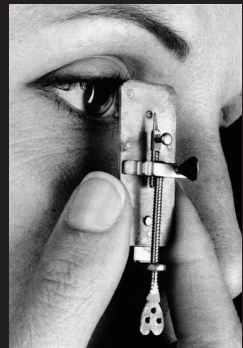


Being Through Painting and Weaving: A Brief Commentary on Intuition

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Prologue

Before you begin to read this paper, take a moment of your time to walk outside. Breathe in the air, feel the cold wind enveloping your body, and find a pebble or a rounded stone. Place the stone in front of you on your desk and choose a piece of classical music to listen to. Pick up the closest pen to hand, hold the stone in the other, and take five minutes to feel the inspiration. Then, make a mark(s) on the stone – any mark, anywhere. When finished, place the stone back on your desk, put the pen to one side. Leave the music playing if you wish, and continue to read.

Introduction

This paper represents the most recent attempt in an on-going project to formulate an account of artistic creation (in relation to the visual artefact) that leaves behind the prevailing notion that the human practitioner works upon, and is separate from, an inert material world. This idea is seen, in particular, in some of the contemporary approaches of psychology (Hodgkinson et al., 2008), where creative processes such as intuition and inspiration are understood as ‘impulses’ or ‘feelings from within’; they are classed as somatic and affective hypotheses about the world that occur prior to rational thought, encased within the experiential dimension of the human body. Such accounts presuppose a clear boundary between the body in which the intuition or inspiration is ‘encased’ and the external world out of which it forms its hypotheses.

This model of creativity is embedded within particular ‘matter-form’ models of creation, such as that of ‘hylomorphism’ (Simondon, 1992), which have become axiomatic across much of Western art and media theory,¹ history and philosophy.² This theory maintains that an artefact (a statue, for example, or a basket)

is created by the imposition of a pre-defined form (morphe) by the practitioner upon an external inert material (hyle). Its creation is understood in terms of a design specification applied to a material, which can be traced back to a pre-designed form in the mind of the human agent.

This paper, in contrast, proceeds from the claim that the mind cannot be confined to the brain or body of the practitioner, as accounts of the ‘extended mind’ reveal,³ but extends into the wider components and processes of the environment, which include that of an energised matter. As such, what can be termed as the ‘inspiration’, ‘impulse’ or indeed ‘intuition’ underlying the human creative process cannot be fully accounted for by human agency, but requires a framework that can encompass a more distributed account of human creativity.

In the attempt to extend the notion of inspiration beyond the body of the practitioner, the work of Merleau-Ponty (1964), in particular, provides an account of artistic ‘inspiration’ that is distributed amongst the wider processes and forces of the milieu or environment that (in some way) gives rise to the figure depicted. Here, the formal, figural qualities of line and

shape cannot be separated from the wider context of the object they are depicting or the materials being used. Merleau-Ponty reveals that, for practitioners such as modern painters, the very movement of the line's generation, of the stroke, is bound up in a complex entanglement of forces emanating from the body, the materials and the environment in which they work.

Following Merleau-Ponty, this paper moves the focus away from the analysis of a pre-established form imposed upon inert matter and focuses upon these distributed processes of 'form-giving' that give rise to 'human-made' forms. Through building an account of artistic inspiration that reflects upon the actual processes of the practices of painting and weaving, it provides an alternative account of the human (as drawn from the work of Merleau-Ponty, 1962; 1963; 1964) – one that is reciprocally bound to the environment, within which it can be situated as a small commentary upon the process of artistic intuition.

A distributed inspiration

In his work, *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty (1964, pp. 178-179) declares that the entire history of painting during the modern period, including its efforts to detach itself from illusionism in order to acquire its own dimension,⁴ always had a metaphysical significance. However, this significance is of a different order to that accounted for by the idealists in the field of the psychology of perception. The metaphysical, for Merleau-Ponty, is existential – extending out beyond the body and intermingling with the objects of the world. His account of mind and inspiration, drawn from the arts, is a central tenet of his existential phenomenology; it is most fully articulated in his earlier work challenging the psychological accounts of mind that prevailed in the early 20th century, which viewed sensation as a reflex of external stimuli.

In *The Structure of Behaviour*, Merleau-Ponty (1963, p. 11-14) builds a model of existential 'stimulation' in which he argues there is no one direction of stimuli and response; instead, both the milieu and the organism's perception are co-constituted or intermingled, and emerge through movement and behaviour:

The properties of the object and the intentions of the subject ... are not only intermingled: they constitute a new whole. When the eye and the ear follow an animal in flight, it is impossible to say 'which started first' in the exchange of stimuli and responses. Since all movements of the organism are always conditioned by external influences, one can, if one wishes, readily treat behaviour as an effect of the milieu. But in the same way, since all the stimulations which the organism receives have in turn been possible only by its preceding movements which have culminated in exposing the receptor organ to external influences, one could also say that behaviour is the first cause of all stimulations. Thus the form of the excitant is created by the organism itself, by its proper manner of offering itself to actions from the outside. ... The environment emerges from the world through the actualisation or the being of the organism – [granted that] an organism can only exist if it succeeds in finding in the world an adequate environment. (Merleau-Ponty, 1963, p. 13)

For Merleau-Ponty, the properties of the milieu (of the object) and the intentions of the subject are co-constituted; there is no primacy of either world or perception (intention) as they are symbiotic and constitute a new 'whole' or reality, which is seen as emerging from this intermingling. As such, he declares that the true source of any 'stimulation' is movement or behaviour – a behaviour that is constituted by the co-dependence of organism and milieu. Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology thus provides an account of the mind of the practitioner as not confined by the boundary of the skin but extending into, and intermingling with, the objects and bodies that consti-

tute the milieu, the cause of which is behaviour and movement. The effect is the emergence of a new reality or 'whole'.

The painter's vision is, for Merleau-Ponty (1964), not a 'physical-optical' view of the outside world. The world does not stand before the artist as a representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself through the visible (a coming-to-itself that is born from the movements and gestures of the artist as they paint) (pp. 179-181). This understanding puts an emphasis upon the wider processes of how a painting comes about, rather than what a painting represents. As such, following the writings of modern artists such as Klee and Cezanne,⁵ the activity of painting is seen as a rendering visible of the invisible forces that constitute the 'distributed mind' of the artist – forces and processes of mind that are distributed in the environment. As Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 166) declares, the mind of the artist goes out beyond the body to wander among objects themselves. Built upon this distributed model of mind, his description of the processes of the painter during the modern period speaks of 'inspiration' in a literal sense:

There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration in Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between who sees and who is seen, who paints and what is painted. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 167)

Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology accounts for a painter's mind that flows like air between the body and the world, between the subject and the object, beginning and residing in neither; mind cannot be attributed to a single body, but is relational between all bodies.

Merleau-Ponty's model of mind and painting as distributed amongst the processes of a wider system points toward an alternative account

of the human, one that is in part coupled and in part symbiotic with the environment. This account finds further support within the later 'extended mind' hypotheses of cognitive science and anthropology, particularly as developed by Bateson (2000 [1972]) and Varela and Maturana (1979), whose 'systems theory' and theory of 'autopoiesis', respectively, provide an alternative model of the human as an organism that is coupled with the environment, where both mind and environment are emergent, immanent, through movement.

The 'extended mind' hypothesis

For thinkers such as Bateson (2000 [1972]), working within anthropology during the 1970s, the boundary assumed between organism and environment (that is, between an external 'physical' world and an internal 'mental' world) is not absolute. "The world of information processing is not limited to the skin" (Bateson, 2000 [1972], p. 460) and is seen, in some cases, as extended within a wider system of relations and processes involving the material world. For Bateson, who draws an epistemology and ontology from cybernetics, when seeking to explain the behaviour of man (or any other system), the system itself must be understood in its totality. In other words, the mental characteristics of the system are immanent, not in part, but in the system as a whole (p. 316). The mind is seen as immanent within a larger system of man plus environment (p. 317).

As such, Bateson maintains that to fully understand the mind is to look toward the practitioner as a part of a larger system of relations that they are working both with and within. This is characterised by his example describing the system of processes that comprise a man felling a tree with an axe:⁶

Each stroke of the axe is modified or corrected, according to the shape of the cut face of the tree left by the previous stroke.

This self-corrective (i.e., mental) process is brought about by a total system, tree-eyes-brain-muscles-axe-stroke-tree; and it is this total system that has the characteristics of immanent mind. (Bateson, 2000 [1972], p. 317)

For Bateson, the processes involved with the constitution of mind (or the mental), such as perception and cognition, are brought forth through the total system of relations involving the wider system of the material world. As such, he reveals, mind should not be confined to a process that exists solely within the boundary of a practitioner's body, but is, as anthropologist Ingold (2011, pp. 16-19) describes, 'leaky', constituted in part by processes that extend within the material world. Bateson believes that what designates the organism is always the organism plus environment – that is, an organism-environment system, maintained through the processes, movements and actions that cause the self-corrective (mental) processes to be brought forth from within.

The 'extended mind' hypothesis is characteristically embedded within the concept of 'autopoiesis' (Varela and Maturana, 1979; 2001). This maintains that cognition, perception and action emerge together within the relational, reciprocal system that includes body and world. An autopoietic system is defined not by its individual components (as separate entities), but by the processes and relations between the components:

An autopoietic system is organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components that through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produce them; and constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in the space in which they exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network. (Varela and Maturana, 1979, p. 13)

An autopoietic system is understood as a network of components and processes, which reciprocally constitute each other. What the organism is able to do is structured by the abilities of the organism and its nervous system. The environment emerges out of the infinite possibilities for action that make up the world. For the organism, through its actions, the world is limited by what it is able to do and its possibilities for action. The enacted environment in turn limits the possible movements and actions, and this restructures the organism's own actions, and the system continues. Both the organism and the environment are enacted (emerge) reciprocally.

For Varela and Maturana, cognition and perception emerge within the whole system and are not confined within a single organism. The autopoietic system is brought forth through its own organisation, an organisation that "is not the material properties of its components, but the relations (or processes) between the components" (Varela and Maturana, 1979, p. 7). For Varela and Maturana, as for Bateson, mind is neither confined to the brain nor to the boundary of a single organism; it is distributed throughout the whole system of relations (including the external world) within the processes of the system's self-organisation.

The accounts of an extended mind outlined by Bateson and Varela and Maturana reflect the existential phenomenological accounts of a 'distributed inspiration' exemplified by the painters described by Merleau-Ponty: the artist never works alone, but is in constant reciprocal relationship with the world and the objects they are painting. It is by investigating more fully these distributed processes made visible by the practitioner that this paper will return to the concept of 'intuition' or 'inspiration', departing from the conventional psychological accounts and proceeding instead from the theory, drawn from the arts, of a distributed

and extended mind, through a philosophical reflection upon the practices of painting and weaving.

Painting: lines, forces and movement

In his notebooks, Klee (1964; 1973) reveals through his experiments that the processes of creativity (the impetus to create) that give rise to ‘human-made forms’ are just as much a part of the energetic world we inhabit as they are of the human body. In reflecting upon his own practice of painting and drawing, Klee constructs an “elementary theory of creativity” (1964, p. 269), in which human subjectivity is not the only impetus in the creative process of the painter. In focusing his analysis not upon the final form of a work, but upon the very processes of ‘form-giving’, he was able to realise a theory of creativity that included energies external to the human body. For Klee, there is always a form-giving process to creativity that cannot be accounted for solely by human subjectivity. He demonstrates this through experimentation with what he terms ‘sand figures’ – he runs sound waves through layers of sand and analyses the forms and figures that emerge (fig. 1). Through such experiments, Klee was able to speculate that form is not applied to a material from the outside by a practitioner, but that:

... [f]orm is set by the processes of giving form, which is more important than form itself. Form must on no account be considered as something to be got over with, as a result, as an end, but rather as genesis, growth, essence. ... What is good is form-giving. What is bad is form. Form is the end, death. Form-giving is movement, action. Form-giving is life. (Klee, 1964, p. 269)

The shift of focus from a final form to the very form-giving processes that give rise to it is central to his theory of creativity. For Klee, to focus on a final form is to kill the form’s very creation, to neglect the true genesis and

growth of the form; form-giving itself is life. Klee’s theory is a precursor of the later rejection of ‘hylomorphism’ characterised by Simondon (1992).

To frame his theory of creativity based upon these distributed form-giving processes, Klee (1964) draws an analogy with that of the growth of a seed, in which the impetus to grow (what he sees as the very act of creation) is not limited by an impetus from within the boundary of the organism’s skin. Instead, “a certain impetus from without, the relation to earth and atmosphere, begets the capacity to grow” (p. 29). As he notes, a seed has extensions into the earth, water and air (fig. 2). These extensions are interdependent with the growth of the structure of the organism itself, its nutritional and nervous system (p. 31). For Klee, there is a mutual reciprocity between the nutritional organs and the environment (the greater ‘breathing -space’), in that the nutritional value and breathing-space of the environment will allow the organism’s structure to grow and enlarge:

Extensions in the air and space and within [the] soil are interdependent, just as in developed organisms the functions of nutrition and respiration are interdependent. A broader nutritional base may give rise to large respiratory organs, while greater breathing-space may enlarge the nutritional organs. (Klee, 1964, p. 31)

In turn, the organism’s growth will depend upon a newer nutritional value in the environment. Thus, the nervous system and its extensions into air and space and within the soil are interdependent with the organism’s capacity to grow. This concept of ‘organism’ (as in the example of the seed) is extended to encompass the environment through external and internal energies. Klee uses it as an analogy to think about human creativity, in particular the growth of drawn and painted form.

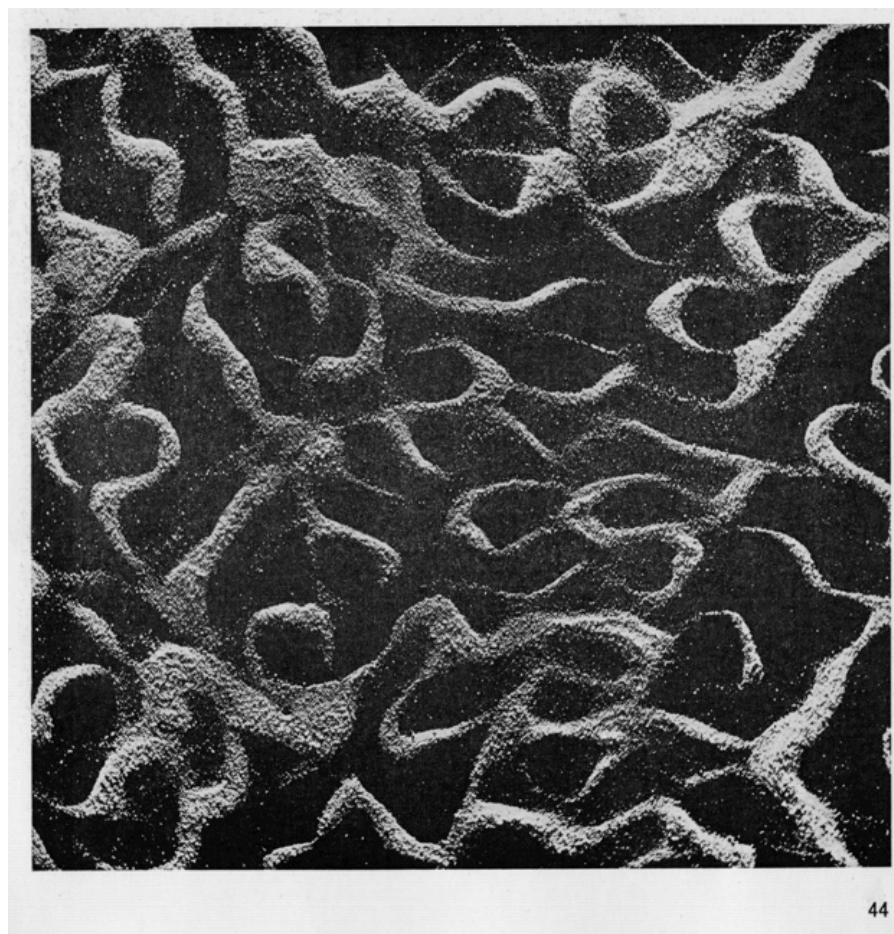


Fig. 1. Paul Klee: 'The Structure and Dynamics of Waves and Vibrations' (1973, p. 31)

For Klee, certain types of line (or strokes of a painter's brush) always begin from a point, just like a seed, and grow through the impulses (from within and without) that set it in motion. As movement is given to the brush, from a body within a world, the line is grown through this movement, which is enabled and impinged upon by energetic relations not only within the body (such as emotion and desire), but also within the environment (the atmosphere and the earth) and the materials used.

Movement is thus the true generator of form, and also the site of agency: "The Primordial movement, the agent, is a point that sets itself in motion (genesis of form). A line comes into being" (Klee, 1964, p. 105).

Form (or figuration) is always the manifestation of the processes of form-giving within the entwining energies that are both resonated by the artist and by the material and environment in which the artist works. Thus the practice

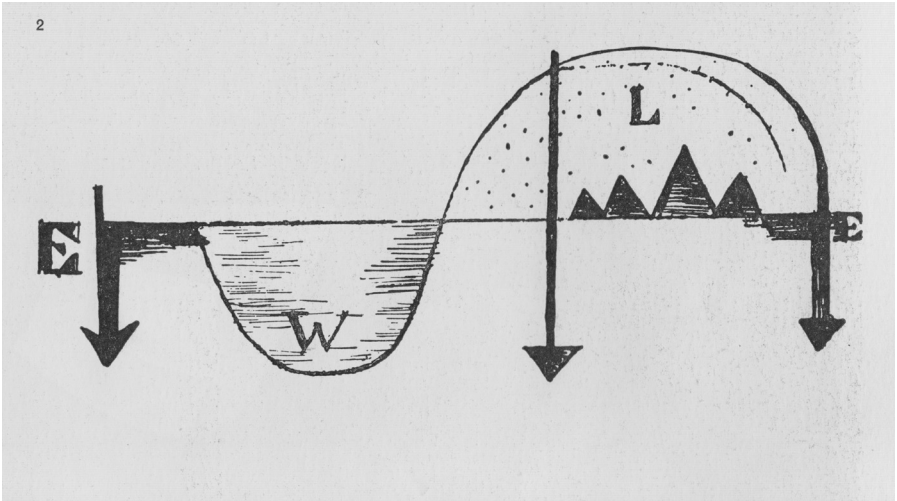


Fig. 2. Paul Klee: 'Earth, Water, Air' (1970)

of painting, for Klee (1964, p. 10), is always a form-giving process rather than a representational one; the strokes of the brush do not render the visible (that is, copy a world as seen by the artist), but render visible the energies and forces of the form-giving processes the artist is involved within. The painted line and the stroke (or figuration) are grown within the distributed and energetic form-giving processes that arise from the relationship between the body, the material and the environment.

The notion of figuration as rendering invisible energies visible is exactly what Deleuze (2002, p. 56), following Klee, claims to be the elementary task of painting itself. Deleuze recognises that for modernist painters such as Millet, Cezanne, Bacon and Van Gogh, a common notion is described, in that the act of painting is (in some respect) the process of capturing the energetic forces of the world: for Cezanne, painting had the task of "rendering visible the folding force of the mountains, the germinating force of the seed, the thermic force of the landscape", and with Van Gogh, it was a matter of inventing forces to be rendered, such as

the forces of the germination of a seed (p. 57). For Deleuze, the move toward abstraction and the figural⁷ by modernist painting was an attempt to attain sensation directly – a sensation that was related to external forces. For a sensation to even exist, a force must be exerted on the body:

Force is closely related to sensation: for a sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on a body, on a point of the wave. But if force is the condition of sensation, it is nonetheless not the force that is sensed, since the sensation 'gives' something completely different from the forces that condition it. (Deleuze, 2002, p. 56)

For Deleuze, the 'forces of the cosmos', as outlined by Klee and Cezanne, are lines or threads that exert themselves upon the body and penetrate it, resulting in a sensation that promotes further action, much like Klee's sand figures. This rendering of force within figuration through sensation was exactly what he maintains Millet was alluding to when he defended his 'peasant paintings' from socialist



Fig. 3. Jean-Francois Millet: 'Peasant with Wheelbarrow' (1848-1852)

criticism during the late nineteenth century (fig. 3). When criticised for painting “peasants who were carrying an offertory like a sack of potatoes” in a figuration that was reserved for the gods, the artist responded by saying that “the weight common to the two objects was more profound than the figurative distinction” (Deleuze, 2002, p. 57). Deleuze claims that, as a modern painter, Millet (just like Cezanne and Klee) was striving to give a visible existence to the seemingly invisible forces of weight and gravity, and not merely portraying figurative sacks of potatoes or wheelbarrows of manure.

As revealed through a study of Klee’s work, figuration within painting can be understood as arresting a much longer and more deeply distributed form-giving process that extends

both into the body and into the world. In describing the growth of a stroke or line, we cannot ignore the impulse from the earth, from the sea, from the air, from the atmosphere, from the body and from the materials used. Movement is only possible because of forces of resistance, tension and energy that emanate from outside the body, as well as the energies and forces within; there is an impulse both from within and from without that begets the growth of form. As lines grow through these impinging forces, movement itself is the true generator of form. To understand the form solely in terms of the final form (as applied to a material by a human mind) is to kill the form-giving processes, the traces of the movement that gave rise to it. As Deleuze (2002) reveals, sensations, which give rise to figuration, are

themselves lines – lines that extend both from the body and into the environment and vice versa. Sensations themselves are ‘lines of force’: lines from both the practitioner’s body and the environment, which entangle, and which beget and enable motion, and generate the movement with which the figurative brush stroke of the painter is grown. In such an account, mind and inspiration is distributed within the movement beget by the body acting within a world.

The notion that the painted line is grown, born out of the generative nature of movement itself, can be extended to thinking about artefacts and material culture. Anthropologists such as Ingold (2011) conceive of artefacts not as made, but as grown within a field of distributed relational forces. Ingold maintains, with Simondon and Deleuze, that matter has properties, tensions, resistances and forces, which play a fundamental role in the form-generating processes of the artefact through a material engagement⁸ with the human practitioner. Such an account of material engagement is revealed in Ingold’s reflections on the form-giving processes of weaving a basket.

Weaving: threads, fields and layers

Ingold (2011, p. 215) believes that to read a work of art or an artefact entirely in terms of its form is to read creativity⁹ backwards, to start from the outcome and to trace it, through a sequence of antecedent conditions, to an idea in the mind of an agent. Reflecting Klee’s theory, he insists that a work of art is not an object but a ‘thing’, and the role of the artist is not to reproduce a preconceived idea, but to bring forth form through joining and following the forces and flow of the materials. The ‘creative impetus’ of things lies, for Ingold, not in the tracing back of a single idea, but in following the forward movement¹⁰ of the flow of materials that gives rise to things – that is, the form-giving process itself.

In using the example of weaving a basket as a philosophical metaphor for the making of artefacts, Ingold (2011) asks whether we can really maintain that the basket has been created (made) through the imposition of a human design working on the surface of some raw material. Have the forces impacting upon the surface been applied from without (p. 341)? His answer is, not exactly. Basketry, he claims, involves the bending and interweaving of many fibres that may exert a considerable resistance of their own. The basket holds together, and assumes a rigid form, precisely because of its tensile structure (p. 342). The form of the basket, for Ingold, is thus the result of the play of forces, both internal and external to the material that constitutes it. The basket’s form grows within a force field that catches the weaver up in a reciprocal dialogue.

Ingold describes the way the movement of the practitioner generating material forms is distributed within the resistances and energies of the properties of the material itself as an active force – a force that begets the very movement that generates the form:

The actual concrete form of the basket ... does not issue from an idea. It rather comes into being through the gradual unfolding of the field of forces set up through the active and sensuous engagement of practitioner and material. This field is neither internal to the material nor internal to the practitioner (hence external to the material); rather, it cuts across the emergent interface between them. Effectively, the form of the basket emerges through a pattern of skilled movement, and it is the rhythmic repetition of that movement that gives rise to the regularity of the form. (Ingold, 2011, p. 342)

What Ingold (2011, p. 353) refers to as ‘skilled movement’¹¹ is, in Bateson’s (2000 [1972]) terminology, an immanent property of a total field of relations constituted by the presence of the organism (the practitioner) in a richly

structured environment.¹² That is, skill is always situated within a wider system, or ‘field of forces’, which is constituted by both the practitioner’s movements and the properties, resistances and forces of the material itself that beget that movement,¹³ and which cannot be reduced to a single formula. In this respect, Ingold sees the growth of artefacts as a process of ‘autopoiesis’ (p. 345) – the self-transformation over time of the system of relations within which the organism or artefact comes into being. Consequently, as the human practitioner is involved in the same system as the material with which they are working, their activity does not transform that system, but is part and parcel of the system’s transformation of itself. Just as with the concept of ‘autopoiesis’, Ingold’s schema of the creation of human artefacts foregrounds the processes that give rise to the form – processes, distributed between the material properties and the practitioner, that are beget by movement.

What Ingold makes transparent is that the form of the basket cannot be fully accounted for by the concept of a human design applied to a material. The actual form of the basket comes into being through the gradual unfolding of a field of forces created by the active engagement between practitioner and material: “This field of forces is neither internal to the material nor internal to the practitioner ... rather it cuts across the emergent interface between them” (2010, p. 342). The form of the basket emerges (or is grown) through a pattern of skilled movement that is built up gradually over time as the practitioner increasingly comes to terms with the tensions and resistances of the material. It is the rhythmic repetition of that movement that gives rise to the basket’s form. There is no template to work from. The developing form itself acts as its own template, since each turn of the spiral is made by laying the longitudinal fibres along the edge formed by the preceding one (p. 345). The action has a narrative quality, in the sense that

every movement, like the line in a story, grows rhythmically out of the one before and lays the groundwork for the next (p. 347).

As Ingold reveals, much like the painted line, the basket’s form grows within a distributed relational force field, within which the weaver is caught up in reciprocal dialogue. The developing form, the movement, acts as its own template – what is possible now came from the previous layer, which sets up a new field of forces within which the practitioner can work and is caught up in, reciprocally. The artefact (the basket), in short, is a crystallisation of movement and activity within a relational field, its regularities of form embodying the regularities of movement that gave rise to it (p.345). “It is within this weave that our projects of making, whatever they may be, are formulated and come to fruition” (Ingold, 2011, p. 348). Whilst we cannot attribute a ‘true’ agency to either the practitioner or the material, we can say that a possible site of agency (and, as such, elements of inspiration, impulse or intuition) could be the very movement that gives rise to the form, a movement that involves both practitioner and material, and both material and immaterial dimensions in equal measure, a movement within which form is grown as a trace of the distributed form-giving processes that gave rise to it.

From form to form-giving

Both these conceptions of form-giving maintain a common thread – that form is not to be understood as a fixed point to be analysed from above, but should be seen as the momentary resting of form-giving processes, of lines of movement, entangled within lines of energy, force and matter. A basket or a paint stroke is not, in this sense, an object or an artefact, but an ‘entanglement’, and the role of the maker is not to reproduce a preconceived idea, but to bring forth form through joining and following the forces and flow of materials. The origin

of form is, then, not a single point of origin, but a bundle of lines of movement in counterpoint to the trajectories of the lines of force and energy that constitute the world. Form-giving is a forward movement following the flows and trajectories of matter that give rise to things – the trajectories of diverse constituents, in which the trajectories themselves are just as much a part of the emerging form as the form itself. In such cases, form – or ‘entanglement’ – is constituted by much deeper form-giving processes which are distributed along (im)material lines or threads of force, energy, properties, matter and movement, within which the practitioner is reciprocally entangled, following its trajectory and flow.

The accounts of creative practice by modern painters, philosophers and contemporary anthropologists, which recognise the extended nature of mind, point to a re-thinking of the ontology of human-made forms by departing from the analysis of form and the anthropocentric account of intuition of conventional psychology, and turning instead to an analysis of the distributed form-giving processes of the generation of form. With painting and weaving, the practitioner always works from within the world, not upon it. They do not think and feel solely from within the confines of the body, but from deep within the flow and forces of the world itself, of its lines of forward motion, following its trajectory as it becomes. As Klee (1964) reveals, the practitioner thinks through the very material they are using, from within the world that they work within; mind flows between the body, earth, sea, air and atmosphere. For the weaver, as Ingold (2011) shows, neither is the mind above nor nature below, they are symbiotic. Mind is in the very weave of the surface of the world itself, and as such it can be seen as distributed within matter, forces and processes.

From distributed mind to distributed human

Had I wished to present the man ‘as he is’, then I should have had to use such bewildering confusion of line that pure elementary representation would have been out of the question. The result would have been vagueness beyond recognition. ... And anyway, I do not wish to represent the man as he is, but only as he might be. (Klee, 1964, p. 53)

Klee’s account of his depiction of the human as a bewildering confusion of lines (Fig. 6) is underpinned by his conception of the human nervous system as that of a seed, interdependent with its wider milieu – the air, sea and soil. This alternative model of the human suggested by Klee during the modern period echoes the philosophy of Bergson: his ‘process philosophy’ conceived of the human nervous system as “[a]n enormous number of threads which stretch from the periphery to the center [sic], and from the center to the periphery” (1911, p. 45), a periphery that, as Klee reveals, also extends into the environment.

This extension of the nervous system, and subsequent questioning of the boundary between organism and environment, underpins Ingold’s account of the human, following thinkers such as Hagerstrand (1976) and the biologist von Uexkull (2010), which recognises every constituent of the environment – human, animal, plant, stone, building – as a continuous trajectory or thread of becoming that is always in counterpoint¹⁴ to the rest of the ‘tapestry of the world’. What is important for Ingold is von Uexkull’s notion of the world as a tapestry or melody of lines and scores, in which the animal and the medium (the environment) are co-constituted.¹⁵

Ingold (2008) foregrounds von Uexkull’s notion of counterpoint in order to re-think the boundary assumed between an organism’s nervous system and the environment, conceiv-

ing the human organism itself as a counterpoint; not as a bounded entity, but as a line of becoming, whose very being includes that which it is a counterpoint to – the properties and energies of the environment. The notion of the bounded organism is a consequence of what Ingold terms the “logic of inversion” (pp. 70-72), a maintenance of an axiomatic distinction between man and nature, commonplace within network models across a broad range of disciplines.¹⁶ This logic of inversion, Ingold reveals, turns the trajectories along which life is lived¹⁷ into boundaries within which life is contained; life is thus reduced to an internal property of a bounded organism that occupies a world rather than inhabiting it (pp. 1797-1798). Ingold refutes the network model of relations by questioning the very need for a distinction between the organism (or ‘node’) and its line of connection or relation – that is, the need for a distinction between the material component and the immaterial process of relations.¹⁸ He maintains that within a network model there can be:

... no mutuality without prior separation of the elements whose constitution is at issue. That is to say, the establishment of relations between these elements – whether they be organisms, persons or things of any other kind – necessarily requires that each is turned in upon itself prior to its integration into the network. (Ingold, 2011, p. 70)

Crucially, for Ingold, network models of organisms treat the material ‘node’ (the organism) separately from its relations within the rest of the network (the processes) and, as such, logically entail that the organism and its nervous system are constituted prior to its engagement (or insertion) within the environment. Such a logic, he suggests, neglects the diverse and distributed counterpoints of von Uexküll’s wider ‘tapestry of the world’ by maintaining that the material nature of the organism can

be distinguished from the immaterial processes of its relations and interactions with the environment.

To undo this inversion, and to recognise fully the relational nature of being, is to repudiate the distinction between a thing (as matter) and their relations (as processes) – that is, to recognise that organism and environment are always constituted as a relation to each other (Ingold, 2011, pp. 69-70). The organism is not to be specified genotypically (as a separate body) prior to its entry into the environment, and conversely, the environment is not to be specified as a set of physical constraints, in advance of the organisms that arrive to fill it (p. 19); they are instead ‘contrapuntal’. Ingold conceives of an organism not as a bounded entity, but as a bundle of lines; not as a node within a network, but as a knot within a tissue of other knots, whose constituent strands (or counterpoints), which become tied up with other strands, comprise not a network of relations, but a ‘meshwork’ or tapestry of the environment – a meshwork in which Klee’s depiction of man as a bundle of lines finds a further resonance.

A brief commentary on intuition

It is within this context that the paper returns to the notion of ‘intuition’ as characterised by the psychology of perception referred to at the beginning. Can we still maintain that intuition is an internal hypothesis of an external world? A somatic feeling? We can, but only if we accept the body as separate from the material world in which it works. If, however, we look for ‘intuition’ within the wider distributed meshwork of entanglement within which the human practitioner works, we can no longer maintain this view. This paper suggests, instead, that a feeling of ‘intuition’ should be understood more as the ‘virtual’ presence of the wider fabric of



Fig. 4. Paul Klee: 'Child Ph' (1933)

reality that we are entwined within, the infinite possibilities for action and movement – a glimpse of the entangled meshwork we are all a part of, a glimpse of something outside of our assumed boundary of bodily and material existence, a glimpse into the possibilities for action and movement, both past and present, a glimpse of the entanglement. In this sense, intuition is never merely a hypothesis; rather, it is a moment amidst a process embedded within

the very bringing forth of a reality itself. It is a momentary revelation of the bewildering confusion of line that, as Klee remarks, constitutes the human entangled within a meshwork of material and immaterial processes (fig. 4).

Epilogue

Whilst reflecting upon the content of this paper, return to the stone you marked and placed on your desk. Hold it in your hand once more and study the marks you have made. Feel the weight of the stone, its shape, its surface, and imagine the resistances that the pencil (or chalk or pen) you used to make the marks came up against. Imagine the resistances the pencil (or chalk or pen) itself caused. Remember the music you played whilst making the marks, and feel the temperature of the room around you. Study the marks in terms of the wider tapestry of forces and materials which begat your movement, and look for its traces within the marks you made.

Notes

¹ Specifically, the psychology of perception as represented by the work of Arnheim (1959; 1969; 1974), Gombrich (1964), a revival of Arnheim's psychological film theory for application within contemporary media and film studies (Higgins, 2011), contemporary film studies dealing with the mimetic and perceptual dimensions of film form (Marks, 2002; Sobchack, 2004), and the re-thinking of film theory in terms of perception (Elsaesser and Haganer, 2010).

² Dominant within much of Western philosophy and thinking since the time of Aristotle, and now a central axiom of mainstream modern thinking, the 'hylomorphic' (matter-form) model of creation describes a way of thinking about the creation of objects (substances) that conforms to the notion of the human mind (and the human organism) as autonomous from, and dominant to, the natural external world that the human agent works upon as if it were inert or 'dead' matter. Such thinking accounts for the generation of a 'thing' only in terms of the form imposed on inert matter by a productive human agent. Simondon (1986, p. 299) argues that, in privileging this anthropocentric model of creativity, the very agency of the matter itself (its properties, forces and resistances) that play a part in the actual processes of a thing's creation (the activity of physically making the object, involving the material forces and processes) are neglected and reduced to the process of "putting forward, or putting into effect, the already conceived form, from the mind of the productive agent".

³ Proponents such as Bateson (1979), Varela (1979), Clark (2011) and Thompson (2010) reveal how specific processes of the human mind, such as cognition and perception, are external to the body, bound up within processes of engagement with a wider system, which includes the material world.

⁴ Merleau-Ponty eludes here to the model of art history built upon the notion of the 'autonomy of art' – that is, art as autonomous from human perception and metaphysics. The influential work of Clement Greenberg (1960) and his followers helped it become the dominant account of the period.

⁵ Merleau-Ponty (1964) believed that modernist painters had a sensitivity to such a situation in which the processes and activity of painting are caught up within the very processes between the body and the world. In citing the painter André Marchand, he notes that the artist is always penetrated by the universe as he paints, is always buried by the world he paints, through feelings, sights and sounds (p. 167). For Merleau-Ponty, the mind of the painter does not lie within the boundary of the body, it is distributed: "[t]he painter lives in fascination", fascinations which, to him, seem to emanate from the things themselves. For the modern painter, the very gestures most proper to him are not confined to his body, but are a part of the world itself. Merleau-Ponty cites Marchand's (after Klee) recognition of this world: "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me ... I was there, listening ... I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it ... I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried." (Marchand cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1964, pp. 167-8).

⁶ This totality of the system Bateson (2000, pp. 317-319) sees as conventionally being eschewed by the commonly understood notion of 'self', in which a person may perceive an event they are a part of. A person may believe, he claims, that "I cut down the tree", and that they are the delimited agent which performed an act upon a delimited object. However, he says this belief is misleading, it a way of maintaining the separation of the internal mental processes from the physical external world. This 'false belief' that Bateson points to is outlined further in contemporary anthropology (Malafouris, 2008), in which it is conceived as a conflation of the notions of agency and ownership.

⁷ The formal conventional accounts of modernist art claim that it aimed to escape the clichés of the past by focusing upon figuration (how an object is represented by the artist) or abstraction (investigating the essence of the medium itself), in order to either investigate the form of painting imposed by the artist, or the matter

of the practice itself.

⁸ As Klee also reveals, such a materiality has been overlooked for too long in conventional accounts of creativity, which focus upon the notion of a designed form imposed upon inert matter (Ingold, 2010; 2011).

⁹ By ‘creativity’ Ingold is referring to a form-giving process acting within a field of forces, which is distributed in a material engagement between the practitioner and the material world.

¹⁰ Ingold builds his notion of ‘forward movement’ upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari, specifically their distinction between ‘iteration’ and ‘itineration’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 410). The work of iteration is one of reproduction of pre-defined form, whereas a work of itineration is creative, the co-substantiality between artisan and material that lies in the trajectory of forward motion.

¹¹ What Ingold describes as ‘skill’ he maintains is a skilled movement that is emergent (not purely implicit, not purely learnt), a product of the entire ‘structural history’ of the engagement of practitioner with the materials. What is possible through this skilled movement is based upon (but not entirely determined by) the structural history of movements and engagements.

¹² Ingold (2010, pp. 352-353) returns to Bateson’s model of the axe-man (cf. previous section), in which he situates ‘skill’ within a wider system that is as much mental as physical. Thus, it is a property not of the individual human body, but of the total field of relations that includes axe, man and tree.

¹³ Malafouris (2008) offers a further account of material agency within pottery. Here, the potter’s intentionality is seen as emergent in the relationship between the material state of the clay that needs moulding, the speed of the wheel being turned, and the pressure needed by the potter to pull the pot into shape.

¹⁴ For von Uexkull (2010), the rules or properties that constitute the environment can be said to shape, and be shaped by, the composition of an organism’s cells – a shaping he sees as a ‘melody’ of development of both environment and organism, which expresses, in some way, both the properties of the environment and the properties of the organism. Forms (of organisms or environments) are contrapuntal (or plastic), emerging within multiple semi-independent melodic lines, always as a counterpoint to the entire composition, emerging from what is of interest to the organism(s) involved.

¹⁵ “Nothing is left to chance in nature. In every instance a very intimate meaning rule joins the animal and its medium; they are united in a duet, in which the two partners’ properties are contrapuntally made for each other ...” (von Uexkull, 2010, p. 100).

¹⁶ Ingold (2010) reveals how network images have become commonplace across a broad spectrum of disciplines, embedded within terms such as the ‘web of life’ in ecology, ‘social networks’ in sociology, and the ‘agent-object network’ in material culture.

¹⁷ Such a trajectory is what Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 323) term a ‘line of becoming’, which is not “defined by the points it connects, or by the points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs ... transversally to the localized relation to distant or contiguous points. A point is always a point of origin. But a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end ... only a middle ... A becoming is always in the middle: one can only get in by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between.”

¹⁸ As is evident within Varela autopoietic system, “[t]he organization of the system is not the material properties of its components, but the relations (or processes) between the components” (Varela and Maturana, 1979, p. 7), the organism is clearly bounded, in a reciprocal relation to the environment, constituting a network of components and relations, of separate material and immaterial domains.

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