

Out for a Walk

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Walking, that rhythmic movement of a body in open space, is good for human health -- good for heart and lungs and the circulation of blood, breath, lymph fluids. It is also good for thinking, as per a old tradition of peripatetic philosophy, which celebrates walking for its thought-enhancing powers. "Let us walk along the Ilissus river as we talk," says Phaedrus to Socrates, accompanied by a chorus of cicadas. "My mind only works with my legs," says Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. The nineteenth century naturalist Henry Thoreau also extolled walking, or, to be more precise, that unhurried, undirected version of it he called "sauntering": "I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who ... had a genius ... for *sauntering*, which word is beautifully derived 'from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going *a la SainteTerre*,' to the Holy Land."¹ Sauntering is also what Paul Klee says a line does: "an active line, moving freely, goes for a stroll on its own, without destination." ["*Eine aktive Linie, die sich frei ergeht, ein Spaziergang um seiner selbst willen, ohne Ziel.*"]²

In what follows, I explore two walks, one by Thoreau and one by Klee's line (as it becomes doodle). In each case, I focus on the walk's power to transmit signals to selves, and to inscribe and inflect their positions and dispositions. This power might be described as a practice of "aesthetic education," if, however, that term is stretched a bit beyond the 19th century frame in which it became famous: Schiller's *Letters*. Schiller's friendly amendment to Kant was to show how the "moral" and the "aesthetic" were not at odds: morality was *not* "indifferent" to the

¹ Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: V: Excursions and Poems*,

² Paul Klee, *Paul Klee: The Thinking Eye*, (London: Lund Humphris, 1964), 105.

sensuous, and, moreover, it required the active participation of a certain "play-drive" innate to the creativity of humanity. Can we say that walks are a form of aesthetic education? Perhaps. I do share Schiller's conviction that aesthetic experience can alter the affective tone of experience, but I hesitate to endorse the idea that the education of sensibility induced by "aesthetic" experience tends naturally to promote moral goodness. Better to leave that second claim, about the ultimate normative effect of aesthetic experience, an open question. Better, then, to say that a walk is an "ontographic operation." A walk, in other words, in one of the "procedures that grasp, open up and register the ontic reality without being conveyed by language."³ Compared to the framing of "aesthetic education," Lorenz Engell's "ontography" offers a less intrinsically moral figure, a way of naming the apersonal operations of a universe that nonetheless capable of real creativity.

1. A man out for a walk

Out for a walk one hot summer day, Thoreau finds himself "pressed down" upon by the atmosphere and its "15 pounds to a square inch" of barometric pressure. On days with more comfortable weather, the "stupendous piles of light ethereal influence" that Thoreau now feels would go largely unnoticed. But on that hot and sticky day (July 23, 1851) in Concord Massachusetts, the atmosphere announces itself as an active force and not merely a background condition. The atmosphere imprints itself onto Thoreau's body in a rather dramatic fashion, in an ontographic operation that, we learn from his journal, redistributes the relative strengths of his "faculties." Thoreau's faculty of thought – a capacity to organize experience into ideas,

³ Lorenz Engell, "Ontography: Procedures, Problems, Prospects"

words, phrases -- was “drowned.” *It was too hot to think.* At the same time, a more vegetal faculty, of sensuous reception of and capacity to absorb or “store up influences” -- gained prominence.



Too hot to think (doodle by J. Bennett)

Here is Thoreau’s journal entry for that day:

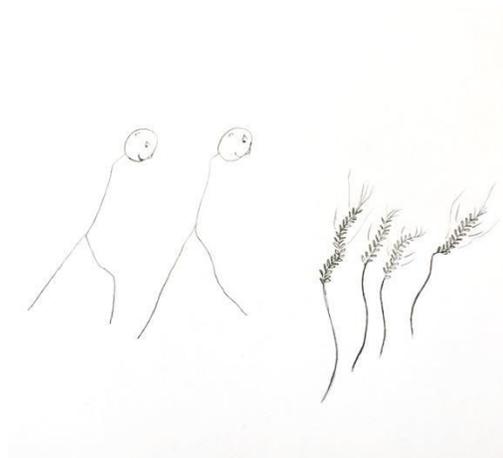
out of doors my thought is commonly drowned as it were & and shrunken, pressed down by stupendous piles of light ethereal influence – for the pressure of the atmosphere is still 15 pounds to a square inch – I can do little more than preserve the equilibrium & resist the pressure of the atmosphere – I can only nod like the ryeheads in the breeze. I expand more surely in my chamber, as far as expression goes, as if that pressure were taken off; but here out-doors is the place to store up influences.⁴

If “ontography” refers “to procedures that grasp, open up and register the ontic reality without being conveyed by language or ... even the conceptual,”⁵ then the New England scene above exhibits (at least) two *sources* of ontographic inscriptions. First, there is the ontographic

⁴Henry Thoreau, July 23, 1851, *A Year in Thoreau’s Journal: 1851*, ed. Daniel Peck, Penguin Books 1993, 126.

⁵ Lorenz Engell, “Ontography: Procedures, Problems, Prospects”

effort of "atmosphere," that brew of summer sun, heat, humidity, dust, pollen, sweat, breeze, and buzz of insects. (Regarding the latter, we now know that on any given summer day in the northern hemisphere, in a .6 mile column of air from the ground up to 14,000 feet, there exist three *billion* insects: "Sometimes they hover, sometimes they glide, sometimes they free-fall, sometimes they soar," and sometimes, as with airborne spiders, they float on the sticky threads they send out from their tiny bodies.⁶) The atmosphere, consisting of all these and many other shapes, sounds, and movements, impresses itself on sensitive flesh. That flesh is itself also engaged in ontography: it transmits the impressions received from the outside to Thoreau's body as a whole, to the effect that "ontic reality" now re-manifests as Thoreau's mental fog and as (the spatial configuration and rhythm of) *nodding*. "I can only nod like the ryeheads in the breeze."



Noddings

Atmosphere and flesh together participate in an ontographic *process*: atmosphere gives evidence of the ontic reality by inducing nodding in Thoreau (and in ryeheads), an inducement

⁶ Hugh Raffles, *Insectopedia*, 10. See also Robert Krulwich, "Look Up! The Billion Bug Highway You Can't see," National Public Radio, July 15, 2010.

that relies upon the consistency of the sensitive and permeable materials it marks. Atmosphere graphs the out-of-doors (or “Nature,” Thoreau's other term for “ontic reality”) onto the man and the plant, bodies for which “nodding” is one possible posture. Because of this constitutive co-dependence, it seems better to describe the action-style of ontography as one of *inducing* rather than *producing*. The nod is *Thoreau's*, even though it is prompted from without (rather than issuing from inner will or intention). But the nod is also the atmosphere's, even though atmosphere can only activate those compartments already within Thoreau's somatic repertoire. Thoreau and atmosphere each contribute sketches to a much larger creative process of ontography. Thoreau's scene of cognitive-suspension and nod-activation dramatizes a mode of agency distributed across a variety of lively bodies and forces.

Once Thoreau retires to his house, he is again able to think -- and to write. There, the ontographic inscriptions of atmosphere and flesh are translated once again, this time into meaning-filled squiggles on the page. "I expand more surely in my chamber, as far as expression goes." Inside his room, Thoreau "speaks a word for Nature," for forces whose creativity is not, in the first instance, linguistic.⁷ By way of the efforts of Thoreau's thoughts, memory, fingers, head and neck, and by way of the leanings of pencil, ink, paper, and by virtue of the cooler air and less glaring light of his "chamber," ontic reality becomes journal entry. The writing there is a riff on the aesthetic pedagogy of the outdoors.

We shall return to this linguistic phase of the metamorphosis, exploring more closely the human effort of *writing up*, at the end of the essay.

⁷ "I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil, -- to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of nature, rather than a member of society. I wish to make an extreme statement, if so I may make an emphatic one..." (Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: V: Excursions and Poems*, p. 205.)

2. A line out for a walk

Thoreau tried “to speak a word for Nature.” Paul Klee did the same for the line, for that rhythmic pulse traversing open space. "An active line, moving freely, goes for a stroll on its own, without destination" is the famous line, here in written form.⁸

As an inveterate doodler, I am familiar with strolling lines – flowing down arm, fingers, pencil, and out the graphite tip, joining and diverging from trajectories already taken by predecessors on the page. The lines saunter, curve, loop, zig-zag, double back to the east, north, south, west, and eventually come to a rest, sometimes after a walk that is brisk, sometimes after one more lazy.

Doodles are rarely born out of doors, more often they emerge in a "chamber" where something else is the official site of attention -- a meeting, a phone conversation, a lecture, while waiting for the check at a restaurant. Doodles don't need a lot of space: they make landfall on margin of text, corner of napkin, upside down is fine, though, as Klee notes, they do like to roam. I feel confident that their strolling shapes are something *other* than the expression of an intention of the human doodler. Perhaps even more than the less "absent-minded"⁹ works called drawings or paintings, doodles *surprise* she who holds the pencil. "Lo, a shape !,"¹⁰ I say to myself (quoting Walt Whitman) as they emerge on the page.

⁸ Paul Klee, *Paul Klee: The Thinking Eye*, (London: Lund Humphris, 1964), 105.

⁹ "Doodles are the scribbled drawings or markings that are spontaneously produced absent-mindedly, when one's mind is preoccupied with something else rather than concerned solely with the process of drawing itself... For the purposes of this study, doodles are understood as a subjective phenomenon involving the subconscious." (Ben Watson, "Oodles of Doodles? Doodling Behavior and Its Implications for Understanding Paleoarts," *Rock Art Research* 2008 - Volume 25, Number 1, 35-60, pp. 35-36.

¹⁰Walt Whitman, "Europe, the 72nd and 73rd Years of These States," line 17, in Michael Moon (ed.), *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, 224.



Lo, a shape

Doodles do not have the same prideful feel as, say, the diagram I put on the blackboard to visualize the logic of an argument or the chart I draw to operationalize a plan I am about to hatch. A doodle, writes Matthew Battles, is “about anything but [intention-] expression. Its joys are sensuous and immediate: the dry catch of the pencil point as it tangles in the fibers of the page, the gelid smoothness of the ballpoint unrolling a fat swath of ink, the pliant bouquet of crayons and the stink of coloring markers.”¹¹

More faithful to the phenomenology of doodling would be the assertion of an efficacy that is ontologically multiple, variegated, distributed across a field. David Maclagan, in a fine study of doodling called *Line Let Loose*, takes a step toward this idea when he invokes the agency of “the drawing process itself,” whose “kinetic” energy (the “to-and-fro of the pencil”¹²) is such that a doodler watches her hand “as if it belonged to someone else.”¹³ Deleuze and Guattari might say here that the doodle follows the rules of a “protogeometry,” which concerns

¹¹ Matthew Battles, “In Praise of Doodling,” *American Scholar*, vol. 73, no. 4 (Autumn 2004), 108. Battles notes that Russell M. Arundel, an early theorist of the doodle, claimed that “civilized man’s natural state is one of ‘pixilation’—a condition of pixie-like enchantment that, though concealed by the lumber and business of modern life, emerges most clearly in the ‘automatic writing’ he calls ‘doodling.’” (105)

¹²David Maclagan, *Line Let Loose: Scribbling, Doodling, and Automatic Writing*, London: Reaktion Books, 2014, 84–86.

¹³ Maclagan, 87.

itself not with the established shapes known to geometry (cone, parallelogram, sphere, etc.), but with forms that are "anexact," "vague," "vagabond or nomadic"¹⁴ -- like doodles!

The Surrealists, influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis, took the non-intentionality of doodling to suggest that the doodle was an expression of the *Unconscious*. Doodles were "producing evidence"¹⁵ of an obscure region of the human psyche. For example, Max Morise, theorist of Surrealism, described doodles as "spontaneous images" prompted by "imperceptible undulations of the flux of thought."¹⁶ Surrealist games of automatic drawing, such as *cadavres exquis*, were designed to unearth the "secrets" of the Unconscious and to render the "undulations" of thought more perceptible.¹⁷ There is no doubt that the figure of an unconscious flux has had much explanatory (and therapeutic) power. But it does not capture well the doodler's sense of the presencing of a creative "flux" that *exceeds* intra- and inter-psyche relations, which operates out of doors. The anthropocentrism of Surrealism makes it difficult to detect and acknowledge contributions to creativity made by things like Concord's "atmosphere."

Various 19th century "spiritualist" and "mediumistic" forms of artistic automatism (later to be absorbed into discourses of "psychotic" and "outsider" art) *did* address this outside. The drawing hand of a (usually female) medium at a *séance* is guided by disembodied spirits. Most (all?) such claims end up involving some kind of earthly intentionality. But I think it is also important to acknowledge the intuition motivating practices of *séance*, automatic drawing,

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 367.

¹⁵ Lorenz Engell, "Ontography: Procedures, Problems, Prospects," 1.

¹⁶ Morise is quoted in Toub, p. 479.

¹⁷ Jim Toub, "In and Out of the Margins: The Doodle in Art and Popular Culture," *SECAC Review*, vol. XVI, no. 4, 472-484, p. 473.

or other rituals of aesthetic possession. And that is the sense that more-than-human forces of creativity are active and real. Had Maclagan, for example, attended more closely to this, perhaps by way of the figure of a “virtual” realm that is real despite not fully actual (Deleuze) or the figure of “creative evolution” operative in the spaces between life forms (Bergson), or the figure of “etherial” yet efficacious “natural influences” (Thoreau), he might have spared himself the either-or question organizing his book: Is doodling automatic or intentional? That question is a precipitate of an ontological framework that posits active subjects and relatively passive objects; it also tends to revert to an image of the artistry as an exclusively human realm. But if bodies of many different sorts engage in ontography, then other questions concerning doodling come to the fore. The question now moves from "Who or what is in charge of doodling?" to "What dimensions of the creative universe does doodling expose?" and "How does doodling help us to rethink our model of action, of what it means to *act*?" The doodle bears witness to outside forces that have seeped "in," and it calls for a model of action that has no single locus. The "ontic reality" activates the "drawing process," which leans into the momentum of the strolling line, which taps the shoulder of the human doodler, who lends her arm to the pencil, which gives the nod to emergent shapes. (And vice versa, all around.)

c . On Writing Up

In this last section, I would like to focus on the (productive) paradox of *writing* about (nonlinguistic) ontography. What are the characteristics of a rhetorical style that approximates non-linguistic phenomena, phenomena whose efficacy exceeds words but can also be expressed in translation through them? What grammar, syntax, tropes and tricks are most pertinent to a

wordy manifestation of ontographic processes operative inside and outside selves? How to speak a word for ontography?

As I pursue these questions, I find myself turning back to Thoreau and to Walt Whitman. Their writing hovers between the genres of political theory, myth-making, and poetry and is unusually good at acknowledging the contributions made by forces not indigenous to writing. Thoreau writes up his outside encounters in ways that mark how not-quite-human vitalities both *prompt* and continue to inform and deform the text each time it is read. Thoreau, writing as “the scribe of ... the corn and the grass and the atmosphere writing,”¹⁸ insinuates into the reader an uncanny sense that, at this very moment, one is amidst a bevy of active forces, some human and many not.

A poetics appropriate to ontography needs to acknowledge (most often indirectly, though occasionally outright) that its metaphors *remain infused* by the physical forces more obviously at work when one is out in the sun on a really hot day. It would show, for example, how the throat-and-chest feeling of breathing and the texture of wind on your face still vibrate inside the word “inspiration,” or how hearing the phrase “on the one hand ... on the other hand” induces a subtle rocking to-and-fro of your body.¹⁹ Such a rhetoric might push the “metaphorical” to the point where it becomes uncertain whether a sentence speaks in a

¹⁸ Thoreau, *A Year in Thoreau's Journal*, September 2, 1851, p. 188.

¹⁹ Iris K. Schneider, Anita Eerland, Frenk van Harreveld, Mark Rotteveel, Joop van der Pligt, Nathan van der Stoep, and Rolf A. Zwaan, “One Way and the Other: The Bidirectional Relationship between Ambivalence and Body Movement,” *Psychological Science*, XX(X) 1-7, OnlineFirst, published on January 25, 2013, p. 1-2.

descriptive or an aspirational voice, and also uncertain whether the speaker is positioned outside the scene (like a bird or a god from above²⁰) or a body swimming in a processual sea.

Such a rhetoric would also try, to paraphrase Michel Foucault, to bring sentences *to* life, showing not only how sentences *ex-press* the humanist, societal life of its writer, but also *press* forward a laudable liveliness proper to all shapes. Such sentences would "light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it."²¹ They would acknowledge that (what Thoreau calls) "natural influences" linger in the language enlivened by them.

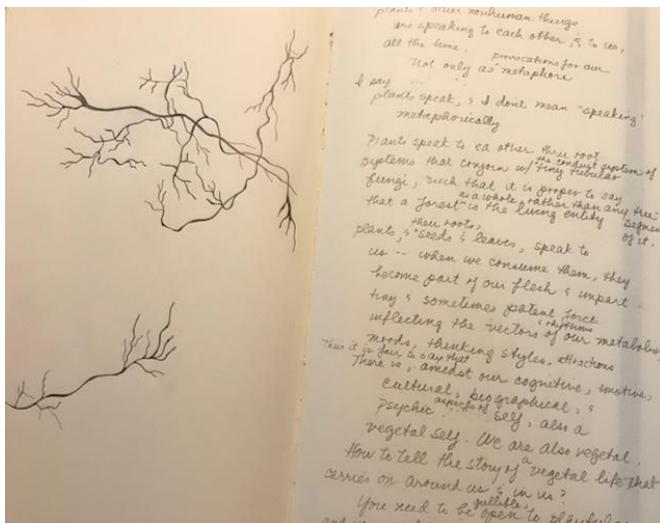


Figure 3: Sentences to Life

²⁰ Donna Haraway speaks of "the God trick of seeing everything from no where," in "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3. (Autumn, 1988), 575-599, p. 581.

²¹ "I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgements but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes- all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightening of possible storms." (Foucault, Michel. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 1. ed. Paul Rabinow. NY: The New Press, 1997, 323.)

Walt Whitman too sought such a poetics, one “done with reviews and criticisms of life” and instead “animating now to life itself.”²² To “animate” to life is to throw oneself heartily into an ongoing creative process. It is neither to “take” a decisive action (as in “to act more animatedly”) nor to endure as a patient of an outside force (as when Frankenstein’s monster is “animated” by electricity.) Thoreau too makes a similar point in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*: “A perfectly healthy sentence, it is true, is extremely rare.... It is as if a green bough were laid across the page, and we are refreshed as by the sight of fresh grass in mid-winter or early spring. You have constantly the warrant of life and experience in what you read. The little that is said is eked out by implication of the much that was done. The sentences are verduous and blooming as evergreen and flowers, because they are rooted in fact and experience...”

Such a rhetoric might also try to speak with a tongue that is ramified or many-branched, like a huge old tree or a neural network. Or perhaps with a voice that is rhizomatic in the sense of being all branches and no trunk. “The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd,” say Deleuze and Guattari.²³ Such a rhetoric would be roomy enough to accommodate a heterogeneous swirl of agents, some human, some not. It would find work-arounds to the grammar of subjects and objects -- in order to display how “writing up” consists in overlapping waves of expressive effort, some mine, some yours, and some apersonal.

²² Walt Whitman, “By Blue Ontario’s Shore,” lines 189-190.

²³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p. 3.



Rhizomatic Speech

To bespeak from within an ongoing process, rather than from an external vantage where the subject of a predicate *either* directs activity (the active voice) *or* is acted upon (the passive voice), is what verbs in the *middle-voice* do. The middle voice is a grammatical form appropriate to, prompted by, and traversed by stupendous, ethereal influences.²⁴ Middle-voiced verbs are marked formally in classical Greek and Sanskrit but not in English. They name activities whose *impetus* is apersonal and multiple and whose *efficacy* is proper to process rather than a function of the aggregated efforts of its dividuations. According to linguist Emile Benveniste, the dominance of two voices (active and passive) was a relatively late development of the Indo-European verb form. It was a “transformation” of an older linguistic order in which the key difference was between activities in which an actor stands *outside* the activity and thus not changed by it (“external diathesis”) and activities in which an actor is *inside* and thus also subject to being altered by the process (“internal diathesis”). Internal diathesis would only later

²⁴Henry Thoreau, July 23, 1851, in *A Year in Thoreau's Journal: 1851*, ed. H. Daniel Peck, Penguin 1993, 126.

be presented as *midway* between active and conditioned verbal forms. Benveniste makes the case that the "middle" of middle-voiced verbs is thus *not* a mean between an active and a passive voice. It indicates instead an effectivity *amidst* a (complex, heterogeneous) atmospheric process. Any acting I "effects while being affected, in the middle."²⁵ For example, in the Greek middle-form verb *oimai* (to think), what become the essence and the essential activity of the Cartesian subject here appears as "an activity that speaks in its own sphere and reverts to itself of itself prior to a subject's taking charge of it. Thinking in this case would be an activity that enacts itself out of its own processes."²⁶

Gavin Parkinson emphasizes how hard it is to theorize the middle voice in "a language like English which has almost entirely eradicated" it. The "sheer difficulty and awkwardness" of attempts to do so remind us of the power of grammar to circumscribe what can be felt of life.²⁷ Let me emphasize, however, that this circumscription is not *complete*: linguistic forms that nod to a distributive kind of agency still endure and persist. And they can be amplified through practices of "writing up." Take, for example, Whitman's "I sing the body electric," with its non-atomic I enmeshed in a sonorous process with flesh, electricity, and sound. If there is any choosing-to-sing on the part of the poet, it is best understood as what Angus Fletcher calls "a passage through an intermediate state of cohesion, a sense of apprehending a presence, so that only in that rather indirect way is he active."²⁸ Or consider Whitman's phrase "It sails me, I

²⁵ Emile Benveniste, "Active and Middle Voice in the Verb," in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek, Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971, pp. 149-50. See also Hayden White, "Writing in the Middle Voice," in *The Fiction of Narrative*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, pp. 255-262

²⁶ Charles E. Scott, "The Middle Voice of Metaphysics," *Review of Metaphysics*, 42:4, June 1989, 743-764, p. 748.

²⁷ Gavin Parkinson, "(Blind Summit) Art Writing, Narrative, Middle Voice," in *Art History*, 34:2, April 2011, 268-287, p. 277. Charles Scott also notes how "the dominance of the active and passive voices [in modern European languages] makes inevitable the priority of the spectator-subject for philosophical thought, whereas the middle voice yields a different way of thinking." (Scott, *The Question of Ethics*, Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 18-19.)

²⁸ Angus Fletcher, *A New Theory of American Poetry*, Harvard 2004, 168.

daub with bare feet," where the I is suspended between the status of the windblown and the volitional toe-tapper:

*I hear the train'd soprano. (what work with hers it this?)
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them
It sails me, I dab with bare feet...*²⁹

Or take Elizabeth Barry's less poetic example of the middle-voiced phrase "It sounds good."³⁰

"It sounds good" is a response to a happening in which one is still currently entangled. The activity so named comes not from a discrete speaker but from an admixture of influential currents.

All this suggests that a rhetoric for ontography would be sprinkled liberally with process-oriented verbs – to induce, to animate to, to inflect, to partake, to sing, to sound. Such verbs mark activities with multiple loci of impetus, and they position partakers as already caught up in an ongoing flow that precedes them and to which they may add impetus, drag, swerve. Such verbs position human participants as always already involved in a creative flow before it is possible to feel themselves being so. Before they “take” action. Eberhard calls this a condition of being “incorporated in a process that carries us along, a process in which and especially of which we partake.”³¹ We are middle-voiced partakers even more than actors *or* recipients.

²⁹ "Song of Myself," section 26, line 606

³⁰ Languages such as “classical Greek, Sanskrit, or modern Hungarian” do register “middle marking ... in verbs that might more usually be considered passive. Constructions such as the German ... ‘es hort sich gut an’ [‘it sounds good’] use middle forms... to de-emphasize the agent.” (Elizabeth Barry, “One’s Own Company: Agency, Identity and the Middle Voice in the Work of Samuel Beckett,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 31, no. 2, 115-132, p. 116.) Barry uses "It sounds good" as an example of a sentence that is "agentless but not devoid of agency" in the context of a discussion of the rhetoric of Samuel Beckett.

³¹ Philippe Eberhard, “The Mediality of Our Condition: A Christian Interpretation,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67/2, 411-434, p. 420.

Language can never be wholly faithful to influences not itself: every rhetoric, poetics, or wordy composition will be more or less untrue to stupendous, etherial influences that signal without words.³² But writing them up remains one powerful way to get in touch with them, however faintly or off-key. The question of a rhetoric apposite to ontography, to a middling, more-than-human, creative process, is a daunting one. Like the neo-vitalist, new materialist, assemblage-focused, and nonhuman turns in scholarship that have made it possible to define this as a task, discussions of how to use words *with* (ontographic) things are still fledgling. But we be trying.

³² What is more, each writer will contaminate the influences she targets for expression with other influences embedded in her perceptual, ideological, social-positional, and body-capacity styles. And at least some dimensions of our “subject-position” must remain unmarked, unconscious, vague to their bearer. The attempt to unearth these, and to confess to their influence, is an valuable part of post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, and neuro-diversifying strategies of resistance. (For an excellent discussion of the politics and philosophy of neurodiversity see Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Duke, 2016) and “Me Lo Dijo Un Pajarito: Neurodiversity, Black Life and the University As We Know It,” unpublished manuscript. The point I am trying to make, with the help of Manning and others, is a trans-humanist extension of the claim, characteristic of the linguistic turn, that the writer is not to be understood as only directing language but as also affected by the force of the writing, of a language irreducible to any deployment of it, as when Roland Barthes says that in the verb “*to write* the [human] subject is immediately contemporary with the writing, being effected and affected by it.” (Roland Barthes, “To Write: Intransitive Verb?” in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard. University of California Press, 1989 and “To Write: An Intransitive Verb? Discussion,” in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Macksey, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972, 134–156.)