

THE MISCOMPETENTLY- INCLINED IMPROVISER'S READER OR HANDBOOK



COVER OF DEREK GALLEY & HAN
DENNY'S SELF-TITLED 1973 INCUS RECORDS LP

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I. Mis-competence

“These are days when no one should rely unduly on his ‘competence.’ Strength lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed.”

–Walter Benjamin, “One-Way Street”

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A nagging and unpleasant question I’ve felt like the object of since the beginning of the year is: “why is it unpleasant/painful/wearying to *not know* what exactly I’m doing or going to do?”... because it *seems* like the idea that (for example) I could make new music in a state of cluelessness would actually be very appealing and pleasant and free and not stressful, but in my experience it feels really lousy and anxiety-provoking, and the fact that I feel this way about “beginningness” is itself pretty dismaying and diminishing...

In general I seem to need a way to 1) get started, 2) keep myself from “overworking” the resulting material, and 3) develop a habit of sharing it with others and working with others. “Mis-competence,” I think, points to a way to address these needs.

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stem of paths along which to move among realms of being (for ason there is also a web of cross-references from title to title in xt). Flowing from the commonplaces are comments (*scholia*) show, in increasingly open styles of discourse, how the common- are amplified and serve to make audible the world-wide and -long discourse which is always going on (30.6) in the presence poem—with the intention of putting poetry and poetic knowl- service of human interests. ve all, therefore, this is a text for use, intended like a poem to se to thoughts about something else.

ALLEN GROSSMAN

The Primer

Immortality I (14)

1. The function of poetry is to obtain for everybody one kind of success at the limits of the autonomy of the will.

Scholium "in the wake of language." Here we conceive of poetry as doing moral work, as having a function in the same way as a machine has a function but a machine that speaks. (43)

Like language (but not identical with language)—perhaps it would be well to say "in the wake of language"—poetry makes promises to everybody and keeps its promises only to some. So when we say "the function of poetry is to obtain for everybody one kind of success," we are running ahead of the fact (but doing so in the name of the fact), and raising the question of justice.

By "success" we mean "outcome." Poetry serves to obtain a kind of outcome (a success is any outcome) precisely at those points in experience where the natural will is helpless.

- 1.1 The limits of the autonomy of the will discovered in poetry are death and the barriers against access to other consciousnesses.

Scholium on limits. Poetry thematizes the abandonment of will of the speaking person as speaker. "Sing, muse. . . ."

SHUNRYU ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ SUZUKI,

FROM

"ZEN

MIND,

BEGINNER'S

MIND"

find more meaning in it. So I think that sometimes the best horse may be the worst horse, and the worst horse can be the best one.

If you study calligraphy you will find that those who are not so clever usually become the best calligraphers. Those who are very clever with their hands often encounter great difficulty after they have reached a certain stage. This is also true in art and in Zen. It is true in life. So when we talk about Zen we cannot say, "He is good," or "He is bad," in the ordinary sense of the words. The posture taken in zazen is not the same for each of us. For some it may be impossible to take the cross-legged posture. But even though you cannot take the right posture, when you arouse your real, way-seeking mind, you can practice Zen in its true sense. Actually it is easier for those who have difficulties in sitting to arouse the true way-seeking mind than for those who can sit easily.

When we reflect on what are doing in our everyday life, we are always ashamed of ourselves. One of my students wrote to me saying, "You sent me a calendar, and I am trying to follow the good mottoes which appear on each page. But the year has hardly begun, and already I have failed!" Dogen-zenji said, "Shoshaku jushaku." Shaku generally means "mistake" or "wrong." Shoshaku jushaku means "to succeed wrong with wrong," or one continuous mistake. According to Dogen, one continuous mistake can also be Zen. A Zen master's life could be said to be so many years of shoshaku jushaku. This means so many years of one single-minded effort.

We say, "A good father is not a good father." Do you understand? One who thinks he is a good father is not a good father; one who thinks he is a good husband is not a good husband. One who thinks he is one of the worst husbands may be a good one if he is always trying to be a good husband with a single-hearted effort. If you find it impossible to sit because of some pain or some physical difficulty, then you should sit anyway, using a thick cushion or a chair.

Bruce Russell, from "What True Project Has Been Lost?" (excerpts)

Part of the shift in artistic habitus associated with the after-effects of punk I term 'mis-competence.' My definition of mis-competence is the ability to do something both deliberately wrongly, and well. *Mis-competent inclination* – a love of doing things the wrong way.

My improvisational guitar practice was born from expedience, enabled by technology and driven by mis-competent inclination. Of special importance to this discussion is the issue of technical support – specifically my reliance on the borderline malfunction of my original guitar amplifier.

I have been at pains over three decades to perform in a way that undercuts any expectations about performance, often immobile for long periods, swinging the guitar like a cricket bat, unplugging and re-plugging equipment in mid-performance, or deliberately misusing my equipment in questionable ways. [...] In a setting which seems inevitably to call for a musical performance, I am "making a sound," an activity which I argue is of a completely different order.

[My practice] is not a technique of playing – the kind of activity we might describe as "goal-oriented" – rather, it is an heuristic, a set of instructions for reaching a goal which remains unknown until we reach it. [also from the liner notes to *Howling and Instability at High Volume Settings*]

All of these approaches have served as strategies to deflect the judgement of audiences towards the broadest context of cultural production, *away from the aesthetic and towards the social*; towards questions such as: 'what is happening to me here, and why'?

The process of performance itself is really not 'the only thing going on', and *its inherent questionability is thus foregrounded as the only possible point to the whole exercise*.

Possible theses on mis-competence

- ☞ That “mis-competence” as a practical creative mode is anarchically viable across the whole “beginner → intermediate → expert” conceptual hierarchy and, as such, effectively levels (or circularizes, radicalizes, etc) that hierarchy;
- ☞ that “expertise” in the radical, mis-competently-inclined sense (another word might just be “facility”) opens the way to a relatively well-adjusted (or, bearable) state of ongoing beginnerhood;
- ☞ that fear of “getting started” can be overcome by the realization that “beginning” is all there ever is;
- ☞ that to sail against the wind of the commodity-expectation (of an “end result”) in creative practice involves kind of stumbling around open-hearted in a way of life that is creatively centered as much as possible on social relations and relationships, in both theory and practice.

there, and here's your dressing room, outer reaches of Mongolia." "We were Zealand then," Russell laughs. "It was g them their own urine."

ance started to take hold on the ng. In 1994 Russell founded a new ermeticum, dedicated to documenting t-head C rock by the likes of Sandoz , Dramaar, Surface Of The Earth and as his duo with Alastair Galbraith, A and international jams from Thurston uder Attack and Tetuzi Akiyama. e era best defines The Dead C's -Fucking Exit (1993), Clyma Est the double LP Harsh 70s Reality t the apex of their marriage of feral and collapsing song structures. intentionally sprawling," Morley what we're all about," Russell states "tension." "It definitely marks a the group," Morley continues. "It Siltbreeze release, it was a double ook a bit of work to sustain that kind sthetic that balances the record. for about 18 months. I got the title he had said something to me about V programme, the harsh reality of the aland, what it was like in the country, ally, economically. But it's not a 70s at all in the end. It's about the , it's abor in that moment and

that mom
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ssell.
uitar,
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oo, it
ing Seals
lped define the Siltbreeze
s what I would describe as warped
nk it is one of the most important
ic labels, up there with ESP-Disk'.
reeze records did that thing, you
adow Ring, how the hell do you cope
Ring? You have to abandon your
out what you're going to get and
was ground zero. We were all making
y designed, incomprehensible rock
t fit or give away too many reference
a shitty sound."
nk your sound was shitty? "Yeah, I
titty sound," Russell insists. "But not
se." Yeats adds helpfully, "like a shit
go on about low fidelity recording,
ssell groans. "But I think our

records are simply a true reflection of what we actually sound like. I believe that our recordings are really good, really clear recordings of a really shitty sound."
"Let's not underestimate what we do," Yeats avers.
"No one can play the guitar as well as Bruce Russell plays his guitar or Michael Morley plays his guitar. It's true! No one else can fucking do it. You try it!"
"I think of myself as the Jimi Hendrix of no technique," Russell beams.

Nowhere is this intense de-tooling of the guitar more apparent than on the heroic series of mostly instrumental albums The Dead C released between 1996 and 2002. It runs from their final Siltbreeze recordings, *Repent* (1996) and *Tusk* (1997), to the first releases on their newly minted Language Recordings, the double set *The Dead C* (2000) and *New Electric Music* (2002). They're some of the most relentless guitar albums ever made, birthed from the sound of struggle, with three players battling to overthrow the constraints of technique in search of an ecstatic communion of flesh and metal. "*Repent* is a brutal record," Russell agrees. "There were always large chunks of spew on our records and large chunks of spew between songs in our sets. Then we did *Repent*, which is all large chunks of spew. Nothing else, just the spew."

"After Siltbreeze went into temporary retirement we retreated to New Zealand and we didn't play live for years," says Morley. "We went back to working together, in private, in secret. The self-titled double CD was the result of years of playing, of listening to recordings, of trying to narrow down what it is experimental scenes, ~~records~~ are all about the sound for the way psychedelia was introduced of metal on agent into a music looking for ways to extend the punk lessons it had internalised. Alongside Wreck Small Speakers, The Clean, The Chills, The Stones and others, it included Roy Montgomery's Velvets-obsessed Pin Group, who, according to Russell, had an "unparalleled understanding of the ultimate drone rock magic trick of how to hold one chord just too long."

"Personally, I think of us as intensely psychedelic," Russell declares. "That's our stock in trade within the rock traditions, 100 per cent psychedelic and with everything else missing. We just stripped everything else out of rock music and kept the psychedelic element. Fuck the rest of it."

"A definition of psychedelic has to be made, I think," demands Morley. "Headfucking," Russell shoots back. "It's not kaftans and coloured wheels," says Morley. "I'm not talking about Quicksilver Messenger Service," bursts. "How cool is that about early Cabaret guys," he says, grabbing Morley by the neck. "We think 'We get to see the Mediterranean today! We look and say, there's Africa. I'm in tears of joy. I have always wanted to go and see the Mediterranean. This is a big fucking thing for me! This is a big deal for The Dead C going to the South of France and these freaks want to hear this music, bonus, whatever!'"

Outside the station, The Dead C pose for one last photograph. There isn't a cloud in the sky. Just over Yeats's shoulder I can see Notre Dame de la Garde Church. "Remind me again how the fuck we got here?" he laughs. It's been a long strange trip. □ The Dead C's *Armed Courage* and Gate's *A Republic Of Sadness* are out now on Ba Da Bing

"There's
always
that
creeping
concern
in
the
back
of
your
mind
that
nothing
is
being
achieved,
slowly"

Michael Morley

coherent stagger through one moments, a version of "Helen Said This", which first appeared as a sidelong jam on the *Helen Said This/Bury 12*" EP (Siltbreeze, 1990). Morley's vocals never sounded quite so narcoleptic, as he leeringly gutter through lyrics that shuffle and repeat word order over Yeats's definitive builds and dead-stop crescendos, while playing those two descending minor chords that define all of the best Dead C tracks. Russell reports it from another galaxy altogether, tearing alien distress calls and screaming single notes from the sound of pure electricity, and alternating them with punk primitive raga guitar reconciling Rudolph Grey's work in The Blue Humans with The Byrds circa "Eight Miles High". But the most exhilarating aspect of the set is the way the group set up a song only to tear it apart. They round on the atomic structure of the song itself, tearing through veil after veil across a 45 minute jam that reduces it to a single quivering atom, a vibrating singularity, a genuine love cry.

named write about it. A name is adequate or it is not. If it is adequate then why go on calling it, if it is not then calling it by its name does no good.

People if you like to believe it can be made by their names. Call anybody Paul and they get to be a Paul call anybody Alice and they get to be an Alice perhaps yes perhaps no, there is something in that, but generally speaking, things once they are named the name does not go on doing anything to them and so why write in nouns. Nouns are the name of anything and just naming names is alright when you want to call a roll but is it any good for anything else. To be sure in many places in Europe as in America they do like to call rolls.

As I say a noun is a name of a thing, and therefore slowly if you feel what is inside that thing you do not call it by the name by which it is known. Everybody knows that by the way they do when they are in love and a writer should always have that intensity of emotion about whatever is the object about which he writes. And therefore and I say it again more and more one does not use nouns.

Now what other things are there beside nouns, there are a lot of other things beside nouns.

When you are at school and learn grammar grammar is very exciting. I really do not know that anything has ever been more exciting than diagramming sentences. I suppose other things may be more exciting to others when they are at school but to me

undoubtedly when I was at school the really completely exciting thing was diagramming sentences and that has been to me ever since the one thing that has been completely exciting and completely completing. I like the feeling the everlasting feeling of sentences as they diagram themselves.

In that way one is completely possessing something and incidentally one's self. Now in that diagramming of the sentences of course there are articles and prepositions and as I say there are nouns but nouns as I say even by definition are completely not interesting, the same thing is true of adjectives. Adjectives are not really and truly interesting. In a way anybody can know always has known that, because after all adjectives effect nouns and as nouns are not really interesting the thing that effects a not too interesting thing is of necessity not interesting. In a way as I say anybody knows that because of course the first thing that anybody takes out of anybody's writing are the adjectives. You see of yourself how true it is that which I have just said.

Beside the nouns and the adjectives there are verbs and adverbs. Verbs and adverbs are more interesting. In the first place they have one very nice quality and that is that they can be so mistaken. It is wonderful the number of mistakes a verb can make and that is equally true of its adverb. Nouns and adjectives never can make mistakes can never be mistaken but verbs can be so endlessly, both as to what they do and how

they agree or disagree with whatever they do. The same is true of adverbs.

In that way any one can see that verbs and adverbs are more interesting than nouns and adjectives.

Beside being able to be mistaken and to make mistakes verbs can change to look like themselves or to look like something else, they are, so to speak on the move and adverbs move with them and each of them find themselves not at all annoying but very often very much mistaken. That is the reason any one can like what verbs can do. Then comes the thing that can of all things be most mistaken and they are prepositions. Prepositions can live one long life being really being nothing but absolutely nothing but mistaken and that makes them irritating if you feel that way about mistakes but certainly something that you can be continuously using and everlastingly enjoying. I like prepositions the best of all, and pretty soon we will go more completely into that.

Then there are articles. Articles are interesting just as nouns and adjectives are not. And why are they interesting just as nouns and adjectives are not. They are interesting because they do what a noun might do if a noun was not so unfortunately so completely unfortunately the name of something. Articles please, a and an and the please as the name that follows cannot please. They the names that is the nouns cannot please, because after all you know well after

all that is what Shakespeare meant when he talked about a rose by any other name.

I hope now no one can have any illusion about a noun or about the adjective that goes with the noun.

But an article an article remains as a delicate and a varied something and any one who wants to write with articles and knows how to use them will always have the pleasure that using something that is varied and alive can give. That is what articles are.

Beside that there are conjunctions, and a conjunction is not varied but it has a force that need not make any one feel that they are dull. Conjunctions have made themselves live by their work. They work and as they work they live and even when they do not work and in these days they do not always live by work still nevertheless they do live.

So you see why I like to write with prepositions and conjunctions and articles and verbs and adverbs but not with nouns and adjectives. If you read my writing you will you do see what I mean.

Of course then there are pronouns. Pronouns are not as bad as nouns because in the first place practically they cannot have adjectives go with them. That already makes them better than nouns.

Then beside not being able to have adjectives go with them, they of course are not really the name of anything. They represent some one but they are not his or his name. In not being his or its or her name they already have a greater possibility of being some-

Day time.
Of course and the morning.
I always go well prepared.
Of course you would.
What do I think.
Is not this certain.
What.
That there are a great many places where one would not be as comfortable.
Where we would not be so comfortable.
Certainly I don't deny that.
We have been so happy here. Yes but that has nothing to do with the people. No it hasn't. But I like to see what I see here. You know perfectly well you will be just as well pleased with something else.
Why do mules go together. Because those people are religious. They are very religious. Were you invited. Then I will finish it here.
This is very easy to please. Cups and saucers altogether.
We are going to have a picnic. With chicken not today today we are going to have eggs and salad and vegetables and brown bread and what else. False smuggled contraband tobacco. You mean by that that it isn't tobacco. No it's only leaves. I laugh.

STEIN

COUNTING HER DRESSES

A PLAY

PART I.

ACT I.

When they did not see me.
I saw them again.
I did not like it.

ACT II.

I count her dresses again.

ACT III.

Can you draw a dress.

ACT IV.

In a minute.

PART II.

ACT I.

Believe in your mistake.

ACT II.

Act quickly.

ACT III.

Do not mind the tooth.

ACT IV.

Do not be careless.

PART III.

ACT I.

I am careful.

ACT II.

Yes you are.

ACT III.

And obedient.

ACT IV.

Yes you are.

ACT V.

And industrious.

ACT VI.

Certainly.

PART IV.

ACT I.

Come to sing and sit.

ACT II.

Repeat it.

ACT III.

I repeat it.

PART V.

ACT I.

Can you speak quickly.

ACT II.

Can you cough.

ACT III.

Remember me to him.

ACT IV.

Remember that I want a cloak.

PART VI.

ACT I.

I know what I want to say. How do you do I forgive
you everything and there is nothing to forgive.

PART VII.

ACT I.

The dog. You mean pale.

ACT II.

No we want dark brown.

ACT III.

I am tired of blue.

PART VIII.

ACT I.

Shall I wear my blue.

ACT II.

Do.

PART IX.

ACT I.

Thank you for the cow.

Thank you for the cow.

ACT II.

Thank you very much.

PART X.

ACT I.

Collecting her dresses.

ACT II.

Shall you be annoyed.

ACT III.

Not at all.

PART XI.

ACT I.

Can you be thankful.

ACT II.

For what.

ACT III.

For me.

PART XII.

ACT I.

I do not like this table.

ACT II.

I can understand that.

ACT III.

A feather.

ACT IV.

It weighs more than a feather.

PART XIII.

ACT I.

It is not tiring to count dresses.

PART XIV.

ACT I.

What is your belief.

PART XV.

ACT I.

In exchange for a table.

ACT II.

In exchange for or on a table.

ACT III.

We were satisfied.

PART XVI.

ACT I.

Can you say you like negro sculpture.

PART XVII.

ACT I.

The meaning of windows is air.

ACT II.

And a door.

ACT III.

A door should be closed.

PART XVIII.

ACT I.

Can you manage it.

ACT II.

You mean dresses.

ACT III.

Do I mean dresses.

PART XIX.

ACT I.

I mean one two three.

PART XX.

ACT I.

Can you spell quickly.

ACT II.

I can spell very quickly.

ACT III.

So can my sister-in-law.

ACT IV.

Can she.

PART XXI.

ACT I.

Have you any way of sitting.

ACT II.

You mean comfortably.

ACT III.

Naturally.

ACT IV.

I understand you.

PART XXII.

ACT I.

Are you afraid.

ACT II.

I am not any more afraid of water than they are.

ACT III.

Do not be insolent.

PART XXIII.

ACT I.

We need clothes.

ACT II.

And wool.

ACT III.

And gloves.

ACT IV.

And waterproofs.

PART XXIV.

ACT I.

Can you laugh at me.

ACT II.

And then say.

ACT III.

Married.

ACT IV.

Yes.

PART XXV.

ACT I.

Do you remember how he looked at clothes.

ACT II.

Do you remember what he said about wishing.

ACT III.

Do you remember all about it.

PART XXVI.

ACT I.

Oh yes.

ACT II.

You are stimulated.

ACT III.

And amused.

ACT IV.

We are.

PART XXVII.

ACT I.

What can I say that I am fond of.

ACT II.

I can see plenty of instances.

ACT III.

Can you.

PART XXVIII.

ACT I.

For that we will make an arrangement.

ACT II.

You mean some drawings.

ACT III.

Do I talk of art.

ACT IV.

All numbers are beautiful to me.

PART XXIX.

ACT I.

Of course they are.

ACT II.

Thursday.

ACT III.

We hope for Thursday.

ACT IV.

So do we.

PART XXX.

ACT I.

Was she angry.

ACT II.

Whom do you mean was she angry.

ACT III.

Was she angry with you.

PART XXXI.

ACT I.

Reflect more.

ACT II.

I do want a garden.

ACT III.

Do you.

ACT IV.

And clothes.

ACT V.

I do not mention clothes.

ACT VI.

No you didn't but I do.

ACT VII.

Yes I know that.

PART XXXII.

ACT I.

He is tiring.

ACT II.

He is not tiring.

ACT III.

No indeed.

ACT IV.

I can count them.

ACT V.

You do not misunderstand me.

ACT VI.

I misunderstand no one.

PART XXXIII.

ACT I.

Can you explain my wishes.

ACT II.

In the morning.

ACT III.

To me.

ACT IV.

Yes in there.

ACT V.

Then you do not explain.

ACT VI.

I do not press for an answer.

PART XXXIV.

ACT I.

Can you expect her today.

ACT II.

We saw a dress.

ACT III.

We saw a man.

ACT IV.

Sarcasm.

PART XXXV.

ACT I.

We can be proud of tomorrow.

ACT II.

And the vests.

ACT III.

And the doors.

ACT IV.

I always remember the roads.

PART XXXVI.

ACT I.

Can you speak English.

ACT II.

In London.

ACT III.

And here.

ACT IV.

With me.

PART XXXVII.

ACT I.

Count her dresses.

ACT II.

Collect her dresses.

ACT III.

Clean her dresses.

ACT IV.

Have the system.

PART XXXVIII.

ACT I.

She polished the table.

ACT II.

Count her dresses again.

ACT III.

When can you come.

ACT IV.

When can you come.

PART XXXIX.

ACT I.

Breathe for me.

ACT II.

I can say that.

ACT III.

It isn't funny.

ACT IV.

In the meantime.

PART XL.

ACT I.

Can you say.

ACT II.

What.

ACT III.

We have been told.

ACT IV.

Oh read that.

PART XLI.

ACT I.

I do not understand this home-coming.

ACT II.

In the evening.

ACT III.

Naturally.

ACT IV.

We have decided.

ACT V.

Indeed.

ACT VI.

If you wish.

JOHN ASHLEY

A FUNNY DREAM

His aunt was accepted.
How cool is that?

A new desire,
plainer than I can doubt
lightens the cities of the plain.

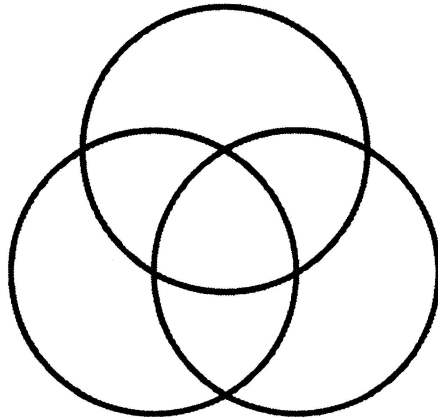
All is effulgent, sawtooth fronds,
veiled undertones.
Then the question remains: What is it?

Leaving his shorts behind, he
hastened to rejoin the marchers up ahead—
a peanut pastime, pleats, tucks, and panels,
unreinforced paint thinner.

So turn this off.

Activity time!

If the middle of this venn diagram represents “what people are made of,” or “the human situation” (whatever that maybe eye-rolling phrase means to you overall), then what are the three circles? Name them on the blank diagram below. There are no rules.



Questions:

- 1) What is something you've dreamt of doing, but (for whatever reason) haven't, the doing of which might be helped along by a newly mis-competent inclination?

- 2) What is something you've *already* done, that might be re-appreciated/reinterpreted in terms of mis-competent inclination?

More time!

Write the first, truest thing that comes to mind *with a rainbow crayon*. *ACTUALLY,*
WRITE IT SEVERAL TIMES...

II. Improvisation

“My general consciousness is only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community.”

—Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

*

“What could be the relation between social action & an improvisational art project which seeks to embody time and not expropriate it?”

—Bruce Russell, “What True Project Has Been Lost?”

*

“Some people pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them; *others pass on situations*, by making them practicable and thus liquidating them. The latter are called the destructive.”

—Walter Benjamin, “The Destructive Character”

*

“Renounce and enjoy.”

—Isha Upanishad

Bruce Russell, again from "What True Project Has Been Lost?"

[Improvised sound work] produces no intellectual property that may be alienated from the person of the improviser. Its value lies in its foregrounding of everything entailed in the struggle 'to enact the origination of the artwork.'

"Free improvisation is not the embodiment of freedom but a search for it in the here and now of the work's becoming" (Peters, *The Philosophy of Improvisation*, p. 72). And as anyone who has ever lost their car keys knows, there is no experience of time to compare with that spent looking for something.

What is the experience of this act and its implications for the artist who engages in 'a working without a work; indeed [one that] might be considered a working to avoid works'?

It is a process or a journey towards a goal that is never reached because it does not exist. It is 'all beginnings'. In this way it becomes a comparatively 'pure means' with which to simultaneously highlight and critique the role of time within the work and also as the measure of value in spectacular society.

Value, the form of wealth in capitalism, is not a social relation; it is a form of abstract domination which appears to us as 'objective.' Art, for me, has worth when it points to social relations not mediated by such wealth; and the more explicitly it does that, the better.

My solution to the problem of addressing social relationships [in art practice] was to make them the guiding principle of the work: by framing it as a *potlatch*.*

The potlatch is a technique for focusing attention on what is often seen as peripheral to 'the work.' It places the relations of mutual recognition at the centre of the project. These are the relations which support the free exchange of time that surrounds the making of the work, and which in turn sustain the individuals.

The audience must be given every chance to 'look under the hood.' [...] The goal is 'to create a certain play in the machine through a stratification of different and interfering kinds of functioning' (De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*). The goal is to strengthen the autonomous zone within the field of practice by inspiring an ongoing collaborative potlatch—a way to symbolically liquidate the most valuable of commodities: time.

.....

**Potlatch* is the gift-giving feast practiced by Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of Canada and the United States, among whom it is traditionally the primary governmental institution, legislative body, and economic system. This includes the Heiltsuk, Haida, Nuxalk, Tlingit, Makah, Tsimshian, Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Coast Salish cultures. Potlatches are also a common feature of the peoples of the Interior and of the Subarctic adjoining the Northwest Coast, although mostly without the elaborate ritual and gift-giving economy of the coastal peoples.

A potlatch involves giving away or destroying wealth or valuable items in order to demonstrate a leader's wealth and power. Potlatches are also focused on the reaffirmation of family, clan, and international connections, and the human connection with the supernatural world. Potlatch also serves as a strict resource management regime, where coastal peoples discuss, negotiate, and affirm rights to and uses of specific territories and resources. Potlatches often involve music, dancing, singing, storytelling, making speeches, and often joking and games. The honouring of the supernatural and the recitation of oral histories are a central part of many potlatches.

1180

"Remember me" implored the Thief!
Oh Hospitality!
My Guest "Today in Paradise"
I give thee guaranty.

That Courtesy will fair remain
When the Delight is Dust
With which we cite this mightiest case
Of compensated Trust.

Of all we are allowed to hope
But Affidavit stands
That this was due where most we fear
Be unexpected Friends.

c. 1871

1181

When I hoped I feared -
Since I hoped I dared
Everywhere alone
As a Church remain -
Spectre cannot harm -
Serpent cannot charm -
He deposes Doom
Who hath suffered him -

c. 1862

1182

Remembrance has a Rear and Front -
'Tis something like a House -
It has a Garret also
For Refuse and the Mouse.
Besides the deepest Cellar
That ever Mason laid -

[524]

Look to it by its Fathoms
Ourselves be not pursued -

1183

Step lightly on this narrow spot -
The broadest Land that grows
Is not so ample as the Breast
These Emerald Seams enclose.

Step lofty, for this name be told
As far as Cannon dwell
Or Flag subside or Fame export
Her deathless Syllable.

1891



The Days that we can spare
Are those a Function die
Or Friend or Nature - stranded then
In our Economy

Our Estimates a Scheme -
Our Ultimates a Sham -
We let go all of Time without
Arithmetic of him -

1932

1185

A little Dog that wags his tail
And knows no other joy
Of such a little Dog am I
Reminded by a Boy

Who gambols all the living Day
Without an earthly cause
Because he is a little Boy
I honestly suppose -

1 -- 1



DICKINSON

22

CHOBYAM TRUNGA

CREATING AN ENLIGHTENED SOCIETY

extremely selfish. We want to build our own little nests, our own cocoons, so that we can live by ourselves in a secure way.

But we can be much more brave than that. We must try to think beyond our homes, beyond the fire burning in the fireplace, beyond sending our children to school or getting to work in the morning. We must try to think how we can help this world. If we don't help, nobody will. It is our turn to help the world. At the same time, helping others does not mean abandoning our individual lives. You don't have to rush out to become the mayor of your city or the president of the United States in order to help others, but you can begin with your relatives and friends and the people around you. In fact, you can start with yourself. The important point is to realize that you are never off duty. You can never just relax, because the whole world needs help.)))

While everyone has a responsibility to help the world, we can create additional chaos if we try to impose our ideas or our help upon others. Many people have theories about what the world needs. Some people think that the world needs communism; some people think that the world needs democracy; some people think that technology will save the world; some people think that technology will destroy the world. The Shambhala teachings are not based on converting the world to another theory. The premise of Shambhala vision is that, in order to establish an enlightened society for others, we need to discover what inherently we have to offer the world. So, to begin with, we should make an effort to examine our own experience, in order to see what it contains that is of value in helping ourselves and others to uplift their existence.

If we are willing to take an unbiased look, we will find that, in spite of all our problems and confusion, all our emotional and psychological ups and downs, there is something basically good about our existence as human beings. Unless we can discover that ground of goodness in our own lives, we cannot hope to

15TH OF NOVEMBER

INVOCATION

*pūrnām adah, pūrnām idam, pūrṇāt pūrnām udayate
pūrnasya pūrnām ādāya pūrnām evāśiṣyate.*

That is full; this is full. The full comes out of the full. Taking the full from the full the full itself remains. *Aum*, peace, peace, peace.

Brahman is both transcendent and immanent.

The birth or the creation of the universe does not in any manner affect the integrity of *Brahman*.

"RENOUVEAU"
AND ENJOY

1. *Isa Upaniṣad*

GOD AND THE WORLD

567

1. *iśāṁśvānam idam sarvaṁ yat kin ca jagatyāṁ jagat
lena byaklena bhūyitīha yā gṛhah kasyasvid āhanam.*

1. (Know that) all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation; do not covet what belongs to others.

All things which move and change derive their significance from their relation to the one eternal truth. 'The invisible always continuing the same, but the visible never the same,' Plato: *Phaedo* 64.

iśāṁśvānam, enveloped by God. The world does not stand apart from God, but is pervaded by Him. Cp. the Psalmist: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.' The Supreme is viewed not as the Absolute *Brahman* but as the cosmic Lord.

*iśā: iśitā paramēśvaraḥ. vāsyaṁ, nivaśanyam, vyāpyam. Kṛānā-
rayana.* The world is steeped in God. It is the 'household of God.' God dwells in the heart of all things. *iśvarāṁśvakam eva sarvaṁ, bhūānyā yad anīśvara-rūpeṇa gṛhīam. A.*

jagat: The universe is a becoming, not a thing. It is a series of change-ful happenings.

byaklena bhūyitīha: enjoy through *byāga*, or renunciation of self-will. Enjoy all things by renouncing the idea of a personal proprietary relationship to them. If we recognise that the world in which we live is not ours, we enjoy it. When we know that the one Real indwells all, we will get rid of the craving for acquisition. Enjoy by giving up the sense of attachment. When the individual is subject to ignorance, he is not conscious of the unity and identity behind the multiplicity and so cannot enter into harmony and oneness with the universe and thus fails to enjoy the world. When, however, he realises his true existence which is centred in the Divine, he becomes free from selfish desire and possesses, enjoys the world, being in a state of non-attachment. Self-denial is at the root of spiritual life. 'If any one wish to come after me, let him deny himself.' Matthew XVI. 24.

Sometimes this passage is interpreted as meaning: enjoy what is allotted to you by God (*lena*). Do not ask for more than what is given.

mā gṛhah: covet not. Do not be greedy. When we realise that God inhabits each object, when we rise to that cosmic consciousness, covetousness disappears. Cp. Wotton's Paraphrase of Horace which is found in *Palgrave's Golden Treasury*:

This man is freed from servile bonds
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands
And having nothing, yet hath all.

James Hillman
ALFRED ADDL

I have come to think that the uncertainty about what the patient and I are really there for is in fact what we are really there for: this third factor that seems willfully to keep our aims changing and riddling, and presses the question on us even while refusing our answers.

reactive intuitive and factor in the thera-
peutic experience, I attribute to soul. I believe the patient and I are kept in psychotherapeutic analysis because it keeps us there in all sorts of ways, from the obsessions of transference to the intractability of symptoms and the enigma of dreams—none of which phenomena we understand. But most importantly, we are kept there by that sense of wanting something deeply important, which is never identifiable with what we believe we want. Moreover, this inarticulate desire makes us feel a woeful inferiority.

We feel inferior because we simply can't grasp why we are engaged in psychotherapy, what it is, whether it is going well or even going on at all, or when it is over. And since we know so little, we rely so much on positivisms, the positive sciences, the positivites of spiritual teachings, the moral positions of ideologies. We clutch at these bright and rigid straws because the base on which we stand, the soul, is endless and unfathomable.

So, to begin with, our theme of inferiority in psychotherapy appears as that want—beyond the actual inferiorities of failure, depression, repetition, and suffering which are the content of therapy—that sense of irremediable inadequacy at the root of our work and presented by the word 'soul.'

One way of setting this uncertainty is to go to soul itself to find out what it wants, independent both of the patient's reporting and the doctor's diagnosing. A direct move of this sort was made already by Tertullian, in his *De testimonio animae*, who wrote

I call in new testimony, one which is better known than all literature more public than all publications, greater than the whole man....
Stand forth, O soul..., stand forth and give thy witness.

The tradition of speaking directly with the soul goes back even further: to the world-weary man in Egypt talking with his Ba, to Socrates with Diotima, and then later there is Boethius in prison, consoled by the voice of philosophy; Poliphilo, among others, in the Renaissance, who converses with his Polia, until finally in our own time the therapeutic method

WRITING ABOUT

of active imagination, Jung's own example, which we saw in the previous chapter.

Let me show you examples from my practice. You will see how anyone can engage directly in conversations of imagination.

A woman of about forty who worked in a major Zürich bank in a good position, a rural woman who now lived alone in a large modern block of flats, distanced from family, without a lover, and who felt severely this cemented, punctual, secretarial loneliness of her high-standard and competent life—with a secret fear of going insane, of doing something crazy—dreamt of an unknown young man in a white shirt and a green cap who was in prison. He was emaciated, scruffy, and moved jerkily like a mime or an acrobat or "someone who is crazy," she said. In the dream she wanted to get him out of prison.

I said, "Go there in imagination and talk with him."

She found easy access. Unusual, but she did. She asked him questions: his name, where he came from, why he was in prison, what had he done, and what could she do to get him released. He wouldn't talk. All he did was dance jigs and rock his head and act insane. She came to her next appointment, despairing after her visit with him.

I said, "Keep going there. But let's also find out here whether there is anything about you that makes him act this way." Then we uncovered that she was "enraged with him: he was uncooperative; he wouldn't respond and didn't seem to realize that she was trying to help him."

So we began to see that she was the judge, even now judging him in prison when she went to help him, and that her questioning was a further prosecution. It didn't take much for us to grasp who had placed him in jail. She went back to him. This time she said nothing and he said nothing.

They watched each other through the bars. Then in her imagination she found she was inside the bars with him, or at least there were no bars. He now put his head in her lap. She touched his green cap and said, "How are you today?" He didn't reply. She thought, "Aha, I have asked a question again. I am still trying to get information, still being a policewoman." So she let his head stay in her lap with her hand on his green cap. She started to say, "Does this help?" but stopped herself. Then after inwardly parrying several moves of this sort, she suddenly heard him say very clearly, "Thank you. I have been alone so long. I won't go crazy now."

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITIES (suggested: trade your progress/results with someone you met at this workshop, or through another personal network, to take it from the aesthetic to the social)

1) In the space below, succeed at something:

2) In the space below, fail at something:

3) In the space below, fail at the same thing differently:

4) In the space below, *fail successfully* at something else, or at the same thing, guided or inspired by the way(s) that you failed above:

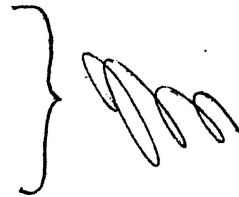
HERACLITUS

6

Yet they lack the skill
to listen or to speak.



Whoever cannot seek
the unforeseen sees nothing,
for the known way
is an impasse.



8

Men dig tons of earth
to find an ounce of gold.

9

See note.

FRAGMENTS

7

Poem for Bruce Russell

In the space below,
In the space above,

