

## **Evolution of Art's Effectiveness on Posthumanism: Infinite Life of Art through the Changes of Time/Humanity**

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**Abstract:** Art, aesthetics and the response to art over time cannot be encapsulated as a commodity or dissolved in the needs of current events. Imagine a creative phenomenological river flowing through perceptions, space-time and humanity. Its life breath pings into the universe with the chords of the past, present and future. The true artists and their work is not of the commercial commodity of financial gain, although it can be caught up in it, as we look at the value of the classics. The artistic expression is universal and timeless, its muse is part of the phenomenology of life, and its effects priceless.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, arts, psychology of creation, posthumanism, poets, song writers

### **INTRODUCTION**

In response to the challenge, “Has the postmodern era erased the question of the essence of art?” I, quote Robert Lax, *The Way of the Dream Catcher*, ‘there is a bell on the Isle of Patmos which reads,’ “I read where all the lessons have been intoned; but each generation in its own holy freedom must hear it differently” (Georgiou 2002).

We hear it differently, we see it differently, we study our fascination of the creation of art and how it touches generations according to the time (“Interview with Bob Dylan”, 2017). Modern psychologists study where creative thought comes from as did philosophers decades before. Bob Dylan responds to the question which is often asked of an artist: “Where do his thoughts go when he starts to create?” In response, he quotes Homer’s *Odyssey*: “Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story” (Ibid.). In his book *Chronicles* he explains, “A song is like a dream, and you try to make it come true.” (Dylan 2004).

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## A RIVER: PHENOMENOLOGY OF POETICS CREATRIX AND THE POETS

‘The Priest of the Muse’ - Horace Phrase:  
So it takes heroic humility to be yourself and to be nobody,  
but the man, or the artist, that God intended you to be -

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*

To understand the arts and the effectiveness of art over time is to understand the artist. In my paper I look at the *beingness* of the Poet and how the universality and time-space *poetic creatrix* has existed in without fail throughout the history of humanity. We find it from the *Iliad* along with Homer’s *Odyssey*, the oldest known extant of the western world, to Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka in the 2011 edited volume *Sharing Poetic Expressions: Beauty, Sublime, Mysticism in Islamic and Occidental Culture*.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* speaks of “The Cartesian–Lockean conception of thought and experience” – a conception that in many ways still figures prominently in contemporary psychology and cognitive science – and gives an account of perception, imagination, intellect, and will in terms of the presence of “ideas,” or what Kant called “representations” (*Vorstellungen*), in the mind. The French philosopher goes on to say, “Phenomenology involves describing, and not explaining or analyzing...The first rule to be a descriptive psychology.” (Merleau-Ponty 1945)

The Irish poet Michael Longley, in his April 12 *Vitality of Ordinary Things* on the podcast *On Being*, speaks eloquently on his experience as a poet, where he describes the poet in first person and the transcendental existence of where poet’s draw from when they write. He asks, “Where does the poet come from...they are caught by surprise.” He compares it to the biblical teachings where Jesus said, “Do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.” Longley, “there is nothing more exciting than writing a poem; and it cannot be forced or you produce forgery.” (Longley 2016)

Merleau-Ponty writes of Perception and Perspective, “Indeed a pale reflection, of divine omniscience. God’s perfect and unlimited knowledge of the universe, they supposed, is the proper standard against which to measure the scope and limits of what we can know. Whereas God’s perspective is the ideal “view from nowhere,” ours is

always a view from somewhere – hence, partial and imperfect. (Merleau-Ponty 1945)

Michael Longley speaks of the power of the words of the poet. How in history ‘dictators’ quickly dispose of the Poets and the artists? Why? “Artists and Poets encourage people to think indifferent to the church or state.” (Longley 2016) He continues on, accounting how scraps of paper with poems written on them were found in the concentration camps of Auschwitz. It is the natural defense in the bottom of the well of human despair where the universe calls the voice of the poet, artist, philosopher and phenomenologist, leaving timeless values to exist through time-space. (Ibid.) In a butcher shop in Northern Ireland a person asked Michael Longley, “What good is poetry?” He turns and responds, “No good at all, but it has value.”

It is human nature for us to want to put monetary value on the arts, it is what we use to gauge the existence and value of the world by the world. It is however, never the reason the arts or poetry exist, or even become eternal through time. It is the Cosmic Way of reminding us of the existence of a voice much higher than we understand.

Yet, in the words of John Claire, “Poets love nature, and then they themselves are loved.” And Emerson says, “the happiest person on earth is the one who learns from nature the lesson of worship.” We cannot separate the existence of creation, whether of the arts or nature, it is there for us, it is in us. In the words of the Poet, Robert Lax:

Everything that exists  
Can turn to prayer;  
Even the water,  
Even the air.

*A Song of our Lady* (in Georgiou 2002)

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka in her wisdom of Phenomenology of Life understood the stance of the poet, she was a poet, she is a poet, her writings and her poetry resonate into the cosmos and into the beingness of anyone who listens to her. She speaks of her garden, she listened. In her 2008 interview, the poetic reference she refers to her, “being a gardener is like unto the very mystery of life.” (Torjussen et alii 2008, 33). Yet she was a scholar of all the scholars who went before us, Kant, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur. She is writing with her own voice of the poet, looked at the Cosmos and knew they were an intricate part of who we are as pilgrims - seeking

understanding of what is not yet to understand. *It is through her poetry, I came to know her.*

In *Phenomenology / Ontopoiesis Retrieving Geo-cosmic Horizons of Antiquity: Logos and Life*, Tymieniecka explains in her Introduction, "...publication plans to bring to light the long chain of fragmented issues along which we have retrieved the full Greek intuition of man, earth, cosmos which has been in its entire horizon, forgotten since. The horizon of the cosmos called to be retrieved. It is in the onto-poietic foundation of the logos of life that 'the soul is in the cosmos, and the cosmos is in the soul.'" (Tymieniecka, ed., 2011a, xi)

Yes, if you are looking for fortune as a poet, you will be disappointed, in the words of John Hewitt, "it is your own fault."

To quote an excerpt from my poem, *Tears*: "it is not your duty to carry the burden nor your light of joy, you are important, for you are my 'tears'." (McNeill-Matteson 2011)

*Poetry has value.*

In the words of Michael Longley, "If prose was a river, poetry would be the fountain." (Longley 2016)

Bob Dylan speaks of the "Phenomenological Muse"; he in his address as a Noble Prize Recipient talks eloquently about the influences that his hunger for reading has on his writings. He speaks specifically of 3 books *Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Odyssey*. Dylan shares listening to the song "Cottonfields," when he first heard it, he listened to it one hundred times. In his words, "it changed my life." Is the Cosmic Muse of time-space, a part of the legacies of speaking through to such artist as Dylan? He speaks of *Moby Dick* and Ahab being a poet, and when asked where he is from, he says, "it is not down on any map." (Dylan 2017)

As a poet, who at nine years old wrote poems and hid them in my Grandparents' book case, I often read the poem afterwards and came to know I am just a visitor from a *source* we continue to study.

According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "the phenomenal field is always a 'transcendental field,' that is, a space of possibilities, impossibilities, and necessities constitutive of our perceptual world. The body is not just a causal but a transcendental condition of perception, which is to say that we have no understanding of perception at all in abstraction from body and world (Merleau-Ponty 1945).

The ordinary becomes extraordinary in the description of the effects of the universe and the cosmos; the phenomenology of poetry and the

understanding poets share, but too often have challenges when trying to describe where their poem comes from. Bob Dylan's response to his writings in his interview with *The Washington Post*, mentions Odysseus, who in *The Odyssey* visited Achilles in the underworld. A morose Achilles tells Odysseus that "he would rather be a slave in the world of the living than king in the world of the dead." As Dylan put it, "whatever his struggles of life were, they were preferable to being here in this dead place." (Dylan 2017) In his song, "One Too Many Mornings", he talks about the song, is telling your story of the simple, yet universal. The universe becomes personal yet for generations it echoes through the universe the voice of tomorrow." He ends his interview in the words of Homer, "oh muse speaks through me." (Ibid.)

To quote Romans 7:4, "We have been raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit for God." An excerpt from my poem *Dichotomy* (see McNeill-Matteson 2011) is coming to the fore:

I distinguish myself  
Writing of my own queries.  
While people seek to share their  
Confusion from the lockers of their minds,  
*The poet inserts a key and she writes.*

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka writes in her "The Song of the 'Promised One'": "Purity of heart of the inexpressible belonging to an enmeshed thread of symbol in an unknown text; a silent walk together on an unknown path... opened at the end only be the master key of all ciphers, purity of heart of the total and yet uncertain response to a call; call and response of the total question without possible answer other than another question." (Tymieniecka 2011).

In terms of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945): "I weave dreams around the things, I imagine objects or people whose presence here is not compatible with the context, and yet they are not confused with the world, they are out in front of the world, on stage of imaginary. If the reality of my perception were based solely on the intrinsic coherence of representations, there it should always be hesitant, and, delivered over to probable conjectures. ...this is never the case."

Returning to Bob Dylan, he writes many songs about dreams, one particular one titled, "A Series of Dreams". In his video he shows the tombstone of Jack Kerouac.

The American novelist and poet Jack Kerouac wrote one of his last novels based off the dreams he had recorded over a span of years (1948-1956), *Book of Dreams* (see Kerouac 2001).

From a psychoanalytic point of view, Carl Gustav Jung wrote his last book about dreams, first known as *Black Books* (1913-1932), and later as *The Red Book*: “What is this I am doing, it certainly is not science; what is it? Then a voice said to me, that is art.” (Jung 2009)

In his turn, S. T. Georgiou, in *The Dream Catcher* (2002), published a poem of Robert Lax, *Origins: The Circus of the Sun*:

And in the beginning was love.  
Love made a sphere.  
All things grew within it.  
The sphere then encompasses  
  
Beginnings and endings,  
Beginning and end.  
Love had a compass  
Whose whirling dance traced out  
  
A sphere of love in the void;  
In the center thereof  
Rose a fountain.

Jack Kerouac was close friend of Thomas Merton and Robert Lax. They became friends at Columbia University, where they were members of a prolific group of writers and artists such as Thomas Merton, Ad Reinhardt, Edward Rice, and John Berryman.

In his Foreword, Jack Kerouac talks about the heroes in his publication *On the Road*, comes from his *Book of Dreams*, he explains: “Everyone in the world dreams every night ties all mankind together shall we say in one unspoken Union and also proves the world is really a transcendental state. ...So, I dedicate this book to the ‘roses’ of the unborn”.

In other book, *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*, Keith Oatley explores the fundamental truths about our minds. In his chapter “Fiction as Dreams”, he talks of Shakespeare and how he had his idea of dreams and visits them often. Oatley (2011) mentions toward the end of Shakespeare’s career he continues his career in shadows and substance, in *The Tempest*:

The cloud-capp’d towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,

Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with sleep

Psychologists look at 'functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging' (fMRI) and the locations of the brain when creativity is engaged. They speak of linguistic terms of the dream idea of linguistic terms. In essence they see it as in the words of Keith Oatley (2011): "Narrative Stories are simulations that run not on computers but in our mind."

The dreams of the Poets, the mystery of where the poem comes from can only be explained by getting to know the poets; as they intricately, intimately are listening to the echo of the Muse over time, from the Cosmos, to intimate moments of a walk in a garden. Asking the questions, as Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka refers to and reminding us, "we are only left another question." (Tymieniecka 2011a)

#### INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Remaining with the creator of the Phenomenology of Life, I stress her position expressed in her Foreword at the volume *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies*:

Our imagination is informed by the gloomy vapors, the glimmers of fleeting light, and the glory of the skies. Reconnoitering from the soil of human life and striving towards the infinite, the elan of imagination gets caught up in the clouds of the skies... There in that dimness, sensory receptivity, dispositions, emotions, passionate strivings, yearnings, elevations gather and propagate. (Tymieniecka 2012, ix)

I think of the artist, the poets, the song writers, and I quote Carmen Cozma (2011, 418), in her study "*Sophia as Telos in the 'Ontopoietic Perspective'*":

To Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's assertion that philosophy, respectively wisdom is "made possible owing to the creative virtualities of man", we add that, in its turn, wisdom represents a creative factor within the expanse of human life; it can be explored like a function of "man, the creator" in order to rise from the initial spontaneity, going to enact and fulfill the inventive virtualities in a specifically human individualization, guided by a "creative telos", considering the total human experience between the rootedness "in Elementary Nature" and the tendency "toward Transcendence."

In the words of Pope Francis, “an artist is an apostle of Beauty... who helps people live”.

It is a good place to reiterate that all the while, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka walked in her garden, listening, and finding places even for the weeds (see McNeill-Matteson 2017).

I close with a poem I wrote:

*A River of Time*

It was a silver thread  
running like a river  
cutting through creation  
of life forever  
to quench the thirst of  
the tired and bold  
to sooth with solace  
of the grieving souls  
the songs of poets  
ring in the hearing  
meeting humanity  
the cosmos bearing  
webbed in saddle  
to ride upon rhyme  
carrying the breaths  
throughout time  
of poets and sages  
philosophers too  
a mystery of dreams  
brought from old into new.  
the silverthread  
a river of time  
It was theirs then  
it is ours and now mine



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