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'A Huge Silence': And the Way of Poetry

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by Jon Kabat-Zinn's suggestion that mindfulness is best captured in poetry, this paper reflects upon performed poetry as a contemplative practice for audiences. It discusses the paradoxes of words and dharma, and words and silence, and draws on the work of Iain McGilchrist to examine the role of poetry in, and as, contemplative practice.

Introduction

At the end of *Full Catastrophe Living*, Jon Kabat-Zinn's seminal work in which he sets out his mindfulness-based approach to stress reduction, the final word is given to a poet. Mindfulness originates in the domain of religion, and has increasingly been taken up in the domain of science but, here, Kabat-Zinn asks science and spirituality to step aside, and gives the last word on the subject to the arts - to poetry. Of the path of mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn says, 'After all is said and done, perhaps its essence can only be captured in poetry, and in the silence of your own mind and body at peace' (1990: 443). And he turns to the poem 'Keeping Quiet' by Pablo Neruda to 'cradle' the closing moment of his book (443-444).

How is it that the poet is best placed to express the essence of mindfulness? How does poetry share space with 'the silence of your own mind and body'? And if poetry has a

role to play in mindfulness, does it also have something to offer to contemplative practice more broadly? Is the poet also best placed to express the essence of the Dharma? After all, the writer Ruth Ozeki has said 'I don't think there is much difference between art and Buddhist practice' (Ozeki and Cho, 2021), and Buddhist teacher, Jack Kornfield, has pointed out that the Buddha himself was a poet (2015).

John Brehm, author of *The Dharma of Poetry*, goes further; he writes,

> [T]o truly enter a poem requires mindful attention, an alertness, curiosity, and open-heartedness that is very much like the awareness we cultivate in meditation (2021: ix).

To enter into the *writing* of a poem (or into the being state in which a poem might arise) can be seen to call for such qualities, but, here, Brehm is talking about the *reader*. He suggests that 'poems of great power and depth' invite and require the reader to become mindful. The implication is that some poetry might act as a portal into qualities and experiences 'very much like' those associated with meditation.

In this paper, I consider the possibility that poetry in performance might function, for audiences, as just such a portal - into the 'silence of your own mind and body at peace' and into the 'alertness, curiosity, and open-heartedness' of meditation. If poetry can capture the essence of mindfulness, and if it requires of its audiences a mindful response, perhaps we can frame poetry as an invitation into the calm and healing heart of mindfulness. Perhaps poetry can function as a gateway, inducting audiences into the rich, inner worlds of contemplative practice, and leading them towards the wisdom that points to the end of suffering.

Although my focus here is on relationships between the *silence* of contemplative practice and the poetic power of *words*, I invite readers to consider whether and to what extent these arguments might also pertain to other aspects of performance, such as the poetics of sound or movement.

Into the Contemplative

In order to consider how poetry can function as a form of contemplative practice for audiences, we must first pause for a moment on the word 'contemplative'. One meaning of 'contemplative' is 'given to thoughtful reflection' (OED), and in this sense poetry and performance, like other arts, can certainly be seen to involve contemplative experiences for audiences. The term 'contemplative practice', on the other hand, is more specific, and usually designates a formal technique designed to cultivate adaptive states of 'self-awareness and self-regulation' (Davidson and Dahl, 2017) through alterations in modes of attention. Contemplative practices are generally embedded in wisdom traditions, and therefore imply a relationship with the teachings of that tradition. They are many, and varied, and include mindful movement and arts-based modalities as well as the various forms of sitting meditation.

Richard Davidson and Cortland Dahl, scientists from the Center for Healthy Minds, point out that, '[a]lthough contextualized differently among the traditions that use them, contemplative practices are typically viewed as practical methods to bring about a state of enduring well-being or inner flourishing' (Davidson & Dahl, 2017: 121). They also note that contemplative practices 'hold promise in transforming the self-related psychological constructs that lie at the root of many forms of suffering' (Davidson & Dahl, 2017: 122).

Mindfulness meditation is the modality most studied in this regard, with extensive data demonstrating beneficial effects in a range of populations and contexts, but Davidson and Dahl's point is that, whilst there has as yet been less scientific attention paid to other contemplative practices, they too 'hold promise' in this regard.

In positioning poetry as a contemplative practice for audiences, then, I am describing it as a means by which to induce contemplation, cultivate awareness, and support well-being. In the context of the global crises currently threatening humanity, I am imagining contemplative poetic performance as a site for potential healing from both the effects and the causes of suffering.

In the science that has grown up around mindfulness research, a useful distinction is made between mindfulness as a 'state' and mindfulness as a 'trait' (Medvedev et al, 2017). Contemplative practices can be seen to involve both.

State mindfulness is temporary and transient - for the duration of a given experience, the participant manifests the qualities of mindfulness, which Jon Kabat-Zinn lists as: non-judging; acceptance; patience; beginner's mind; trust; non-striving; letting go (Kabat-Zinn, 1990: 31-40). Through engaging in the exercise of a contemplative practice, a practitioner can access such a state of being. We might want to add compassion; embodied awareness; kindness; equanimity; presence.

In state mindfulness these qualities or attitudes arise temporarily. Trait mindfulness, on the other hand, describes a person's ongoing access to such states; a person who has developed 'trait mindfulness' will

manifest these qualities as part of their character in an ongoing way. Much of the research into mindfulness, to date, has focused on measuring trait mindfulness.

In this paper, I am not considering trait mindfulness; it seems unlikely that a single artistic experience (or for that matter, a single meditation experience) could cultivate 'trait' mindfulness in audiences. I am, however, exploring the possibility that poetry in performance could create 'state mindfulness', such that audiences would be inducted into attitudes of equanimity and compassion, acceptance and trust.

I begin, though, with tackling two potential objections to my proposal: the incompatibility of words and Dharma, and of words and silence.

Words and Dharma

If, at first glance, words and mindfulness seem like strange bedfellows; words and Dharma practice are even more so. Buddhist teachings frequently warn of the danger of words, thinking, conceptual activity (Edelglass, 2019; Wright, 1992). These aspects of cognition are often seen as the very core of what one comes to meditation to silence. Meditation, across its various forms in various traditions, is generally seen as a practice of shifting into a non-discursive mode of being in which arising thoughts are observed, sometimes labelled, but - in principle - never followed.

The status and role of language and discourse in the Dharma has been explored by Buddhist scholar, William Edelglass. He tells us that,

> what most - though not all - Buddhist philosophers in fact argue is that language and conceptual thought are insufficient for achieving awak-

> ening *and* that ultimate reality is beyond the reach of language (203).

Further, language itself can be seen to be complicit in the state of profound separation which characterises contemporary life, and which underlies the crises of co-existence in which we find ourselves. Edelglass tells us that,

> language is often thought to reify, necessarily, in ways that lead to aversion and attachment, and words and concepts are thus regarded as obstacles on the path to awakening (Edelglass 2019: 203-4).

In fact, Edelglass tell us that 'some Buddhist thinkers understand awakening to be a nonconceptual awareness that is precisely a liberation from language and concepts' (2019: 203). This position is expressed by Vajrayana teacher, Reginald Ray, for whom meditation is a somatic activity; he says,

> [A]uthentic realization…can *only* happen when we abandon the outside standpoint of our left-brain, judging, ego mind and plunge into the innermost depths of our ordinary, unprocessed human experience. (Ray, 2016:12)

In referring to 'left' (and, implicitly, 'right') brain, Ray is evoking Iain McGilchrist's extensive exploration of the brain's unsymmetrical lateralisation (2009). We shall return to this work later; for now, though, we can note that abandoning the perspective of the left brain plunges the meditator into 'unprocessed depths'. And that this shift can be seen as a central transaction at the heart of the meditation experience.

In this regard, Zen Master Dōgen advises,

> You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words and following

> after speech, and learn the backward step that turns your light inward to illuminate your self. (Dōgen: 2002: 3)

Here, Dōgen very explicitly banishes verbal language from meditation practice. Where does this leave us in our inquiry into the role of poetry in, and as, contemplative practice? It sounds as though the ceasing of words and the backward step go hand-in-hand; that the backward step - into Ray's unprocessed depths - is one taken in the cessation of speech.

Words, then, are described as inadequate to the task of cognizing ultimate reality, and as hindrances to meditation. Words must be ceased in order for the necessary shift of awareness to take place. And yet, as John Brehm points out, poetry has been interwoven with Buddhist thought and practice since the earliest scriptures in the Pali Canon (2021: x). In fact, Edelglass tells us, Buddhism's relationship with language is much more complex than a simple rejection of it; Buddhism explores and expresses 'the paradox of language', seeing it as both 'ensnaring' and 'liberating' (2019: 201).

The liberating quality of language consists, at its most basic level, in its power to communicate ideas, convey viewpoints, and guide students towards experiences which they may then begin to discover in and for themselves, through practice. But poetic language has powers beyond the informative, and in terms of communicating the Dharma, information would seem to be the least important function.

Stephen Batchelor, commentating on Nagarjuna's *Verses from the Center*, which is concerned with the Buddhist notion of emptiness, tells us,

> Nagarjuna has relatively little to say *about* emptiness. Each

> poem is an attempt to *disclose* emptiness through the play of language; poetry works not by describing its subject with detached objectivity from without, but by imaginatively entering its subject so as to disclose it from within. As a poet, Nagarjuna gives voice to the freedom of emptiness *from within* (Batchelor, 2000:23-24).

In this sense, poetry is the perfect medium for Dharmic transmission - phenomenological, metaphorical, and capable of embodying and communicating not only the writer's ideas but the state of being from which the writer speaks.

John Brehm tells us that,

> Poems arise out of moments of heightened awareness, and as such have the power to heighten our own awareness as we read them (2021: ix)

The quality of the poet's attention is embodied in the words of the poem and plays out in the mind of the listener. As we enter imaginatively into the poet's experience, our minds and bodies entrain to the pace and rhythm of the minded moment that the poet wrote from. In this way, we can think of poetry as a kind of shared process of enhancing awareness.

Describing the process of translating Nagarjuna, Batchelor tells us that 'I was not content with a chapter until I could recite it out loud in a way that (to me at least) caught something of the pulse of emptiness' (140). The 'pulse of emptiness' suggests both a living quality and also a rhythm or tempo - some aural marker of the experience of emptiness. For Batchelor, Nagarjuna's text communicates aurally as much as semantically, and has the potential to disclose a profound experience of the nature of reality.

In this way, poetry has the power, in the words of Brehm, to 'embody and implicitly endorse ways of being in the world' (2021: vii). We are invited to go with the writer, not only into their ideas, their vision, the descriptions of their world, but also into our own felt sense of the embodiment suggested by the poem - the embodied state of being in which the poem is rooted and to which the poem belongs. In the hands of a powerfully presenced writer, 'ways of being in the world' can, arguably, be transmitted through the very breath of the poem's cadences and rhythms.

Are there, then, ways in which words can be used artistically to activate the liberating powers of language in a contemplative context? Can words be deployed in such a way as to support, rather than hinder, the shift into the meditative state which Reggie Ray described as an abandoning of the standpoint of the left-brain? Could words - poetic, image-rich words - serve as an artistic foundation from which - even *with* which - to take the backward step?

Words and Silence

Silence is a key marker of meditation; we sit in silence, we quieten inner noise, we come to stillness, which is also a kind of silence - 'the silence of your own mind and body at peace', as Jon Kabat-Zinn described it. Silence also features in Buddhist pedagogical stories: we hear that the enlightened speak with silence (Edelglass, 280), and that the Buddha taught a wordless sermon by holding up a flower. But as William Edelglass makes clear, 'silence in Buddhist texts can have different meanings' and it is words which frame and establish those meanings (2019: 209). The silences that Buddhism is interested in are not neutral, but potent, and in pedagogical contexts, they are often ushered in by words.

The 'silence' of meditation is not merely a quietening of mental chatter, nor purely the absence of left-brain ego activity, but an altered mode of being, the specific contours of which are delineated and illuminated by words.

Dale Wright has written about the cultural embeddedness of the practice of silence in Zen, saying 'a reciprocal, interdependent relationship exists between direct experience (perception), language, and concepts' (1992: 130). If, in Zen practice, one ceases to pursue words, nevertheless words have a role to play. As is cogently argued by Wright, 'language and linguistically articulated social practice have shaped and made possible distinctively "Zen" modes of experience' (1992:113) - including those modes carried on in silence, and popularly considered to be beyond words.

Thus, the discourse - and, by extension, the poem or performance - can be seen as a means of establishing the coordinates of a silence that blooms within the listener in the wake of words. The great poet of spiritual experience, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, often ends his poems by sending himself into silence, leaving the listener or reader to resonate with what has gone before. Here is one example, in a popular translation by Coleman Barks:

> The grief-armies assemble,
> but I'm not going with them.
>
> This is how it always is
> when I finish a poem.
>
> A great silence overcomes me,
> And I wonder why I ever
> thought
> to use language.
> (from 'A Thirsty Fish', Barks, 1995: 20)

Rumi's 'great silence' is shared with his audience - though not before a final comment on the inadequacy of language! But it is language which has brought his audiences into this encounter with him. It is langauge which conveys that powerful, guiding image: the assembling grief armies which Rumi refuses to join; which we too might refuse.

Here is another example of Rumi evoking silence in his audience:

> Why do you stay in prison
> when the door is so wide
> open?
>
> Move outside the tangle of
> fear-thinking.
> Live in silence.
>
> Flow down and down in always
> widening rings of being.
> (from 'A Community of the Spirit', Barks, 1998: 4)

This silence is expansive, flowing, deepening; it is the silence of a being-state untouched by fear. Rumi's poem is map, invitation, and evocation.

Coleman Barks tells us that 'Rumi is less interested in language, more attuned to the sources of it' and that, for Rumi, '[w]ords are not important in themselves, but as resonators for a center' (Barks, 1995, p.17). What would we know of the source and the centre if we were not guided there by Rumi's luminous writing? It is the experience of the poem itself that evokes the great silence that overcomes Rumi and, perhaps, his listeners.

In live performance, this experiential aspect is foregrounded. In addition to the words they share, performers have the opportunity to embody and communicate states of inner 'silence', and to guide audiences into and through multi-sensory contemplative experiences. The phenomenon of silence falling at the end of a particularly powerful

performance is well known; as one, the audience forego the social etiquette of applause and instead sit quietly with the resonant after-effects of the shared experience. They have been moved beyond the 'left-brain, judging, ego-mind' with its logic and linearity into a state of being which can feel like being stunned into silence. This is perhaps analagous to the 'great silence' conjured by Rumi, or the meaning-rich silence of the Buddha famously raising a flower in his wordless 'Flower Sermon'.

As Peter Brook points out, silence can bloom in any moment of a performance, not just at the end. There are moments when, as Brook describes them, '[t]he silence in a theatre changes its density' (1994/1998). For Brook, such a moment in the theatre is tangibly different to the silence that accompanies the opening of a performance (which is merely the silence of polite anticipation). He tells us,

> An audience is composed of people whose minds are whirling — as they watch the event, sometimes [...] all of a sudden, something touches everyone. At the moment that they are touched an exact phenomenon occurs. What has been up till then individual experiences becomes shared, unified. At the moment when the mass of people becomes one, there is one silence and that silence you can taste on the tongue. (1994/1998)

Brook's description suggests that dense silence occurs when the energy of whirling, scattered minds becomes focused, and when the mass of individuals becomes unified. Perhaps these characteristics can also be found in the solitary experience of hearing or reading a poem, when we ourselves

become intensely focused and inwardly unified.

The poet David Whyte has spoken of the 'primary imagination' in the poetic tradition of Coleridge or Keats as functioning in just such a unifying manner. The primary imagination is, he says,

> the ability of a human being to form a central image inside of themselves that makes sense of all of the thousand besieging images that they are surrounded by (2002).

Such an image - which must come from within - has the power to magnetise and organise the many swirling currents of ideas with which we are bombarded; the many, perhaps contradictory, facets of a situation with which we are faced; the many, perhaps conflicting, parts of ourselves which we might struggle to reconcile.

The poem with which Kabat-Zinn chose to close his book on mindfulness revolves around just such a unifying image (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 443 - 444). In 'Keeping Quiet', Pablo Neruda envisions a 'huge silence' of epic proportions. The poem opens with a call to stillness and quietude, and then goes on to describe the contours of that quietude and all that Neruda imagines could blossom within it:

> It would be an exotic moment
> without rush, without engines
> [...]
> Fishermen in the cold sea
> would not harm whales
> and the man gathering salt
> would not look at his hurt
> hands...
> [...]
> perhaps a huge silence
> might interrupt this sadness...
>
> (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 443 - 444)

The silence proposed by Neruda is a holding space for an unfolding of possibilities that include a newfound togetherness amongst people, non-harming, the cessation of war and self-

destructiveness. It is as if the ushering in of 'a huge silence' could interrupt humanity's patterns of rush, alienation and destruction, and allow a natural ease and compassion to arise. The poem deftly connects great global problems to our inability to keep quiet; their resolution to the power of coming to silence and stillness. This is an idea also encapsulated in the philosopher Blaise Pascal's meme-worthy line, 'All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone'.

But whereas the succinct idea has a certain appeal to the intellect, the poem has the potential to function as a process through which the listener enters into the quiet room. At the end of his poem, Neruda, like Rumi, slips away, leaving us to our own silence:

> Now I'll count up to twelve
> and you keep quiet and I will
> go.
>
> (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 443 - 444)

This is a silence which is potent and particular; multiple and meaningful. A silence which we instinctively recognise; a silence which speaks directly from something in the writer to something in us. We know this silence; even if we have never experienced it before. It is both the silence intimated by Pascal as the answer to humanity's problems, and the silence which arises as the divisiveness of the left brain gives way to a confluence of streams, a patterning of potentials.

Without Neruda's words, there could be no such silence, for the proposed silence, as we have seen, has a 'suchness'. If, at the close of Neruda's poem, we fall into silence, the experience of that silence is embedded in wider contexts - it is

inseparable from the language and culture from which it emerged - and it carries those contexts and resonances deep into our listening.

Metacognition

The intentional silence of meditation practice, the dense silence that descends on Brook's audiences, and the resonant, ringing silence called forth by Rumi and Neruda, are all holding spaces for enhanced awareness.

According to mindfulness neuroscientist, Dusana Dorjee, contemplative practices such as meditation crucially entail 'introspective metacognition'; that is, 'awareness and knowledge of bodily sensations, mental phenomena, and behaviour' (Dorjee 2016:3). Such metacognition, Dorjee tells us, is 'a natural propensity of the mind' (2016: 1) and yet, it is also something that we have to learn.

In his description of ways of thinking, Guy Claxton quotes the English poet, Ted Hughes, from a talk for young people:

> At school... I became very interested in those thoughts of mine that I could never catch. Sometimes they were hardly what you could call a thought - they were a dim sort of feeling about something... [and] for the most part they were useless to me because I could never get hold of them. Most people have the same trouble. What thoughts they have are fleeting [...] or, though they know they know something, they just cannot dig those ideas up when they are wanted. Their minds, in fact, seem out of their reach... The thinking process by which we break into that inner life... is the kind of thinking we have to learn, and if we do not somehow learn it, our minds lie in us like fish in the pond of a man who cannot fish (Claxton, 1997: 80-81).

Hughes conveys a strong sense of the importance of learning how to access and understand our own interiority; a point implied by Dōgen when he said '*learn* the backward step' (emphasis mine). Contemplative practices revolve around learning how to access interiority and cultivate metacognitive awareness. In fact, Dorjee makes clear that this aspect of contemplative practice is essential to bringing about the effects on well-being which Davidson and Dahl noted (2016: 1). In meditation, the cultivation of meta-cognition also ultimately facilitates the development of advanced modes of existential awareness associated with the Dharma (2016: 1). In other words, attending to one's interior life in meditation is part of a process that leads toward transformations in how we construe our selves and our realities. In both spiritual and neurophysiological terms, bringing awareness to the nuances of one's interior experience is intimately connected with transforming our relationships with exterior experience.

Dōgen famously said,

> To study the Way is to study the self, to study the self is to forget the self, to forget the self is to awaken to the ten thousand things. (Hirshfield, 1997: 140)

Commenting on this, Buddhist poet, Jane Hirshfield writes, 'You cannot leap beyond human consciousness without first going through it; but if you gaze deeply enough into being, eventually you will wake into the company of everything' (Hirshfield, 1997: 140).

The Backward Step

This is 'the backward step', which Dōgen spoke of, 'that turns your light inward to illuminate your self'. Reg-

inald Ray describes 'the great step backward' as involving 'setting aside the bright daylight world of the thinking mind', and 'simply set[ting] our consciousness backward and down' - 'into the shadows, into the semidarkness of our own body' (2016: 2). In Ray's Vajrayana-derived body-based meditation techniques, setting consciousness backward and down occurs in the context of a subtle body anatomy, with its access points to deeper energetic layers of being.

Theravada Buddhist monk and scholar, Bhikku Bodhi, uses a similar image in his discussion of mindfulness, here referred to by the Pali term, *sati*:

> One might even call the stance of sati a ‘bending back’ of the light of consciousness upon the experiencing subject in its physical, sensory, and psychological dimensions. This act of ‘bending back’ serves to illuminate the events occurring in these domains, lifting them out of the twilight zone of unawareness into the light of clear cognition (2013: 25).

The mental gesture of 'bending back', is one of the primary ways in which a meditation practice is supportive of, and comparable to, artistic practice. As I have explored elsewhere,

> Bodhi’s “bending back” is the deploying of attention in such a way that even as the object of creative inquiry is held in mind, the attentional field lifts into awareness the echoes, residues and associations that are sparked within one’s own physical, sensory and emotional fields. This serves as a process of dilating both sensory awareness of the object and, simultaneously, streams of emotional response and meaning association (Templeton and Adkins, 2016: 3).

The 'bending back of the light of consciousness' is a way to lean into the shadows, into what the Japanese philosopher, Yuasa Yasuo, calls 'dark

consciousness' (1987: 4 - 6), and Ray calls the Soma (2018: 15 - 16). This can be understood as a process of fishing for those 'dim feelings' and elusive apperceptions that Hughes was interested in. It is a process of withdrawing from the daylight mind's clarities and confusions into the intuited patterns, associations, and dream-like gleanings that simmer just below the surface of consciousness. The left-brain ego mind, to use Ray's phrase, cannot reach those understandings, for they belong to the domain of the right brain.

As Iain McGilchrist (2009) has exhaustively documented, the human brain's unsymmetrical lateralisation has led to our having access to two very distinct ways of knowing and being, one of which is greatly favoured in our society. The notion of hemispheric lateralisation at one time received a lot of popular attention, but as brain science increasingly demonstrated that most activities require networks distributed across the whole brain, the concept lost traction. McGilchrist's work invites us to look again at what it means to have a divided brain, and his insights are extremely pertinent for both meditation and art.

In McGilchrist's analysis, the left brain is utilitarian, abstracting, and given to dividing one thing from another; its forte is separation, and it has no access to direct experience. The right brain's gift is to see things whole, interconnected. The right brain processes somatic experience, and it is the pattern-maker - able to hold multiple percepts or experiences in one embracing conceptual space.

The words and concepts which Buddhism sees as reifying, abstract-ing, and disconnecting - therefore, as hindrances to contemplative practice -

are the products of the left-brain, but metaphor - the poetic image, whether spoken, sung, danced or signed - is the fruit of the right brain.

The backward step is meditation's means of shifting gear - out of the driven, driving, striving left-brain dominance our culture has opted for, and into the wiser depths of the bodymind, the soma, the right brain. It is an abandonment of discursive thought and binary thinking in favour of the blurred line, dream logic, poetic ambiguities.

As McGilchrist tells us,

> Art is by its nature implicit and ambiguous. It is also embodied: it produces embodied creations which speak to us through the senses, even if their medium is language, and which have effects on us physically as embodied beings in the lived world. (340)

Artists know how to take the backward step into the embodied mind's ambiguities. Poets - of whatever medium - know how to cast back and draw forth, like fish, those unifying images that allow us to be with the challenges and potentials that daylight thinking resists. Poets enter into the word-play that unmakes consensual reality, that remakes our view, and primes our experience. McGilchrist turns to the philosopher, Max Scheler, to exemplify this point:

> For by creating new forms of expression, the poets soar above the prevailing network of ideas in which our experience is confined, as it were, by ordinary language; they enable the rest of us to *see*, for the first time, in our own experience, something which may answer to these new and richer forms of expression, and by doing so they actually *extend* the scope of our *possible* self-awareness... (in McGilchrist, 2009: 341-2)

As poets and performance-makers, we

can dare to take the backward step, out of the known and into the fertile depths of the not yet known; out of daylight consciousness with its dominant discourses, and into the dream world of dark consciousness. This is the 'silence' artists enter and can invite others into; it is a silencing of the left-brain, but it is a flowering of the right brain's embodied poeticism.

And there are so many silences - *specific* silences - that we need: the silence in which we turn toward the grief-armies, and choose not to join them; the silence in which we turn toward the open door in us and slip ourselves out of the tangle of fear-thinking; the silence in which we remember that we are neither small nor solid, but vast and flowing; the huge silence in which we expand in ever-widening rings of being...

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