

December 2018

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Recommended Citation

Goler, Danny (2018) "Contemplations of Meaning," *The STEAM Journal*: Vol. 3: Iss. 2, Article 20. DOI: 10.5642/steam.20180302.20

Available at: <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/steam/vol3/iss2/20>

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STEAM is a bi-annual journal published by the Claremont Colleges Library | ISSN 2327-2074 | <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/steam>

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Abstract

Contemplation on how we construct meaning.

Keywords

meaning, expression, flow

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Contemplations of Meaning

Danny Goler

Almost any mathematician will tell you that when they work, it feels like uncovering something that is already there, as opposed to constructing it. If you ask most artists, they will shrug you off. But if you ask nicely, they'll tell you that when they work, there's a process of discovery of what the piece wants to be, almost as if it already exists somewhere and you're trying to reconstruct it. Now all this of course can just be figures of speech, but funny enough, figures of speech themselves seem to be discovering something rather than making it up. Is it possible that our minds are actually connected to a deeper space that expresses itself through informational patterns that then felt by us as our inner world?

This question is one of the oldest philosophical debacles, which we certainly won't be able to resolve in 500 words or less. But I do think that there are enough clues to hint at whether or not it's the case. For example when we talk to each other we have to constantly keep an eye on the ball of what the other person means to say. But if what the person describes is an object we've never seen before, we can still reconstruct some resemblance of a thing in our mind. So just like the artist and the mathematician, we're trying to reconstruct something that is already there, in someone else's mind. And just like there are more efficient ways to communicate, there might be a way to listen closer to the world itself. Like the state of Flow for example.

It was discovered and then coined as a term by Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in 1975. Be it in sports, science, art, or any other task that requires mental and/or physical effort, the state is mostly characterized by an optimal quantity and quality of information, reaching you at the right

moment in order to solve a problem. It's almost as if it allows you to see more of what the world is in any given moment, so each task becomes almost flawless; everything flows.

But wait, a **problem** in art? Isn't art completely subjective? There will be a lot of ear raising here, but no, true art is far from being subjective. It sits on a much broader gamut of functional possibilities, but they're not infinite; just consider a toilet bowl in an art gallery presented as art. Sure, it seems sophisticated, but we all know this is a joke being played on us.

Good science is hard, and so is good art. They both require rigor, creativity, and imagination, and both produce esthetics, beauty and understanding. Imagine what a future we can build, if science and art merge as the two hemispheres of our collective unconscious; one optimizing our understanding and construction of the world, and the other painting it with our imagination. Maybe we can start by reframing art as the science of meaning, and science as the art of understanding.