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The Aesthetics of Enchantment

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THE AESTHETICS OF ENCHANTMENT

"Once upon a time, in a land far away ... ". Anonymous

"Tis distance lends enchantment to the view /And robes the mountain in its azure hue' Ilomas Campbell, *Pleasures of Hope*

"The Mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" Milton, *Paradise Lost*

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep". Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

I. PHILOSOPHY/ENCHANTMENT

There are two preliminary things to be stated at the outset of any philosophical consideration of enchantment. First, traditional philosophy has been antagonistic toward the idea of enchantment: as a foundational discipline of reason, philosophy has defined itself in opposition to the non-rational, The main traditions of philosophy have regarded any form of discourse other than that centered in reason as alien, the *other*, as something which obscures or undermines those procedures which alone can determine knowledge and value. I presume here that enchantment would be considered "non- rational", and also that such a designation is problematic in a number of ways.

The second thing to be said is that this comportment of traditional philosophy toward the non-rational is itself a serious mistake, indeed, a serious philosophical mistake. For life and literature, in contrast to the epistemic constraints of traditional philosophy, it is often the other way about: it is precisely *out of the other* that value emerges. That enchantment is endemic to both life and literature is sufficient reason for philosophy to take an interest in it.

Parallel to the celebrated ancient quarrel between logic and rhetoric, in which Socrates first contrasted the logic of philosophical inquiry in direct opposition to the rhetorical skills of the Sophists, there is another equally ancient division. Plato defined philosophy by restricting questions of knowledge to a specific language of inquiry, a single method of dialectical reason *(logos),* which rejects the telling of stories *(mythos)* as a resource for truth. Poets and dramatists do not fare well with Plato, of course. His refusal to allow mimetic poets admission to the *Republic* reflects the determination of classical philosophy to denigrate the poetics of passion - the particular materials of body and sense essential to the aesthetic. Contrary to general opinion, Aristotle's *Poetics* did little to restore art as an autonomous source of wisdom or truth. Indeed, where Plato at least conceded a kind of vision to the poet - a "divine madness" - Aristotle reduced the poetic to a therapeutic exercise legitimated by its utility as a public *katharsis.*

There is a central tradition of aesthetics which seems to concede the point, and simply abjures the question or importance of truth. This is, of course, a legitimate way to take an interest in the arts: to consider the beautiful as a domain of feeling, and its investigation a separate and valuable pursuit. But in philosophy as in life, an intuition persists that there is an intrinsic relationship between the beautiful, the true, and the good. The main difference is that, in philosophy, the bias is always to subsume the good and beautiful under the true. An important question for us here is whether the issue of enchantment locates aesthetic interest exclusively in a sense of beauty apart from the true. For example, if enchantment depends upon *illusion,* does this preclude a relation to truth? Enchantment may be seen as a form of illusion aligned with negative descriptions such as "delude/deceive/trick/cheat/ mislead". These concepts presuppose the primary value of discourse to be veracity, which relegates enchantment to a bewitching of reason detrimental to intelligent and responsible existence. This, essentially, and ironically, was the view of the seductive Socrates and the poetic Plato, both of whom neglected to apply the criterion to themselves.

There remains a perennial problem in philosophy where the frame of definitive reference has always been not "Did it happen?" or "Is it pleasant?", but "Is it true?" Within that classical tradition it is unclear whether analysis can meaningfully proceed in the absence of the question of truth. On the other hand, the utilitarian and pragmatist traditions frame questions of value so that they reduce to utility and facility, in a way which already shifts the venue of philosophy away from truth. One response of aesthetics, as we have seen, is that it is simply time to put aside worry about the redeeming value of the categories of knowledge and truth. I believe this to be a mistake, however, just as I believe that pragmatic utility-reduction is a mistake. Rather than decide any issue in advance, it is possible and preferable to pursue questions of interest on their own terms - in this instance, the aesthetics of enchantment - and remain open to questions of truth. It may well be that truth has more forms than are dreamt of in any traditional school of philosophy. If so, the art of enchantment is one such form.

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II. MEANING, MYTH, AND FAIRY TALES

Since Wittgenstein's later work in the philosophy of language, it should be a matter of course to insist on establishing contextual meaning prior to the question of truth. Building upon Wittgenstein's logical point, one of the important contributions which literature can bring to the study of philosophy is just this focus on contextual meaning. Particularly in fiction, where the obvious questions of referential truth have been either suspended or dismissed, the issue of meaning and sense is foremost. We read fictive literature not for information or directions on how to operate in the world, but for the depth and dimension of human understanding it provides about the full range of possible experience. Aristotle's remark that literature is more philosophical than history would seem to support this point.

Literature is rooted in the poetics of myth. Independently from the task of fixing truth, making stories is an elemental activity which gathers the meaning of life experience into coherent and comprehensive understanding. Literature has always drawn on the archetypal figures and stories of myth, but philosophy has taken little notice, dismissing this source of understanding, however interesting, as non-rational exercises in regressive fantasy. However, the depth psychology resulting from the work of Freud and Jung on the analysis of myth has introduced a framework for reconsideration of the importance of mythic stories not merely as indices of the irrational anxieties of an archaic culture, but as keys to continuing human sensibility structured in the archaic mind. Perhaps no one today would dismiss the importance of dreaming for human beings. There may be little or no accord on the meaning one is to make of a given dream, or kinds of dreams, but the process is too intimate and crucial to our well-being (as demonstrated for example when dreaming is systematically interrupted or denied) to be dismissed. Whether in myth, fairy tales, or dreams, elemental meaning is disclosed in a direct way accessible on a subliminal level.

A concern with meaning is natural with children, and the child's fascination with fairy tales suggests that a particular kind of elemental, mythic meaning is captured or retrieved in these stories. Children learn first about the world from the inside, from their own feelings and perceptions, and the literature of enchantment seems directed to just this level of perception. The continued fascination we have for these activities of mind recommends philosophical inquiry into the process and nature of enchantment, even if it remains necessarily interpretive.

Eric Erickson's analysis of the process of human growth in terms of psycho-social stages of development is a useful model for understanding the emergent interaction of mind and world, but first it is important to acknowledge the foundation and continuance

of inner experience. In the beginning there is only consciousness. The infant makes no separation between self and world: there is no world apart from consciousness. Gradually, there appear observable stages in a process of separation - still, of course, in terms of "inner" experience - in which the identity of the person is formed. This occurs in large part in contrast with, and in opposition to, the experience of an increasingly complex and "independent" environment. For the infant, first the breast becomes an independent thing, then the mother. As the infant becomes a child, she goes on to relate to increasing levels of significant others, until the experiential network of autonomous self and world is complete.

The mystery of dreams and the myths which seem to draw on and articulate their meanings, are still geared to the archaic mind. Just as dreams seem to do their psychic work independently of fixing rational meaning to them, so do the stories in myth serve a purpose simply in the telling and hearing of the stories in the absence of explanation. With or without interpretation, the meanings of myth become available for healing in stories and thus provide access to deeper sources not of knowledge aimed at control, but of meaning constituted through feeling. Enchantment, in the ubiquitous form and practice of telling "fairy tales", is closer to this experience of dream and myth than are the inventions of literature - certainly so where literature intends and serves only distraction and entertainment. "Once upon a time ... " is an invitation to dream awake, to engage in a subliminal process of understanding which, in the literature of analytic psychology, appears capable of mending tears in the fabric of our conscious lives.

It may be that what the everyday world requires is knowledge - as a resource of power to ensure success. This is hardly surprising since the concept of "world" itself is a construction to the end of control and domination. What the *person* needs, however, and what a people requires, is *meaning:* - to be at one with an integrative life story. The meaning of myth, at least in a relative sense, is natural: there is no deliberate intention to fabricate meaning to whatever purpose may serve an occasion. There is an instructive analogue in the deeper meaning of spiritual life which consists in a "letting happen", not a "making happen". If there is truth in the literature of enchantment, it comes from a similar wisdom of acknowledgement. Life and world are not the same, may indeed be in fundamental conflict. When the world is not so much with us, when the work which usually occupies our consciousness falls away and we are left alone, the default of individual consciousness, confronted with the empty fact of itself, is often fear. Myth in its initial generation seems to have been responsive to this break in human consciousness. Why is it that children, more than others, are enchanted by stories, by fairy tales, and myths? In his book *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettleheim makes the point that children live more in the present than do adults. It is their feelings, focused in the moment, that they need help in understanding. Gradually they will come to view their lives in terms of hopes and future projects, but not in the beginning. To have confidence in their lives it is first necessary to feel secure in the present. It is imperative for example, waking from the deep recesses and terrors of the night to return to a meaningful framework. The fairy tale is a means of psychic orientation which connects conscious and unconscious - stories in which the imagination in the daylight can take hold of the secret terrors and desires that otherwise hold dominion in the night, or at those times when the child is isolated from mother, family friends, and the terror or uncertainty return. Perhaps typical of the conditions of enchantment, fairy tales lack both subtlety and detail. Its issues and characters are black and white, not just good/bad: clear options are apparent, there are no grays. The child's need for identification with character becomes possible. The child does not pick a character because that character is good - "Jack and the Beanstalk" is an obvious example - but rather because the character appeals. Because the character chooses the good, which is usually the adult point of telling and retelling the stories, the child will chose the good as well. In the case of Jack, the child's choice of identification is made from the point of view of a frail undersized creature: Jack's

successful adventure shows that it is possible to prevail with determination and luck, even if he starts out badly, disappointing the parent with a stupid choice. Without going into alternative possible interpretations, clearly the parent and the giant share some features for the child. The child may know there are no giants in the world, but there are parents - adults with the same fearsome power. That Jack (the child) can get the better of the Giant (adult), and so eventually gain access to the wealth and power in the world, is a thrilling possibility, a shred of hope for a world which at present, in daily life, belongs to the others. That the parent may be reading the story to the child adds to the child's sense that either her feelings are O.K. and the parent understands, or else that there is a secret thrill that the child is understanding something, probably on an unconscious level which is not apparent to the adult.

Fairy tales take existential problems and anxieties seriously at the child's level, and address them directly. Contrast this, for example, with the superficial and shallow entertainment of a Disney movie. In fairy tales evil is as omnipresent as good. In fairy tales, as in life, there are inevitable difficulties, some of which are felt to be overpowering. In these stories, the good prevails, mostly - at least this is the moral instruction or implicit support of such choices. More important than any "moral" implicit in the story, however, it is the story itself that is crucial. It is the story, not the moral of the story, which makes sense of the powers and problems in the world as well as the mind. The sense of the fairy tales and the lesson of enchantment is that meaning, not truth, is the deepest human need.

III. MEDIUMS AND MODES OF ENCHANTMENT

Although academic debates continue as to whether the factive and fictive are finally of different orders, it would be difficult to conceive of literature in any of its expressive forms in the absence of enchantment. This is so whether enchantment is a strategy of deliberate embrace of the sort which Coleridge found definitive of poetry: "a willing suspension of disbelief', or that larger domain of drama and life which Shakespeare analogically depicted in so many of his plays. Both A *Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest are* memorable instances and exercises in the depth of aesthetic enchantment. In the contemporary arts, film is perhaps the most obvious case of the reliance on, or invitation to, enchantment.

Since our inquiry is aesthetics, we can confine our examples to art, and not entertainment, which would seem to exclude certain media such as television. It is perhaps instructive to understand why film but not television is a possible artistic resource for enchantment. It might first appear that television is precisely a medium for enchantment. Undeniably children and adults are absorbed into the experience of "watching television". One reason for not regarding this mesmerizing process as enchantment is that the mind and imagination are not heightened, but anesthetized. Typical of entertainment, television drama lacks an intensity of awareness, and caters rather to an easy confirmation of expectations. Art, like magic, breaks expectations and awakens curiosity; television, as entertainment, eases the effort even of paying attention.

Enchantment is founded on the exceptional and funded with the extra- ordinary, but its dramatic and profound effect depends on a simple and plain framing. A fairy tale is vintage wine in paper cups. It is the mixture which intoxicates, the paradox of time and place which fascinates. By contrast, why can a newspaper not be enchanting? Is it that news is fact, not fiction, or that it is new, not old, that it does little to engage the imagination, or that does so only in a marginal and literal and not figurative way? There may be endless different kinds of examples of how something fails to be enchanting. The effect of distancing is surely important, as suggested by the traditional "Once upon a time ... ", which both invites and creates a setting for a free range of imagination. This opening signals a break with present time and place, invites an experience of singular difference

from the ordinary in which imagination cooperates with the telling of the story as if hypnotized: "Now you are asleep, but you will continue to hear my voice ... "; the voice builds a bridge to an imaginary world, and provides a dramatic setting to engage the substance of individual imagination for its characters and action.

Of course not all film is enchanting as art, - even when that is its apparent intention: again, compare the surface entertainment of a Disney movie with Grimm's Fairy Tale of the same subject. Nor is television devoid of art. The point however is that film intends and frames its experience as an exception, - in which one is awake and dreaming in the dark. The cultural as well as physical and emotional frame of the darkened theatre and enlarged images is an essential part of the aesthetic experience - much as presence, framed in darkness, is for "live theatre". This aesthetic effect is different in kind from the intent and frame of television, the development of which - again, in its intention and physical framing - has allowed for a cultural assimilation of the medium and message into the home, as an extension of daily life and experience. It is the cultural intent of film to be singularly different in kind and apart from ordinary experience even when it is "cinema vérité". But television is central to the everyday lives and times of people. It is a "warm" medium which seeks and achieves a familiar intimacy within the family.

Thus two obvious media examples of what does *not* work as enchantment are television and the newspaper. At this point in the history of culture there are no more surprises in newsprint - in the process, and seldom enough in substance. A newspaper publishes a limited range of repetitive stories in which only the names change. Television is still new enough, barely, that there are some surprises, and although the medium itself contains magic, there is no accompanying mystery. Film, however, is different in this way from both newspapers and television. Historically, the novelty of magic is gone from "moving pictures", but not its mystery. Film production from the first has associated process and framing with context and content. Film is not, in its essence, informative - it is never in current time as a medium. On the other hand, we assume or associate television with "real time", or think of it as "live"; even when this is not so, the medium's effect carries over. Herein is the magic of television: I am now watching and seeing what is taking place on the other side of the world, on the moon, in space. It is in the magic of this technology, and in the reduction of the whole world to present time and place, that television loses its mystery.

We will later consider in detail some examples of aesthetic enchantment within literature. First, however, it may be good to examine examples in ordinary everyday experience for characteristic features that anyone would recognize as instances of enchantment.

A sense of the wonder of enchantment may be found in a group of young children listening raptly to the reading of a story. The eyes of the children, alive with anticipation, dance with the rhythm of the narrated events. Several descriptions come to mind: each child is drawn into the world of the story, or, each is lost in the world of her own imagination. We should add that these are most likely privileged children in the sense that someone cares for and about them, they are not subject to the street world of survival, nor children weeping during the playtime of others. A single child intense at play presents another clear picture of enchantment: imagination fully engaged in the creation of a separate world. These are precious moments of childhood too soon lost to the ordinary business of getting on in the practical world of affairs. Whatever the limits of these moments, it makes no sense to deny value to the wonder of enchantment.

Although the simple example may be that of childhood, enchantment, thankfully, is not the sole province of the young. The activity of art - of music, literature, painting, film - occasions a return of enchantment and may induce or provoke the imagination to once again engage in the wonder of its own creation. The world of art is not the world of the child; the free play of imagination in artistic creation is a disciplined innocence

rediscovered, not preserved from childhood. The aesthetic equivalent of the spiritual counsel to become as a child is not to become a child. Even so, enchantment remains a precious possibility for human beings, a resurrectable spirit east of Eden, recovered through art after the fall from the natural grace of innocence.

The play of the child is perhaps always a play of imagination in some sense, but even here, enchantment seems like a disengagement from immediate awareness and surroundings, a suspension of time and transcendence of space. Milton's Satan is in one (albeit extreme) sense the archetypal artist whose mind could make a heaven of hell: his liberating declaration of the power of the mind is not simply one of overcoming surroundings, but of creating worlds. As with Dostoevsky's "Tempter, the Dread Spirit of the Desert" in *7he Brother's Karamazov,* the genius of art sometimes seems to belong to the devil.

In these and multiple other ways, enchantment/imagination/dream/passion/ ecstasy, and other activities and phenomena that we will discuss, come together to form the complex phenomenon of aesthetic experience.

IV. MAKE-BELIEVE: THE ENCHANTMENT OF PLAY

Let us consider for a moment the idea that aesthetic experience is elemental, and definitive of mind, of human subjectivity itself, that it is in its kind, definitive of human being. This is evident and can he shown in the natural and universal delight human beings take in play, and in the generative forms it takes in more complex human activity.

Aside from the meaning and use of play in the life and growth of human beings, it is instructive to consider the cultural ontology of play - play not merely as constructive of a fully human life, but as elemental in its very constitution. Play is both reflexive - a natural response of an organism to its life and environment, and, with human beings, it is also reflective - a cognitive means of subjective awareness. The difference in the latter case, put simply, is freedom. When play becomes a deliberate disengagement from the automatic and ongoing requirements of existence - "make believe", or pretending, is an example - there is a creative empowerment of subject. When this takes place, I am no longer merely existing or responding to circumstance. I become self- aware and controlling of my life space, first in imagination, then in application to what is now my variable environment. In the creation of subjective awareness, the modality of play is essential to, if not generative of, the cultural life through which *Home erectus* became transformed - through the stages of *Homo faber, Homo habilis, Homo sapiens,* and to whatever further developmental categories are appropriate today as *Homo symboticus* fashions new worlds. Common to each of these and any further stage of cultural growth, however, is *Homo ludens* - the creature whose genius it is to play.

When we are considering conditions which appear fundamental to the existence of human consciousness, it is sometimes useful to think in terms of the fully developed expression of subjectivity in art. Play, as an end in itself, is definitive of the free and creative activity of the artist, or for that matter any and every human being with imagination. At its roots, art, as play, is a process not essentially directed to production - this is the source of the idea that regards Fine Art as the useless art. This description is not a dismissal, but a positive evaluation of art. In the same sense, play is often regarded as incidental and not productively useful, nor is this a negative appraisal once one understands the human importance of process, as distinct from productivity. Even a developmental process as important and complex as education has in essence no imperative beyond the growth of the whole person and vital health of the community; it has no external goal, object, or measure essential to the development itself. Education may, in addition, be progressive and advance knowledge; however this still requires the play of imagination. The process itself is prior and fundamental.

Play, as essential to art - not simply to art as production of objects, but, first, as awareness of aesthetic experience *(aesthesos,* "sensuous apprehension") - is an activity directed inwardly to the quality of an experience, not to a produced object. The point to be noticed here is that play, as an aesthetic activity essential to individual creativity and expression, is in a broader and originating sense, essential to human consciousness and culture. In its aesthetic form, play is an activity within the sphere of subjectivity which sets human beings apart in the animal kingdom. It is not merely freedom, but the creative awareness and empowerment of freedom that characterizes human consciousness, and makes possible the domain of subjectivity from which all culture, including objective culture, emerges. The so-called world of objectivity, which is often mistakenly supposed to be primary, is in fact dependent upon and emerges out of the subjective or inter-subjective world, the world of self-conscious experience. When in the language of science we speak of an "objective world", this is not simply a reference to operational facility. The world conceived as objective, that is, as a whole - as a separate existence open to scientific investigation, for example - depends on this initial fact of human subjectivity. It is the subjective capacity of the human being to disengage from the pervasive presence of an existential and operational modality - the otherwise inseparable unity of time and space - which makes possible a re-presentation and projection of an "objective world". Clearly this would not be possible without the mastery first of creative play - of imagining what is not present.

It is thus possible, for example, though obviously a matter of interpretation and not empirical investigation, to ascribe the activity of play to the primitive artists of the ancient carvings in the Lascaux caves. In these first etchings in the evolutionary record of human consciousness there is clear evidence of the "playful", a consciousness which can imagine what is not present, an achievement of spatial distance and imaginative space in which to represent - bring to presence - what is absent in fact, and thus begin first subjective, then objective mastery of a separate world.

It may help to give a few homely examples. The world is not "objective" to an orangutan or dog. Indeed, these beings possess no "world": if there is content to consciousness here, it is only "life" and "now". Wittgenstein once pointed out, as an example of the force of grammar, that your dog cannot expect you the day after tomorrow, and this is not because your dog is stupid or lacks language. What it lacks is consciousness in the sense of self- awareness, subjective identity. One might point out that, of course, a dog can and does play, and we also attribute dreams to dogs, but a dog's play does not and cannot lead to art, to the free and deliberate expression of consciousness. A cat can play with a mouse, and seemingly with a ball of string as if it were a mouse. Play is not alien to any living thing. It is only a relative matter of level and kind. Birds, particularly, show a greater capacity than the primates for aesthetic expression in their mating rituals.

So what is the difference, and how, if at all, is human play distinct? There is not space at present, nor am I qualified to investigate that important empirical question. It is perhaps enough to note here the primordial difference between ape and human being and to say that apes are what human beings would be without the arts - insensate beings, with no impulse to refine or express emotional life.

In referring to the conceptual importance of play in the development of consciousness in human beings, we must connect the free activity of play to the sensitive awareness and expression which becomes art. That others in the animal kingdom, to say nothing of the particular glory of plants, show evidence of aesthetic activity is simply to acknowledge the continuity of all life, and perhaps acknowledge, as well, the creative and artistic impulse in nature itself. In this most primal sense, life is play.

V. A HERMENEUTICS OF ENCHANTMENT

To investigate the phenomenon of enchantment within or without art, our inquiry should include what it is in its nature, the conditions of its experience, its sources, its effects, its consequences, its use and abuse, its value. Not all of these questions can be answered in a short essay, but a beginning can be made.

The grammar of "enchantment" includes an etiology which has to do with song and spell: one is lulled into a sense of unreality, or rather is no longer able or caring to make a distinction between what is real and what is imagined. Whether it is the *world* that is transformed, or only the mind, the difference of how we express this, and the consequences in doing so, have generated rich differences in literature and the arts. Less felicitously, this has been used as a dividing line between the arts and the sciences.

Some concepts related to enchantment are those of magic, witchcraft, alchemy, wizardry, sorcery, divination, the occult, legerdemain, sortilege. A more complete list would probably also include the practices of shamanism, voodoo, demonology, necromancy, and thaumaturgy, making use of incantation, and the charms of the amulet and talisman. To "enchant", among other things, means to bewitch, enthrall, mesmerize, captivate, enslave, fascinate, transport, enrapture, charm, enamor, hex, and beguile.

In reviewing the network of meaning which surrounds enchantment, it may be useful to contrast two familiar moments in art: enchantment and ecstasy. On the surface it would appear that in the first case the self is possessed, in the second it is abandoned. "Self" is clearly the right word for enchantment - coming under the spell of some other - it is not simply the mind which is captured or enraptured but the whole of the person. The experience of ecstasy - "ek-stasis", getting outside oneself - is a loss or dissolution of the individual self, a temporary destruction of the hegemony of the ego. Both enchantment and ecstasy seem essential to the total experience of art: the former the essential condition of art, the latter its goal or maximal effect. Both of these transforming experiences place the individual within a realm different in kind from the everyday world. There is a contrast in directions, but in each case a process seems simply to take place, to have an energy of its own - one osmotic, the other transcendent: enchantment assimilates the self, ecstasy disintegrates it.

This contrast is only a way of talking about two of the many different modalities of the complex activity and experience which art calls forth and embodies. In fully analyzing the nature of enchantment in its relation to aesthetics it would be necessary to account for the many dimensions of art: as object, as experience, as work, as effect, as communication - how it is that art expresses, represents, and embodies, how it elicits and provokes. To simplify the task for this paper I will concentrate on only two aspects of enchantment: the ordinary sense in which every experience of art, whether literary or visual art, involves enchantment - we are drawn into the narrative time of a story, drawn into the interior life of a painting. In this most ordinary operation of art experience, enchantment is *pro forma* - a willing engagement instrumental in providing access to the experience of art as art. This is not a very exciting aspect of enchantment, but one essential to the very existence of the arts.

The second aspect of enchantment we will discuss is more dramatic, one we associate with the extraordinary experience that we have somehow been brought into the presence of some strange and wondrous power in a place which is singular in its magical charm.

What *happens* when one becomes enchanted? Is this discretionary with the individual, an action on the part of the person who becomes enchanted? Enchantment seems to be at once a happening, a gift, but it also appears that one can either invite or set herself against such an experience. Like grace, enchantment is not the prerogative of the person, but one can be open to its reception, or not. With enchantment, one is entranced by *what?* - An appearance, an illusion, a projection of imagination, an apparition? Does

the experience of enchantment require that the mind be released into and held spellbound by the vagaries of fantasy, in which one gives up a sense of autonomy and independent existence?

Enchantment is a matter of both heart and mind. Reason and imagination collapse into a shared logic of sensibility which may require no distinction between plant and animal, in which time can move backwards or forwards, in which there are virtuous horses, arrogant eggs, and cats which vanish into a smile. Enchantment is more than a feeling, either subjective or objective. The particular circumstances of time and place are essential to the experience, and to the meaning of the concept. Nor is enchantment merely an individual experience: we speak of *places* as enchanted - as possessed by a spirit, a magic which is visceral, which can be collectively experienced and shared. An example in my own experience is Walpi, a Hopi village on a remote mesa in Arizona, where I have sat unmoving all day in the dust and hot sun to watch and listen to Kachina dances. I was not alone in having the experience of the earth resonating to the sound and movement of the men dancing, and felt the transformation of those dancers into the Kachinas, the spirits which inhabit that majestic and land. I have the same feeling walking below and within the high ancient cliff dwellings of the Anasazi: there is still so much life present within the vacant space of these abandoned dwellings of an ancient people who simply disappeared a thousand years ago. More familiar examples for many may be the Celtic ruins in Ireland or Wales. The countryside itself, shrouded in mist, seems to coalesce into material forms, an illusion and confusion of objects. In such enchanted places there is a fusion of time and place, or one feels as much suspended in time as in place. Enchantment seems to be a purely aesthetic experience, in the sense that no revelation attends the occurrence. On the other hand enchantment seldom leaves an individual the same person. Whether the occasion is literature or life, music or moonlight, the residuals of memory can haunt a lifetime. Those who think of the aesthetic as marginal or as an addendum to leisure miss the depth and permanence of such experience.

VI. THE TIME AND **PLACE OF** ENCHANTMENT

"Once upon a time, in a far-off place ... " It is a common belief and familiar saying that childhood is a time of enchantment. Art draws on just this capacity natural to childhood - that anything and everything is a wonder. Aristotle's familiar remark that "philosophy begins in wonder" at first seems like a promising analytic insight into the phenomenon of enchantment, but what he goes on to do and say makes it precisely the task of philosophy to overcome the wonder. It is rather the artist, not the philosopher, who seeks to generate, capture, rekindle, and give form and expression to the wonder of enchantment. The artist must risk, if need be, acting the child and playing the fool, to bring this vital and primal sense to life.

If there is a *place* of enchantment, invariable in anyone's experience, it is surely the world of art - or perhaps better, anywhere for anyone where imagination is creatively engaged. Quite ordinary experience is familiarly transformed when one experiences the world as if experiencing a work of art, or experiences the world as created. Any ordinary space becomes enchanted where a present place is experienced as the expression of a creative mind. Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, is clearly right in seeing an aesthetic response as both natural and fundamental to the ordinary experience of the world. Hegel, Dewey, and Gadamer are contrasting philosophical figures who share this conviction about the aesthetic character of experience.

Enchantment occurs when we view the world as art - a sunset, a rainbow, the mist on the moors, creatures materializing as if by design or direction. In the opposite way, it also occurs when one views art as the world - a phenomenon familiar in and essential to the experience of motion pictures. In each case, imagination is engaged to dissolve the

line between world and mind, object and shadow, conscious and unconscious, dream and waking.

Enchantment is a space between waking and sleep - it is a setting more than a state, in which something may happen - or nothing. One is drawn into a world at once strange and familiar, of sensory awareness and reflection. With enchantment, there is a sense of the uncanny, and also a sense of intimacy. I am possessed, but I also belong: if I have been claimed by some spirit or power, nonetheless there is a state of grace in the possession.

Although the surface meaning of enchantment may suggest a quiescent state, there is a deeper tension present in its aesthetic employment in art. To bring this out it may be useful to consider Nietzsche's account of archaic Greek tragic drama, which he takes to exemplify the ecstatic, in ways we have discussed already as the apparent antithesis of the aesthetic complement of enchantment. The primal effectiveness of tragic drama, for Nietzsche, depended on the audience being drawn into a Dionysian celebration of life in death, which, in its earliest staging, became a ritual "time of the God". Nietzsche's analysis of tragic drama, however, makes use of two distinct metaphors describing the two creative sources of tragedy: a drunken revelry of the dark god Dionysius, and the dreaming lucidity of bright Apollo. Nietzsche argued that both are necessary for the full art of tragic drama. As he put it, one must worship at the shrine of both gods. The life energy of tragic art for Nietzsche is Dionysius, and ecstasy its effect. But it is equally clear that the conflicting tension and aesthetic form of tragedy depends on the intercession of the Olympian, Apollo, the enlightening effect of which is a dreaming enchantment. Both time and place, energy and form, are critical to aesthetic experience. One must be moved by an experience, but the experience itself must have a coherent and articulate integrity.

Although the major sense of enchantment seems to be positive - dream, not nightmare - there may be a negative side to aesthetic experience, which adds to the creative tension. One view of the mind as its own place, is that we are trapped within it: we are separate creatures, only able, like spiders, to each dangle from a single thread of her own making. In Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, Addie uses this image in her lamentation of being unable to reach her students with words: we only dangle in space touching with words. Addie finally seeks a resolution to overcome this isolation in a way we understand all too well, and resorts to physically beating the children so that they will *feel* her existence - her passion and theirs join in a moment of real pain. This is a moment in literature which speaks to a common experience, where the whole of existence seems unreal, and thus the terrible suffocating sense that one cannot awaken from a dream. R. D. Laing, a British psychiatrist, has analytically detailed the pathology of this situation in the extreme cases where enchantment and madness meet. In the back wards of "mental hospitals" it is not uncommon to find self-mutilation among patients apparently in terror of the unreality of their bodies. Laing takes literally the concept of "schizo/phrenia", a divided self, resulting in a loss of ontological identity in which the mind implodes. In such a terrible state of dementia, the mind indeed becomes its own place. A reading of Conrad Aiken's much anthologized short story "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" provides a sense for the dangers of enchantment, in his painful and wholly credible account of the seductiveness of childhood schizophrenia.

In this extreme view, we don't fall into a world of enchantment, it is the other way about: we only escape from our private space of consciousness for a waking while, into a common and mundane world provoked by the need to survive and communicate. There is a parallel here to the perennial division of body and soul. It is only from one point of view that one asks the question whether the body can or does contain a soul. From another point of view one can perhaps also say that the body is surrounded by, contained within, or is a manifest expression of the soul or spirit. There is nothing in language or life which decides which of the stories is true. Each story is more useful for one kind or domain of understanding of the human condition.

It may be that dreaming is as close as most of us get to madness without suffering it. What can be frightening in dreaming is that one is subjected to necessity without voice or recourse, subjected to a relentless logic of a narrative over which one has no control, or subject to a symbolic disorder which has no logic. One can, in turn, interpret dreams, of course, subject them to our conscious and rational agendas, rather than be subjected to theirs. But an interpretation is the destruction of a dream - or in any event, a deconstruction of a remembrance. The dream itself is an occurrence, which, as it were, breaks upon consciousness. It intrudes sufficiently that sometimes we can "recall" the content of the dream - make into a story what comes to mind in remembering and thinking about the dream. The point which needs to be emphasized here is that it is not the dream itself which mirrors the enchantment of art and aesthetic experience, but the meaningful reconstruction of the dream.

VII. ENCHANTMENT, MEANING, AND TRUTH

Let us return in closing to the possible connection between enchantment and truth, more generally to the confluence of the true, the good, and the beautiful in aesthetic experience, and most important of all to the issue of meaning. The four citations at the beginning of this paper express different aspects of the many sources and effects of enchantment. The first is of course now a universally acknowledged invitation to enchantment. The importance of citing it here is the reminder of distance and difference. Secondly, Campbell's poetic expression is, on one level, simply a “literal” observation: it is in the reflected and refracted light of the mountain air, as seen from a distance, that the mountain takes on its magical hue. The lines can also be read, at least out of context, as a debunking of enchantment: what you imagine to be a creative act of the mountain god is but a hallucination, a perceptual illusion. But on still another reading, metaphorically, this is an observation about enchantment itself: that the intimacy of an experience is a result of distancing the object. The paradoxical yoking of intimacy and emotional distance is, or can be, a vital part of aesthetic experience. Nor need there be a single aspiration to the truth, if such exists, in a modest line of poetry, but as here, typically, there are little truths which reward sensitive thinking and second thoughts.

John Milton is, of course, sterner stuff, and whether malt does more than old John does to justify the ways of God to us, his words capture an aspect of a larger truth than apologetics. We have already alluded to the several lessons in these lines, so it may be enough here to recall the context which gives dramatic force to this insight. It is Satan in defeat, seeking to justify his pathetic if therapeutic boast that it is better to reign in hell than serve in heaven, who gives voice to what is clearly a rationalization of loss. The mind can indeed be its own place, but as such it is the solitary refuge of the god-forsaken. Enchantment as a paradigm of aesthetic experience is not a withdrawal from the world, nor a regression into a vacant space in which the mind feeds on itself. Enchantment in art is at the very least a relation to the world, or to the many worlds in which sensuous perception and comprehensive perspective draw on *the other*, on and from that which is not simply of our own making. Whatever else Hell may be, it is surely not enchanting.

Our last familiar example is Prospero's memorable soliloquy from *The Tempest*, which I hope the reader will know in its entirety. Recall that it begins "Now our revels are ended, these our actors are all spirits, and are all melted into air ... ". We cannot here discuss the whole of what leads up to this soliloquy, but we should at least note the importance of the background of contextual complexity that frames the truth of drama. Shakespeare's venue embraces the whole of life, of history, of human hopes and expectations. In this enchanted drama, convergent and conflicting metaphors are woven into a single piece which reduces the world and all it inherits into an ending dream, but in magnificent language which belies the reduction. The dramatic analogues of stage and

life, theatre and world, provide the fabric of a vision that even "the great Globe itself (theatre and firmament) shall dissolve, and like some insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind".

Typical of the lyric and dramatic paradoxes of Shakespeare's metaphors - "How infinite in faculty ... how like a god ... this quintessence of dust" - the enchantment of Prospero's island world, for all its power, cannot keep forever, no more than our lives and world. No power of mind or art is final protection against the intrusive human voices and bodies, which in turn enchant his daughter, and ever renew the perennial hopes of a new generation. It is a brave new world, but only for Miranda, for the young, and only for an innocent moment of enchantment, and then the cycle will repeat. It is not such a far remove, after all, into Huxley's dystopic version and revision of the *Brave New World.* What redeems Shakespeare's world, but not Huxley's, is the greatness of art. However dreadful or perverse the poetic vision, whether Milton's Satan, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Conrad's Kurtz, Dostoevsky's Inquisitor, Melville's Ahab or Yeats' Rough Beast, the very language of aesthetic recognition and poetic expression - verbal, visual, audial - restores the dignity of the endurance and sometimes majesty of the human project.

The moral truth in Shakespeare's aesthetic vision provides a way of looking at our lives - as fragile in passing, the stuff of dreams, and hopes, and memories, and meanings. The world is not the totality of things or facts, but the totality of meaning, which includes all of the above. Whether this too solid flesh does indeed melt into desire or into despair, such is the stuff of mankind, an enchanted creature, in an enchanted world.

Both life and world are, in the end, insubstantial pageants faded. Just as this life is my life, this world is finally *my* world. World can also be *the* world - for passing, abstract, public fictions - and *our* world - for brief moments of intimacy. But in every instance, world is an invested fiction, albeit one which constitutes the frame of our individual and collective lives and history. We are awakened into enchantment - in the theatre as into life - and it is here that we learn the truth of our lives. This truth is not simple, not direct, not easy, but it is the human possibility and genius of great art.

The truth of enchantment, the truth of the poetic at its core, is not referential in any ordinary or direct way. There are no singular or separate claims to be examined, tested, or confirmed. The truth embodied in an aesthetic vision is no more and no less than the truths embodied in our lives. The meaning of one's own life comes from the inside out: truth becomes that, for being needed, being chosen. If we are so fortunate on occasion to be carried away by the singular enchantment of art, we are transported into the depths of our own being. If the sense and truth of life is to be found anywhere, it is here. Whether some final or serviceable truth can be found in literature, enchantment at the very least, is the ground of its search.

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