance of any ideology lays in humanity's spiritual organization; concepts influence human action by way of thinking. As long as one is human this essential nature cannot be escaped, even in declaring "I do not believe in any ideology." The attempt to not believe in any ideology should show that one has to integrate their lifestyle to the *ideas* formed from the attempt to exclude all ideological systems. That would be impossible. In the attempt to do this, one unavoidably creates an ideology. The moral current in such a person would be established by a complete paradox. Truth shows us that this would be a dishonest declaration; the lifestyle would be based on fundamentally flawed thinking.

By gathering the courage to reckon with the presence of humanity's ideological inclinations, we may find an approach to human living with which to grasp reality all the more truthfully. Artists, too, must have as significant a role as scientists and philosophers in grasping this reality. Our individual encounters with the creative forces must endear us towards cognition of the expanses we explore through our inner organization. This cognition, which we approach by way of our individuality, gives birth to the inspiring power in knowing. It brings us to the realization of

knowledge by way of our spiritual organization—a realization that remained hidden within the limits of corporeal information. This knowledge does not oppose the substances of the outer world; it is its complement.

The expression of human art in the world relies more on the spiritual organization of humanity than on our physical organization. We find this expressed clearly when, even in the most physically gifted of our species, we consider that the presence of any artistic skill is not universal. If it were bound to physical characteristics, then we would have found a clear system that corresponds to its expression. That these skills can be learned through our experience in the material world does not contradict this fact. The possibility for learning something is not rigorously bound to our physical experiences; it is founded on our capacity for thinking. Gaining knowledge of any kind, too, relies on the content we find by way of our spiritual organization.

Given the conditions of our modern age, we should be wary of defining “art” with the subjugation and manipulation of aesthetic principles to create objects. These principles are transient and tied to historical periods, indicating the ideas that permeate that time. It is equally—if not more—important for art to be associated with learning and knowing than it is to be associated with aesthetic principles. For this reason, I have decided to write openly of my faith and the ideas that have come from my experiences of it. Knowing the importance it bears on the fabric of our individual being, the relevance of morality reveals a serious consideration for the future of humanity’s relationship to the concept of art.

ENCOUNTERING INTUITION

In allowing myself a sense of freedom throughout my creative process, I am able to experience the rawness of thinking as it occurs and record it into the substance of media. The creative process lets me stamp the distinct character of my thinking on the object created. Once the work is finished, the essence of this thinking activity can yet be approached by the element of intuition found in thinking. For the sake of clarity, intuition should be defined here as “the form in which thought-content first arises” (Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking* 88). Steiner delineates this further and asserts:

In examining thinking itself, two things coincide that otherwise *must* always appear as separated: concepts and percepts. . . . [I]f we see what is really present in thinking, we will recognize that only one part of reality is present in the percept and that we *experience* the other part—which belongs to it and is necessary for it to appear as full reality—in the permeation of the percept by thinking. We shall then see, in what appears in consciousness as thinking, not a shadowy copy of reality, but a spiritual essence that sustains itself. Of this spiritual essence we can say that it becomes present to our consciousness through *intuition*. *Intuition* is the conscious experience, within what is purely spiritual, of a purely spiritual content. The essence of thinking can be grasped only through intuition. (136-37).

In the works I have produced for this series, my sights aimed towards this particular experience in thinking. I have chased after it even in the writing of this thesis.

Evolution in the Light of Intuition

In *Evolution of the Thinking Soul*, as seen in Figure 5, I attempt to draw near to the concept of evolution with the resources available from examining intuition. An example of the wealth in this resource is evidenced in the following statement of the renowned philosopher and artist, Ernst Haeckel:

Hence, we must above all . . . compare the highest animal phenomena on the one hand with the lowest animal phenomena, and on the other with the lowest human phenomena. The final result of this comparison is this—that *between the most highly developed animal souls, and the lowest developed human souls, there exists only a small quantitative, but no qualitative difference*, and that this difference is much less than the difference between the lowest and the highest human souls, or than the difference between the highest and the lowest animal souls. (Haeckel 489).

Haeckel is able to express the content of these words by means of the intuition in thinking. There was no substance perceived by any of his five senses that he then measured on a scale to find the valuations he claims. The evaluative power behind this comparison was established through the continual deliberation on the intuition experienced from thinking. Any dismissal of the thought he has expressed can only occur under the total denial of this evaluative power in thinking. We cannot verify the truth in this quote by means of any quantitative measurement. And, yet, one can only refute the lack of a qualitative difference between the highest animal and the lowest human souls without experiencing this intuition in thinking. Intuition should also lead us, however, to an equal consideration of the greater of differences found between the lowest and highest souls in each kingdom. A thorough understanding of these relationships must come to terms with *both* results of this comparison.

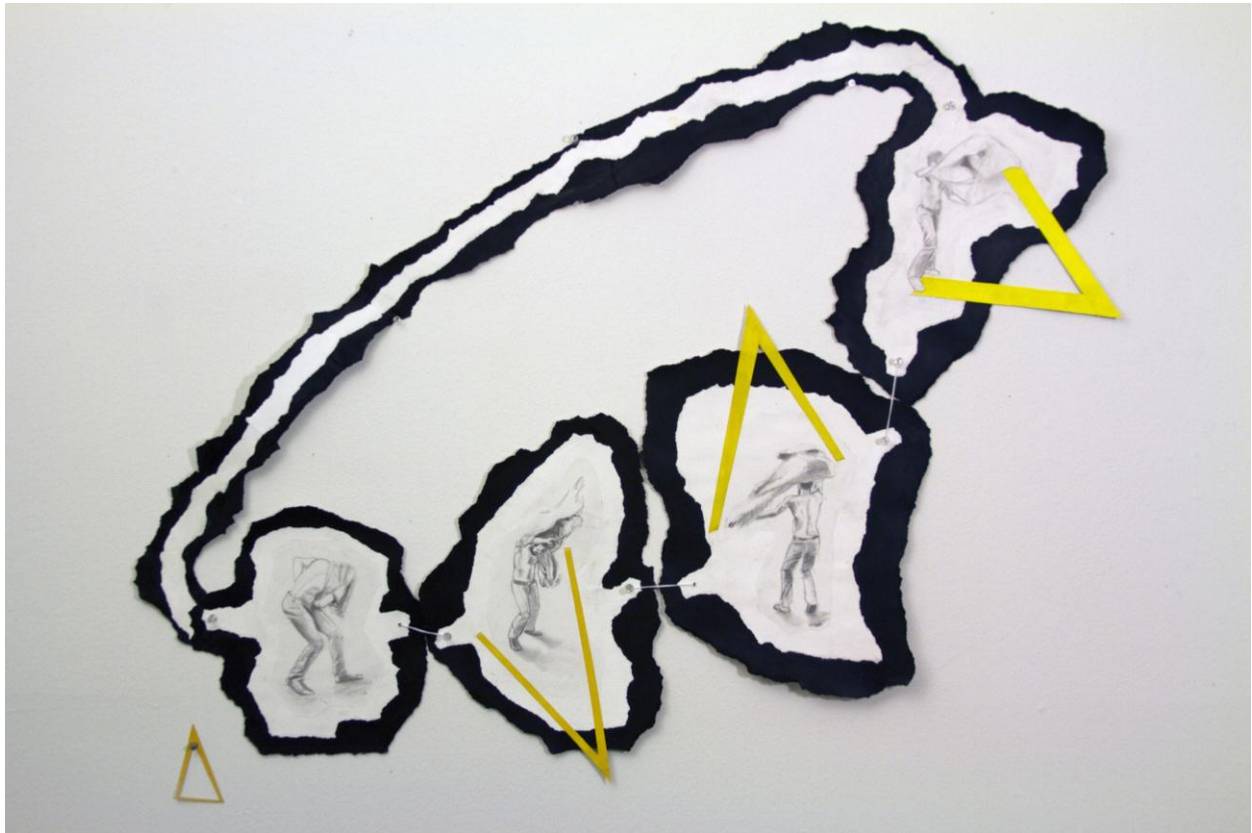


Figure 5: Evolution of the Thinking Soul

An honest investigation of our inner experience should reveal to us that the conceptual nature of the evaluations we establish through thinking is *experienced* within us and not *produced* by our biological organization (Stiener, *Intuitive Thinking* 53). The relationship between thinking and our bodily organization is the concept that inspired *Evolution of the Thinking Soul*. The link between the series of figures and the series of triangles is such that they exist on the common ground of the viewer's observation. The triangle is not generated by the figures. Instead, they interact with each other as separate entities. The succession of figures confronts the viewer in a way that encourages the idea of time to be introduced. The shapes formed by the perimeters of the figures' white grounds, along with the equally organic shapes of the black forms that serve as negative space, give

each figure a sense of separateness and identity. The figures are also unified by the elliptical shape of the entire work. Drawing all of them with the same medium also helped to bring this unity. These separating and unifying elements, then, allow the succession of figures to be read as a sequence in time.

Intuition as a Source of Knowledge

Moving on to Figure 6, we should keep this dynamic between separation and unification in mind. Titled *Thoughts on the Mineral and Plant Kingdoms*, this work also concentrates on the intuitive nature of thinking while considering observations on a different subject: the relationship between minerals and plants. Aside from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's literary masterpieces, the German writer was also involved in scientific research that is lesser-known. Throughout this work, he developed concepts on "transmutation" and "metamorphosis" far earlier than the establishment and regular use of the words "evolution" and "mutation" (Lockley and Morimoto 36). One of Rudolf Steiner's first literary accomplishments was editing Goethe's scientific writings. Throughout the course of this task, he became aware of "a theory of knowledge which was that belonging to Goethe's world-conception" (Steiner, *A Theory* xvii).



Figure 6: Thoughts on the Mineral and Plant Kingdoms

This theory “speaks of an essential nature of knowledge which opens the way from the sense world to a world of spirit” (Steiner, *A Theory* xvii). As a result of his study of Goethe’s scientific works, Steiner had recognized that the insights found in Goethe’s writings—which had been later confirmed scientifically—were not as significant as the world-view which engendered those insights (Steiner, *A Theory* xx). Within the contemplative writings of Goethe, Steiner discovered an individual

whose capacity for intuition rested on a powerful understanding of the nature of reality. In his book, *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*, Steiner's insight into Goethe's world view proved to be a beautiful integration of a scientific search for truth with an artistic sense of vision. I found this approach to science and knowledge to be a great source of inspiration that not only quickened my ideas on intuition, but also lifted me towards developing my own relationship with reality.

Thoughts on the Mineral and Plant Kingdoms

Intuition is what I hoped to express throughout the colors and forms of the work in this thesis. Painted paper, torn or sometimes cut into various shapes, was the means I used towards this aim. *Thoughts on the Mineral and Plant Kingdoms* was inspired by thinking on the relationship between the mineral kingdom and the plant kingdom. Starting with my own, contemplative investigations of a quartz crystal and an apple, I began this work with ink drawings of these two objects. The drawing of the quartz crystal at the bottom is surrounded by dark forms. I realized that the decision to do this was due to the way in which the mineral kingdom appears to our perception. We do not formally attribute any life to it; our senses can only resolve it as a realm made of inanimate members. Yet, its presence in the world and role in the organization of the life experienced by humanity is absolutely vital. The yellowish and brownish form that encloses the top section of the black forms enveloping the quartz crystal is a visual representation that can be thought of, in a way, as highlighting with color. This highlight indicates the significance that the mineral kingdom has for the creative forces that work on it externally.

The apple in Figure 6 was used as a representative for the plant kingdom. An analysis of this realm reveals that the external relationship between the creative forces and the mineral kingdom

undergo a transformation within the organisms of the plant kingdom. These forces are now found working through an internal relationship within the organization of plants. The yellow form that appears to beam from the top of the apple is, again, another highlighting of the transformation of creative forces as expressed in plants. If we follow the yellow beam of the apple upward, the colored form then transitions into an extension that resembles the generic shape of a flower. With the inclusion of the flower form, concepts are introduced that can allow the viewer a chance to think on certain similarities between our own organization and that of plants. Flowers can lead us to a feeling of great sympathy with plants. Their fragility reminds us of the delicate nature of life, of the elements of growth and transformation that we as humans have the opportunity to experience consciously. These similarities only get deeper the more we advance through intuition. However, they are not as obvious as the similarities that our human constitution has with animals. The impact of Darwin's theory of evolution evidences the underlying emphasis given to humanity's connection with the animal kingdom while the equally valid relationships between our constitution and the members of the plant and mineral kingdoms are glossed over. The dynamic of separation and unification that we find between thinking and our bodily organization, as I have tried to address in *Evolution of the Thinking Soul*, is something similar, then, to the relationship of the life forces we find in the condition of the mineral kingdom's inorganic condition and its presence in organic forms. Life is found *within* organic life-forms, but the conditions and forces that allow life to take place also occur outside of these life-forms. Similarly, thinking occurs inside the human individual, while the conditions and forces that prepare and allow this activity also rely on events that occur outside the individual. Without the relationship between *both* the outer and the inner, the universal and the individual, our current experience of reality would not take shape.

The Bull, The Lion, The Eagle and Man

At the top of Figure 6, there is an element to *Thoughts on the Mineral and Plant Kingdoms* that might seem curious. I have constructed a little flap at the center of the bulbous, red form that extends from the flower shape. This flap can open and close and introduces a preliminary drawing for the works that will soon follow. Figure 7 shows a detail of this section. It shows the drawing of an eagle, lion, and bull that come together in a vague form resembling the human body.



Figure 7: Thoughts on the Mineral and Plant Kingdoms detail

This drawing introduces the works in Figure 8: *Thoughts on the Bull*, Figure 9: *Thoughts on the Lion* and Figure 10: *Thoughts on the Eagle*. These works were inspired by the presence of these animals in the book of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation in the Bible. The book of Ezekiel tells of the

prophet's encounter with divine beings that describes, "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle" (*King James Version*, Ezek. 1.10) Similarly, the book of Revelation makes a reference to these animals in describing the divine beings encountered by Saint John in his vision: "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle" (*King James Version*, Rev. 4.7).



Figure 8: Thoughts on the Bull



Figure 9: Thoughts on the Lion



Figure 10: Thoughts on the Eagle

Color, again, is a very important element in these three works. The drawings are more or less central to each composition. The familiarity of the animal forms that have been drawn with respect to traditional realism allows the viewer a chance to immediately begin thinking about the work. Once the recognition of the animal has been made, however, the abstraction of colors and forms that surround the animals must be approached differently. The thinking that interprets the drawing of the animal must become more active and the viewer must fully participate in the act of thinking if he or she is to go beyond the easily recognizable forms to the more abstract forms. It is there that the viewer can find an opportunity for experiencing thinking in a way that allows the possibility for encountering intuition.

Through abstraction, we can experience a double-edged sword. On one side, the artist wields an enabling tool of personal expression. In his book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Wassily Kandinsky reveals this about abstract painting:

A painter, who finds no satisfaction in mere representation, however artistic, in his longing to express his inner life, cannot but envy the ease with which music, the most non-material of the arts today, achieves this end. He naturally seeks to apply the methods of music to his own art. And from this results that modern desire for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, for repeated notes of colour, for setting colour in motion. (19).

This sentiment characterizes abstract work in the light of an artist's desire for inner expression. On the other side of this sword, we find the experience of the viewer. Abstract art also provides an opportunity for artists to connect with the audience in a way that is different from representational work. It is this opportunity for a different kind of relationship between the viewer and the audience that renders the authoritative power in abstract art. The relationship does not hinge upon an artist's

skill in representing reality with a strict adherence to the manner in which it appears through observation. Instead, in the abstract, both the artist and the viewer are opened to the use of other faculties within the structure of experience. Thus, artists can create a greater relationship with themselves and the audiences that experience their work.

If the viewer comes to actively participate in thinking on the experience of these works, then the works become complete. The one characteristic of the visions referenced from the books of Ezekiel and Revelation that is missing in these works is man. I have omitted the human description of these visions because I realized that this aspect would eventually become present. The viewers' experience of these works is enough to uphold an incorporation of the human element. Without the participation of the audience, these works lack an essential component.

Plato's Analogy of the Line

Figure 11 introduces another work in which I incorporated the idea of the viewers' participation to a greater extent. Even its long title, *Plato's Analogy of the Line in a Paperclip: Analogy of an Analogy*, requests a lot of the audience! I cannot essentially refrain from asking for as much as I do of people in the analysis of my work. My faith in the human capacity to understand art is such that I rely on others to be able to approach the concepts in my work in a way that I cannot do on my own. My own interpretations can only achieve an exhaustion of these works for other people. It is the experience within other viewers that can allow for the cultivation of intuition within their own thinking activity as well.



Figure 11: Plato's Analogy of the Line in a Paperclip: Analogy of an Analogy (External)

The work in Figure 11 (*Analogy*, for short) was inspired by a renowned analogy that Plato uses in his dialogue, *Republic*. The analogy was used in the attempt to clarify his views on the structure of reality. It is presented in *Republic* shortly after discussing his Simile of the Sun and is supposed to complement it (236). He concludes this simile, saying:

Well, here's how you can think about the mind as well. When its object is something which is lit up by truth and reality, then it has—and obviously has—intelligent awareness and knowledge. However, when its object is permeated with darkness (that is, when its object is something which is subject to generation and decay), then it has beliefs and is less effective, because its beliefs chop and change, and under these circumstances it comes across as devoid of intelligence. . . .[W]hat I'm saying is that it's goodness which gives the things we

know their truth and makes it possible for people to have knowledge. It is responsible for knowledge and truth, and you should think of it as being within the intelligible realm, but you shouldn't identify it with knowledge and truth, otherwise you'll be wrong: for all their value, it is even more valuable. (235-236).

Here, Plato establishes goodness as the foundation of reality.

In the analogy of the line, Plato renders a line to depict four different mental conditions. He first divides the line in two, unequal parts. This smaller piece is appointed to the visible realm while the larger piece is appointed to the realm we first encounter through thinking. Then, he takes each half and breaks them in the same proportion as the first division. In the visible realm, the smaller portion is described as being made up of shadows, reflections and images. The larger portion is made up of the things to which shadows and reflections owe their existence. As was shown previously in Steiner's writing, the objects of our perceptions, for Plato also, do not constitute our whole experience of reality. As for the realm of thinking, the smaller section of the line is assigned to beliefs and ideas. This is differentiated from the larger section which Plato signifies as Forms and truth. Each part is divided up according to "truth and lack of truth" (238). Figure 12 shows one possible expression for this divided line with labels corresponding to each section.

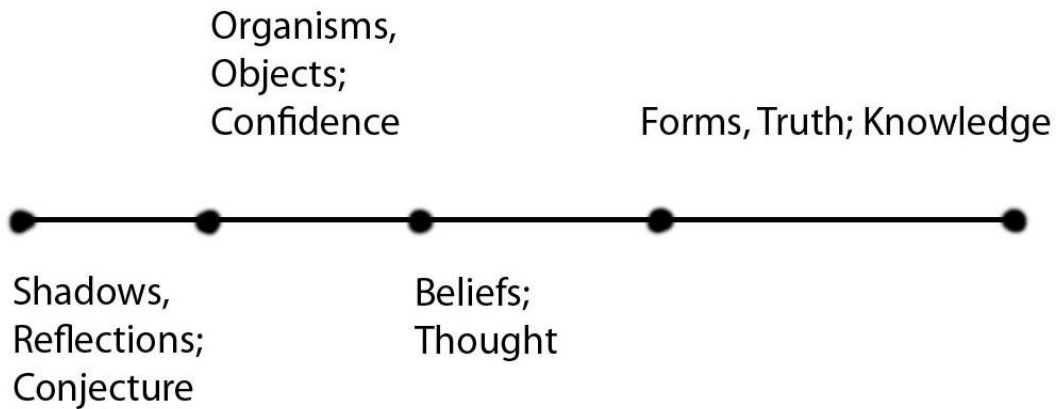


Figure 12: Plato's Analogy of a Line

Plato also mentions that each section corresponds to a condition of the mind. The lowest is represented by conjecture, the next by confidence, the third by thought and the highest by knowledge. The analogy, then, not only describes what Plato understands to be the structure of reality, but also the character of the mind as it experiences each section. Goodness, however, is the foundation for all of this because it “gives the things we know their truth and makes it possible for people to have knowledge” (236).

For *Analogy*, I decided to approach Plato's line in my own way and, in doing so, I chose to use the paperclip as a centerpiece. The paperclip was chosen for the same reason that the scissors were chosen in *Thoughts on Christ Triptych*. I found that the paperclip was perfect not only for its quality as a line but also because it is a line that is bent into four sections. Along with the use of paperclips, I also incorporated a zipper by tearing the front of *Analogy* into two, nearly symmetrical pieces. These pieces are joined by the zipper, which is fully functional. I have bound two paperclips

together, with some thread, in the shape of a Greek cross. I chose this shape in honor of Plato. The cross was attached to the zipper's handle and allows the zipper to be opened and closed more easily.

The front part of *Analogy* corresponds to the first and third sections of Plato's line. The paperclips, in the form of a Greek cross, are bound by thread which forms an "X" across the center—or another cross. This brings in the character of the first section of the line, of shadows, metaphorically. The Greek cross is formed by one paperclip becoming subordinate to the other. This relationship is as our shadow's relationship to our body. The chalk drawings on the black forms in Figure 11 correspond to the third section of the line: beliefs and thought. They read as crude drawings of paperclips. I make use of the general shape of paperclips in order to express the idea of a paperclip. This belief reflects the mental state of "thought", as characterized by Plato. These drawings are not true knowledge, but a representation of the idea of an object.

Figure 13 takes us into the internal part of *Analogy*. Its inside corresponds to the second and fourth sections of Plato's line. Immediately, we are met with white forms made out of torn paper. We might come to think of this as a metaphor for the "bones" of reality. Along with the white forms, there are all sorts of clips and other objects that have been integrated with the structure: binder clips, hair clips, safety pins, hooks, earrings, jewelry pieces, etc. All of these are used to fasten and hold things together. They exemplify the objects and the state of confidence as characterized by the second section of Plato's line. Their conceptual relationship to each other, and to the original paperclip, is a representation of the fourth section (Forms and knowledge). Knowledge is in a constant relationship with truth and reality. The connection between all the objects on the inside of *Analogy*, then, comes much closer to the actual, ideal Form of a paperclip than the crude drawings on the outer structure.



Figure 13: Plato's Analogy of a Line in a Paperclip: Analogy of an Analogy (Internal)

This Form, however cannot really be drawn or painted. It can only be represented or experienced. That is why Figure 13 also shows another zipper place behind the activity of this internal realm. The zipper is not functional. Its intention is not to reveal the Form as defined by Plato, but to show that the actuality of its existence can be understood. The zipper cannot be opened because it cannot be revealed in external images. It is revealed in the experiencing of reality.

Thoughts on the Foundations of Reality

The final work for consideration is presented by Figure 14: *Thoughts on the Foundations of Reality*, or *Foundations*. The inspiration working here is based on the relation of mathematical concepts to the experience of reality. It starts with Jacob Boehme's approach to describing God's

presence in our inner being and the revelation of His presence through love. Boehme writes in *The Way to Christ*:

When God hides Himself in you, love is there and reveals Him in you. And when I further say, ‘He who finds love finds nothing and everything,’ this is also true, for he finds a supernatural, supersensual abyss that has no place as its dwelling and finds nothing that can be compared to it. Therefore one compares it with nothing because it is deeper than everything. Therefore it is a nothing to all things because it is incomprehensible. Because it is a nothing, it is free of all things and is that single good that one cannot tell what it is. When I finally say, ‘He finds everything who thus finds it,’ this is also true. It has been the beginning of all things and rules all things. If you find it you will come into the ground out of which all things proceed and in which they stand, and you will be in it a king over all the works of God. (179).

Boehme’s description of “nothing” as an experience in God is the inspiration for the black circle in *Foundations*.

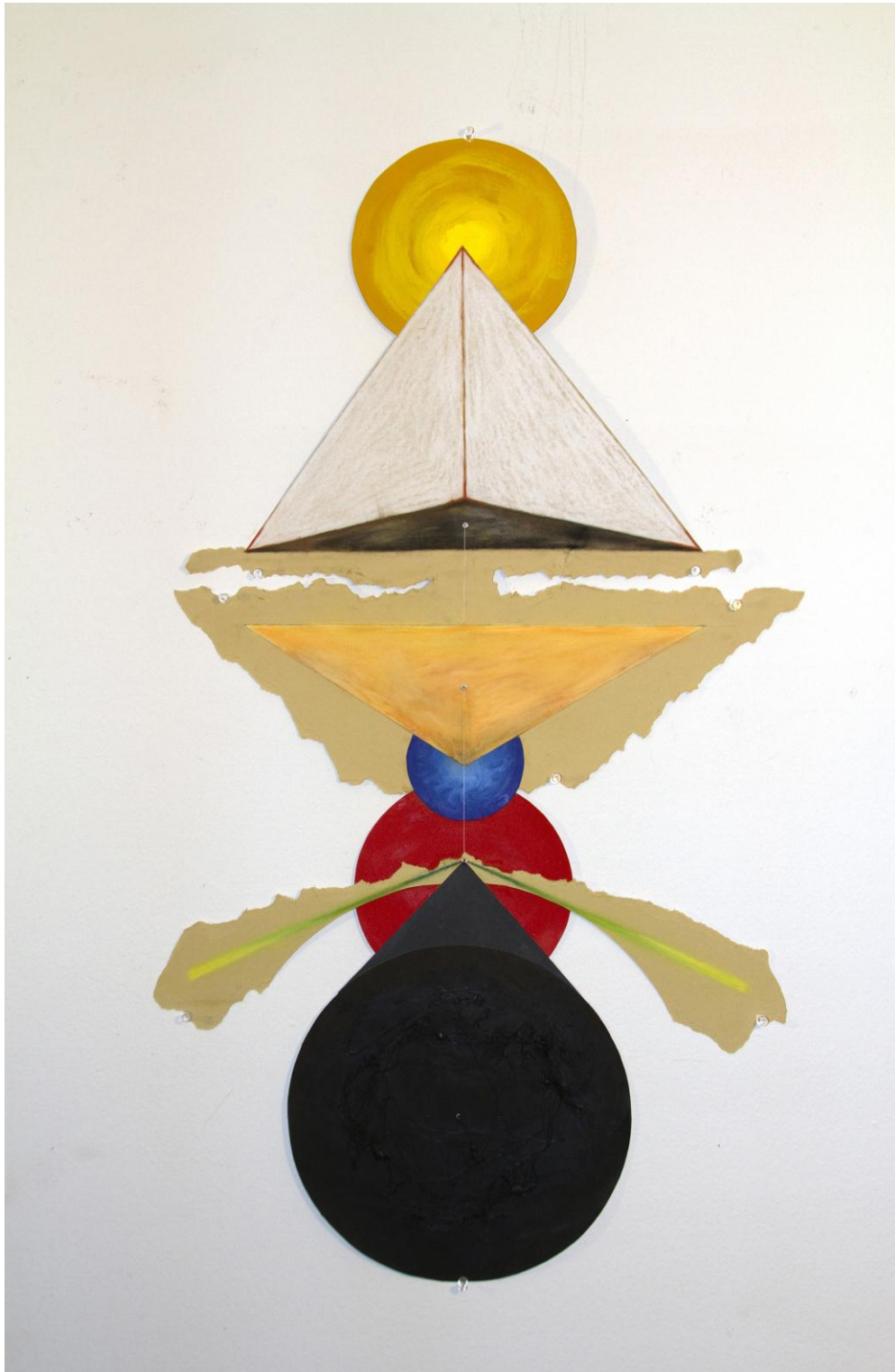


Figure 14: Thoughts on the Foundations of Reality

Conceptually, the word “nothing” is quite interesting. When we think about it, we do not actually experience the purity of its definition. In using the word within the confines of our experience, we are only indicating emptiness or the absence of something. In that absence, however, is either the idea that *something* is missing or that a particular space is empty. We hardly ever use it in the gravest sense of the word. If we can commit ourselves to a proper idea of “nothing”, then it might only be done in silence. In defining it as a word, we are already attaching *something* to its experience. Even in the attempt to experience it, nothing comes to us as something by way of experience. Boehme, in other words, is characterizing something quite special in the concept he is expressing. In *Foundations*, the black circle stands as an image for Boehme’s conception of “nothing”. As flawed as this representation is, we can at least see an attempt to indicate the “ground out of which all things proceed” (179). From there, we can proceed upwards to a representation of the subsequent layers that comprise reality.

If we think of the green lines that extend towards us as the boundaries of a pathway, then we can arrive at their intended direction. It is meant to express an idea of the first dimension and corresponds to the first-dimensional quality we might characterize in plants through their growth and stature. Moving to the orange-colored triangle above, its flatness should relate a second-dimensional quality in the center of *Foundations*. Going further still, we can find a white pyramid at the top, depicted in a third-dimensional form. These dimensional qualities express a relationship in which each form is transformed. Notice that in the representations of each dimension, a general triangular shape is intended to portray a sense of connection between each one. This connection is emphasized with the use of a single thread weaving into each stage of transformation.

The complexity of this work might find some justification. In our relationships with others, we tend to find that our experience of reality is often shaken—even if we have a very stable foundation to rely upon. That others rely on different foundations is the very source of the conflict we find when we meet other individuals. This conflict is not necessarily problematic. In the meeting of two or more forces of varying foundations, we find a remarkable opportunity for impact and absorption. The rhythm, or lack thereof, that is encountered in such meetings can often weave the most complicated webs of thoughts, feelings and wills. In attempting to describe the intuition I encounter in other people, the scope of language seems inadequate towards this end. Its manifold presence is very difficult to approach with the character it deserves.

Just as the black circle could never truly depict the reality of “nothing” accurately, neither could any of the other forms come close to the reality they attempt to represent. The ideas, however, still relate in a way that can become understandable through reflecting on the work. Mathematically, the third dimension relies on the second which relies on the first. In order for each dimension to find expression, it depends on the underlying system that composes its foundation. Our reality is no exception. In *Foundations*, I attempt to describe my own inner experience of this foundational relationship analogically.

Humanity, Art and Intuition

It should go without saying that, without humanity, art would be very different. Since I find myself agreeing with the notion that art would still be present in nature, I cannot confidently assert that art would not exist. However, we can all agree that there would be a great vacancy in the presence of art in the universe, without human beings in the picture. There is a critical significance in the differences between the relationships that art has with each kingdom we find: the mineral,

plant, animal and human. As I have mentioned before, the prevalence of Darwin's Theory of Evolution tells of the obvious relationship between animals and humans that is accepted nearly universally. Thinking that encompasses the faculties we find in art, however, does not stop here. Imagination, inspiration and intuition reveal that this relationship extends itself to the plant and mineral kingdoms as well.

In contrast to the sensitive nature of the relationship between art and human development, Paul Messaris seeks to address art without this understanding. The book *Visual Literacy: Image, Mind & Reality* is Messaris' attempt to clarify his perspective on the human experience of images. He admits to feeling conflicted in using the term "visual literacy" because he sets out to reveal the essence of "images for what they are: sources of aesthetic delight, instruments of potential manipulation, conveyors of *some* kinds of information—but not a language" (3, 26).

Given this perspective, it seems Messaris would likely express an indifference towards the experience and concepts we are capable of finding through intuition. He makes a valid point in emphasizing that we sharpen our ability to interpret images by way of our experience with reality than by our learning any systems or conventions found in the structure of creating images (165). However, there are greater principles at work in the *experience* of imagery than is found in what defines an image. In trying to define the reality of imagery with the conception found in Messaris' book, I get the feeling that the author confines his definition of imagery to photographs, paintings, film and other such objects. The reality of images, though, is not bound to this definition.

Messaris claims, "Because images *reproduce* aspects of our direct, unmediated experience rather than encoding it arbitrarily, familiarity with images does not entail the acquisition of a system of conceptual categories or of a set of analytical operators for ordering those categories" (165). It is

clear by this quote that Messaris has not recognized the implications involved in the fact that only a fraction of reality is imparted to our experience in a pictorial manner. Images do not only *reproduce* characteristics of our experience; they *are* a part of our experience. A word is a percept of a specific concept. In regards to the images of our experience, it also follows that these *are* mediated. The images perceived from reality cannot be integrated into our experience without *thinking*. Our human organization leads us to cognition only if we are able to synthesize either a percept (image) with its corresponding concept or a concept with its corresponding percept. If we take either one of these ingredients away, we have no fertile grounds for understanding. Messaris' conclusion, then, that "visual literacy is unlikely to lead to any broader cognitive advantages analogous to those that result from learning a language" is valid only if we define "visual literacy" strictly with knowledge of aesthetic principles and nothing more (165). If we look beyond the constraints of this definition, however, this conclusion loses ground.

Beyond the severity of definitions, we find thinking to be the resource for literacy. Through thinking, we become mediators of the relationship between the visible and the invisible. Intuition is a revelation of the significance of what we experience in the immediate presence of that experience. No rigorous, methodical experimentation is developed to prove the validity of its content. It is valid for us because we find an intimate connection with the experience. We can, just as rightly, experience thinking with our whole body as we can with our head. This kind of thinking can find its expression through art. The human eye discerns specific concepts from the images it perceives by way of thinking. Visual literacy, then, should be approached under this relationship. Concepts are not only expressed in words and language. We experience images, also, as the immediate expression of concepts. Our ideas of the world must retain a sense of artistry if we are to delve any deeper into

reality. Here, within the human being, we find an experience for art that invigorates the connection between us and that which we might find hanging on a wall or played on an instrument. Intuition releases the spirit of art from the limits of feeble definitions and allows us to free our experience of thinking from the constraints of our underdeveloped conceptions.

CONCLUSION

There is a great deal of complexity involved in the attempt to express the objective nature of that which belongs to the conceptual environment. Much of it arises out of a destiny of human density: the fructification of the individual. In recognizing the difficulty I have experienced in expressing the ideas I have tried to address, I can imagine that readers of this thesis might wonder at this point about the purpose in this project. What exactly was the significance of exhausting the work and the experience of the creative process in this thesis?

Regarding this, I would like to confess my awareness of the limitations I have placed on my work through the previous explanations and analysis. Some artists feel the same way about art as Friedrich Nietzsche did, whose philosophy “embraces ambiguity, and . . . engages in [the] hidden depths of works of art” (Barrett 148). This seems to be the characterizing influence that often discourages artists from talking about their work and providing what would be, in their opinions, an inflexible ingredient that would undermine the ambiguity and hidden depths they cherish.

I do not completely disagree with this position and, in fact, I acknowledge the importance of confronting the enigmatic and mysterious as a necessity for human development. However, I wholeheartedly oppose this perspective when it attempts to imprison the artist within the realm of questions, never to see the light of answers. A perspective as undermining of the potential in human cognition such as this causes crucial harm to the purpose of art for humanity.

My attempt to disclose, throughout this writing, the inner experience of my own creative process and the thinking done throughout the works that I have presented has come from the character of my individuality. In no way do I propose that all artists write about their processes and works with equal measure to the efforts they put in creating. Some artists may benefit from writing

while others do not. As artists, though, we all benefit in the act of thinking about our work and the creative processes we experience. As individuals, applying our experiences within the creative process—namely, the experiences of imagination, inspiration and intuition—broadens the scope of our understanding.

In closing, my aim for this thesis was to convey three essential ideas that constitute the conceptual grounds of my approach to the creative process. First, knowledge must have its foundations in reality. What we, as humans, experience as the separation between what is given by our sense-perceptions and the concepts we find in the act of thinking is a product of our *total* organization. Knowledge is the union of these two elements, which we experience from different sources. Our sense-perceptions rely on our outer conditions while our cognition of reality relies on our inner conditions. That which allows us to become knowledgeable beings, then, owes itself as much to what cannot be perceived by the senses as to that which is sense-perceptible.

Secondly, given the character of our experience of reality, the moral current is integral to our organization. In order to find an appropriate disposition to the wondrous experience that comes with being human, we must begin to cognize the essentials that come to us from our inner nature. It is the role of each individual to find the significance proposed by the radical nature of our relationship to the ideological. Given the separation between the external world and the individual, we should not let this rift overwhelm us. Through cognition we have the potential to sew it back together.

Finally, there is more involved in thinking than is generally thought. Thinking shows us that the role of intuition is vitally important for cognition. The lack of the physical actualization of a specific experience throughout an individual's lifetime does not obstruct that individual from

bearing its knowledge. Knowledge of the conceptual constitution of any experience relies on the individual's *thinking* on those concepts. We cannot meet this knowledge in the investigation of its parts. We must consider the whole structure of human experience. Thinking, then, is more than just a dream. It is a *conscious* dream. Its relevance to art is as indispensable as it is for science or philosophy. More importantly, however, is the significance that art has for thinking. This series of work, while a reflection on limitations, was also an attempt to find meaning within them. Its primary aim was developed with the hope of engendering an experience of human freedom.

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