

# **SILENCE: Capturing the feeling of inner quietude**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Silent experiences are integral parts of human life, and despite moments of *silence-phenomena* may falsely be perceived as moments of “nothings”, they are in fact an essential part of human apperception and meaning-making. The significance of moments of *silence* (an internal, timeless state of being often perceived as solitary, spiritual-mystical, and unconscious, involuntary experiences) and *silences* (contextual states of temporally oriented and social experiences) is supported by the principles behind the concepts of *Gestalten* and *zero signifiers*, in that such absence can lead to greater understanding of meaning than any explicit and direct element ever could. Aesthetic experiences can in the form of *poetic instants* lead to moments of silence, through the human function of *Einfühlung*. Such process of feeling in and through the object, whether this be somebody else, an object of some sort, or a part of one’s dialogical self, can lead to instances of silence, a moment beyond chronological time trajectories. The self itself is *polyphony*, containing diverse *I-positions* which discuss and relate to each other, but each also containing multiple voices leading the self in different directions, with constant evaluation and a dialectic process. The phenomena of silence and poetic instants exist as *hyper-generalized feeling fields* beyond verbal descriptions. They are phenomena which as any other part of human life unfold within the present moment in irreversible time, but as well beyond such time trajectories in the depth and height of the experience. Human beings constantly feel into and through life into themselves, a process unfolding in time supporting the dialectic nature of the self. The current study investigates the phenomenon of silence in an attempt to expand the existing scholarly knowledge about this essential phenomenon of human life, which still scholarly is surround by much unclarity. It is a study of how silence is an essential, inseparable, and naturally occurring part of human life, embedded in the function of meaning-making and understanding of life. The study contains an analysis of a passage from Lev Vygotsky’s personal notebook, which in recent years has been made accessible through the translation by Ekaterina Zavershneva and René van der Veer, as well as a discussion of societal enhancement and hindrance of silence and poetic instants will support exactly this centrality of the existence of silence.

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## 1 A little girl is curious – “Who created God?”

I was probably 5 years of age as I asked my parents “If God created everything... then who created God?” My otherwise talkative and all-knowing parents became silent.

As long as I remember, I have had streams of thoughts, which made me completely speechless, confused, and almost as having a sense of being lost in time. When I was a child, it was most often about space – the span of it. Questions kept going in circles. Where does it end? It must have an end, nothing can for real be endless (unless it is round like the earth). But what is then on the other side of the end-wall of space? To be honest, when I recall it now, I still get the same feeling to some extent – though I (sadly) am not as dazzled by it, as I have come to be culturally brought up to not letting my mind wander this far, that it is just “out there”. But I am still amazed and simply cannot comprehend it. It only slightly soothes me that no one possess the knowledge and has a definite answer to what is out there.

This leads me back to my question about God. My parents, who like most of the Danish population (including myself, maybe due to lack of action) is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark but not necessarily engage with the word of the Bible, did not have the answer to this. Instead my mother advised me to ask the local pastor who baptized me. Some time went by, and suddenly one day when I, together with my mother, was on the parking lot outside of the local grocery store I spotted the pastor. I remember it as if I was running to her, but maybe I wasn't, maybe it is just a remembrance of eagerness.

And there – on the Super Brugsen-parking lot, 5 years of age — I ask the pastor my mind-tormenting question: “If God created everything, then who created God?”. She answered that God created himself. I was amazed. HOW could she say that? OF COURSE, he did not create himself. How could that ever be possible? He must have come out of something, and not simply emerge out of nothingness. I did not believe that in any way could happen. Now, I am indecisive of what I think of this. The pastor was of course not aware of my headstrongness, wherefor she gave the “easy answer” to the young girl at the parking lot. But I was definitely not satisfied with concluding that God just decided to create himself.

Throughout my life I have kept questioning and gone into strange paths of mind-labyrinths. Trying to seek out the answer. Often not succeeding. Left bewildered. But I have come to most often love this. Almost something I cannot not do, but then I believe that we all are capable of (though

it calls for practice) to surrender to whatever is and let things flow by. But maybe these two activities are not contrary or eliminative of one another? This curiosity is as well the ground of this thesis. The curious mind wanders, and this wandering will encounter moments when all the voices in the mind just stop. There is a pause. A moment of silence. This pause seems meaningful for the mind, but how is it meaningful? It is, after all, nothing – just a pause?

Scholarly work on the phenomenon of silence is not widespread, wherefor the knowledge on the functions and meanings of the phenomenon of silence are not comprehensive. I here wish to study moments that might be referred to as internal silence, and how moments of such are natural and crucial elements of human life. These moments of the inquiring mind are the result of continuous relating with the world – where efforts to create pauses may be socially suggested (“be quiet!”) – yet without necessary silencing of the internal flow of experience. A person can remain externally silent after such command, but in one’s internal self could be screaming. In contrast – my focus is on those intra-psychological moments where a person suddenly feels silent – whether there is an external demand or social suggestion for it or not.

## 2 Justification and theoretical overview

Our minds wander. One thought after the other, our everyday lives are taken by the chatter of the mind. This takes the form of an ongoing (most often entangled) stream of thoughts, some of which one actively engages in and some which simply cross by (James, 1890).

“Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chipped up in bits. Such words as ‘chain’ or ‘train’ do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A ‘river’ or a ‘stream’ are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.” (James, 1890, p. 239)

In the stream of thoughts, it is possible from time to time to feel how episodes of silence appear – a pause from the endless mind chatter – independent of whether we pay attention to it or not. Then the stream goes on. These pauses are important for our minds, as they segment the flow of thought. It can be compared to musical experiences, where the melody emerges in between silences and sounds. Musical notes themselves do not create the musical piece, only due to the breaks of the silence which is foundation for any motion of sounds and intervals will a harmony arise (Lehmann &

Klempe, 2017). The human psyche is as well greatly impacted by the silent moments in everyday life. Interestingly, these temporary stoppages in the flow of thought are rarely studied. These silent moments “in between” are treated as “nothing” – while in the emergence of a melody these “nothings” become “somethings”. The centrality of the silent moments for the understanding of the whole has been studied within the field of Gestalt Psychology originating from Christian von Ehrenfels. Ehrenfels (1890), in his seminal paper which marked the beginning of the Gestalt theories in psychology, also draws on the function of melody, as when listening to music one not solely hears each individual tone, but rather the whole series of tones.

”[I]n order to apprehend a melody purely aurally it is necessary to possess, with its dying away, a memory-image of every one of its notes. [...] we can ask whether the spatial figure be more than the sum of the individual local determinations, whether the consciousness which apprehends the figure in question brings to presentation something more than the n individuals taken together.” (Ehrenfels, 1890/1988, p. 85).

The experience becomes something novel which is more than the mere sum of the elements, processing a certain degree of independence. In the terminology of Ehrenfels it is a Gestalt. It is central to perceive the silent moments “in between” as elements with at least as much influence on the process of interpretation as the elements – in the case of a melody tones. In other instances it might not be audible but rather visual, feelings or sensations. The functions of a Gestalt are as well greatly depictable within poetry, where the meaning emerges not from the mere words but from “in between the lines”.

Within the following sections the importance of silent experiences within the everyday life will be studied with a special focus on moments of what may be described as internal silence, which here will be referred to as *silence* in accordance to the theory of *silence-phenomena* (see. 2.1). Diverse phenomena and functions related to the nature of silent experiences will be presented to show how moments of silence are essential, inseparable, and naturally occurring parts of human meaning-making and understanding of life. The phenomenon of silence (and silence-phenomena in general) is still scholarly hardly studied and barely comprehended leading to many unanswered questions on the nature of what silence is.

## 2.1 The meanings of silence

In everyday life the term ‘silence’ is used to cover many different aspects of silent experiences, which in reality comprise diverse phenomena. These have theoretically been unified under the notion of *silence-phenomena* (Lehmann, 2016a) encompassing three diverse phenomena – *silence*, *silences*, and *silencing*. *Silence* is described as present, timeless experiences often perceived as solitary, spiritual-mystical, and unconscious, involuntary experiences (e.g. aesthetic experiences and poetic instants (see 2.3)). *Silences* are past-future oriented, secular, and social experiences often perceived as profane and oriented to be of causal role (e.g. turn-taking in conversation). And lastly is *silencing* considered a persuasive act and rhetorical strategies of manifesting power by restricting somebody else’s expression (e.g. in an event of a teacher demanding a pupil to be quiet) (Bruneau and Ishii 1988; Lehmann, 2014a; Lehmann, 2016a; Lehmann, 2016b). This typology and the use of the term *silence-phenomena* rather than *silence* as a general label is inclusive and serves to illustrate the diversity of internal and external silent experiences. This paper will dive into the depth of internal silent experiences, a realm which is best covered by the notion of *silence*.

Within the relation of the silence-phenomena all three elements can exist in solitude of the others, but it is as well possible for them to overlap. This relation I have sought to illustrate in figure 1 below.

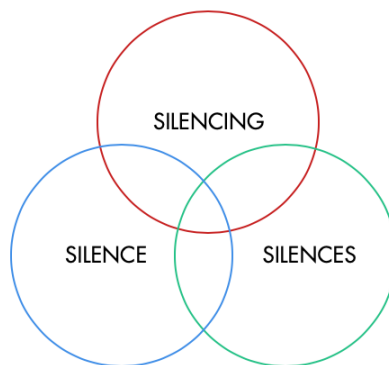


Figure 1 Silence-phenomena

The three phenomena are diverse in their way of form. Silencing is an act, silences is a contextual state, and silence is a state of being. Silence-phenomena have semiotic properties as the phenomena refers to experiences that are interdependent upon language and speech. And though the phenomena have clear differences the boundaries between language-phenomena and silence-phenomena are not always clearly distinguished as silence-phenomena are not equivalent to complete stillness or nothing (Lehmann, 2016a). The diverse phenomena which are collected within the term



of silence-phenomena are not necessarily synchronous or unified, though it is possible that one may lead to the other and that they may occur at the same time as illustrated in the center of figure 1.

Silencing is an act of goal orientation of making somebody else or oneself be silent. The act of silencing can diminish any possibility of an emergence of an experience of silence, as in the example above of a teacher demanding a pupil to be quite, which will probably not facilitate a state of silence within the pupil but rather non-silence in the form of thoughts and feelings of guilt, shame, or anger. However, silencing can as well be a facilitating act of experiences of silences and silence by positing a ground of neutrality distancing the person from authority or traditions which might have narrowed the perspective of the person (Bruneau & Ishii, 1988). This can for instance be in the act of meditation, where one decides to conduct silencing upon oneself for a practice which might lead into emergence of experiences of moments of silence and awareness of such. The power of silent moments are extremely strong and embedded within the cultural affected semiotic internalization of human beings. For instance in the case of a musician during a concert pausing. If this pause, the moment of silences, is too long the audience begins applauding, due to the detection of the moment of silences as a sign of the end of a piece and the time to applaud and express excitement related to anticipation of the musical piece not continuing. When the applause is started the moment of silences has vanished, it would then maybe be possible for the musician to somewhat or completely be silencing the audience by start playing once again. But neither of these dynamics would necessarily enable silence, though it neither necessarily would inhibit it. Vittorio Benussi (1913/2002) studied exactly this dynamic of how long such a pause could be, how long a moment of silences could be and still be perceived as a pause instead of an ending. He reached the outcome, that this relied on the non-exceeding of the sense of direction continuously being on the first, otherwise the pause, the moment of silences, will become an entity of its own. The moment of silences created by the musician can then, if long enough which in fact is not very long, create a sense of non-silence within the audience leading to the reaction of “now we applaud”. This shows how the diverse phenomena of the silence-phenomena can be interrelated but not necessarily are.

Moments of silences are free of sound and other movements of visual character, which can coordinate with experiences of silence. However, the experience of the silent surroundings around you (an experience of silences) is not the same as the experience of internal silence (experience of silence). But one might experience that the environment facilitates an emerge of a state of silence within. Though it might also do the exact opposite – external silence leading one into a state of non-

silence (Tangene, 2017). Tangene (2017) describes this in his introspective study during night shifts on an Atlantic sail crossing of 4 hours with no choirs other than keeping a watch out.

“When there is no sleepiness to fight and no imposing stimuli to catch the attention of the mind, it starts acting like a child who has finished his or her food, but has to wait at the table for the grownups to finish their plates. At first, the child does not pay too much attention to anything. But eventually a creeping uneasiness arise, and the child starts searching the surroundings for stimuli, staring at the weird mustache of one’s father, fidgeting with the cutlery and moving back and forth on his or her chair. Often, and especially if the child is not sanctioned for such behavior, the lack of stimuli will cause the child to crawl under the table, play with the remainder of the food, tease his siblings or nag about leaving the table. Anything is done to avoid the boredom of idleness and lack of stimuli. Similarly, the lack of imposing stimuli during the night shift cause uneasiness in the mind of this author [Tangene himself]. Looking out for ships and keeping a steady course are too simple tasks and a search for more interesting stimuli is initiated. Usually at night, it will be the vision of the starry sky. From there, *the minds focus often drift away from the immediate aesthetic pleasure of this external stimuli and over to internal stimuli in the shape of thoughts and memories being played like movies to my inner eye.* In the beginning these thoughts and memories usually have a connection to the present context of being on a boat watching the stars, but then the thoughts drift far away in space and time on a path that is hard to reconstruct. However, there seem to be a certain chaotic pattern in this thinking. Many thoughts are there for only a few seconds, but soon a thought will appear that the mind deems interesting enough to dwell over. This can be old memories and events in the past that almost was forgotten, or new thoughts and insights that one never had before. More often though, certain more common memories occur and certain other topics with recognizable thought patterns. This can be existential questions, memories of new and emotionally charged experiences, or older memories that are emotionally charged and/or define a biographical milestone of some sort. [...] The thoughts are often connected to romantic acquaintances, future life prospects, and any longer term projects I am currently immersed in [...] These different types of thoughts all have in common that they keep the mind busy, regardless of them being pleasant or unpleasant. However, these thoughts are not particularly constructive: they do not present themselves as problems to be solved or experiences to be reflected upon. It seems like their main purpose is to keep the mind busy.” (Tangene, 2017, pp. 43-44, original italics removed, italics inserted to highlight passages)

This description portrays how a silent experience of the surroundings (categorizable under the notion of silences) can lead to an experience of great inner non-silence and facilitate and foster an enhancement of straying of thoughts. Tangene (2017) describes it as an experience of uneasiness and a disconnection of aesthetic experiences, as he is caught up by the thoughts playing out an internal movie. A description which showcases the very opposite of silence. He is even describing the experience as being an eager and impatient child. The mind is almost set loose, because there is nothing to distract it. This could as well be exemplified through the scenario of one walking alone at night, where the soundlessness of the surroundings might lead to feelings of fear and nervousness of the imagination of might be “out-there”, or in the case of a conversation where verbally silent moment occur, but the involved parts are internally non-silent due to reflection upon the conversation. In every example it is the imagination and the thoughts which will fill up the capacity of the consciousness. This compares to that noise in the surrounding environment will not necessarily interfere with internal silence (James, 1902). James (1902) presents the following example of how the relation between internal and external silent experiences is not fixed in line with the message of Tangene (2017).

“One of the most intuitive men we ever met had a desk at a city office where several other gentlemen were doing business constantly, and often talking loudly. Entirely undisturbed by the many various sounds about him, this self-centered faithful man would, in any moment of perplexity, draw the curtains of privacy so completely about him that he would be as fully inclosed in his own psychic aura, and thereby as effectually removed from all distractions, as though he were alone in some primeval wood.” (James, 1902, pp. 115-116).

This showcases how there are no set relations within silence-phenomena, but that it must be highly unique and contextual. A case which is also highlighted by Donald Winnicott.

“I wish to make an examination of the capacity of the individual to be alone, acting on the assumption that this capacity is one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development. [...] actually to be alone is not what I am discussing. A person may be in solitary confinement, and yet not be able to be alone. How greatly he must suffer is beyond imagination.” (Winnicott, 1958/1984, pp. 29-30)

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (1994) describes the power of absence which is the centrality of the phenomenon of *zero signifiers*, signifiers without materiality of linguistic labels or objects. The

power of zero signifiers is ordinarily hidden in the structure of discourse, but it is transformed into an enormous performative power through *transgression*, the objectification of them in words and objects (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994). The absence of something creates a strong meaning, even greater than a presence of something highly connected with social norms and anticipation. This could be an empty wall, where art pieces were expected (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994) or in a case of silences in “4’33”, an alternative musical performance by John Cage of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of an auditory silent experience, where a traditional conception of sound is expected as he sits by the grand piano, but it seems clear that any note would simple lessen the meaning of the performance. As in the case of any physical represented art piece on the wall would reduce the meaning from containing the possibility of all art to a single piece of art, so would a note on the piano. It could also be in the conversation between people, where the “lack” of words could fill the room with tension and even greater meaning than any verbal expression. By this the silent experience – auditorily in the case of “4’33” or conversation or visually in the case of the “empty” wall, but all cases of silences – is an example of zero signifiers. This can however also be present in combination with non-silences, as in the case of a haiku, where some words are present, though the meaning emerges from the absence of extensive descriptions and therefor in the lack of words and the silences in between the words. The spaces of basically “nothing”, which however is not “nothing” as the meaning is created within this, which is in line with the ideas of Gestalten (see 2). This dynamic can also be predicted in regard to silence, where the internal silent experience becomes the moments of the greatest meaning (this will be elaborated below, see 2.2).

Ohnuki-Tierney (1994) studied the Japanese terms of *ma* (empty spaces and time) and *mu* (nothingness or emptiness) as zero signifiers. These notions can be related to the notions of respectively silences and silence. Building on the example of haiku above, Ohnuki-Tierney (1994) describes how the silent moments in such poems, which as described above are moments of silences, are often cited as examples of the temporal *ma*. The concept of *ma* covers the emptiness of space and time, which correlates with the temporality of the phenomenon of silences. Whereas the concept of *mu* is described as nothingness or emptiness and can be seen as comparable to the phenomenon of silence. Though both *ma* and *mu* are depictions of zero signifiers of full emptiness and because of that elevating meaning creators. The notion of *mu* originates from Taoist tradition and has within Japanese context been highly developed within Zen Buddhism (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994). Nishida Kitarō has through his studies building on occidental philosophers and Zen Buddhism examined how the individual on one hand is absolutely independent, and on the other hand that a

merely unique individual has no meaning on its own. This conceives that there among individuals must be a mutual determination both temporally and spatially, supposing a concrete *basho* (place) being *absolute nothingness* (Dilworth, 1979). This dynamic can as well be perceived as existing within the dialogical nature of the self (see 2.2.3.1). The self existing of diverse voices, everyone of which is independent and at the same time dependent, again initiating a function of underlying *nothingness*. And from the existence of the absolute nothingness does the true self-identity exist aligned with creativity and pure experiencing (Dilworth, 1979; Waldenfels, 1966). Nishida (1979) accentuates how the content of affective feelings are a creative whole which is beyond the mere combination of its elements, presenting the principles of Gestalten (see 2), as well as how any experience or feeling disappears in that it is brought into awareness and possibly conceptualized.

Zero signifiers set the stage for meaning creation. Through the absence it can become symbolic and lead to emergence of new meaning. An example of this is with swearing. One might encounter something and burst out “oh fuck!” (or something similar) and then a moment of silence followed by a thought of and maybe expressing verbally “oh how could I think of SAYING such word...”. That moment of silence creates meaning to the words that were said, the word “fuck” becomes much more meaningful due to the reaction of silence which followed though it could be perceived as not being “anything”. This power of the zero signifiers is as well what the powerful addition to the sum within the dynamic of Gestalten. Any semiotic system relies on zero signifiers due to their crucial role in the meaning-making process:

“[T]he zero degree of the opposition is therefor not a total absence but is “a significant absence”. The zero degree of the zero sign in semantics, thus “testifies to the power held by any system of signs, of creating meaning ‘out of nothing’” (Ohnuki-Teirney, 1994, p. 61)

## 2.2 Pauses as external silences: silencing oneself

Silent experiences create a sense of anticipation, a sense of that anything could happen next (Lehmann, 2018a). This is easiest predicted when speaking of silences, we all have had experiences where our surroundings quite down and our mind can go into trying to figure out what will happen next. Often such experiences will initially be completely different from a state of silence (Tangene, 2017). Anticipation can for many be very uncomfortable especially when one is not alone. Think of how the two words ‘awkward’ and ‘silence’ have become one concept. This refers to the notion of silences. Internal experience of silence will never be awkward. Silence has, as previously mentioned, been linked to spirituality and mysticality. William James (1902) goes into deep exploration

of the term *mysticism* and distances from the understanding of it as referring to anything one finds vague, vast and sentimental without a base of facts. Instead he presents four marks to which a thing must fulfil to be ‘mystical’ – ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. The first two marks must always be present, whereas the two latter will not always but most commonly occur. Experiences of silence is in alignment with these marks. The characteristic of *ineffability* embraces that oneself must have experienced silence to have any chance to understand the quality and worth of which it consists. In our contemporary cultural psychology this can relate to a semiotic perspective of verbalization within the hierarchy of signs (Valsiner, 2014a), as the experience itself is pre-verbal and comes before any generalization of it in which it becomes verbalized and conceptualized in line with the ideas of Nishida (1979) mentioned above (see 2.1). The semiotic hierarchy emerges from the flow of experiencing in irreversible time, where a sign (“sign one” in figure 2 below) which affect the act in the novel present moment. Upon this initial sign (“sign one”) a second sign (“sign two” in figure 2 below) can emerge as a inhibitor leading to create a pause, a moment of silence with no meaning of its own but meaningful in its absence (a zero signifier, see 2.1). Going back to the swearing-example from above (see 2.1) we see how the moment of silence occurs just after the act of saying the word “fuck!” (sign one), sign two being the culturally internalized idea of the word as forbidden, the meaning of this and the meaning of the act which is accentuated by the sign hierarchy by the presence of the moment of silence (expressed as “f...!”). This episode in entirety possibly leading to creation of novel hyper-generalized sign (from “fuck!” to the f + silence in expression—“f...!”) or reconstruction of existing which later on will influence the way in which the person understand and apperceives the world. The initial affective outburst leads to uttering of the swearword which is inhibited on its way out of the mouth and replaced by a pause in expression. *Hyper-generalized signs* are determinators of deep personal meaningfulness (“how could I say that word?!”) which guide the person’s relating with the environment and oneself, affecting the understanding of what ever may occur to what one relates to. In time the hyper-generalized signs can expand (and contract) in consciousness very rapidly (Valsiner, 2014a).

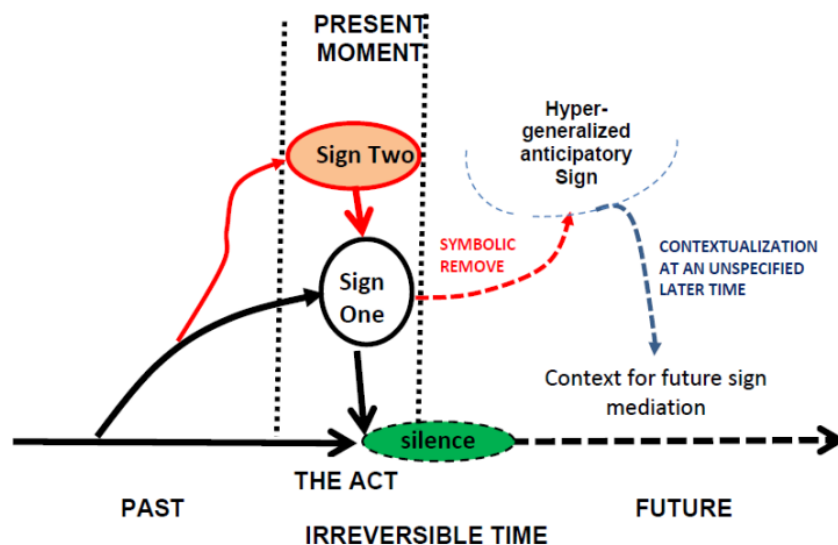


Figure 2 Semiotic hierarchy of a moment of silence

The experience of silence is indescribable and impossible to understand if not experienced oneself, the principle of ineffability. As experiences of silence contain great depth and not solely are as it might initially seem – nothing – it is as well referable to James' (1902) second mark of *noetic quality*, which encompass states of insight and depth of truth. Silence can due to the permeability of borders be experiences as an absence of boundaries, a fusion of oneself with the other, the surroundings, or a divine entity (Lehmann, 2016a).

James (1902) describe how mystical states most often are *transient*, only sustained for a short time and will fade into the light of common day, but that the quality of the experience to some extent can linger on reproduced in memory, and that the richness will develop through reoccurrences of the state. Tangene (2017) gives a beautiful description of emergence of silence and the fleeting nature of it.

“I also might try to silence the inner talk, and calm the mind through meditation or mindfulness. When successful, this sort of conscious effort makes time pass really quickly. It also has the benefit of being a source for learning and aesthetic as well as even spiritual experience (gained through the meditation). However, it seems very hard to hold on to this level of consciousness” (Tangene, 2017, p. 45)

This as well presents the possible relation between silence and silencing (here in the form of meditation or mindfulness forced upon oneself into a state of silences on the path which may lead to

moments of silence) as is described above (see. 2.1). James (1902) describes that it is possible to withdraw oneself from the noise of one's surroundings and step into a state of silence by stepping into the awareness of the ever-present "Spirit of Infinite Life, Love, Wisdom, Peace, Power, and Plenty" (p. 115) which he as well calls "God" but acknowledges that such is solely a notion, and that many notions can be used in attempt to name this which is both beyond ourselves, but we ourselves are as well. Silence is sought within diverse religious practices and central for many of such is the act of silencing, either enforced by someone which is perceived as superior (e.g. a priest leading into prayer) or by oneself in the morale of the faith. I would like to draw a connection to an alternative way of describing this sense of withdrawal as the eternal presence of silence (Lehmann, 2016a). From this I will deduce the connection that within experiences of silence one is in alignment with a realm which is beyond access to social Others and phenomenologically seems to extend temporality. This must be said to be an experience out of the ordinary in everyday life, and therefore it may often very well be as what James (1902) mention in the fourth mark of mystical experience, *passivity*. He describes that a mystical state can be experienced as if one was grasped by something superior, no matter whether the state followed an active effort of facilitation or it occurred spontaneously.

The tension between expectations and reality in the silent moment creates great difficulties in verbally describing the experience (Lehmann, 2018a). However, in a state of silence the temporal aspect of anticipation vanishes and a foundation for relational depth emerges as a profound understanding, connection, and engagement in the relationships with others as well as oneself (Lehmann, Kardum & Klempe, 2018). In this relationship two parts of the relationship prevail – anticipation and feeling into (*Einfühlung*).

### **2.2.1 Anticipation: As the basis for silence**

*Anticipation* – expectation of something that might happen – characterizes all forms of life. In the flow of ongoing living any adaptive action is only possible on the basis of anticipation (Toomela, 2015), and it is relevant to study within a wide variety of perspectives ranging from neuroscience to philosophy, economics, and psychology to name a few (Nadin, 2015a). The extent to which it has been studied is only a small field of contemporary research. Therefor the scholarly insight into the phenomenon of anticipation is limited. The research on the phenomenon of anticipation is mostly based on cognitive and neuroscience and grows out of work from over the entire past century, and recently has the insight from late scholars of Eastern Europe (e.g. Anokhin, Bernstein,



and Vygotsky) been brought out as essential pioneers within the field of study (Nadin, 2015b; Poli, 2017).

The notion of anticipation is used in different ways, as a lay term it refers to future-oriented experiences and set in line with forecasting, predication, expectation, and prospection, which scholarly has been pronounced insufficient in that the phenomenon of anticipation exceeds any reduction to psychology, physiology or any other field, as it range over a wide spectrum (Nadin, 2015a). Within the scholarly field of studying anticipation there exist divergence in regard to definition of the phenomenon of anticipation, and many central elements such as how it occurs and which types of anticipation can be distinguished still hold uncertainty (Nadin, 2015a; Poli, 2017). Studies have however shown how diverse forms of anticipation exist and how it is relevant to distinguish biotic and psychic forms of anticipation (Toomela, 2015). As in other domains the difference between biotic and psychic forms are on fundamental levels diverse. To set it up rather harshly, biotic anticipation is for the sake of the species (with slowly emerging novel forms of anticipation for adaption for the survival of the species not necessarily the individual) and psychic anticipation is for the individual's well-being and function in life (highly linked with the individual's sense-making processes and ability to function, which also consist of learning how to predict the future) (Toomela, 2015). Studies of anticipation are mainly from cognitive and neuroscience perspectives, which is not transmittable and sufficient for comprehending subjective experiences of psychic anticipation (as could emerge in silent experiences), which always will remain new for every emergence. As mentioned above did Lehmann, Kardum & Klempe (2018) show a connection between experiences of surprising silences and feelings of anticipation as a tension between expectations and reality.

Interestingly anticipation will not be present within a state of silence. In that state anticipation vanishes – even for very short moments. This as the phenomena of silences and silence are, though at times linkable, two completely diverse phenomena (see 2.1). The phenomenon of silence is linked with complete presence, but what exactly is experienced in states of silence is still not scholarly determined or fully comprehended though the exploration which states of silence has been practiced and studied for several millennium within ancient traditions such as meditation and yoga. However, experiences of silence will always be unique as they will be subjectively comprehended and furthermore is a state of quietness disengaged with surroundings and temporality in some way or another for which anticipation cannot be.

### 2.2.1.1 Silence in the flow of experiencing

In contemporary psychology there exists a theoretical effort by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi to conceptualize the ongoing flow of experiencing. A state of *flow* is a subjective mental state in which the individual is completely engaged within the specific task and moment. Experiences of flow has been described as where action and awareness merge in a single beam of focused consciousness, clarity of what must be done, and an ease in doing so, a sense of serenity, timelessness, and intrinsic motivation of that the act itself becomes its own reward (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014a; Csikszentmihalyi, 2014b; TED, 2004). Csikszentmihalyi presents an experience of a state of flow of a figure skater who states that flow is “like you’re on automatic pilot, so you don’t have any thoughts” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014a, p. 233; TED, 2004, 11:40). This indicates the presence of the experience of flow as an internally silent experience, an experience of silence. I do not indicate that any experience of silence will equal an experience of a state of flow (or the other way around), nor that the two are identical, but the crossing of the two appears clear, though both phenomena are highly intangible and difficult to comprehend by human mind and language, due to the semiotic dynamics of the phenomena. All experiences exist pre-verbally and solely becomes verbal in the process of internalization and conceptualization, by which the initial experience is vanished (Nishida, 1979; Valsiner, 2014a). Beyond this semiotic dynamic which exists for any human experience, the phenomena of silence and flow are *hyper-generalized feeling fields* having indeterminate borders dynamically able to move according to the present moment between the past and the future. Their borders cannot be specified – these are unbound transformations of a sign moving from its point-like to field-like form (and back) creating dynamic existence with movement from one structure of signs to another (Valsiner, 2014a). For example one suddenly feels an unexplainable sense of flow of fear or happiness (an expansion) which can disappear at the very next moment. Same goes for a sense of silence – suddenly occurring and just as sudden vanishes.

What the phenomenon of flow can illuminate in regard to silence is especially how the state of presence will eliminate any possible chance of anticipation and form of trying to predict or meet what will happen next. A composer has described the experience of composing when it is going well, which Csikszentmihalyi categorizes as flow as such:

“My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what is happening. I just sit there watching in a state of awe and wonderment. And [the music] just flows out by itself.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014a, p. 230).

This utterance shows how it is possible to be in a state of complete presence and surrender, solely observing and ‘flowing’ along. Time has not stopped (and of course it will not as time is irreversible), but one is not entangled in the happening of the past or the possible future. When one is fully emerged in the present moment and that the moment itself becomes the only focus, the act is in itself the reward one will not have a reason or mean to anticipate. And this is also what is the case within experiences of silence. How could it, if experiences of silence are present, timeless experiences often perceived as solitary, spiritual-mystical, and unconscious, involuntary experiences? (see 2.1).

### 2.2.2 Apperception

The way in which we take in whatever we meet in our surroundings and in feelings and thoughts is crucial for the way we can interact and feel into the world. The notion of *apperception* comes from the work of Johann F. Herbart descended and developed by others (Jahoda, 2006; Stout, 1889), and is central for this dynamic. As his cornerstone in educational psychology Herbart formed the theory of apperception, with the function of *Vorstellungen* (Eng. presentations) as central for the understanding of the function of thoughts and the human mind (Jahoda, 2006).<sup>1</sup> However, the phenomenon of apperception has been disregarded within modern Psychology<sup>2</sup>. But apperception as a function of the individual’s perceiving in irreversible time accounting for the role of imagination within the human psyche (Valsiner, 2014b) is a central part of the way human beings in everyday life inseparably with social constructs. A relevant example of how action of apperception is present within our everyday life can be taken from living in a time of the COVID-19 pandemic. represented

As X is standing in line in the narrow aisle of the grocery store a stranger walks down this narrow aisle against the flow of everyone in line and the arrows on the ground. The stranger is

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<sup>1</sup> Within clinical psychology apperception has been in focus within Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) developed by Henry A. Murray and Christina A. Morgan in the 1930s. Used to investigate among other things a person’s personality and expression of emotions, which the person might not otherwise be able to express.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘apperception’ does not appear within the curriculum of the Psychology study at Aalborg University, neither as part of the bachelor’s or master’s degree. A curriculum encompassing cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, personality psychology, and psychiatry among others (Berk, 2013; Ewen, 2014; Fraser & Burchell, 2001; Hogg & Vaughan, 2008; Inglis, 2012; Karpatschhof & Katzenelson, 2002; Matlin, 2009; Simonsen & Møhl, 2017). I do not believe that this is a lack solely present at Aalborg University. It seems it is a tendency across the scholarly field of psychology in general, where this notion which for roughly 100 years ago with good reason were very discussed but over past decades has not been prevailing.

not coughing or in other ways showing visible signs of being ill, but X feels scared of being infected with the coronavirus by the stranger.

In the example above X doesn't know whether the stranger is a carrier of the coronavirus or not, and the feeling of fear does not emerge solely as X perceives that a stranger is walking past. The fear emerges due to apperception, which is linked with the function of imagination. The imaginary understanding of the stranger as having the coronavirus which of course will be transferred to X by the stranger passing, maybe the stranger will cough that instant they cross or simply by the look. Because of this imaginary idea of the stranger X now apperceives the stranger as a danger. It is therefore not from merely perception of the surroundings that creates X's experience in that present moment, it is the social construction and imagination of X's which affect how X is feeling. X is not afraid of the stranger standing behind in line, mind you if this person is not overstepping the marked "safety-box" on the floor, but that another stranger is going against the (new) social norms can lead to an emergence of a feeling of great turmoil.<sup>3</sup> The internal reality of X's is not simply the mere perception of what is in the world at the given moment in time, but it is an understanding that is connected with the irreversibility of time, as the imagination which is future-oriented influences the current moment, which is the act of apperception. Similar example of the centrality of the process of apperception is brought forward by William Wundt (1914) as our understanding of words is going through the process of apperception to become meaningful constructs rather than mere sounds, and that we use such function constantly in our verbal lives.

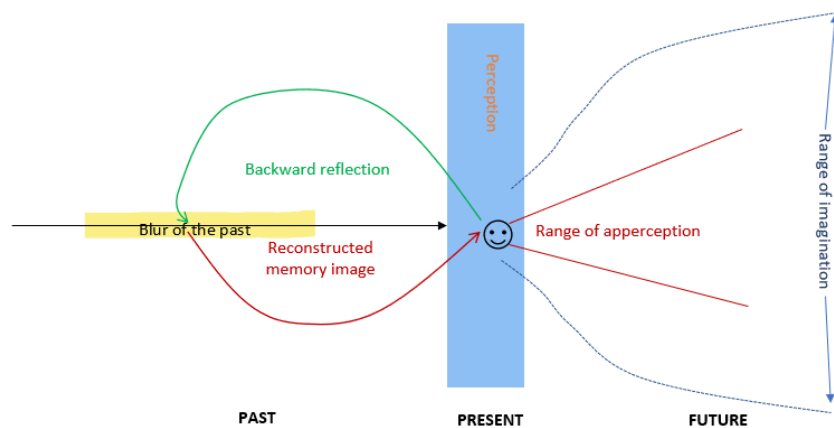


Figure 3 Apperception

<sup>3</sup> I do wish to note, that I of course respect the health concerns of the current situation we are in, as well as respect others precautions due to diverse physical and mental health issues. Here I simply wish to show how the phenomenon of apperception is rippling through our everyday lives.

Figure 3 illustrates apperception as a process in the span of irreversible time. A process which exist within the present moment, as any function in life, intertwined with the reconstructed memory of the blur of the past. The blur of the past resembles a hotchpotch of past experiences, which never can be experienced exactly as they were experienced and often will be affected by other past experiences. And furthermore, intertwined with the imagination of the possible future. All a collected process affecting the way in which the individual understands the experiences inside and outside of the self.

The phenomenon of *perception* has been theorized within diverse psychological traditions – dominantly from a cognitive perspective of *direct perception* by James J. Gibson and its opposing constructivist perspective by Jerome S. Bruner in the 1940s-1950s. Gibson studied the flow of stimulation in events which was perceived (Gibson, 1971/1982). He studied the act of landing an airplane, showcasing how the actions of the person makes use of the purpose of the object in which time exists as the unfolding of time (Gibson, Olum & Rosenblatt, 1955). Gibson's work focused around direct perception and the idea that there is no distinction between sensation and perception. Perception for him leads directly to action (Gibson, 1986). In contrast, the constructivist understanding of perception presents how it is an activity of the total human organism – physical as well as psychological – leading the individual to construct a world and defend a world in which one can thrive (Bruner, 1948). This perspective is very different from the Gibsonian, as it enhances the function of construction within the act of perception and has a softer understanding on the individual acting, as it is not merely perceived as a passive perceiver (Bruner & Goodman, 1947; Kanizsa, 1975). The work of Bruner includes an understanding of perception as affected by other concurrent mental functions – e.g. apperception – that are affected by the operation of perceptual process (Bruner & Goodman, 1947; Bruner, 1948). This builds on a study of the perception of the size of a coin compared to the perception of the size of a gray disc (which in reality was similar in size to the coin), showing that the coins were perceived much larger than their actual size and also than the grey discs, which were perceived roughly correctly in size (Bruner & Goodman, 1947). This indicates how human beings do not simply perceive what is in fact there but are influenced by the social constructions. The constructions of human spaces are creating affordances and using affordances, for example as a rock climber adjusting the body to the cliff in which new affordances are available. Though Bruner's perspective is more inclusive than the Gibsonian and acknowledged the existence of the phenomenon of apperception it still does take the central aspect of both the blur of the past and the future-oriented imagination within the human experience of the present moment into

account. This dynamic of life in irreversible time is central for the process of connecting with one's surroundings and oneself.

Apperception is closely related to silence-phenomena as this greatly affect the way in which we as human beings relate to the present, interpret, and create meaning of what we experience.

### 2.2.3 Feeling in and feeling through in the act of *Einfühlung*

Anticipation is a natural part of being a living being, and therefore also a natural part of being human, but the ability to feel into oneself and others is as well a natural, well developed part of being human. The human ability to apperceive is essential for our function in the span of irreversible time as it is connected to the process of feeling into the present moment. The notion of *Einfühlung* explains how the self is united with what it observes (Lipps, 1903). Theodor Lipps (1903) describes the relation of the self and the object as such:

“As I find myself observing the object, I felt myself as that observed self, active, aiming, troubled, the accomplished aim.”<sup>4</sup> (p. 192, author's translation).

The relation that emerges is of a kind where the observing self and observed object (whether this be an object, someone else, or a part of oneself) merge into a unity, a great relational depth. But in this dynamic covered by the notion of *Einfühlung* is an additional level – the act of feeling through. This can be exemplified by feeling in as when one is listening to a piece of music and feels deeply touched and almost absorbed by it, then following the act of feeling through where one is stepping out of the music and moving forward into oneself into a new feeling of self. This dynamic is sought to be illustrated in figure 4 below.  $S_1$  is the initial person which is feeling into the initial object  $O_1$ . From here it is possible that the dynamic of feeling through might emerge. This is a process of which the subject is not only feeling into the state of the other but through this act of feeling into is returning to oneself from which a new feeling of self emerges through a synthesis process leading to  $S_2$ . A dynamic process through the irreversibility of time, where syntheses emerge out of the tension of the feelings (Valsiner, 2015). The act of feeling through the other will lead to such novel syntheses of self, novel understandings and feelings of self due to the additional knowledge and experiences from the feeling into the other. Lev Vygotsky conceptualized dialectical synthesis as a general psychological process, in which the notion of affective explosion is central (Valsiner,

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<sup>4</sup> “Indem ich mich in dem Objekte betrachtend finde, fühlte ich mich, dies betrachtende Ich, tätig, strebend, sich bemühend, das Erstrebte vollbringend.” (Lipps, 1903, p. 19)

2015). Vygotsky's analysis of Ivan Bunin's short story *Gentle Breath* (Vygotsky, 1971) depicts how the rearrangement of the chronological flow of the plot of the short story continuously creates a way in which the individual feels into the characters and through the mood of the story line and the melody flow of how the story is presented the readers emotions are split. In this way does the notion of *Einfühlung* not only capture the phenomenon of empathy and the relation and synthesis of oneself with the other but it also encompasses the sense of relating to oneself and the dynamic of the self within the irreversibility of time.

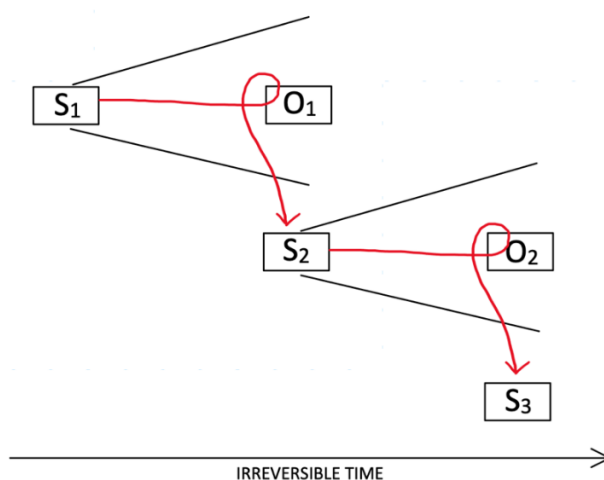


Figure 4 *Einfühlung*: Self develops ( $S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow \dots$ ) via feeling through the world

Figure 4 is ment to showcase how the self develops through the act of *Einfühlung* – feeling in and feeling through the object of the other whatever this might be – leading to synthesizing and novel form of the self. A continuous process through the irreversiblity of time (also see 2.2.3.1 and figure 8). At any moment The self has a span of directed possibilities for the future (range of future options). This range sets up the individuals perceived horizon, in the background of which the object ( $O_1$ ,  $O_2$ ) for feeling in is specified. It is through the interaction with the surroundings that the person becomes and is.

For James Mark Baldwin *Einfühlung*, which he translated as *sembling*, entailed the person's establishing inner control over the object by way of persistent imitation – the ideational experimenting with the potential properties of the object (Baldwin, 1906). In general terms;

“the process of *Sembling* consists in the reading-into the object a sort of psychic life of its own, in such a way that the movement, act, or character by which it is interpreted *is thought of as springing from own inner life*.” (Baldwin, 1906, p. 124, italics added as emphasis)

By feeling into the other the projection of the affective contents into the other is taking place – the person feels *as if* the other “possesses” the characteristics that the “feeler-in” assigns to the other. This is the personal act of the construction of the other in the social universe – “inserting” meaning “into “ the other.

The notion of *Einfühlung* is commonly translated in English to the notion of empathy<sup>5</sup>, this is however not sufficient in that this solely regards the relation between individuals and does not state the action of feeling into and feeling through oneself or a non-human object. Lipps perceived the study of aesthetics as psychology with a particular interest for architecture in regard to the act of *Einfühlung*. This build on the belief that all subject matter of human conscious awareness is part of psychology and relying on the processes of *Einfühlung* and apperception (Valsiner, 2014b). Human beings have for millenniums relied on building shelters to live in, and these have with time become more and more intricate and symbolic. Architecture, as any other visual art form, is a way in which it is possible to express meaning primarily non-verbally (Valsiner, 2014b). This acknowledgement of how words are not needed for introducing meaning in the encounter with the surroundings accentuates the power which lies within the non-verbal era of life. How words are conceptualizations, though even the mere act of awareness is the beginning stage of conceptualization (Nishida, 1979), of things which often cannot be captured by words. It is possible to feel into aesthetic objects of any form, here under architectural constructs as an expression of human hand but more so of a subject of its own life, which it becomes in that individuals interact with it and takes it in through the act of feeling into it and through it. The Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is one of many examples of how a building has gained its own life, history and identity separated from the hand from which it grew. Seeing it be on fire (figure 5) evokes a feeling in me which I cannot fully describe in words – what comes closest is a sensation of heaviness, an emptiness, a sense of nothing can be done though it is such sorrow and an ending. Nothing is possible than to accept. It is possible to feel into the construct which this historical monument had become, through time, religious symbolism, tales and movies of mysterious figures and persons living there. It is not solely the personification of the cathedral and its history which exists and evokes feelings, it is the act of the visual expression of the cathedral (figure 6) which gives a sense of grandiosity in its leading of the eyes upward, groundedness in its heaviness, size, and low roofs of the steeples, and balance in its symmetry. Lipps studied the end of the contour in regard to architecture, emphasizing the role of end-symbols affect the way

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<sup>5</sup> The translation of *Einfühlung* to *empathy* has been done by Edward B. Titchener (Titchener, 1909/2014) as well as Vernon Lee (Lee & Anstruther-Thomson, 1912).



individuals perceive the object. Lipps was especially interested in the end-symbols of architectural structure and person's active exploration of the architectural forms, but an end-symbol could as well be a simple punctuation mark in regard to written text (Valsiner, 2014b). The aesthetic expression of the ends of the steeples of the Notre Dame Cathedral look affect the symbolic representation of the architectural object, leading to affect how the perceiver will sense the feeling of the object. The burning Cathedral gives a completely different impression. Try to perceive it separated from its meaning as if it was a staged installation and meant to be presented like this. It has an expression of its own, of sorrow, screaming for attention, and power. Whether it is culturally understood as meaningful or meaningless the burning of the cathedral clearly, non-verbally leaves the individual perceiving it with an understanding and meaning, a sensation inside. This is due to the act of *Einfühlung*, and the cultural meaning (or meaninglessness) relies on the act of apperception.



Figure 5 Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, on fire 15th of April 2019 (Armstrong, 2019)

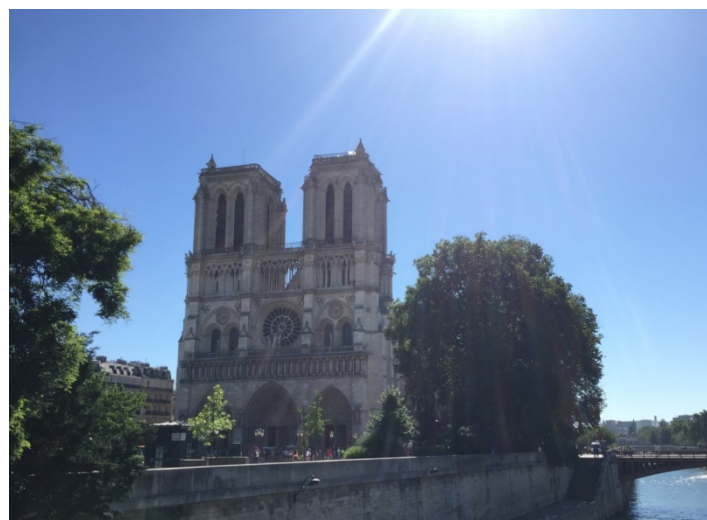


Figure 6 Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, July 2016 (personal photograph)

Looking at the Notre Dame Cathedral, a sunset, or witnessing a physical performance of for example ballet, acting or even intuitive expressions are all scenarios where words or sound are not necessary to understanding a meaning of it, however it is not complete silent experiences. It is experiences of silences in its verbal form, but there is no stillness in the movement or expression. The visual symbolism of the placement of the bricks of the cathedral, the dance of the ballet dancer, or the sun setting over the ocean are also an expression of non-silences.

The symbolism of aesthetics and how it affects the perceivers affective experiences is not solely representative within architectural objects, as was the focus of Lipps, it is as well present within all other aspects of aesthetic objects. This is represented within Vygotsky's analysis of Ivan Bunin's short story *Gentle Breath*, from which Vygotsky emphasizes the crucial factor of the structural representation of the short story in regard to the readers affective experience of it (Vygotsky, 1971) – the readers *Einfühlung* into the story. The melodic curve is implemented by the words of the text creating the symbolic expression (Vygotsky, 1971). The melody of the short story – the carefully chosen order in which the different elements of the story is presented to the reader – is similar to the melody in music crucial for how the reader will feel. There is no additional information (maybe even less needed than in a chronologically narrated story line) to create additional power in the expression of the short story. It is solely the structural work using silences which creates such influence. This is as well the power of poetry. The elements which exist within the poem are carefully selected and it is the specific constellation which leads to the creation of feelings within the individual. In regard to poems this is often played out both in the use of silence (the “in-between” the lines) and silences (in auditory pauses) which influence the tension and affective experience.

Silence (as well as poetic instants, which will be elaborated below in 2.3) is therefore closely linked with the phenomenon of *Einfühlung*. This is depictable in how silences (in e.g. short stories, poems, etc.) can affect the feeling in and thereby feeling through process. And furthermore, how observing a disaster such as a burning cathedral, war landscape, or natural disasters (earthquakes, bushfires, floodings etc.) leads to the moment of silence due to the act of feeling into and through the object (the cathedral, the people of the warzone, the animals and vegetation of the bush).

#### 2.2.3.1 The relationship of the voices of the self

As an individual, is one in fact an individual derived from the Latin *individuus* meaning not divisible (individual, n.d.)? Or is one rather a dividual, as an entity comprising of a diversity of elements? (Ho, 2019). This question is relevant in the sense that the notion individual is so commonly

used (especially within occidental society), which can lead to a misconception of the dynamic of the nature of the human self. The self has through several theorizations been presented as consisting of diverse elements. This has among others been done by George Herbert Mead in his theory of the *I* and the *ME* (Mead, 1934), Mikhail Bakhtin in his understanding of multiple voices within the dynamic of the self and the notion of *polyphony* from the world of music (Lacasa, Del Castillo & Garcia-Varela, 2005), and Dialogical Self Theory (DST) and the concept of self as encompassing a dynamic structure of multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I-positions* which discuss and relate to each other originating from Hubert J. M. Hermans (Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992). The notion of *I-positions* is building on James' notion of *the extended self* and Bakhtin's notion of *polyphony*, covering the idea that the self constitutes of diverse elements of self, which simultaneously function and interact dialogically with each other similar to diverse individuals in a society (Hermans, 2014). However, within DST it is not studied how the relations between I-positions of the self are dynamically relating with one other, and how they are contradictory. Within DST the self is understood as a construction of diverse mutually interacting and affecting I-positions (Hermans, 2018), but this does not fully take the relation within the self into account. I wish to dive into the journey of studying the relationship between these elements of the self, which I choose to conceptualize as voices. This notion should not be comprehended as solely verbal, but as well non-verbal aspects within the self, such as feelings. It is crucial for the understanding of the dynamic of the self and for that the human experience of life. I wish to return to highlight the idea of polyphony within each I-position. That the self consists of diverse I-position (e.g. I-as-a-woman, I-as-a-student, I-as-a-yoga-teacher, I-as-a-girlfriend, I-as-a-daughter, I-as-a-Dane, etc.) which throughout life will develop (e.g. when one becomes a mother a new I-position emerges of I-as-a-mother, which were not present before), and we will not keep all I-positions throughout our entire life (e.g. when a child finishes kindergarten it no longer has the I-position of I-as-a-kindergarten-child). Each of these I-positions consist of diverse voices – integrating the idea behind the notion of polyphony – leading the self in different directions, with constant evaluation and a dialectic process of emerges of synthesizing the concept of self through observation and relating to the self (Røgild-Müller, 2020).

DST is rooted in Bakhtin's analysis on literary works and is thus contributive to a psychological understanding of the self. Bakhtin focused on the dialogical dynamics of voices in dialogue and how meaning emerges from this contextual interplay created in the dynamic of the participants (Allan, 1994; Wijzen & Hermans, 2020). Bakhtin conceptualized the dialogical dynamic within the notions of *I-for-myself* (how I look and feel from inside to my own consciousness) and *I-for-the-other*

(how I look from the outside to someone else), two basically different structures co-existing within the mind. The constant act of balancing these two perspectives of self leads to a constant flux of the I-for-myself (Emerson, 2002) and creating an indispensable role of the other in the aesthetic realm of the individual's doings (Lacasa et al., 2005). Thus, is the dynamic of the self in a constant, intertwined relation with the outside, or the apperceptive internalization of the outside, in which *Einfühlung* acts as a central function in the way the individual connects with both the surroundings and oneself, which has been elaborated above (see 2.2.3). Though I would again like to stress, as I here describe it in line with a Bakhtinian perspective, that the function of *Einfühlung* is not isolated to the realm of elements outside of one's physical body (so to speak other people or physical objects) it may as well be, and probably more often occurring, a connection and process of feeling into diverse voices within oneself. This relates to the idea of polyphony within the self of multiple voices that constantly are in dialogue and feeling in and through each other, applying the phenomenon of *Einfühlung* in correlation with this relations of the self.

William Stern emphasized how experiencing (*Erleben*) is what elevates human beings from the purely animalistic world into a realm "human, introceptive personality" (Stern, 1938, p. 84). The concept of *introception* is used by Stern (1938) to describe the third of three levels of modality of the self – vitality, experience, introception – as the purpose of life functions which goes beyond experiencing, a sphere of coalescence of a unitary and meaningful pattern of life which he also terms personality. He mentions loving, understanding, creating, and consecrating as specific forms of introception (Stern, 1938). Silence is created from introception, moving beyond the mere perception of stimuli and the persons experiencing into a field of ongoing relation with the environment in which a feeling of meaning will enter in such process. From Stern's personalistic perspective the center of each individual's life is themselves, from which and toward which everything pertains to (Stern, 1938). Life unfolds in the present moment, but within the Sternian perspective such is not simply an objective present moment, but a personal present in which the incident life pattern of the person and the coincident situation of the person world completely fuse into one. It is this personal present which is central in the relationship of the polarity of inward and outward dimension in any experience (Stern, 1938). The experience the individual has in its representative personal present will inevitably be in the middle of the dynamic of the inward-outward direction, with the self in a constant negotiation of the inner infinity (deep feeling of the person of the self, first to the realms of the self which is nearest the person and further inward the personal depths) and the outer infinity (imagination and knowledge of the world "outside" of the person; first to the realms which is

nearest the person and the further out towards finally wholly contentless outer infinity) (Stern, 1938; Valsiner, 2014a). The descriptions of ‘near’ does not refer to the objective world which happens to be near, but rather the “milieu” or environment of the individual as the portion of the world that the person brings into oneself because one possesses receptivity or sensitivity for it, also a reason to why each individual lives in a personal realm from its own unique contextual center (Stern, 1938). The environment which may be near to a person is thereby a constellation of both experiences from the physical life, which one has apperceived and internalized, as well as experiences from imagination and psychological constructs.

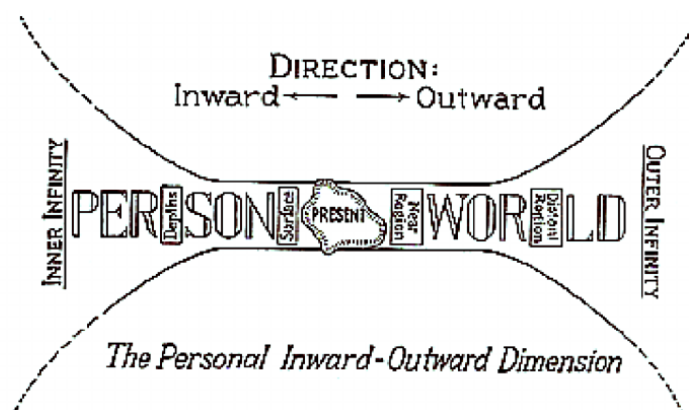


Figure 7 William Stern's figure of the personal inward-outward dimension (Stern, 1938, p.94)

Silence is an experience (as is poetic instant, a phenomenon later discussed, see 2.3). But it also moves into the modality of introception, moving beyond the distinction between inner and outer sphere, compatible to James' (1902) description of mystic experiences as of noetic quality, showing insights and depth. A moment of conciliation and union, which can happen by exceeding the distinction of individuality through *Einfühlung*. Stern speaks of living through the world, Lipps of feeling through the world – similar perspectives emphasizing the experience of living-through.

Life is in the present moment, but as well attached to the reconstruction of the past and imagination of the future in the dynamic of irreversible time. Any moment of life is as the present moment set in the middle of the dynamic between the infinite inner and outer sphere (Stern, 1938). Similar to the Bakhtinian perspective on self the dynamic between inner and outer realm is central within the work of Stern. Coordination of “the depth of one’s own psyche with the depth of the immediate environment” (Valsiner, 2014a, p. 14) will be the constant dynamic of human being, and once again I will highlight how the function of feeling into and feeling through is the act that is done in the relating to whatever is being related to. Stern’s figure of the personal inward-outward

dimension (see figure 3) illustrates the present moment in the center of this dynamic almost as a border between the infinite internal external realms.

The dialogical dynamic of the self is an integrated part of the present moment, though it is not constrained to the present moment as it links to the past through reconstructions and the future through anticipation and imagination linked with the process of apperception, as also the voices of the self is object for apperception of the self to relate to it (see 2.2.2). This dynamic of diverse voices is of a hierarchical structure, within which new layers of self emerges from the self relating to itself (Røgild-Müller, 2020), a process of *Einfühlung*. This is illustrated in figure 8 below, showcasing how the experiencing self can experience an internal voice (“voice 1” in figure 8) leading to a novel experiencing self (as time has passed) or into a dialogical construct of an additional voice (“voice 2” in figure 8) leading to a possibly alternative experiencing self. Furthermore, it is possible that the self will move into an observing position upon the dialogical dynamic of the voices of the self.

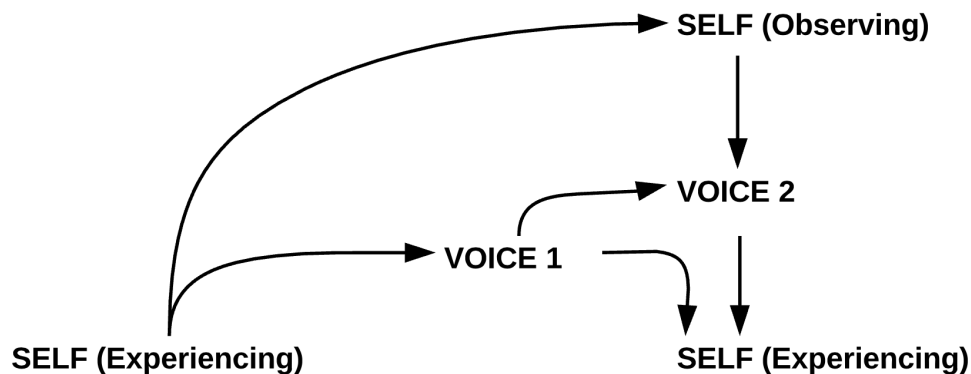


Figure 8 Emergence of dialogue in facing oneself in a mirror (Røgild-Müller, 2020, p.4)

Novel layers upon layers can emerge from a dynamic of synthesizing, which possibly may lead to a voiceless state (a pause or a state of silence). There is no limit to this complex relation of the evolving self. The self engages with itself in the form of diverse voices which have a dialogical relation, but the voices do not stay consistent but rather they constantly evolve hand in hand with the flow of irreversible time. Such state can possibly trigger of a state of a *poetic instant*, which are “lived-experiences where the emotional arousal they involve defies the capacities of language to describe the value that is grasped in them, and in that sense, also defies traditional understandings of chronological time trajectories” (Lehmann, 2015, p. 3) (this will be elaborated below, see 2.3). The moment of silence in the poetic instant acts as a stepping stone to what may emerge next whether this be a creative process of art, action or simply a glimpse of insight into the self and the other in the present

moment of the act of having felt into that and through to oneself. The hierarchy of the self can lead to a voiceless state, relatable to the conception Stern (1938) in which he describes personal time as not solely unidimensional but rather encompassing a level of time which is not clock time but “moves” in subjective depth. Stern (1938) speaks of the personal time in regard to experiencing but exactly this element of depth is a matter in which the experiencing is possibly led back to a state of introception and movement of silence, as can be the case of poetic instants (also see 2.3). Olga V. Lehmann accentuates the polysemy and polyphony – in line with Bakhtin’s use of the term describing the simultaneous multiplicity of the self – of silence-phenomena in human beings based of a depth and vertical quality of emotions (Lehmann, 2016a; 2016b). Though language is not multidimensional it becomes such through use of silence-phenomena, and I will refer back to Vygotsky’s analysis of Bunin’s *Gentle Breath* as to how the short story contains its own melody created by moments of silence (in the form of the composition of the short story, eliminations, and presentations) as is also the key point of melody in music as described above leading the recipient to how an affective experience and possibly through such an instant moment of silence (as can be caught within the notion of a poetic instant).

#### 2.2.3.2 Moments of silence in the act of *Einfühlung*

“I walk by the fjord and suddenly I become aware of the sound of the small, slow waves. My favorite type of waves. Slowly flowing through the water, giving long and low sounds of swoooosh swoooosh swoooosh. Merely the sound makes me stop, kneel down and let myself be absorbed by this. I feel a sense of being filled but at the same time empty. As I am fully present, feeling through the waves into the realm of myself, I feel a sense of silence within as my mind seems to have paused and I am left to simply be. But as I become aware of this I am pulled out of this state and back into the visual image of the waves in front of me and eventually to the sounds of the people and birds around me.”

This is an experience of my own, as I one evening was going for a walk by myself. The verbalizing of the experience itself is almost impossible, as no words I come up with seem to be able to grasp the sensation of the emotional space in which I where, a space which I feel correlates to the terminology of silence. This example clearly shows how it is possible for a human being to feel a connection of feeling into and furthermore feeling through an object (here the waves of the fjord) which is not another human being, leading first of to support the fact that *Einfühlung* is not solely a

matter of empathy, but goes beyond human-to-human connections. Secondly, the example illustrates how pauses within *Einfühlung* may occur, and that these pauses can be perceived as moments of silence. I have sought to illustrate the flow of how such process might occur in figure 9 below, where the blue lines are the dynamic flow of the *Einfühlung*, and the red circles is solely to empathize where the pauses are, and that the act of *Einfühlung* not necessarily will continue from the same place it were pre-pause.

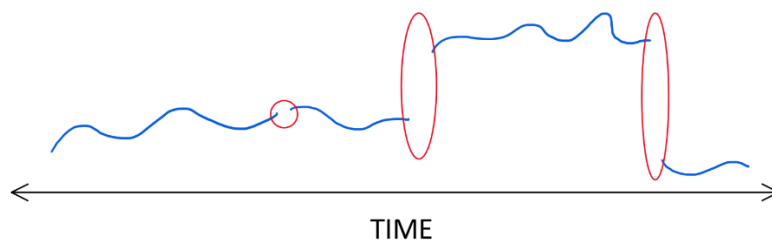


Figure 9 Pauses in *Einfühlung*

Returning to the previously presented description of the phenomenon of silence (see 2.1) as a present, timeless experience is representative of the above described experience of the mind seeming to pause and being left to simply be. Furthermore, elements of mysticism are, as described above (see 2.2), as well present in this instant as further connection to the phenomenon of silence.

When speaking of the experiences of *Einfühlung* in regard to the waves, the aesthetics of the visual impression, and a sensation of silence it is natural to move into a study of the phenomenon of *poetic instants*.

### 2.3 Silence of aesthetic experiences

Experiences of silence in everyday life can emerge from a countless number of things and take just as many different forms, one of which is an aesthetic one. Aesthetic experiences convey a wide range of experiences and emotional outcomes. ‘Aesthetic’ is commonly defined as the beauty and pleasurable in art and nature (æstetik, n.d.). Aesthetic experience can emerge from anything, from nature, any visible object, or in the form of words, but as experiences they are created by the person. An aesthetic experience can lead one into a state of disconnection from the societal world and into a sense of eternal presence.

“[A]esthetic experiences convey what existence is about, discontinuities and ruptures that we weave with meanings and evocation of emotions, with the risk enough to step back forever in an instant, or keep going even after it is gone.” (Lehmann & Klempe, 2016, p. 58).



Throughout life some experiences will pull us out of the routine of life and out our minds. Emotional states which exceed any verbal description are leading one into a state beyond mere experiencing in the form of the person apperceiving and internalizing stimulus. Ruptures of high emotional arousal which both tense and expand the potentiality of meanings of an experience. Such can be considered under the notion of *poetic instants* (Lehmann, 2015; 2018b; Lehmann & Klempe, 2016; Lehmann & Klempe, 2017; Lehmann & Brinkmann, 2019a). The notion of poetic instants refers to lived-experiences where the emotional experience exceeds any verbal description. Such experiences are separated from chronological time trajectories, and instead it is relevant to discuss the extent of the experience in its depth and height as an intensity and qualitative rather than quantitative extend of chronological time (Lehmann, 2015; Lehmann, 2016a).

When speaking of poetic instants, the extent of the terminology of the term must be accentuated. A poem, poetry, and poetic instants must be perceived as individual, but possibly related entities (Bhattacharya, 1998; Lehmann, 2015). A poetic instant is therefore not solely a reaction to reading a poem, however it can be (Lehmann & Brinkmann, 2019b), but a matter of ineffable tensions within the very present containing each and every instant in a negation of temporality (Lehmann, 2015). In his speech when receiving the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1990 Octavio Paz describes the nature of poetry as:

“Poetry is in love with the instant and seeks to relive it in the poem, thus separating it from sequential time and turning it into a fixed present.” (Paz, 1990)

A poetic instant is an experience which everyone at any given moment in time is able to experience when opening and surrendering fully into the present moment, which contains every instant in a negation of time (Lehmann, 2015). Poetic instants are not set to happen in specific circumstances, but can emerge for normal people in everyday life, whether it be from engaging in art, nature, another human being and so on. Such an experience can lead the individual to different emotional states of mind whether it be elation or joy (Chaudhary, Chawla, & Shindu, 2017), time passing by quickly (Tangene, 2017), or into a feeling of silence (Lehmann, 2016a; Tangene, 2017).

The phenomena of *silence* and *poetic instants* are similar and possible overlapping, but they are not one and the same thing. Not all experiences of silence will be related to aesthetic experiences (as seen through out the descriptions above), but poetic instants are connected to such experiences. Some experiences of poetic instants can take the form of experiences of silence. This could be an experience of complete silence as the reaction to a poem, a painting, a ballet performance,

perceiving a sunset, and many other aesthetic experiences. These are moments of poetic instants, experiences where the emotional arousal exceeds the capacities of language – this can be in the case of explosiveness of the emotion or in this case in the silence of it, not to mistake for lack of emotional arousal (referring to the description by Lehmann (2015) mentioned above, 2.2.3.1). This sort of experiences will fit in the overlap of silence and poetic instants, illustrated below in figure 10.

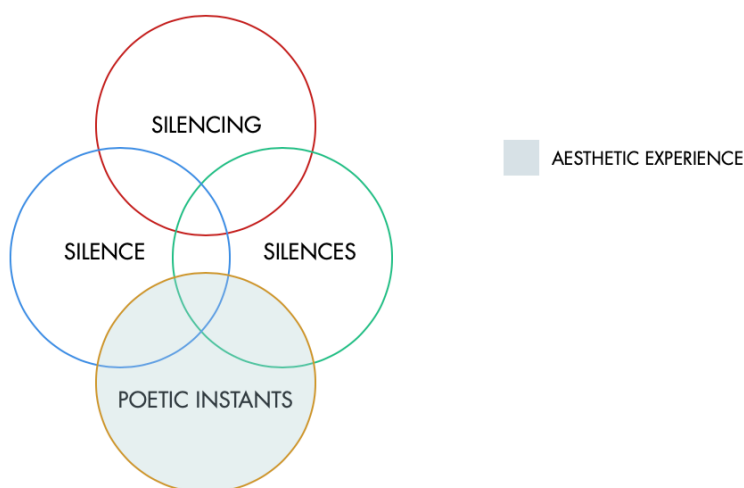


Figure 10 Silence-phenomena and poetic instants

Figure 10 builds upon figure 1, integrating the phenomenon of poetic instants in the dynamic of silence-phenomena. Poetic instants will, as mentioned above, be aesthetic experiences. Moments of silence and silences can as well be aesthetic experiences, but this will be in the overlap with experiences of poetic instants, as not all experience of silence or silences necessarily will be an aesthetic one. Both moments of poetic instants and silence are part of how we create meaning in life (Zittoun, 2017; Lehmann & Brinkmann, 2019a) referring back to the dynamic of zero signifiers (see 2.1). As described above in relation to figure 1 (see 2.1) each phenomenon of the silence-phenomena can occur on its own, but the coexistence of phenomena is as well possible. This dynamic is as well present in regard to the integration of poetic instants. Poetic instants does however not occur simultaneously with silencing as this is an act, but it is however not eliminated that a poetic instant might occur following an act of silencing leading to silence or silences. The phenomena have indeterminate borders, as was described above in 2.2.1.1, and the illustrated circles should not be perceived as set fields but as a visualization of the fields of the phenomena possible to change and grow. The overlapping of the fields depict the unspecifity and fluidity of the borders and how they as well are human created concepts and notions to an initial non-verbal experiencing life. Experiences of silence and poetic instants, can be difficult to detect within oneself as one experiences it. This is due

to the pre-verbal nature of any initial experience and furthermore the non-verbality when functioning of a semiotic level of hyper-generalization (Valsiner, 2014a), as described above (see 2.2.1.1). It is furthermore counterintuitive to verbally express or define silent experiences such as silence and some variations of poetic instants, as these in essence are non-verbal – both explicit and internally.

Poetic instants occur in relation with the act of *Einfühlung*. Through the process of feeling in the person merges into the aesthetic experience and in the dynamic of feeling through it back into oneself the synthesized novel level of self becomes intergated with the aesthetic experience, enabling one to have a strong affective experience – a poetic instant. *Einfühlung* is therefore essential for the emergence of poetic instants, as this is how a person would truly connect with the aesthetic experience. This is present within the example above of the aesthetic experience of the fjord and how the process of *Einfühlung* as well as moments of silence emerged here (see 2.2.3.2). These experience of silence here are moments of poetic instants, in that the instants of silence are connected to the aesthetic experiences and fully defies the capacities of language to describe its value. In this case the poetic instant is expressed in the form of an instant of silence.

### **2.3.1 A greater understanding of silence in everyday life experiences of poetic instants**

Feelings of silence and poetic instants are difficult matters to access both in one's own personal life as well as within research. This is a great scholarly difficulty and the phenomenon of silence – and silence-phenomena in general – has seldom been theorized. Now, Lehmann is pioneering the study of silence within the realm of psychology through her focus on silence-phenomena and poetic instants. However the need for further investigation of silence-phenomena in cultural psychology and psychology in general is crucial, as all aspects of silence-phenomena are, as has been presented above, are fundamental and defining elements of everyday life in the way we as human beings experience and create meaning. Especially the phenomena of silence and poetic instants need attention within psychology as they are phenomena of great subtlety and at the same time extremely essential part of understanding the human psyche.

### 3 The poetic nature of Lev Vygotsky: in life and in thought

Within the following section I wish to study the phenomena of silence and poetic instants in relation to a concrete example of poetic writing. It should not be necessary to mention that the amount of work which is of poetic writing is endless and evergrowing, and that my example of course solely consist of one short passage. However, this fact does not take away from how this single passage illustrates the power and importance which lies within the unspoken, illustrating the ideas of Gestalten and how impact of the presense of moments of silence and poetic instants affect the reader's understanding and meaning-making. The use of literature as empirical data within psychological research is rewarding though it is unconventional (Brinkmann, 2009; Røgild-Müller & Robinson, in press). Good literature can present as much (or more) about human life as traditional forms of empirical qualitative research (Brinkmann, 2009). Umberto Eco (2009) emphasize how fictional characters become semiotic objects just as any other historical figure does, and by that, that fictional characters are as valid in the interpretation of human life as any human being. Not only fictional literature but also other forms such as poetry, memoirs, and other forms are useful for inquiries. Within literature rest the opportunity of studying the poetic personal world of major authors.

Vygotsky, who is best known as a psychologist, gave beautiful, deeply poetic descriptions within his personal notebooks of his own personal experiences. Vygotsky was a writer in the sense that he wrote down not only ideas and everyday notes, he also wrote down feelings and experiences of his own. A selection of his notebooks has in detail been detected and translated by Ekaterina Zavershneva and René van der Veer in a collected publication titled "Vygotsky's Notebooks – A Selection" from 2018. Much of Vygotsky's writing in these notebooks is very beautiful and poetic, mashed together with notes on names, addresses, and other practical notes. I have selected a passage from Vygotsky's trip to London in 1925, where he would attend a conference, leaving his young wife and infant daughter back at home (Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018). During his travels to London Vygotsky writes the following passage in his notebook, which is a great example of how the non-verbal can scream the loudest in regard to the expression and the meaning of the written text.

"As is known, in medicine there are allopaths and homeopaths, of the latter there are very few left. I perceived Europe homeopathically, i.e., so that it leaves no traces in the organism, but the homeopaths say that the minimal doses are the strongest." (Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018, p. 62).

Shortly before he wrote this passage he notes that he had boarded the ship from Vlissingen in Holland on his travels to London, as well as noting the sea and fog (Zavershneva & vand der Veer, 2018). Within this passage it is clear – whether one knows anything about the background of the narrator or not – that the sense which lies upon this is connected to what could be described as sorrow or aversion, but the sense which underlies this is not capturable by any verbal descriptions. The meaning of this passage emerges from the silences which is “in-between”, as a Gestalt the meaning of the passage is more than what is verbally expressed. The at first conflicting statements of the effect of homeopathy – first for leaving no traces in the physical body, second that minimal doses are the strongest. The dynamic of this is captivating. Though only building on this short passage the ending with this last sentence leads into a sense of rupture. So much is unsaid, so much is only implied. The utterance “I perceived Europe homeopathically” does not rationally make sense, but the following of “so that it leave no traces in the organism” illustrates how Europe is in no way a place which is wished for by the narrator. And the approach to Europe is therefore sought in the way which should leave no postlude. Non the less it seems that in the presence of his trip he feels strongly affected. It is not solely the verbal expression of the metaphorical image he draws, as none of his feelings are explicit. It is in the absence of the statement of how he feels, which makes this passage so heavily affectionately charged. And the abrupt end sentence leaving one in a state – maybe just for a brief instant – of silence. A poetic instant of silence. A sense which is impossible to verbally describe, even with a thousand words, if one does not experience similar oneself. Any experience of such will solely emerge from the *Einfühlung* into and through the production of the narrators hand.

#### 4 Societal enhancement and hinderence of silence and poetic instants

Culture is an integrated part of the individual through the nature of internalization and externalization. Societal norms and standards are intervoven with the ones of the individual, wherefor the way in which we function in life is greatly influenced by where we have been raised and live as non-verbalized hyper-generalized signs influencing the way we perceive and apperceive the world as well as create meaning. The function, norms, and values of the society which one lives and functions in therefore has a great influence on what we experience in life – not only in what we physically are put in front of and how our life is structured, but also in our perspectives on and understanding of our surroundings and ourselves. There does not exist some out of human structure

which has been notioned culture. Culture is not some independent element. Culture exists within the individual (Branco & Valsiner, 2010; Valsiner, 2014a), but as some structures are shared with groups it is still possible to talk of cultures, this becomes obvious when travelling. Therefore, it is clear that we as human beings live in diverse societies and that these affect our lives.

Occidental societies enforce performance, effectivity, quantitative measures, and economy (Brinkmann, 2008; Valsiner, 2017). The high pace leaves little room to being. It counteracts being aware of the present moment, counteracts being in the moment and truly acknowledging it, counteracts slowing down so one can be aware and feel what one is experiencing. Occidental societies does not necessarily inhibit silent experiences. Silencing is happening all the time. Silences will of course naturally occur. But silence, though it is a natural state of the mind, is inhibited by the standards of our society. Experiences of silence and poetic instants calls for presence, a thing which is not culturally promoted.

It is interesting how human experiences seem to suggest that the mind naturally will move into a state of silence or a state of flow, where one does not really engage with thoughts or feelings but simply is. But for such a state to emerge, the mind must have time – however society normally does not “give” such time. Time is to find in few places in occidental societies, one of which is within the Royal Life Guards, where the guards will have much time with no assignments besides keeping a watch out, simply standing patrolling. Within the Royal Life Guards of Denmark it is not officially taught to the guards how to attain a mental state, but it occurs spontaneously, naturally after months of having spend long periods of time doing nothing. This following statement present how time naturally can lead into silence.

“Silence first occured to me in the beginning of my 20s as I served my compulsory military service within the Danish Royal Life Guards. More specifcly it occurred 6 months into the service, as I served the royal palaces. A shift last 24 hours, where one is on guard for 2 hours and afterwards 4 hours in the guard room. The 2 hours where one is on guard is sectioned as so, one will stand for 5 minutes and then walk with 1 step per second for 10 minutes. *During the first 2 months I was in service, I used a lot of time thinking of food, alcohol, and women. Hereafter, the state spontaneously emerged. During the 5 minutes in which I would stand I was no longer conscious about my own thoughts, an experience of silence. I did not lose my indirect sense of time, and I knew exactly when I should start walking again, but I had no idea if I had at all been thinking of anything.* But at the same time I was in service, and *I have several times been thrown out of the state because something happened which needed my*

*attention. I was not aware of the notion of ‘silence’ before Laura [the author] told me about her thesis, but ‘absence of thoughts’ is commonly known among guardsmen of the Royal Lifeguard. Now the state of silence emerges when I am bored or doing something monotonous, which does not require for me to be aware of my actions.”*<sup>6</sup> (26 year-old, Danish man, translated from Danish by author, italics added for emphasis)

Notice the descriptions of the experience of silence as emerging spontaneously due to the extend of time doing a simple task, and how he through this (unintentional) practice during his service for the Royal Life Guards is able to experience such moments in other realms of his life. Furthermore, he describes the state of silence as a state which can be broken up by outside stimuli. This may be linked to the descriptions of James (1902) on how moments of silence, as experiences of mysticism, are transient and calls for practice to first of be aware of such experiences but also to be able to tap into it. He also describes how the experiences of silence exist on a level beyond temporality, in that he is able to be aware of temporal clock time, knowing for how long to stand and when to walk without leaving the state of silence. This is relatable to the descriptions of silence above of how silence is introceptive and exists beyond the mere span of clock time as an immobilization of the present glimpsing eternity in a timeless, spatioless flow of pure feelings (Lehmann, 2015). This statement is similar to both the descriptions of Tangene (2015) of how the longitudes experiences of silences on his boat night-shifts contained diverse stages as well of the experience of flow of the figure skater (see 2.2.1.1).

Borders are socially created and exist all through out everyday life – visible or not. During my training as a yoga teacher in Bali we shared a physical space (yoga shala) in which we practiced yoga (both in the physical practice of asana as well as mental and spiritual practices) and were taught of yoga. At the beginning of the training we were told we should handle the space as sacred. The peculiar aspect of this is that the shala was in fact not separated from the outside. The yoga

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<sup>6</sup> Original statement in Danish: ”Indre stilhed, opstod for mig først i start 20’erne, da jeg aftjente min værnepligt hos den Kongelige Livgarde. Mere specifikt opstod den 6 måneder inde i forløbet, da jeg gik vagter ved de kongelige slotte og palæer. En vagt varer 24 timer, hvor man holder vagt 2 timer og efterfølgende 4 timer inde i vagtstuen. De 2 timer hvor man går vagt er nedbrudt således, at man står 5 minutter og går, med 1 skridt i sekundet, i 10 minutter. Under de første 2 måneder jeg gik vagter, brugte jeg rigtig meget tid på at tænke på mad, alkohol og kvinder. Herefter opstod tilstanden af sig selv. De 5 minutter jeg skulle stå, var jeg ikke længere bevist om min egen tankevirksomhed, altså en indre stilhed. Jeg mistede ikke min indirekte tidsfornemmelse, og jeg vidste præcis hvornår jeg skulle begynde at gå igen, men jeg havde ingen idé om jeg overhovedet havde tænkt på noget. Samtidig var jeg også på vagt og er flere gange røget ud af tilstanden, fordi der skete noget, der krævede min opmærksomhed. Jeg var ikke bekendt med begrebet ”indre stilhed” før Laura forklarede mig om sit speciale, men ”fraværet af tanker” er alment kendt blandt Gardere. I dag opstår tilstanden af indre stilhed, når jeg keder mig eller laver noget monotont som ikke kræver, at jeg er bevist om mine handlinger.”

shala was the first floor of a building by the beach, which could be described as a large covered terrace, only with walls on two of the four sides and the two remaining sides of the area being outlined by a railing (see picture below in figure 11, the yoga shala from the inside, and figure 12, the yoga shala from the outside).



Figure 11 Yoga shala, inside (personal photograph)



Figure 12 Yoga shala, outside (personal photograph)

So in fact was the sacred space within the yoga shala no different from the non-sacred space of the beach, but still did a set of rituals and a ruleset reign over this space which did not apply on the beach or just out on the staircase leading up to the yoga shala. Borders are not solely created to distinguish physical spaces but all over human spaces. This is both an example of how social constructs affect how we as individuals apperceive and interact in life, as well as an example of how physical represented objects (here it would have been a wall) can be unnecessary such social constructs. Societal and cultural structures and norms influence how one as an individual is able to experience and be aware of experiences of silence and poetic instants.



## 5 Conclusion

Silent experiences are fundamental parts of the way human beings experience and create meaning in life. Silent experiences appear as diverse phenomena, which the notion of *silence-phenomena* seek to encompass through the distinction of *silence* (a state of being, a present, timeless experience connectable to the notion of *mysticism* and *flow*), *silences* (a contextual state, which is past-future oriented), and *silencing* (an act of ordering others or oneself to be silent). Moments of silences affect how we apperceive and feel in and through (*Einfühlung*) our surroundings and ourselves, as it is connected to the polyphony and dialogicality of the self. Furthermore, experiences of silence can emerge from the process of *Einfühlung* within aesthetic experiences. The phenomenon of *poetic instants* can be experienced as moments of silence emerging from aesthetic experiences. Experiences of silence and poetic instants exist beyond verbal representation as *hyper-generalized feeling fields* with dynamic borders, supporting the knowledge of *Gestalt theory* and *zero signifiers*, crucial for the process of meaning-making. As zero signifiers, an absence which is within moments of silence and possible poetic instants, create strong meaning, exceeding any level which is verbally expressible. Such moments exist all through every aspect of life – in human relations and interactions, in architecture, in writing, in music. The power of the absence, stating nothing, including everything. As Claude Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque, L.75, III. Clair de Lune* reveals how silent moments create greater emotional affections than anything could ever do in comparison.

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