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Dissertation Chapters Underway: 10,000 Shards, Or Opening and Activating Depth: Handicraft, Value, and the Work of Art (Shards 00000-00001), Christopher Southward

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10,000 SHARDS, OR OPENING AND ACTIVATING DEPTH[1]:
HANDICRAFT, VALUE, AND THE WORK OF ART

PART ONE: HANDICRAFT

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Shard 00000
Decoding the Ground Beneath Our Feet: A Preface

Back in the day, in an era not very far removed from our own, when the vibrant, pulsating, oscillating materiality of the world was overall a bit more readily at hand, there stood in the ever-looming shadows of the *Sierra de la Sangre de Cristo* and under the ominous, omnipresent gaze of "The Mountain" a fairly modern but endearingly dilapidated adobe which housed the inner workings of Taos Clay Studio & Gallery. There, on the hinterlands of Taos Mesa, where even now the perennial flow of the multimillennial waters of the mighty Rio Grande persistently shear at and cart away monoliths of granite and basalt as gravel, sand, and silt, were situated, against the south-facing wall of the southeasternmost room that served simultaneously and by turns as office, storage, shipping-and-receiving center, and space of warm respite from the bitter-cold mid-winter-to-late-spring winds, dozens of boxes stacked forehead-to-floor (for the physics here were of a different order) wherein were packed (and scattered across nine-foot-long waist-high worktables) thousands of decades-old and late issues of journals and magazines dedicated to the art and craft of clay. Not a quite a library in any commonly held sense of the word but a collection nonetheless, it was a veritable *Moon Palace* **(NOTE AUSTER)** for studio potters of every degree of interest and experience. Basking there in the faint late afternoon glow of sunlight filtered through a panel of glass blocks reminiscent of the seventies, we often lost ourselves in musings over clay bodies and glaze formulas, kiln designs and firing techniques, dreams of the ideal studio, and the varied styles and practices of

[1] This dissertation is animated by Herbert Marcuse's riddled notion of *the depth dimension* as articulated in "Liberation from the Affluent Society"—a lecture delivered at the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation Conference held in London. The arguments presented in that lecture read as condensed versions of those more broadly developed, most notably, in such works as *One-Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilization* and, later, in *The Aesthetic Dimension.* Our overarching aim here is to problematize Marcuse's notion of *depth* in such ways as to render it a concretely universal and actionable concept in order to intervene in the pernicious effects of what he called *technicity* **(CITE MARCUSE; ELLUL)**. While Marcuse's formulation fittingly ambiguates the practical terms of such an intervention, we claim that the dialectical-dialogical-ethical-ontological core of what we shall call *handicraft-instaurative activity* is a privileged standpoint from which we might endeavor with him "to open and activate" the revolutionary potential of what he envisaged as "a depth dimension of human existence*"* **(CITE MARCUSE, "LIBERATION")***;* reflections on the wealth of experience we have gained through pottery studio practice provides us with a foothold from which to begin**.** We will qualify our central claim and return to Marcuse's problematic at length in later chapters, but let us now note his terms as he presents them in "Liberation:"

> The dialectic of liberation, as turned from quantity into quality, thus involves [...] a break in the continuum of repression which reaches into the depth dimension of the organism itself. Or, we may say that today qualitative change, liberation, involves organic, instinctual, biological changes at the same time as political changes [...]. In other words, liberation seems to be predicated upon the opening and the activation of a depth dimension of human existence, this side and underneath the traditional base: not an idealistic dimension, over and above the material base, but a dimension even more material than the material base, a dimension underneath the material base [...] **(Ed. Cooper, 1968: 184, 182).**

undiscovered and well-established artists of the earth, both near and far. It is there, in the pages of a lost issue of *Ceramics Monthly,* that we meet a now anonymous but unforgotten Japanese potter who we are told required his apprentices to produce three hundred cups as part of their studio service and practice. What follows, then, is our imagining of how such a situation might have unfolded—a meditation that we hope will serve as an introduction to our problem and the many questions that it poses.… … …

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Shard 00001
300 Loving Cups, Or Apprenticeships in Therapeutic Esoterics

If those who, in kilns with love and ingenuousness, cover glazed clay with charming decorations cannot afterwards sell their ceramics, it is because the world has other needs more pressing. However, if they have leisure and are happy in these amusements that are noble and interesting, it is their right. But if they wish that this work be a trade, and would live from it, it is necessary that they also see in it the selling value according to the service of their work and the degree of importance of this work.
(Souriau, *Future of Aesthetics,* 1938: 87)

Three:::
It's the magic number.
-De La Soul

Always keep a diamond in your mind.
-Tom Waits

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There once lived in Japan an elderly master potter and subsistence farmer who lived alone in a modest villa to which was attached the generations-old pottery where he daily made his living, weekly saddling his horse and carting his wares to market in nearby towns and villages. Villa and pottery consisted of an array of wooden structures located on a thousand-acre plot of fertile land in the foothills of a great mountain, the arable property being situated at the edge of a meadow traversed in all directions by crystal-clear streams teeming with aquatic life. Among these were a squat granary and silo in which he stored rice, wheat, and barley against the ravages of rodents and the fallow winter months, a henhouse that produced eggs and poultry sufficient for his own consumption and that of a few guests, a small barn and carriage house for horse, hay, and wagon, a modestly appointed cottage with room to quarter three, and a loafing shed where a dozen or so goats found rest when not grazing the land or serving as sources of milk and meat. Sheltered year-round by a canopy of old-growth evergreens, and adorned in summer with every hue and fragrance of wildflower, the property stood as testament to a family's patient accumulation of land and renown. They were potters known for unconventional practices, forms, and glazes, and their work was sought and collected throughout the land. Having no progeny of his own to whom he might bequeath the property, and having lost all friends on whom he might depend for help in maintaining it as the source of his livelihood, the elderly master yet desired a successor worthy of receiving the secrets of his family's revered and longstanding practice. One summer afternoon, as the old man strolled through the meadow, picking flowers along the way, he fell to thinking:

"I'm growing old and tired, and I can no longer do this work alone. If I continue at this pace, then the day is sure to come when I'll no longer be able to work at all! How dreadful!," he

thought, pausing midstride to let the thought sink in as he surveyed what he could see of the land that stretched from the mountaintops above into the valley below.

"I must find someone to help me. Yes, I must find willing hands, and that's just what I'll do! I'll go out and find six strong, youthful, willing hands to learn our craft and do the work!," and, with this, he set off again across the meadow. As he neared a creek that cut through the meadow just a hundred or so meters from studio and villa, he knelt down on the banks and peered into the shallows, struggling to maintain balance as the sight of the surface ripples dizzied him, making him feel as though he might at moment topple headlong into the creek. He steadied himself by lowering his head, closing his eyes, and pressing his fingertips against the soil—a six-point stance that restored internal equilibrium. The soil was cool to the touch in the stifling late-summer heat and, as his fingers sank into the soil, he realized that he was at the very edge of one of the most generous clay flats that he'd found in these waters. How had he missed it? He'd recently dug and processed several kilos of its bounty, recalling how he'd marveled at the color and texture of the clay—the grey-black of volcanic eruptions, billowing carbonic ash and smoke, and pyroclastic flows of eons past, its particles fine as diamond dust.

Glancing farther downstream now, he caught sight of a forgotten eel trap that he'd set during his last trip here to forage clay, and he made a mental note to check it later that evening, already imagining the meal that he would prepare, his mouth watering with anticipation: *「ウゥゥムー。ソウダ！タレ付ノ鰻重、オキュウリノオ漬物、然シテ去年ノオ梅酒ヲ本ノ一杯ト。取リ敢得ズ以上デ良シ！」*, he thought, standing erect now to survey the sky above and behind him, watching patiently as a low-hanging cumulus bank moseyed in from the west and noting how the clouds appeared to promise an early-evening squall—perfect conditions for a nice catch. Turning now back toward the villa and gazing up the hill, he resumed his earlier train of thought:

"*Three…, yes, three apprentices will do! I'll train them, and they'll carry on with the craft. The world today hardly seems aware of it, but people still need good…, no, great pottery! Yes, this, of all things, is what the people of the world need—simple, needful, loving things—and, like it or not, great, loving pottery is just what they will get!"*

With this, the elderly master climbed the hill back to the villa, watered and readied his horse, hitched the carriage, and set off for the nearest town in search of three apprentices who, he was sure, were at this very moment awaiting his arrival from only a few kilometers away.

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The master left home at a galloping clip and, an hour later, halted his horse on the corral of the bustling center of K—: a town of about six thousand residents and home to M—Prefecture College of Visual and Performing Arts, which hosted respectable courses of study in painting, photography, art history, drama, music, and studio ceramics. The campus stood only a few dozen meters away from where, now alighting from his carriage, the master hitched his horse to a post and stood surveying the layout of the square, distractedly packing and lighting his pipe as he absorbed the buzz and hum of activity underway. Over here, a stone's throw from his hitching post, a pair of street musicians plucked and strummed *koto* and *shamisen,* their unpracticed fingering filling the air with a string of discordant notes that reverberated stereophonically from the rough surfaces of asphalt, concrete, and brick (When had he last seen such materials?, he wondered.), the cacophony sending an uncomfortable tingle up his spine from sacrum to crown. Over there, a blindfolded magician flamboyantly juggled rubber balls (two red, one white) between uncontested matches of Three-Card Monte.

"Aaaahh! That's the oldest trick in the book!!," the master shouted as he watched, feeling himself defeated each time a bemused and bewildered player walked away. And all the way over there, on the far side of the plaza, a…,

But it was getting late, and he realized that he still had to meet his apprentices, who must now be rather impatiently awaiting his arrival. They naturally had no way of knowing that, at any moment now, a chance encounter would forever change their lives, but something was in the air…. Unlike the ready-made spectacle that now flashed before him—one that was at this very moment playing out in near-identical form in town and village squares across the country, indeed, around the globe, he thought—here, in that indeterminate space precariously suspended between them, *something was happening,* and all involved sensed—What *was* it?, they thought in unison. "*Weight? Pressure? Lightness? Wonder?"*—this ephemeral *something* intensifying by the second. The master sensed it and, along with them, *felt* it, in fact, and each was sure that, whoever and wherever the others might be, they must surely feel it too.

Glancing about the square, the master spotted a small café tucked into the shadows of an alley that appeared to lead directly to the college campus. *"They're there!,"* he thought, patting and watering his horse, checking the hitch, snuffing and tucking away his pipe after taking a final toke, and setting off for the door.

As he approached the entrance, the master struggled to make out the characters 珈琲, which were embossed, stark-white, on a field of deep indigo at the split ends of a two-meter-long *noren,* the curtain fluttering on a gust of wind that now howled fiercely down the long, narrow passage. A cup of coffee would do just fine, he thought, stopping before the entrance to inspect the curtain. *"Handmade,"* he thought. *"Nice work."* Tightly woven, thick, heavy cotton—cash of the American South. He stood there a moment examining its texture and imagining the calloused, cut, and bleeding black and brown hands that had picked the cotton from the blood-stained black and red earth of far-flung, sharecropped Mississippi, Tennessee, and Georgia fields so far away, on the other side of the earth. They were hands that, just last growing season, he realized as he fingered the fabric, had plowed, planted, and hoed those fields and, come fall, had plucked stubborn white tufts by the bale for pennies on the pound. While imagining the heated auctions and convoluted routes that had brought these very fibers to the distant shores of The Land of the Rising Sun, he again fell to thinking:

"Black hands…, the color of pain…. Red and black earth…, the color of blood…. White cotton..., the color of…"

Yes, coffee!," he suddenly remembered, shouting himself out of reverie. *They're waiting!*

Pushing the curtain aside and ducking into the vestibule, the master entered the café through the sliding door, shut it behind him, and stood for a moment on the other side, taking in the low rumble of a thousand and one conversations. *"Art students,"* he thought as he surveyed the room, but also assembled there were vagabonds and weary travelers, forlorn writers and professors, crackpot philosophers, and several drowsy cats, their worn pencils and frayed brushes, their tattered notebooks and sketchpads, their unfinished treatises and well-worn plush toys scattered across the floor and stacked on tables or tumbled upon ledges and in nooks filled with afghans and pillows, the entire space being dimly lit by gas lanterns suspended from the low-hanging ceiling. *"Ah, yes. A 'salon' if ever there was one,"* the master thought, smiling and feeling at home.

Spotting an empty table on the far side of the room, he made his way there and lowered himself into the solitary, dingy chair, positioning its back against the wall so that he had a panoramic view of that voluminous space. Presently, a waiter approached with the standard

offering of espresso, a glass of mineral water, and a nondescript sweet cake and, without pomp or pretense, placed it onto the table before him. No sooner had the waiter turned to walk away than the master downed the coffee, ordered another one at his back, and began munching on the snack.

Right away, Sir, the waiter replied, ambling off to the bar to prepare another cup.

"'Yes, I must check and reset the trap!,'" the master thought, realizing that he'd soon need to hurry home and prepare dinner.

When the waiter returned, the master took the occasion to strike up a conversation and explain his current predicament.

You must be a student at the college, he said assumingly.

Yes, well I was *a student,* the waiter replied. *Painting…, but…. Wait…, you must be…,*

Yes!, the master answered, reading expectation in his voice and taking it as an invitation to summarize his offer before the waiter could continue. He needed three willing and able-bodied apprentices to join him as soon as possible, he said—the sooner, the better.

It seems that I've found the first, and surely you know two others who might be interested, no?

Well, yes, in fact, I do—two more painters. I'll call them over now, the waiter said, and off he went, scratching his head and glancing back at the master as he stumbled back to the bar, returning momentarily with two comrades in tow and introducing them to their guest. *This is the gentleman who—*

The master interrupted and restated his offer to the trio in greater detail: three days of work per week from sunrise to sunset at his studio in the nearby foothills for a three-year period of service. He would compensate them with meals, lodging, and transportation by his very own carriage which, he noted almost pridefully, was hitched at the corral on the square. Not to mention that he would instruct them in a wide range of studio techniques as he practiced them, including the use of tools and equipment. What's more, he said, if all went as smoothly as he expected, then they stood the prospect of inheriting a well-established pottery situated on a sizeable plot of land, in which case it would be up to them to determine the conditions of ownership and whatnot. As the trio stood staring at him, breathless, mouths agape, he told them that he would give them time to think it over and return for their answers.

I'll give you three days to think it over, he said. *One day for each of you!,* guffawing as he retrieved three coins from his breast pocket and placed them, neatly stacked, onto the table. *Thank you for the lovely coffee and cake!* With this, the group agreed to meet again, bowed, and parted ways, the master chuckling to himself as he made his way to the door: *"Three days…. One for each! Now, let them chew on* that!*"*

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When three days had passed, the master returned to the café, and each of the students informed him that they'd happily decided to accept his offer. The group made plans to begin work the following week, agreeing to meet on the square an hour before sunrise on the morning of the new moon.

Work began, and the apprentices daily performed the standard grunt-work of digging, washing, sieving, wedging, and reclaiming clay, of chopping, splitting, and stacking fire-wood, of loading, firing, and cleaning kilns, of procuring and cataloging chemicals for the mixing of glazes, and of sweeping, mopping, and scrubbing the master's studio as preventatives against the fabled and feared Potter's Lung—that painful, cancer-like infection induced by the slow and extended accumulation of airborne silicates in the respiratory tract.

Time passed and, one day, roughly a year into their three-year service period, the apprentices found themselves busy as usual at their rotating tasks, but more grudgingly today, for each had become so wearied of his labor that private discontent and self-pity had grown into a palpable, collective force that could no longer be contained. Early morning saw them in exchanges of furtive glances here, each daring another to speak, and midday brought barely stifled grumbling and moaning there, further encouraging the others to raise the alarm, so that, by the time they returned from lunch and a long walk together in the surrounding wooded hills, the trio had begun spitting invectives like poisoned darts deftly aimed at the master's back from their respective quarters. Overhearing their complaints, the master chuckled, sighed contentedly, and ordered them to join him at the kick-wheels, as this was the day when they would begin learning to throw. Always busy at his work, the master seldom spoke, so that, visibly flummoxed by his words, the apprentices stood staring at him, breathless and with mouths agape, motionless, as though riveted in place.

Make haste! Finish what you're doing and meet me at the wheels!, the master ordered, as time was of the essence. *The way ahead is winding and long,* he said, somewhat introspectively, as though addressing himself. *It winds and dips, its rocky paths climb to treacherous peaks and then descend again into depths unknown, but each of you must keep moving and keep up, for you have miles to go—Oh, so many miles to go!—before you sleep. You have three minutes…, one for each of you!*

"Ha! 'Three minutes…!,' the master guffawed, visibly and vocally pleased with his cleverness, for even *he* had his lighthearted moments. *'One for each…! Imagine that! Let's see if they figure it out! Ha! Ha, Ha—aa!! Goo— one!!!"* Little did the apprentices know, but the master had jokes aplenty and laughs to go **(Cf. Marx; Harvey: industrial time compression).**

They did as the master said, each wondering at his laughter and pondering his statements while one stacked the last splints of wood and tidied up the splitting area, one wrang out and hanged the mop and then dumped the dirty water into a cistern for sedimentation and reuse, and one took note of the last measurement of dry chemicals for a small batch of the master's most coveted and guarded glaze, which he had personally developed through many years of troubled experimentation: *Nepheline Syenite…, 300 grams.*

"'Peaks…?'," they thought nearly aloud. *"'Depths…?' What on Earth does he* meeeeaaan…? *It makes no…"*

But now, with brows furrowed, each hurried so as not to squander the allotted minute already dwindling to seconds in corners of the mind, and it would seem that they were, just now, collectively reading the master's:

"Forget time! Think diamonds!"

Pressure was mounting, and as his apprentices completed their respective tasks, the master advised them on a selection of hand-tools needed for the day's lesson, speaking softly now over his shoulder as he finished his work at hand and prepared his workstation for the transition, removing a final piece from the wheel and placing it onto the ware board beside him for slow, observed curing inside damp-boxes. At his instructions, they gathered wooden ribs and knives, cutting wires and stainless steel pins, buckets of water, sponges, and a few kilos of the clay that one of the apprentices had only yesterday wedged into smooth, malleable mounds, wrapping them in water-dampened swaths of cotton cloth before placing them into a damp-box for storage; the least of them dutifully retrieved from the box an additional mound for the master's use. As they made their various ways to their workstations, little did the apprentices know that they were already on their own, for the master could only guide them to the horizon of what he knew, and it was up to them now to follow him to that point or be left behind. He

waited patiently as they set up their stations, each, in the placement of tools, being doubly guided by incalculable intuition and rational familiarity with the master's practice.

Thank you for your continued service, the master began, standing and bowing as he directly addressed the apprentices before carefully lifting and setting aside his ware board, which now lay loaded with a series of newly thrown pots. With this, he slowly lowered himself again into the seat before his dedicated wheel which, like the others, sat recessed in the floor in the style of a sunken hearth, the lot being arranged in a squared circle. Center of the circle, a brazier glowed with embers for warmth, and a pot of tea simmered on a grate above it alongside four cups and sweet cakes. The master retrieved three cups and poured tea for all, placing the service on a lacquered tray alongside three cakes and passing it around the circle, serving himself only when, moments later, the empty tray had returned to him. The apprentices sat silently as he poured himself a cup of tea, replaced the kettle onto the grate, and retrieved the remaining warmed cake, whereupon the group gave thanks, bowed together, and the master continued:

You've been patient and faithful thus far, and while you may have thought yourselves to be serving only me, you will now see that you've unwittingly been serving yourselves as well. Let's see what you've learned.

If you've paid attention, then your back-breaking labors of the past year should have prepared you well for your journeys to come. With pick, shovel, trowel, and hand, you've dug, sifted, studied, and learned the living variants of clay that now will serve you dutifully in return, each yet taxing you according to its needs. You've swept, scrubbed, mopped, and kept the studio organized and clean and, by now, you've become familiar with the many implements of our craft. You've unselfishly loaded, fired, and unloaded my work from the kilns, all of which I've managed to sell modestly on the market in order to support our operations here. You've studied glaze chemistry and observed the results of their interactions with the elements, and you've mixed as many liters of every gradient of these glazes as I desired. Your patience has brought you here, now, to this moment, and I am grateful for your time and dedication. On your journey forth, I bid you Godspeed. And so, now, let us begin.

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There are openings in the cosmos of things, innumerable openings marked out by virtuals. Rare are those who perceive these openings and attribute any importance to them; rarer still are those who delve into them with creative experimentation.
-David Lapoujade, *The Lesser Existences,* 2021: 26

Apodictic thinkers, or 'dialecticians' […], are interested in working on the conditions in which one can put at a distance and contemplate deixis—and thus passing from monstration *to* de-monstration, *from* showing *to* de-monstrating. *However, these conditions are themselves* monstrative*—they are themselves of the order of* showing; *they cannot be demonstrated or proven. They are what one calls axioms. They are the object of so-called esoteric philosophical teachings that are more like 'initiations' than like education properly speaking—education is 'exoteric' by nature.*
Bernard Stiegler, "The Proletarianization of Sensibility," 2017: 11

The road to mastery is paved through ten years and with the shards of ten thousand pots.
-Riff on a Japanese proverb[2]

[2] In the aforementioned issue of *Ceramics Monthly,* the writer speaks of a Japanese proverb that was reported to have been often repeated by the Japanese potter referenced in that article. While the writer did not provide the original iteration of that maxim in the Japanese language, we are told that the master was fond of telling

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And so, they began, the master finishing his cake and setting aside his teacup before hefting the soft grey-black mound of volcanic clay onto his lap and then squaring up with the wheel. He now took a few deep breaths, tightening and stabilizing his core as he raised the mass chest-high and then dropped it onto the wheel-head, slamming it so that the mound's physical center met with the geometrical center of the circle beneath it. The sound of clay hitting the wooden wheel-head was as of a resounding *Blop?!,* which filled the room and soon dissipated into nothingness.

"Questions already!,"[3] he thought as he adjusted the sleeves of his robe, narrating each step as his charges sat rapt with attention to the subtleties of his every move.

A few words first, the master said, pausing before setting to work on the clay. *Today, I will demonstrate a technique called 'throwing off-the-hump,' and I'll explain each step as we move along, but let me begin by outlining the entire process of making pottery, from working with raw clay to unloading finished pots from the kiln. Take mental notes, and we'll review them as we proceed through the steps over a more or less extended period of time.*

You're already familiar with the process of locating clay deposits along the creeks and streams that run through our property. You've prepared many kilos of clay for use here in the studio and, of course, the lumps that we have before us now are the products of your hard work. But we know that, between lump and kiln, much more work must be added to the clay in order to render it useful, and we can avail ourselves of the use of many tools and techniques to that end. For example, in addition to throwing pots on wheels, we can also roll clay into slabs and build vessels of various forms, dimensions, and sizes by pressing it into or around molds made of, say, glass, plastic, or wood. We can also roll it into coils and hand-build forms, pinching and paddling them into shape. Then again, we can cast forms by creating clay slips, pouring it into plaster molds, and allowing it to set until the pieces can be removed, cured, and fired. The possibilities in the medium are truly endless, and we can say that they are limited only by the potter's imagination, our physical and mental dexterity, our needs and points of view, and the relative availability of very basic tools, our hands being the most essential.

The master paused as if to let the gravity of these last words settle things for the moment, for how often, he wondered, do we actually marvel at the miracle of our hands? He

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his apprentices something to the effect that "achieving pottery mastery requires ten years of practice." We have modified and expanded this sentiment in the form of the epigraph to this section.

[3] See Etienne Souriau on the notion of *artistic instauration*—another of our many central concerns*:* "With regard to the development of the instaurative process, I cannot forget that over the very course of the journey accomplishment, there occur many absolutely innovative acts, many concrete proposals, suddenly improvised in response to the momentary problematic of each stage. Without forgetting all the motivation that occurs with each decision and all that this decision itself adds. To instaur is to follow a path. We determine the being to come in exploring its path. In blooming, the being demands its own existence. In all of this, the agent must yield before the work's own will, must work out what is it wills, and must renounce himself for the sake of this autonomous being, which he seeks to promote in accordance with its own right to existence. Nothing is more important in all forms of creation than this renunciation of the creative subject with respect to the work to-be-made […]. If I gladly take artistic instauration as a model […], it is simply because it is perhaps the most pure of all, the most direct, that in which the experience I am seeking is most accessible and most clearly lived […].

"One of the most notable ways in which the work to-be-made is present in this dialogue between the man and the work, is in the fact that it establishes and maintains a *questioning situation.*

"For let us not forget that the work's effect upon the man never takes the appearance of a revelation. The work to-be-made never says to us: 'Here I am, here is what I should be, a model you have only to copy.' Rather it is a mute dialogue in which the work seems enigmatically, almost ironically to say: 'And what are you going to do now? With what actions are you going to promote or deteriorate me?'" **(2015, 231-232)**

spoke in a continuous, uninterrupted train of thought as though having rehearsed and memorized this spiel a thousand times solely for the purposes of this moment. But as they listened attentively, the apprentices realized that the ease, fluidity, and certainty with which the master addressed them must have been the result of many thousands of hours of practice accumulated through the years and thousands more spent in deep reflection. And since they'd seldom heard him speak more than a few words at a go over the course of the past year, no one dared interrupt him now. **He continued:**

… … …

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The tool, as such, has been characterized as an extension of the hand or of human organs generally. In effect, just as the hand is a tool of the soul, so too to tool is a hand of the soul. Although the fact that it is a tool divorces the hand from the soul, it does not prevent the process of life from flowing through both in intimate unity; their being both apart and together constitutes the unanalyzable secret of life **(Simmel).**

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With clay firmly placed, the master now set the wheel-head in motion with several sure kicks of his right foot to the top edge of the flywheel below; four or five kicks gave it momentum sufficient to executing the next step—wetting his right, which is to say, his throwing hand and, with the tips of his four fingers, sealing the outer edges of the foot of the clay mass to the wheel-head for greater stability. Now, with clay in place, and with a few more kicks of the flywheel in order to maintain constant momentum, he began firmly patting the clay body on opposing sides as it spun on the wheel, thereby compressing lumps and molding the mass into a rough conical shape from base to crown.

We're preparing the clay for centering, the master said, still patting the spinning clay—*the most difficult but crucial step of wheel-throwing. Well, 'crucial,' that is,* he paused reflectively, raising his head, *if you plan to throw* balanced *work, which is what I expect you to teach yourselves to do. Of course, I can demonstrate my techniques to you, and be sure that I'll share with you all that I know, but please understand and always remember that I can teach you nothing, per se. All things beyond sheer technique are secrets that you'll have to discover and learn on your own. Any questions so far?*

The apprentices remained silent, so that the master now took a few more deep breaths and continued.

I'm right-handed, and you'll notice that I spin the wheel counterclockwise, like so, he said, demonstrating his method of kicking the flywheel tangentially, roughly along the 170-to-70-degree arc for maximum torque, the sole of his right foot centered on the top edge of the flywheel, his leg snapping straight so that the heel of his foot hovered just above the floor as he completed the move and the wheel-head spun with renewed vigor. He now dipped both hands into the bucket of water, wetting them to the wrists, and clasped the clay mound at its peak, firmly compressing roughly the mass of a baseball between palms and fingers as he gave a few more kicks to the flywheel.

Yes…, throwing off-the-hump, he continued. *This technique entails throwing centered pieces 'off' the top of a larger, more-or-less centered lump of clay. Of course, the more clay with which you begin, the more pieces you can throw, but you must take care not to overstrain your backs, as this work takes a toll on the body through years of consistent practice. Take care of your bodies!,* he said with emphasis. *They're the only one's you'll ever have.*

With a few more kicks of the wheel, the master fell to thinking about bodies—*clay bodies, human bodies,* and *the bodies of ceramic forms*—each with its organs and appendages, its movements and inertia, its curvatures and contours, its vectors and coefficients of resistance **(CP. D+G, AO)**. Now, as the clay spun in the palms of his hands, he mixed and compressed the mass, now laterally, as in a motion of bringing the palms firmly together and slowly, with subtle control forcing the clay upward and through the hands, and now more or less vertically forcing the clay downward again with the interphalangeal joint of his right thumb. It was at this point that he began again to lose himself in reverie, mesmerized as he observed his hands in their near-autonomous movement and contemplated their ordered but supple mechanisms and infinite range of expression. And now, as his right leg again went to work, reinvigorating the wheel-head with a series of kicks to the flywheel and his hands further mixed and compressed the baseball-sized mass of clay, it occurred to him that, perhaps just as the diversity of linguistic systems are built upon underlying logics, so too did the hand have its own *logos* **(Cf., Cp., Ct. Stiegler, Nishida; Heidegger, esp. *Being & Time, Poetry, Language, Thought; What is Called Thinking?*).** Through the formal constraints of syntax and grammar, tone and phoneme, and the many systems of alphabetic, pictographic, numeric, and hieroglyphic representation, languages serve as machines-tools that enable us to build, maintain, and modify vast systems of thought—*worlds,* even, the master mused—each possessing its own dynamic nomenclature, rules, and conventions. So too with the hand… … …

If we imagine the hand in its open and closed aspects, each of these representing a certain *orientation* **(Cf. Stegmaier)** with respect to the given worlds that it encounters and the new worlds that it seeks to instaur, then perhaps we can imagine each of the myriad aspects between these two extremes as constituting, with them, an expressive continuum, the forms of expression themselves being determined by the tools and materials that the hand selects, grasps, and utilizes from within its momentary standpoints and perspectives **(Cf., Cp., Ct. Nishida, Levinas, Deleuze, Stegmaier).** … … …

These were worthy considerations for every potter, he thought, and he would address them by turns and in due time. For now, though, he would set these aside and demonstrate a technique so as to send the apprentices on their variously meandering ways. … … …