Chapter nine

Instinct, Intuition, the Unconscious & Still Water

THE INTUITIVE LIVES OF ENTREPRENEURS correspond in many ways with artists who, by nature, tend to approach their work instinctively. Through a presentation of some of the intuitive aspects that have framed the art of greats such as Bob Dylan, Bill Evans and Jackson Pollock, this section provides a more thorough exploration of the muse. The tendency to self-learn, moments of transcendent otherworldliness, an avoidance of deliberation, and bouts of work frenzy arc all referenced as signatures typical of such artistry. Examples of "still-water" moments arc considered where, whether awake or asleep, creativity has manifested serendipitously.

> Art is a marriage of the conscious and the unconscious.
> JEAN COCTEAU[1]

> Man lives consciously for himself, but is an unconscious instrument in the attainment of historic, universal aims of humanity.
> LEO TOLSTOY[2]

> [A]rt belongs to the unconscious! One must express oneself! Express oneself directly! Not one's taste, or one's upbringing, or one's intelligence, knowledge or skill. Not all these acquired characteristics, but that which is unborn, instinctive.
> ARNOLD SCHOENBERG[3]

Picking up on themes introduced in Chapters One (the artistic sensibility) and Three (passion), this chapter offers a fuller examination of the role of inspiration in art through the interrelated facets of instinct and intuition, and the role of nonconsciousness. To begin, a brief definition of each:

Instinct

Instinctive behaviour generally manifests without any prior incidents of practice or learning. A first-time mother bear will suckle her young, a batch of newly hatched turtles will head down to the sea and dogs will shake their coats when wet. These are all instances of instinctive behaviour in the sense that they are innate and hardwired.[4]

Intuition

Intuition is understood as a subconscious thought pattern acquired through a process of conditioning. Conceptualised as rapid and automatic, intuitive behaviour is seen to be learnt, while innate instinctive behaviour is not.5 In this sense, when R.E.M.'s Peter Buck says he "couldn't tell you what a single one of the songs on Van Morrison's Veedon Fleece is about, but I think it's one of the greatest albums ever made",[6] he would be talking about the role of intuitive appreciation honed over years of listening to music.[7]

Non-consciousness

Non-consciousness or terms such as "subconscious" or "unconscious" are sometimes used to denote instances of non-rational and/or divine insight and inspiration that lie beyond the bounds of what science might attempt to explain. Psychologist Carl Jung said the unconscious is "the world behind the conscious world", from which creative processes arise independent of the waking will. "All art," he maintained, "intuitively apprehends coming changes in the collective unconsciousness."[8] US author Cormac McCarthy is in no doubt as to the authority and power of the ulterior world. "The sense of the subconscious and its role in your life is just something you can't ignore," he said.[9]

According to the ancients, the manifestation of inspiration was like the outpouring of heavenly fire, such as when the muse is woken in artistic bouts of creative passion. Alternately, when not freely given, inspiration may be viewed as something to be stolen. According to Greek mythology, the superhuman Prometheus stole fire from the gods at Mount Olympus. He gave it to humanity and so allowed them to cultivate higher order purposes such as architecture, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, writing and metalwork. Upon hearing what Prometheus had done, Zeus became angry and had him carried off to Mount Caucasus. There, he was tied to a rock and each day an eagle would descend to eat off lobes of his liver. Each night his liver would regrow and each day the eagle would return, in a cycle of unending agony.

In examining the role of inspiration in the dynamics of art, much of this book has pointed to the primacy of intuition. From the perspective of business, however,

the role of inspiration appears less celebrated, though of course it has always been there. By way of an introduction, some of these instances are presented below. In such cases, as you will see, the individuals cited either gave up university entirely or dropped out, considering formal education irrelevant, probably because they already possessed the necessary knowledge and insight to achieve their ends or what they were being taught was not helping them to do what they wanted or what was interesting.

Following intuition's siren call, the dyslexic Richard Branson never even went to university. On completing school in 1972, Steve Jobs was also well aware of the importance of gut feel. He dropped out almost immediately from UCLA after he'd become interested in the possibilities of typesetting on word processing software programs. By this point he'd understood that "an intuitive understanding and consciousness was more significant than abstract thinking and intellectual logical analysis". Following a two-year sojourn in India, Jobs observed how much emphasis Americans seemed to place on rationality rather than intuition. "Corning back to America was, for me, much more of a cultural shock than going to India," he reflected later. "The people in the Indian countryside don't use their intellect like we do, they use their intuition instead, and their intuition is far more developed than in the rest of the world. Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect, in my opinion." Jobs opined that Western rationality was not innate; it was acquired. "In the villages in India, they never learned it," he observed. "They learned something else, which is in some ways just as valuable but in other ways not. That's the power of intuition and experiential wisdom."[10] The extent to which Jobs shunned focus-group-based research in favour of intuitive market assessments is well documented. "Did Alexander Graham Bell do any market research before he invented the telephone?" he once asked.[11] Customers simply do not know what they want, he maintained. "I think Henry Ford once said, 'If I'd asked customers what they wanted, they would have told me, "A faster horse!"' "People don't know what they want until you show it to them. That's why l never rely on market research. Our task is to read things that are not yet on the page."[12] Bill Gates dropped out of university in his second year at Harvard. Seizing the opportunity to develop and sell software to a computer hardware company, he and then partner Paul Allen moved on directly to form Microsoft. Larry Page and Sergey Brin are two other dropouts, abandoning their Stanford PhD studies in 1996 to launch the online Google search engine in the garage of close friend and now CEO of You Tube, Susan Wojcicki. Prior to its subsequent incorporation in September 1998, Google had run on the Stanford servers as google.stanford.edu and z.stanford.edu.[13] As of January 2017, their combined wealth stood at $78 billion.

Another notable dropout is Mark Zuckerberg. As a Harvard sophomore studying computer science and psychology, Zuckerberg wrote a program to enable users to select courses based on the choices of other students. He also designed a program that allowed students to choose the "hottest" student from a selection of posted photos, creating a ranking of "hotness" across the campus. In one weekend it crashed the campus servers and was promptly closed down. Undeterred by the censure that followed, Zuckerberg soon started coding thefacebook.com, going live in February 2004. Thirteen years later, as Face book CEO, Zuckerberg was worth $53.6 billion, making him the tenth wealthiest individual on the planet.[14]

Though such dramatic walkouts might prove overly alarming to most parents, Gates' father, Bill Gates Snr, was unperturbed by his son's varsity exit, believing that parents need to trust their children's instincts and give them the freedom to follow their dreams. Reflecting on the success of Bill Jnr, he said: "Perhaps there's a lesson for the parents of other curious children who, from the start, require the freedom to meet life on their own terms: It is that there is no statute of limitations on the dreams you have for your children. And there is no way to predict how much delight you might feel when those dreams are realized in a far different way than you could have imagined."[15]

Though no dropout, South Africa's Sol Kerzner was another business genius given early degrees of freedom. As a youngster, he was passionate about music and his parents encouraged him to explore this creative side. "When I was six, I played in a talent contest at the old Metro Cinema in Bree Street," said Kerzner. "As a kid of twelve, I played with the symphony orchestra on the Johannesburg City Hall stage, playing great classics."[16] Though his musical interests developed no further, you can speculate that it was his parents' flexibility that taught him to follow his instincts in the hotel trade where, today, he is worth $400 million.[17]

Though such cases are poorly documented, the instinctive flair of these entrepreneurs corresponds in many ways with artistic examples that now follow. Examining the work of artists such as Bob Dylan, Bill Evans and Jackson Pollock reveals the essential role of - among other things - instinct, intuition and the unconscious.

Bob Dylan

Due to his lack of formal musical training, much of Dylan's artistic practice seems driven by intuition and instinct. In 1952, as an 11-year-old in Hibbing, Minnesota, Bob Zimmerman and his six-year-old brother, David, were offered piano lessons on the family's Gulbransen spinet by his cousin Harriet Rutstein. As their uncle Lewis Stone later recalled: "David, who was a very, very smart boy, took it all in ... and he

could play better than Bob. He was very musically inclined." Bob, however, became exasperated with the formality of these lessons and soon packed it in, preferring instead to teach himself.[18] Today he is a more than proficient player of the guitar, harmonica and piano, though like Eric Clapton, Robert Johnson, Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, Robin Gibb, Lionel Ritchie and Michael Jackson, Dylan can neither read nor notate music. With sufficient practice, however, Dylan soon developed his own approach to crafting music. Just a decade after his rejection of piano lessons, the now rapidly maturing singer-songwriter reflected on his songwriting abilities: "The songs are there. They exist all by themselves just waiting for someone to write them down. I just put them down on paper ... If I didn't do it, somebody else would." Following his initial breakthrough in New York, Dylan moved upstate to the then unknown village of Woodstock (population 3000), rooming in a bedsitter above the local Cafe Espresso coffee shop. Its then owner, Bernard Paturel, recalled how Dylan would scatter photos and pictures on the floor, stalking out images and word associations. "He was like an abstract painter composing a picture," said Paturel.[19] In the summer of 1963, he hooked up with folk queen Joan Baez, who subsequently described his method of song capture: "Bob stood at the typewriter in the corner of his room, drinking red wine and smoking and tapping away relentlessly for hours. And in the dead of night, he would wake up, grunt, grab a cigarette, and stumble over to the typewriter again."[20] Later that year Dylan moved in with Baez. Her friend Nancy Carlen recalled how, when in songwriting mode, he would stand by the window with its Carmel Valley mountain view and, Hemingway-style, peck-type on an old typewriter while simultaneously picking out the rudiments of a tune on the old piano. "He'd drink black coffee all the morning and then, at lunchtime, he would switch to rot-gut red [wine]. And he would drink red rot-gut the rest of the day."[21] According to reports, most of the Dylan songs of this period arrived close to completion, though the writing of "Mr Tambourine Man" in 1964 is reported to have taken a "lengthier" two months.

Bill Evans

Another deeply intuitive artist was the influential jazz pianist Bill Evans. His two live sets recorded in 1961, Waltz for Debby and Sunday at the Village Vanguard, are regularly cited as the greatest jazz albums of all time. Five years later, he collaborated with his brother, college music teacher Harry Evans, to produce a filmed recording explaining the creative process as he saw it. In the recording, Evans acknowledged that practice was required to attain mastery, though this, he believed, was merely an intermediary step towards elevating the aspirant jazz pianist to a position where he could instinctively articulate his art. Such play, he maintained, was connected to a

universal consciousness: a higher state of collective genius based on a form of unconscious collaboration across all of humanity. “I believe that all people are in possession of what I call a universal musical mind,” he said. “Any true music speaks with this universal mind to the universal mind in all people. The understanding that results will vary only insofar as people have or have not been conditioned to the various styles of music in which the universal mind speaks. Consequently, some effort and exposure is often necessary to understand some of the music from a different period or a -different culture - the knack to which the listener has been conditioned.”[22]

Agreeing with this interpretation, his brother, Harry, explained that a successful artist's playing style would eventually emerge from “that mysterious interior well of inspiration”, though he did concede that the mastery of musical fundamentals was critical to developing musical competence. This, he maintained, was not linked just to the technical facility of playing, but also to the brain's connection to the arm muscle. This neurophysiological development component was critical, developing the artist's competence, as he put it, “to the point where the subconscious mind can take over the basic mechanical task of playing, thus freeing the conscious to concentrate on the spontaneous creative element that distinguishes the best jazz and the best of human activity'”. This, he said, mimics the process of driving a car, where mechanical operations such as braking are relegated to the automatic processes of the brain, freeing up the more creative, neurological components to engage in more cognitive processes like making conversation or adjusting the music.

In the same documentary, Bill added that learning jazz required relocating the technical problems of playing from the outer layer of cognition to the inner level of the unconscious. Each separate component of technique requires intense levels of concentration until the operations of playing become secondary and subconscious. “Now when that becomes subconscious then you can begin concentrating on that next problem which will allow you to do a little bit more - and so on and so on,” said Evans. So it was that, after just 10 years of jazz practice, Evans began to feel a degree of expression and the ability to lay out his unconscious feelings through the craft of his musicianship. “We must remember that in an absolute sense jazz is more of a certain process of spontaneity than a style”, he said.[23]

Such was the unconscious dimension of jazz that, at first, Evans failed to recognise its pull on his life. “It's obvious now that jazz is the most central and important thing in my life, yet I never knew that,” he said. “I was involved with jazz - like I went to college; I got a teacher's degree - so that I could teach; but when the moment came - bang - I went out into jazz. It was like it was so much a part of my inner life and I didn't realise it. If you ask a kid what you want to be when you grow up - I would have said anything because I didn't really know and I don't think many

children do. So I just became involved with jazz – that it was a natural road and it just pulled me here and pulled me there and finally it revealed itself as the most important thing in my life."

Evans believed that - beyond the rudiments of piano playing - the higher planes of jazz art required discovery through self-learning. "The jazz player, if he's going to ultimately be a serious jazz player, teaches himself," he insisted.[24] Harry Evans recalled that when his famous younger brother stopped by for a week's visit, he had hoped to pick up a few trade secrets. Following four days of constant badgering, Bill reportedly told Harry: "Well, I don't want to deprive you of the pleasure of finding this out for yourself, and for that reason, I'm not going to show you a thing. If you sit at the keyboard and get into it yourself, it'll be a marvelous experience."[25]

This notion of self-discovery twins well with his other view that, in the art of jazz, instinct should always trump deliberation. The liner notes to Miles Davis' 1959 album Kind of Blue (featuring Bill Evans) illustrate this by describing a style of Japanese calligraphy that requires brushwork using watered-down black paint over a thin tissue-like parchment. Erasure is impossible and the visual integrity of the work is destroyed if the brushstroke is hesitant, unsure, overly deliberate or unnatural. Just as easily, a lack of skill can rupture the delicate parchment. Because of these constrictions, wrote Evans, "[t]hese artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere".[26]

For the haunting music he produced, which expressed a creative mastery of rhythm, harmony and interpretive conception, Evans was nominated for 31 Grammy awards, ultimately receiving seven. In 1994, he was posthumously awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jackson Pollock

One of the greatest artistic intuitives was the reclusive Jackson Pollock, perhaps the icon of the mid-20th-century period of Abstract Expressionism. From the late '40s until his death in an alcohol-related motor accident in 1956, the mercurial Pollock came to typify, if not own, this genre. Typical of an Outsider artist, Pollock's initial training was haphazard, with an early spell under the madcap Mexican Social Realist David Alfaro Siqueiros, and then, at 22, a year under the American Regionalist Thomas Hart Benton. Pollock was especially taken with Benton's hard-drinking machismo. This would prove a fatal attraction for the soon alcohol-addicted Pollock. Though in many ways alcoholism defined his artistic temperament, there is speculation that his aggressive use of drink ultimately shut down his access to the

muse. When, however, the muse was unleashed, the artistic results were profound. As fellow Abstract Expressionist George McNeil noted: “What is interesting about Pollock is that he came from very bad influences like Benton and the Mexican muralists and other anti-painterly influences, and yet, somehow, in a kind of alchemy, he took all the negatives and made them into a positive. It's a mystery. The rest of us were following the right path, and therefore the magic didn't issue.”[27]

To trace the source of Pollock's brilliance, it is worth tracking back to the development of Mural, his first fully representative work, painted in 1944 for the New York socialite and art collector Peggy Guggenheim, and now at the University of Iowa. Though Mural was painted almost solely by brush, like so many of the great works that followed, it was reportedly completed in a cataclysmic one shot all-night-and-day session. Its mesmerising, whirling energy represents a step change in Pollock's canvas work, with signature 11th -hour sessions of blinding passion and fury. Though Pollock had never been given to regimented patterns of work and was well acquainted with numbing periods of unproductivity, the frenzied work-attack on Mural now became his template. It had been his most agonising and most rewarding period of work thus far. Importantly, Mural was his first large canvas commission and, according to Howard Putzel, one of Guggenheim's artistic advisors, designed to establish “whether a larger scale would release the force contained in Pollock's smaller paintings”.[28] For a long time, this release was not forthcoming. In the months following the delivery of the substantial 2. 7 x 6.1-metre canvas to Pollock's studio, the artist was rendered immobile, though the November deadline loomed ever closer. Attempting to make progress, he made a number of preliminary sketches but to no avail. Over this period, his wife, Lee Krasner, recalled finding him staring blankly at the vast canvas and “getting more and more depressed”.[29] As the weeks ticked by, the now irate Peggy Guggenheim stipulated that the painting was to be completed in time for a January party at her apartment. Yet still nothing happened. And then, according to the catalogued notes that still accompany the painting, as the final deadline approached, Pollock cast himself over a creative cliff, painting non-stop with frenzied passion throughout the night and until nine the following morning. “I had a vision,” he recalled some time thereafter. “It was a stampede... cows and horses and antelope and buffaloes. Everything was charging across the goddamn surface.”[30] Close inspection of the painting yields little of what he described, though what is present is a driving, rhythmic energy- the painting being transposed into some kind of force field. Though Pollock had produced smaller drip paintings prior to this, it was this rendering of a primal and unconscious battle zone that marked the break from his previous work and characterised all his important pieces from then on. The transition was not, however, immediate. For almost three years afterwards, sustained bouts of lethargy,

drunkenness and self-doubt kept the muse at bay. Then, in early 1947, Pollock reconnected with his earlier magic and used drip-work on an ever-increasing scale. Art historian Martin Gayford called it one of art's most incredible ugly-duckling-into-swan transformations ever. “All the effortfulness, laboriousness, the sense of congestion that hung over his earlier work disappeared,” he said. “He became graceful, airborne. Suddenly he is flying.”[31]

One interpretation of Pollock's work is that his drips were transcribing figures from a distance above the canvas - in much the same way as a jazz musician might riff off a well-known song. He was not, he insisted, “just throwing the paint”.[32] Whatever the case, his connection with the non-rational was profound. “He painted like a machine,” said Nick Carone, another Abstract Expressionist, “but the machine was clicking away at another level. It was a conscious, unconscious dialogue.”[33] “When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing,” explained Pollock. “It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that l see what I have been about. I have no fear of making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.”[34]

Most times, Pollock found it difficult to describe the source of his inspiration. “I don't know where my paintings come from, they just come,” he said.[35] It was all a process of self-discovery, where “every artist paints what he is”. Driven to self-express, Pollock spent himself, utterly. “I have seen him come out of the studio like a wet rag,” observed fellow Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman. Much of his behaviour was coarse. Tormented as if by demons, he was famously rude to guests and prone to tantrums, and would suffer sustained periods of drunken self-alienation. Joseph Henderson, his psychoanalyst, was of the opinion that he was “basically uneducated ... [though] highly intelligent, much more so than he appeared, but it was all intuitive. His inability to express ideas went both ways - he couldn't absorb words, and he couldn't use them, but he picked up the subtlest nonverbal signals.”[36]

Immediately following his death and then again in 1967, Pollock's work appeared in retrospective exhibitions at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Pollock has withstood the vicissitudes of time. In the late '90s, his work was featured in major exhibitions at London's Tate and again at MoMA. It continues to sell at astronomical prices. In 2013, his Number 19 (1948) sold for $58 million and, three years later, his Number 17 A sold for a reported $200 million.

The Download

In the art of songwriting, Neil Young believes in something that lies beyond the bounds of instinct and intuition. “I don't feel the need to write a song. It's not like that,” he said. “It's almost like the song feels the need for me to write it and I'm just there. It's not like I'm doing a job. Songwriting, for me, is like a release. It's not a craft. Crafts usually involve a bit of training and expertise and you draw on your experiences - but if you're thinking about that while you're writing, don't! If I can do it without thinking about it I'm doing great.”[37] In 1971, Young admitted that, when in the right space, he had little control over the songwriting process. “I don't know where it comes from. It just comes out,” he said. “Seems like even when I'm happy, I write about bein' lonesome. I don't know why. And you're asking about images I write, like 'the burned-out basement' and all that - I really don't know where that comes from. I just see pictures. I just see pictures in my eyes. And sometimes I can't get them to come, y'know, but then if I just get high or something, and if I just sit there and wait, all of a sudden it comes gushing out. I just got to get to the right level. It's like having a mental orgasm.”[38]

Sting also believes that songwriting is largely an unconscious process. “You have to get into a state where you just allow things to come through,” he explained. “Which begs the question: are you writing anything or is it being written for you in some other, collective unconscious? I don't know the answer to that. Often I think you write good stuff ... it's kind of religious, but when you're in a state of grace, when you're not trying to do anything. You have no agenda. You have no end in mind. You have no care what happens next. You're just in the moment and then things just come to you. It's rare but I try as much as possible to get into that state. True freedom is not caring what happens next. There are certain jobs where that would be dangerous, but in songwriting it's OK.”[39]

Asked to comment on Lee Mavers' (of The La's) view that songwriters served as conduits to songs from the ether, Sting said: “I agree ... There's a degree of grandiosity in that statement but we really don't write songs. They pre-exist. We find them like an archaeologist. It's my experience ... it feels that way. Even though I've put the work in and I've done the graft they seem like they're already there. The best songs are that way. That's paradoxical. What a great privilege, some great fucking songwriter out there!”[40]

Responding to a question about whether the muse had stayed with him over time, Ray Davies of The Kinks carefully replied: “To a degree ... Alone in a quiet room I tend to be too reverential of the space needed. It's the old Jimmy Webb theory: apparently when he wrote 'Up, Up and Away' and the hits for the 5th Dimension

group, he lived in a car and had a very transient lifestyle. According to folklore he had all the success, bought a fantastic house, put a studio in it and then couldn't write."[41]

As with Jimmy Webb, Paul Simon's initial songwriting period appears to have drawn on instinct and intuition. When asked where pieces like "Bridge over Troubled Water" and "The Sounds of Silence" came from, Simon confessed that he had no idea. All this changed following his break-up with Art Garfunkel, when it seems that the muse deserted him. To this extent, so doubtful was he that he would ever replicate his earlier songs that he commenced formal songwriting lessons, forsaking the non-conscious traditions laid down by Evans, Dylan, Pollock and indeed himself. It seems unbelievable that Simon would break so with his art, though, as many golfers will acknowledge, when intuitive muscle memory fails, you need to fall back on the discipline of practice. That he would title one of his subsequent solo albums One Trick Pony (1980) is testament to the continual doubts harboured by this truly great songwriter. In a 1992 interview, Simon seemed to have come full circle, equating songwriting to wandering down a path without an obvious endpoint. "Somewhere, toward the end, you can sort of see what the destination is and you can understand what the journey is about," he said. "At which point, if I want, I can go alter some of the things that occurred to set it up. But usually I don't. It usually just goes along as a story that I'm telling, and I'm a listener, and at a certain point I say, 'Oh! That's what it's about.' ... But that part of the process, I really can't explain it. I don't really know why an idea comes to me."[42]

These examples return us to a dynamic already introduced: that in art, genius is typically manifested during states of higher consciousness or enlightenment. Alternately, for the artist, there are periods when he is reduced to the status of a journeyman, when there is simply no inspiration, no clear-cut direction, and when the output is simply ordinary. In Art and the Creative Consciousness, art historian Graham Collier compares two horse sketches by the French Romantic painter Eugéne Delacroix, namely, The Constable of Bourbon and his Conscience (1835), and Study for Attila (1843-47). Though the two works are ostensibly similar, Collier disagrees, suggesting that, while inspiration and genius are clearly evident in the former, in the latter they are not. In The Constable of Bourbon and his Conscience, Collier observes how, for example, "the volumes of man and horse push through space; slow, liquid, and sensual lines run with lines which are broken, brittle, and speedy ... Such formal eloquence carries its own psychological power – a dramatic mood is created by these sensuous rhymes ... Then one becomes involved with the detachment and uncomfortable posture of the man on the horse ... a man riding alone but accompanied by the unremitting and unseen presence of the 'other self' - and so the image intensifies its specific psychological hold over us."[43] Collier argues that Study for Attila is,

however, more conventional and - though it contains a degree of vitality - it is almost wooden by comparison. The elevated vision is simply not there. Unlike The Constable of Bourbon, it does not generate the degree of sentiment in those observers who possibly share the same feelings as the artist.

I have viscerally understood this capacity to move audiences through art, having wept before sketches by Kathe Kollwitz and while reading passages by Patrick White. How could I be so profoundly moved by drawings and novels so far removed from my immediate and material life? The answer is surely that these pieces, like many works of great art, were deeply inspired in moments of heightened consciousness: their creators believing that what they had to say mattered, not just for them but for us as well. Imagine how this occurs: across time and distance, the enlightened artist reaches out to a receiver, a "you", daring you, challenging you, to feel and believe and perceive and empathise and live this particular way. In certain respects, though the underlying intent of such art is premeditated as in "I feel the need to write or paint this particular piece today" - the process of inspiration and its outcome are invariably not. Most great art is not, in this sense, preconceived. Collier noted critically that elevated inspiration of this sort occurs when strong and spontaneous fluxes from the subconscious are thrust up to override the conventional processes of logic-driven cognition.44 Plato agreed, writing that "the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind no longer in him, when he has not attained this state he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles".[45]

Michelangelo scholar Robert Clements had no doubt, too, that the great Italian artist created supraliminally and subliminally "out of his nights without rest, out of meditations, dreams, ecstasies"46 And we know that Pollock was similarly controlled by the unconscious. The Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke is known to have produced his finest work in a single period of artistic frenzy. In 1922, over a period of just three weeks, in a "savage creative storm", Rilke wrote a cycle of 55 sonnets entitled The Sonnets to Orpheus, while at the same time completing the Duino Elegies, a series of poems that he had been working on for 10 years. Both pieces are regarded as his finest contributions to German literature. Writing to a former lover, Rilke described this period as " ... a boundless storm, a hurricane of the spirit, and whatever inside me is like thread and webbing, framework, it all cracked and bent. No thought of food."[47] When subject to the muse, Russian painter Kazimir Malevich was similarly racked, describing a netherworld where "the contours of the objective world fade more and more".[48]

Such transcendence has also been reported in sport. For example, in the intense heat of play, every so often the NBA basketball great William (Bill) Russell

experienced a similar feeling of otherworldliness. “That feeling is difficult to describe,” he wrote, “and I certainly never talked about it when I was playing. When it happened, I could feel my play rise to a new level ... The game would move so quickly that every fake, cut, and pass would be surprising, and yet nothing could surprise me. It was almost as if we were playing in slow motion. During those spells, I could almost sense how the next play would develop and where the next shot would be taken ... My premonitions would be consistently correct, and I always felt then that I not only knew all the Celtics by heart, but also all the opposing players, and that they all knew me. There have been many times in my career when I felt moved or joyful, but these were the moments when I had chills pulsing up and down my spine.”[49]

Gary Kirsten, the South African cricketer who coached India to World Cup glory in 2011, also acknowledged the role of transcendence during his years as opening batsman for South Africa. “When you are in the zone, it is like heaven on earth,” said Kirsten, who described the space as being without external noise. It allows you plenty of time to think and there is only the present, reported the left-hander. In a sport where international fast bowlers are regularly timed at 150kph, batting in the zone made Kirsten feel invincible. “No bowler can bowl too quickly for you when are in the zone,” he reflected.[50]

Tennis legend Billie Jean King expressed a similar experience: “It's a perfect combination of ... violent action taking place in an atmosphere of total tranquillity,” she observed. “When it happens I want to stop the match and grab the microphone and shout, ‘That's what it's all about'. Because it is. It's not the big prize I'm going to win at the end of the match, or anything else. It's just having done something that's totally pure and having experienced the perfect emotion, and I'm always sad that I can't communicate that feeling right at the moment it's happening.”[51]

When inspired to write, English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge was also intensely aware of himself operating in the experience, as if he were birthing something already within himself. “In looking at objects of nature,” he wrote, “as at yonder moon dim glimmering through the dewy window pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolic language for something within me that forever and already exists, than observing anything new. Even when the latter is the case yet still I have always an obscure feeling, as if that new phenomenon were a dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature.”[52] Bob Dylan felt the same, stating that for creativity to spark, you must pay attention to the dynamics of your inner world. “There is no guidance at all except from one's natural senses,” he said.[53] Poet laureate Seamus Heaney wrote similarly of W.B. Yeats' frog-like ability to live “the

amphibious inner and outer world", adding: "Being in two places at once is, of course, the only way."[54]

A lad insane

This leads to a further interesting question. If artists are required to be "amphibian", living in a littoral zone that connects the land of logic to the subliminal sea, what occurs when the undertow proves too strong? Inevitably, there is a price to pay and, in most cases, the penalty comes in some form of mental breakdown. Here, David Bowie's descent into the psychotic underworld provides a cautionary tale.

Though spurred by a hitherto restrained use of drugs, it is known that Bowie was prone to hallucination well before his period of cocaine addiction. In "Oh You Pretty Things" (1971), for example, he described a hand reaching down from a crack in the sky, which was inspired by one of his earlier visions.[55] "The fine line between the dream state and reality is, at times, quite grey," he once observed.[56] His mid-'70s descent into a drug-crazed, psychotic hell was more than mere hallucination, however. By 1975, ensconced in the Helter-Skelter-New-Age-Anything-Goes culture of L.A., Bowie was living on a simple diet of milk, peppers and cocaine. A coked-out junkie, Bowie veered into the realms of psycho-fracture, at one point becoming increasingly obsessed with the idea that witches were trying to steal his semen. From his window he reportedly witnessed dead bodies falling from the sky. Convinced that he had attracted some kind of curse, Bowie drew protective pentagrams around his $300,000 Art Deco mansion and studied a then 40-year-old book by Dion Fortune entitled Psychic Self-Defense, which explained how to understand the signs of a psychic attack, vampirism, hauntings, and methods of defence.[57] According to his then-wife, Angie, when the book's defensive spells proved ineffectual, the unhinged Bowie contacted a white witch from New York to perform an exorcism on his indoor swimming pool in which, he was convinced, Satan had taken up residence. During the exorcism, the waters of the pool were said to have thrashed and bubbled, leaving a dark stain at the bottom. At his wit's end and while at the same time filming The Man who Fell to Earth, Bowie penned the remarkable "Word on a Wing" for the 1975 album Station to Station, in which he beseeches the "Lord" to release him from his spiritual torment. While it is difficult to infer from the lyrics whom he refers to as "Lord", in an interview with NME magazine, Bowie confessed that the song was directed towards Jesus. "There were days of such psychological terror ... that I nearly started to approach my reborn, born again thing," said Bowie. "It was the first time I'd really seriously thought about Christ and God in any depth, and 'Word on a Wing' was a protection. It did come as a complete revolt against elements that I found in the film. The passion in the song was genuine... something I needed to produce from

within myself to safeguard myself against some of the situations I felt were happening on the film set." This was as close as Bowie would ever come to publically admitting a faith in God. "The minute you know you're on safe ground, you're dead," he flippantly rationalised sometime later to Playboy magazine.[58]

Although the effect of his drug addiction and dabblings in the occult suggested that he would never break free, Bowie's release from this tormented period was triggered by the "left field" insinuation of an arrestingly beautiful album of contemplative solitude by the avant-garde musician Brian Eno. Originally a member of the art-rock group Roxy Music, Eno, who did not play any musical instruments, became interested in electronically based recording techniques, releasing a series of low-volume albums aimed to alter your awareness of the environment. The composer Erik Satie called this "furniture music", in the sense that it could provide the backdrop to an occasion. The first of these "furniture" albums was inspired when, in January 1975, Eno was hospitalised following a car accident. To facilitate his recovery, Eno's girlfriend brought him an album of 18th-century harp music. When playing the album, the volume was too low but Eno did not have the strength to get out of bed to adjust it, so he left it to play at a level that was barely audible. He was captivated by the consequent "ambient" effect of this music, commenting later that "this presented what was for me a new way of hearing music - as part of the ambience of the environment just as the colour of the light and the sound of the rain were parts of that ambience".[59] Inspired by this experience, when he recovered, Eno recorded a "low sonic" album that incorporated variations of Johann Pachelbel's Canon in D Major. Entitled Discreet Music and released in 1975, this ambient music was a world first. It was made up of just four instrumental pieces, the longest of which ran for 31 minutes. Its effect was hauntingly peaceful.

Remarkably, it was this Discreet Music that Bowie latched onto over the Station to Station recording period of September to November 1975. Reflecting on his first interaction with Bowie, Eno said that Discreet Music was "the only thing he would listen to for a long time", its dreamy effect seeming to shift Bowie out of his tormented darkness and into a place of quiet and peace. Bowie was so moved by the ambience of Discreet Music that he contacted Eno, asking him to collaborate with him to set up similar "sonic scenarios" to work off in future recordings.[60] Eno accepted the proposal and, in late 1976, Bowie decamped to West Berlin to commence working with him. Aside from Ziggy Stardust (1972), this collaboration would prove the pinnacle of Bowie's creative output, realising three critically acclaimed albums all recorded in Berlin. This so-called Berlin Trilogy of Low, Heroes and Lodger is now cast in the firmament of sonic art.

In addition to contributing fundamentally to Bowie's emotional and creative breakthrough, Brian Eno is also known for his critique of the notion that art is generally spawned by lone, genius types such as Bowie and Dylan, and for offering an alternate view on the source of great ideas. When in art school, Eno was "encouraged to believe that there were a few great figures like Picasso and Kandinsky, Rembrandt and Giotto and so on who sort of appeared out of nowhere and produced artistic revolution". Eno, however, concluded that this was not necessarily so. For example, pivotal political and artistic events around the time of the Russian Revolution were driven within a vibrant ecology of many like-minded thinkers, tinkerers and artists. The same can be said of artistic events in medieval Florence under the Medicis or in San Francisco with music and computers during the mid-'70s. To incorporate this view of synergistic creativity, Eno came up with the term "scenius", which, as he put it, is "the intelligence of a whole ... operation or group of people".[61] The notion of scenius is similar to Bill Evans' conceptualisation of the "universal mind of music", with Jung's view of a collective unconscious, and also with the German term "Zeitgeist" or "spirit of the time". Instances of such mutually conceived art, Eno maintained, were surely connected to such a universal ecology of minds.

Eno's more recent reflections regarding the intent behind his collaboration with artists such as Bowie, Talking Heads and Coldplay is revealing about the purpose that drives art. "I think that they are inviting me to work with them for the same reason - they want to go somewhere different," said Eno. "[A]rtists don't just want to have the same hit over and over again. It's boring. The thrill of being an artist is going somewhere that you haven't been before ... I was always interested to see what was new for the band; what was exciting for them and to try to make something of that. So I think that's why I was asked to produce a lot of records."[62]

To conclude this section: from the examples cited here, perhaps inspiration should not be interpreted as a simple combination of intellect and capacity. Rather, it appears as if creativity is bestowed on those who empty themselves of their cognitive powers. The artistic "evidence" seems to suggest that genuine, creative inspiration is afforded to those who prize the spiritual/non-material virtues of art above everything else. The muse tires of flipcharts and seldom correlates itself with price. Most great art is made well before recognition in the market. ln this respect, inspiration seems, therefore, to be a condition of the heart. Stated this way, it is clear to me that the most definitive of creations are the product of inspiration and, in particular, divine inspiration. In the lesser instances of instinct and intuition, as when time-honed skills step in automatically to supersede the interference of cognitive rationality, any consequent art is invariably also "elevated".

There is an additional point to make. The Creator does not appear to allocate according to any particular religious perspective. Evidence indicates that most artists receive regardless of affiliation, if they affiliate at all. As Shakespeare observed through Hamlet: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”[63] It is a mystery beyond mystery.

Still water

The opening chapter of this book examined the three-part creative process: observation, withdrawal and action - described by Brian Arthur of New Mexico's Santa Fe Institute. To close off this chapter I want to examine the “withdrawal” component- a subprocess that I call “still water”. As already explained, still water implies a removal from the stress of normal life to a place that allows the psyche to speak. This is akin to setting the creative table. It is straight preparation.

Finding still water requires that we eliminate hurry from our lives. In a world where there is so much compulsive busyness, this is not easily achieved. But somehow we need to locate the source of our compulsive behaviour and manage it.64 In an unhurried world, issues become far more manageable, and being an entrepreneur becomes more like being an artist or a monk. It is a practice and a discipline. Struggling to complete the final volume of the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling followed this strategy, albeit somewhat expensively, by booking a room in Edinburgh's five-star Balmoral Hotel and remaining there, in splendid uninterrupted isolation, until it was completed. Important to note here though is that there is, or should be, no prescribed way of finding this balance. In this respect it's a bit like prayer. Within the Christian doctrine, other than the Lord's Prayer, there is no established “one way” to do it. Rather, as the spiritual writer Philip Yancey suggests, prayer is about keeping it honest, keeping it simple and keeping it regular.[65] Similarly, with still-water creativity, no one can presume to tell us how to locate, actualise and implement that part within us that seeks self-expression. This is the slippery part of being an artist-entrepreneur. The first thing, however, is simply getting on with it, doing it regularly, and with all the authenticity we can muster. In time, and given enough practice and discipline, things tend to come together. We just need to keep at it. For every individual, the mental preparation required to steady oneself is, I believe, critical in the artistic process. Without the necessary preparation the muse is unlikely to join you at the table. Though necessity is often the mother of invention, all too often that invention comes through a posture of empty-handed readiness.

Finding moments of still water allows our brains to slow down and contemplate issues and problems in ways that they might not ordinarily be given the chance to. Using brain scans we can - through exercises such as pattern recognition –

identify the conditions under which we usually reach insights or have original thoughts. Research of this nature tells us that we are most likely to be aware of our original thoughts when removed from noisy and stressful environments. In other words, it is within contexts of relaxation that the realisation of creativity is most likely to occur.

The list of significant quiet-water moments when artists and thinkers had significant insights away from busy places and crazy schedules is quite remarkable. Here are a few examples.

Insights that emerged in still-water dreams

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge penned his poem "Kubla Khan" on waking from a particularly vivid dream (allegedly fuelled by opium).

2. Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley, was based on a nightmare.

3. A piece by Beethoven was inspired by a dream which he subsequently related to one of his publishers, Tobias Haslinger, by letter: "While I was dozing I dreamt that I was travelling to very distant parts of the world ... during my dream journey the following cannon occurred to me ... As soon as I awoke, however, the cannon had vanished and no one note could I recall. But on the following day as I was driving back here in the same vehicle, and was continuing yesterday's dream journey while awake, behold, in accordance with the law of the association of ideas, the same cannon occurred to me." The three-part cannon is inscribed in the same letter.[66]

4. The main character in E.B. White's novel Stuart Little emerged from a dream.

5. The Beatles songwriter Paul McCartney literally dreamt up the classic "Yesterday" after hearing the tune played by a string orchestra in his sleep. "I had a piano by my bedside," said McCartney, "and I must have dreamed it, because I tumbled out of bed and put my hands on the piano keys and I had a tune in my head. It was just all there, a complete thing. I couldn't believe it. It came too easy. I went around for weeks playing the chords of the song for people, asking them, 'Is this like something? I think I've written it.' And people would say, 'No, it's not like anything else, hut it's good.'"[67]

6. Robin Gibb from the Bee Gees developed the melody for their 1987 hit "You Win Again" when he awoke from a dream with the song's keyline and melody

running through his head. He was able to locate a tape recorder and so sang the line into the machine: There's no fight you can't fight/ This battle of love with me/You win again.[68] When asked when he preferred to write his music, Gibb replied: “I would have to say the early hours of the morning when it's quiet, about 2 a.m. You can't write when there are people around. It's a vexation to the spirit.”[69]

7. When golfing great Jack Nicklaus went through a slump, hitting scores in the high seventies, he adapted his swing after a dream demonstrated a better way of holding the club. It worked, reducing his score to the mid sixties.

8. Also in a dream the German chemist Friedrich August Kekulé resolved the circular molecular structure of benzene while dozing in front of the fire. He’d been staring at the snake-like contortions of the flames in the hearth and saw, in his reverie, a snake seizing its own tail.

9. Another German, the sculptor Almuth Lütkenhaus-Lackey, described how her dreams proffered ideas for her work. In these dreams, faces and symbols appeared, recalling traumas she had suffered as a child during World War II. Using these visions, she was able to work through her early traumas and produce a series of evocative pieces that drew much critical acclaim in her new country of residence, Canada.

10. Pioneer of the sewing machine, Elias Howe, cracked the problem of how to design the mechanised sewing needle when, in a dream, he saw a ring of native warriors bearing spears. Near the tip of each spear was a hole, which inspired Howe to place the eye of the needle at the tip instead of at the other end (as in ordinary needles).

11. Said Ernest Hemingway: “Sometimes I write in my dreams, actual lines, and when that happens I wake myself up and write it down or I will have dreamed it all out.”[70]

12. Famous for his naval victories against Japan, the 16th -century Korean admiral Yi Sun-Shin's idea of cladding battleships in iron is purported to have come from a dream, which featured turtles.

13. Key sections of Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886) were inspired by a dream. His wife, Fanny Stevenson, recorded the event thus: "In the small hours of one morning ... I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare, I awakened him. He said angrily: 'Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.' I had awakened him at the first transformation scene." The author's stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, recalled this of the event: "I don't believe that there was ever such a literary feat before as the writing of Dr Jekyll. I remember the first reading as though it was yesterday. Louis came downstairs in a fever; read nearly half the book aloud; and then, while we were still gasping, he was away again, and busy writing. I doubt if the first draft took so long as three days."[71] As per Chapter One: shades here of the final act of the three-part artistic process of acting instantaneously and in one full rush of energy and passion.

14. While I have no great claims to greatness, one of my academic insights also emerged in a dream. The story is worth relating if only for its quirkiness. In 2001, I was registered for an MBA at the University of Cape Town. We were in the middle of a demanding finance module and I was especially taken with the Capital Asset Pricing Model and how the best yielding shares can be depicted graphically in an area called the "efficiency frontier". Worth stating, too, is that one of my ongoing social and research interests is wine. As a thirsty undergraduate student, I began my first collection by storing bottles under the floorboards of my grandparents' house (to avoid temptation). Many years later, in the midst of the finance module, my wife and I attended a wine-tasting dinner party and we were pretty rat-faced by the end of it. That night I had a dream in which I was walking into a '70s movie theatre where, typically, you might read in lights above the entrance: The Rocky Horror Picture Show. In my dream, above the entrance, in lights, read the encryption: Wine is Risk. At this point I woke up, dazed and confused, yet profoundly aware that this was an important dream. I immediately scribbled down the bare essentials of the dream and some rough equations that related. The initial result of this dream yielded my MBA research project and, ultimately, a PhD.

15. Cormac McCarthy relates a similar, though truly remarkable, story about an MIT mathematician, Don Newman. Newman had been working on a problem for some time and had reached a stage where he could progress no further. He became so distracted that friends began to worry about him, as did his wife. Then one night he had a dream in which he was having dinner

with a fellow MIT colleague, the maths genius John Nash. In the dream, Nash asked Newman to describe the problem, then asked for a napkin upon which he wrote down some equations which he thought might help solve it. At this point, Newman awoke, and jotted down the equations as well as a few notes. As McCarthy relates: "Well, the next morning he woke up and the first thing he thought was, God, what a strange dream. I wonder what kind of gibberish I've written on my pad? And when he looked on the pad there was this elegant solution to the problem. So be wrote the paper, and he cited Nash as co-author."

I remain utterly mystified as to how we connect with our unconscious psyches, and how at largely unpredictable times our psyches, in turn, lend insight and creative solutions to our waking lives.

Insights that emerged in still water awake

1. Newton was relaxing in an orchard when an apple fell on his head (so the story goes), prompting him to initiate his theories on gravity and to write his great work, Principia.

2. Galileo was reported to have come up with his ideas on using a pendulum to mark time while sitting alone in a church and watching the movement of massive chandeliers.

3. Albert Einstein first developed his famous $E=mc^2$ equation while sitting on a train going to and from work in a patent office in Bern, Switzerland. His key insights emerged as he imagined himself as a particle of light perched on the nose of the train as it accelerated towards the absolute velocity of any object, a constant, C, which today stands for the speed of light.

4. In similar fashion, author J.K. Rowling became inspired to write the Harry Potter books while on a delayed train journey between Manchester and London. During those four hours, Rowling says that the plot of the young wizard and his education at Hogwarts "came fully formed" to her.[72]

5. The structure of the atom was conceptualised by the scientist Niels Bohr while watching horses galloping around the race track-his model showed the atom being comprised of a nucleus with electrons moving in orbits around it.

6. In 1843, the great Irish mathematician William Hamilton came to his most profound insight while walking with his wife along Dublin's Royal Canal towpath, en route to the Royal Irish Academy. Through some flash of insight, fuelled by his subconscious, Hamilton saw that, by dropping the commutative law, a new number system known as imaginary numbers became possible. The subsequent equation runs as follows: $i^2 = j^2 = k^2 = ijk = -1$. As he wrote later about this "eureka" moment: "I then and there felt the galvanic circuit of thought close, and the sparks which fell from it were the fundamental equations between i, j k; exactly such as I have used them ever since." So taken was he by this manipulation that he immediately carved this formula into the stonework of the closest bridge. A plaque bearing this equation is still there, commemorating this event.[73]

7. In 1951, one of the first working models of DNA was developed by a biophysicist, New Zealander Maurice Wilkins, at King's College, London. This was two years before the double helix shape was finally announced to the world. Wilkins took a photo-image of DNA, but was still perplexed by its actual configuration. The legend is that, one night during this period, he stepped out of his laboratory for a breath of fresh air to gaze across the Thames and over towards the famous OXO Tower. The spectre of the well-known OXO logo gave him an idea that perhaps the DNA structure resembled an "x" or spiral-type form. For more than a year he kept this insight to himself before relating it to James Watson. Watson then raced back to Cambridge and, within a month, with his colleague Francis Crick, cracked the puzzle of the famous double helix. In 1962, for their efforts, Wilkins shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Watson and Crick.

8. Contemporary singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright said that the song "Zebulon" came to him when walking through Montreal one night after visiting his mother, musician Kate McGarrigle, in hospital. By the time he'd got back home the song was finished, he says. Another of his songs, "April Fools", came to him when he was in the bath. "I stood up naked and sang it. Songs come to me at odd times. The only thing they have in common is that, when they do come, the moment has to be theatrical," he says.

9. One day in 1968, during a bad dose of flu, a half-delirious, semi-conscious Neil Young wrote three epic songs: "Cinnamon Girl", "Cowgirl in the Sand" and "Down by the River".[74] All featured on his mid-career greatest hits compilation album Decade (1977) and are standard to the Young lexicon. All in one day!

10. The father of Cartesian geometry, René Descartes, was renowned for spending the better part of his mornings in bed; it was from there that he watched the checkerboard crisscross of shadows cast by his bedroom window frame play across a far wall in his bedroom. Ultimately, this horizontal-to-vertical play of dark on light provided the inspiration for his famous x-y coordinate system, revered (and reviled) by so many schoolchildren in the earlier phases of their mathematical education.

11. One of the first scientific theories about the creation of our universe was developed by Sir Fred Hoyle in the years following World War II. Working with his scientific colleagues Hermann Bondi and Thomas Gold, he set up shop at Trinity College, Oxford. After a period of kicking ideas around it seemed they were getting nowhere. Then, one night in 1948, the three went off to see a movie entitled Dead of Night. It was a thriller, based on the same plot as Groundhog Day, starring Bill Murray, where the same scene recurs with little variation, over and over again. The seed of an idea was thus planted in Hoyle's mind: what if the universe were like this too, caught in a loop of time with no apparent beginning or conceivable end? After sharing his hypothesis with his friends, Hoyle went on to develop the mathematics that would prove it. Ultimately this model of the "universe as holding pattern" was rolled over to herald the now dominant "big bang" theory.

12. In his jacket, jazz pianist Bill Evans always carried a small six-stave composer's notebook. When the muse struck, he would use it to write out melodies, take notes and transcribe ideas. Evans understood well that new music was as likely to arrive somewhere on the road as when he was sitting attentively at his Chickering piano. His composition "Show-Type Tune" was a case in point. Said Evans: "Songs usually required a lot of work later on the piano, but this one came out nearly complete. I still have a lot of those books that I should go back to. I read somewhere that Gershwin had to write twelve bad tunes to get a good one. That gives me confidence."[75]

13. Apple CEO Steve Jobs often saw himself as an artist. Famous for railing against rational science and motivating constantly for an integration between engineering and the humanities, the man named Fortune's CEO of the last decade confessed that, if he hadn't been involved in computers, he'd probably have been a poet in Paris. The design ethic at Apple remains legendary. In January 2012, Job' key designer, Jony Ive, was knighted for his brilliant design work at the Cupertino

headquarters. One story about the collaborative efforts between Jobs and Ive is instructive of how brilliant work can emerge from quiet water. In 2000, Jobs was mulling over the screen design for his new iMac computer. Ive had come up with a flat-screen design that incorporated most of the computer hardware at the back of the screen. Jobs was not happy with the work and called for a rethink. He went home early and, when Ive dropped by later that afternoon, he was out in the garden amid a profusion of sunflowers his wife had planted earlier that year. As Jobs' wife recalled later, "Jony and Steve were riffing on their design problem, then Jony asked, "What if the screen was separated from the base, like a sunflower?'" Ive began sketching possibilities from this idea and realised that the sunflower metaphor might imply a screen that was sufficiently mutable to seek out the sun, the source of all life and energy. It was a creative concept both he and Jobs thought compelling. And so it was that a screen articulated to a mutable chrome neck that could twist like an Anglepoise lamp or the face of a flower, according to the purpose of the user, was born. Said Ive later: "Why do we assume that simple is good? Because with physical products, we have to feel that we can dominate them. As you bring order to complexity, you find a way to make the product defer to you. Simplicity isn't just a visual style. It's not just minimalism or the absence of clutter. It involves digging through the depth of the complexity. To be truly simple, you have to go really deep. For example, to have no screws on something, you can end up with a product that is so convoluted and so complex. The better way is to go deeper with the simplicity, to understand everything about it and how it's manufactured. You have to deeply understand the essence of the product in order to get rid of the parts that are not essential."[76]

Many of these innovators are dead and most of their ideas and their origins are anecdotal; those surfacing occurred long before the current era of confessional life stories. Like Jobs' life story, the 2010 Keith Richards' autobiography, Life, is an extremely useful source of insight into the still-water process. So many of the really great Rolling Stones songs appear to have been sparked in moments of relative quiet. In 1965, for example, Richards was in still water when he wrote their first major hit, "Satisfaction". Having just bust up with his girlfriend, he was alone in his London flat, jamming on his acoustic guitar late into the night. Almost unconsciously, he pressed the record button on his Philips cassette player and spent five minutes experimenting with a few riffs before finally passing out. On awaking the next morning, Richards rewound the tape to hear what it was he'd played the night before, and there, before 40 minutes of loud snoring, was the rough-hewn chord structure for

“Satisfaction”. It was all he needed.[77] In 2004, Rolling Stone magazine voted it the second greatest song ever written, after Dylan's “Like a Rolling Stone”.

Later in his book, Richards comments on how his songwriting ability came to rely on the development of key chord sequences, or what he calls “riffs”, that came out of nowhere. “When you get a riff like ‘Flash’, [as in ‘Jumpin’ Jack Flash’], you get a great feeling of elation, a wicked glee ... ‘Flash' is basically ‘Satisfaction’ in reverse. Nearly all of these riffs are closely related.” He said Flash was particularly interesting because it was “almost Arabic or very old, archaic, classical, the chord setups you could only hear in Gregorian chants or something like that”. It was a mixture of rock 'n' roll and a “weird echo of very, very ancient music” that he didn't even know. “It's much older than I am, and that's unbelievable! It's like a recall of something, and I don't know where it came from.”[78]

While it is, undoubtedly, a source of creativity, constantly returning to the pool of quiet water is critical, too, if we wish to sustain ourselves. Those who dismiss this rule of life tend to burn up. “Your nerve coatings are only so thick,” said Don Felder, the former Eagles band member who composed the famous riffs to “Hotel California”. “When they get worn really thin and frayed, that's when people say things, do things, misbehave. Especially when you add fuel to the fire with drugs and alcohol. It just becomes a very volatile situation.”[79] In Neil Young's opinion, this is why Kurt Cobain from Nirvana committed suicide. “Because there was no control to the burn ... He didn't know that he could maybe go somewhere else and get some more fuel, come back and do it again ... At his stage, it was all music. Kurt Cobain only had one world.”[80]

U2's Bono has also spoken about controlling the burn within. “There's no doubt about the fact that I have a wild streak and I'm very capable of setting fire to myself. So you know I don't go to church for the view,” he says. To fight temptation, Bono gets up at six each morning to pray and meditate. “My meditation life feeds my soul and it's a wonderful thing for me to have time to reflect upon things and spend time with myself,” he says, adding that as a creative person he needs to find time and head space to think through and execute the ideas that he believes are the most important: “I want to squeeze every drop out of the day. But it's also the tyranny of good ideas, because if you spot one, then you think that you have to follow through on it. That might be a psychosis. I may have to get that fixed.” The implication here seems to be that part of that fixing requires time alone in still water.[81]

Andy Warhol was another artist aware of the burn. While many acknowledge him as the progenitor of the sexualised celebrity pop-culture, few know that his secret life was one of constantly seeking out spaces of stillness and grace. After his death, many were shocked to find out that Warhol, whose art and pronouncements did so

much to promote the promiscuous sexual and narcotic culture of the '60s, was in fact a committed Catholic who would attend church on a daily basis. There is a fearsome symmetry to the darkness and light within this man.

A wonderful account of silence and grace relates to the '80s band Talk Talk and their 1988 album Spirit of Eden. The album's architecture is unconventional, containing only six tracks, all between five and nine minutes long. Moreover, between the third and fourth tracks ("Desire" and "Inheritance"), there's that 30-second break mentioned earlier. It is 30 seconds of complete silence. Critics asked whether this was an error of judgement or if the band was in fact trying to say something. Looking at the themes of these two songs, and the meanings that bind them, you would conclude the latter.

Similarly, some three years later, Van Morrison issued a double set entitled Hymns to the Silence. Critical tracks, especially from Disc 2, can be regarded as spiritual contemplations on still water. The title track is a case in point and one of my long-time favourites.

A 2011 trip to New Zealand for the Rugby World Cup found me downtown in Auckland's main art gallery and drawn to a simple, yet evocative, oil-based portrait of a woman. The painting is smaller than an A4 piece of paper and is entitled Lizette. It was painted in London in about 1913 by one of New Zealand's most famous artists, Raymond McIntyre. Beneath the painting, the curators had posted an inscription quoting McIntyre's thinking at the time: "I am learning what I do not want to do. When I eliminate what I don't want to do, only what I do want to do will be left."

This view coincides with Steve Jobs and his ability to focus. "Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do. That's true for companies, and it's true for products," he said.[82] Tom Waits was of the same view. Asked why he became a musician, he replied: "I don't know. I knew what I didn't want to do. T thought I'd try some of what was left over."[83]

Perhaps the best exponent of silence was the exquisite Bill Evans. In 1975, fellow pianist Richie Beirach dropped by to visit Evans. "He was very happy, and he was actually openly happy, which was completely unlike him. And it threw everybody. Anyway, it was great. He showed me his Chickering. He pushed down the keys. They were like beautiful, old, yellow keys, and you could see where his voicings would come from. He was a real poet. Sometimes less is less. Sometimes less is just not enough. But he would create an aura of silence around him. He would draw you in whether you wanted it or not. He was hypnotic."[84]

As with Bono, Talk Talk, Van Morrison, McIntyre and Evans, the song of simplicity remains the same. Do only what you must do. And leave the rest.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. By nature, artists tend to work instinctively. This we see through the lives of artistic greats such as Dylan, Evans and Pollock.
2. This chapter also offers a more detailed appreciation of the muse. It is difficult to say quite how we get to the place where the muse is active. While there are no prescribed formulas for invoking the muse, there are certain creative behaviours that seem to characterise its arrival. These include: (1) the ability to self-learn, (2) the cultivation of dream-like otherworldliness, (3) a capacity to improvise, and (4) an ability to work in bouts of sustained frenzy.
3. We look at the "important and not urgent" quadrant of life-activity, and why it is the place to be if we wish to live creative lives. It shows that the best way to act on ideas is to operate in a zone of "less hurry" so as to control the burn, as Neil Young once put it.
4. Here we see why Bono meditates first thing every morning and why artistic control requires stillness and the discipline of thinking.
5. If we learn to quiet the urgent inner voices, the important and non-urgent part of our lives can also become the source of great ideas. Many creative insights have emerged from periods of sleep or quiet contemplation, as this chapter illustrates.

CHAPTER NINE – Instinct, Intuition, the Unconscious & Still Water

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