

Article

“Turtles All the Way Down”: Mind, Emotion and Nothing

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Abstract: This is an article in three movements. Each takes as its object a public phenomenon of emotion: first, the representation of human emotions as homunculi in a recent children’s movie; second, the performance of the Australian cricket captain at a press conference concerning the death, on the field, of a team-mate; and, finally, the mass contagion of public grief in response to that death. Using these three episodes, the article develops an understanding of Martin Heidegger’s thought in relation to, first, the “enframing” of human being within technology, in which the nothing from which being is brought into presence is concealed; second, the mood of anxiety in and through which *Dasein*—Heidegger’s term for the kind of being we “are”—asserts itself into that nothing; and, finally, the potential for post-aesthetic art to move beyond the logics of representation and subjectification, and in so doing, to reveal what Heidegger understands as the struggle between earth and world. The former refers to the “background” against and through which any particular “world” exists with the latter referring to a particular web of significances in which *Dasein* lives, and allowing truth to spring forth.

Keywords: emotion; Heidegger; performance; consciousness; memory; grief; art

A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: “What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.” The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, “What is the tortoise standing on?” “You’re very clever, young man, very clever,” said the old lady. “But it’s turtles all the way down!”

Stephen Hawking [1]

1. Introduction

This article takes up and interrogates commonsense understandings of emotion, as (re)presented in public life. Specifically, it uses three examples—first, a children’s film; second, a press conference about the death, on the field, of an Australian cricket player; and third, the “spontaneous” response to the death of this public figure—in order to identify the way in which emotion, certainly in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is framed as, in Arjun Appadurai’s formulation, the “bedrock” of human personality ([2], p. 93). The article further considers how that framing is, at the same time, destabilised by a certain *nothingness* pervading that bedrock. I will show how, in the children’s film, the confident assertion of a scientific topography of a child’s inner or psychic life is haunted by the threat of a (potentially) vertiginous fall into nothingness. (I use “scientific” rather than “scientific” in order to suggest a discourse which appeals to a science-like grounds for its authority, without necessarily engaging in the rigour of a “properly” scientific methodology.) In the second example, in the grief of a

young man facing a press conference about the death of his friend, I will demonstrate the unfolding of a consuming anxiety in the encounter with nothing. Finally, I will turn to the labour of a grieving public, in the face of loss, to create *something* that might render intelligible, graspable, the oxymoronic, all-but-unfathomability evinced by the anecdote recounted by Stephen Hawking, above, in which the old lady stands as the (absurd) epitome of a desire for ontological certainty, for foundation.

Each of the three sections of the paper first offers an account of the phenomenon to be examined, before turning to the work of Martin Heidegger in order to better understand the play between the desire for foundation and the implacability of nothing. The argument proceeds by first revealing, in the children's film, the haunting presence of nothing confronting the metaphysics of scientific, commonsense understandings of human beings; second, by interpreting the anxiety manifested in and through grief as the grounds of possibility of the reconfiguration of metaphysical or foundational thinking; and, third, by outlining the way in which a "spontaneous", collective making or performance in response to the anxiety induced by grief reveals the process of making *being*, and making that being intelligible.

In doing so, the article takes up Heidegger's own call for *ontic attestation* ([3], Section 11)—that is, for "existentiell, factual, disclosure" of *Dasein's* possibility of being ([4], p. 14). Here, I am taking Heidegger quite literally, seeking concrete examples in which the ontological structure of *Dasein*—his term for the kind of being we "are"—is revealed or reveals itself. In these terms, I write from the discipline of performance studies, and specifically that discipline's grounding in the observation and analysis of performance (itself), towards the discipline of philosophy, enacting (a contribution to) a mutually enhancing bootstrapping, through which the philosophical discourse offers tools with which to understand performance phenomena, and the analysis of those phenomena helps us to better grasp, and, potentially, to clarify the complexity of Heidegger's thinking.

2. Movie

Inside Out is a computer-animated film, produced by Pixar Animations and released through Disney Films in 2015 [5]. The plot unfolds in the mind of a pre-pubescent girl, Riley, as she struggles with the challenges of adjusting to moving interstate with her family. Overwhelmed by sadness, the happy memories she has of her childhood—memories that have provided the substance of her emerging personality—are soured. She becomes embittered and sullen and, one by one, the key positive aspects of her personality—the solidity and comfort of her family, her honesty, her love of hockey, her capacity for friendship, and her endearing goofiness—crumble and dissolve. She becomes something of a moping, nihilistic pre-teenager, sullenly withdrawing from family life, losing her vital spark.

Fortunately, things work out: Riley's internal emotional struggle is resolved. The competing forces of sadness and happiness are reframed in non-adversarial terms; she learns that happiness is all the richer for being leavened by the bitter sweetness of nostalgic sadness, that holding sad memories dear is the path to depth of personality. The film closes on the promise of a complex but balanced, adult, emotional future (no doubt setting the scene for an inevitable sequel).

In *Inside Out*, the cinematic journey from exterior life-world to interior mind-world is effected by an animated crash zoom [5]. The first time this happens, the character involved is Riley's mother, trying to engage her husband in conversation about Riley's disaffection over the dinner table. The shot zeros in on her forehead, which dissolves into a dark-centred, pink-haloed sphincter, through which our point of view passes, with what might be called the "colonoscopic" visuals melting into the kind of representation of trans-scalar travel familiar from science fiction movies. It is a warp-speed transition, opening up to the scene of a control desk, backed by burnt orange drapes, through which peek serried rows of crystal balls wrapped in helical bindings. Five cartoon figures—all female, identifiably of early middle age, and all spectacled (as is Riley's mother)—sit behind the desk, their gaze directed off-screen at what subsequent shots reveal to be an ellipsoid, fuzzy-edged screen, offering the point of view of the character inside whose heads we now find ourselves. (Riley's father's interior screen is tuned to an ice hockey game).

This set-up is subsequently revealed to be “Headquarters”, the psycho-geography of which we are more fully introduced to as we enter the mind of Riley herself. “Headquarters” is located in the centre of, and slightly overlooking—as might be the case for an airport control tower—the landscape of Riley’s mind. The facility is staffed by a crew of personified (colour-coded and physiognomically overcoded) emotions: Joy, a doe-eyed, blue-haired, pixie-like ballerina—the stock standard Disney princess in a green dress; Sadness, a dowdy, bespectacled, blue frump in a shapeless sweater; the introjected father figure, Anger, a tightly wound, furrow-browed, hypertensively scarlet male in shirtsleeves and tie; a violently green, party-frocked and heavily made-up Disgust; and Fear, a purple-hued, wiry and again masculine figure in a chequered vest, spectacles, and bow tie, given to yelps, covering his eyes, and leaping, “springingly”, in response to any and every stimulus.

These five figures—immature versions of the middle-aged personae inhabiting Riley’s mother’s mind—manage the processing of Riley’s experiences, which appear as a steady stream of crystal orbs, through various elaborate, post-digital versions of Heath Robinsonesque mechanisms, the purpose of which is to triage them into different orders of memory. Each experience or memory is rendered as an orb of varying colour—corresponding to the nature of the memory (sad, happy, frightening)—and sent off, each night, to long-term storage. The latter appears as a bewilderingly vast and labyrinthine storage facility, a Borgesian library stack arranged in curvilinear folds, echoing the organic contours of brain tissue. The whole thing is maintained by (of course) an elephant—as much storeman as curator—and extends indefinitely to an indeterminate horizon.

Not all memories, however, are consigned to long-term storage. “Core memories” are retained in a special hub in Headquarters, where they “power” a series of “islands”, each of which constitutes the architecture of Riley’s personality. These baroquely detailed constructions, each corresponding to one of the five key aspects of her being—recall: family, honesty, friendship, hockey, “goofballery”—are arrayed around (and slightly below) Headquarters, hovering over a vast chasm, connected to the surrounding terrain by slender bridges. As Joy, in voice-over, explains: “the Islands of Personality are what makes Riley Riley”. As the plot unfolds, the abyss over which the personality islands hover is revealed as a “memory dump”: a literal oblivion, into which, as the vicissitudes of plot unfold, the stored memory balls—and the islands constituting Riley’s personality—tumble, to be forgotten, crumbling into undifferentiated nothingness.

Although there is not, as yet, a scholarly literature engaging the science of *Inside Out*, a Google search quickly yields a number of authorities testifying to the “accuracy” of this rendering of the (pre-adolescent) human psyche. Janina Scarlet, for example, describing herself as “a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, a scientist, and a full time geek”, explains in a column for *Psychology Today* that

What’s really powerful about this film is how accurate it is to cognitive, developmental, and clinical psychology. The 5 emotions used in this film are in fact 5 of the 6 scientifically validated universal emotions (the 6th one being surprise). Psychologist and scientist, Paul Eckman, is most known for his work with universal emotions as he traveled around the world and found that these were present in every culture and presented in the same way, through the same facial expressions, around the world. Eckman’s work has been used for psychology research, as well as for the US government, and even inspired the popular television series, “Lie to Me” [6].

Another review, on the website “Shrinktank”, awarded the film a 3.5 (out of five) for “scientific accuracy”, evaluating the film as being “Quasi-scientific to Fairly Accurate” [7]. Writing for *The Conversation*, Jennifer Talarico, an Associate Professor in Psychology at Lafayette College, concludes that “[e]ven if not all of the details are completely accurate, the metaphors are grounded in a real understanding of psychological science” [8]. The producers had in fact recognised the dramaturgical limits of the Eckman schema, with director Pete Docker explaining in a radio interview that he had decided to elide the emotion “surprise” as it was too similar to “fear” [9]. Further liberties were added in production: the memory elephant rides the “train of thought” to cross over to the various islands,

for example—a triumph of associative word play as much as an attempt to render the insights of contemporary psychology.

Scarlet is equally as enthusiastic about the film's representation of memory function:

When a memory is seen as salient or relevant enough to us, or when it has been repeated enough times, the brain messengers, dopamine and glutamate, ensure the long-term encoding of that memory. Think of these messengers as computer coders or awesome IT support team—they write the code to ensure that our brain computer is up to date with the new information [6].

No doubt the cutting edge of psychological research—and particularly of neuroscientific research—would want to nuance this account, perhaps significantly. Indeed, recent research in neuroscience takes issue with the “headquarters” model of executive function, and with the delegation of that executive function to “emotion” [10].

However, for the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to note how both the popular psychology narrative and the film share a desire to populate our interior landscape with people—the philosophical term is “homunculi”—who pull the levers, write the code, oil the machinery, and so on. The device of personifying the internal life of a character is not without its popular culture precedents. Growing up a reader of the comic magazine *The Beano* in 1970s England, I have fond memories of “The Numskulls”, a cadre of middle managers situated in a control room inside a man's head (his name is Ed), co-ordinating responses to various everyday crises, and engaged in intra-corporeal class and industrial relationships with the more menial homunculi responsible for the functioning of the lower bodily stratum. The comic book format allowed for cut-away architectural renderings of Ed's internal mindscape, with the various offices occupied by the Numskulls themselves presented as architectural sections of his skull. More recently, the 1990s American television sitcom *Herman's Head* took a post-Jungian approach, with four characters embodying paradigmatic types—Angel (sensitivity), Animal (lust), Wimp (anxiety) and Genius (intellect)—constantly at odds with each other in the eponymous hero's psyche. In this instance, the movement between inner and outer was effected by the emergence, from the centre of Herman's forehead, of a kind of thought bubble [11]. The trajectory is from inside to out, rather than the introjective penetration of the point of view in *Inside Out* [5].

There are two basic problems with homuncular decomposition as a way of thinking about the mind. First, there is the infinite regression to which the model too easily lends itself. Even my eight-year-old daughter picked that up. “What if”, she asked me, “the people inside her brain had people inside *their* brains?” It is, as it were, “turtles all the way down”. Second, the model, as Daniel Dennett argues, is implicitly dualist. The figure of the homunculus is implicit in Descartes' rendering of the mind as vanishing point—and ideal viewer—of the internal projection of visual stimuli. This is a set-up to which Dennett referred to famously in his book *Consciousness Explained* as the “Cartesian theatre”—the residue of mind-body dualism steeped through contemporary realist accounts of mind ([12], pp. 107–38). The issue is that the “us” to whom the brain computer *belongs*, to whom memories are *salient*, is strangely exterior to—or perhaps anterior to, and at the very least, distinct from—the process. There is, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, no who there. The problem of “me” is displaced, presumably to the equivalent of a screening room somewhere else, where I reap the benefits of having my brain computer kept up to date, and “salient or relevant” memories rendered available for my enjoyment and/or use.

Notwithstanding these problems, Scarlet's account—and the Pixar model—is representative of a kind of commonsense popular science narrative, grounded in what Arjun Appadurai refers to as “the paradigmatic western topography of the self”,

in which the biologically anterior “self” (where the intertwined processes of ontogeny and phylogeny play out) through the vicissitudes of the trajectory of “personality development” becomes a recognisable though idiosyncratic unit, the individual ([2], p. 93).

Appadurai describes this topography as being

[a]nchored in a spatial image of layers, of which the affective bedrock is seen as simultaneously the simplest, the most general and the most directly tied to the somatic side of personality ([2], p. 93).

Inside Out extends and elaborates the paradigm, extending the depth metaphor through activating a by now very familiar trope: the human psyche as supercomputer, modelled as a three-part sequence involving data in, executive function and data out [5]. In Scarlet's gloss, the trope is developed with two key linguistic devices: the use of passive voice (a memory is seen as salient by whom?) and, paralleling the film, the personification of mental processes. In this way, biochemical compounds become first "messengers", then "computer coders" and finally an "awesome IT support team", each endowed with agency. They are seen to write the code that keeps the computer—"our brain computer"—up to date. Where the Numskulls understood the activities of their homunculi in terms of a rudimentary class warfare, figured through a bluntly dualistic division of labour between the cerebral and the visceral, and *Herman's Head* took up the Freudian insight of a psyche at odds with itself [11], *Inside Out* completes what Martin Heidegger called *Gestell*, or enframing: "an all-encompassing view of technology not as a means to an end, but rather a mode of human existence" [13].

For Heidegger, the question of technology was not necessarily reducible to one of the technological; nor does technology remove us from a (more fundamental) truth: technology is, as Ronald Godzinski explains, "not intrinsically dangerous or evil" [13]. Rather, *Gestell* is the "essence of modern technology", in which truth "reveals itself as a standing reserve", with this last term referring to the way in which the world appears to us as a resource to be used, as a concatenation of (simple) things. This constitutes a specific mode of "revealing" of the world, a coming into presence of the world that characterises an epoch—this particular epoch, in which we are under the sway of a particular configuration of technology. For Heidegger, the danger for us lies not so much in our being under the sway of the revealing of the world as standing reserve, but in our allowing ourselves to be "ordered or dominated by the things that we in turn are trying to order and dominate" [13]. We can, Heidegger suggests, "affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature" ([14], p. 54), a disposition he referred to as "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*). This is the "saving power" inherent in technology, a power bound up in the question of what Heidegger called "concealment".

Concealment, for Heidegger, is at the heart of the historically dynamic disclosure of intelligibility in time. As

this historical unfolding of truth takes place—to use Heidegger's preferred philosophical terms of art—as an "*a-lêtheia*" struggle to "dis-close" or "un-conceal" (*a-lêtheia*) that which conceals (*lêthe*) itself, an "essential strife" between two interconnected dimensions of intelligibility (revealing and concealing) which Heidegger calls "world" and "earth" [15].

The totality of "what-is" stands in the place of, and so conceals, the "nothing" from which it emerges. Being, for Heidegger, conceals itself in order to bring itself into presence; nothing would be able to come to presence without this concealment. (Although to think as Heidegger does, we would need to read "presence" here as a verb, rather than as a substantive state that simply "is"). In *Gestell*, however, a second order of concealment holds us in its sway: a concealing of the first order of concealment—a taking of a thing for granted, presupposing its meaning and existence, rather than seeing it as a result of the movement of presencing [14]. It is this second order of concealment, in its hiding of the (original) movement of concealment, inherent to Being, in which, in Arthur Pap's translation of Heidegger's phrase, "nothing noths" ([16], p. 103).

Godzinski concludes his reading by reflecting that Heidegger's thinking on technology risks, in the absence of an engagement with "everyday, concrete experience", having only "the status of a metaphysical exercise" [13], emphasising the ontological over the ontic. "Perhaps", he writes, "the ontological characteristics that are part and parcel to the movement of modern technology need to

be related more to lived experience and the life-world in order to make Heidegger's concept more meaningful" [13].

So, here I am again, watching *Inside Out* with my children, and my attention is drawn to—I cannot shake myself free of—amid the *Gestell*, the spectacle of the memory dump, the vast emptiness not only into which memories crumble and disappear, but *over* and around which the topography of mindscape is built [5]. The Islands of Personality and Headquarters quite literally hover over the event horizon of an all-but bottomless pit. An awesome nothingness yawns beneath, threatening to (re)absorb everything, held only at bay by the exacting labour of the emotions to maintain the islands of personality. The memory dump is the nothingness around, over, and through which the possibility of any and every thing is predicated. It is the nothingness into which, and from which, Being is "presenced"; that is, brought into presence. Memory, personality stands over and against, precisely, nothing. At the very heart of this children's film is a reminder that the real question—the one opened up but not necessarily addressed—is not about what there *is*, which might consider the nature and organisation of the things that make up the mind. Instead, the real question is whether anything at all can be found there ([16], p. 110).

3. Press Conference

A broad-shouldered young man sits at a table, centre-screen, his cheek tucked into the up-turned collar of a zippered jacket, head canted forward and eyes focused on a script, out of sight, presumably on the table at the bottom of the frame [17]. The left breast of his jacket—a subdued, drab garment, highlighted by lime green bars across his shoulders—bears the logo of Cricket Australia—on the other breast, a sponsor's brand. The young man is well presented: his complexion is that of the well-exercised, healthily maintained athlete; his haircut sensibly fashionable. He is the captain of the Australian cricket team.

Across the bottom of the frame are arrayed a clutch of microphones, each bearing a broadcaster's identification: Channel 9, 2GB, 2UE. Absent, however, is the usually ubiquitous geometry of sponsors' logos against which these press conferences are staged: today the background is that of a blank wall, on which is cast the young man's penumbral shadow.

Before he speaks, the young man draws a deep, audible breath, his shoulders heaving upwards and back, the breath expelled through pursed lips, with an emphatic "hoof" as he launches into his script, which he starts reading with a slightly rushed, but media-coached, polish, the familiar quasi-cant of the genre of prepared press statement presentation:

Words cannot express the loss we all feel as a team right now. To Greg, Virginia, Jason and Megan...

He pauses, taking another deep breath, head drawn momentarily back into his shoulders, into the curve of the upturned collar, and with the outbreath, there is the barest trembling of lips, and a brief, quickly clamped-down fricative snort. A slight blush has come to his cheeks; his eyes don't leave the page in front of him.

...We share in the deep pain you're feeling.

With these words, the young man's body has risen slightly in his chair, his left shoulder arching up and out of his body. As he concludes the sentence, his voice breaks, withdrawing into his nasal cavity, settling across the bridge of his nose. His shoulders drop back into alignment, and something of a squall passes over his countenance, a twitch that originates in his left brow and is carried across his face in a flicker of lips, a 'tctheing' through the right corner of his mouth, and a quiver of his right brow as his head flicks, briefly, as if to cast off the tremor that threatens the equanimity of his performance. Now, however, his brow is furrowed, and he stops. More than a pause: a conscious gathering. His shoulders heave up with a measured intake of breath, followed by an equally measured outbreath, a focused exorcism of the affect threatening to carry him away: "phwooooofff". He gathers himself for a full five seconds, muttering something I cannot make out under his breath: is it a nickname? A cue?

Apart from when he was home on the farm with his beloved cattle, Hughesy was at his happiest playing cricket for his country with his mates.

Things were always put into perspective when Hughesy said, 'Where else would you rather be boys...

...the briefest of pauses as his voice begins to waver again, trembling through the labour of mimetic recollection:

"but playing cricket for your country?"

A longer pause, a shaking of his head, a click of the tongue, a heavy sigh. The pause is displaced by what appears to be an emphatic decision to actually stop. He reaches down out of frame to his right, and brings a bunched tissue to his left eye, dabbing at tears. His forehead creases as his brows open wide, eyes still downcast, and he makes a strangled, guttural groan that segues straight back into the script:

We're going to miss that cheeky grin and that twinkle in his eye. He epitomised what the baggy green is about, and what it means to us all.

The world lost one of its great blokes this week, and we are all poorer for it.

Again he stops, and there is a barely audible "gaw" ending in a fluting sigh.

Our promise to Hughesy's family is that we will do everything we can to honour his memory.

Last night, I asked Cricket Australia if Hughesy's one-day...Hughesy's Australian one-day international shirt number, 64, could be retired...to which they agreed. That means so much.

On these last four words, his voice takes on a mellifluous, downwards cadence, a moment of deep, wistful settling, followed by a careful breath, a gently unfurled sense of confidence. He carries on.

His legacy of...

However, he runs out of steam, brought to a halt by another gasping sigh, before, after another deep breath, starting again:

His legacy of trying to improve each and every day will drive us for the rest of our lives.

Moving now towards peroration, there is a sense of relief, that the worst is over. The young man picks up the pace, a weight lifted, his voice level and efficient.

We'd like to thank everyone here and overseas for the touching tributes to Hughesy in recent days.

It's nearly the end. But now he stops again, face still angled towards the page, eyes scanning back and forth over the words still to be read. After five seconds, he heaves a deep breath, exhales. He is fidgeting with his script, his nose is dropping closer and closer to the clutch of microphones. His mouth moves, makes speaking movements, he seems about to speak, taking another deep breath, but no words come with the exhalation, and so he gulps another lungful of air, seems close to hyperventilating, his creased brow a storm, the plane of his face now almost parallel to that of the desk at which he sits. His face clenches; it has been 15 seconds without words. Against the silence, the subjectile hiss of the gathered recording media looms into perception, punctuated by the mechanical snap of a camera shutter. The young man's nose is grazing the microphone, his face twitches, and he shakes his head, a tiny gesture, a matter of millimetres, but in the close framing and dilated time of the performance, one of mute, unequivocal significance: a minute refusal, an expression of inconsolable incomprehension. And then stillness, into which words form.

Our dressing room will never be the same. We loved him...

Here, he loses control of his voice, which ascends in pitch and volume, the words “loved him” gently, plosively percussive as he lets them go, before he completes the catechism in a symmetrically falling cadence.

and we always will.

He stops and, for the first time, raises his face, eyes still closed, a deep vertical furrow visible between his brows, a gestus of pure transfixation:

Rest in peace, Brussy.

And his face collapses again, lips trembling. He gasps, swallows, takes the barest of moments before decisively, emphatically levering himself out of his chair, led by his left elbow, his body liberated from its fidgety, desk-bound constriction, purposively exiting the podium, the comforting, guiding hand of a female companion resting on his shoulder blade.

The news presenter back-announces the clip. “He broke down a number of times...”, he explains. “[T]he raw emotion and the pain that obviously continues for Michael Clarke...the country is joining as one, the cricketing world is joining as one to remember Phillip Hughes.”¹

His co-presenter rejoins, “Much deserved and lovely to see. Thank you, Jim.”

Michael Clarke’s press conference performance was in response to the death, the previous day, of his friend and erstwhile team-mate, Phillip Hughes (“Brussy”, a familiar form of “Brother”, was Hughes’ nickname). Hughes was a batsman who had, over a period of several years, been selected and subsequently dropped from the Australian XI. His technical deficiencies as a batsman had been well-documented: he was overly eager to play at deliveries pitched short and wide of his off-stump, with a habit that he was apparently unable to resist: chasing the ball with his bat, slicing, broadly, away from his body, rather than observing the orthodox mantra of playing straight, right elbow high (he was a left-hander), the blade of his bat perpendicular to the pitch, along the line of the delivery, close to his pad. Generally, though, his “eye” was good: against anything but the highest quality bowling, he could get away with his rashness, middling the ball and thrashing it square of the wicket. At anything but the top level, his looseness of technique was rewarded, presumably making it even harder to make the requisite adjustments to the habits instilled against inferior opposition. When in full flight, he was a supremely exhilarating a batsman.

Against international bowlers, however, with the discipline to maintain a consistent line and, importantly, able to deviate the trajectory of the ball just sufficiently to beat his eye, Hughes was regularly exposed. Dropped from the Australian team, he had sought to rebuild his technique, moving from his home state of New South Wales (NSW) to play with the Western Australia team. In late November 2014, while batting against NSW, he was struck on the base of his neck by a fast delivery. The blow crushed his skull.

For two days, Hughes lay in a coma in a Sydney hospital. News crews were able to record his family and friends—many of whom were high-profile international cricketers—arriving to keep bedside vigils. Footage of the incident itself was readily available online, albeit of poor quality. From the crestfallen, red-eyed faces emerging from the hospital, and the reporting of the details of the injury, it became quickly apparent that there was little chance of Hughes recovering consciousness. When news of his death was reported three days later, news presenters openly wept [18]. Talkback radio stations were immediately awash with tearful callers. I recall hearing a listener calling into a drive-time radio show on ABC local radio, explaining how, as he heard the news in his car, he started

¹ The footage including these back-announcements was removed from YouTube sometime in late 2015. The version cited here consists only of the reading of the statement itself.

crying, looked across at the car next to him and saw the driver—another man—also in tears. He noted the intensity of this moment of emotional communion.

How are we to account for the affective power of this performance, and of the event of Hughes' death? What are we to make of Clarke's performance? How do we interpret it? Understand it? Or, perhaps, we could turn the question around to ask, instead, what is revealed, what is shown, what shows itself here? There is no question that the press conference is a powerful performance; I, certainly, feel an immense tugging, an immense weight and dread, an insistent, fragile pounding, an urgent timpanic insistence, high in my ribcage as I watch, rendering a kind of visceral hollowing-out, a thin-ness that is not quite, but almost, anoxic. I sense the skin on my cheekbones, a subtle, implacable pressure behind the bone of my forehead. I catch myself holding my breath, a flickering of sense/memory/context snippets overlapping and displacing each other in and across that indeterminate field that I am inclined to call my consciousness. I seem to gather this concatenation of stuff under the rubric of "empathy", without really knowing what I mean, or how I come to that labelling. Other words come to me: dread, fear. I engage with/in, and this stuff enjoins me to, the world, the totality of my being in the world is now coloured in, through/around and by a mood of what I know is sadness, and I am aware that my head is shaking, gently, from side to side as I reflect upon that knowingness.

There are many accounts of the processes by which emotions circulate, how they move between bodies, from the magnetism referred to by Socrates in his dialogue with Ion, through the Galenic ontology of the humours, so wonderfully evoked by Joseph Roach [19], to the elaboration of those ideas in medieval and later discourse. We can read Stanislavski writing about *prana* radiating forth from an actor's eyes and fingertips; for Grotowski, a radical transluminescence bursting forth from the actor's essence ([20], p. 16). Alternatively, we can enjoin semiotic theory: emotions interpreted between bodies, inferred from a repertoire of signs. We could turn to Deleuze, and ideas about affecting presence [21], or to neurophysiology, and map the process as a sequence of biochemical micro-events [10]. As well, notwithstanding a growing literature exploring the socially distributed, intercorporeal nature of emotional life, in the popular imagination, power continues to adhere to Appadurai's précis of the paradigmatic Western topography of the self, in which an essential self is encased in successive layers—layers which, in particular circumstances, might be peeled away, the better to access the truth of a person [2]. This is, perhaps, most emphatically rendered in the Grotowskian narrative of a singular, truthful self being revealed through the *via negativa*: the systematic dismantling of the various layers of (mere) personality, accrued through the actor's lifetime culture [20].

In this account, what is so powerful about Clarke's performance is precisely the removal of artifice, culture and obstacle, yielding a revelatory moment of—in the words of the announcer quoted above—"raw emotion". Analogy might be drawn with a series of iterations of post-method acting where there is veneration of a purportedly truthful, authentic emotional "truth"—one which we are led to believe has the potential to somehow unify us, to perform to us a kind of transcendental humanity. This gets talked about in terms of a bodily transcendence of mere words: a truth that might be revealed in one's blood, one's DNA, in some fundamental state of matter in which being, incontrovertibly and unambiguously, *is*.

What if, however, following Heidegger's lead, we turn this around? Clarke's performance, rather than revealing a truthful, foundational place of pure (emotional) being, does precisely the opposite. In the moment where the media training fails, where language fails, perhaps no thing, no foundation, is revealed at all? Rather, does this moment offer the possibility of an opening? What else might the moment show?

In the *Contributions to Philosophy*, written between 1936 and 1938, published in 1989, and translated into English in 1999 [22], Heidegger attempts to move beyond the metaphysical limits that his earlier work, *Being and Time* [3] had—in his estimation—failed to shake off. The latter work proposes an "other beginning" of philosophy, to take the place of the "first beginning's" mistaken fundamental assumption of "being" as a transcendental *quality* of beings, affirming, instead, the radically temporal,

performative nature of “being” as emergence. The *Contributions* proposes the absolute rejection of *Beyng*—the English rendering of the word Heidegger used (*Seyn*) to distance the emergent concept from the metaphysical entanglements of the more familiar “Being” (*Sein*), as related to any kind of “thing” at all. Instead, “being” is construed as radically performative [22].

Key to the movement towards a new thinking was, for Heidegger, a question of attunement (*Gestimmtheit*) to what he called a fundamental mood (*Grundstimmung*) ([23], p. 138), which he understands as “fundamental manner[s] and [a] fundamental way[s] of being”, not located inside a subject (as emotion), but already there, “like an atmosphere in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and which then attunes us through and through”.

The question of mood is not a theoretical or empirical one. Rather, the process of awakening attunement involves “acting in accordance” with a particular mood. Grant explains: attunements are “a taking up or a being taken over by the mood, a moving with, and a being moved by the mood” ([23], p. 139). This does not involve a choice or decision as much as an allowing, such that we will be taken by a new way of thinking that more correctly approaches the question of being. Heidegger analyses historical moods: the *wonder*, *surprise* and *astonishment* of the (pre-Socratic) Greeks that anything *is*; modernity as characterised by *anxiety* (*Angst*) in the face of being towards death, and *boredom*.

The question of anxiety is taken up by Heidegger in the essay referred to above, “What Is Metaphysics?”, first published in 1937, in which he refers to anxiety as the mood in which “man is brought before the nothing itself” ([16], p. 100). Anxiety, he explains,

is in the face of...but not in the face of this or that thing...The indeterminateness of that in the face of and for which we become anxious is no mere lack of determination but rather the essential impossibility of determining it ([16], pp. 100–1).

The sensation is that of having “no hold on things”: “All things and we ourselves sink into indifference”. In anxiety, we “hover” as things recede from us; anxiety “reveals the nothing”, “robs us of speech” ([16], p. 101). All that remains is “pure *Da-Sein*”, which here Heidegger glosses as “being held out into the nothing” ([16], p. 103).

In the *Contributions*, Heidegger considers the moods that will yield the possibility of grasping or enjoining be-ing not as a state of things—captured in the present indicative tense—but as responses to the mystery of be-ing as a possible event—the future perfect modality that enjoins the “futural”, that is, future-orientated risk, as Stuart Grant argues for performance [23]. Here there is the possibility of a movement beyond the *unheimlich* silence of *Angst*. Attunement to/with these moods is necessary in order to make what Heidegger characterises as *the leap* to the “other beginning” of philosophy—that beginning which does not predicate being to beings, but holds to being in a groundless grounding. In his careful, confounding language, this is the sway of be-yng in the abyss into and through which being is presenced. The moods required to enable the leap are, Heidegger claims, variously those of restraint, diffidence/awe, alarm/shock, intimation/presentiment, enthusiasm/excitement and delight.

Restraint, awe, shock. I think of Michael Clarke, that moment in the press conference when nothing comes, when words fail him, when he is in the thrall of *Angst*, and I wonder: is this the moment before the leap into the abyss? Grant describes the Heideggarian injunction to “hold to the stilling silence which will enable the new beginning to come to us, to come over us, through a *Gelassenheit*, a releasement, a letting be. It requires letting go of everything familiar.” What comes first and lasts the longest is being able to wait in this clearing until the hints arrive.

Is there, in grief, this apprehension that is not the same as despair at the loss of life so much as the realisation of the abyssal groundlessness of being? Is Clarke, for those 15 seconds, waiting in the clearing for the new beginning? Is this, I wonder, what the moment before the Heideggarian leap looks like?

4. #Putoutyourbats

The public response to Hughes' death was immediate. The news broke at 4 p.m. on Thursday. Paul Taylor, a suburban Sydney father, described to journalist Rick Feneley, his response:

"I picked up my cricket bat," Taylor said, replaying his actions in his lounge room at Westleigh, near Hornsby. "And I swung it around a few times and padded it down on the ground."

He had begun to cry. He took his bat outside and placed it at the front door, and perched his blue Mosman cricket cap on its handle, as a mark of respect. He went back inside [24].

Thinking "we've got to get together to show our grief", Taylor recounted what he did next. He returned with his camera, snapped an image of the bat, and tweeted it using the hashtag "#putoutyourbats", sending the tweet to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and a commercial television current affairs show, and then posting it on the ABC Facebook page. The response was immediate and of an almost unprecedented scale. Across the world, people—most likely, but not exclusively, male cricket lovers—did precisely that: they put out their bats, placed a cap on top, took a photo, and tweeted the image. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported 91,798 tweets within 24 hours [24], quoting analyst Tiphereth Gloria:

This was not manufactured. This was not confected. It was not a brand or a campaign. It was a heartfelt expression of grief and respect by one man, with a beautiful and simple visual message which struck an instant chord [24].

Why they did so, why this death was so affecting, is a complex matter, and not necessarily the question I want to ask. The factors involved include the national and international status of cricket as a sport, and the timing of the accident at that point in the national news cycle when cricket starts to gear up. Moreover, there was the already long-established figuration of Hughes as an unaffected country boy, embodying the particular story upon which so much Australian mythopoetic production is based, redoubled in the narrative of the exciting but flawed sporting hero. The unlikeliness of the lethal blow was yet another factor: a reminder, to the parents of the hundreds of thousands of children who play cricket that a cricket ball is a lethal projectile; that there are risks inherent in this most regulated of sports that no high-tech protective equipment or code of sporting conduct ("that's not cricket") can entirely mitigate. The protracted drama of the death with its tinge of celebrity—as sporting superstars filed into the hospital to visit their "little mate"—was also a factor, lending itself to a news cycle hungry for updates and images. (It should be noted, too, that the outpouring of grief for a male cricketer was critiqued by a handful of brave voices. One journalist tweeted, "Imagine if we paid as much attention to the one woman a week who dies as a result of DV [domestic violence]" [25]—an opinion that provoked quite a backlash [26]. There is much in this event that speaks directly to a broad, gendered sensibility at work.)

My interest, rather than finding itself drawn to this complex set of causes, is in the nature of the response: in the making and re-making, the performance and re-performance, on a global scale, of Paul Taylor's spontaneous gesture, which had its origin in a middle-aged ex-cricketer picking up his bat, swinging it around, then "padding it down"—enacting the embodiment of a batsman at the crease. Taylor grasped that object in its everyday equipmentality—a grasping that yielded tears, and a desire to make something where, before, there was no thing, and to engage that making with others ("we've got to get together...").

Again, there are many conventional ways to consider this act, this en-actment, and its re-enactments: *memento mori* is the most ready-to-hand rubric, recalling the practice of humble roadside memorials erected for loved ones killed in traffic accidents, for example, or the larger-scale spectacles of flowers spontaneously laid at the gates of Buckingham Palace and Kensington Palace following Diana Spencer's death in 1997. More recently, and only a few days after Hughes died, the deaths

at the Lindt Café in central Sydney were marked by a mass laying of flowers near the site. A few months later, the murder of a country school teacher, Stephanie Scott, was marked by the mass release of yellow balloons at a commemorative event to which invitees were asked to wear yellow [27].

Such gestures take up what we might provisionally call an “aesthetic” modality, as representations of grief, of the absent deceased, offering something like “closure” and comfort for the grieving. On this understanding, the gestures are not so much *memento mori*—“remember, you are going to die”—as attempts to hold on to and reaffirm life. In concluding this article, however, I want to turn again to Heidegger, and in particular to his thinking about the work of art, and about what art moved beyond the historical constraints of aesthetic thinking might be capable of.

For Heidegger, aesthetics functions to determine artworks as objects held up to human experience. An object, in the post-Cartesian world, is that which stands opposite to, and external to, a human subject. In experiencing an object, the subject traces a journey towards and back from that object, in the process strengthening, consolidating, passing into common sense, an immanent understanding of the subject as standing over and against the world. In the case of artworks within the aesthetic tradition, the process involves a heightening and intensification of “lived experience” as being fundamentally isolated and personal. Moreover, the artworks themselves are understood as meaningful expressions of the artist’s subjectivity. The term Heidegger uses to describe this process in general is, precisely, *subjectivism*: humanity’s quest to grasp the entire world as standing reserve, by establishing ourselves as the being “who gives the measure and provide the guidelines for everything that is”. In aesthetics, explains Thomson, Heidegger sees that subjectivism “somersaults” beyond itself into *Gestell*, referred to above—the subject *objectifies* itself. “[T]he human subject, seeking to master and control all aspects of its reality, turns that impulse to control the world of objects back onto itself” [15]. Subjectivism and its redoubling in *Gestell* leads us to fundamentally misapprehend the way in which we experience our average everydayness, in which we are unreflectively immersed, failing to acknowledge the “integral entwinedness of self and world” [15], and of self with others, that constitutes our being-in-the-world.

The artwork removed from aesthetics, from the movement between subject and object, has, for Heidegger, the potential to “help us to learn to understand the being of entities not as modern objects (‘subjectivism’) or as late-modern resources (‘enframing’) but in a genuinely post-modern way” ([15], Section 3). Aesthetic art, with its subject-object dichotomy, does not grasp things in their equipmental relationships, but simply represents things in their thingness. To escape this logic, in which representations presuppose a level of existence which they cannot explain ([15], Section 3.1), we must instead learn to linger with the artwork, with the truth happening in the work. When we meditate upon, when we allow an artwork to reveal itself to us, we potentially come to grasp the modality of practical coping with equipment, a practical coping that constitutes engaged existence.

Central to this grasping, in Heidegger’s account, is the uncovering, in the “great artwork” of the nothing that surrounds them, in which and to which they can belong. Heidegger’s discussion of this phenomenon in “The Origin of the Work of Art” turns on the way in which the nothingness framing the peasant shoes in Van Gogh’s paintings not only supports the foreground image, but seems to constantly “offer up inchoate shapes that resist being firmly gestalted themselves”, evincing, for Heidegger, the tension of emerging and not emerging. This is a tension between the world of meanings brought together by the painting—the meaningful “world” for the viewer—and that which in the one moment offers itself to and withdraws from intelligibility—what Heidegger called “world”. “The world grounds itself on the earth and the earth juts through the world”, writes Heidegger ([28], p. 49). The great artwork exists in the tension of this strife, through which being is revealed in its emergence out of the nothing, containing “the undisclosed abundance of the unfamiliar and extraordinary, which means that it also contains the strife with the familiar and the ordinary” ([28], p. 76). Thomson summarises:

The encounter with the nothing in the work of art “shatters” the taken-for-granted obviousness of the modern theoretical framework in which subjects seek to master external objects...returning us directly to the primordial level of engaged existence in which subject and object have not yet been differentiated ([15], Section 3.6).

Perhaps that is enough with which to return to the putting out of the bats. It is important to remember that Heidegger's analysis in "The Origin of the Work of Art" focuses on "great works": most particularly, (one, unspecified example, of) Van Gogh's (many) paintings of peasant boots; a poem by C. F. Meyer, and a Greek temple. I am not making the claim that #putoutyourbats assumes the mantle of "great art", even of great post-aesthetic art. At the same time, the gesture—the performance—of putting out one's own bat (or of releasing a yellow balloon, or not simply placing a bouquet but adding a bouquet to an already existing mass of flowers outside Kensington Palace) may be understood through the thinking that Heidegger makes, and perhaps, in the very mundanity of its action, proposes that the work of "shattering the taken-for-granted obviousness of the modern theoretical framework" might unfold in contexts other than those of "great art"; that such opportunities might present more readily to hand.

At the very least, the proliferation of the assemblage of bats and caps, and the images that then circulate, constitute what Thomson—following Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger—calls "ontological paradigms'paradigms", "serving their communities both as 'models of' and 'models for' reality", such that "artworks can variously 'manifest', 'articulate', or even 'reconfigure' the historical ontologies undergirding their cultural worlds" ([15], Section 1.1). This micro-paradigmatic work is, Thomson explains, what Heidegger refers to as "things thinging".

The performances, on this reading, enjoin the strife of world and earth, rather than simply representing a (simply absent) person, in bringing forth, spontaneously, out of nothing, things. At the same time, the thing made, brought into presence, not only by its provenance but in its presence enjoins nothing; just as it "things", it "noths" ("nihiliates"). In the bat that offers itself to a hand that is not there, in the cap that cradles, in its empty concavity, the head that is not there, there is a movement beyond mere representation. There is the apprehension, fleeting and *unheimlich*, of the nothing, an apprehension shared, in which subjectivity dissolves in collective action. The very action of putting the bat out—the fact that this action engages an average, everyday equipmental relationship—and the sharing of that action, again moves the event beyond simple representation, to the incomprehensibility and immanence of death, which is revealed/reveals itself, and is withdrawn/withdraws itself in the same moment—a moment which always already anticipates that moment to come, in which the flowers are swept away, or the bat and cap disassembled, taken down, leaving nothing behind.

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