



MYSTICAL PRAGMATIC MODERNISM

TRACING VASTATIONS IN THE WORK OF
GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND ALFRED STIEGLITZ

MEREDITH MASSAR MUNSON, PH.D.

9.

11-21-17

wouldn't consider it anyway

What has given — whether
 to what family — or drawing
 — or what sort of communication
 has been made, you gave as
 freely I guess

when I think of it — as
 natural as just sitting there breathing
 as natural as the fact that I grew
 to the height I am —

as natural as the other — as little of
 my choosing

It scares me when I feel
 that

No sir, I wouldn't be scared
 if you knew me well that well to nature Co.

Shelton With Sunspots (1926)
 Georgia O'Keeffe
 Oil on Canvas
 Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Equivalent (1926)
 Alfred Stieglitz
 gelatin silver print
 The Phillips Collection



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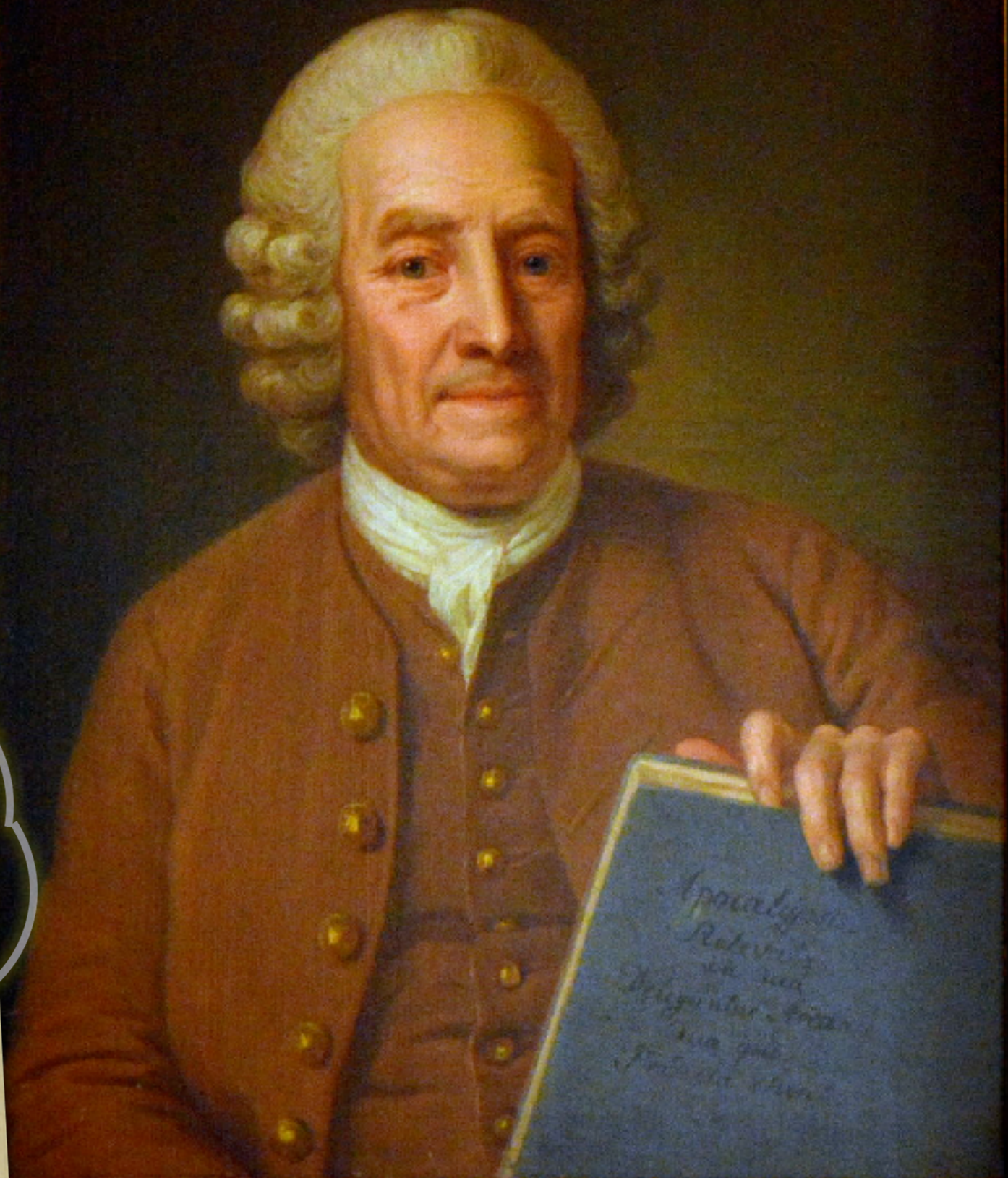
31 Sat. Night - the 27th - I've just gotten home
- no one but myself at home - & I'm already
in bed. - A summer thunderstorm is raging out-
of doors. A deluge of rain - It has been
storming intermittently the last 2 hours -
and at 8 o'clock the full moon was clear
& the sky cloudless - I spent the evening
at my brother's, the doctor, - Garsman & several
other people there to dinner - Mrs. S. is
in Northampton for the day & for Sunday -
her birthday to-day -

It has been an active day. Up
very early - at Eliz.'s studio at
8:30. Sat there awhile reading the
Life of Swedenborg. - Do you know anything
about Swedenborgianism? -
E.'s friend came at about 9:20 -
talked awhile & then I walked to
291 - started printing but the
sun was lazy so did n't accomplish



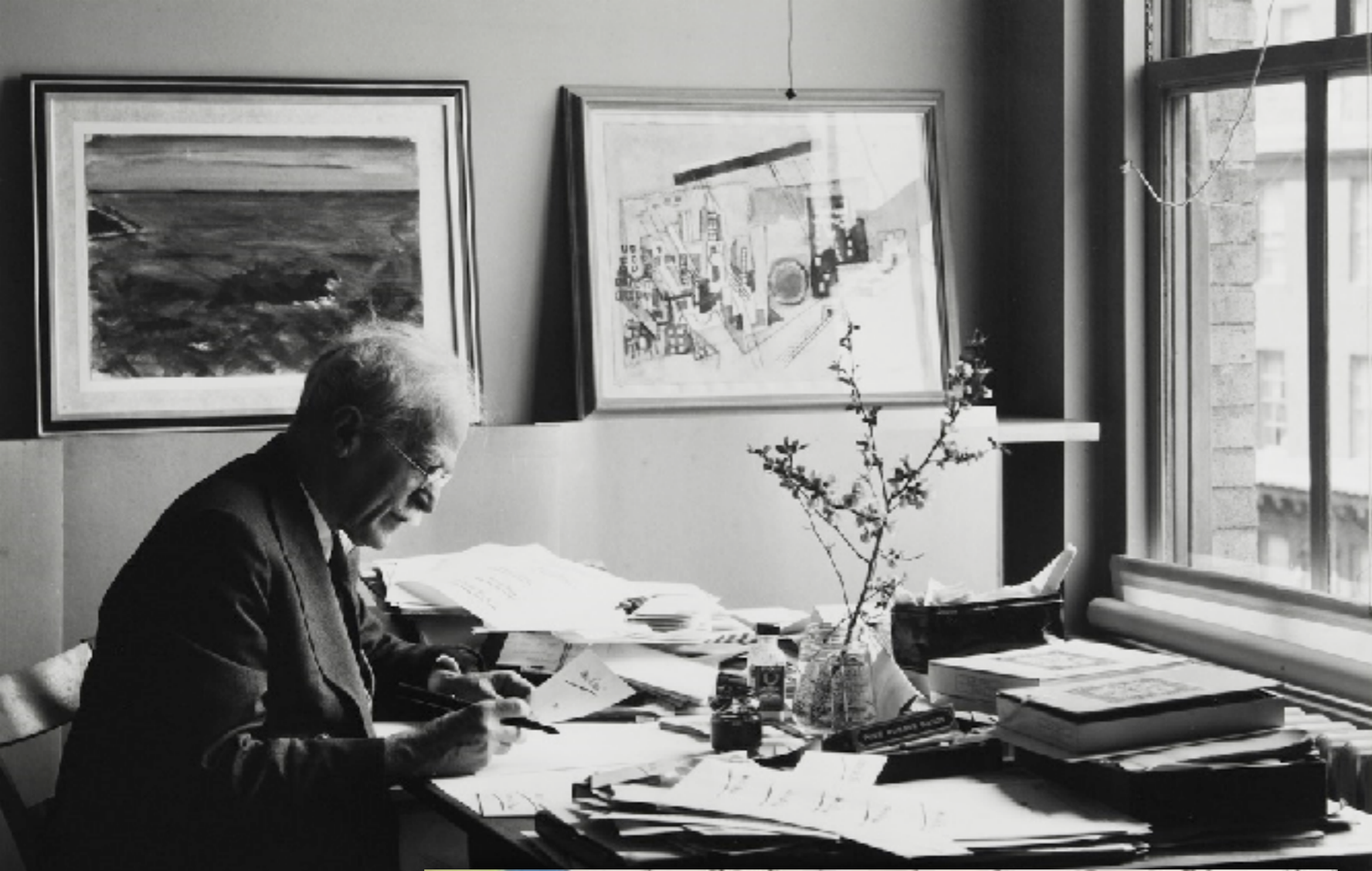
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Portrait of Emanuel Swedenborg, Swedish (c. 1766)
Per Krafft the Elder
oil on canvas
The National Portrait Gallery, Sweden





approve because they sign their
 name a matter of autographs this
 there all the world still to be
 is where the market lies - among
 what a clear this is. who still
 is lost when a picture is
 in hand I can except about
 to do them - but in hand I don't
 out them - I can give to me
 thing in the world. What is
 one's own redemption - in
 on there best that follows me
 own. When one's tired one would
 greater than one's own
 the best - and I do feel that there
 kind of symbolism in the title
 private in - "The South Receiver"
 in can had a quarter reception
 days - have had 3 of those a
 language and I can make
 either much or little in four
 as much demand in the back
 in is small - more more than
 every one - there is
 there is Vienna - if that is
 there is a little Dagerische
 at one can understand of it
 considerable Sachsehe
 - Isn't it strange when a

Dear Stieglitz: - [11/20/21]
 You made a good guess. - The
 letter found me at home, - two days
 at home. Your letter made me glad
 to be home, and, I will see you soon
 in New York.
 It was all very wonderful, -
 but, I must work here. Had I stayed
 in France when I went to it for
 the first time, - by now, I would be
 in to it. It would take years, -
 and, after all there are many able
 to do it. New York is some

Alfred Stieglitz Correspondence
 Personal and Business Correspondence

SPIRITUALITY

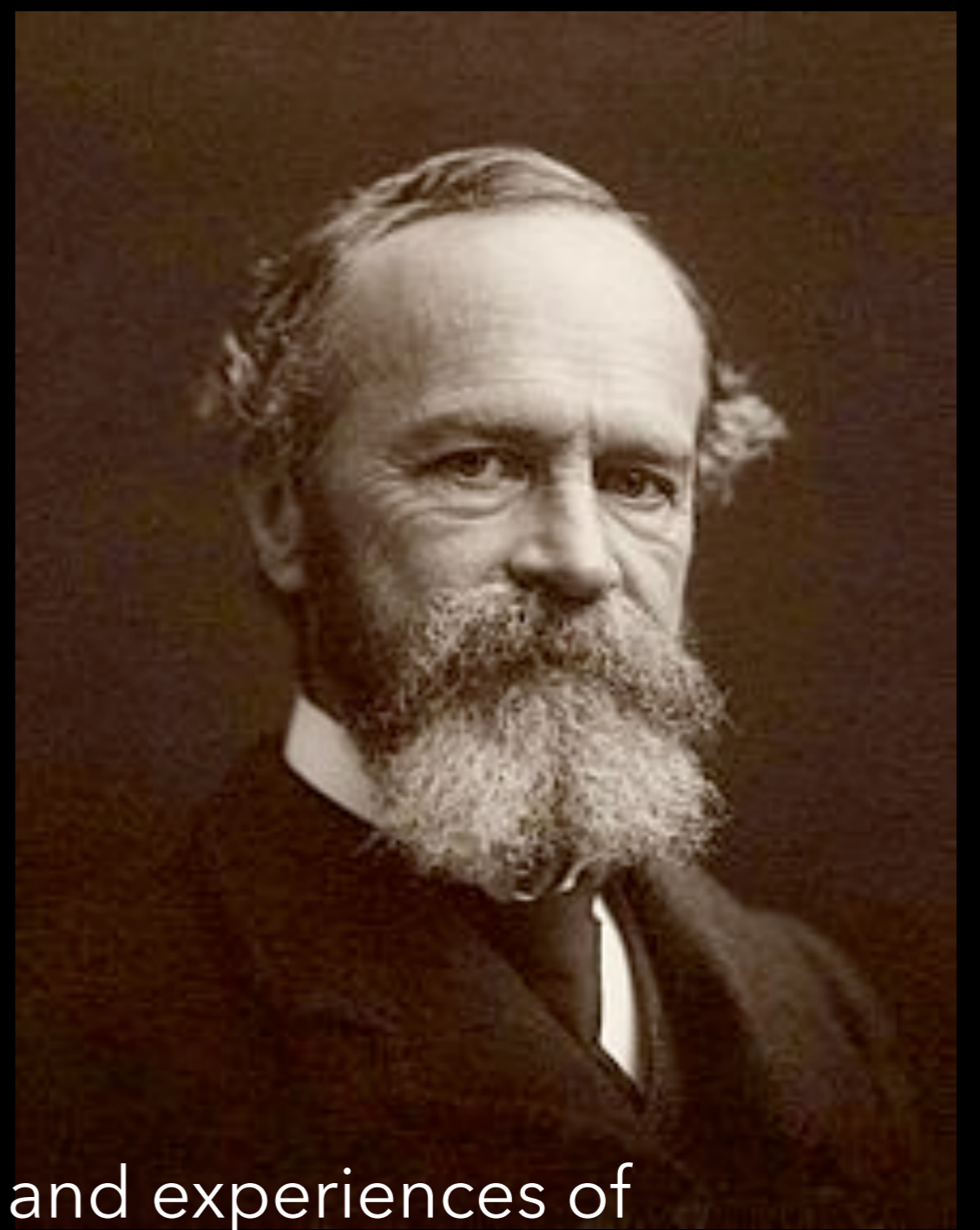
&

PRAGMATIST

AESTHETICS

PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

WILLIAM JAMES



"I define religion as the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."

William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 31.

PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

JOHN DEWEY



“What William James wrote about religious experience might well have been written about the antecedents of acts of expression.”

John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1934), 72.

PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

Embodied Experience

Mysticism

Conversion

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Black Cross, New Mexico (1929)
Georgia O'Keeffe
Oil on canvas
The Art Institute of Chicago





New York Street with Moon (1925)

Georgia O'Keeffe

oil on canvas

48 x 30 1/4 in.

Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection on loan at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza



Shelton (Shelton Hotel, N.Y., No. 1) (1926)

Georgia O'Keeffe

oil on canvas

32 x 17 in.

Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis, Minnesota



“The painter using the word often seems to me like a child trying to walk. I think I’d rather let the painting work for itself than help it with the word.”

-“Georgia O’Keeffe to Fiske Kimball, May 26, 1945,” Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

Radiator Building - Night, New York (1927)

Georgia O’Keeffe

Oil on Canvas

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR



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“But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed.”

-James, *Pragmatism*, 53.



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Film Still From Manhatta (1921)
Paul Strand & Charles Sheeler
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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CONVERSION

“the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”

-James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 189.

Shelton With Sunspots (1926)

Georgia O'Keeffe

Oil on Canvas

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL



Sincerely yours,
Georgia O'Keeffe
Georgia O'Keeffe

Shelton With Sunspots (1926)
Georgia O'Keeffe
Oil on Canvas
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL



Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, Beinecke Collection, Yale University



"I detest tradition for tradition's sake . . . superstitions that go against life, against truth, against the reality of experience, against the spontaneous living out of the sense of wonder – of fresh experience, freshly seen and communicated."

- Alfred Stieglitz, *Aperture*, 8.1 (1960): 25.

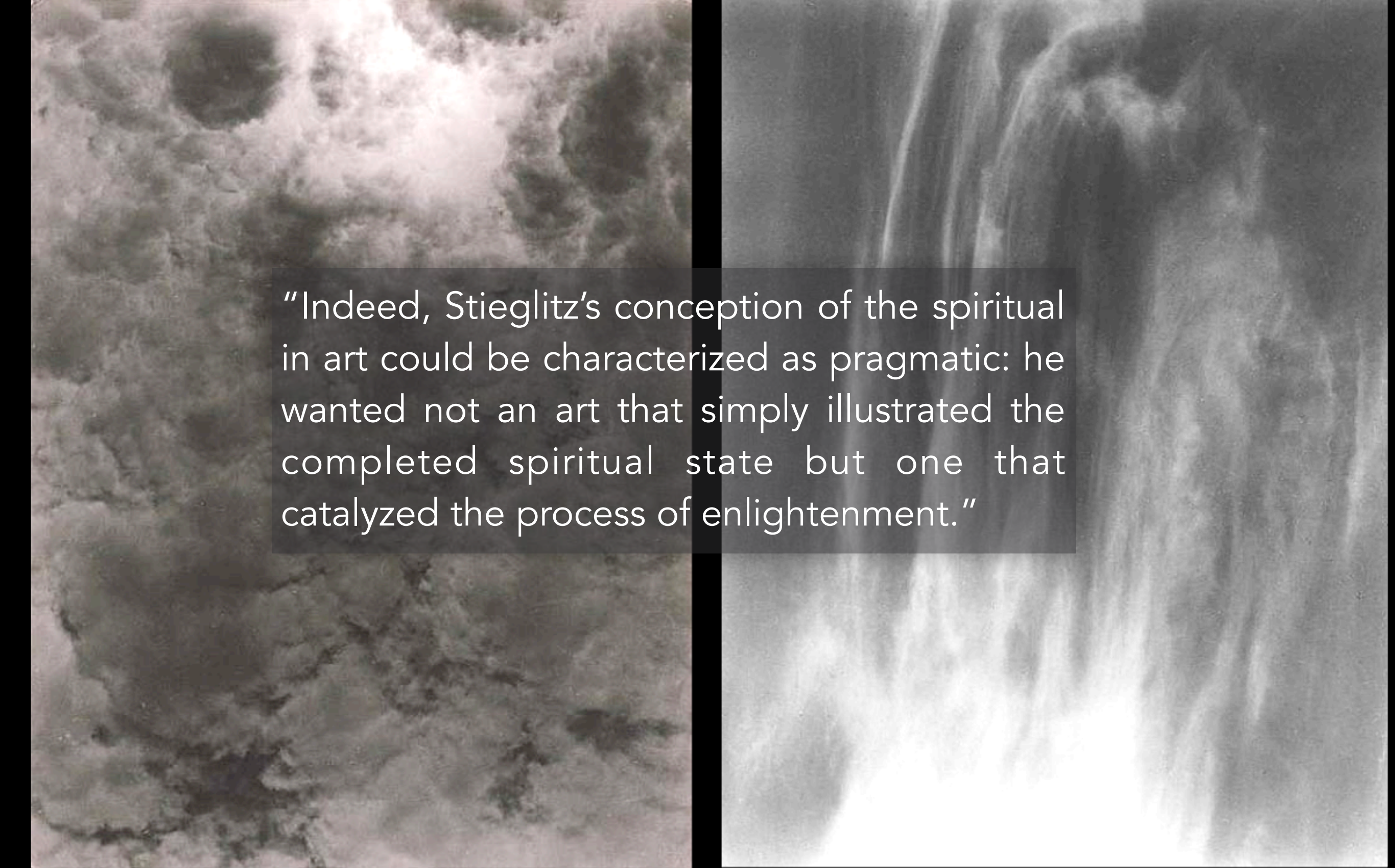
Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, *Beinecke Collection, Yale University*



Equivalent (1926)
Alfred Stieglitz
Gelatin silver print, 4 3/4 x 3 5/8 in.,
Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.



Equivalent (1925)
Alfred Stieglitz
Gelatin silver print, 4 3/4 x 3 5/8 in.,
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“Indeed, Stieglitz’s conception of the spiritual in art could be characterized as pragmatic: he wanted not an art that simply illustrated the completed spiritual state but one that catalyzed the process of enlightenment.”

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Equivalent (1925)
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gelatin silver print
4 11/16 x 3 5/8 in.
The Museum of Modern Art



Equivalent (1923)
Alfred Stieglitz
gelatin silver print
4 1/2 in. x 3 1/2 in.
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art



Equivalent (c. 1927)
Alfred Stieglitz
gelatin silver print
3 9/16 x 4 5/8 in.
Yale University Art Gallery



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FIRSTNESS

pure feeling

THIRDNESS
cognitive relationship

SECONDNNESS
tangible result

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gelatin silver print
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FIRSTNESS

pure feeling

"Shapes, as such, do not interest me unless they happen to be an outer *equivalent* of something already taking form within me."

THIRDNESS
cognitive relationship

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tangible result

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Alfred Stieglitz
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San Francisco Museum of Modern Art



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tangible result

"My cloud photographs are *equivalents* of my most profound life experience, my basic philosophy of life."

Equivalent (1923)
Alfred Stieglitz
gelatin silver print
4 1/2 in. x 3 1/2 in.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art



FIRSTNESS

pure feeling

“What is of greatest importance is to hold a moment, to record something so completely that those who see it will relive an *equivalent* of what has been expressed.”

THIRDNESS
cognitive relationship

SECONDNNESS
tangible result

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“If religion be a function by which either God’s cause or man’s cause is to be really advanced, then he who lives the life of it, however narrowly, is a better servant than he who merely knows about it, however much. . . . For this reason, the science of religions may not be an *equivalent* for living religions.”

James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 378.



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Gelatin silver print, 4 3/4 x 3 5/8 in.,
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