

# INSCAPE

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: . . . Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As Kingfishers  
Catch Fire, Dragonflies Draw Flame”

Any process of growth must sink its roots into deep, rich soil. This chapter struggles to uncover those roots. This first approach to Soul involves describing insofar as it is possible its character and functions. I call this the task of “painting the inscape of Soul.” As explained in *Nature* and *The City*, the term *inscape* is borrowed from the work of the great Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins.<sup>1</sup> Devoted to the insistent particularity of all the events of the cosmos, Hopkins used this term to identify the great effort needed to express on the outside what is going on in the inside. A particular fact of creation expresses itself when individuality is woven in, on, and through the web of connections within which it is born. This rise into being is marked by the expression of degrees of intensity. Poets have long recognized the value of each and every such act of expression. John Keats spoke of human life as “a vale of soul making,” and Aristotle spoke of living things as having Souls. In the course of history the Greek word *psyche* becomes the Latin *anima*. Thenceforth we speak of animation as the very sign of life itself.<sup>2</sup> *Anima* is expression itself. Hopkins found deep resonances in the philosophy of Duns Scotus who regarded divine creativity as an

act of will that was to be understood as God's eros driving into the cosmos itself and thereby releasing myriad forms of individual creativity. He called each of these instances of creative expression in the Latin a "*haecceitas*" which literally translated means "thisness." *What is, is what it expresses itself to be.* At this primordial level of being, one is reduced to speaking like a child; however, this is where the roots of expression are to be found. God, for Scotus, creates through eros and wills maximum individuality. Strength of individuality is an instance of creative force that brings difference into the world.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of uniqueness for this study of Soul. It will emerge again and again as the subject of expression expands. The history of human reflection—East and West—testifies to its continuing importance. Suchness, *Tathagata, Tat Tvam Asi, Dao, Ziran* in Asia; *To Hen, Logos, Eidos, Ousia, Substantia, Monads, die Sache Selbst*, actual occasions, and experience in the West. Each concept amplifies and deepens the expression of what in itself is inexpressible—the absolute uniqueness of each Soul.

Contemporary society, even in its most intense postmodern forms, is still reacting to two aspects of the Enlightenment: expression and autonomy.<sup>3</sup> In this sense my proposed change in understanding Soul is in line with today's insistence upon the significance of language and the connections between subjectivity and freedom. I know that the uses to which I put these concepts will not satisfy many postmodern thinkers. But no one has a license to define what is reasonable, especially since postmodern thinkers have consistently courted "unreason" and limited the use of freedom despite freedom's very meaning.

In considering Soul as the expression of experienced freedom, I am following a formidable tradition whose lineage includes distinguished medieval thinkers. Great Renaissance artists have also lent their power to this way of understanding. And of course, the emergence of the subjective realm is the signature of the modern age. In our own day, the neurosciences have entered so powerfully into the discussion that it is unthinkable to ignore the fact that the expression and the freedom that make up the inscape of Soul are carried out by an embodied subject. The fact is that the body, and most especially the brain, is a major contributing element that both enables and limits Soul's expressive capacities. There is also the social body of the cultural community whose demands and supports are necessary for Soul to express its creative efforts. Finally, evolution and human history are part and parcel of any study of Soul.

I begin by suggesting certain dimensions of the inscape of Soul:

Subjectivity  
 Intensity of feeling  
 Creativity  
 Integration and Transformation  
 Personal Unity

Each of these features results from what Hopkins called the “instress” that inhabits individuals. Instress is the activity expressed by Soul’s features. Instress and inscape are ways of understanding *form* as an active agent in a world of becoming. Form is not a lifeless idea best buried alongside Plato. A form is a limit, and the limits imposed on process make up the determinations that make a creature a definite *this* rather than a *that*. This was captured by Hopkins’ eye, ear, and mind as he sought to express the Soul of things. Instress is the poet’s insight into the unending process of things—an insight exemplified in a work of genius such as Hopkins’ “That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and the Comfort of the Resurrection.” Form breathes fire into the universe.

*Subjectivity* is one part of what materialists call “the hard problem”; another hard part is consciousness itself. The act of being a subject does not show up in the materialists’ empirical data. It looks like nothing, has no mass or extension, and cannot be empirically measured. And yet our deepest experiences as Souls tell us emphatically that it is there. It is the source of our psychic joy and our psychic pain. It is what convinces us of the fact that we are persons. It is the ground of our identity. It is the mark of the determinateness that sets the limits of our being in the world. To be a subject is to be the center of the Soul powers under discussion. The modern world begins its rise with the words of Descartes: “[But] what then am I? A thinking thing. And what is that? Something that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and also senses and has mental images.”<sup>4</sup> Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant develop this concept in various ways. Some two hundred years after Descartes, Hegel underlines the absolute importance of the term for modern philosophy when he writes in the “Preface” to *The Phenomenology of Spirit* that “everything depends on comprehending and expressing the true not as substance but also equally true as subject.”<sup>5</sup> What Hegel means by “subject” is a center of self-organizing power that can in its human form express itself as self-consciousness. It is therefore the living, evolving, and developing spirit that is the Soul in action. There may be much that is problematic in Hegel’s philosophy, but his development of Spirit (read Soul) in the *Phenomenology* is an important factor in undertaking a reconstruction of Soul.

*Intensity of Feeling* as a philosophical idea makes its first systematic appearance in the work of Alfred North Whitehead. It expresses directly and concretely the value attained by the world's creatures. When a certain degree of intensity is reached, consciousness and self-consciousness emerge as real factors in experience. For the most part the material world exhibits a predictable steadiness that expresses itself as the laws of nature. Life shifts the equation and introduces what Whitehead calls a "bid for freedom." Higher level animals and human beings mark their arrival by the act of expressing conscious reactions to their environments and their own states of being.<sup>6</sup> Finally, when language develops another stage in expression is reached. Whitehead writes: "The account of the last day of creation should be rewritten, He gave them speech, and they became souls."<sup>7</sup> Intensity is to be judged by its quality and not its quantity. Creativity is most evident when degrees of intensity are increased.

The onset of *Creativity* is also the emergence of difference. When difference happens, time emerges. Professor Guy Debrock has formulated three elementary propositions that sum up creativity at work in a world of process:

1. Nothing is until something happens.
2. Nothing happens unless it involves interaction.
3. Nothing happens in isolation.<sup>8</sup>

Creativity can be as slight as the movement from one moment of time to another—what was now is. It can also be as complex as the interactions of brain components at work when thresholds of consciousness are reached. Creativity signifies that a boundary has been crossed and a new line drawn. Novelty is the outcome of genuine creativity. This primordial originality distinguishes all creatures and is direct evidence of Soul at work. There is in Soul an element of *causa sui* that is the ground of freedom. A natural spontaneity is part of Soul's sway. In human beings the degree of creativity is proportional to the presence of Soul and this self-command is the root of basic individuality—the *Haecceitas* that Duns Scotus and Hopkins insisted was the very inscape of Soul. Call it "freshness" or call it "Dao," it is what has struck Asian, European, and American cultures when Soul is experienced directly.<sup>9</sup> Without creativity there would be nothing for Soul to express and without expression there is no creativity on display. Although not limited to art, creativity finds rich, strong, and commanding presence within aesthetic experience. In many ways art is the royal road to

the character of Soul as expression. Art provides significant measures for estimating the value of creativity in the sweep of human culture. But there is more to creativity: when experienced as the sense of an alternative (which we will see is the meaning of consciousness), it gives birth to a real force in the world. Creativity is the original energy underlying expressions such as Gandhi's Soul force (*satyagraha*). Its absence is remarked when we speak of events as Soulless. And finally in metaphysical terms, creativity is the heart of a process universe. Creativity works its magic through involved interaction. It establishes community where once there was emptiness.

*Integration and Transformation:* this dimension of the inscape of Soul finds expression everywhere life has appeared. On the human level one of its most forceful expressions is to be found in what is called the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. Having described the steps required for transformation, it declares: "Many of us exclaimed, 'What an order, I can't go through with it!' Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to attain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The Principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."<sup>10</sup>

It is mostly here in the sphere of self-transformation that the spiritual dimension of the human person expresses itself. There are situations where material elements are needed to restore balance to the human body. There are also situations where the human mind needs reconstruction in terms of its reasoning processes. Later in this study Spinoza will be of great help in understanding how these seemingly different aspects work together through their inherent identity. When it comes to integrating the whole person—body and mind—it is the work of Soul that establishes the wholeness of the human person. Psychotherapists know this when they speak of the need for the patient to act as the ultimate factor of integration in their growth toward health. I call this act "spiritual" for a number of reasons. Much of this study is given over to exploring and arguing for the reality of the spiritual realm as an authentic human dimension. But here at the very start an essential aspect of human experience needs emphatic underlining. I call it "the expression of Soul work." Robert Neville has defined Soul in this way: "A self or soul consists of a person's engagement with realities, ultimate and otherwise, and its structures have to do with how the person is oriented with reference to the realities and integrates the different structures of orientation."<sup>11</sup> This description of Soul brings together issues that our culture continues to struggle with: Soul, person,

self, will, perspectives, and structures of orientation. In many ways this definition fits better with an Asian view of the human existence rather than a Western one. The idea of integration of one's self and situation strikes many Western ears as a foreign and impossible wish. Asian cultures—Hindu, Buddhists, Confucian, and Taoist—are much more comfortable with this integrative vision. However, one could find similar descriptions of Soul in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures.

Engagements, orientations, perspectives, and structures of engagements are the elements that most concern us in this attempt to recapture the elusive nature of "Soul." Its bewildering dimensions are due to the failed nature of the categories employed to express Soul. At the beginning it is best to keep the understanding of Soul as open and wide as possible. If that is not done, the possibility of marginalizing some of its major dimensions is very real. Neville's definition has the advantage of bringing into the discussion reality ("ultimate or otherwise"), the self, the person, engagements, orientations, and perspectives. At the very least this definition shows the astounding width of Soul's inscape.

The weakening of integrative powers eventually drives human culture into the extreme dualisms that confound contemporary discussions of brain, mind, and Soul. What does it mean to integrate? At its basic metaphysical level this is the classic problem of the one and the many. But the act of integration also involves growth, normative thinking, and command of different types of order as well as sensitivity to the history of human culture. At the heart of this Herculean task is what I term the "factor of the integer." When it is present, then the whole is transformed into more than the sum of its parts. When it is absent, expression deteriorates into a heap of sorites.

What renders the factor of the integer so difficult to pin down is that it takes place as an activity. The integer is that which makes a process whole, unified and complete, but it cannot completely end the movement of process for that would violate the very meaning of process. But we are able to speak of "localized authoritative wholes."<sup>12</sup> Whitehead also terms such a moment of achievement "perfection according to its own kind" for it expresses the human Soul's power to attain to levels of excellence within its finite range of personal inscape.<sup>13</sup> The creativity enacted here can be called "eloquence" since it maximizes intensity of value through minimum effort.<sup>14</sup> The power to integrate itself within its situation is the ground of Soul's personal unity.

*Personal Unity* results from such eloquence and brings the discussion back to the value of particulars as expressed in the depth of their own creative integration. Susanne Langer has made "The Act" the metaphysical cornerstone of her analysis of mind as the process of

expressing the feeling derived from asserting one's place in the universe.<sup>15</sup> This can begin with the most insignificant of ontological assertions and culminate in the great works of aesthetic excellence that adorn the universe.<sup>16</sup> The attainment of personal unity is a long journey and its travail involves many issues—from infantile absorption in the mother, through social separation and recognition, to the development of conscience and onwards to personal creative activity and responsibility. My point here is to underline what has already been implied in the foregoing discussion of the results of the Soul's attempt to work out its inscape through the process of instress. Growth and development depend in the first place on the shadowy creation of a self image. This act of imagination is a leading factor in the Soul work of the person. As this image shifts and changes, it leads the person forward toward an increasingly more unified self identity. Soul work conspires with environment to establish a subject capable of organizing its many parts. This activity increases or decreases the intensity of feeling experienced by the subject as its creative powers emerge. As these feelings are integrated and the subject experiences a sense of its own uniqueness (*haecceitas*), the importance of maintaining unity expresses itself. To be a Soul-self is to be a singular one among the many. It is the argument of this book that the success or failure of such an achievement hangs on the quality of the Soul work carried out by the person. In other words our unity as persons depends upon the matchless unity each of us can carve out through our expressions.

It is important to note the dominance of images in the building of personal unity. Indeed without a healthy self-image growth and development are all but impossible. Once again, Susanne Langer's masterpiece is of direct assistance. She insists that brain science cannot answer the kinds of questions that philosophers ask about mind because they work out of a mode of inquiry based upon models. This methodology is anchored in a commitment to strict causal analysis of the real. Such a way of thinking is from the very outset blinded to the presence of feeling as an integral part of Soul's inscape. It can measure material effects based on quantitative changes. The domain of the qualitative, however, does not enter the world of physical science. This is, of course, but one more example of Whitehead's fallacy of misplaced concreteness: the concreteness of mind is misplaced and shuffled off to the quantitative domain where exact measurement can most effectively do its work. Without recourse to imagery the presence of personal unity anchored in intense feeling remains blocked from view.

One must look to the artist for clues as to how mind and nature work in tandem as acts of expression. Consider the fact that in addition

to Langer the following philosophers have held a similar position: C. S. Peirce, Iris Murdoch, David Bohm, John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, and Merleau-Ponty. Peirce saw esthetics as the ground of logic, metaphysics, and ethics. Langer's great study of feeling and the mind provides a definitive argument for using aesthetic images to get at the subjective reality of mind. Iris Murdoch, as we have seen, uses esthetics to define the "local authorized wholes" that are the key to valid knowledge derived from the artist's sense of what 'fits.' Similarly, David Bohm's lifelong effort to reconstruct science on the basis of wholeness and unity expresses itself most clearly when he employs aesthetic metaphors to describe how 'fitness' implies unity and wholeness.<sup>17</sup> John Dewey's scientific instrumentalism eventually yields to his insight that art is a better vector for carrying his message of the importance of consummatory experience for the creation of lasting human values.<sup>18</sup> Whitehead calls his whole metaphysical project a "critique of pure feeling,"<sup>19</sup> and Merleau-Ponty eventually turns to art to deepen his sense of the importance of feeling in human development.<sup>20</sup>

But it is not enough to provide a list of philosophers. What does happen when images express our experience of the real? When images express themselves, they do so by restructuring experience into a foreground/background gestalt. This provides the necessary individuality for the inscape of Soul to find expression. Vivid unique expression is the hallmark of Soul. But it is precisely here at this moment of self-expression that the danger of lost connections emerges. It is critical that the image retains concrete contact with the background. When this vital contrast is lost, individuality has erased community, and what is left is mere eccentricity. Or worse, a narcissistic Soul arises, and its various expressions kill all possibility of human growth and development. The integration of Soul's experiences is brought about by feelings rather than any purely physical causes. It is this affective dimension that makes the factor of the integer both possible and powerful. By binding together the varieties of feelings felt by Soul, the integer makes a one out of many. The integer takes many forms ranging from the divine grace cited by Augustine in his *Confessions* to the chance meeting of James Joyce and Nora Barnacle on a Dublin street. Whenever it occurs, we find the unfolding expression of a human Soul seeking to change both its own character and its environment. The process is long, difficult, and calls for the utmost in human strength.

In his journals Hopkins echoes Plato and Whitehead; he speaks of "selving," instress, "pitch," and finally "play and field." Each expression deepens the meaning of inscape and thereby the concept of Soul now emerging. These are 'feeling' expressions and immediately convey



the effort and drama involved in Soul's work. Hopkins stresses the fact that Soul is always in the process of becoming and not an already achieved substance. "Selving" expresses the ongoing creation of what I have termed the "Soul-self." Its qualities are not accidental to its being. The forms used to integrate the various occasions of its experience cause an "instress" in its inscape such that the lines and integuments developed during its selving are the very signature of its coming to be. Straining to do justice to its values, the Soul-self leaves expressive tracks. These marks depict its triumphs and failures. The fame of the philosopher Duns Scotus rests on his power to unravel these expressions of a Soul's efforts.<sup>21</sup> In so instressing our Souls, we achieve a pitch of being not unlike Spinoza's *conatus*. But it is not all strain and effort, for the achievement of self is also likened to playing in a field. There is a tune carried by Soul, and to hear it one must be able to play in a field. Recall the musical "hoot" whispered by the slave. The field is our personal environment and worldly conditions. This field is alive with feelings. Every image, perception, and idea carries along with it a feeling tone. Emotions clothe our conscious modes of becoming. This is why this chapter began with Hopkins' words.

The looked for bonds between brain and mind, Soul and body reside in these feelings. This is the reason the choice of expressions is so important. The key to the discovery of feelings rests in our ability to put them into expressive forms. The poet and all other artists do this as part of their genius. They play in the fields of expression and thereby give birth to Soul in its myriad forms. Plato's forms are not caskets for the dead. Nor are they abstractions dwelling in another timeless realm. As earlier said, forms breathe fire into the universe. When images are vested in feelings, they are the converse of dried up dead things. As Whitehead says they are like the dry bones in the Old Testament's book of Ezekiel: "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."<sup>22</sup> Philosophy is the attempt at the sheer disclosure of Soul as it expresses its form throughout the universe.

In previous writings I have spoken of the need to cultivate an art of felt intelligence so that the feeling base of experience can be lifted out of its hiding places. This 'invisible world' is the heart of value expressing intense feelings that announce the arrival of new forms of creativity. *Nature*, *The City*, and now *Soul* as 'Expression' are efforts to bring to public attention this place where Soul lives. The "hard problem" of consciousness and the "explanatory gap" that so bedevils many materialistic philosophers of mind will neither be solved nor sealed until the expression of feelings finds a place in the methodology

of science. As I have argued elsewhere, the East is far ahead of Western science when it comes to creating ways to develop this art of felt intelligence.<sup>23</sup> The cultivation of inner feelings through meditation is a treasure trove that science is just beginning to explore.<sup>24</sup>

But an important obstacle remains. Consider the characteristics of Soul as dealt with earlier: subjectivity, intensity of feeling, creativity, integration and transformation, and personal unity. One cannot find within these dimensions of Soul any mention of 'the other.' So far a solitary portrait of Soul has been painted. Its expressions have been confined to its own self-assertions. And its goal has been to separate itself from others through a fierce expression of individuality. *Haecceitas* is a sign of strength but it also can hang itself out to dry. Soul's inscape is not exhausted by the solitary expression of one's own way of life. Such atomic individualism is contrary to any really human way of being. As Aristotle told us, that person who lives alone may very well be a god or may also be a beast, but it is a certainty that such a person is no human being. For humans are meant to dwell together.<sup>25</sup>

Eventually Soul will be understood to be a unique form of harmony that weaves its being out of the conditions and circumstances of its situations. This act of composition takes up the reality of others and merges it into its own way of being. Soul's agony and Soul's joy take rise from the need to recognize others and be recognized by the same. It lives out the passion of the slave and the despair of the master that Hegel argued was the beginning of Soul making.<sup>26</sup> Freedom and autonomy depend upon proper acknowledgment of each other. Self-consciousness arises when the other recognizes the value of its opposing human being. Dialectical experience is the radical form of harmony that Soul uses to grow into its own genius and self-worth. All this is a fancy philosophical way of saying what we already know: *we need each other*. God found Paradise unsuited for his solitary creation. It is not good for man to be alone. The health of Soul depends upon its concord with others. It draws strength from its experiences with difference. A life of sameness is boring and stifling. Sapped of dynamic force Soul lacks the power it needs to become itself. Its singularity suffers in the absence of others. This tells us much about the difficulty of drawing just the right portrait of the workings of Soul. A universal definition may only offer a hollow sameness and along with it, an emptiness that fails to mirror back the unique inscape that is the mark of each and every Soul. Without a rich source of difference to draw upon, the 'thisness' so necessary for genuine Soul making is inaccessible. Unique self-creation is impossible. A literally 'Soulless' person becomes the standard issue of the human race. And what comes to the fore as the archetype of the person of

genuine quality is the commonplace, the usual, the run of the mill, the mundane, the regular, the expected, the typical, the undistinguished, the unremarkable, the routine, the conventional, the traditional, the conformist, the predictable, the banal, the boring, the monotonous, the humdrum, the wearisome, the tiresome, the mind-numbing, the dreary, the dull, the tedious, the insipid, the trite, the undead, the zombie, the man in the gray flannel suit, the professional—in short, the square.

I believe that it was a feeling of agonizing loneliness or mind-numbing boredom that drove John of the Cross out into the streets on that legendary “Dark Night.” Here I repeat again in a special translation by a Mexican Sister working with the poor in the South Bronx of New York City the first stanza of “The Dark Night of the Soul”

On a dark night,  
 Filled with anxiety  
 On fire with love  
 By luck, I got away unnoticed  
 My house still well guarded.

—John of the Cross [Translation by Sister Juanita,  
 Hermanas de San Jeronimo, Iglesia de San Jeronimo,  
 South Bronx, New York]