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## The oceanic feeling in painterly creativity

Jussi Antti Saarinen

### Abstract

The oceanic feeling has been a relatively persistent topic of discussion in both creativity research and aesthetics. Characterized by a sensation of self-boundary dissolution, the feeling has often been reported to involve experiences of fusion with various objects, including works of art. In this article, I will discuss the oceanic feeling in the specific context of painterly creativity. I will begin by arguing that the oceanic feeling cannot be classified as an emotion, mood, or bodily feeling in the established senses of these terms. I will then introduce philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe's theory of existential feelings to help formulate a more accurate view of the oceanic feeling. More specifically, I will suggest that oceanic feelings should be classified as shifts in existential feeling. To conclude, I will briefly discuss the implications of my account of the oceanic feeling for the more general pursuits of painterly creativity and artistic self-transformation.

Keywords: oceanic feeling, existential feeling, painterly creativity

### 1. Introduction

Painting can be an intensely affective affair. During the course of the creative process, it is not unusual for the artist to feel apprehensive about producing something unsatisfactory, frustrated by seemingly insoluble problems of color and composition, irritated by unsolicited interruptions, enchanted by the developing work at hand, delighted about creating something new and surprising, somber about surrendering the finished work of art, and, in the end, proud of her achievement. States such as these are commonly classified as *emotions*. Like all emotions, they are *intentional* states directed towards relatively specific objects within the world – things, the self, other persons, events, actions, or states of affairs. Sometimes the intentional objects of affective states are not clearly specifiable: they may also be experienced as vague or unfocused. One may, for instance, feel angry at everything or nothing in particular. States that take on relatively unspecific intentional objects may be classified as *moods*. In the painterly context, a moderate mood of hypomania, for example, is often felt as carrying the creative process forward, whereas a dejected mood can make the slightest of setbacks feel overwhelming – perhaps dealing a fatal blow to the entire endeavor. Finally, the intentionality of an affective state may be directed exclusively towards one's body, or part(s) of it. After hours of demanding work the painter may feel sore in the joints, tired in the eyes, and heavy in the legs. Such states can in turn be classified as *bodily feelings*.<sup>1</sup>

With these distinctions in mind, let us next consider two first-person descriptions of a special type of feeling in the painterly context. In the first description, artist Stephen Newton tells us of a sudden change in experience while working on a collage:

I began to paint at the top right hand corner... and was moving downwards when the vertical canvas seemed to slide down to a horizontal position. Suddenly and inexplicably, I found myself at the centre of an endless grey sea, with its surface covered as far as the eye could see with floating fragments or flotsam of canvas collage, scraps of line, painted and glued canvas, all rising and falling around my person half submerged at the centre of its infinity. I was not in any way fearful of drowning, being overwhelmed or lost; rather the experience was to be expected and welcomed and, at that time, didn't take me by surprise. When I was once again deposited on dry land, the painting had been completed.<sup>2</sup>

In the second description, philosopher and painter Michael Krausz recounts a life-changing experience amidst a series of large abstract canvases painted by his friend: "I suddenly experienced myself in the space of the work instead of looking at it. More than that: I experienced an 'interpenetration' of my self and the space of the painting. In that space, I suddenly became much more highly visually sensitive – to spatial relations, coloration and more."<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this experience, Krausz developed an "inner necessity" to paint, and confirms that these kinds of "non-dualistic" experiences continue to affect his creative work.<sup>4</sup>

At first view, such feelings of self-boundary dissolution and fusion with the artwork at hand may appear quite outlandish. However, a closer look at writings on both artistic creativity and aesthetic experience suggests that feelings of this kind might be somewhat common.<sup>5</sup> As expected, the concepts and tropes used to describe such experiences have been rich and varied. Even so, the depictions tend to point to a common experiential core. As Krausz observes, "characterizations of nondualistic experiences might deploy such metaphors as 'interpenetration' of subject and object, or 'fusion' of artist and work, or 'overcoming', or 'dissolving', or 'transcending' such binary opposites as subjective and objective reality. All these idioms suggest that, under particular circumstances, sharp distinctions between such binary terms as self and other, or subject and object, are undone."<sup>6</sup> Krausz also points out how these states have been variously designated as "nirvanic, epiphanic, numinous, religious, flow, ecstatic, or oceanic" depending on one's preferred orientation.<sup>7</sup> Since I have become theoretically acquainted with the phenomenon via the psychoanalytical tradition, I will use the *oceanic feeling* as my term of choice.<sup>8</sup>

Having said that, I will not discuss the oceanic feeling in psychoanalytical terms in this article. Instead, I will draw on contemporary philosophy of emotion to improve our understanding of the feeling and its occurrence in painterly creativity. To begin, I will discuss the question of taxonomy. Can the oceanic feeling be adequately classified as an emotion, mood, or bodily feeling? I will examine each possibility in turn, and argue that these affective categories do not suffice in grasping the essence of the oceanic feeling. This analysis will also serve to highlight the complex matter of intentionality in oceanic feeling. In order to classify the oceanic feeling more accurately, and to provide a plausible account of its intentional structure, I will then introduce philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe's notion of existential feelings. More specifically, I will argue that oceanic feelings should be viewed as significant shifts in existential feeling. To conclude, I will discuss some of the implications my account of the oceanic feeling has for the more general understanding of painterly creativity.

## 2. The oceanic feeling: emotion, mood, or bodily feeling?

Let us begin with a definition. I maintain that the defining feature of the oceanic feeling is *a feeling of dissolution of the psychological and sensory boundaries of the self*. From this point of view, any feeling of fusion, merger, or oneness with a given object (e.g. an artwork) is a secondary and contingent feature of the oceanic feeling, rather than its primary distinctive property. This is so because any feeling of fusion, etc. presupposes a feeling of self-boundary dissolution, even if the latter does not necessarily engender the former. On that account, if we were to classify the oceanic feeling as an emotion, we might consider it to be one type of feeling of dissolution, distinguished by its characteristic object, the ‘self’ (just as acrophobia is a type of fear that is distinguished by its characteristic object, high places). Positing the self as the intentional object of the oceanic feeling is a plausible option, seeing as this is the case in various self-referential emotions, such as shame and self-pity.<sup>9</sup> If we commit to this option, the intentional object of the oceanic feeling could be further specified as a particular aspect of the self, namely its psychological and sensory boundaries. The oceanic feeling could then be classified as an emotion in which the feeling of dissolution is directed towards the boundaries of the self.

However, I consider this option somewhat contrived and phenomenologically insufficient. Even though the oceanic feeling undeniably concerns the self, I believe it does so in a much more comprehensive and fundamental sense than mere self-referential emotion allows for. Whereas self-referential emotions represent a particular intentional object *within* the world (the self) in a relatively selective, evaluative, and focused light (e.g. as shameful, guilty, or pitiful), the oceanic feeling seems to constitute an all-embracing sense of *a certain kind* of world. Simply put, the oceanic feeling does not just represent the self or one of its features under a limited affective aspect; it discloses the world – including the self, its boundaries, and its relations to other objects – in a more constitutive way.

If, then, we regard the oceanic feeling as a world-disclosing feeling, classifying it as a mood rather than an emotion becomes a reasonable option. On the view that moods are distinguishable from emotions due to the unfocused nature of their intentional objects, one could argue that the ‘world’ is a sufficiently vague intentional object to warrant the classification of the oceanic feeling as a mood. Indeed, the philosopher Peter Goldie has chosen this line of reasoning in classifying the oceanic feeling as a feeling (mood) of oneness that takes as its intentional object the universe as a whole.<sup>10</sup> However, my understanding of the oceanic feeling differs from Goldie’s view in two crucial respects. First, as stated above, I regard any feeling of oneness occurring in conjunction with the oceanic feeling as a secondary and contingent feature of the oceanic feeling, not as its primary distinctive feature. Second, and more importantly for the matter of mood, the sense in which I refer to a ‘world’ that is disclosed in oceanic feeling differs from the sense in which Goldie designates the ‘universe’ as its intentional object of feeling. Certainly, we may have various different intentional attitudes towards the world and the universe (with ‘world’ and ‘universe’ taking on many possible meanings, both literal and figurative). One may, for instance, *believe* that the world (in a concrete sense) consists of atoms, *feel* awe at the vastness of the universe (in an abstract or theoretical sense), or *desire* that the world (in an

experiential, subjective sense) come to an end. However, by ‘world’ I refer to a pre-given experiential space of meaning and possibility that each of us already necessarily inhabits. This world is a world of practical engagement we are immersed in, rather than an objectified world we feel or think towards. In sum, then, the ‘world’ in the present sense is not an unspecific intentional object of feeling, but a space of possibility that is constituted and disclosed by the oceanic feeling in a particular way. For this reason the oceanic feeling should not be classified as a mood or a generalized emotion.

Finally, we may ask whether the oceanic feeling might simply be a bodily feeling. It could be argued that the sense of a ‘self’ – including its psychological and sensory boundaries – is developmentally established through bodily interaction with one’s caretakers, and is therefore fundamentally bodily in nature. On that account, the feeling of dissolution could be understood as directed towards an aspect of the body or bodily self. Viewed in this light, the oceanic feeling could be classified as a kind of disturbance in bodily awareness. I believe this is a step in the right direction. However, even if the sense of self-boundaries is essentially bodily, I maintain that the feeling of boundary dissolution is not a bodily feeling in the restricted meaning of the term. That is, it is not a feeling of the condition of the body exclusively, or of a change therein – similar to a racing heart or the sudden appearance of goose bumps. As I already suggested in connection with self-referential emotions, the oceanic feeling appears to concern the self, its boundaries, and its relation to the world in a much more fundamental and comprehensive way. In effect, it seems to constitute a particular kind of self-world relation. Thus the claim that the oceanic feeling takes as its exclusive intentional object the body or its parts is too narrow in scope.

To summarize, I have sought to demonstrate the insufficiency of the concepts of emotion, mood, and bodily feeling in accounting for the oceanic feeling. This analysis has also served to foreground the complex question of intentionality in its proper classification. Interestingly, the descriptions given by Newton, Krausz, and others suggest that the oceanic feeling may well be a significant change in one’s overall existential state, or feeling of *being*, rather than a feeling directed towards the world or any of its objects. Perhaps an alternative approach is therefore in order. Could the oceanic feeling instead be classified as a type of affective state that does not intrinsically contain intentionality? Could it provide intentional states with certain kinds of directedness, rather than being intentionally directed itself? In the next section, I will pursue this line of argument.

### **3. The oceanic feeling as a shift in existential feeling**

I have set forth the idea that the oceanic feeling belongs to a group of affective states that constitutes an overall feeling of being, and thus discloses the world to us in a pre-given way. How, then, should we identify and designate this distinct class of affective states? I believe philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe’s notion of *existential feelings* can help us delineate the phenomenon more accurately.<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe maintains that feelings can be classified as existential in virtue of two shared properties. Firstly, they are *pre-intentional* background feelings that structure experience as a whole. As such, they are distinguishable from intentional states directed at objects within the world. Ratcliffe frequently depicts existential feelings as “ways of finding ourselves in the

world” that constrain the kinds of experience we are capable of having. Indeed, he has chosen the attributive ‘existential’ to accentuate that the feelings in question constitute our changeable sense of reality, and of our belonging to and relating to the world. In sum, existential feelings provide us with a pre-intentional sense of possibility and meaning, and accordingly, structure our intentional feeling and thinking.

The second necessary property of existential feelings is that they are *bodily* feelings. As I suggested above, characterizing the oceanic feeling in bodily terms is a step in the right direction. However, taking this step requires us to recognize that feelings can be bodily in various ways. To clarify the particular sense in which existential feelings are bodily, Ratcliffe has introduced a tripartite distinction between noematic, noetic, and existential bodily feelings.<sup>12</sup> First he designates as *noematic* those bodily feelings that are *of* the body or its parts. These are the kind of bodily feelings I have discussed above, i.e. feelings that have the body as their exclusive intentional object. Simply put, noematic feelings refer to the *felt* body. However, as Ratcliffe notes, we do not generally experience our bodies as sealed containers with some experiences falling neatly on the inside and others on the outside.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, bodily feelings need not necessarily be phenomenologically conspicuous, i.e., objects of our conscious experience. On this account, the body can also be understood as the *feeling* body: a medium for world-directed experience.

In *noetic* feelings, then, the body is *that through which* objects other than the body are experienced. Even though the body is not necessarily an object of attention in noetic feelings, it contributes to emotional experience through a kind of background awareness. In short, noetic feelings are incorporated in intentionality directed beyond the body, yet through the body.<sup>14</sup> For example, when the activity of painting flows effortlessly, the painter’s attention will presumably be directed towards the world – primarily on the painting being worked on. Her focus might be on the mixing of colors; on the way the paint spreads over the canvas; on the emergence of form and contrast, and so on. Even so, concurrent bodily feelings of openness, alertness, and responsiveness are likely to provide the situation with a sense of fluidity and ease. In this way, noetic feelings are incorporated into the experience of the painting as pleasingly receptive to one’s painterly gestures. In contrast to this, the painter may feel increasingly frustrated by a formal or material problem in her work.<sup>15</sup> An attentional shift toward the body may then make her aware of a physical feeling of being stuck, or of being weighed down and confined by the work at hand. Such noetic feelings in turn contribute to experiencing the painting as resistant and overbearing. In this situation the painter might seek some fresh air to clear her head, or stretch her limbs to break the deadlock.

Finally, *existential* bodily feelings constitute a more fundamental and all-encompassing feeling of *being*. Following Merleau-Ponty, Ratcliffe maintains that the lived body is not only directed at things in the world; it also opens up a pre-objective view of the world as a space of purposive, practical activity.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the other two bodily feelings, then, existential feelings cannot be classified as intentional states directed either towards the body or the world beyond its boundaries. Instead, they provide us with a bodily backdrop to overall experience, determining the parameters within which noetic feelings are incorporated into particular emotions and moods. Simply put, existential feelings establish a pre-intentional orientation to the world,

whereas noetic feelings are incorporated in feelings towards objects within such a world.

Perhaps an example can serve to clarify the firm connection between pre-intentional existential feelings and intentional affective states. Consider feeling enthusiastic about painting and enjoying it on a regular basis. Feeling such enthusiasm and joy towards the activity presupposes that one already inhabits a world in which experiencing things as interesting and enjoyable is an actual possibility. This disposition cannot, however, be taken for granted. Indeed, someone who is deeply depressed finds herself in a world completely devoid of such possibilities. For her, everything feels fundamentally and inescapably lacking in interest and joy. This is not an emotion directed towards a situation; it *is* the situation. In sum, the depressive existential feeling forms a frame through which the world is experienced as constricted, bereft of significance and vitality, and lacking in certain experiential possibilities.<sup>17</sup>

Even though existential feelings generally remain in the background of our experience, they may under certain conditions become objects of attention and rational reflection. Usually this happens when a significant change or *shift* in the existential feeling occurs, and the orientation one previously took for granted becomes conspicuous in its absence. As Ratcliffe notes, it is changes in existential feeling that uncover their contribution to experience and thus reveal the contingency of our prior orientations.<sup>18</sup> Such changes may be experienced as positive or negative. For example, Ratcliffe observes how in religious conversion experiences “a world that is drained of life... can be shaken up to reveal a different and wider space of possibility, something *more*, something *greater*.”<sup>19</sup> The opposite holds true in transitions into pathological states such as psychosis and depression, in which the experiential world is characterized by a sense of loss of connection to other people, life, and shared reality.

On that account, I maintain that oceanic feelings of self-boundary dissolution are significant shifts in existential feeling. Ordinarily, we experience ourselves as distinct from other people and things, even if there is individual variation in the felt permeability of self-boundaries. In fact, most forms of everyday human interaction require us to experience the boundaries between things, people, and ourselves as relatively fixed and stable. The oceanic feeling is a sudden and often very momentous change in this common existential orientation. Simply put, the felt dissolution of the psychological and sensory boundaries of the self disrupts the taken-for-granted sense of reality and substitutes it temporarily with one that is thoroughly different in kind.

What, then, does such an oceanic existential shift consist in? I believe there are two experiential options available: 1) That oceanic shifts in existential feeling are experienced as devoid of any ascribable intentional object, or 2) that they are experienced as involving an intentional object, either real or imagined. In the former case, the shift dispenses with specific intentional relatedness to one's surroundings, and hence, does not amount to a feeling of oneness or fusion with any particular objects. For lack of a better term, we may call such cases diffuse or pure oceanic feelings. The philosopher André Comte-Sponville has encapsulated this orientation succinctly by describing his own oceanic experience as “an immanence, a unity, an immersion, an insideness.”<sup>20</sup> He continues: “The ego *had* vanished: no more separation or representation, only the silent *presentation* of everything. No more value

judgments; only reality. No more time; only the present. No more nothingness; only being.”<sup>21</sup> In the second case, the experience of self-boundary dissolution is accompanied by intentional directedness towards particular objects. Indeed, I believe that all cases of self-boundary dissolution that *do* involve an intentional object necessarily entail a feeling of fusion or oneness with that object (seeing as the boundaries between the self and the object are experienced as dissipated). Be that as it may, it is important to recognize that without a fundamental shift in how one’s self-world relations are pre-intentionally structured, the feeling of oneness with a particular intentional object could not come about in the first place.

In light of the above, the experience of fusion with a work of art can be viewed as one possible upshot of the oceanic shift in existential feeling. This is not a particularly surprising outcome of the oceanic feeling in the painterly context. Indeed, it is expectable that the feeling of merger will be directed at the object one is intently engaged with during the moment of self-boundary dissolution. Newton, for instance, has described his oceanic experience as involving a “peculiar sensation of envelopment... [in which] the whole womb of the painting draws you into itself in a total engulfment... [resulting in a] loss of self in this mystical union.”<sup>22</sup> The art pedagogue and critic Anton Ehrenzweig has similarly noted how, in the oceanic state, “the artist feels at one with his work, not unlike the nursling on his mother’s breast who feels at one with his mother.”<sup>23</sup> In sum, it is within the context of a pre-intentional oceanic shift that the feeling of fusion with the particular intentional object, the painting, is experienced.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Painterly creativity does not depend on shifts in existential feeling, nor do such shifts necessarily entail creative results, even within the context of creative activity. Even so, painting is an activity that may induce changes in existential feeling, and as such, can raise into conscious awareness the role existential feelings play in structuring overall experience. This means that existential feelings may also become one of the actual objects of creative work: that which is worked on in painting. Simply put, artistic work need not merely aim at producing artworks; it can also involve the conscious reorganization of one’s existential orientation. In this sense changes in existential feeling may lead to a wider artistic process of self-transformation, i.e., to a restructuring of one’s fundamental relations with oneself, others, and the world.

Viewed in this light, the oceanic feeling presents itself as a rather special phenomenon. As a sudden and significant shift in existential feeling, it tends to have a momentous impact on one’s overall take on reality. Indeed, many artists have voiced the transformative effect it has had on both their creative abilities and their overall existential orientations. Consider, for example, psychoanalyst and artist Marion Milner’s first-person recollection of her oceanic experience:

[I] had discovered in painting a bit of experience that made all other occupations unimportant by comparison. It was the discovery that when painting something from nature there occurred, at least sometimes, a fusion into a never-before-known wholeness; not only were the object and oneself no longer felt to be separate, but neither were thought and sensation and feeling and action. All one’s visual perceptions of colour, shape, texture, weight, as



well as thought and memory, ideas about the object and action towards it, the movement of one's hand together with the feeling of delight in the "thusness" of the thing, they all seemed fused into a wholeness of being which was different from anything else that had ever happened to me.<sup>24</sup>

Milner tellingly describes her experience as "a discovery of a different way of being," and asks, "[W]as it not also possible that this different sense of self that grew out of creative concentration had bearings upon one's relation to the whole mass of other selves that one was in contact with?"<sup>25</sup>

In the same vein, Michael Krausz has noted how the oceanic experience can be "an ingredient of a creative life journey, a part of a larger project of self-transformation."<sup>26</sup> He elaborates: "As a consequence of my nondualistic experience... I now experience more clearly, more expansively, more richly, more perspicuously. Such changes in my ways of experiencing in turn affect what I produce. What I produce has affected my ways of experiencing. I think of my art-making as a process in which who I am is enriched and transformed. In short, my art-production fosters my self-transformation, and my self-transformation fosters my art-production."<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, it appears that oceanic feelings can play an important role in enhancing artistic creativity, and in a more general sense, creative living. I presume this is largely due to their ability to emancipate the artist from habitual, common sense ways of experiencing self-other boundaries. Moreover, they may provide us with a brief yet alluring glimpse into a more flexible reality, and thus confront us with fundamental existential questions of what is inner/outer, self/not-self, and body/world. Embracing these questions creatively may well become the work of a lifetime.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> That emotions are intentional states is commonly accepted in contemporary philosophy of emotion. What accounts for their intentionality is a more contested issue. Whether moods and bodily feelings are also intentional states is another topic of active debate. For argumentative purposes, I will adopt the view that emotions, moods, and bodily feelings (in the sense presented here) are indeed intentional states. For further discussion see, for example, Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); Aaron Ben Ze'ev, "The Thing Called Emotion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 41-62.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Newton, *Art and Ritual: A Painter's Journey* (London: Ziggurat, 2008), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Krausz, "Creativity and Self-Transformation", in *Philosophy of History and Culture*, vol. 28: *The Idea of Creativity*, eds. Michael Krausz, Denis Dutton and Karen Bardsley (Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 191–203; ref. on p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the works of Krausz and Newton (cited above), see for example: Marion Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1957); Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Perception* (London: Phoenix

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Press, 1967); Adrian Stokes, *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes, Vol. III, 1955–1967* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978); Arthur Koestler, “The Three Domains of Creativity,” in *The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art*, eds. Denis Dutton and Michael Krausz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), pp. 1-17; David MacLagan, *Psychological Aesthetics: Painting, Feeling and Making Sense* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001); Marlene Goldsmith, “Frida Kahlo: Abjection, Psychic Deadness, and the Creative Impulse,” *Psychoanalytic Review*, 91, 6 (2004), 723-758; Barnaby Nelson and David Rawlings, “Its Own Reward: A Phenomenological Study of Artistic Creativity,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 38 (2007), 217-255; Caroline Rooney, “What is the Oceanic?,” *Angelaki – Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 12 (2007), 19-32.

<sup>6</sup> Krausz, “Creativity and Self-Transformation,” p. 194.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed account of the history and semantics of the concept of oceanic feeling, see William B. Parsons, *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling: Revisioning the Psychoanalytic Theory of Mysticism* (New York: OUP, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> In self-referential emotions, the subject and the intentional object of the emotion are identical. See Alexandra Zinck, “Self-referential emotions,” *Consciousness and Cognition*, 17 (2008), 496-505.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Goldie, “Freud and the Oceanic Feeling,” in *Religious Emotions: Some Philosophical Explorations*, eds. Willem Lemmens and Walter Van Herck (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 219-229.

<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe has also called states of this kind “deep moods”, but has specifically promulgated the term “existential feeling” to distinguish them from intentional affective states. See Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being. Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality* (Oxford: OUP, 2008); “The Phenomenology of Mood and the Meaning of Life,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 349-371; “The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling”, in *Feelings of Being Alive*, eds. Joerg Fingerhut and Sabine Marienberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 23-54.

<sup>12</sup> Ratcliffe, “The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling”; see also Colombetti & Ratcliffe, “Bodily Feeling in Depersonalization: A Phenomenological Account,” *Emotion Review*, 4, 2 (2012), 145-150.

<sup>13</sup> Ratcliffe, “The Phenomenology of Mood and the Meaning of Life,” p. 365.

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion on how bodily feelings can have world-directed intentionality, see for example Peter Goldie, *The Emotions*, and “Emotions, Feelings and Intentionality,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 1 (2002), 235-254; Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotions*; Jan Slaby, “Affective Intentionality and the Feeling Body,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 7, 4 (2008), 429-444.

<sup>15</sup> I have modeled this scenario on Peter Goldie’s example of bodily feelings that are felt towards an intractable philosophical problem. See Goldie, *The Emotions*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>16</sup> Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>17</sup> For a developmental account of depressive existential feeling, see Somogy Varga & Joel Krueger, “Background Emotions, Proximity and Distributed Emotion Regulation,” *The Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 4 (2013), 271-292.

<sup>18</sup> Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>20</sup> André Comte-Sponville, *The Book of Atheist Spirituality* (London: Bantam Press, 2008), p. 155.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Newton, *Art and Ritual*, p. 47.

<sup>23</sup> Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art*, p. 119.

<sup>24</sup> Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint*, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>26</sup> Krausz, “Creativity and Self-Transformation,” p. 197.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>28</sup> Although I have discussed the oceanic feeling in the specific context of painterly creativity, it is evident that it can and does occur in other forms of creativity as well. Whether the degree and type of bodily engagement in the creative activity plays a role in facilitating or suppressing the emergence of the feeling is an interesting question for further study. It is also worthy of note that oceanic feelings may arise in situations that do not specifically aim at producing creative products, e.g. in mystical/aesthetic encounters with nature or works of art. I believe such experiences may indirectly inspire and inform one's personal creative activities. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for calling attention to these pertinent points.