# The Relationship between the Prereflective Self and the Reflective Mind:
## Keeping the Head and Heart Together

By

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the

Curriculum Theory & Implementation: Philosophy of Education

Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2012

**Approval**

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Degree:            Doctor of Philosophy
Title of Dissertation:   The Relationship between the Prereflective Self and the Reflective Mind: Keeping the Head and Heart Together

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**Abstract**

This dissertation addresses the following question: what is the optimal relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective mind? This question arises because of the waning influence of master narratives that provided guidelines for individual behaviour and social interactions. Because of the declining import of these grand narratives, received meanings have lost much of their efficacy. Consequently, the postmodern individual has to become more adept at meaning making.

The fundamental process for doing so, involves a shuttling back and forth between prereflective experience and reflective meaning. That is, one attempts to give conceptual, linguistic form to one's prereflective experience by "trying on" various metaphors, symbols, and terms. One assesses the appropriateness of these verbal forms by referring them back to the implicit experience. Some forms "fit" better than others and those become the meanings that are adopted. This approach becomes necessary as the pace of cultural change accelerates and the appropriateness of "zombie categories" comes into question. "Zombie categories" are categories for organizing understanding that no longer fit the time in which we live. Prereflective consciousness is the means by which we attune to our *current* circumstances. It registers what is emerging. Reflective consciousness can then forge the terms that express the patterns that have been sensed by the prereflective. Those terms can then be employed to communicate regarding the shared situation in which we find ourselves.

This dissertation also suggests that through referencing the prereflective the ontological status of both the self and the world attains fullness. This is contrasted with the abstracted, ironical stance that is more characteristic of the reflective mind. The latter style results from the methodology of doubt, whereas the former embodies the impulse to affirm.

Finally, my methodology employs a narrative, that repeatedly circles around the phenomenon of the prereflective. Because the prereflective is non-conceptual, whereas a thesis is conceptual and reflexive, I use the latter to point at a consciousness that is non-representational. Each conceptual iteration reveals the boundary beyond which it cannot go. The sum total of those iterations reveals the 'shape' of the prereflective.


Keywords: prereflective; reflexivity; felt sense; schizophrenia; methodology of doubt; master narratives

# Acknowledgements

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**Keeping the Head and the Heart Together**

"The problem with being meta is that if one adds sufficient layers of abstraction between the original event and the abstractions one creates to clarify or explain it, one eventually loses all connection to the original.[1]" Charles Hoffmann

This introduction will begin with a sketch of the framework that will be employed to pursue my research question: What is the optimal relationship between the prereflective self[2] and the reflective mind? I am interested in this question because for some time I've suspected that the abstractions being offered to "explain" emergent cultural events are no longer in touch with the circumstances that generated them. I fear that if we use those "explanations" as our signposts we will find ourselves completely lost. I recently came across the work of Ulrich Beck[3] (2003), a German sociologist, who is naming the same problem. He coined the phrase "zombie categories" (p.203) to refer to concepts that were alive in words but no longer alive in the flesh. I will begin with some provisional definitions of my primary terms: the prereflective self and the reflective mind. The implicit background of these explicit definitions will be their constitutive processes—the interaction between prereflective experience and reflective meaning. Next, I will sketch out a diachronic account of the relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective mind. Then I will propose a normative standard that sees the prereflective self as sensing both its needs and its circumstances with the reflective mind giving form to those vague intuitions. I will then make explicit the methods that I utilize in this research project. Hopefully those methodological points will orient the reader to my non-traditional treatment of the topic. The remainder of the introduction will inform the reader via a more narrative account of my intentions for this dissertation. Thus, the beginning of this introduction will be articulated in clear and distinct ideas that are characteristic of the reflective mind at work. The latter part however, will be characterized by a style that mixes the analytic and the metaphoric, the conceptual and the preconceptual. While that style will lack the clarity of the beginning it will be more faithful to the phenomenon that I am investigating for I believe that human functioning is mostly a mixture of the reflective and prereflective.

As mentioned, my objective is to investigate and describe some of the more probable relationships between prereflective self and reflective mind. In so doing, I will be setting up a context or range within which to situate what I conceive to be the nature of a healthy relationship between these two entities. The word "entities" raises an issue that will be revisited throughout the dissertation as it suggests static "things" rather than dynamic processes. For example, in the first

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[1] Urban Dictionary (2012)

[2] The title for the dissertation came last. The "heart" stands for the prereflective self, while the "head" stands in for the reflective mind. When the latter gets ahead of the former, as this dissertation will make clear, trouble ensues.

[3] Beck, U. & Willms, J. (2003). *Conversations with Ulrich Beck.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

paragraph, I mention prereflective self and reflective mind and then in the following sentence, I refer to a prereflective experience and a reflective meaning. The former characterization fits with a predilection for entity language whereas the latter terms might stand at a threshold between entity and process language. How to reconcile this different terminology is a challenge that is inherent in my project. Perhaps I can clarify by suggesting that experience is a process or flow that meaning attempts to formulate. Meaning gives form, or entitizes an aspect of an experience. Thus, the relationship between experience and meaning would be appropriate to a finer grained analysis, whereas the language of prereflective self and reflective mind would be fitting for a more structural account. In addition, this latter characterization begins to suggest a differentiation between self and mind that will be developed further as this dissertation proceeds. This entity language is convenient, even illuminating, if one keeps in mind that both the self and mind are processes. When processes repeat themselves, they form pattern and those patterns taken collectively are descriptive in some cases of self and in others, of mind. In summary, the phenomenon to be investigated is processes that, because they tend to repeat, can be conceived of as pattern or structure.

### Provisional Definitions

For the purposes of this thesis, the term prereflective has three aspects:

1. As a repository of response potentials or an inventory of behavioural skills. These prereflective skills are used spontaneously—that is, without conscious intent. For example, when I write in longhand I am not conscious of forming the letters, my prereflective skills do that for "me." Rather, I am conscious of the content that I am attempting to communicate.
2. Its primary orientation is perceptual rather than conceptual. Attention is directed toward the environment and not toward mental representations. For example, when playing table tennis I am not thinking but rather perceiving and responding (see pt. 1).
3. An inventory of biases based on inadequately symbolized experiences. That is, it tends to assimilate unique environmental events to patterns previously experienced. For example, a man is prereflectively attracted to women with high foreheads because his mother had a high forehead and she nourished him. This man would not be consciously aware of this criterion but an outside observer might notice it. This tendency to assimilate the emergent to the previously encountered serves the subject in some cases and is detrimental in others.

For my purposes, the reflective is defined and described as follows.

1. It is dependent on symbolization. That is, recurrent patterns have been formulated as linguistic representations that can be communicated, examined, and critiqued.
2. Attention is directed inward rather than toward the environment. Reflection works with representation rather than perception. In the example above, the man might reflect on commonalities between his various mates and discover that they all had high foreheads like his mother. He would then be able to explicitly represent this abstracted criterion.

3. Reflection involves taking a third person point of view towards one's self. Instead of being a first person experience, one stands "outside one's self" and views one's self as an object. Self-concept and self-image would be examples of representing one's self to one's self.

Edelman[4] (2006) gives another account of these two entities that is deceptively simple,

> Dogs and other animals, if they are aware, have primary consciousness. This is the experience of a unitary scene in a time period of at the most seconds that I call the remembered present . . . Although they are aware of ongoing events, animals with primary consciousness are not conscious of being conscious and do not have the concept of the past, the future, or a nameable self. Such notions require the ability to experience higher-order consciousness, and this depends on having semantic or symbolic capabilities . . . With the ability to speak, we can free ourselves temporarily from the limitations of the remembered present. Nonetheless, at all times when higher-order consciousness is present we also possess primary consciousness. (p. 15, emphasis added.)

Two points need to be emphasized. Firstly, "primary consciousness," or prereflective awareness operates at all times, even when reflective consciousness is operating. This relates to my research question: how do these simultaneous consciousnesses relate, if at all? In the last chapter, I will be turning to Gendlin[5] for support in my quest. But for now, it is enough to raise the question of levels of analysis to avoid confusion at a later juncture. Both Gendlin and Edelman claim that that higher—order consciousness—reflective meaning in my terms—and primary consciousness—in my vocabulary, prereflective experience—operate simultaneously. Viewed synchronically this suggests that their relationship is reciprocally influencing. Yet, when I investigate the relationship of the prereflective self to the reflective mind diachronically, I begin to map a developmental sequence that isn't always reciprocal. For example, I will claim that the prereflective self developmentally precedes the emergence of the reflective mind. This suggests that the relationship between the two is one of unequal influence with the prereflective initially dominating and the reflective mind increasing its influence over time.

Let me return briefly to the finer grained analysis; one where both prereflective experience and reflective meaning operate simultaneously. Gendlin (1962) makes the case that we are only aware of the contribution that experience brings to meaning when the meaning is temporarily unavailable. We encounter someone whose name we should know; whose name we once knew but can't recall in the moment. One feels that their name is there, on the "tip of one's tongue," in one's

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[4] Edelman, G. (2006). *Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
[5] Gendlin, E. (1962). *Experiencing and the creation of meaning : a philosophical and psychological approach to the subjective.* New York : Free Press of Glencoe. Freud, S. (2003). *The uncanny*. New York: Penguin Books

body, in one's experience.  Because that feeling hasn't found its home in a meaning, we can be aware of it pressing; of it insisting that we know this person's name.  However, on other occasions, when we see another person and know their name, our experience with this person isn't necessarily foregrounded—it is present but we are not aware of it operating.  Our background experience with this person fills in the meaning of their name seamlessly—without requiring representational thought and memory.  Edelman's second point is worth recalling: "higher-order consciousness" is dependent on symbolization or representation.  This symbolization allows us to be "conscious of being conscious."  Later in this dissertation, I've referred to the same phenomenon as self-consciousness but I am not totally comfortable with that term because with ordinary language usage "self conscious" means being embarrassed because one is the centre of attention. However, the reason that I originally chose that term was because when we are employing higher-order consciousness we are working with internal representations—thus, self -constructions—rather than with objects in the world. In this case, we've adopted a reflective or third person stance toward ourselves. We represent or symbolize ourselves as a conscious being and thus we are able to be conscious of being conscious.

I began this section with the intent of clarifying any confusion that might arise through conflating two different levels of analysis. On the one hand, I have made the claim that prereflective experience and reflective meaning operate simultaneously throughout our life span. On the other, I make the claim that the prereflective self develops first and only after pattern recognition followed by concept formation does the reflective mind come to the fore. During this latter phase, the reflective mind can begin to influence or "program" the prereflective self. The first claim is posed synchronically; the second, diachronically—both are true but depict different aspects. But that is not the only difference. In everyday living, for the most part, we are only conscious of our conceptual meanings and not the background awarenesses from which they emerge. The result is not the denial of prereflective experience but rather ignorance of its existence. This surely must be the case with ideologues who "explain" everything only from within their conceptual framework. Yet, at the same time, they navigate through the postmodern world more or less adequately. I suggest that their simultaneously operating, prereflective self is responsible for any success that they have but that an ideologue would have little awareness of this guidance system. Their self-understandings would consist of ideological concepts.

**A Phenomenological Sketch**

I would like to fill in this conceptual discussion with some prereflective experience. Phenomenological description has always appealed to me because of its ability to convey both meaning and experience.  In the 70s and 80s, I was stimulated by a popular, if controversial, author, Carlos Castaneda (1968, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1977).  The narrative line of his journey began with him

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as a graduate student studying anthropology. He was traveling to Mexico to do field work on shamanism. However, because of his contact with a shaman, his relationship to his academic interest changed from that of "observer" to that of "participant." His subsequent experiences led him to develop an account of a person's life trajectory: The self initially dreamed a double and, after some time, the double began to dream the self. I resonated with his description without understanding it.

Looking back, I understand that my fascination with his account had to do with Castaneda's ability to convey the uncanny. Freud (2003)[6] defined the uncanny as that which had been experienced and subsequently repressed. Its reappearance in the subject's life elicits an enigmatic fascination. When I originally read Castaneda's account my reflective mind had only a vague idea of what his terms meant, nevertheless my prereflective self engaged. Now, many years later, I reflectively understand that he had used phenomenological language to introduce a diachronic or developmental perspective regarding the relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective mind. I interpret his "double" as the reflective mind whose contents are developed from observing the repeated interactions of the prereflective self with its environment. That reflective mind then begins to "program" the prereflective in order to begin to develop a "second nature" of the subject's own choosing. What made Castaneda's account uncanny for me was its ability to symbolize my existential, developmental history—a history that I had "forgotten."

### What is Meant by "Real"?

Finally, I wish to define what I mean by the terms "real" and "reality." When I've used this term in previous papers, I've encountered resistance. My sense is that I was being criticized for a kind of naive arrogance. How could I have the temerity to claim to know reality? I think that this criticism is based on a misunderstanding rather than a disagreement. That is, my interlocutors think that I'm making a totalizing claim that reality can be known in its completeness—and that I have attained that felicitous state. However, I am not making such a claim. In fact, I suggest that such a claim would be the implicit ambition of the reflective mind. I say this because, as I shall elaborate later in this dissertation, the reflective mind valorizes closure. Rather, I am saying that the aim of the prereflective self is the experientially, or phenomenologically real. This is not a totalizing, but rather a situational real. A particular real. But this does not go far enough. When I ask myself, "what leads me to attribute the quality of realness to any event, or experience?" I come up with the following: the real is anything that does not bend to the dictates of my will. That is, the real is my encounter with otherness. That otherness can be internal or external. A cold virus is real. 9/11 was real. Coetzee[7] (2003) made a similar distinction with his observation that he could believe in anything that didn't

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[6] Freud, S. (2003). *The Uncanny*. New York: Penguin Books
[7] Coetzee, J. M. (2003). *Elizabeth Costello : eight lessons*. London : Secker & Warburg, 2003.

require his belief in order to exist.  As will become clear as my dissertation proceeds, the prereflective is the experiential realm that is most intimately linked with the real.

I hope that the foregoing provisional definitions and descriptions can give the reader a way of framing this admittedly complex exposition.  As you work your way through the dissertation and see how those terms are being used in many different contexts, their meanings will become clearer and fuller.

## Why is this Important?

Why go to all this trouble of untangling and describing the varying contributions that the prereflective and reflective modalities bring to our lives?  That question will be answered more fully in chapter one, but, for now, I would say that I'm pursuing the same correction about our self understanding that Brooks[8] (2011) was articulating in The Social Animal: "just as Galileo 'removed the earth from its privileged position at the center of the universe,' so this intellectual revolution [in brain science] removes the conscious mind from its privileged place at the center of human behaviour."  Brooks pointed to studies showing the vast array of tasks that our brains perform unconsciously—for example, recognizing our friends.  He also drew the conclusion that if our brains lacked an emotional sense we might be more logical but less able to make decisions and live successfully.  My final chapter will take up that claim in some detail.

It should not be surprising that our educational institutions partake of the same premise as does the culture at large: The conscious mind is at the centre of human behaviour.  This would apply especially to universities that continue to emphasize reflective and critical thinking—functions which only the conscious mind can perform.  These are obviously valuable capacities but effective decision-making and successful living might require something more.  I am reminded of an anecdote regarding the chess match between IBM's "Deep Blue" computer and a chess master.  When asked about the experience, the chess master replied that it was like playing someone who didn't really want to win.

I suggest that although the computer had enormous computational capabilities, it was missing something.  Brooks (2011) might say that it lacked an "emotional sense." Transitioning from computers to humans, this dissertation will claim that both good decision making and successful living require interacting from a first person perspective that can be augmented but not replaced by a third person, or reflective perspective.

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[8] Brooks, D. (2011). *The Social Animal.* New York: Random House. This book is notable in that its intended audience is not a specialist one but rather mainstream. This book has enjoyed some success on the New York Times bestseller list. I don't see specialist literature as the only legitimate one, as the focus of my dissertation is the interaction between the individual and their situation or circumstance. Those circumstance or contexts can range from the micro to the culture at large.

**Overview of the Content**

Chapter one utilizes Kegan (1982) to ascertain how reflective thinking attained its privileged position. Kegan suggested that psychological development is made possible by getting "outside of ourselves," or adopting a third person point of view toward ourselves. That is, development requires that we symbolize or objectify some aspect of ourselves that previously conditioned our experience implicitly. In other words, psychologic development is dependent on looking at our frame of reference rather than through it. One can understand how reflective thinking has attained its privileged position given this account of psychologic development. And I am more than willing to acknowledge its value. Yet, I am suggesting that its power is limited. I am not suggesting that Kegan is in error as he presents an unusually balanced account of psychological development that includes a "participative" or first person experience of the changes that such development entails. Rather, I am researching what may be a limit condition with regard to the efficacy of reflection. Chapter two devotes considerable space to the distortions that result from adopting an exclusively reflective position. It utilizes the work of Sass[9] (1992) with schizophrenics who have developed a hyper-reflexive style—a style so "meta" that it has lost touch with the original experience. By examining various aspects of this extreme condition I hope to sensitize the reader to its appearance in its subtler forms, which I contend are widespread.

The final chapter proposes an approach that outlines the most productive relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective mind. There I will spend some time describing micro-processes of focussing the reflective consciousness on one's emergent experience in order to be able to give it a suitable conceptual or symbolic form. In addition, I will suggest that by giving the prereflective self primacy, one is empowered to make better decisions and to affirm one's commitments.

There are some far-reaching educational implications to this project. Because I characterize prereflective intelligence as being interactional in nature—involving a feedback loop between the subject and his or her situation—this might have the effect of shifting our attention away from intentions to results. It's been my experience that in ordinary living most people seem to honour or privilege the motive or 'cause.' But we might be arriving at a historical turning point where one's interest in the result is foregrounded. The "result" points to the change in the situation that our actions have wrought. Perhaps we are moving from a linear to a circular epistemology. That is, this switch of focus indicates that we are aware that we are in a feedback loop.

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[9] Sass, L. A. (1992). *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and* Thought. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

**A Methodological Note**

Throughout this dissertation, I make use of a number of vocabularies, models, theories, and paradigms. I do so because to explicate a phenomenon via different theoretical vocabularies, points at the phenomenon and not to the vocabulary. Using only one vocabulary invites the danger of reification. The terms become the "things in themselves" rather than pointing to the phenomenon in question. For example, Freud's term Ego takes on substantive associations, becoming thing-like, rather than pointing to a process or function. For that reason, I appreciate the symbol that Gendlin[10] (1962) uses to refer to implicit experiencing—that symbol being ." . . . ." Such a symbol avoids the error of using a concept to refer to the non-conceptual. Another writer, Zizek[11] (2000), solves this same problem with the term 'placeholder.' It holds open a non-conceptual space within a conceptual system.

In addition, as much as possible I attempt to be explicit about my biases. As the substance of this dissertation will make clear, I believe that intelligence is evidenced by the appropriateness of the response to one's situation. I am formed in part by the situations I encounter. In turn, I impact those situations. The influence is reciprocal if uneven. To be consistent with my message, therefore, I want to reveal the biases that I bring to the discussion. In this respect I agree with the art historian Moxey (1999)

> The cultural function of historical interpretation can be openly acknowledged rather than masked behind an ideal of objectivity. As a consequence, the shape of the discipline has been decisively altered. Rather than operate according to an ideology of neutrality and disinterest that insists that the author repress his or her subjectivity in the pursuit of the "facts," rather than fetishize empirical data by suggesting that they might be relied upon to provide the interpretations that are actually forced on them by particular historians, scholars have begun to foreground their commitment to a specific form of understanding.[12]  (p. 1, emphasis added.)

My third methodological point has to do with my style of persuasion. I don't rely exclusively on logical argument to "prove" my claims. Rather I seek what Wittgenstein calls "the understanding with consists in seeking connections,"[13] the kind of explanation that uses analogy to change the aspect under which given phenomena are seen, so that they will make sense, or make sense in a new way. Through the use of analogy and metaphor, I attempt to bring forth the experiential dimension of my thought in the hopes that by so doing I will refer the reader to their own experience. I am asking

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[10] Gendlin, E. (1962). *Experiencing and the creation of meaning : a philosophical and psychological* approach to the subjective. New York : Free Press of Glencoe,.

[11] Zizek, S. (2000). *The fragile absolute.* London: Verso

[12] Moxey, K. (1999). "The History of Art after the Death of the 'Death of the subject." In *Invisible Cullture:* An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies. Retrieved: May 5, 2011.

[13] Quoted in R. Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: the Duty of Genius* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 451

them to think with these concepts rather than agonistically.  When I ask people to think with these concepts, I am not asking for agreement but rather usage.  Apply these concepts to your experience and observe the result that is produced. By so doing you might find these concepts useful.  In addition, you might find that by doing so you are able to carry the conversation forward in ways that would be impossible for me to predict or control.

## My Supplemental Style: Narrative

One of the frequent comments I've heard from people who had read earlier drafts of my dissertation was that I attributed unwarranted powers to the prereflective—that it had immediate access to reality.[14]  For these readers I seemed to be claiming that this prereflective power could correct or compensate for the self referential—and therefore potentially solipsistic—tendencies of the reflective mind.  My interlocutors suggested that the implicit claim of my argument goes something like, "If we could just dwell within, and move from, our prereflective self we could get beyond our conceptual short circuits and deal directly with reality."  I think that my readers understood what I was saying but disagreed with what they took to be my position.  Furthermore, as they pointed out, my position seems to be at odds with the prevailing opinion that everything is text all the way down.  Or, stated differently, prereflective experience is already constrained and configured by 'imported' conceptual frameworks in such a way that it is impossible for us to encounter the things in themselves.  It is in response to this feedback that I offer what follows.  This clarification will also serve as an introduction to the remainder of the dissertation.

Part of the difficulty is that the ground for my position is a felt sense and thus prereflective and implicit.  The critical comments I've received have encouraged me to be more explicit and thus clarify from the outset why I believe that there is value in gaining a deeper understanding of how the prereflective operates in our day-to-day living.  I contrast engaged, day-to-day living with the detached cogitation that is entailed in reflective thinking.  I believe, as will become clear, that the prereflective does the 'walking' while the reflective does the 'talking.' In other words, I believe that our day-to-day interactions with our natural and social environments are undertaken largely prereflectively.  When I'm operating in that modality I take little notice of my mood or inner experience because I'm focussed on carrying forward some task or project in the world.  Because I take little notice of it, it is hard to describe.  So, one could say that to the degree that I actively engage the world, I remain in a kind of ignorance about the part my prereflective self plays in the co-

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[14] Since writing the above I've come across an interesting angle on the question of mediated and unmediated reality. Gendlin claims that we have unmediated access to our *experience*. Prior to my encounter with this writer the vast majority of participants claimed that unmediated access to reality was an illusion.

construction of that same world.  However, because my thesis makes the claim that the prereflective is the primary modality with which we engage with the world, it is incumbent upon me to make an effort to at least describe it.  Here one encounters a major challenge: How to describe a phenomenon that is more-than-conceptual[15] with a language and within a tradition (philosophy) that is conceptual. My approach, throughout the dissertation, will be to point to various aspects of the prereflective. Hopefully the cumulative effect of these gestures will begin to entitize the prereflective for the reader[16].

Let me begin with a description/definition that the prereflective is the emergent, dynamic product of a person's character responding to environmental events.  When I refer to a person's character, as distinct from their self-conscious style or personality, I am referring to a significant aspect of their prereflective self.  In other words, character is structured.  By that, I mean that it displays recurrent patterns in its interactions with environmental challenges.  Bill O'Hanlon, a family therapist, relates an anecdote about his mentor that conveys the nature of this structuring: "Bill, for people like you and I, life is just one damn thing after another.  But for our clients it's the same thing over and over."

What is producing this repetition?  Certainly not their conscious, reflective minds which rails against the frustration of willing one result only to find itself experiencing the "same old, same old." Rather, I will be claiming that these repetitious patterns are produced by the prereflective—a combination of both a genetic predisposition and personal history/experience.  Yet, at the same time, the prereflective perceives and responds to the world—the unique, never-before encountered environmental event.  In other words, prereflective responsiveness is a combination of the 'same' (genetic 'hard wiring' plus personal history) and 'difference.'  Contrast this with the conscious conceptualizations of the reflective mind—which are not 'of' the world but rather symbolic and representational[17].  What counts in my argument is that attention in reflective thinking is oriented towards representations, as opposed to the objects themselves.

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[15] In this hyphenated vocabulary I'm following the lead of Eugene Gendlin who didn't wish to set up a binary of rational and irrational or conceptual versus preconceptual. Rather he wanted to say that our concepts were derived from the immense intricacy of the prereflective which was more-than-conceptual and *not opposed* to the conceptual.

[16] Entitizing refers to the process of freezing and lifting some aspect out of the ongoing flow of experience by symbolizing or representing it.

[17] One could make the claim that those symbols were originally imported from the world but that is immaterial to my argument.

**A Hypnotic Demonstration**

The following hypnosis experiment should illuminate some of the differences between representational thought and prereflective experience. This simple experiment[18] presents multiple interpretive opportunities, multiple aspects that can be drawn out and explicated. In this experiment, half the subjects were hypnotized and given a suggestion for a negative hallucination: specifically they wouldn't be able to see a chair in the middle of the room. The other half, were told to pretend that they were hypnotized which included the suggestion for a negative hallucination of this same chair. Those who were actually hypnotized never bumped into the chair while those who were pretending did. Let us begin with the curious fact that the genuinely hypnotized subjects were able to avoid bumping into the furniture even though they'd been given the suggestion that such furniture didn't exist. Their avoidant behaviour clearly revealed that they perceived the chair. That is, their prereflective selves were aware of their environment. However when asked to explain their avoidant behaviour, they didn't refer to their actual motivation—a wish to avoid harming themselves. Instead, they fabricated or rationalized a motive after the fact. They might, for example, claim that they changed direction when they caught sight of a painting that they wanted to view. That is, they used the representations or concepts that were available to them to "explain" their behaviour. Could it be that the hypnotist's suggestion didn't actually produce neurological blindness for the furniture but rather for the representation of the chair? Lacking a concept for chair, they fabricated "reasons" for their behaviour from the concepts or representations that were available to them. My sense was that the subjects were not consciously dissimulating—they believed their rationalizations.

This experiment not only describes the difference between the reflective mind and the prereflective selves, but also raises other, startling, implications. For one thing, it seems to imply that what we call consciousness is conceptual and reflective. That is, somehow these subjects were able to register the presence of the chair without being "conscious" of it. What do we then call the "intelligence" that perceived the presence of the chair and thus allowed the subject to apply avoidance strategies? I referred to it earlier as prereflective "awareness" but I'm not completely happy with that terminology. But what to call it? At this point, I don't have a satisfactory term. Perhaps a term will show up later. I like what Gendlin does, he refers to it with . . . . . . Those dots are his placeholder for the intricacy that hasn't yet been articulated. I like the term placeholder. It seems to me that it is an incursion of the inarticulate into the articulate. The five dots . . . . . . announce, "I'm here too," without compromising itself by wearing the disguise of a clear and distinct concept. Those dots keep something open.

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[18] Orne, M. & Shor, R.E. [1965]. *The nature of hypnosis; selected basic readings.* New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston,

Let me push past the struggle for vocabulary and instead use this experiment as a metaphor for some larger, cultural processes. Let me offer up the possibility that we live in a culture that has yet to symbolize many of its emergent phenomena. That is, we seem to be living through a transitional or liminal era. Some have labeled this era as postmodernity. We somehow find a way to navigate through it without bumping into too many obstacles but we can't yet talk about it—we lack the concepts. Postmodernism offers some concepts but they mostly seem negative—that is, they claim that modern categories can't do the job. That is, postmodernism seems to be oppositional rather than affirmative. We seem to be having difficulty theorizing or thematizing our condition in positive terms. Yet, we muddle through. Perhaps this dissertation will go some way toward articulating the need for those concepts and that, in turn, will draw the artists and writers who can continue this task. Perhaps Gendlin will show us a way.

There is another implication that I draw from this experiment. It shows that it is possible to live within the hermetically sealed vessel of one's concepts. For those who do so, reality is their concepts. Recall what I claimed earlier that higher-order consciousness was conscious of being conscious. That is we receive our perceptions and generate our behaviour but are usually only "conscious"—in the sense of being able to articulate—of our concepts or representations. The hypnotized subjects articulated their avoidant behaviour with the representations of which they were conscious rather than articulating the perceptions to which their behaviour was a response. Wittgenstein[19] (1958) would have no trouble understanding this, as he believed that for adequate action, mental representation is neither necessary nor sufficient. Instead, we evaluate adequate action based on what a person does.

In general, it seems that we often give a representational account or explanation of what happened when in actuality our experience and behaviour arose from our prereflective self or primary consciousness. For example, when I first began counselling. I would ask a client, "So, how do you feel when 'X' happens?" Their reply didn't address my question but rather gave me their interpretation of the event in question. For those people, it seemed like an interpretation was equivalent to a feeling. I could see that they sincerely believed that they were answering my question candidly. However, they were inside the hermetically sealed vessel of their conceptual minds and didn't have any notion that their situational attunement arose in their bodies. They looked confused and distressed when I told them that they had given me an interpretation rather than reporting a feeling.

In the hypnosis experiment cited above, the subjects, when asked to report their account for their evasive behaviour, thought that their answers were a faithful rendering of their experience. And

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[19] Wittgenstein, L. (1958). Philosophical Investigations. Trans. G.E.M. Anscomb. Oxford: Blackwell.

the shocking possibility is that they were.  That is, they couldn't get 'outside' their conceptual schemata.   Because they lacked a concept for "chair" they made use of the remaining concepts to rationalize their behaviour.  Something similar may be happening when people live predominately in their ideologies.  They can't get outside their meaning schemes.  Or, for those who could, this "outside" would be experienced as an abyss—a kind of nothingness.  As a result, they might find themselves rushing back to the enclosure of their ideology.[20]

In attempting to understand someone, I try to include both the 'reality' of their prereflective self and the ideal standards, which serve as reference points for their reflective minds.

### Including the Involuntary

In my 40 years experience as a psychotherapist, I have developed a framework and method for integrating these two realms: the real[21] and the ideal.  The presenting problem that my clients bring to me is their inability to change either a repetitive distressing experience or troublesome behaviour.  They are being haunted by the involuntary.  Their 'autonomous' ego has been usurped.  Because people identify with this autonomous ego, it can be very distressing to discover that its powers are limited.  Typically, their ego wants me to help them get rid of this offending experience or behaviour.  Harry Stack Sullivan, the American psychiatrist, schematized individuals consisting of three parts "the good me" (my ego ideal), "the bad me" (experience infused by anxiety) and "the not me" (experience or behaviour that is so alien to one's self concept that one experiences massive anxiety).  My clients want my help in taming "the bad me" and exorcising "the not me."  Instead of accepting my client's characterization of the dilemma, I visualize each client existing on a continuum that joins the real to the ideal.  The continuum acknowledges the legitimacy of each pole and their respective contribution to the client's behaviour.  The 'real' pole refers to how my clients have historically handled the situations in which they've found themselves.  The 'real' is a recurrent pattern; a self sustaining engine.  From the point of view of their ego ideal, some of the behaviours generated by the 'real' self are regrettable.  When this is the case, their ego ideal is articulate and judgmental.  On the other hand, their 'real' self is inarticulate and powerful—powerful because it operates the levers of their 'involuntary' behaviour.

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[20] An acquaintance of mine related that Fritz Perls, the originator of Gestalt therapy, claimed that we lived on one of six levels, the first three of which included "cliché, role, impasse," He was pointing to an attempt to "get by" with a formula, a cliché or role prescription and when that didn't work one found one's Self teetering on the brink of transformation.

[21] The reader may want to know why I refer to the prereflective self as 'real'. I am using ordinary language when I so do. Behavior is real, material, observable and my claim is that the prereflective self generates the majority of day to day behavior. "Actions speak louder than words" is a common sense aphorism that conveys this sentiment

My clients are quite adept at articulating their values and standards but quite limited in expressing what motivates their 'problematic' behaviour. I'm claiming that the ego ideal is articulate because it is a product of their reflective minds whereas the 'real' self is prereflective. In my framework, therefore, the ideal self is articulate, judgmental and, at times, impotent whereas the 'real' self is inarticulate and powerful. This interpretation explains why the motives for my client's behaviour appears to be a mystery to her or him. Their behaviour is generated by something other than their ideals. They're frustrated because they are unable to 'walk their talk;' unable to actualize their ideals. But what they don't realize is that they are also unable to talk their walk. They are stuck in a third person perspective when it comes to understanding their troubling behaviour. They are dealing with a 'lost' subjectivity, which once was theirs.

Perhaps it is impossible for the walk ("know how") and the talk ("know that") to be integrated one hundred percent (and that probably isn't desirable) but when it comes to dealing with distressing behaviour, it seems to be necessary for forward movement. My therapy practice brings the prereflective into the conversation as a legitimate voice. Later in this dissertation, I will be asking if pedagogical practices that acknowledge the prereflective have a greater chance of producing wisdom, whereas a pedagogy that focuses predominately on the reflective produces knowledge. In therapy, I suggest that the client assumes the subjectivity of her or his prereflective self. That is, I'm asking the client to generate and occupy a subjectivity that could produce the behaviour about which their reflective ego ideal is distressed. I might further support such a move by suggesting that they assume a worthwhile motive for their behaviour; I'm asking them to suppose that they are engaged in such a behaviour because it serves them in some way. That is, I'm trying to counteract the tendency of the ego ideal to shut down any exploration of the subjectivity that may have produced the behaviour that the ego ideal considers regrettable. I'm asking them to construct or re-construct a 'lost' subjectivity. I then support them to find adequate symbols to express their experience. In other words, I'm asking them to develop symbols that would allow them to express the need that is being met by their 'problematic' behaviour. These freshly minted symbols are distinctive from tired, depleted, clichéd symbols in that they are informed by prereflective experience. That is, these symbols are meaningful rather than hollowed out. I like the metaphor of an inflated tire for its ability to illuminate this relationship between the symbol and its felt correlate. A tire is made functional by the air that fills it. Likewise, I claim that symbols that are informed by the prereflective have greater functionality. That is, they imply a carrying forward, an impetus, a direction. This 'carrying forward' aspect is conveyed clearly by an artist who looks at the half completed work and asks, "What does it want in order to develop?" I've heard craftsmen utter similar invocations. With this attitude of receptivity, the power of the prereflective can be accessed and given voice. Now a respectful

conversation can ensue between the ego ideal and the recently symbolized, prereflective self. Some integration is now possible. My client is a little closer to walking their talk and talking their walk. When therapy is successful, the client doesn't revert to the 'default settings,' their previous troublesome behaviour/experience, when the pressure is on. This is probably the most important reason for acknowledging the prereflective -- the whole person can move forward when the prereflective is engaged. Otherwise, the person's life begins to resemble a leaf caught in a back eddy—circling round and around but never moving forward.

Yet, this still doesn't address my reader's feedback that I seem to be attributing special powers to the prereflective to make contact with reality. And yes, that is what I am claiming. I valorize the prereflective because it is the locus of interaction—whereas the reflective is the site of intra-action. Yes, I'm coining a word that draws its inspiration from the psychoanalytic distinction between that which is interpsychic and that, which is intrapsychic. The interpsychic or intersubjective is the psychic interaction between or amongst individuals whereas the intrapsychic is mental activity taking place within the individual. When I valorize the prereflective I do so because it is the means by which the core of the subject makes contact with their environment—whether that environment is cultural or natural. A Buddhist aphorism might make my point more clear: "You should be grateful whenever, you're frustrated or disappointed because it means that you are getting news from reality.[22]" That is to say that these emotions of frustration and disappointment arise because some assumption has been invalidated. In the act of perception, something has exceeded the template of one's cognitive assumptions. Something has arrived that wasn't predicted. As Martha Nussbaum[23] might claim, these emotions signal an "upheaval of thought." In the subsequent struggle to overcome the dissonance between our assumptions and the news that is arriving, we have an opportunity to create a new, more inclusive cognitive structure. In so doing, we are engaging in conscious, reflective thought. Then, once its adequacy has been tested, this new cognitive rule can once again sink down and be absorbed in the prereflective where it will be applied automatically and rapidly until the day when its inadequacy will be signalled by surprise, frustration, and/or disappointment. Those emotions gather the attention because they reveal that living on autopilot has just met a condition for which there is no adequate script or program, routine or habit. Agency is required in order to construct an appropriate response.

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[22] Trungpa, C. (1973). *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*. Boston, Mass.: Shambhala
[23] Nussbaum, M. (1994). *The therapy of desire: theory and practice in Hellenistic ethics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

**Implications for Transformational Learning**

But even if I failed to convince the reader that prereflective engagement has a privileged access to reality, I would still claim that both our pedagogical and therapeutic practices would do well to address the prereflective—that is, if our goal is to support the client/student through a transformational learning process. Mezirow (2000) pointed out that transformational learning involves "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation."[24] With the term "tacit assumptions and expectations" I refer to as the mediated or sedimented[25] prereflective—that agency that embodies and enacts those assumptions that allow us to carry on. These tacit assumptions or premises on which the person founds him or herself generate experiences that the subject takes to be reality. For example, one fundamental premise might be that the subject is hundred percent responsible for other people's well-being. Given this premise, one would not be surprised to witness manipulative and controlling behaviours. Such a premise would likely generate those behaviours. Surfacing and critically examining those assumptions is a difficult, arduous and, often, necessary task. Such a process results in a change in one's sense of self—one's basic ontology. By addressing that sedimented self—rather than the reflective mind—the educator or therapist accompanies the whole person through that process and increases the chances of a complete transition.

The term "premise" has an interesting double meaning: referring to both a foundational assumption and to a dwelling place. My conjecture is that my client's existential sense of self dwells within those premises. To have them challenged, therefore, is to shake the very foundations of their existence while, at the same time, a necessary pre-condition for structural change. New foundations generate new feelings and new behaviours. Therefore, I am suggesting that if we are after more than cosmetic change or the accumulation of information, then the existential self must be engaged. When I train counsellors, my cardinal rule is "meet the client where they live." As I have suggested and will make clear throughout this dissertation, the client's sense of self is an aspect of the prereflective—that is where they live. In folk psychological terms, the sense of self could be referred to as "feeling comfortable in your own skin" or "at home in your own body." When that sense of self is absent, the person often defers to others when decisions are to be made. Such a person is highly suggestible lacking the ballast that their prereflective self normally affords them.

For transformational learning to occur, one must engage the foundational assumptions of the prereflective self. Frequently, this engagement is not the result of an intentional "intervention" by a

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[24] Jack Mezirow. (2000). *Learning as Transformation*: *Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. p. 4

[25] Sedimented is an apt metaphor for acts that were once conscious and volitional but have since sunk into the prereflective as habitual dispositions.

therapist or teacher. Rather, it is the relentless barrage of life events that reveal that one's premises are inadequate. The therapist/teacher's job then is to provide support and possibly guidance to the person as they traverse their humbling, naked experience. At the very least, one should understand, that this person's essential task is the deconstruction of an inadequate operational intentionality[26] in favour of a new one that is based on assumptions that are less illusory.

### A Caveat

Before I proceed further with my examination of western civilization's privileging of the reflective, let me acknowledge the paradoxical nature of my project. This is important because my critique will be based in part on problematizing the Cartesian paradigm that reigned so long in the academy. If my critique has some legitimate basis, then the obvious implication is that educational institutions are in a large part responsible for privileging the reflective. Yet, here I am writing a PhD dissertation from within such an institution. Furthermore, the method that I employ in my project appears to be reflective and abstract itself. There are a lot of strange loops at play: I'm am critiquing the academy while appealing to it for credentials; I'm critiquing reflection with a style that could be described as hyper-reflective. How did I arrive at such a point and how do I make sense of these paradoxes? Before continuing, therefore, I think that it is crucial to declare my subject position.

In my first draft, I attempted to approach these paradoxes with an autobiographical chapter that pointed to an epistemological and ontological shock that I experienced during an altered state experience over forty years ago. That experience undermined my ontological ground and motivated a long transformational journey. As a result I have first-hand knowledge of the stakes involved in radical transformation. If what I have to report about my journey has some truth value, then its initial effect on the reader could be disturbing for some. Gendlin (1997) points to a milder version of this reaction,

> Today most philosophers find only discouragement in the recognition that all statements and logical inferences are conditioned by someone's situation, by the biases of culture and social class, usually summed up as "history and language." If universal and 'objective' concepts are not possible, it can seem as if there is nothing for philosophy to do. (p. xiv)

This is precisely the point at which I had arrived. And, on a more personal level, if there are no objective truths then how does one anchor oneself? Where is the ground from which one can move forward with confidence? I understand "most philosophers discouragement" because it was mine as well. I had been an unconscious Cartesian and the ontological shock that I experienced undermined

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[26] In healthy functioning operational intentionality guides our interactions with the world. It is not self conscious but rather a spontaneous organizing of our experience and behaviour.

that paradigmatic way of being.  Prior to that, I experienced myself as a singular, autonomous subject looking out on a world, seeking universal truths with which to proceed.  Furthermore, I had thought of my self as a solid, thing like, phenomenon that accumulated substance with experience.  All this was implicit or assumed rather than consciously formulated. In addition, I assumed that language was a transparent medium where words were somehow attached to the thing they represented.  The word "window" and the thing "window" were interchangeable in some important respect.  Thus, words captured reality.  They didn't merely represent reality—they captured it.

After my altered state experience, however, I realized that reality was relational — that there were no essences; only networks of relationships.  I realized that the self wasn't thing like and didn't increase or accumulate over time.  Rather consciousness was an "empty" phenomenon.  Furthermore, I saw that language was separate from the thing that it represented.  I began to realize that language distorted reality as much as it represented it.  Distorted it in the sense that it conveyed a static world represented by nouns.  I was discovering that reality was an emergent phenomenon.  If any figure of speech could approximate it, it would have to be a verb.  I had been catapulted out a world of being and into a world of becoming.  As you can probably realize, my foundations had not been shaken; they had been dissolved.  As a result, I can relate to those philosophers who feel only discouragement when they realize that their project, as it had been conceived, is bankrupt.  It has taken me years to fashion another way of being in the world—a way other than experiencing myself as an independent, substantial self existing in a rational universe that science will ultimately explain.  I hope that I've conveyed the sense that my discoveries were not intellectual insights but rather a radical transformation of my prereflective experience.  Consequently, if what is to follow generates defensiveness in some readers, I would say that they "get it." That is to say, that they recognize something unsettling in what I'm saying.  I suggest that recognition is prereflective and the defensiveness is reflective.  The threat is real but its challenge is workable.  Other readers may be making or have already made the transition and feel quite at home with the ontology I am describing.

As for the paradox of critiquing reflection and abstraction while apparently using a method that employs both, I can only offer the defense that I'm being fundamental rather than abstract.  That is, I'm trying to go deeper into experience.  This is in contrast with taking a "meta" position that is so far removed from the original experience that any explanation is eviscerated rather than embodied.  By going deeper into the experience, I discover that what we call concrete is already a co-construction—although we are not aware of our contribution to the experience.  We simply assume that the phenomenon exists independent from our experience of it.  In this dissertation, I am attempting to become conscious, and communicate my understanding of that process of co-construction.  In chapter two, I cite studies of people with schizophrenia, whose "disease" was a result

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of a radical shift in the colouring, the background, and texture of their experience. Their sensibility was no longer the familiar one that they took for granted and as a result, they became hyper-conscious of that which the rest of us take for granted. Previously they thought that the concrete was immutable but now, through their own radically transformed experience, they discover that it is. They just don't realize exactly how they are contributing to that construction. Buddhists arrive at the same result only with much more equanimity. Loy (2008), a western Buddhist scholar, stated

> sankhara refers to the constructedness of all our experience, including the experience of self. When looked at from the other side, another term for this constructedness is anatta, "not-self." There is no unconditioned self within our constructed sense of self, and this is the source of the deepest dukkha, our worst anguish. This sense of being a self that is separate from the world I am in is illusory…. [T]he sense of self is a psychological-social-linguistic construct: psychological, because the ego-self is a product of mental conditioning; social, because a sense of self develops in relation with other constructed selves; and linguistic, because acquiring a sense of self involves learning to use certain names and pronouns such as I, me, mine, myself, which create the illusion that there must be some thing being referred to. (p. 2)

So, while my work may appear to be abstract conceptualizing, my aim is to uncover something more fundamental.

**Chapter One: Philosophy's Limit**

In the introduction, my primary focus was to present evidence that led me to distrust a purely rationalistic and reflective approach to living. My personal experience had revealed that rationality was a very thin bulwark against the flux and power of the non-rational[27]. As time went on, I began to believe that the clear and distinct concepts that are the building blocks of the rational mind were generated out of cognitive process performed on the raw material of the non-rational. That is to say that the source of those very concepts was a non-rational domain. As a result, I had come to believe that the determinants of behaviour arose from somewhere other than rationalistic deliberation. I resonate with J. M. Coetzee's observation that:

> People rarely—in fact almost never—act on the basis of reason: people act on the basis of impulse or desire or urge or drive or passion or mood, and dress up their motives afterward to make them seem reasonable…. It would be entirely consistent with human psychology to assert (and believe!) that rationality is our lodestar at the very moment...when we are acting most crazily."[28]

I offer an aphoristic iteration of the same sentiment: We live life forward and understand or rationalize it backwards. Something is living life forward. Something intelligent is guiding the responsiveness to the challenges that life present. And if it is not rationality, then what is it that governs our behaviour in our daily lives? Coetzee suggests various candidates: impulse, desire, urge, drive, passion, or mood. I want to suggest another, more synthetic source, the prereflective self. To coin a rough metaphor, the prereflective self drives the car (lives the life) whereas the reflective mind is the passenger with the navigational map (which may or may not be out of date). Of course, this is an oversimplification as the rational mind often plays a useful role in deliberating alternative courses of action that the impulsive, prereflective self wouldn't otherwise consider. But even in such instances, I believe that the prereflective self chooses which alternative it will enact. I am talking of agency. Francisco Varela[29] puts it this way:

> [The agent's] constitution is a matter of the commonsensical emergence of an appropriate stance from the entire history of the agent's life…. [T]he key to autonomy is that a living system finds its way into the next moment by acting appropriately out of its own resources. And it is the breakdowns, the hinges that articulate microworlds, that are the source of the autonomous and creative side of living cognition. Such

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[27] Perhaps a better term would be "more-than-rational" as that implies that it is not irrational but rather something more than….

[28] Coetzee, J. M. An interview published in the Spring/Summer issue of Salmagundi and republished in Harper's magazine August 2010

[29] Francisco Varela 1999. *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition*. Stanford University Press.

common sense, then, needs to be examined on a microscale for it is during breakdowns that the concrete is born.  (p. 11)

Agency is the "autonomous and creative side of living cognition."  It is fluid rather than crystalline intelligence[30] where we define the former is dealing with the never before encountered.  There are others who've recognized that defining humans as predominately rational creatures is limiting at best.  Too much of human behaviour is left unaccounted for when our inquiry is constrained by a definition of humans as primarily rational.  This chapter will summarize and respond to some of their arguments.

## Multiple Disciplinary Lens

Before doing that, however, I will begin with some elaborations on the definitions of the terms that I use throughout the chapter: terms such as reflective, prereflective, discursive thought, and subjectivity.  Then I hope to show that traditional, mainstream philosophy, as the paradigmatic model of human thought, has itself reached a dead end.  That is, schools of philosophy that limited its tools of investigation to the clear and distinct concepts so necessary to rationalist thought, have a great deal of difficulty accounting for a world in flux.  I will be referencing the work of Robert Pippin (1991)[31], a historian of philosophy, for his account of how we find ourselves in this cul-de-sac.  Thus, as Eugene Gendlin[32] observed, it appears as if philosophy has very little to offer, in terms of guidance, for navigating our postmodern culture.  Next, I will reference the sociological framework developed by Anthony Giddens[33] (1990) to describe the tensions that exist between the individual's need for identity integrity and the social, economic, political, and technological forces that undermine that very identity project.  It is his contention that a secure identity requires a stable, taken-for-granted, social platform.  That platform consists of predictable social practices, habits, and customs.  However, according to both Giddens (1990) and Gandesha[34] (2003), globalization is changing the world in which we live and the very categories by which we attempt to make sense of that world.  For example, Giddens makes use of the term 'plastic sexuality' to name a category that does not have

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[30] Raymond Cattell defined fluid intelligence as "the ability to perceive relationships independent of previous specific practice or instruction concerning those relationships."

[31] Pippin, R. (1991). *Modernism as a philosophical problem: on the dissatisfactions of European highculture*. Cambridge, Mass.: B. Blackwell.
Pippin, R. *The persistence of subjectivity : on the Kantian aftermath*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[32] Gendlin, Eugene. (1997).*Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning.* New York: Free Press, Macmillan, Paper Edition, Northwestern University Press.

[33] Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

[34] Gandesha, Samir. (2003). "The Political Semiosis of Populism". *The Semiotic Review of Books,* 13(3)

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fixed boundaries and a stable identity.  Next, I will introduce the work of Louis A. Sass[35] (1992) for its brilliance in revealing the 'downside' of reflexivity[36].  He describes the hyperreflexivity that is often observed in schizophrenics.  The image that conveys the phenomenology of hyperreflexivity is a snake eating its own tail — it is essentially self-referential.  That is, a hyperreflective individual reflects on her or his reflections.  I will undertake a more comprehensive examination of his work in chapter three.

Next, I will introduce the work of Gendlin[37] (1997)—including the commentary of his colleagues—for their assessment of the cultural condition within which we currently find ourselves. Gendlin's work is interesting for a number of reasons.  He is a philosopher who also practices psychotherapy.  So, in addition to the historical, philosophical lens (Pippin), the sociological lens (Giddens), the cultural lens (Sass) I will employ Gendlin's psychological/philosophical lens.  To my way of thinking, he has developed a therapy that is appropriate to the cultural conditions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century in the west.  His therapy is not restricted in its application to the upper middle class of late 19th century Vienna.  Finally, I will turn to the Transformative Learning movement for parallel developments in the field of education.  As with other fields, education has had to adapt its understandings of what it is to be human in the age of late modernity and postmodernity.

## Refining the Terms

Before relaying definitions derived from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2011) I would like to evoke a concrete experience that will hopefully ground the more abstract discussion to follow.  Recall or imagine entering a store with a number of shoppers; you are peripherally aware of their presence in order to avoid bumping into them; you notice a person approaching and as you direct your attention toward them, you realize that you are looking at your reflection in a mirror.  Before the moment of self-recognition, your self-image was experienced as pure object whereas after recognition, the image was experienced as the objective compliment of one's subjective experience. Before the moment of recognition, one's self experience was implicit or pre-reflective.  That is to say, that one was not conscious of self but rather explicitly conscious of the world: of the objects in it and the projects to be engaged.  My 'project' might have been to buy a shirt and the 'objects' are other customers and racks of clothing.  However, after the moment of self-recognition I became explicitly aware of my self.  I became reflectively self-conscious.  I might have even described my self in terms

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[35] Sass, L. A. (1992). *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and* Thought. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Abbreviated as MM
[36] The following chapter will explore Sass' ideas regarding hyper-reflexivity more comprehensively.
[37] (1997)."How Philosophy Cannot Appeal to Experience, and How it Can." In *Language Beyond* Postmodernism: Saying and thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy. Abbreviated as LBP

of clear and distinct concepts: "I'm looking nattily dressed; while my body language suggests deference and tentativeness." One could even say that I've turned myself into an object of consciousness. Before that moment, my consciousness could be described as a spotlight illuminating the world; after that moment, I attend to the spotlight.

One cautionary note before moving on to definitions that are more formal: I've yet to find a vocabulary that really fits the phenomenon that I'm trying to elucidate. The term prereflective is pervasive throughout this dissertation. In the above example I was 'prereflectively' self-conscious until I recognized myself in the mirror, at which point I became 'reflectively' self-conscious.[38] In prereflective consciousness, I do not represent myself to my self. That is, while prereflective, I remain un-thematized, un-theorized. When I probe deeper into these questions of definition, I have to ask, who coined the term 'prereflective'? And the answer that occurs to me is that it is the reflective mind that coined that term.[39] I sense that my discussion might be getting a little convoluted and so I wish to introduce a metaphor that might clarify. In the abortion debates, one side was characterized by the other as 'pro-abortion.' Those who were anti-abortion were doing the naming. At some point, both sides recognized that language had political effects. Naming was a political act. Knowing that, the 'anti-abortion' group relabelled themselves as 'pro-life' and the 'pro-abortion' group renamed themselves as 'pro-choice.' These new names highlighted what was of value for each group. Returning to the main line of my argument; is 'prereflective' really an appropriate name for perceptual consciousness and 'reflective,' the appropriate name for conceptual consciousness? Or is 'prereflective' the only name that the reflective mind can come up with to describe the 'other'—that which is not reflective? The reflective mind, if it is capable of acknowledging this other consciousness, might only identify it as a negation of itself, hence prereflective.

Other names suggest themselves to me: that-which-is-prior-to-reflection; implicit awareness; tacit knowledge; the "unseparated multiplicity."[40] I like Eugene Gendlin's early term, the interpretive mass. I imagine it as a cloud of knowing that instantly and un-self-consciously gives meaning to a phenomenon. For those who find my cloud metaphor too vague, let me clarify with an example. When I teach I'll often make use of the optical illusion that can be read as either, two faces in profile or, a vase. I ask students what they see. In all the years that I've been using this exercise, only one student said "white chalk lines on a green blackboard." All the rest were prereflectively interpreting those ambiguous squiggles into something that made sense to them. That is, they were giving

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[38] Perhaps a better term than 'self conscious' would be 'self evident' as in, it was self evident that this was happening to me; it was *my* experience -- no need for reflection or rational deduction to ascertain that.
[39] I am aware that I'm attributing personhood to the reflective and prereflective consciousness. It is a rhetorical device rather than a truth claim.
[40] This is a term coined by Eugene Gendlin to refer to an awareness that is complex, nuanced and instantaneous. A prior iteration was 'interpretive mass'. Each term lifts out a different aspect.

meaning without being thematically aware of their constitutive activity in so doing. For the majority of my students, the meaning of those squiggles was an attribute of the squiggles and not of their minds.

Let me now turn your attention to the definitions to be found in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.[41]

> One can get a bearing on the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness by contrasting it with reflective self-consciousness. If you ask me to give you a description of the pain I feel in my right foot, or of what I was just thinking about, I would reflect on it and thereby take up a certain perspective that was one order removed from the pain or the thought. Thus, reflective self-consciousness is at least a higher-order cognition…. In contrast, pre-reflective self-consciousness is pre-reflective in the sense that (1) it is not an explicit or thematic form of self-consciousness, and (2) reflective self-consciousness is possible only because there is a pre-reflective self-awareness that is an on-going and more primary self-consciousness. (emphasis added).

Much of what is quoted here covers the same ground as my own descriptive definition. However, there are a couple of points that are worth highlighting: firstly, that reflective consciousness is at least one order removed from the pain or the thought and secondly, the prereflective is held to be more primary than reflective consciousness. As will become clear later in this dissertation, I am especially interested in this "one order remove" that is involved in taking up a perspective on the primary phenomenon. That is to say, that reflective consciousness opens up a critical distance from the primary experience. What follows is another entry from the same source:

> In the most basic sense of the term, self-consciousness is not something that comes about the moment one attentively inspects or reflectively introspects one's experiences, or in the instant of self-recognition of one's image in the mirror, or in the proper use of the first-person pronoun, or in the construction of a self-narrative. Rather, these different kinds of self-consciousness are to be distinguished from the pre-reflective self-consciousness which is present whenever I am living through or undergoing an experience, i.e., whenever I am consciously perceiving the world, whenever I am thinking an occurrent thought, whenever I am feeling sad or happy, thirsty or in pain, and so forth.

The prereflective is always there as I live through or undergo an experience….I just don't notice it. Perhaps this is what Coetzee (2010) was pointing at when he said, "people act on the basis of impulse or desire or urge or drive or passion or mood, and dress up their motives afterward to make them seem reasonable" Or, to pull out the implication of Coetzee's thought: We live life forward and

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[41] First published Sat Feb 19, 2005; substantive revision Tue Aug 8, 2006. Accessed September 13, 2009

understand it backwards. We largely navigate the world with our prereflective consciousness and attempt to understand it with our reflective minds.

Finally, an even more cogent descriptive definition, again drawn from the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

> Although, as pre-reflectively self-aware of my experience I am not unconscious of it, I tend to ignore it in favor of its object. In my everyday life, I am absorbed by and preoccupied with projects and objects in the world, and as such I do not attend to my experiential life…. In contrast to pre-reflective self-consciousness, which delivers an implicit sense of self at an experiential or phenomenal level, reflective self-consciousness is an explicit, conceptual, and objectifying awareness that takes a lower-order consciousness as its attentional theme. I am able at any time to attend directly to the cognitive experience itself, turning my experience itself into the object of my consideration. (emphasis added)

The key phrase for me in the above is "I tend to ignore it in favour of its object." It is as if subjective awareness were a beam of light that illuminates only that within its restricted radius — in this case, my project — while other mental processes, although occurring simultaneously, remain in the shadows. With prereflective consciousness, the radius of light illuminates the object but leaves one's own constitutive activity in the dark. And, I believe, that this is necessarily so: Even when I reflect, there is always something about my experience that will evade my reflective grasp: the reflective act itself. As Sartre (2004) claimed in The Transcendence of the Ego, even when we are self conscious, the agent of that self consciousness is not reflected upon. In conclusion, therefore, prereflective consciousness is always operating (at least, while I'm awake) while reflection, focussing my attention on my own subjective experience, goes against my standard disposition to focus on my project in the world. It is a temporary stepping back or disengagement from the world in order to ascertain my constitutive activity. I do that in order to become aware of my prereflective bias and so purchase a less distorted perceptual hold on the world. I can do so because now I am explicitly aware of how various prereflective factors might be conditioning my perceptions. One final exemplary anecdote, drawn from the omnipresent Reader's Digest that my parents subscribed to when I was a child. A woman patient was reporting her troubling irritability to her doctor. He told her that there was a new medication that had been developed to treat such symptoms: tranquilizers. He gave her a sample and told her come back in a week. "Well," he asked, "How did they work?" She replied, "To be honest with you doc, they didn't make any difference. But I did notice that other people were a lot nicer." Clearly, this woman was reporting her conscious experience and was not aware of her constitutive contribution.

At this point, I need to add another caveat. I'm aware that my writing on this topic could be read as suggesting that the prereflective is a relatively empty consciousness, that is, without bias, prejudice, or distortion. This has been an unintended consequence of my valorizing its orientation toward the world. What is important for my purposes is that the prereflective is engaging the world[42] whereas the reflective mind is operating on its representations of the world. However just because prereflective intentionality is directed toward the Other, does not mean it is without predisposing inclinations. Not only is the prereflective a repository of personal experience, it is also socialized or acculturated. It is a storehouse of ways of making sense of ongoing experience—templates for interpretation. Many of those ways are simply 'imported' or downloaded versions of what parents teach their children; teachers impart to their students and the culture delivers to us all. The prereflective delivers the 'what' of experience while screening out awareness of 'how' that sense was generated. The prereflective is unaware of its constitutive contribution. That is to say that the meaning seems to be "out there;" an attribute of the world—whereas I'm making the argument, that prereflective meaning attribution is a creative, synthesizing act performed without conscious intent. In order for that activity to become explicit, the subject must reflect on the nature of his or her experience. That is, instead of making the world the object of one's attention, one makes one's experiential flow the object of one's scrutiny.

## When Concepts Exist in Words but not Longer in the Flesh

Earlier I stated that I was uncomfortable with the vocabulary with which I was working. I variously tried on 'reflective' and 'prereflective'; 'conceptual' and 'preconceptual'; 'rational' and 'the more than rational'; 'implicit' and 'explicit.' I've come to feel that these terms don't do justice to the phenomenon I am investigating. Let me reorientate to that phenomenon. I am concerned with an educational system that addresses only the reflective, conceptual mind. I further suggest that the conceptual units with which the mind works are static representations of protocols—"If 'X' happens, then respond with 'Y.' That is, concepts tell us how to proceed—that is, originally they disposed us for action—how to carry on. Yet it seems to me that if these protocols or rules were derived and then abstracted from situations and circumstances that may no longer exist, then a meaning or conceptual understanding which may be intellectually coherent will be situationally inappropriate. This is most clearly demonstrated in the case of ideologues. When pressed to explain the reasons for their behaviour, their response is articulate, if not glib and facile—appearing neat and comprehensive only by ignoring the true complexities of an issue. Closure and certainty are achieved but at the cost of a

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[42] When I write this way it seems that I'm positing a homunculus or a number of them that are contesting for control of the individual. I'm not making a truth claim when I do so, but rather employing a rhetorical devise.

disconnection from reality.  The short-term integrity of the organism is protected but potentially at the cost of its long-term viability.

I experience the time through which we are living as a time of crisis.  A time when in Marx's famous phrase, "all that is solid melts in the air."  That is, we live in a hyper-fluid time—to which some writers refer as "liquid modernity."[43]  Traditions, customs, ritual —structures that give stability to our lives—are all being swept away in the flood of the new.  The relative stability of language should give us some purchase on the flux of becoming.  Yet, we seem to lack the vocabulary with which to discuss our postmodern time.  I take the recent 'economic meltdown' as paradigmatic of a more general condition.  As I listened to the economic pundits it seemed to me that the words they were stringing together had little or nothing to do with what was occurring.  Their pronouncements seemed more like a skin of rationalizations to cover over what couldn't be named.  Their words seemed like empty incantations; chants to keep the bogeyman away.  "Situation normal; situation comprehensible; situation controllable."  I interpreted these 'expert' opinions as an attempt at reassurance rather than an effort to address the challenge of the unforeseen.  The language that was being used did not reference the circumstances it was purporting to address.  Politicians, pundits, and journalists were using familiar terms and categories for a situation that was anything but familiar.

### Parallel Mental Processes

I'm trying to avoid that same mistake.  What is this elusive 'beast' that I'm stalking?  What is the appropriate vocabulary to name it?  My overall intent was to make a justifiable claim that we are in danger, both as individuals and as a collective when our language floats freely away from our experience—or, as I've stated on numerous occasions, when the reflective mind disconnects from the prereflective self.[44]  That disconnection seems to allow two parallel mental processes to occur independently and simultaneously.  On the one hand, for example, there is the ideologue who is only aware of his conceptual system and relies on coherence as his ultimate "truth" criteria.  On the other, we have a train of prereflective thought that goes on without the subject's conscious intention.  My readings on Buddhism suggest other terms for this[45]: the discursive mind—sometimes called the "monkey mind."  Let me give an example: when I sat down to meditate this morning, I became aware

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[43] Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge : Polity Press ; Malden, MA : Blackwell,.

[44] I am making a consistent effort to refer to the reflective as 'mind' and the prereflective as 'self'. While I'm aware that many postmodern thinkers and the majority of Buddhist writers claim that there is no self, I still want to use that term to convey the ontological aspect of experience—the sense that one's being is at stake in the action/decisions being contemplated. And I want to use 'mind' to convey the purely intellectual process of conceptual calculation.

[45] As I search for an appropriate vocabulary, I am *performing* the practice of focusing to which Eugene Gendlin devoted much of his life to investigating. That is, I am trying to find a language that does justice to my prereflective experience. Everything I try seems to be only an approximation of that inner sense which I am attempting to 'capture' and express in language.

of a stream of thought that was working in the background.  I didn't intend that stream of thought, nonetheless it was occurring.  I was witnessing my 'monkey mind' at work.  For example, I may catch myself in the middle of a mental scene with my adult children in which I defensively explain my position.  That scene seemed to have been developing in the background before 'I' ever tuned into it.  Being mindful at the time of this witnessing, I became explicitly aware of my defensive disposition.  Without that mindfulness I would still be defensive but would most probably 'explain' it as being 'caused' by my children's behaviour.  That stream of thought would carry me in directions that I don't anticipate nor intend, yet affects the way that I think and behave.  However, if I've taken up a reflexive distance from my primary experience I can inspect it critically…  I can look at my constitutive activity in producing the scene.  I can become aware that a potential rupture in the relationship would be distressing to me.  If, on the other hand, the spotlight of my awareness is directed only at the world, the sorry state of American politics for example, I will be oblivious to this separate stream.  I will talk long and convincingly about the breakdown in democracy while being unaware of the stressors in my familial relationships.

Let me step out of that stream for a moment and reflect on a different aspect that is emerging from the dialogue between my prereflective self and reflective mind.  I seem to be saying that there is a mental process occurring of which I may or may not be aware.  Yet, if I've identified myself with volitional consciousness, then it is distressing for me to discover another parallel consciousness occurring simultaneously with, but elided by, the volitional life of my conscious mind.[46]  Something similar happens as I fall asleep.  Entering a hypnogogic state, I notice a string of incoherent images that disperse almost as soon as I place my attention on them.  They seem to be the random flotsam and jetsam of the mind.  The coherence that I experience when I'm fully awake is missing.  I suspect that, that coherency is a product of my intentionality.  Without that intentionality, 'the centre will not hold.'

In my endeavour to make the fact of parallel mental processes intelligible, I will refer to the phenomenon of an 'ear worm.'  This term references music playing 'inside your head' all by itself.  It could be a jingle or a pop song that one has been listening to recently.  But now there is no need for a player because it seems to have been downloaded into one's mind where it is on 'repeat.'  It has an autonomous quality to it.  I didn't choose to listen to it, but it is 'playing' nonetheless.  They are similar to reactive behavioural patterns that 'run' themselves.  Yet, these background 'programs' condition what 'I' think in the foreground.  They colour my thoughts and perceptions.  Or, to state it differently, if I'm in a mood, I can't look at the world without looking through that mood.  My

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[46] Questions regarding agency and selfhood are being generated as I pursue my quarry, catching my attention and initiating another train of speculative thought. Which, in the interest of discipline, I will resist.

prereflective self is working on something… something unfinished… something that wants to be carried forward.  If, however, my reflective self is the expression of my will to power or my desire for autonomy, I might resist this prepersonal self and the news that it brings to me.  I might choose to disconnect from that source in favour of the supposed autonomy that my reflective self seems able to achieve.

Let me turn briefly to the work of Milton Erickson[47], a practicing psychiatrist and hypnotherapist who developed "the confusion induction."  The "confusion induction"[48] nicely captures, through exaggeration, the movement of the discursive mind.  Thought seems to move forward through association rather than by the agent's will or intention.  The following example should demonstrate the kind of random associations to which I refer:

You should closely watch what I say all the time.  Watches are used to tell time.  The old fashioned watches had faces and hands.  They didn't save face and yet, you'll have to hand it me when I say that the first hand is called the hour hand; the second hand is the minute hand; and the third hand is called the second hand.  If that watch had been purchased in a second-hand store, does that mean that time can be stored and that faces can be saved? (Green, 1989. p. 46).

This verbal production seems to be missing a guiding intent that would lend it coherence and make it meaningful[49].  And so it is with the productions of the monkey mind.  Just as habits don't require my volition to operate, so it is with discursive thought.  One could even say that it is mindless or meaningless rather than meaningful—just as a CD player doesn't understand the words that it's reproducing and broadcasting.

As I write the above, many questions and implications come forward.  At this point, I'll only deal with one: are these incoherent thought fragments being generated by the prereflective mind?  This seems to be the case because it is certainly not my volitional, reflective mind that generates them.  If this is true, then it indicates that the prereflective mind has been infiltrated by language.  Gendlin (1997), for one, claimed that the prereflective has language capacities because otherwise how would it recognize which verbal terms most precisely convey the prereflective experience.

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[47] Erickson, M. H. (1980).*The nature of hypnosis and suggestion*. edited by Ernest L. Rossi. New York: Irvington Publishers: distributed by Halsted Press,

[48] For the subject, the confusion induction initially seems to be meaningful and they let them be carried along on the stream of the hypnotist's words rather then their own discursive thought. After a certain degree of confusion has been generated then the hypnotist's suggestion is embraced because it offers something definitive… perhaps the eagerness to accept the suggestion is similar in kind to the yearning for closure.

[49] Actually its guiding intent is to generate incoherence so that there will be a hunger for anything meaningful; a response potential for accepting any suggestion that the hypnotherapist might make.

So, it seems that I'm adding a second type of break in the connection between the reflective mind and the prereflective self. This so-called discursive mind with its chain of signifiers that link through association rather than intent is this second type. The other type—one that I'm most interested in—occurs when the mind operates like a word processing machine. For example, this 'word processing' occurs when I or someone else addresses a question to my conceptualizing mind. After a moment, I notice my mind generating an answer that is both coherent and of interest to myself and others. However, my 'answer' has very little predictive power with regard to my behaviour. This is so because my verbal production has not referenced my actual needs, desires, and history. The tip of the iceberg has been severed from its base and can float off in any direction. Consequently, when I'm in 'word processing' modality, I am not saying what I mean; or meaning what I say. This last sentence has within it considerable folk wisdom. I will uncover that wisdom by examining how the word 'mean' works in this sentence. It seems to imply a kind of commitment—an existential commitment. I mean what I say, implies that you can count on my behaviour being congruent with my words. I will walk that talk.

When I consult a dictionary I am informed of a double sense for the word 'mean:' on the one hand, it means "to have as its sense or signification." On the other, "to have the value of; assume the importance of." So, in its first sense 'meaning' points to other equivalent or similar terms, other significations; in the second sense, 'meaning' refers to its value for me personally. As Heesoon Bai[50] once said to me, there is a difference between 'meaning' and 'meaningful.' The second term implies value. It also implies engagement. "Tonight's concert was so meaningful, that I was transported." The suffix ful is instructive in this regard. It connotes a plenitude or volume and, by way of contrast, 'meaning' seems flat or thin. The volume to which I refer is me. I become full. I "rise up" and dwell in my meaningful speech.

Let me see if I can gather up the threads of thought that I've been unravelling. This chapter is titled: "The Problem with Reflection." My intent was to identify some of the under-acknowledged limits, even dangers, of reflection. In the preceding few pages, however, I've turned my attention to some of the incoherencies of the prereflective—that which I've referred to as the flotsam and jetsam. Some dreams are like that—a stream of random content—, while other dreams—also produced by the prereflective—display a meaningful coherency. Likewise, when I engage in a meaningful conversation, my utterances display a spontaneous, coherency. Both the coherent dream and my meaningful conversations are organized through my existential commitment—which I will later claim is a capacity of the prereflective. Metaphorically, my existential commitment is a force field that organizes content to produce a coherent gestalt. My meanings are drawn from my experience.

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[50] personal communication. October 17, 2007

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However, when the prereflective experience doesn't inform conceptual meaning, the latter may display an internal consistency while being incongruent with one's prereflective self. Those conceptual meanings seem to float in a separate domain above and separate from my actual life. In this account, it is not the act of reflection that is the danger but rather a kind of disembodied, conceptual solipsism. Here I am using solipsism as equivalent to impermeability to external input. One prizes coherency and closure over fresh input.

Let me lift out one important implication from the preceding. As I wrote the above, I became concerned with agency. Recall my claims about the dream fragments that occurred as I drifted off to sleep. I was claiming that fragmentary, incoherent nature of these episodes was a result of a missing subject or agent with its coherency producing intentions. At the other end, the 'word processing,' conceptualizing mind, while performing coherency, seemed to be missing an ontological sense of being—probably because prereflective experience was not included. If we think of reflection as operating on representations and concepts rather than interacting with the situation in which it is imbedded, we get closer to the problem.

### Contextualizing Reflections Historically

Hopefully the above descriptions and definitions will assist the reader for what is to follow. As indicated earlier, I'm going to utilize various sources and lens to illuminate the limitations of reflective thinking. Once again, let me stress that reflective thinking has had and will continue to have great value. For most, those values are obvious. However, it is not as clear that there are costs associated with this human capacity to bend our attention away from the world and back toward the self.

First, we will look at the fate of a philosophy that restricts its domain of inquiry and its methodology to reflective thought. Pippin (1991, 2005), a historian of philosophy, will be our guide in this endeavour. Then we will look at the work of cultural critic Giddens (1990) to demonstrate that many assumptions about human nature have, in fact, been culturally contingent. That is, if a culture is relatively stable over time, many of the members of that culture will display similar psychological characteristics. It would be easy to assume that those characteristics were generated by nature and not culture. However, when a culture changes as rapidly as ours does, assigning determinates of self to either culture or nature becomes much more problematic. For example, at one time it was held that a stable identity was the hallmark of mental health.[51] Recently however Gergen[52] (1991) suggested that postmodern times might require a more fluid or plastic identity—an

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[51] Erik Erikson was probably the most influential psychologist to establish this point of view.
[52] Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The saturated self : dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1991.

identity that can 'morph' to match the multiple contexts that the individual will move through during any given week. Consequently, members of a postmodern culture who derived their personal coherence, (their identity) from a traditional religion, a stable ideology or an enduring social imaginary[53] will find themselves at sea in a leaky boat. Put differently, in more stable cultures the prereflective domain of its members was colonized by custom, tradition, religion, the social imaginary, ideology, etc. Shared meanings and practices structured the member's prereflective self, giving it stability and coherence as well as lubricating social transactions with other 'like minded' individuals. Gendlin (1997) arrived at a historical moment when the master narratives of religion and ideology were losing their hegemonic grip.[54] Consequently, individuals were losing their shared, taken for granted world and, as a result, the efficacy of their prereflective ways of making sense. Gendlin sees an opportunity in this. Because we lack a theory, paradigm, ideology, or religion that clearly outshines its rivals, Gendlin claimed that we are thrown back on our own experience as our reference point for how to proceed.

Pippin[55] (1991) elucidated how even traditional philosophy is unable to produce a master narrative or even a final vocabulary for the age through which we are living. Pippin describes himself not as a philosopher but as a historian of philosophy. That in itself is a tip-off as to how he construes the current state of philosophy. That is, he doesn't think of philosophy as a statement of eternal truths; rather his use of a historical framework introduced time and succession rather than any closure or finality. Pippin identified Nietzsche's reframing of 'truth' as value as an early recognition of the impossibility—and even the undesirability—of establishing an objective truth. Nietzsche's claim that what we had previously called truth was actually a valuation—that which enhances life.

> Nietzsche was right, according to Heidegger, to see that all prior claims for
> metaphysical truth are no more than 'estimations of value,' and were undertaken for
> the 'preservation and enhancement' of 'life.' (p. 132)

The significance of this move, in my mind, is a movement away from objective, disinterested 'truth' to a notion that begs the question: value for or to whom? Here the subject is 'life'—including the life of humanity. That is to say that we are a very interested party. We value that which enables us to survive and thrive. Nietzsche was writing from the collective point of view, attempting to address the

[53] Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham : Duke University Press,

[54] Gendlin, E. (1997)1 997 *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning.* New York: Free Press, Macmillan, 1962. Paper Edition, Northwestern University Press,.

[55] Pippin, Robert B.. (1991). *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem.* Cambridge, Mass.: B. Blackwell

interest of our species via a conversation with other philosophers. Varela[56] (1999) has made a very similar point from an individualistic, biological point of view:

> In the enactive approach, reality is not a given: it is perceiver-dependent, not because the perceiver 'constructs' as he or she pleases, but because what counts as a relevant world is inseparable from the structure of the perceiver. (p. 13)

What counts, what is foregrounded, what is highlighted in the environment for the organism is something that is meaningful to that organism in terms of its emergent needs and interests. That is, the salient environment for the subject "shows up" as a result of her prereflective engagement with her situation. This is Nietzsche's (1999) idea about the history of philosophy transposed onto the phenomenology of an individual. Up until Nietzsche's revision, traditional philosophical methods had assumed that objective truth could only be determined by bracketing out the subject—or perceiver, as Varela (1999) would put it. Implicit in this account is the tendency for reflective, conceptual thinking to pursue "final" truths, and prereflective engagement to produce emergent, and therefore provisional, truths. If our world is changing rapidly—and by all accounts, it is—then our cognitive maps need constant updating.

I will be taking up the question of valuing in a later chapter as I hope to show that the disinterested, reflective stance mitigates against the direct experiencing of value. Mitigates, attenuates or mutes felt value in favour of rationally deduced value. Next, Pippin (1991) parses Nietzsche's stance on western metaphysics as a series of philosophical moves that attempt to make life comprehensible and manageable: In other words it is a strategy for human self empowerment. I take this to mean that some meanings enliven, while others, deplete our energy. Some beliefs are 'robust' and invigorate while others, weaken and 'sicken.' In my opinion, the current fascination with neuroscience exemplifies the kind of empowerment that meaning can promise. This invigoration can be attributed to neurosciences implicit promise to explain or make sense of the human condition 'better' than previous models offered variously by religion, ideology, and the human sciences. Why is neuroscience better than its antecedents? Is it better because it's science— purporting to be objective and rational and therefore trustworthy? This orientation has been labeled 'scientism' because, while it may use the vocabulary of science, the logic of its reasoning processes bears closer scrutiny. It fails to address the gap or discontinuity between the knowledge claims of science and the claims of experience[57]. That scrutiny will not be undertaken here in any detail

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[56] Francisco Varela. (1999). *Ethical know-how : action, wisdom, and cognition.* Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press,

[57] To my knowledge few thinkers attempt to bridge that gap. I think of Gendlin and Michael Polanyi as two such thinkers. Gendlin claims that conceptual knowledge is ultimately derived from experience.

because of time constraints.  Suffice to say that there is undeniable excitement about neuroscience.

Much of what I've read in my research for this dissertation justifies its truth claims with reference to

the latest findings from neuroscience.  The excitement seems to arise from the impression of finding

solid ground upon which to validate one's humanistic inclinations.  So, it seems to produce the kind

of empowerment to which Nietzsche referred in the earlier quotation.  Later I will be taking up the

question whether any system of meaning that we self consciously create has the capacity for self

empowerment as the metaphysical systems that Nietzsche unmasked.  My provisional position is No!

A self-conscious meaning system cannot provide the robust confidence that our times seem to require.

The master narratives are in tatters and the bestseller lists offer a plethora of competing models,

theories, paradigms, etc.

## The Weakening of Thought

According to Pippin (1999), one philosopher who carried forward the implications of this

Nietzschean unmasking is Vattimo[58]:

> The key issue in Vattimo's work is the historical event of the 'weakening' of the hold
> that metaphysical assumptions have exercised over the Western tradition, an event
> that makes possible a kind of thinking that takes place in the light of this weakening,
> or a 'weak thinking.'  This all turns out to have to do with a notion of postmodern or
> post-metaphysical   'truth' in which the 'experience of truth is an aesthetic and
> rhetorical experience.' (p. 141, emphasis mine)

That is to say that the criteria for judgement are not rational but rather aesthetic and rhetorical ones[59].

His sentiment echoes James (1956) in The Will to Believe[60] where he examines how one goes about

deciding between two logically sound explanations of a phenomenon:

> Well, of two conceptions equally fit to satisfy the logical demand, that one which
> awakens the active impulses, or satisfies other aesthetic demands better than the
> other, will be accounted the more rational conception, will deservedly prevail.  (p. 75-
> 76, emphasis mine)

Having worked toward a similar conclusion as Vattimo and James, I appeal to rhetoric and aesthetics

to make many of my points in this dissertation.  I would go even further with the claim that both

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[58] Vattimo, G. (2002). *Nietzsche : an introduction.* trans. by Nicholas Martin. London : Athlone.
[59] Robert L. Scott states that rhetoric is, in fact, epistemic.[33] His argument is based on the belief that
truth is not a central, objective set of facts but that truth is based on the situation at hand. Scott goes as
far as stating that if a man believes in an ultimate truth and argues it, he is only fooling himself by
convincing himself of one argument among many possible options. Ultimately, truth is relative to situated
experiences, and rhetoric is necessary to give meaning to individual circumstances. Scott, Robert L.
1967. "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic". *Central States Speech Journal* (Original publication)
[60] James, William. *The Will to Believe* (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 75-76

aesthetic and rhetorical appeals are to the prereflective.  By that, I mean that it appeals to something in addition to rational criteria, something more embodied.  One doesn't deduce beauty; rather, one experiences it as a bodily response.  Something in me longs for beauty.  Something in me is drawn towards beauty.

Vattimo's (2002) writing marked a transition from the search for Truth toward a more modest phenomenological ambition: the "experience of truth."  Following Gendlin's approach, I associate experience with the prereflective and meaning with the reflective.  Gendlin's term, the felt sense, is the conflation of both.  As for rhetorical appeal, I lean on metaphor.  As Frie (1997) pointed out, it is our intuition that allows us to understand metaphor.[61]  Intuition, from my point of view, is a prereflective operation that presents us with an answer from 'out of the blue'—that is, we are not aware of the computational process that produced that intuition.  Metaphor primes the pump by suggesting that a known set of relations might function as a template for grasping an unknown set.  For example, I referred to the empty speech of media pundits 'explaining' the economic meltdown as a metaphor for the larger, postmodern mystery.  My claim therefore is that both the aesthetic and rhetorical effects are produced through the engagement with the prereflective.  These extra-rational criteria have become a necessary alternative to strictly rational analysis because, as Horkheimer and Adorno[62] have pointed out, the ultimate result of privileging theoretical, reflective thinking is a further weakening or even sickening of thought:

> So, "ruthlessly, in spite of itself, the Enlightenment has extinguished any trace of its own self-consciousness," until "every specific theoretic view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief - until the very notions of spirit, truth, even Enlightenment itself, have become animistic magic."  (as quoted by Pippen, p. 152)

This anticipates a later section of this dissertation where I make the claim that reflective thinking has the unintended 'side effect' of undermining our ability to affirm and value.  If it's "only a belief," how effective is it for the "enhancement and preservation of life"?

## Rationality as Protection

The sentiments I am expressing are nothing new: Postmodernism continues to undo the Enlightenment myths.  In spite of and underneath the undermining of reason as the ultimate arbiter of truth runs a deep, dare I say it, need, or prejudice for some justifiable ground for our arguments.  When I say "underneath," I am pointing once again to the prereflective.  I am suggesting, for

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[61] Frie, R. (1997). *Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity in Modern Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. Lanham, Md. ; London : Rowman & Littlefield. p. 6

[62] Horkheimer, M., and Adorno, T. (1972) *The Dialectic of Enlightenment.* New York: Seabury, as quoted by Pippin, R. in *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* p. 152

example, that while I may consciously and reflectively be an atheist; at three o'clock in the morning, after awakening from a disturbing dream, I find the religious impulse still stirs within me. Similarly, although a sophisticated postmodernist may express some delight that everything has been relativized, could it be that underneath that delight still runs a prereflective wish for certainty. Scharff[63] has articulated this far better than I have, when he stated:

> Experience is philosophy's inescapable point of departure; it is, however, so thoroughly untrustworthy and yet so powerfully attractive that the first philosophical task must be to step reflectively back out of any reliance upon it in order to ask what rational principles might protect us against its pull. (p. 196)

Previous to that quote I asked if there was a prereflective yearning for "certainty," but I find Scharff's language to be more precise: experience is "so powerfully attractive" and, therefore what "might protect us against its pull?" These quotes beg the questions, what is its pull and what makes its so attractive? Earlier I named this 'pull,' certainty. But I think that Dilthey[64] suggests a more nuanced identification: the pull is the experience of immediacy,

> Lived experience is a distinctive and characteristic mode in which reality is there-for-me…. [It] does not confront me as perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but...is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it unmediated and as belonging to me in some sense…. Everything I experience or could experience constitutes a nexus or system. (emphasis mine.)

Recall the earlier quoted definitions of the reflective and prereflective: if I reflect on the pain in my right foot in order to describe it to you then I "take up a certain perspective that is one order removed from the pain." I would have taken my distance from my pain by reflecting on it; I no longer am my pain but rather, I have pain. In the process, I've lost some immediacy. In this particular example, I'm grateful to lose that immediacy. However, if that becomes my characteristic stance toward life—one or two orders removed—then all my experience begins to become 'sketchy' or spectral. Now, instead of life I get represented life. I achieve some distance and lose some certainty. I then try to reclaim my certainty through appeals to logic, rationality, and objectivity. Or, worse still, I resort to reification where I confer on concepts the same ontological status as objects.

As I write this, I begin to wonder if the Enlightenment promise of increased autonomy is based on this taking of distance. The preference for the reflective mode is a preference for escaping

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[63] Scharff, Robert, C. "After Dilthey and Heidegger: Gendlin's Experiential Hermeneutics". in *Language Beyond Postmodernism*

[64] Dilthey, W. (1989). *Gesammelte Schriften,* 20 vols. (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner; and Gottingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprech, 1913-), vol. 1, 359-73; Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works,* vol. 1: *Introduction of* the Human Sciences, trans. Rudolf A. Makkreel, et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press,), 192 -206.

the pull of experience; a preference for disengagement. It is a movement toward abstract, intellectual freedom and away from finitude and dependency. I am suggesting that such a move results in the disenchantment of the world. We gain our mental freedom and lose a substantial world. I turn back to Scharff (1997) for a powerful summing up of philosophy's dilemma at the start of the twenty first century:

> Criteria of rationality (truth, utility, conversational appeal) are everywhere being pluralized (historicized, recontextualized): but it is still widely assumed that at least these criteria must be the criteria, established in a properly detached, reflectively "separate" analysis--or else our whole philosophical practice seems threatened with corruption by precisely that illusion-prone, error-ridden, semantically uncrystallized, homely experience which was seen to need criteria in the first place. (p. 197)

### The Cultural Perspective

Having gestured towards traditional philosophy's cul-de-sac I will now turn my attention to the status of reflexivity from the perspective of cultural criticism. Initially I will be drawing on the work of Zizek.[65] He observes that traditional psychoanalytic interpretation has lost its "performative symbolic efficiency" (p. 9). Let me unpack the implications of that statement. Originally, it was held that when a patient was able to surface their unconscious conflicts through the process of reflective symbolization, then they would no longer feel compelled to act out their psychic conflicts. Rather than 'acting out' their implicit beliefs, patients would be able to think them through towards premises that are more useful. In other words, the prereflective would be made explicit via reflection and thereby be made available for critique. However, as Zizek reports, in our culture, a culture thoroughly permeated with psychoanalytic ideas, such promised outcomes no longer deliver.

> What happens in psychoanalytic treatment is strictly homologous to the response of the neo-Nazi skinhead who, when he is really pressed for the reasons for his violence, suddenly starts to talk like social workers, sociologists and social psychologists, quoting diminished social mobility, rising insecurity, the disintegration of paternal authority, lack of maternal love in his early childhood -- the unity of practice and its inherent ideological legitimization disintegrates into raw violence and its impotent inefficient interpretation. This impotence of interpretation is also one of the necessary obverses of the universalized reflexivity hailed by risk-society theorists: it is as if our reflexive power can flourish only in so far as it draws its strength from and relies on some minimum 'pre-reflexive substantial support which eludes its grasp, so that its universalization comes at the price of inefficiency, that is, the paradoxical re-

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[65] Zizek, S. (2000). *The Fragile Absolute.* N.Y.: Verso.

emergence of the brute Real of 'irrational' violence, impermeable and insensitive to reflexive interpretation[66] (p. 9-10, emphasis mine)

I think that Zizek has noticed something of critical importance but I'm not sure his explanation satisfies. Yes, antisocial individuals are fond of playing the victim card and yes, many citizens are suspicious of these 'explanations' when the antisocial behaviour continues. Yet, I want to argue that the assumptions upon which Zizek's argument rests seem 'off.' (This, however, should not discount the remarkable statement that I've put in italics.) Let us first deal with my objection to his assumptions before moving on to explore his heuristic conjecture. The skinhead's explanation for his behaviour lists only external causes—it is as if there was no agent present in either his behaviour or his account of his behaviour. I very much doubt that any effective psychoanalyst would accept such an explanation. In my own experience as a therapist, I see little point in engaging with a client whose agent is absent. My claim, which I will be developing in subsequent chapters, is that the experience of agency, like the experience of truth, is primarily prereflective in nature. Recall for a moment the definitions of the prereflective at the beginning of this chapter:

> Although, as pre-reflectively self-aware of my experience I am not unconscious of it, I tend to ignore it in favour of its object. In my everyday life, I am absorbed by and preoccupied with projects and objects in the world, and as such, I do not attend to my experiential life.

As a prereflective agent, I am intending a project in the world. I want an outcome. For example, if I'm that skinhead, "I want to violently impose my will on those foreigners who are taking my country away—I want to destroy them because their achievements and possessions are destroying my dreams for my own life." If the psychotherapeutic process doesn't address and engage that agent, no transformational change will occur and the violent behaviour will continue. Our hypothetical skinhead's verbal productions do not refer to his agency. Instead he appropriates the psychoanalytic memes that are floating through our culture; memes that elide his responsibility. This leads me to a significant implication of my thesis: his verbal productions don't reference his prereflective experience. His words don't come from the same source as his behaviour. From my experience as a therapist, I've learned that therapy that doesn't help the client to reconnect these two domains can only have limited efficacy. As we shall see later, this skinhead is not the only type to operate with this disconnection.

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[66] am struck by the binary that Zizek produces: "the brute Real" versus "impotent, inefficient interpretation". Is this the same as the prereflective and the reflective? If it is, then Zizek seem so be supporting my contention that reflective thought is 'weak' thought and doesn't provide adequate ground for affirming one's values.

Let us return to the Zizek (2000) quote for his fascinating conjecture: "[I]t is as if our reflexive power can flourish only in so far as it draws its strength from and relies on some minimum pre-reflexive substantial support which eludes its grasp." (p. 9). As I interpret this, Zizek seems to be saying that reflexivity works only when it relies on some adequate prereflective ground that remains unanalyzed. I agree. In a subsequent chapter I will be looking at people with schizophrenia as a population that tries to do without that "minimum pre-reflexive substantial support." I look to their extreme experience to sensitize the reader to other, possibly widespread instances, where the effect of reflective analysis actively dissolves the very prereflective ground on which it depends. This stands in marked contrast to my experience when I'm prereflectively engaged in the world. When I disengage in order to analyze, I begin to drain the world of its ontological status.

Here, in the lessons drawn from Zizek's (2000) analysis of the impotence of symbolic efficiency, I find a striking parallel with the earlier quotation drawn from Horkheimer and Adorno with regard to the Enlightenment: "every specific theoretic view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief." That is, in both cases, the impotence of psychoanalysis and the Enlightenment project, we encounter an unexpected outcome: rather than reflexivity empowering the individual or the species, we get, instead, a kind of 'weakening.' As stated in the previous paragraph, I will be exploring the disastrous outcomes that occur for individuals who have completely disconnected from their prereflective ground. People with schizophrenia, as described and interpreted by Sass (1992), appear to operate only in the reflective modality and experience anything arising from their prereflective as intrusive thought and imagery.

## Breaking Through the Assumptive Cocoon

Let me clarify what I mean by 'intrusive thought' with examples drawn from my experience with 'normal' people. I'm thinking of a couple of my intellectual friends who reported distressing, near hallucinations while engaged in intense conversation. When I say 'near hallucinations,' I mean that their perceptions were involuntarily, radically altered. One friend experienced the room getting brighter after the group conversation made use of an illumination metaphor. When we were alone later, he nervously asked me if I had noticed the fluctuating lighting. His question was a 'reality check.' It told me that the credibility of his experience was being doubted—"Am I doing this or is it 'out there'." He was experiencing a boundary question, where what was 'subjective' could not be distinguished from what was 'objective.'[67] Another friend was discussing his new spouse's need to move back to her home city...she had joined him in his hometown and was miserable. At some point

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[67] I am in agreement with Merleau-Ponty as well as others who've made the point that both 'subjectivity and 'objectivity' are abstractions that are derived after the fact. Perhaps this is an example of the tendency to live life forward and understand it backward.

in the conversation, he noticed that her face was morphing into that of a woman that he didn't recognize.  Again, he was not speaking metaphorically but rather reporting his literal experience.  His prereflective experience was changing and his reflective mind didn't know what to make of it.  I suspect that he was beginning to actually see his wife whereas normally he saw his static, and therefore familiar, representation of her.  Such experiences are experienced as "intrusive" because the change wasn't willed.  Rather the change was involuntary.  That is, when individuals identify with their reflective consciousness, then, when the prereflective shows up, it is experienced as alien and intrusive—"That's not me."  In both the above examples, I'm pointing to a phenomenon that occurs when something irrupts through the representational screen that the reflective subject has been watching.

The above leads nicely into the work of Giddens[68], a British sociologist who stated:

> Fateful moments are threatening for the protective cocoon which defends the individual's ontological security, because the 'business as usual' attitude that is so important to that cocoon is inevitably broken through.  They are moments when the individual must launch out into something new, knowing that a decision made, or a specific course of action followed, has an irreversible quality, or at least that it will be difficult thereafter to revert to the old paths.  (p. 114)

Clearly, I am stating that there are some equivalencies between the rupturing of the representational screen by an intrusive thought and the "inevitable" breaking through the "protective cocoon" by a "fateful moment."  As Giddens pointed out, such ruptures disturb the individuals "ontological security."  That is, the intrusive environmental event is experienced as a threat to the person's very being.  The taken for granted assumptions and meanings have broken down (or been broken through); proven themselves to be inadequate to the question that this event has presented.  The protective wall of assumptions has been breached and the self is forced to confront the world directly.  "[T]he individual must launch out into something new." I am tempted to say that an individual in these circumstances has relatively unmediated access to the world.  An example of this launching into the new is the beginning of a romantic relationship.  Boundaries and habits that have been maintained for years dissolve in favour of a renewing contact with an other.  A kind of transfusion occurs that empowers both parties. Increased energy, vitality, and less need for sleep are the result.  Plunging into fear when one senses that one's feelings won't be reciprocated is another.  Clearly there are highs and lows

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[68] Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age.* Cambridge: Polity Press. 114

associated with such direct contact with the other[69]. Another example of direct contact would be that of trauma. The term 'trauma' originally meant a physical wound. But the meaning has now expanded or migrated to the psychological. The "fateful moment," the piercing of one's assumptions, is experienced as if it were a physical threat. It certainly is an ontological one.

### A Coherent versus a Fragmented Sense of Self

Yet, there is more going on here than loss. At the beginning of this chapter, I repeated the aphorism: we live life forward and understand it backwards. If our reflective understandings are always after the fact then what or who is "running the show"; who is this individual that "must launch out into something new." Giddens (year) response might be as follows:

> The body is an object in which we are all privileged, or doomed, to dwell, the source of feelings of well-being and pleasure, but also the site of illnesses and strains.... [I]t is an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity. (emphasis added, p. 99)

"An action-system, a mode of praxis"—in short, life is lived forward via the prereflective. It is the prereflective that is immersed in the practical concerns of daily life. It is the prereflective that sees, and avoids bumping into, the furniture when the reflective mind has been hypnotized. Furthermore, Giddens claims that it is this immersion in practical concerns that sustains "a coherent sense of self-identity." I highlight this remark because I suspect that it is the disengagement from those practical concerns that produces the decentred and fragmented self that is theorized by many postmodern philosophers. I suspect that those philosophers are faithfully reporting their experience —the phenomenon of a self that has been abstracted out of its context. As Hatab[70] remarked:

> [T]he practice of philosophy requires a reflective pause from world involvement.… But here philosophers have been guilty of imposing a model of knowing that simply follows from the way philosophers think that misses or distorts other forms of engagement. In other words, philosophical reflection itself can lead to obfuscation of human experience and its circumstances. (p. 242)

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[69] Many of us seem to prefer the muted experience of the same old, same old. When working with recently separated people, I note their greatest difficulty is letting go of the fantasy of who their partner was. Their partner's actual behaviour has caused my client untold stress and one would expect some relief and joy with the end of the relationship. But what I find is a clinging to the fantasy of what the relationship was supposed to be. That fantasy was on the inside wall of their cocoon.

[70] Hatab, L. J. 1997 "Language and Human Nature" in *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and* thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy. Ed. Levin, D.M. Northwestern University Press. Evanston, Illinois.

I will be going into this more fully when I examine Sass' work with "hyperreflexive schizophrenics". People struggling with schizophrenia have almost completely disengaged from practical immersion in the world in favour of the, disengaged spectator's point of view. The experiential results of such disengagement further remove them from the consensual world of human commerce. For now, however, I will quote Milosz,[71] who expressed similar thoughts as Giddens but in a much more personal, and heartfelt manner.

> On one side, there is luminosity, trust, faith, the beauty of the earth; on the other side, darkness, doubt, unbelief, the cruelty of the earth, the capacity of people to do evil. When I write, the first side is true; when I do not write, the second is. Thus, I have to write, to save myself from disintegration.
> (p. 62)

Milosz's writing is an attempt to capture the truth of his experience; not the truth of a theory. That is, I'm claiming that Milosz's coherence (or 'integration') emerges from his attempt to find a language that is faithful to his experience. He has made good use of his reflective intelligence to make his prereflective experience visible. When both work together, wholeness and coherence is the result. In this, he is following virtually the same process that Gendlin employs when conducting psychotherapy. Gendlin directs his client's attention to their experience rather than to their explanations. Eventually, as therapy progresses, their explanations will be derived from, rather than imposed on, their experience.

### The Body Knows Its Environment by Being the Interaction

To summarize, I'm claiming that we live life forward prereflectively. Furthermore, I am claiming that the appropriate function for the reflective mind is to attend to and symbolize our prereflective awareness so that it can incorporate "news from reality" into its conceptual scheme or cognitive map. Yes, I am claiming that the body registers this news first, followed by the updating of the representations or 'map.' Gendlin[72] is helpful in this regard:

> Usually we don't say the body knows the situation; we say that we know it, and our bodies only react to what we know. Of course, they do react to what we know, but not just to that. Our bodies know (feel, project, entwerfen, are, imply) our situations directly. What sense might it make, if we try out saying that the bodies of animals and plants know their situations? Aha, yes! A plant lives in and with soil, air, and water, and it also makes itself of soil, air, and water. Now the 'is' also changes if we say: a living body is its environment. Similarly, the word 'knows' changes if we say a living

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[71] Czelslaw Milosz. 1998. *Road-Side Dog*. New York: Farrar; Straus and Giroux.
[72] Gendlin, E. (1997). "How Philosophy Cannot Appeal to Experience, and How it Can." In *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy.*

body knows its environment by being it. Its environment is not just something perceived, waiting to be photographed. The body is (part of, made of, ongoingly emergent from) the environment. Environment and body are one interaction: the body knows the environment by being the interaction. (pp. 26-27)

This is beautifully and compactly said. It reveals the prereflective connection between body and environmental circumstance. It reminds me of the Buddhist exhortation to "feel one's way into the texture of the situation and let one's response arise from that sensing." Gendlin's words on these matters need no further clarification from me. However, I would like to balance his account of body sensing with his earlier acknowledgement that "our bodies react to what we know." That is our bodies are not just engaged with and responsive to the environment… they take direction or execute what we know. The reflective mind does generate and make use of reference points, generalizations, intentions, plans, and strategies, to guide one's ongoing decision-making and behaviour. As long as there is a feedback loop between the reflective and the prereflective that ensures the updating of those conceptual structures, then the action-system will be more or less appropriate.

**Chapter Two: Self, Mind, and Their Relationship**

In the previous two chapters, I joined an ongoing philosophical conversation regarding the respective contributions of reflective thinking and prereflective awareness[73]. I arrived at a position that problematized the generalizations and abstractions that characterize much of traditional philosophical thought. Gendlin[74] made a similar observation:

> Today most philosophers find only discouragement in the recognition that all statements and logical inferences are conditioned by someone's situation, by the biases of culture and social class, usually summed up as "history and language." If universal and 'objective' concepts are not possible, it can seem as if there is nothing for philosophy to do. (p. xiv)

This seems to throw us back on the 'merely' subjective, the merely personal ways of making sense of life. But, as Scharff[75] put it

> Experience is philosophy's inescapable point of departure; it is, however, so thoroughly untrustworthy and yet so powerfully attractive that the first philosophical task must be to step reflectively back out of any reliance upon it in order to ask what rational principles might protect us against its pull. (emphasis mine, p. 196)

**The Way Forward**

As I've stated repeatedly, this stepping back, which was intended to protect us from untrustworthiness of subjective experience, has its own set of problematic consequences. The thought of Robert Scott (1967)[76] showed a possible way out of this cul-de-sac. He argued that truth is not a central, objective set of facts but that truth is based on the situation at hand. Furthermore, because truth is relative to situated experiences, rhetoric is necessary to give meaning to individual circumstances. Meaning, therefore, is derived from its ability to articulate the situation in which one finds one's self. As I will be arguing, the prereflective self is a perceiving self, and is therefore best equipped to explore individual circumstance.

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[73] 'Thinking', in the way that I'm using it refers to conceptual activity where 'awareness' is predominately perceptual in nature.

[74] Gendlin, Eugene. (1962) *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning.* New York: Free Press, Macmillan,. Paper Edition, Northwestern University Press, 1997. Abbreviated as *ECM*

[75] Scharff, Robert, C. (1997). "After Dilthey and Heidegger: Gendlin's Experiential Hermeneutics". In Language Beyond Postmodernism

[76] Scott, Robert L. (1967). "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic". *Central States Speech Journal* (Original publication)

**Disorder: A Disconnect Between The Reflective Mind And Prereflective Self**

In the previous two chapters, I've been exploring the possible relationships between the reflective mind and the prereflective self. For example, I asked is there an optimal relationship between them; and further, how is it possible for unbalanced relationships to arise? The short answer is that yes, there is an optimal relationship—one which Gendlin intentionally puts to use when he conducts therapy and when he teaches. This topic will be explored in greater depth in the final chapter. The second question, the possibility for an unbalanced relationship, will be explored from a number of different angles including: a developmental acquisition of formal operational thought; the schizophrenic withdrawal from prereflective engagement; and the widespread psychological preference for living conceptually rather than confronting life directly.

For now, however, I wish to begin the discussion with a simpler typology. When I think of examples of an unbalanced relationship, two polar types come to mind: in the first, the 'impulsive,' prereflective self generates behaviour and in the second, the reflective mind, guided by concepts, prescribes behaviour. In the first instance, beliefs are 'acted out' rather than thought through. In the second, the reverse occurs. All action choices are assessed and evaluated according to trusted frames of reference. Frequently those frames of reference are ideological in nature. For this second type, any 'news' that can't be easily assimilated to one's frame reference is blocked or distorted, primarily through rationalization. In both the impulsive and the deliberating types, there is no explicit or conscious relationship between the reflective mind and the prereflective self.

**The Perceptual Self and Reflective Mind**

As stated in chapter one I was somewhat dissatisfied with these terms. I experimented with other vocabularies. The 'discursive mind' and the 'monkey mind,' were two such attempts to find a term that fit my purpose better than 'reflective mind.' They got closer to the phenomenon that interested me, but still didn't satisfy. I want to bring forward yet a third terminology: the perceptual self and the conceptual mind. I think that these terms might bring me closer. The term, 'perceptual self' implies a field of operation that consists of transactions between the self and the environment. Piaget's[77] first stage of development, the sensori-motor period, charts such transactions. Likewise as adults when we play a round of golf or a tennis match we operate largely from our perceptual self. We attend to the circumstances in which find ourselves. On the other hand, I suggested that the conceptual mind, can conduct its investigations within the hermetically sealed chamber of itself. Its

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[77] *The Cambridge companion to Piaget.* ed. Ulrich Müller, Jeremy I.M. Carpendale, Leslie Smith. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

conceptual units don't necessarily reference the environment and therefore are more allegorical[78] than symbolic.  The transactions are amongst symbols or signifiers rather than with objects.

### Reification as Compensation for Ontological Insecurity

An exclusive reliance on the allegorical mapping of symbols without a built in 'reality check' provides the condition in which solipsism can flourish.  Without the cybernetic feedback loop that the perceptual system provides, there is little chance for self correction[79].  There is a danger that dwelling within the allegorical system or the conceptual map—originally derived from 'real world' encounters—inadvertently allows the subject to drift further and further from their current situation. The map within which such an individual operates is no longer 'updated' and therefore, fails to represent the changing territory.  Furthermore, I am suggesting that in many cases it is no longer recognized as a map but rather is interpreted as the territory.  In such cases, the conceptual system has been reified.

How would I be able to identify a person who dwells predominantly in their conceptual mind? In other words, how does my 'new' terminology play out experientially?  I turn to the ideological debates occurring between tea party constituents and their adversaries on the left for empirical support.  Both seem to hear without listening; to look without seeing.  I'm reminded of an old cliché that describes such a person: "My mind's made up; don't confuse me with the facts." News from reality is confusing and disorienting for those who dwell predominately within their conceptual minds. Yet, for any given question, such an ideologically governed person seems to have no trouble generating an articulate opinion quickly. No confusion. I'm suggesting that her or his opinion may have little to do with this or her actual needs nor with practical behaviour. Often the only need it seems to fill is that of providing easy closure when encountering dissonance. "Stop up that opening with a sound bite; close that fissure with some verbiage." When I consulted an online dictionary regarding 'dissonance,' it offered this interesting example:  "dissonance between campaign rhetoric and personal behaviour."  Yes, the walk and talk are out of sync.

The other benefit that ready-made opinions provide is a sense of belonging to a community—an ideologically-defined community.  The Tea Party movement in the United States provides numerous examples of utterances that are conceptual without being reflective.  I am claiming that many of the concepts that its members hold dear, are neither experientially informed nor reflectively

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[78] I'm using 'allegory' in the sense defined by Fredrick Jameson in *A Singular Modernity* where he states that symbols represent or refer to objects where allegory points to other signs rather than objects. Allegory is reflexive according to Jameson.

[79] Rationality, especially logic, is valued as a safeguard against solipsism.

critiqued.  Rather, they are uncritically 'downloaded' and swallowed whole. Received or conventional 'wisdom.' One is tempted to say that language is living through these mouthpieces.

### A Point of Contrast: Collaboration rather than Disconnect

Contrast this with a person who reflects on their language usage and thus is capable of evaluating their utterances for their aptness to the situation and their prereflective experience. When the fit is poor, this type of person is capable of coming up with a more precise vocabulary. Something like this process is occurring as I write this section. Firstly, I feel some restlessness and dissatisfaction with the terms 'reflective' and 'prereflective.' They don't 'nail' the phenomenon that I am investigating. Then I turn to my experience. I recall conversations where my opinions were glib and facile rather than considered. I also recalled hearing such offerings from others. By attuning myself to such experiences, as I grapple with my topic, I began to see that what disturbed me was not so much reflection but rather the 'mindless' repetition of unexamined meanings.  Yet, even this iteration produces some tension. As I attend to this prereflective unease, I begin to see that I seem to be arguing that mindless repetition without reflection is the villain of the piece. This prereflective tension carries or pushes my thought process forward.  Yes, I am unhappy with mindless repetition, talking points, and unexamined meanings but this leaves out the central topic of this dissertation: that of excessive reflection. Then I realize that I'm dealing with a dialectic between the extremes of acting out unexamined meanings and the paralysis that results from reflectively driven over-deliberation. There are other consequences of which I will mention only one for now: I suggest that reflective analysis begins to desiccate our prereflective experience; that we distort matters when we try to preserve our learning by removing the "juice" from our experience.

### Disconnect as a Developmental Achievement

I began the current chapter with some questions about the relationship between the prereflective self and the conceptual mind. I asked how this relationship changed over time.  I will turn to the developmental frameworks offered by Kegan (1982) and Piaget[80] to address this question. I am employing Kegan because I find that his approach gives equal validity to both a third person point of view—that is, the view from the outside—and the first person point of view—the participative or "inside" perspective. In other words, Kegan's approach resonates with my own insistence that both the prereflective self and the reflective mind function best when both are included. Kegan's theorizing enacts this inclusion and so is coherent rather than self contradictory—

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[80] *The Cambridge companion to Piaget.* ed. Ulrich Müller, Jeremy I.M. Carpendale, Leslie Smith. New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009.

or self cancelling. Many developmental theories, most notably Piaget's, adopt a third person point of view where subjective experience is largely under- or unrepresented.

I also asked how could it come to pass that the conceptual mind could detach from its substrate or soil in the prereflective? Once again, Kegan and Piaget will be my guides in this search. I will focus on the achievement of Piaget's stage of formal operational thought where hypothetical thinking—thinking that does not reference objects in the immediate environment—becomes possible. I will conclude the chapter, with an examination of previously under acknowledged outcomes arising from this ability to disengage from one's immediate environment.

Recall the definitions that were offered up in the previous chapter: reflective self-consciousness is an explicit, conceptual, and objectifying awareness that takes a lower-order [prereflective] consciousness as its attentional theme. Or, to utilize an example drawn from everyday experience, if you were to ask me what I was just thinking, in order to answer I would have to take up a certain perspective that was one order removed from the thought. Instead of thinking about making supper, I would be turning my attention to my thought processes. I am curious about the implication that in order to reflect I have to remove myself from my immediate experience. There seems to be two different orders or registers of analysis operating in the foregoing. On the one hand, I just offered a synchronic account of separating from one's experience—a separation that might be the precursor that enables the diachronic and structural separation that occurs with the acquisition of Piaget's formal operational thought.

## The Mobility of Consciousness

Let us have a closer look at what is involved in this reflective disengagement. What is this 'I' that is able to remove itself? And, where does this 'I' then locate itself? This notion of relocating one's subjectivity is implicated in Scharff's (1997) quote at the beginning of this chapter: "[T]he first philosophical task must be to step reflectively back out of any reliance upon it [experience] in order to ask what rational principles might protect us against its pull.(p. 196)" Scharff and I are referring to the same operation —stepping away from being absorbed by experience—but emphasizing different aspects. Scharff is highlighting the intent of such a move—to attain objectivity—whereas, I am highlighting the unintended result: an ontological undermining. Despite these differences in emphasis, we both claim that the loci of consciousness are changeable. That is, I can locate my consciousness in my experience or I can adopt a perspective that is one step removed from my immediate experience. I've demonstrated this mobility with the following thought experiment: in clasping one's hands together, one can experience each hand alternatively as first subject, then object. That is, in the first instance, I 'locate' my subjectivity in my right hand and experience my left hand as an object; then I can reverse this procedure. In the act of reflecting, I am doing something similar:

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moving my subjectivity to a "second order" level to take my "first order" experience as its object. Both the clasped hands experiment and the act of reflection demonstrate that subjectivity is mobile rather than fixed. Clearly, this necessary and sufficient condition makes detachment possible. I can detach from my immediate experience. Not only does this gap or critical space allow me to reflect on my experience but it also makes possible a disconnection between the reflective mind and the prereflective self. When this occurs I can live completely in my spontaneous experience or I can opt to 'live' completely in my reflective mind—thereby eliding my prereflective experience. The superior relationship occurs when the two work together.

I recall teaching a deaf client to do this. He was angrily recalling being treated disrespectfully by a librarian. He seemed to be oblivious to the change in his state as he moved from recounting to reliving his experience. I directed his attention to his mounting anger. That is, I acted as his reflective function. I then taught him the concept of reflexivity. I used the metaphor of a hot tub as a stand in for the raw experience. "Sometimes you have to get out of the tub, cool down a little and try to understand what just happened. But when you cool down too much, and you're just in your head and not your heart, you have to get back into the tub. In and out." I was teaching him the fullness of reflexive experiencing.

Let me remind myself and the reader that the main point I wish to make is that our ability to step back from the immediacy of our experience is both a blessing and a potential curse. It becomes a curse when one 'forgets' to tune into one's ongoing experiencing, opting instead for the solipsistic certainty of living in one's reflective, conceptual mind.

I'm also troubled by the connotation that reflective thinking is of a 'higher order'—that is, superior to immediacy—as stated in earlier definitions drawn from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*. While that may not have been the author's intent, it is congruent with my contention that western intellectuals value the abstract and reflective over the concrete and experiential. While the shift in perspective that reflective thinking entails has advantages in that it opens up a critical space it also, I suggest, denudes experience. My experience begins to fade, seem less substantial as I adopt a "higher-order consciousness." Yes, I am no longer captured by the "pull of experience," but at the cost of reduced ontological ground. In other words, where I am looking from, as opposed to what I am looking at, has effects on my experience.

Hopefully I have provided sufficient argument to support my contention that it is possible for the reflective mind to operate independently from the prereflective self. I will organize the remainder of this chapter to build a more empirical case for this argument. I will introduce Sass' (1992) work with schizophrenics to describe a 'pure' type of the hyperreflective, disconnected individual. This image will then act like an anchor or reference point for that which is to follow. Then I will use

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Kegan's work (1984) to reveal how it is possible for such an apparent aberration to arise out of normal developmental processes.

### Extreme Disconnection: The Schizophrenic's Hyperreflexivity

Sass[81] presents a compelling description of schizophrenia that places hyperreflexivity at the centre of the disorder. To foreshadow Sass's contribution, the schizophrenic seems to have completely abandoned the anchor of his prereflective self, in favour of the seeming autonomy and potency of the reflective mind[82]. I will be using the example of schizophrenia because its symptomology is so pronounced that familiarity with it, sensitizes one to recognize the more pervasive, yet less extreme forms in our modern culture. Two quotations from the beginning of his book will offer a taste of what is to follow.

> Schizophrenics and schizoid individuals can also adopt a critical stance toward social facts that are too encompassing, or too much a part of the taken-for-granted fabric of normal social existence, for the average person even to notice. (p. 7)

These individuals have opened up a critical, reflective space, where the assumptions and customs that tacitly govern our lives are made explicit. The schizophrenic has adopted a "second order" awareness of these phenomenon and are therefore able to problematize social facts that are invisible to the average person. While 'invisible,' those social facts nevertheless condition the average person's perceptions.

Sass goes on to describe another aspect of their withdrawal from what is immediately given

> Schizophrenic individuals often describe themselves as feeling dead yet hyperalert—sort of a corpse with insomnia." (p. 8, MM)

How could both "feeling dead" and "adopting a critical stance toward social facts" be manifestations of the same phenomena? Both result from losing touch with the prereflective. The prereflective is both the source of behavioural repertoires and the perceiver that registers and interprets the environment. The resultant gestalt is composed of both external and internal (proprioceptive) stimuli. Consequently, when schizophrenics disconnect from their prereflective they lose awareness of their sensing and sensual bodies. They no longer experience the streaming current of emergent feeling. Of course, they would feel dead. Or

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[81] Sass, Louis A. 1992. *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Abbreviated as MM

[82] It may not be quite that simple. The schizophrenic might not be going after increased autonomy as much as he or she is trying to escape an unstable, unreliable sensibility. This highlights their probable intent whereas my writing focuses on result.

more correctly, they would have no feeling and conclude that they were dead—or they were the undead, zombies, a collection of 'corpses with insomnia.' Instead of robust vitality we get a hyperalert entity: pure, vigilant disembodied consciousnesses.

Moreover, Sass (1992) enlists other intellectuals to make the point that the leading cultural figures in art, literature and philosophy in the twentieth century displayed many of the attributes of schizophrenic consciousness — most notably that of rational hyperreflexivity.

> Various writers in the romantic, Nietzschean, surrealist and poststructuralist traditions have pointed out dangers in this enshrining of reason, such as how it can splinter the unity and authenticity of the human being, stifling imagination and physical vitality while bringing on the paralysis of overdeliberation and self-consciousness. (p. 4)

In this section, I've been highlighting some of the consequences of disconnection from the prereflective in favour of an overdeveloped reflexivity.

### Healthy Psychological Development: The Role Of Reflection

Now that I've sketched out a description of development gone awry I turn my attention to the work of Kegan (1982) and his book The Evolving Self. I am opting for this order because Kegan gives some empirical grounding to the more philosophical methods that I've been employing up to this point.  Secondly, he shows how the capacity to reflect on oneself is an intrinsic part of the developmental process.  We get "outside of ourselves" in order to resolve the inherent contradictions of our current stage and thereby move to the next level of development.  Let me set up what is to follow with a summary of some of his key thoughts.  I begin with his interesting claims regarding the zone where meaning is made.  He directs us "to that most human of 'regions' between an event and a reaction to it—the place where the event is privately composed, made sense of, the place where it actually becomes an event for that person."[83] Let me offer an example: Three people are sitting on a park bench when one of them screams and jumps up on the bench; one of the others looks around for the 'cause' of these screams, sees a common garter snake and resumes reading his paper; while the third, goes over and examines the snake. Clearly, this snake has different meanings for each of these people.  Kegan is directing our attention to the interaction between an event in the world and the person's spontaneous way of making sense of it. That is, he is referring to our prereflective experience. In a very condensed sentence, Kegan points to the transition that occurs from a meaningless, inchoate sensation to the status of an event. That moving snake only becomes an event when a meaning is attributed to it.  That is, even before we reflectively or conceptually 'interpret'

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[83] Kegan, Robert. (1982). *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development.* Cambridge Massachusetts and London England. Harvard University Press. abbreviated as ES

what the snake could mean, we've already 'received' or experienced a prereflective meaning. That meaning is the "lower-order cognition" on which one's reflective mind will subsequently work. For example, the first person, the screamer, could take note of the other two reactions and reflect that her reaction was one of many possible reactions. At this point, those other possibilities exist only as conceptual alternatives. These conceivable choices will not have the robustness that come with her prereflective meaning: "snakes are dangerous." It will take a long time, and much effort, for her new, conceptual meaning to 'sink in' to her prereflective self[84]. Let me offer another example that will make the point even clearer. The case that I have in mind is the event of screaming. How can screams have meaning when there are no words? As any parent will tell you, it is relatively easy to distinguish between a child's cry of pain, fear, disappointment, or frustration. These events, even though inarticulate, have meaning for the parent. Similarly, as a therapist, I can tell by my patient's tone when they are courageously engaging with their pain as opposed to turning away from it. That is, I have some sense of where they are situating their subjectivity—inside their experience or one step removed. I've learned to 'intuit' the existential meaning of the event of their tears and sobbing. My prereflective self is attuned to theirs—and my reflective mind is attuned to both. These examples, drawn as they are from my parenting and counselling experience, are particularly apt because I believe that the therapy process must involve the same psychic process that originally formed the personality. Just as childhood is the crucible of personality formation, so therapy is the context of its reformation. Again, I find support for this contention in Kegan's thought:

> A central conviction is that personality development occurs in the context of interactions between the organism and the environment, rather than through the internal processes of maturation alone. (1982, p. 6, my emphasis)

That is, personality development is an interactional affair rather than an internal process. As I've already suggested interactions between the organism and its environment are largely prereflective in nature[85]. In Piaget's terms, it is sensori-motor. In Varela's[86] vocabulary, it is action guided by perception. Reflection, on the other hand, involves disengagement from the world in order to attend to one's inner processes. The therapeutic process invites the patient to bring his private meanings into relationship with another. There they will be tested. Some will be discarded, some refined and some created. All this, as a result of interaction.

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[84] The robustness of prereflective meaning when compared to 'weak', conceptual thought has been explored in the previous chapter and will be examined in greater detail in a subsequent chapter dealing with affirmation and valuing.

[85] Yes, there may be a reflective component as well but if its only the reflective mind, then any structural change in the personality will be unlikely.

[86] Varela, Fransisco. (1999). *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition*. Stanford University Press.

**The Structure of the Self: Its constitution and re-constitution**

Kegan (1982) made some initial observations of how the self is created and maintained. That is, he developed a notion of the structure of a self. A caution is in order at this point because the term 'structure' can imply a solid, static thing. I prefer to think of mental structures as a repeating pattern. The metaphor of a whirlpool or eddy might be helpful here. The material constituent of the whirlpool, water, is constantly changing yet the pattern persists. Kegan has a wonderful way of capturing this notion of continual, but patterned flux,

> What we know of the way our client holds himself and his world together can help us understand what his experience means to him…. We are especially helped by our awareness of the fact that the way he composes himself is at once a kind of achievement and a constraint. (1982, p. 3, emphasis mine)

What fascinates me in Kegan's account is the activity that he names. We are not solid, inert things. Rather our constancy requires continual construction. We "compose" ourselves. We hold our selves and our world together. And the way that we do this favours or privileges certain meanings over others. How so? What comes to mind is that our repeating patterns are generated by reference points. Metaphorically, reference points are like enduring, trustworthy compass points. When in doubt; when a decision is required; when the stakes are high; we turn to them for guidance. Here are some examples of reference points: "knowing that my approaching death is a reality, how do I want to spend my lifeblood today?" "Is there a money making opportunity here?"; "What would Jesus do?" etc. It doesn't take much extrapolation to see how each of these reference points would generate quite different personalities. To return to Kegan: the way the individual holds himself and his world together can help us understand what his experience means to him. Our hypothetical subject who orients to money will develop a nuanced financial vocabulary whereas his relationship vocabulary might be underdeveloped. To use Lacanian[87] language, the person's master signifier (primary reference point) generates many derivative meanings.

**The Trade Off: Organismic Integrity And Environmental Responsiveness**

This raises another, more formal, aspect of the issue of pattern and movement. As Kegan (1982) states, the way the individual "composes himself is at once a kind of achievement and a constraint (p. 3)." The constraint aspect is responsible for the preservation of one's organismic integrity and psychological identity. This suggests a trade off between environmental responsiveness and organismic integrity. When I sprinkle salt on a slug, it becomes so impacted by that

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[87] I became familiar with the notion of master signifier through reading Malcolm Bowie's *Lacan.* (1991). London. Fontana Press

environmental event that its boundary dissolves and the slug dies. Clearly, the structuring boundary is a necessity for all life forms. Likewise, a viable human being is psychologically responsive and stable.  Our reflective, conceptual minds provide order—the compositional constraint while the prereflective self is responsive. Much of the order and stability results from the immersion in "history and language" (p. xiv) as Gendlin (1997) so cogently put it.  These, in turn, are further developed and refined by the individual as they create personal reference points—that is, reference points that arise from a history of mistakes that the subject wishes to avoid repeating. As I therapist, I witness my patient's attempts to deconstruct the reference points that generate their problems in favour of creating those that bring the possibility of fulfillment and belonging.

## The Process of Identity Formation

In the foregoing, I am highlighting the structural or patterned aspect of the self.  Kegan (1982) returns us to its process aspect:

> There is presumed to be a basic unity to personality, a unity best understood as a process rather than an entity. This process, according to Rogers' conception, gives rise to a 'self,' the meaning making system with which the process gets identified. (p. 5, emphasis mine)

The last sentence is important, yet confusing.  Let me see what heuristic possibilities appear as I unpack it. "The personality is a process and not a static entity"— so far, so good.  "That process called personality gives rise to a 'self.'"  Seems a little tautological. "The self is a meaning making system."  Yes.  "The personality gets identified with the meaning making system."  Hmmmm? Seems like more tautology. Yet something is hinted at here that is of major importance to this dissertation: the process of identification. What is identification?  Something like, "I am this." Possibly, "I am my meanings."  Or is it, "I am my meaning making?"  I support the latter because it highlights the "making"—the activity of constructing meaning. As Buckminster Fuller[88] famously said, "I seem to be a verb." Whereas when one becomes identified with a static meaning—when one believes one's self to be a noun—then when that meaning is revealed as revisable, one's ontological foundation begins to shake. The precipitating condition that leads to this outcome occurs when the reflexive, conceptual mind overrides the perceptual, prereflective process. When I identify with my reflexive, conceptual self, I most likely will screen out any perceptual "news" that might challenge that version of self. Otherwise, I am faced with the possibility that I will no longer continue to exist— I am facing the possibility of identity death.

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[88] *I Seem to Be a Verb* (1970) Buckminster Fuller, Jerome Agel, Quentin Fiore, New York. Bantam Books

**The Process of Attachment to, and Detachment from, Meaning**

Earlier I asked, "What is identification?" I answered with conclusions rather than a description of the process. What is the process of identification? That is, how does one attach to meanings? And further, how does one detach from those meanings once they've been revealed as limited? And what is it that is attaching and detaching? These questions are central to the psychotherapeutic project and to transformative learning as both imply structural changes in the self. Provisionally, I suggest that it is the life force, directed by attention that attaches and detaches. I tell my clients that one's attention is to psychic structures what water and fertilizer are to plants. That to which we attend will grow and what we neglect will wither and die. What is suggested by this metaphor is much more than the word 'attention' can convey. I'm talking of a process that is more akin to imprinting. For example, when I give all my attention to a musical piece, I become that music. A certain musical phrase enters my awareness and continues playing. Lacan's[89] 'imaginary register,' is pointing at a stage in our life where imprinting with environmental events was our primary way of being. His concept clearly identifies early prereflective functioning as distinguished from later developmental stages where the reflective and prereflective are mixed.

**Weak Thought versus Foundational Premises**

I find support for this kind of thinking from Merleau-Ponty (2002) with his claim that "subject' and 'object' are abstractions derived retroactively from a unified experience. I contend that 'imprinting' occurs when the boundary that separates subject from object, the me from the 'not-me,' has not yet been formed or has been temporarily dissolved. Infancy would be an example of the former. 'Falling in love' would be an example of the latter. In that state, we are that to which we attend. Gendlin (1997) articulated this way of being when he "asserts that an organism's living interaction with its environment is prior (temporally and philosophically) to abstract knowledge about its environment." This implies that this way of being is always operating. In many cases, however, this way of being is unacknowledged or unrepresented. Walking through a nature trail buzzing with insects, birds and exuberant plant life, my friend is caught up in his political analysis and isn't aware of the wonders through which we are moving. He was living "in his head" rather than "being-in-the-world." Kegan (1982) points to this occurrence as an example of a later stage in development; when the person no longer is their transactions with their environment but has begun to consult their internally constructed representations[90]. I believe he is pointing to a similar phenomenon with his notion of internalization. He makes the point that the child's social relationships migrate inward to

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[89] Bowie, M. (1991). *Lacan*. London: Fontana Press.
[90] The use of the verb 'constructs' implies an agent doing the construction; that is, it implies that the subject object differentiation has already been achieved. Prior to this, I contend, the individual is being imprinted by their transactions with their environment.

become 'object relations.' He uses a biological metaphor of an exoskeleton traversing inward to become an endoskeleton.  As children, we engage with the world more completely than it seems possible as an adult. As we grow older, the reflective, conceptual mind increasingly mediates our interactions with our environment. The 'weak' thought[91] that is typical of conceptualizing is often outmatched by the stubborn power of imprinted premises. That is, one can't merely decide to change one's foundational premises and be done with it. The reflective and conceptual are clearly at a disadvantage when challenging the incarnated assumptions[92] of the prereflective. I suggest that if, as educators and therapists, we wish to facilitate transformative learning, then we must be intimately familiar with these processes of attachment and detachment; imprinting and identification.  But I get ahead of myself.  I will return to the topic in my final chapter. For now it must suffice to say that the self is a meaning making system with which one has become identified.

### Kegan's Meta-theoretical Stance: respecting ontology and epistemology

Now I wish to turn my attention to that aspect of Kegan's (year) work that bears most directly on the issue of reflexivity, the topic of this dissertation. He has some very interesting things to say about meaning making.  He does so within the constructive-developmental tradition.  One of his central ideas is that we actively construct our meanings and that how we construct those meanings evolves over life span development. What I find particularly satisfying in Kegan's approach is his ability to include both "objective" and "subjective" descriptions of this process.  That is, he is able to compare how that process appears from the outside, from say the social scientist's point of view, to how that process is experienced from the inside, by the person.

> And yet this constructive-developmental perspective has taken no interest whatever in the equally important, but quite different, side of the same activity—the way that activity is experienced by a dynamically maintained 'self,' the rhythms and labors of the struggle to make meaning, to have meaning, to protect meaning, to lose meaning, and to lose the 'self' along the way. The Piagetian approach, viewing meaning-making from the outside, descriptively, has powerfully advanced a conception of that activity as naturally epistemological; it is about the balancing and rebalancing of subject and object, or self and other. But what remains ignored from this approach is a consideration of the same activity from the inside, what Fingarette[93] would call the 'participative.' From the point of view of the 'self,' then, what is at stake in preserving any given balance is the ultimate question of whether the 'self' shall continue to be, a naturally ontological matter. (p. 12, ES)

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[91] The concept of weak thought was developed by Gianni Vattimo, an Italian philosopher
[92] I have coined the term "incarnated assumptions" to convey the embodied nature of those premises.
[93] Fingarette, H. (1963). *The self in transformation.* New York: Harper and Row.

In the above, Kegan is performing on a theoretical level the same process that he charts for individual psychological development: the ever-evolving attempt to correlate an epistemic perspective with its ontological consequences. I've repeated and will repeat again that my quest in this dissertation is to identify the optimal balance between the prereflective self and the reflective mind. Making use of Kegan's work, I begin to see that the prereflective is more ontological, while the reflective is more epistemic. In the above quotation, Kegan is pointing out the importance for the social sciences to include two, complimentary perspectives on human beings  His claim is that it is only by adopting both can we can explain the person objectively and apprehend them subjectively. His exposition above clearly identifies the inadequacy of theoretical models that leave out one or the other. What he doesn't discuss, and what I will take up later, is the experiential distortions that occur when an individual privileges the epistemic over the ontological, the reflective over the prereflective. I contend that by so doing the individual runs the very risk of 'losing a self.'

### The Axis Of Development: What Was Once The Subject Of Consciousness Becomes Its Object

I will now turn my attention away from meta-theorizing to Kegan's model of individual personality development. He tells us that each stage of development is marked by an internal shift from that which was once experienced as subject to that which now can be viewed as object. That is, at an earlier stage we look through our frame of reference and only developmentally later, do we learn to look at it. A simple example should clarify: when we are children, we don't realize that tiredness conditions perception. We feel that our cranky outburst was justified by the event rather than conditioned by our state. It is only later, with maturity, that we factor tiredness into our perceptions. In so doing "tiredness," has become something objective rather than the implicit medium through which we look. In this way, we learn to reflectively compensate for transient prereflective states. The child has begun the developmental process of differentiation—representing what was once experienced as the ground of subjectivity as an object for consciousness to contemplate.

Kegan claims that this internal differentiation corresponds to an external differentiation: the toddler begins to psychologically separate or individuate from their mother. Both a self and a world are coming into being. Previously the infant treated the mother as an extension of self. "Everything is me." That is, the infant was fused with mother, as if they were a composite being. During the separation/individuation process the toddler becomes capable of relating to the other as a separate person, an "other" or "object."

> The infant, who before regarded the world and everyone and everything in it as a part of herself, becomes able to differentiate herself from others. Instead of being fused

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with her primary caretaker, she is now able to relate to him or her. In creating for the first time an 'object world'… the infant begins the history of successively joining the world rather than incorporating it, of holding the world while guaranteeing it distinct integrity—which is the history of human development. (p. 18, emphasis mine)

Previously, Kegan makes the point that the context of development is the transaction or interaction between an organism and its environment. With the internalization of the repeating patterns that occur in this "context of interaction," the individual's psychological development begins. A model, or representation, of being-in-the-world is being constructed based on a personal history of those transactions. The model represents the self and the world with their separate integrity—each bounded rather than fused with the other. With the establishment of the conceptual boundary between the "me" and the "not-me," the fundamental cognitive category has been established. Within this fundamental category, other subsidiary categories are derived. For example, the infant will begin developing rules for coordinating sensory input with behavioural response-action guided by perception. This work proceeds apace until the next reorganization of the subject-object boundary. Then the current "evolutionary truce" (Kegan, 1982, p. 28) is discarded in favour of a more nuanced parcelling out of that which is considered as 'subject' and what, as 'object.' For example, at an earlier point in her or his development, a person might experience him or her self as navigating through a hostile world. Later, with the development of an adequate self symbol they might change the location of their attributions: from that of "hostile world" to that of "sensitive soul." That is, their sensitivity has now become explicitly conceptualized rather than implicitly experienced. In the next chapter, we will turn to the work of Gendlin (year) for his nuanced guide to this process of translating one's experience into symbols that adequately express the meaning of that experience.

### Performing the Transformation from Subject to Object: Gendlin's "Focussing"

In rereading the above, something niggles; something doesn't seem quite right. My felt sense is disturbed by disparity between what I intended and what I've produced. I will use that sense of disturbance to guide me toward a more exact articulation. I begin with an attempt to link Kegan's thought to my primary categories of the prereflective self and the reflective mind. I've stated a number of times that the prereflective self is situational—it interacts with the environment—and that the prereflective self is the "being-in-the-world." On the other hand, I'm suggesting that it is the reflective mind that established the boundary between the "me" and the "not-me." An argument has been made, most notably by Merleau-Ponty (1964) that the categories of "subjective" and "objective" are a result of an abstracting process that occurs retroactively. We find, therefore, that the boundaries

and organization that Kegan so masterfully describes, are more a product of our reflective minds than a phenomenon existing in the world.[94]

## Depersonalization/Derealisation: Reflexivity Carried Too Far

Let me remind myself and the reader of the purpose of this dissertation. I want to contextualize Kegan's contribution to that overall project. My thesis is that western culture in general, and education in particular, over emphasizes the conceptual and reflective. Later I make use of the schizophrenic experience as a particularly florid example of this valorizing of the reflective. At the same time, I wish to place this unfortunate eventuality within the context of a developmental process that most of us regard positively. That is, with our increasing capacity to reflect upon our thoughts, feeling, and behaviour we begin to know our selves. We begin to develop a complex self symbol. One comes to know oneself precisely through the capacity to objectify oneself—to "stand outside ourselves," as Kegan would put it. For example, standing outside one's self enables one to witness a defensive reaction as opposed to acting it out spontaneously. Clearly, benefits are derived from this self knowledge. It is not so obvious that there is potentially a cost involved. For example, if, in the attempt to objectify oneself, one ceases to engage the world prereflectively then the resultant experience will probably take on an alien cast. Psychiatry's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual refers to such alienation as depersonalization and derealisation. With depersonalization, the individual no longer feels that they are real. With derealisation, on the other hand, it is the world that loses its ontological status. When Kegan talks of moving what was formerly subject to the status of object, I believe that he is implicitly assuming that most of the subject remains on the subject side and only some aspect moves over to the object side. However, in the case of depersonalization and derealisation, my sense is that the transfer threatens to become total—one no longer dwells within, nor looks from the prereflective self. Rather one invests in, and identifies with, the reflective mind exclusively. The self in that case has been turned into a thing.

## A Summary of Kegan's Developmental Model

Kegan's framework is as follows: psychologic development doesn't happen within the individual but rather evolves in the context of his or her interactions with their environment. Kegan (1982) names this evolving context as "equilibrium in the world." This fits nicely with the existential insight that the unit of study is not the autonomous psyche of an individual but rather the self-in-the-

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[94] At least, that would be the case initially; at the beginning of the developmental process. It is not hard to imagine, that later, those boundaries would be imposed on one's experience such that one would experience oneself as separate and distinct from the environment. That is to say that later in the developmental sequence, one's prereflective self would also be organized or colonized by the boundaries and organization that had been established by the reflective mind.

world. Next, he makes the point that, that equilibrium is dynamic not static. To put another way, just when one finds one's balance some event occurs which destabilizes it; thus initiating activity that might produce a new balance. Thus, the evolving balance is "between the progressively individuated self and the bigger life field, an interaction sculpted by both and constitutive of reality itself" (p. 43,). As I individuate, new vistas reveal themselves to me. I can see that others are not mere superficial variations of my mind set; rather they embody unique sensibilities. This freshly perceived uniqueness challenges me to further growth. It is a reciprocating, or dialectical process: my individuation allows me to see more; what is then revealed challenges me to respond in a more complex manner.

In addition, this evolutionary process is marked by periods of dynamic stability—ordinarily characterized as a developmental stage. Kegan's interesting refinement is to refer to this dynamic balance as an evolutionary truce. My understanding is that this truce represents a respite from the question, "Am I generating this event, or is it originating from the outside?" During my temporary truce, my current balance has for the time being resolved that issue. I know what is me and I know what is not me...temporarily. During this period of relative stability, my work, as a continuously developing individual is to work out the details within that framework. However, when I move to a new stage of development that parcelling out of the "me" and the "not-me," that was my old framework, will have to be renegotiated. Kegan does an excellent job giving examples of that process: beginning with the infant's progression past their total identification with their reflexes—that is, they are their reflexes—to an infant who has reflexes. It is a movement from being to having; from imbeddedness to separation. I am reminded of the illustrative story that a fish wouldn't be able to tell you the nature of water because they are immersed in it. They would have to jump out of it, in order to "know" it by comparing it to what it is not: air.

## Building a Representational Model

This movement from "being" to "having" is a representational move. That is, at first one is one's interactions with the environment, then, later, one represents those interactions to oneself. We have our representations. The word representation is possibly misleading as it implies a picture of some object or incident in the world. Perhaps 'schema' would be a more accurate term, especially the way Piaget used it. A schema is both the environmental event and the behavioural response as one complete unit. It is transactional whereas the term 'representation' elides the self's response referring only to the external object or event. When Kegan states that psychological development takes place within the context of interaction, I believe that what he is mapping is cognitive development: the internalization of one's history of interactions. And, further, that this development is actually the

increasingly sophisticated representation of the context of interaction[95]. That is, we can now hold up representations of these interactions before our mind's eye. Let me use an incident that Kegan offers to make my point. He is interviewing a boy who happens to have a brother.

> If we asked him if had a brother, he would say yes. If we asked him if his brother had a brother he would say no. He is unable to get outside of himself, to look at things from his brother's point of view and see that, indeed, his brother does have a brother and it is he. (p. 50, emphasis mine.)

At a later stage of development, this boy will begin to represent family relationships. In so doing, he has gained the capacity to stand outside the limited perspective of his immediate experience. It seems like the capacity to represent allows him the freedom to imaginatively adopt other perspectives. His consciousness is mobile and is able to adopt a number of perspectives. Given this ability to represent, he will be able to articulate that, yes indeed; his brother does have a brother. This capacity to adopt other perspectives is the necessary precursor for the development of the "view from nowhere" so prized by the early scientific community. It enables the "disinterested" stance, which formerly was viewed as the necessary pre-condition for achieving objectivity. However, another aspect of the 'disinterested' stance is that it requires bracketing one's embodied situatedness—it elides one's prereflective self. While this has been of value for the scientific enterprise, it would be disorienting for practical life. As the chapter on schizophrenics will reveal, the prereflective is also our compass.

### Reflection: "Getting outside of One's Self"

Starting with this concrete example, Kegan goes on to make a larger generalization:

> The meaning-constructive activity which we colloquially refer to as 'getting outside of oneself' is analogous to what I have meant by 'moving from subject to object,' or 'disembedding' or 'differentiating.' (1982, p. 50)

I am delighted by Kegan's multiple vocabularies; each picking up a slightly different aspect of the phenomenon in question. With each alternate vocabulary, one gets a better sense of that towards which he is pointing: the operation that is bound up in the act of reflection—or, "getting outside of one's self." Recall my earlier thought experiment when I asked the reader to clasp his or her hands

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[95] I seem to be getting into some trouble here by conflating 'representation' and 'schema'. Perhaps at an early stage in our development we experience the environmental event as *dictating* our reaction. We have yet to develop the capacity to make choices amongst a variety of possible responses. Our reaction, at this early stage, is the only possible one and therefore, only the triggering environmental event requires representation. Perhaps this notion of external representation lingers on even after we come to realize that we have choice in both how we construe an event and how we respond to it.

together and then inhabit the right hand as subject while experiencing the left as object. Then, in order to demonstrate the mobility of consciousness, I suggested reversing that procedure: inhabit the left as subject and experience the right as object. At one moment, my right hand is the matrix of my subjectivity and in the next; I am outside of my hand and experiencing it as an object. Of all the terms that Kegan uses, in the above quotation I am most intrigued by the colloquial expression: getting outside of one's self. It does a good job of revealing the phenomenology that is entailed in reflection. One turns oneself into an object by getting outside of oneself. I could say that during the act of reflection one considers oneself as an object. The first verb, "turns," is ontological in nature, while the second, "considers," is more epistemological.

### Kegan's Model Under Represents the Prereflective

It seems to me that Kegan's discussion about reflection focuses on its epistemic function and seems oblivious to its ontological implications. Later, when I summarize Sass's (1992) work on schizophrenics, it will become apparent that turning one's self into an object can have disastrous effects. But I have considerable territory to cover before we get to schizophrenic hyperreflexivity. For example, I would like to see how Kegan would describe or define the prereflective state as compared to "getting outside of oneself." Or would he even be able to describe prereflectiveness because that would entail representing it and thereby turning it into an object and thus missing its essential nature—as that which conditions the content of our awareness. Recall that the capacity that Kegan posits as necessary for development is the ability to move that which once was subject over to the object position. Thus, when I'm able to stand outside myself and represent my state of 'tiredness,' then I can allow for how my tiredness conditions my perceptions. I might then realize that a perceived insult, for example, has more to do with my state then it has to do with the other's intentions. This realization might lead to a power nap rather than to retaliation. This is an example of the reflective mind and prereflective self in an optimal relationship. They refer to each other. In my account, one's awareness of one's prereflective state is honoured as expressing a legitimate, organismic intentionality. The state of one's being is consulted with regard to choosing the next response rather than discounted as that which distorts objective knowing. Perhaps my difference with Kegan is more a matter of emphasis rather than principle. I think that I regard the prereflective as primary both temporally and philosophically.

Kegan begins his explication of this process by focussing on the first two years of life—what Piaget has named the sensori-motor stage.

> The child is gradually moving from being subject to its reflexes, movements, and
> sensations, to having reflexes, movements, and sensations. These become the object,

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and the child's psychologic becomes a reflection on its reflexes and the sensorimotoric. (1982, p. 30)

This then becomes the first instance of the transition from being to having; from being a subject to forming and having a self-concept. I like Kegan's term "psychologic" for its evocation of a structured, symbolic mental "space." Yet, again we have a description of the process of self objectification, which is only one half of the equation. Where is the prereflective in all this? Kegan has an interesting answer to this question:

> It is not that the child was not a meaning-maker earlier or that it was unable to think. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the child did his thinking by moving and sensing that its body was its mind. (p. 30)

This is a point that I constantly strive to make with examples drawn from both animal behaviour and human athletic endeavours. In terms of the latter, I am reminded of sport's commentator referring to a particular soccer player's "smart feet." These feet "know" what to do. Likewise, I enjoy the instantaneous responsiveness of the top tennis players. The bodies of these athletes display intelligent responsiveness. They are acting out their intelligence rather than thinking with their representations. This intelligence, a prereflective intelligence, is not separate from the body but rather is the body: a sensori-motoric, cybernetic feedback loop. Let me turn to the work of McIntyre (1999)[96] for the distinction between a smart body and a smart mind: A dog chases a cat until it runs up a tree and disappears into the foliage. The dog remains barking at the foot of the tree. Although the dog can no longer see the cat, is it "thinking" according to propositional logic?—something along the lines of "because there is no where else for the cat to go, I deduce that although I can't see it, it remains in the tree." MacIntrye thinks not. Instead, he infers from the dog's behaviour that it "knows" without knowing that it knows. It is not "self-conscious." It is "other-conscious." MacIntrye explains it this way: "The dog thinks that the cat is in the tree but we cannot say that the dog has the thought that the cat is in the tree." MacIntyre's implication is that the dog can have a cat as its intentional object but can't have a formulated thought as its intentional object. If we take the dog as a metaphor for our prereflective selves then this account suggests that the reflective works with and on disembodied representations while the prereflective is an interactive, embodied, and situated intelligence. In the first case, we are able to get outside of ourselves; in the second, we find ourselves imbedded in a world.

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[96] MacIntyre, A. (1999). *Dependent, Rational Animals: Why Human Beings need the Virtues.* Chicago: Open Court.

**Late Cognitive Development: Acquiring the Capacity to Disconnect from the Immediately Given**

Let me use this notion of a disembodied mind as a hinge joining an explication of a "normal" psychological development to an investigation of its pathological variant: hyperreflexivity. According to Kegan, it is with the development of formal operational thought that one's mental life is no longer dependent on the concrete world. A disconnect is possible.

> This new subjectivity can now construe the world propositionally, hypothetically, inferentially, abstractly. It can spin out an 'overall plan' of which any given concrete event...is but an instance. Put most simply, this new balance makes 'what is' a mere instance of 'what might be.' (1982, p. 38, emphasis mine).

I am intrigued by the implication that with the capacity for formal operational thought "what is," or the actual, becomes a "mere instance of what might be." That is, the event's ontological status has been reduced to one possibility of many. Or, would it be more correct to say that the representation of the event has the same ontological status as any other possible representation? Clearly, I believe that the latter explanation is a more accurate account of the transition from concrete operational to formal operational thought. It is congruent with my contention that the prereflective orientates to the world while the reflective orientates to one's representations. In addition, it pinpoints the developmental moment when the human being is able to disengage from the world and entertain hypothetical alternatives.

**Thinking with Kegan's Model and going Beyond**

While I experience great excitement writing this last piece, the words themselves do not do justice to the experience[97]. I'm trying to get at the ontological consequence of substituting a representation of a world for encounters with a world. One of the characteristics that I admire in Kegan's writing is the respect that he pays to both the 'outside,' objective account of development and the 'inside,' or participative aspect. What is the participative aspect of losing a world? Or, to highlight a different aspect, what is the subjective consequence of disconnecting from one's prereflective experience. I can think of no better example then that of performance anxiety. Performance anxiety occurs most often in the context of public speaking, but can also occur during job interviews, formal presentations, first dates, etc. Frequently someone having this experience will report their mind going blank; being unable to access data, jokes, anecdotes that in a more relaxed state would come to them. Often the person will report observing themselves from the outside; "the best part of me left and became a detached and invisible witness of my behaviour, leaving an ignorant

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[97] Once again I am guided in my exploration by the tension I experience when my explicit verbal productions don't quite fit my implicit intention.

husk behind to represent me to the audience." They have got outside of themselves but the results are not those to which Kegan was pointing. Rather they experience themselves as performing stereotypical behaviours; acting like automatons or robots. Rule or script bound. That is to say, their behaviour is not adaptive or fitted to the situation in which they find themselves. Rather it is more like a script or program that has to run its course. Cut off from the prereflective, the speaker's presentation loses its aliveness, its heart. I turn to Gendlin[98] to give a more nuanced account of the loss of connection to one's prereflective experience.

> The speaker who has temporarily lost his inward datum of what he is about to say, cannot continue to speak. He is lost, pauses, searches to "remember"—that is, he searches with his attention inward to find again that concrete and definite feeling of what he wants to say, so that his words may pour out again. If he cannot find it, he is lost. (p. 15)

Gendlin's term 'feeling' is equivalent to prereflective experience. He anticipates, in the following, what Sass has to say about the schizophrenic experience:

> [I]f our direct touch with our own personally important experiencing becomes too clouded, narrowed, or lost, we go to any length to regain it; we go to a friend, to a therapist, or to the desert. For nothing is as debilitating as a confused and distant functioning of experiencing. (p. 15, emphasis mine.)

Without being in touch with what is "personally important" for me, I do not know how to proceed. No course of action seems any more important than any other. They are all just "mere instances," mere hypothetical possibilities.

### The Role of Emotions in ongoing Development: The Participative Aspect

One of the strengths of Kegan's model is that it folds these experiences into the overall developmental pattern[99]. More specifically, he identifies the transition from one stage to the next, as the liminal period where one's prereflective self no longer provides a stable framework within which to operate. The taken-for-granted is troubled once again. During these times, the boundary between self and other is shifting, sometimes dissolving completely. Kegan gestures toward this loss of one's subjective centre but doesn't develop it:

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[98] Gendlin, Eugene. (1962). *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning.* New York: Free Press, Macmillan,. Paper Edition, Northwestern University Press, 1997.
[99] By 'folding in' these transitory, liminal states into an overall developmental framework he corrects the tendency to interpret such experiences as a mental breakdown or the onset of psychosis.

> I am suggesting that the source of our emotions is the phenomenological experience
> of evolving—of defending, surrendering, and reconstructing a center.  (1982, p. 82)

He seems to be suggesting that our emotions are like seismic upheavals that signify the need for a reorganization of one's construction of self and world.[100] This fits nicely with my earlier suggestion that emotions are activated when one's assumptions don't adequately address the challenge that the world is presenting.  When we are surprised, delighted, frustrated, and disappointed we are getting news from our prereflective selves that our conceptual rules/assumptions/expectations are not sufficient to the situation in which we find ourselves.[101] In order to correct them we must bring those assumptions into view; we must look at rather than through our frame of reference.  That is to say, that we must objectify what formerly we experienced tacitly as our subjectivity.  If the framework does not adequately address our circumstance, we experience anxiety.  As I've indicated throughout this dissertation, this move from prereflective experiencing to reflective conceptualizing brings certain potential hazards with it.  Those hazards are ontological in nature.  Anxiety could be characterized as ontological uncertainty. Sass[102] presents a compelling description of hyperreflexive schizophrenics who have suffered such an ontological dislocation in late adolescence or early adulthood.  Kegan illuminates this condition when he re-describes separation anxiety as, not so much a separation from the significant other as it is a separation from what one thought of as oneself.  That is, as an infant if I am fused with my mother, rather than differentiated from her, then when she leaves my presence I am no longer the same person—rather I am a stranger in a strange land.  Kegan notes that this occurs every time the individual transitions from one relatively stable stage to the next.  He uses his double vocabulary to denote that shift.  Objectively (or from the outside), he refers to it as decentration or qualitative change.  Subjectively or phenomenologically, it is equivalent to the "loss of my centre."

> Infant distress understood as the felt experience of an evolutionary
> transformation...seems to be not so much a separation from the object as separation
> from myself, from what is gradually becoming the old me…. (p. 82, emphasis mine).

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[100] Some emotions seem purely defensive in nature. These ones seem designed to push away any news from reality that might disconfirm one's foundational premises. Instead one violently reasserts them. The purpose of these emotions seems to be to prevent reflection and to valorize one's taken-for-granted assumptions. Still if one has the courage to reflect without prejudice on the experience one would experience a struggle between one's old frame of reference and a possible new one.

[101] Instead we have to attend to our circumstance and respond to it creatively. Perhaps that will be the beginning of a process to construct new premises that would be adequate for a wider range of circumstances.

[102] Louis A. Sass. (1992). *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and* Thought. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

He makes the startling, yet appropriate, claim that anxiety and depression are the concomitant emotions that accompany such a shift. This is a major, and long overdue, correction to the popular notion that such emotions are "caused" by some event; some external loss or threat of loss. It is no surprise to me that anxiety and depression accompany the "re-cognition that what before was me is now, not-me." Kegan treats this sequence as a necessary, even beneficial, though challenging experience. It is likely that most of us will experience this shift several times over our life span.

### Suspended Between Stages: The Schizophrenic Experience?

What separates this normal, developmental process from that of the schizophrenic experience? In normal development reflection seems to play a large part in deconstructing old meanings yet in schizophrenia, reflection—in the sense of self consciousness—seems to have become the exclusive obsession. What was a temporary withdrawal from the environment in normal development—in the sense of existing within a chrysalis where transformation can occur through reflection and re-conceptualization—has become an enduring detachment and disengagement from conventional life for the schizophrenic. He or she seems to be stuck between two states or stuck in a liminal state. Such a person has lost touch with the former prereflective self, but hasn't yet developed a new one to replace it. The old self has become objectified, possibly even petrified (yes, this double meaning is intentional) as their consciousness and élan vital inhabits the reflective position. Alternatively, having lost their taken for granted self, they are trying to make their reflective, conceptual mind do the work of a tacit, prereflective self. They have become hyperreflexive and have lost the capacity for spontaneity. I will be exploring these various aspects as I move my research from Kegan to Sass and from Sass onto Gendlin.

### Where Have We Arrived?

My purpose continues to be the exploration of the under acknowledged consequences of privileging the reflective while discounting the role of the prereflective. I've been attempting to situate that purpose within an overall context. Toward that end, I've sketched in normal psychologic development that culminates in formal operational thought. That capacity allows one's thinking to disconnect from one's immediate situation. I've also referenced performance anxiety as an acute and distressing disconnect form one's prereflective; and I've cited schizophrenia as an example of a chronic disconnect. A more pervasive, yet less noticeable, example of the loss of "inward datum" would be that of a person who takes on an ideological identity in lieu of an authentic self.[103] Such a

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[103] Let me raise a methodological caution at this point. Throughout this dissertation I've treated the conceptual and the reflective minds as identical. At times this has generated confusion for myself and I suspect for the reader. I've come to the realization that this seeming confusion may arise from conflating the synchronic with the diachronic. That is, I believe that conceptualization and reflection are related

person "consults" their ideology, rather than their prereflective self, in order to have meaning. They seem to prefer their meanings "off the shelf" rather than "custom made." If such is the case, then they are in similar situation as the speaker who has temporarily disconnected, or the schizophrenic who is chronically disengaged, from the prereflective. It is to this larger population that the import of my dissertation addresses itself.

## Towards A Balanced Relationship Between The Reflective And Prereflective

I now wish to briefly turn my attention to a troubling predisposition that I imported unknowingly into my project. As I approached Kegan's work, I did it with a bias. His work is so conceptual, theoretical, abstract, and reflective that I suspected that it couldn't or wouldn't do justice to the interactional process between the self and its environment. That is, I expected his work to demonstrate or exemplify what I saw as our collective error in valorizing reflexivity over world engagement. Consequently, I expected him to put a premium on constancy, stability, predictability, and structure and pay less attention to emergence, flow, improvisation, and dynamic pattern. It was my feeling that the latter had been underrepresented in the literature of psychology, philosophy, and psychotherapy. I was tempted to make the opposite error of valorizing prereflective engagement. However, in thinking with Kegan, I've come to appreciate the necessity for both. We need to continually compose our integrity while also being responsive to change. I stress "continually composing" because it conveys the notion that the self is not a thing but rather an activity. In addition, I've come to see that conceptual language is much more suited to the task of "entitizing" the relative stability of the temporary evolutionary truce of each stage then it is for "capturing" the shifting flux experienced as one moves from one stage to the next. Let me unpack that sentence. "Entitizing" is Gendlin's term for the moment when one temporarily freezes a process or flux into a discrete entity. Entitizing momentarily arrests some aspect of the process of becoming, thereby enabling the emergence of some stable content with which to think. In a language game, it would be the equivalent of turning a verb into a noun. Finally, a "temporary evolutionary truce" is Kegan's term for an individual's characteristic way of categorizing self-world interactions. That is, it is the understanding of the self-in-the-world that is evolving. For example, the same action of answering a phone by both a five year old and a fifty year old will be understood differently by each. I am claiming that while their behaviour is external and observable, understanding is necessarily internal and therefore separate from the world. This is its strength and its weakness. It is a strength in that it gives us constancy and

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developmentally(diachronically) but not necessarily experientially (synchronistically). This notion is based on the following reasoning: when one *originally develop*s a concept one does so by reflecting on prereflective experience. If one imports a concept, on the other hand, it need have no relation to one's 'inward datum'. This seems to be the case when one's identity is constructed from a fund of ideological notions. So an ideological self would not necessarily be given to reflection but would most certainly be governed by their concepts.

predictability and is communicable—and doing so, it supports our integrity. However, it is also a weakness in the sense that it is an internalization of a world that once was, but has now moved on. The world no longer exists in the form that our representations attribute to it. A gap has opened up between the model and that which it purports to model. Eventually this gap calls for an accommodating shift. I would surmise that it is the mounting pressure produced by the disparity between the conceptual representation and the emergent reality that is the spur for transformative learning—or for strenuous confabulation and rationalization in order to explain away the gap between the way that the world is and the way "it is supposed to be."

### The Ur Structure: The Boundary Separating Me From The Not Me

Earlier I suggested that what evolved in Kegan's model was the characteristic way of categorizing self-world interactions. What motivates these increasingly sophisticated conceptualizations? And where does it start? I suggest that the master motive is the drive for autonomy or independence. In attempting to achieve that goal, the human subject quickly articulates a boundary—the ur-structure—that differentiates the individual from the world. Imagining myself at this stage, I might consider that everything that I can control is me, whilst everything else is the world or not-me.

At one point Kegan talks about the child becoming "sealed off" as they move from the Impulsive to the Imperial balance or stage[104]. The child becomes "sealed off" in the Imperial stage because he now has the beginning of a private, internal world—a world of its own representations. He or she is thereby able to choose between inhabiting a private world or interacting in the intersubjective one. Having that choice, they can opt for self containment. By so doing, events no longer directly impinge on the child; or their effect is muffled or dampened. The child is no longer subjected to a kind of stimulus-response slavery vis-a-vis the world. Rather a contemplative space or gap is being constructed that makes considered responses possible[105].

Many parents experience a sense of loss when they witness this sealing off. The interactional contact between them is no longer guaranteed. However, the parent's loss can be described as the child's gain. Kegan strongly implies that the motive for the movement from the impulsive to the imperial balance is the desire for agency. With this move, the child is no longer subject to their impulses; rather their impulses are now subjected to them. The emergent self is now the context in

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[104]  Again, I prefer Kegan's vocabulary of 'balance' with its connotation of an equilibrium amongst competing forces to the term 'stage', with its connotation of a steady state.
[105] In trauma theory one hears talk of the loss of the stimulus barrier; with trauma once again events impinge directly on the core of the self.

which the competing impulses vie for dominance, with the self as the arbiter. The result is the beginning of an autonomous self that demonstrates a capacity for acts of agency.

## Transitions between Stages: The Liminal Zone

Let us now look more closely at the process and experience of moving from one evolutionary truce to another. I'm focussing on a liminal condition. The Oxford English Dictionary defines liminality (from the Latin word līmen, meaning "a threshold") as a psychological, neurological, or metaphysical subjective state...of being between two different existential planes[106]." I'm interested in what happens in that "in-between" zone where all that was once stable has become fluid. This fluidity is necessary if the subject-object balance is to be recomposed at the next developmental stage. One's sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation, but also the possibility of new perspectives. Turner (1969) had something similar in mind in the following:

> If liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutiny for the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs'[107] - one where normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are undone. (p. 156, emphasis added)

I wish to highlight both effects, "disorientation" and "the possibility of new perspectives," as these are two aspects of the same process as one moves between "two different existential planes."

I suggest that the liminal condition is a concomitant of existential choice. That is, when I am in the throes of moving to another culture, changing careers, ending a marriage, or any game changer, I know that everything that appears solid is about to change. When standing at that threshold, I know that my current life is a composed life; one that requires continual effort to maintain its present configuration. I am reminded of a Sartre quotation whose source I can't locate: "Consciousness is afraid of its own radical freedom because it knows that at any moment it can make a choice that could undo a lifetime of choices. Instead it chooses to hide out in the ego." That is, "hiding out in the ego" is equivalent to maintaining the status quo—no radical break from one's past but rather the further elaboration of its founding premises. With liminality, on the other hand, one realizes that everything can change in a second. This was the oft-quoted sentiment after 9/11. From where I stand, it appeared like Americans stepped into a new world for a blinding moment and then spent the next few months trying to scramble back to the old one. Something like this happens with individual psychological development as well. One glimpses the possibility of stepping into a new world and one also resists that possibility. These competing forces are experienced intensely as one enters a

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[106] "liminal", *Oxford English Dictionary*. Ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. OED Online Oxford University Press. Accessed June 23, 2007;
[107] Turner, V. W. (1969). *The Ritual Process*. New York: Penguin p. 156

transitional zone with the possibility of exiting on a different existential plane. Those forces can feel like they're tearing the individual apart when compared to the experience of dwelling within a specific developmental stage where one's limits are accepted, possibly even cherished as the "taken-for-granted."

## Schizophrenia as Permanent Liminality

Secondly, I am interested in the liminal process because I think that it might reveal something about the schizophrenic's experience. I find Turner's (1974) observations helpful: "People...may not complete a transition (or a transition between two states may not be fully possible), with those who remain in an in between state becoming permanently liminal."[108]. The schizophrenics who Sass (1992) discusses might be intelligible as permanently liminal. That is, they have little fixity, no constancy. Kegan's talk of composing a self would be an experiential truth for the schizophrenic. Their constancy can only be achieved through a kind of conscious wilfulness and eternal vigilance; whereas the task of composing and maintaining a self runs in the background for most of us. Could it be that the schizophrenic's hyperreflexivity is an attempt to re-establish the stability that at an earlier developmental level was automatically generated by the prereflective. At this earlier level one's perceptions were being conditioned in a characteristic fashion that assures, "This is my experience." This is not a reflective self consciousness, rather it is experienced as prereflectively given, a kind of background that is always there.

Let me remind the reader that the argument I am developing concerns the overvaluing of reflection. In the case of the persons with schizophrenia, they trust their reflections more than their experience. Further, I am making use of an extreme type, the hyperreflexive schizophrenic, in order to make the phenomenon visible in its more attenuated forms. What compels my attention is that a seemingly beneficial human ability to reflect on one's experience can become pathological.

## What Can The Schizophrenic Teach Us About Western Civilization?

Let me compare this extreme type with a similar, but limited, process that occurs with normal development. According to Kegan, psychological development occurs when some aspect of subjectivity has been lifted out of its imbeddedness in the prereflective and now is experienced as an object of consciousness. For example, my mood is no longer something that I look through but rather something that I look at. Being aware of my mood, I can 'account' for its conditioning of my experience. This enables me to act in accordance with what I take to be my long-term interests rather than acting impulsively based on my shifting, moody perceptions. With schizophrenics, on the other hand, it is as if all of their subjectivity has been moved over to the object side. That is, their

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[108] Turner, V. W. (1974). *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors.* New York: Cornell University Press p. 260

existential self no longer dwells within the prereflective but rather comes to be identified with the act of reflection. Rather than being grounded from below—by being anchored in, and constrained by, the prereflective—a schizophrenic attempts to 'fixate' a self from above, through reflexivity. In this attempt, I suggest, they parallel the western tendency to privilege abstract reflection over lived experience. After all reflective consciousness produces clear and distinct, easily organized concepts. Contrast this with Gendlin's assertion that an organism's living interaction with its environment is prior (temporally and philosophically) to abstract knowledge about its environment[109]. He makes a powerful claim that living is an intricate, ordered interaction with the environment, and as such, is a kind of knowing. Abstract knowledge is a development of this more basic knowing[110]. It seems to me that schizophrenic hyperreflexivity reveals a decided preference for abstract knowing. In that preference, they display an exaggerated form of the western intellectual tradition. That is, in both cases there is a tendency to substitute abstract knowledge about the environment for the organism's prereflective interaction with the environment. If reflective knowing is the visible or explicit tip of the iceberg with prereflective being its much larger, invisible base, then the schizophrenic has stood that iceberg on its head. Radical instability is the result.

My iceberg metaphor was intuitive and is hopefully evocative. However, it does little to articulate the psychological processes involved when the reflective modality dominates. My sense is that the individual who has opted for living reflectively has done so in order to compensate for a fluctuating and therefore unreliable sensibility. I am reminded of a quote attributed to Carol Shields, the Canadian writer, who compared happiness to a pane of glass that we carry with us. One day an accident occurs; the pane shatters and the world and the self are no longer the same. There are a number of survival strategies that are employed to survive such a catastrophe. A popular one is a longing for the past. Clients often talk of getting "back to their old self." Others, attempt to distance themselves from their emergent sensibility through reflection and abstraction. This strategy parallels the western intellectual tradition that talks of opening up a "critical space." It seems that "space" is necessary in order to critique that which has been assumed as "the way things are." It is as if the immediacy of experience has such a gravitational pull on the mind that we have to take some distance from it in order to escape its attraction. This stance of "getting outside oneself" has critical benefits up to a certain point. I try to find that beneficial range by asking clients to focus on awareness rather than analysis. Awareness involves training the mind on emerging experience. Or, to put it another way, "pay attention to what you're paying attention to." On the other hand, I ask my clients to avoid

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[109] Gendlin, E.T. (1992). 'The primacy of the body, not the primacy of perception.' *Man and World*, 25(3-4), 341-353. From http://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2220.html
[110] Gendlin, E.T. (1997). 'The responsive order: A new empiricism.' *Man and World*, 30 (3), 383-411. From http://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2157.html

analysis because it is too experience distant.  Some prefer analysis to escape the vulnerability and unpredictability attendant on dwelling within one's circumstances.  Yet, in many cases such a move increases instability.

**Heightened Suggestibility: The Consequence of Disconnecting from the Prereflective.**

How does withdrawal from the territory in favour of inspecting the map lead to increased instability?  I suggest that in normal functioning the prereflective acts as a constraint and ballast for the reflective mind.  The prereflective constrains what is probable for this particular individual, whereas the reflective mind is capable of generating a vast array of the possible.  Therefore, when one disconnects from the prereflective in the hopes of stabilizing via reflection, one enters the realm of possibility—one has entered the domain of the "what if."  Bateson[111] (1978) claimed that a paranoid individual had lost the ability to distinguish between possibility and probability.  The boundary between the two had become permeable or had disappeared.  I don't think that this is confined to paranoids.  I've had panic disordered clients who have also lost the distinction between possible and probable.  Another, related, aspect of this ontological disturbance is heightened suggestibility.  Rather than the reflective processing the raw material of the prereflective, it begins to produce the prereflective experience.  Thus, when a possibility is suggested, it quickly morphs into an experiential reality.  I had a borderline client with whom I was working.  During one session, I was using metaphors of electricity[112].  "The spark jumped….we're not wired for that….rapport is like an electric current that connects two people."  After some time she reported that my right forearm had folded open and she could see my wiring.  For her, I had become a bionic man.  My metaphors had conditioned, if not determined her perceptions.  This same client on another occasion revealed that she was "erasing herself from the inside."  I now interpret this enigmatic remark as her phenomenological description of effacing her prereflective self.  To the degree that she succeeded, she became more suggestible.  One can imagine how rapidly her prereflective experience might shift as a result of losing her ballast.  To summarize what is emerging to this point:  if one disconnects from or erases one's historically constructed prereflective self then a transient prereflective self will be generated with every passing suggestion.  Experience will be generated by the concept rather than the concept emerging from the experience.  It will invert the normal, and I claim, healthy relationship between the two.

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[111] Bateson, G. (1978). "The Birth of a Matrix or Double Bind and Epistemology." in *Beyond the Double* Bind. Ed. Milton Berger. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
[112] I was trying to communicate something intangible and I frequently resort to metaphor to do so.

**The Intellectual's Defense**

As stated earlier, one strategy to arrest this unbearable shape shifting is to search for evermore higher order abstractions that might contain this erratic flow within a stable framework. However, I've seen evidence in my more intellectual friends that such a move produces the same kind of suggestibility and therefore instability as my borderline client evidenced. I remember a discussion in my men's group about enlightenment. As I rode home with the most intellectual member of the group he asked, "Did you notice the lighting in the room waxing and waning?" Somehow, the topic of our conversation had come to colonize his sensibility—our reflective, conceptual conversation had begun to generate his prereflective experience. His experience had become unstable and therefore untrustworthy. This suggests an educational implication. It implies that our emphasis on abstract analysis, with its attendant uncoupling from immediate experience, might produce the inadvertent result of heightened suggestibility.

Let me now shift from this unfortunate result to a closer examination of the intent. The intent is to find some solid place to stand from which one could once again have the experience of a unitary self and a coherent world. This unity and coherence are characteristic of childhood. It seems that the experience of a fragmentary self has to wait until the further development of our capacity to reflect. I'm of two minds when it comes to exploring this idea. On the one hand, does this revelation of a fragmentary self result from the ability to reflect on our experience—a capacity that comes to fruition in adolescence? According to this idea, a little reflection will reveal that mood and context generates multiple selves or 'selflets.'[113] On the other hand, the claim has been made that the process of reflection and rational analysis actually produce fragmentary selves[114]. If the latter explanation is the more accurate one, then a strategy that seeks stability from abstractions generated by reflection paradoxically increases their instability.

How could reflexivity possibly offer a substitute for the prereflective? Why would that even be considered a viable coping strategy? Reflection is a necessary precursor for linguistic coding of preconceptual experience...a conversion of the implicit into the explicit[115]. As such, it produces

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[113] I came across this term while reading Oliver Sacks' *The Man who mistook his Wife for a Hat.* Sacks claimed that brain injured/diseased patients were a swarm of selflets that only cohered into a whole when an emergency presented itself. After the emergency passed, the glue that held them together dissolved.

[114] Louis A. Sass in *Madness and Modernism* states the following: "Various writers in the romantic, Nietzschean, surrealist and poststructuralist traditions have pointed out dangers in this enshrining of reason, such as how it can splinter the unity and authenticity of the human being, stifling imagination and physical vitality while bringing on the paralysis of overdeliberation and self-consciousness." p. 4

[115] When working with a client who had been sexually abused from early childhood I saw that her trauma was never transformed from experience into memory. That is, her trauma was always 'now'. Julian Janyes' *The Origins of Consciousness,* suggested that linguistic coding was necessary for time tagging events and arranging them in a narrative sequence that had a past, present and future. *Linguistic coding was necessary, if experience were to become memory.* With that in mind, my intent for this client was to have her language her experience.

stable forms: a vocabulary with relatively fixed definitions.  This contrasts with prereflective experience where everything was process and flux.  As a result of this coding, some minimal constancy is achieved.  Could it be that the schizophrenic hopes that the achievement of the constancy provided by language could be a foothold leading to the restoration of a reliable self[116]?  Thus, the schizophrenic is engaged in symbolizing or mapping the territory, rather than living in it.  I suggest that they are afraid of dwelling within their unfamiliar, prereflective experience for fear of being trapped in a strange and alien world.  Instead, they hold it at a critical distance and reflect on it, hoping to arrest it's ongoing transformation.  However, I make the claim that their prereflective experience will never become familiar (heimlich)—won't become intelligible—until they dwell within it.  Yet dwelling within it means losing their previous configuration of self[117].  Thus, they become permanently liminal—their sensibility has changed but their understandings and self-concept have not.  This is not an easy place to live.  As a result, many try to pull themselves up by the bootstraps, via reflection.

### The Limits of Reflection: A Supporting Argument

I am reminded of Zizek's[118] caution that in order for psychoanalysis to work there must be an unanalyzable, prereflective core to the person.

> [I]t is as if our reflexive power can flourish only in so far as it draws its strength from and relies on some minimum 'pre-reflexive substantial support which eludes its grasp, (p. 9-10, emphasis mine)

This brief statement sketches out the optimal relationship between the reflexive and the prereflective.  Reflection is impotent unless it connects with and refers to the prereflective.  In the final chapter I will be explore the therapeutic approach of Gendlin whose every intervention is designed to support this connection.  When that connection does occur a "felt sense" is generated that illuminates the circumstance in which the patient finds himself.  "Felt sense": two words that condense and express the optimal relationship between the pre- and the reflective.  "Sense" as in meaning; and "felt" as in prereflective experience.  The felt sense is embodied knowing.

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[116] Admittedly these thoughts are speculative. Supporting evidence drawn from the work of Louis A. Sass will be offered in the next chapter.

[117] Only by dwelling within it that one begins to recognize certain repetitions, certain patterns. While it is possible to argue that reflection is necessary to recognize certain patterns, a strong case can be made for prereflective familiarity with the phenomenon in question. For example, my cat recognizes that the sound of a ceramic dish being put on a tile floor 'means' that cat food is available. I don't believe that she can *remember* that sound (i.e. evoke it mentally or representationally) but she can *recognize* it when the sound arrives. 'Remembering' implies the concept of object permanence guaranteed by a stable mental representation of the object. 'Recognition', on the other hand, requires the presence of the external object to activate its corresponding sensori-motor schema. So it is possible to build up sensori-action schemas by dwelling within the prereflective. If, on the other hand, one identifies one's existential self with the reflective mind, then the prereflective changes that occur will seem to come from 'out of the blue'.

[118] Zizek, S. (2000). *The Fragile Absolute*. N.Y.: Verso.

I began this project with the idea that reflexivity had an unacknowledged down side. Yet, I also had to recognize the gains that it made possible. For example, reflexivity is required to become conscious of one's prereflective assumptions. Once made explicit those assumptions could be critiqued and replaced when necessary. Otherwise, we could never get beyond the injunctions that our parents imposed. Thus, psychotherapy, if it is to be effective, depends on our capacity to "stand outside ourselves." So, in the case of normal development, reflection was both necessary and beneficial. Yet, with schizophrenics who have been described as hyperreflexive, the results are disastrous. How can a process that is natural turn pathological? I suggest that it is an enduring and substantial prereflective core that makes possible the movement of some of what was formerly experienced as 'subject' to now what can be viewed as 'object.' Some, not all.

## Summary and Conclusions

So, what ground has been covered in this chapter? Firstly, I suggested that reflection had ontological consequences in that it undermined or undercut the experience of immediacy. Excessive reflection eventually leads to a diminution of the experience of realness. Both the self and the world begin to be experienced as picture or image rather than as indubitable actualities that are given to experience. Kegan (year) makes the claim that development consists of converting what was once 'subject' into an 'object' for reflection. According to him, this is the process that leads to self knowledge: getting 'outside one's self' and then looking back. Clearly, Kegan and I are lifting out different aspects of the same process. For Kegan, turning the subject into an object is a gain whereas to my way of thinking it entails the risk of ontological diminution. Kegan's language seems to be valorizing self as a symbolic object, whereas I want to identify self as an emergent process.

Secondly, following Kegan, I suggested that developmental stages were a series of frameworks that parceled out what was subject and what was object; what was self and what was world. That is, the configuration of subject and object changed at each stage. The frame of reference through which we look at the world at one stage, becomes the object of our awareness at the next. In this way, we become aware of what we contribute or bring to our experience over and above what the world is presenting to us.

Thirdly, I briefly examined the transitions from one stage to the next. I suggested that during this transitional experience the old framework was experienced as inadequate while the new one had yet to be established. This way of describing both the stages and the transitional zones is a conceptual reading. Yet, it occurs to me that any conceptual reading is after the fact; it is a retroactive imposition, something along the lines of: "one lives life forward and understands it backward." I wish to do justice to the 'living forward' experience. I suggest that during these transitional periods one's sensibility, one's existential reality, is changing. Yet one's conceptual framework has yet to

formulate or articulate the new sensibility.  That is one's reflective mind realizes that everything has changed—the raw data of experience is somehow qualitatively different.  I am no longer the same self that I once was.  Several reactions to this momentous experience are possible.  I can seek my lost stability through reflecting on and thereby distancing myself from my emerging experience in favour of conceptual understanding.  If I make that choice, then I will live in my concepts rather than in my experience.  This is similar to the hyperreflexive stance that Sass claims schizophrenics employ.  Or I could acknowledge that the only way to make my new, strange sensibility familiar, is by dwelling within it[119].

In the next chapter, I will articulate the profile of Sass's ideal schizophrenic type in order to more fully offer a phenomenology of the hyperreflexive experience.  I then will use this type as a lens for looking at western culture.  As a result, I hope to provide evidence that reveals this tendency toward hyperreflexivity pervades high culture.  I will draw on examples from art, literature, and philosophy.  Finally, I will turn to the world of Gendlin for an account of the process in which the client learns how to relate his reflexively derived meanings to his prereflexive experience.  That is, Gendlin shows us that these two distinct forms of consciousness work best when they inform each other.

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[119] It should be noted that William Perry articulated a number of other responses in his seminal research on moral and ethical development in college students.

**Chapter Three: Schizophrenic Hyper-reflexivity**

This chapter will focus specifically on the problem of excessive reflexivity as manifested within the individual and the collective. The work of Sass (1999) and Sass and Parnas (2002, 2003) will be employed to do so. Their work examines the schizophrenic condition, which they characterize as being hyperreflexive. The chapter will conclude with a case study of a British aristocrat, Sir John Perceval, who became "mad" in his search for spiritual perfection. The case study also identifies the significant processes that enabled his journey back to sanity. Hopefully Perceval's story will ground much of the abstract theorizing that marks Sass' and Parnas' explication of schizophrenia. The following and concluding chapter will employ the work of Gendlin (1997) to propose a solution that rebalances the relationship between the reflexive, conceptual mind and the prereflective, perceptual self.

Before proceeding let me situate this project in what has been accomplished so far. In the previous chapter, we explored Kegan's (1982) model of psychological development. According to Kegan, the necessary process for further development was the ability to "stand outside oneself." Standing outside, we inspect the self and thereby develop self knowledge. In psychological terms, this allows us to develop a self image or self concept. From a philosophical point of view, we reflect on our self as an object rather than inhabiting that self as a subject. In this chapter, we will make use of both Sass (1999) and Sass and Parnas (2002, 2003) to reveal the potential dangers inherent in such a move. Their work with schizophrenics demonstrates that the seemingly beneficial move of "standing outside oneself," that Kegan lauds, can also have disastrous results. A phenomenological approach to understanding schizophrenia will show that the culture itself encourages the "turn inward" and its effects are pervasive, if unnoticed in the culture at large.

As I stated earlier, Sass's book, Madness and Modernism (1999), has had an enormous influence on my own thought. Many of the ideas presented there articulated my implicit sense of how the mind functioned and, more specifically, how it malfunctioned. In that book, he identified a number of parallels between the experiential modality of schizophrenics and the works of twentieth century artists, writers, and philosophers. These figures, being cultural exemplars, serve as a bridge between the individual and the collective levels of analysis. Thus their cultural productions could provide an evidential basis for my claim that the west overvalues reflexivity. Furthermore, Sass is a valued source because he makes a case for the explanatory superiority of a phenomenological model over operationalized or behavioural models. That is, he gives full weight to subjective meaning as a determinate of behaviour. Subjective experiences that occur during the prodromal[120] period are more

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[120] Prodromal refers to the early signs of a developing pathology.

reliable indicators of incipient schizophrenia than are behavioural criteria. With the current emphasis on biological (genetic and neurological) determinates of personality and behaviour, it is necessary to emphasize that we are cultural as well as biological creatures.

In addition, Sass (1992) challenges the conventional equation of what it means to be human: the claim that to be human is to be rational. Rather his claim is that schizophrenia results from exaggerated rationality with its attendant abstractions and reflexivity. In his view, schizophrenics are not less able to reflect on their experience rather they are hyperreflexive. The following framework was developed by Sass and Parnas[121] (2003):

> Schizophrenia, we argue, is fundamentally a self-disorder or ipseity disturbance (ipse is Latin for "self" or "itself") that is characterized by complementary distortions of the act of awareness: hyperreflexivity and diminished self-affection. Hyperreflexivity refers to forms of exaggerated self-consciousness in which aspects of oneself are experienced as akin to external objects. Diminished self-affection or self-presence refers to a weakened sense of existing as a vital and self-coinciding source of awareness and action. (p. 427-444, emphasis mine).

While we might be using different vocabularies, I think that my terms 'reflexive mind' and 'prereflexive self' can be nicely mapped onto his description—the reflexive mind in the schizoid individual displays "exaggerated self-consciousness"; the prereflexive self has become distant, even alien .

### Refining my Terms: One More Time

Before continuing, I want to restate and clarify the relationship between my primary terms. These terms are slippery, hard to nail down. The difficulty is in language itself as it presents the reflective mind and prereflexive self as separate and distinct nouns. This can give the impression that the entities to which they refer are independent, one from the other. However, it would be more accurate to say that the reflective and prereflective mutually implicate each other in the following ways. My prereflective state influences how I think conceptually (that is, when I'm in a mood, my thoughts will be conditioned by that mood); my conscious goals and objectives reciprocally influence my prereflective self. For example, when I've repeatedly meditated on self-compassion, my previous harsh, judgmental predisposition begins to dissolve and be replaced by a more accepting attitude towards myself.

This tendency for language to separate terms that refer to processes that are actually mutually implicating is exaggerated by the fact that we can only be aware of one thing at a time. That is, the

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[121] Sass, L.A., Parnas, J. (2003). "Schizophrenia, consciousness, and the self." *Schizophrenic Bulletin.* 29(3)j: 427-44

sequential nature of awareness reinforces the impression that the reflective mind and prereflective selves are separate entities. The following example will hopefully illustrate what I mean: "The absent minded professor was so preoccupied that he tried to push the door open when it was clearly marked, 'pull.'" Being caught up in his internal ruminations, he failed to register his perceptions. When the door did not open, his perceptual self might be summoned forth by the disjunction between intention and result and he would perceive the 'pull' sign. Whereas in the previous moment he was only aware of his thoughts, in this moment, he is only aware of 'pull.' First, he was aware of his conceptual activity and later, the perceptual object. Experientially they exist as separate, not parallel domains. I'm claiming that this separation is an illusion. Both are always operating but we can only be aware of one at a time. For example, before the 'glitch' with the door, the professor's behaviour didn't require conscious awareness. His prereflexive self took care of walking, climbing stairs, going to the right building, etc. In other words, he was doing two things simultaneously: walking and thinking. His two consciousnesses were operating simultaneously—one with awareness and one without. In this example, both the prereflective self and the reflective mind initially were operating independently. However, when the "pull" door didn't yield to his push he moved his subjectivity from his reflective mind to his prereflective self. According to Gendlin, a similar process occurs during psychotherapy and writing poetry. In both these activities, the person works most effectively by mindfully aligning the prereflective self and reflective mind. Problems that fail to yield to an exclusively cognitive approach are more likely to be resolved when information from the prereflective self is accessed.

An important conceptual achievement would be for the subject to install a placeholder for the prereflective in their conceptual system. Such a placeholder might remind the subject to access their prereflective experience as they generate their verbal productions. Otherwise, they can only work with the concepts already in place. I remember a time in my life when I felt some despair as I came to realize that no matter where I began my deliberations I would always end up with the same result. The underlying assumptions would inevitably generate that outcome. I needed to get outside of the conceptual net that they produced but didn't know how. Then I discovered body knowledge or what I now come to know as the prereflective. Something new could emerge.

The implications of this are enormous for both psychotherapy and education. For example, if a person is not aware of the pre-reflective self, it simply doesn't exist for them. Despite their ignorance, their prereflective self often undermines their conscious intentions. A therapist who is unaware of its influence will not be effective. They will be addressing the wrong intentionality—the conscious, conceptual mind—rather than the prereflective self that generates the behaviour. Likewise, an educator who isn't aware of the prereflective background won't know how to respond

when a student is moving into transformative learning[122]. With transformative learning, on the other hand, formerly unconscious premises are made explicit, examined and revised. For example, the person who is operating under the premise that negative attention is better than no attention might learn that positive attention is even better. The resultant learning could best be described as existential rather than cognitive, or ontological as compared to epistemological.

## Meaningful versus Pro Forma Meaning

I would like to add yet another refinement to my description of my primary theoretical terms. It is based on a lyric that persisted in my mind long after the song was over: "Without you, I feel hollow." The songwriter had lost his lover and as a result felt empty. He was registering a withdrawal or shrinkage of his prereflective self. It is as if the tendrils of his self had recoiled from a painful engagement with the world. Perhaps Sass and Parnas (2003) can offer some support here. Recall the their earlier quotation where they referred to diminished self affection as "a weakened sense of existing as a vital...source of awareness and action." Could this be what our dejected and rejected lover is experiencing? Whatever was inspiring him has largely withdrawn leaving a vacuum instead. His world would probably appear flat, lifeless, possibly even meaningless. This bereft lover can still read, have lunch with a friend, do his job—activities that require conceptual, reflective consciousness—but the personal significance of these acts would have paled. They no longer partake of the meaningfulness that informed his life when his lover was there. In most cases, this is an acute state, as the lover eventually recovers. When we are filled with an abundance of love it passes through us on its way to our beloved. The envelope of our prereflective self expands to include our lover—we go beyond ourselves. This is quite different from the "standing outside ourselves" which is a reflective, and not a prereflective move. Schizophrenics however, find themselves chronically outside. To summarize: Both the reflective and the prereflective operate simultaneously most of the time, and in most cases, we are only self-consciously aware of our reflective activity. When we are fully engaged in our lives the prereflective brings a quality of meaningfulness to our experience.

## Self Conscious versus Spontaneous Intelligence

In our use of ordinary language, we've come to associate intelligence with verbally mediated thought processes. For example, an intelligent person thinks things through. This could give the impression that only reflective consciousness is intelligent. However, I am defining intelligence as an internally generated, appropriate response to an environmental challenge. We can infer the presence of that kind of intelligence in the behaviour of a mosquito when we swat at it because it

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[122] Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

moves to avoid it. The mosquito doesn't consider its options propositionally—it reacts appropriately. I am aware that I might encounter resistance to the notion of attributing intelligence to a mosquito but I urge the reader to think with me by using the insect's adaptive response as being similar to a human intelligence that is not self conscious—i.e. conceptual. Human behaviour can display intelligent responsiveness without the person necessarily being aware of generating that response. For example, during a recent psychotherapy session, my client would make disparaging remarks about her weight followed quickly by some absurd humorous remark. She was aware of her shame around her weight but unaware of displacing that shame with her humorous asides. Her volitional self was mocking her involuntary weight gain. Yet, I suggest, intelligence was generating both the weight gain and the ironic commentary—two different consciousnesses. Her ironic comments were made from a perspective "outside herself"; from the position of someone who knows better. Yet, she was unable to act efficaciously on that knowing because she was unaware of the prereflective consciousness responsible for her weight gain. "I don't know what makes me eat excessively," she might remark— when clearly she is the agent that was responsible for putting food in her mouth. Erickson, a psychiatrist who practiced hypnotherapy, claimed that whatever the symptom, it was in the service of the overall personality. That is, although the conscious mind might disparage the result, the prereflective self "knew" exactly what the benefits of overeating were.

### Self Disturbance: Loss of a First Person Perspective

Sass and Parnas (2003) are focussing on awareness, specifically on "distortions of the act of awareness" that a self-disorder produces. These distortions include a loss of a first person perspective on the world. For example, they claim that schizophrenics lament the loss of the core of their being and complain of only having a third person perspective on themselves. This mysteriously distressing experience can be made more intelligible by referring to equivalencies exhibited by normal neurotics. As a therapist, I'm very aware when my client shifts from a first person narrative to a second or third person perspective—no longer self-coinciding but rather one or two steps removed. Instead of saying, "I really get jealous when my lady looks at another man" they say something like, "you know, Paul really gets mad when his lady looks at someone else." He has abandoned his experience in favour of speculating on it. Sass and Parnas (2003) continue their exposition:

> [T]his ipseity disturbance has two fundamental and complementary aspects of components. The first is hyperreflexivity, which refers to forms of exaggerated self-consciousness in which a subject or agent experiences itself, or what would normally be inhabited as an aspect or feature of itself, as a kind of external object. The second is a diminishment of self-affection...that is, of the sense of basic self-presence, the

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implicit sense of existing as a vital and self-possessed subject of awareness…. These
complementary distortions are necessarily accompanied by certain kinds of
alternations or disturbances of the subject's "grip" or "hold" on the conceptual or
perceptual field—that is, of the sharpness or stability with which figures or meanings
emerge from and against some kind of background context. (p. 428, emphasis mine.)

Hyperreflexivity, in their understanding, involves taking a third person perspective on the self—self
as external object[123]. They go on to state that this hyperreflexivity is accompanied by a diminishment
of self presence. Of course! As one inhabits reflexivity, one abandons self presence. Can't be in two
places at once. They make the point that self presence is an implicit experience.

### Performance Anxiety: Temporary Loss of First Person

Perhaps I can bring some further clarity to this discussion with examples drawn from my
work with people afflicted with performance anxiety. When lecturing on this topic, I make a
distinction between self concept, self image, and sense of self. I group the first two together as
explicit representations of self—self as clearly delineated object. Sense of self, on the other hand, is
more embodied and tacit. I've pointed to it by asking students or clients to notice when they are
"comfortable in their own skin, at home in their bodies." I'm asking them to register their ipseity, to
notice their sense of self. I want them to be able to sense its presence because I want them to notice
the moment of its leave taking, the moment when they start to experience themselves as object.
Often they report that it is the presence of an other or others who are in a position of power, that
prompts the vanishing of their prereflective self. I claim that such a leave taking or "diminishment of
self-affection" generates the conditions that invite performance anxiety. One of the reported
phenomena that accompany performance anxiety is an overwhelming sense of seeing oneself and
one's flaws from the point of view of the audience— that is, standing outside one's self rather than
inhabiting and living from one's prereflective self. This self evisceration produces a kind of
emptiness or hollowness that invites colonization by the other because one loses one's "grip on the
conceptual or perceptual field." For example, if I'm meeting a new acquaintance for lunch and I
notice that her food and drink order is an exact replica of mine, then I suppose that they are
experiencing that loss of their own tacit background which normally highlights specific items on the
menu that would satisfy their emergent appetite. That is, they've lost touch with their organismic
valuing. They no longer sense what menu items are significant for their embodied well-being. By
now, I hope the reader sees an equivalence between this implicit sense of self and the prereflective. It
is the background context out of which explicit meanings emerge that enable active choices. For

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[123] I recall doing a graduate degree in counselling psychology where the rules forbade the use of first person
pronouns in academic writing. This supposedly promoted a more dispassionate, more objective account but, as
we follow Sass and Parnas' reasoning, does nothing to acknowledge and honour human subjectivity.

example, if I'm hungry, I notice restaurants; if I'm lonely, I notice couples; if I've been living conceptually, I begin to yearn for the aesthetic; etc.

## Loss Of A Stable Frame of Reference

I am particularly interested in Parnas and Sass' assertion that such distortions produce disturbances in the subject's grip or hold on both their perceptual and conceptual field. I interpret this to mean that the stability that accompanies the givenness of experience is lost. I recall a recent heart to heart talk with my son. Near the end, he reported that the forest scene at which he was gazing seemed to be receding. His experience reminded me of a comment by a colleague that when he was anxious he seemed to be looking at the world through the wrong end of the telescope. Their experience was one of the world withdrawing but, I believe, it would be more accurate to say that it was the prereflective self that was withdrawing. These two incidents are examples of alterations in the perceptual field. We're so used to thinking of perceptions as perceptions of an object or person that it is difficult to describe fluctuations in perceptions that seem to alter the object.

## The Given Quality of Experience

In the description of performance anxiety, I was noting the loss of the "given" quality of one's experience . Or as Parnas and Sass (2003) would put it:

> This "self-feeling of self" (sometimes referred to as the prereflective cogito) is not something we do but something that simply happens. It is an unmediated feeling or sense of aliveness, a sense of a certain tonality or luminosity of consciousness. (p. 430)

When my mood is constant, so is my perceptual field. However, when I am tired my luminosity dims, the world looks muted, even grey. The prereflective cogito is phenomenologically foundational—or should be. Both tacit experience of self as well as perceptions of the world partake of a unique colouring characteristic of the perceiving person. A colouring that isn't noticeable because it is always there. One only becomes aware of that background conditioning of perception when it changes to something else. A simple example of this shift occurs when one has had a drink or smoked marijuana or even experienced a mood swing. After a brief duration, one's sensibility changes. What is significant about this shift is not that it is truer, feels freer, less inhibited, etc. Rather it reveals the previously unthinkable possibility that one's normal state also conditioned one's experience. I've seen similar shifts when clients begin a regimen of anti-depressants. In one case, a fundamentalist Christian who interpreted the bible literally began to be confident enough to question some of her previous conclusions. That is, she began to carry forward her experience, opening it up, rather than living inside the enclosure of her early upbringing. A similar but more profound shift in

sensibility occurs during the prodromal period that precedes a formal diagnosis of schizophrenia.  As reported by Parnas and Sass (2002) a Norwegian study of twenty, freshly diagnosed schizophrenic patients revealed that they all had profound and alarming changes of self-experience; nearly all patients complained of ineffability of the their altered self-experience; and a great majority reported preoccupations with metaphysical, supernatural or philosophical issues.  I speculate that this shift in the taken-for-granted perceptual field was so alarming that the subject abandoned their prereflective cogito in the hope of establishing some stability via their reflective consciousness.  Their preoccupation with metaphysics and philosophy was, I think, a search for reliable foundations to compensate for the loss of the taken-for-granted.  On a separate but related level, their hyperreflectivity was intended to detect any further change before it got "out of hand."  That is they locate themselves in their reflective mind because their prereflective self has become unstable.  Sass (1999) points to one outcome:

> Schizophrenic individuals often describe themselves as feeling dead yet hyperalert — sort of a corpse with insomnia.  (p. 8)

"A corpse" because they've lost touch with their vital source—they are no longer self-coinciding.  They no longer inhabit their prereflective self.  They are dead and yet "hyperalert": expecting another tremor in the ground of their existence.  "It happened once; it could happen again."  I suspect that it is a rapid and unwilled change in the prereflective self that produces the self-disorder that Parnas and Sass (2003) so ably investigate.  I am grateful to them for bringing the notion of 'self' back into the conversation.  This term belongs both to ordinary and specialist language and thus bridges the world as we live it and the theoretical paradigm that purports to explain it.  In ordinary language, when we refer to the self we are referring to one's irreducible, experiential core.  At any moment, it is my self that is enjoying a game of Frisbee, making love, writing a dissertation, engaging in a stimulating conversation.  These are my experiences.  And because they are mine, there is a recognizable medium through which they are revealed.  This medium is the way I color the world.  When it suddenly changes, I become a stranger living in a strange land.  The reflective mind attempts to compensate for the loss of stability or security that the transformation of the prereflective wrought.  The reflective mind tries to impose an order from 'above' to compensate for the loss of the prereflective foundational self.

### Parallel Processes in the Collective

At several previous points, I've speculated about parallel processes that might be found between individual and collectives levels.  I've made the tentative claim that western culture is

skewed toward reflective and conceptual modalities of consciousness. Consequently, when I read Sass and Parnas' report of the Norwegian study of schizophrenics and saw that the majority became preoccupied with metaphysical, supernatural, and philosophical issues, I realized that I had seen that process before—a process that was preoccupied with fundamental assumptions. When I first attended professional school in 1971, the courses were simple and basic: some counselling theory, a little active listening, an introduction to psychological testing, and some statistics. When I returned eight years later, the course content had become much more sophisticated: gender studies, cultural diversity, ethics, linguistics, epistemology, etc. I looked on with amazement. What had happened while I was away? I came to realize that the hidden assumptions imbedded within the earlier curriculum had been made explicit, then problematized, and, in many cases, replaced. The new curriculum was a critique and a transformation of the previous one. Is there a parallel between my profession rethinking its premises and the schizophrenic preoccupation with the metaphysical, supernatural and philosophic? I believe that in both cases the assumptions that formerly had been relied upon and taken for granted were suddenly revealed as inadequate for understanding emergent phenomenon—a change in the sensibility of the schizophrenics studied; a change in the culture that the counselling program was intended to serve. The counselling training program was nested within a larger cultural context—a context that underwent profound changes in the late 60s and early 70s. Like the schizophrenics in the Norwegian study, faculty were looking for firm footing, for new premises that might allow the program to serve the emerging community better. The implication that this comparison foregrounds is that such a questioning of fundamental premises can have deleterious or beneficial results.

Parnas and Sass (2003) summarize this process in the following quotation arising out of their reading of Polanyi (1974). They are making the point that there are different forms or types of awareness and that these forms are related or structured as a

> [C]ontinuum stretching between the object of awareness—which is known in a focal or explicit way—and that which exists in the "tacit dimension"—that is, that which is experienced in what Polanyi terms a more subsidiary, implicit, or tacit manner….Any disturbance of this tacit-focal structure, or of the ipseity it implies, is likely to have subtle but broadly reverberating effects that upset the balance and shake the foundations of both self and world. (2003, p. 430, emphasis mine)

Their account reminds me of Gestalt's figure ground relationship. We look at a figure which stands out from, while being supported by, its ground. Mapping this on to my theoretical terms: the prereflective is the ground that provides the hidden support for our explicit thoughts. When the structure or relationship between the focal/explicit and the tacit/implicit is altered, the taken-for-

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granted is no longer taken for granted. The so-called 'givens' of self and world lose their inherent stability. Referring back to Kegan (1982), his developmental model is characterized by a rebalancing of the subject-object relationship where formerly what was subject now moves over to the object side. Or to put it in somewhat different terms, instead of looking through, one's frame of reference (the subject position) one looks at one's frame of reference (the object position). Whereas Kegan emphasizes the growth potential in such a move, Sass and Parnas (2003) highlight the risks involved. Again, it might prove useful to look for the parallels between the individual, and the collective change processes as exemplified by Counselling Psychology's revisionist project. The following quote should make clear what is involved in both:

> [W]hereas the notion of hyperreflexivity emphasizes the way in which something normally tacit becomes focal and explicit, the notion of diminished self-affection emphasizes a complementary aspect of this very same process—the fact that what once was tacit is no longer being inhabited as a medium of taken-for-granted selfhood. (p. 430)

The new curriculum was taking something that was previously tacit and making it focal, explicit and, therefore, subject to critique. Political correctness, in that context, could be seen as a reflective effort to resist re-inhabiting what was tacit. In the new dispensation, faculty and students were strenuously attempting to inhabit new premises hoping that eventually they would come to feel as natural as the old ones.

**Hyperreflexivity: Both a Cause and an Effect Of Diminished Self-Affection**

In this section, I will make extensive use of quotations drawn from Parnas and Sass (2003) to deepen our understanding of what is occurring for the schizophrenic as the archetype or epitome of the hyperreflexive individual.

> Phenomenology distinguishes between a thematic, explicitly, or reflective intentionality…and a more basic, nonreflective or tacit sensibility--called "operative intentionality" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. xviii)—that constitutes our primary presence to the world. Thus, consciousness is not a self enclosed Cartesian theater cut off from the world but is intrinsically directed toward and embedded in the world. (p. 429)

As stated earlier, the Cartesian consciousness is self-conscious and representational—in my terms, a reflective consciousness that takes the self rather than the world as its object. That self, including its model of the world, produces "a self enclosed Cartesian theatre." Operative intentionality, on the other hand, is directed toward the actual, as opposed to the modeled, world. The prereflective is essentially interactive. Next, Parnas and Sass (2003) complicate my description of the prereflective.

In earlier iterations of my definition, I left the impression that the prereflective had direct access to reality. Direct and unmediated. Perception without bias. Their account corrects this impression.

> Operative or prereflective intentionality is the mode in which habits and dispositions come to be sedimented; it furnishes the background texture or organization of the field of experience and thus serves as a necessary foundation for more explicit or volitional acts of judgment, perception and the like. (p. 429)

In this account, the prereflective self is built up over time and includes habits and dispositions that structure the field of experience making it intelligible. We enact a behaviour often enough and it becomes our "second nature." In addition, the prereflective can be partially colonized or organized by the reflective. That is, over time, repetitious patterns of conscious thought and action migrate from the reflective to the prereflective. A tennis player practices thousands of hours so that his skill becomes automatic or prereflective. An art critic has viewed so many works that she has developed a cultivated sensibility. We enjoy listening to the blues because we've heard so many songs of that genre that they form a background that enhances our appreciation of this song. As a result of this build up over time, when we attend to our experience we don't encounter chaos, a meaningless jumble of sensory stimuli. Rather, what is given to us, already makes sense in a rudimentary way, which we can then reflect upon to produce more explicit or thematic meaning.

In addition, I want to add that our habits and dispositions do encounter an actual world—the otherness of the world does enter and interact with the predispositions of the self. A meaning is generated that is the product of this encounter. I feel that it is necessary to state this because of a certain intellectual climate that claims that experience is text all the way down. To me this claim can only be taken seriously if one lives in a "self enclosed Cartesian theatre." That is, that claim is the product of a reflective, rather than a operational intentionality. It is important to make this distinction because I believe that a philosophy that claims that all experience is mediated, or text all the way down, justifies passivity and despair.

## Loss of The Structuring Boundary

The above sketch outlines my claim for a normative operating relationship between the prereflective, the reflective, and the world. In healthy functioning, operational intentionality guides our interactions with the world. However, if those interactions generate unwanted yet repetitious consequences then the reflective mind is called into play in order to make explicit, then critique, the premises that might be generating those unwanted consequences. In addition to this normative explication of the relationship, I want to remind the reader of my claim that such a relationship is hardly the case for the majority of people living in the west. I contend that those subjects are

comfortable living within their closed conceptual systems—whether those systems are ideological or idiosyncratic. Most of them are not aware of the prereflective level of experience. I base this conclusion on my forty years experience as a therapist where my fundamental task has come to be that of teaching the client to access their embodied knowledge—to become aware of her or his prereflective experience.

I would like now to look at a more detailed account of what occurs when living within one's conceptual model is suspended or breaks down. By studying the breakdown, we will hopefully be in a better position to understand typical functioning. I will begin with an experimentally produced breakdown; then, I will move to a literary description that refers to a similar experience and l conclude with a journal entry from a schizophrenic girl.

I turn my attention to an experiment result reported by Deikman (1966) in Loy (1988)[124]. His subjects were to look at a blue vase for a half hour over ten trials. He instructed them to attend to (perceive) the blue vase without lapsing into thinking (cognition). One participant, (subject A), reported the following:

> One of the points that I remember most vividly is when I really began to feel, you know, almost as though the blue and I were perhaps merging, or that vase and I were. I almost get scared to the point where I found myself bringing myself back in some way from it....It was though everything was sort of merging and I was somehow losing my sense of consciousness almost. At one point it felt...as though the vase were in my head rather than out there: I know it was out there but it seemed as though it were almost a part of me. (p. 83, emphasis mine)

I want to suggest that this experiment artificially produced the same sensibility as that experienced in childhood when our eyes could touch the blue sky and summer was an eternity. That is, this experiment encouraged or supported prereflective engagement in contrast to the critical or reflective distance that adult's typically employ. With the former, we fuse with our surroundings—in this case, a blue vase. It is only in reflection, and then only retroactively, that we are able to separate subject from object; our person from the blue vase. Returning to the above quotation we see that the participant was losing her defining boundary and merging with that to which she was attending. That is, she was investing her self in the vase and the vase was entering her. She experienced that as losing her "sense of consciousness," the substrate of her identity[125]. No wonder she attempted to

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[124] Deikman, A. J. (1966) "Implications of experimentally induced contemplative meditation." *The* Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases. February, 142 - 2. pp. 101- 116. Lippincott, Williams and Wilkens.
[125] Recall the distinction that Edelman made between higher order consciousness and primary consciousness. Only with the former was it possible to be conscious of being conscious. It seems like subject A was losing her capacity for being conscious of being conscious. Also recall that higher-order consciousness depended on having semantic or symbolic capabilities—i.e. representational thought.

"bring herself back from it." She did not wish to lose her awareness of herself as a separate, self conscious identity: "I am here and the blue vase is over there...I am not the blue vase." She wanted to consolidate her identity on a familiar existential plane, a plane where subject and object were differentiated. Something similar to subject A's experience occurs in the prodromal period that precedes the onset of schizophrenia. The major organizational loss is that of the boundary that separates the me from the not-me. I suggest that this is the terrifying shift that produces the schizophrenic's flight to the reflective mind (as a compensation for the loss of organization). Sass and Parnas (2001) use a case study of schizophrenic young man to reveal how disturbing this loss is.

> [He] was frequently confused in conversation, being unable to distinguish between himself and his interlocutor. He tended to lose the sense of whose thoughts originated in whom and felt "as if" his interlocutor somehow "invaded him," an experience that shattered his identity and was intensely anxiety provoking. (p. 109)

I believe that his identity anxiety was similar in nature to participant A's experience of fusion and her fear of losing her sense of herself as a separate consciousness.[126] Two more descriptions drawn from Deikman's (1966) experiment reveal how different one's prereflective experience is from the formed meanings that reflective consciousness overlays on them.

> It was as though we were together, you know, instead of being a table and a vase and me, my body and the chair, it all dissolved into a bundle of something which had...a great deal of energy to it but which doesn't form into anything but it only feels like a force. (p. 84)

Not only does the self-object boundary disappear but also object boundaries that distinguish one from another. Clearly delineated organization disappears and instead one experiences an energy or force field. Participant B looking out the window after his sixth session was "unable to organize his visual impressions."

> For a long time it [the view out the window] resisted my attempt to organize it so I could talk about it. There were no planes, one behind the other...Everything was working at the same intensity...I didn't see any order to it...and I couldn't impose it, it resisted my imposition of pattern. (p. 84)

Many interesting implications are imbedded in this quotation. For example, in participant B's account his ability to verbalize, awaited the coalescing of a certain organization. This implies that

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[126] As a side note I find it interesting that this young man felt that his interlocutor was invading him. I've often conceived of my client's as having been colonized by their parents. Most children, however, don't report invasion type experiences and I wonder why. Perhaps they have yet to fully consolidate a separate identity and so don't fear its loss.

verbalization depends upon organization. However, recall Edelman's (2006) account where "higher-order" or reflective consciousness depended on semantic or verbal capabilities. I've always assumed that it was the semantic capability that applied organization to an undifferentiated experience. But perhaps subject B's description reveals that the relationship can be reciprocal. Taking our investigation further—perhaps these apparently contradictory accounts actually point to a difference that emerges diachronically. An infants' prereflective experience might be closer to that of subject B: "a great deal of energy but which doesn't form into anything." However, later in development the prereflective begins to be organized:

> Operative or prereflective intentionality is the mode in which habits and dispositions come to be sedimented; it furnishes the background texture or organization of the field of experience. (Sass & Parnas, 2003, p. 429)

Secondly, it is interesting to note that for subject B, there were no planes, with one object behind another. That is to say, there wasn't this primitive organization of space that we take for granted as indicative of the way things present themselves to us. Rather, he is describing a scene that is very much like Picasso's cubistic work. Artists like Picasso often attempt to get beyond the conscious, rational mind. That is, they try to de-habituate perception. It is remarkable that his resultant paintings are so close to that of subject B and to the experience I attribute to an infant. Finally, I want to suggest that his "imposition of pattern" is similar to the motive for hyperreflexivity that Sass and Parnas discuss. It is an attempt to compensate for the loss of the taken-for-granted, categorical organization of the perceptual field. Now order has to be wilfully imposed rather than merely unselfconsciously given. Previously his prereflective self automatically provided this rudimentary order. I suggest that the only remedy for his situation is living through it rather than reflecting on it. That is, by living through it, he inhabits it and his actions and attitudes toward his situation become, once again, sedimented in his prereflective. This takes time.

We find a similar experience expressed in Sartre's (1969) novel Nausea. His protagonist is sitting on a park bench looking at the roots of a chestnut tree. The root was a "black, knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me." Then, pointing explicitly to the loss of his prereflective sense-making he states:

> I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference, which men have traced on their surface. (p. 127)

Just as participant B couldn't talk about his experience, Sartre's protagonist had lost language. Later in his description he states, "It had lost the harmless look of an abstract category." Sartre's

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protagonist had been plunged back into unmediated prereflective experience. He is making a heroic attempt, after the fact, to give it a verbal form that nevertheless conveys the essence of his non-verbal experience.

Throughout this dissertation, I have cautioned both myself and the reader about the dangers inherent in an excessive reliance on the conceptual, reflective mind. I've made the claim that inhabiting one's reflective mind is equivalent to living in a map or model rather engaging with a world. Why would one choose to do so? I think Sartre's phrase about his perceptions losing the "harmless look of an abstract category" gives as good an answer as any. Living in one's conceptual mind is like looking at photographs of last summer's vacation: any potential danger is confined to the past leaving the photographs as harmless and inert as an abstract category. So there is comfort in inhabiting a familiar model and feeling at home. The danger in becoming complacent within one's home is that it can drift away from its foundation in prereflexive experience. As a result, the abstract categories can no longer be updated via "reality checks." Sartre continues:

> This root...existed in such a way that I could not explain it.
> Knotty, inert, nameless, it fascinated me, filled my eyes, brought
> me back unceasingly to its own existence. In vain to repeat:
> "This is a root"—it didn't work any more. (p. 127)

When one loses the ur structure, the constructed boundary that separates the me from the not-me, the Cartesian mind dissolves and the object becomes fascinating or compelling. One is called out of one's self toward the object, toward fusion with the object, away from a separate sense of self. Subject A above, resisted this fascination: "I found myself bringing myself back in some way from it . . . . It was though everything was sort of merging and I was somehow losing my sense of consciousness." She resists this because without experiencing herself "existing as a vital and self-coinciding source of awareness and action" she wouldn't know how to proceed. She would have lost her primary reference point: the boundary separating "me" (a source of agency and autonomy) from the not-me (that which is beyond one's control).

Compare Sartre's account of his loss of a sedimented prereflective to this passage drawn from The Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl.

> [Objects] filled me with terror. When, for example, I looked at a chair or a jug, I
> thought not of their use or function—a jug not as something to hold water and milk, a
> chair as not as something to sit in—but as having lost their names, their functions and
> meanings; they became "things" and began to take on life, to exist…. The stone jar,
> decorated with blue flowers, was there facing me, defying me with its presence, with
> its existence. To conquer my fear I looked away. My eyes met a chair, then a table;
> they were alive, too, asserting their presence. I attempted to escape their hold by

calling out their names. I said, "chair, jug, table, it is a chair." But the word echoed hollowly, deprived of all meaning; it had left the object, was divorced from it, so much so that on one hand it was living, mocking thing, on the other, a name, robbed of sense, an envelope emptied of content. Nor was I able to bring the two together, but stood rooted there before them, filled with fear and impotence.[127] (p. 40-41, emphasis mine)

She attempts to escape their hold by naming them. This account implies that language previously had distanced her from the compelling nature of her perceptions. This was no longer the case, and she was consequently filled with terror. For this girl, the reflective (meaning) and the prereflective (experience) had separated and she was aware of both and the gulf that separated them. A note of clarification: she had lost her sedimented prereflective—the one built up from historical experience; the one that organizes the field of experience. She was now experiencing her naked prereflective. Existence was compelling and meaning was "an envelope emptied of content." No harmless abstract categories to soothe her.

Writing this section, I am again thrown into some promising conceptual confusion. Sometimes I sense it as a disparity between what I know explicitly and what I sense implicitly—they don't align. To work my way through my confusion I begin to "hold" both my explicit, thematic notions and my implicit felt sense in my awareness, referring each to the other. As the reflective and prereflective begin to draw closer to each other they begin to mutually implicate, mutually inform one another. I set out to write of the excesses of reflexivity. In the examples that I just cited I thought I had found accounts of how experience is distorted by such excesses. But as I contemplate those accounts, I think that what I'm observing is more the loss of an organizing and mediating prereflective. Participant B in Deikman's research above articulated his experience of losing an organized perceptual field and the futility of trying to impose an organizing pattern with his will. I believe that hyperreflexivity is precisely just that, an effort to discover an abstract pattern from above—a frantic effort to 'stand outside' one's suddenly naked, prereflective experience. This implies that such an experience is always terrifying. Yet, it isn't necessarily the case. For example, meditators cultivate a state where things are allowed to stand alone, to inhabit their own existence rather than being seen as a means for the realization of one's will. For example, a HB pencil no longer is experienced as a "to-write-with," but rather as a yellow, six sided stick, tapered at one end, with a grey point. When I meditate, these objects are stripped of their signification for me. Or my intentionality has been withdrawn from the object and it is no longer organized by its potential to satisfy some need of mine. The meditator finds this experience benign while the pre-schizophrenic is terrified. My point is that both instances imply an access to an apparently unmediated experience but

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[127] Sechehaye, M. (1970). *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*. New York: New American Library

each elicits different emotional responses. I will suggest one tentative answer for this difference: the pre-schizophrenic experienced this alteration as involuntary whereas the meditator cultivated this state intentionally. Thus the meditator's identity as an agent remains undisturbed, possibly even affirmed, while the pre-schizophrenic suffers a traumatic blow to his or her sense of agency with the undermining of their familiar sense of self and its correlated world.

Once again, I find myself referring back to my starting position: my claim that our capacity for reflection had been valorized and my desire to problematize that claim. I turned to the schizophrenic experience for supportive evidence. And, yes, I found what I was looking for as well as some potential dangers that I hadn't anticipated. Primary amongst those dangers was the loss of the empirical, sedimented prereflective. This seems, at bottom, to be an existential event. The experiences reported by participants A and B (in Deikman's experiment), Sartre's protagonist in Nausea, and Renee, the schizophrenic girl, are existential rather than intellectual. That is, their experiences involve their whole being and not just their mind. They all found themselves showing up on a different existential plane then that with which they were familiar. I'm suggesting that hyperreflexivity is an attempt to deal with that existential shift, intellectually. This defensive strategy shows up in a more muted form in everyday life as the following example should illustrate. I've worked with people who endlessly analyze why their marriage didn't work, without actually accepting that it had not — and that it was actually over. They seemed to be doing intellectual, busy work as a way of avoiding the existential task confronting them — constructing a new life.

In the preceding, I was employing the approach that I've been discussing. I was engaging in a dialectical process between my prereflective experience and my explicit, conceptual meanings. The "holes" that showed up in my theorizing were fruitfully resolved by that process. I came to see, as a result, that an unmediated experience could be problematic and that a mediated prereflective gave us a way to proceed. Along the same lines, Rorty was purported to have said that we should be careful about discarding our prejudices and biases because they are, after all, all that we've got. I've come to understand that he was talking about our sedimented habits and dispositions that help orient us to the world. Our biases, dispositions, and prejudices organize our perceptual field such that it highlights or foregrounds what is personally significant to us as embodied beings. It provides our purchase on the world without which we would be unable to proceed. As subject B, above, stated, when "everything is working at the same intensity" it becomes impossible to choose.

### A Model of the Prereflective and Reflective and their Interaction

Let me impose an organization on this collection of thoughts, descriptions, and quotations. I have been focussing largely on a prereflective that is either yet to be structured or one that had lost its previously attained structure—I've called it the naked prereflective. Let us

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say that this entity exists at the extreme left of a continuum between the prereflective and the reflective. It is more sensory than perceptual. As we move to the right along the continuum, we find a prereflective that displays structure. It is a sedimentation of habits and dispositions, biases and prejudices. Originally, those structures may have been consciously constructed but they have long since sunken into the prereflective. There they organize the sensory data into a perceptual field where we experience them as "givens." Consequently, we are not aware of the prereflective's contribution to our experience. Phenomenologically, the prereflective is given—it simply happens. Whether we are awake or dreaming, our experience ceaselessly occurs. Further to the right on this continuum, one's conscious, volitional, and reflective mind takes up a perspective at least one step removed from this immediate, given, experience. It takes that experience as a mere instance of many possible instances. That is to say, the reflective stance operates with the presupposition that "it could be otherwise." This is a requirement for Piaget's formal operational thought—a stage that allows us to think hypothetically. Whereas when we live from the prereflective we may feel trapped in our concrete experience, our reflective mind offers alternative ways of construing the same experience. Although some certainty is lost in such a move, some potential freedom is gained. A positive accomplishment, no doubt. At the far right end of the continuum is the extreme example of someone "standing outside of him- or herself." They have taken flight from their prereflective or it has been snatched away from them. I reasoned that hyperreflexivity was an attempt to compensate for that loss.

### The Undermining of the Prereflective: Cultural Consequences

Sartre, Deikman, and Renee, the schizophrenic girl, all gave us a glimpse into the psychic shock that is the loss of a familiar self and its correlate, a familiar world. Their vivid descriptions of what was lost, help us to understand the opposite: that which was at one time taken for granted—a secure, confident sense of self. One wonders if there is an equivalency for the collective. The following quotation by O'Sullivan (2003)[128] gives a good description of a secure culture operating according to widely shared foundational "truths."[129]

> When any cultural manifestation is in its florescence, the educational and learning tasks
> are uncontested and the culture is of one mind about what is ultimately important.
> During these periods, there is a kind of optimism and verve that ours is the best of all

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[128] O'Sullivan, E. (2003). Bringing a perspective of transformative learning to globalized consumption. International Journal of Consumer Studies, 27 (4) 326–330.
[129] I put "truths" in scare quotes to indicate that I'm talking about phenomenological, rather than objective truth. I think that living a satisfying life requires the foundation that phenomenological truth provides.

possible worlds. It is usual to have a clear sense of purpose about what education and learning should be. A culture is formatively appropriate when it attempts to replicate itself and the educational and learning institutions are in synchrony with the dominant cultural themes. (p. 328)

Such a culture is unquestionably robust. I suspect that most members of such a culture, would not reflect on its underlying assumptions or question whether other members of that culture shared those assumptions. I posit that those shared assumptions overlap with Taylor's, (2004)[130] concept of the social imaginary. Taylor defines it as follows: "The social imaginary is not a set of 'ideas'; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society." For example, queuing up at a sales counter or bus stop is a way of organizing multiple competing demands in a way that minimizes potential conflict. Organizing a classroom in which the teacher's position is invested with greater authority than the personal authority of any of each of the students, would be another. When O'Sullivan's refers to a culture in its fluorescence I think he is pointing to a condition where the social imaginary was fresh, pervasive and homogenous. It provided a relatively stable framework that enabled social practices. That implicit social framework could be taken for granted—in the same manner as individuals who take their sedimented prereflective as the unquestioned—and, therefore, out of awareness—background for their thoughts and behaviour. Taylor goes on to trace the process whereby a new conception of the moral order of society is

> at first just an "idea" in the minds of some influential thinkers, but it later came to shape the social imaginary of large strata, and then eventually whole societies. It has now become so self-evident to us, that we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among others. (p. 1)

I map Taylor's argument as follows: the reflective ideas of influential thinkers eventually sink into the prereflective (self-evident) of the collective. It becomes a shared understanding of social practices. Taylor thinks that is important to reflect on what has occurred because

> historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization); of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality); and of new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution). (p.1)

threaten to undermine what O'Sullivan described as "the culture is of one mind about what is ultimately important."

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[130] Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press.

I sense that this is not dissimilar to the tectonic shift that schizophrenics experience during their prodromal period.  In a multicultural, pluralistic society, one begins to realize that one's assumptions are being constantly confounded.  The social imaginary, which formerly enabled interactions, is no longer a reliable framework and a new, appropriate framework is yet to be established[131].

Midway on the scale between the social and the individual are the micro-cultures that make up the larger culture.  For example, during my first engagement with the Counselling Psychology graduate program I was immersed in an academic culture that was at the tail end of a cultural florescence.  The paradigmatic assumptions that organized it had been "used up."[132] The conditions that had generated those assumption, a citizenry consisting predominately of white, Anglo-Saxon, protestants, had become pluralistic and multicultural.  The old assumptions didn't fit this emergent culture.  Yet, the training program continued to be informed by them.  Eight years later, the program explicated that which we had intuited earlier: we were no longer living on the same existential plane.  The assumptions that worked for that plane were not operative for our current one.  This   changing curriculum exemplified the beginning of a paradigmatic shift in my profession.  At the same time, it was a response to a shift in the larger culture.

### The Cultural Drift in Philosophy and Art: from the World, Toward the Self

In this section, I will touch briefly on how the ideas that currently govern our social imaginary initially show up in the domains of philosophy and art and subsequently come to govern many of the practices of the culture at large.

I begin with the founding of the Enlightenment project on rationality and reflexivity.  No longer would we be governed (and torn apart) by superstition, magic, and religion.  I then "fast forward" from those origins to the manifestations of rationality and reflexivity in contemporary culture.  It will be a cursory outline suggestive of a larger, more detailed process.  Showing the beginning and end points of this process will, hopefully, reveal how the culture of the West has come to overvalue reflexivity.  My goal is to make this conditioning "visible."  This is necessary in order to prepare the way for critique.  As my earlier examples, drawn from the schizophrenic experience, pointed out, reflexivity can generate its own set of problems.

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[131] Perhaps the 'market' is kind of an intermediary social framework, empty of anything but abstract economic values.

[132] This might be similar to the process that Kuhn (1962) discusses in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. A fresh paradigm generates a robust research program. A 'tired' paradigm has to go to increasingly convoluted lengths to explain anomalies.

I now wish to go beyond those individualistic examples to examine western culture as the generative context that produces hyperreflexive individuals. My argument relies on the assumption that being born into a culture is to be unavoidably informed by its values. Western culture valorizes reflexivity. This really took hold when the Enlightenment project began to replace a religious social imaginary with that of rational humanism. Rationality was to be the means and autonomy would be the end towards which it would be employed. To the degree that we utilized reason, we would be free. In addition to these historical/sociological reasons there are psychological motives for preferring rational reflection to prereflective engagement. As stated earlier, living from the prereflective is to experience our interdependent relationship with our environment. The reflective mind, on the other hand, thinks in categories that are timeless and decontextualized. Because it is unsituated, the reflective modality, can lead to the illusion of independence rather than the actuality of autonomy. McGilchrist (2009)[133] provides some support for this position with the following

> [T]he left hemisphere has a "narrow, decontextualised and theoretically based model
> of the world which is self consistent and is therefore quite powerful."

McGilchrist also points to "the problem of the left hemisphere's lack of awareness of its own shortcomings." In contrast, the right hemisphere is aware that it is in a symbiotic relationship with its environment[134]. In a video broadcast[135] McGilchrist cites the neuroscientists Dennett and Kinsborne, who found that "when completely false propositions are put to the left hemisphere it accepts them as valid because the internal structure of the argument is valid." However, according to McGilchrist, the right hemisphere knows from experience that the propositions are false. McGilchrist's overarching point is that the "progress" of western civilization is the history of the increasing domination of the left-brain thought processes. In the vocabulary of this dissertation, the reflective mind came to be viewed as legitimate intelligence whereas the prereflective was regarded as irrational—mere subjectivity. In McGilchrist's vocabulary, the left hemisphere assumed the place of privilege.

McGilchrist offers a macro-analysis, which argues that the members of our culture are dominated by "left brain thought processes." I would like to juxtapose his assertion with the micro-analysis of Parnas and Sass's (2001). These authors noted that schizophrenics split the self into an observing and observed self, but do not treat this as the defining condition of schizophrenics. Rather they point to similar processes occurring for normal subjects—the vast majority.

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[133] McGilchrist, I. (2009). *The Master and His Emissary*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
[134] I am suggesting that there is at least a partial overlap between those operations of the reflective mind and the functions attributed to the left hemisphere. Likewise the right hemisphere seems to map onto the prereflective
[135] McGilchrist, Iain. (17 Nov 2010) "The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World" (Video). The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (RSA). Retrieved 2011-05-04

Normal processes of reflection and imagination also involve an ego-split, but they possess a natural flexibility and happen in a unified field of experience in which the sense of myness or self-presence never calls itself into question. (p. 109)

There argument seems to run along these lines, "yes, most of us split our egos into the reflective and prereflective but this really isn't a problem—in fact it's normal." This is the world of mental functioning to which Kegan (1984) refers with his mapping of normal psychologic development— a development that depends on getting outside of oneself, presumably without losing "self-presence" -— or without the troubling awareness that one is diminishing self-presence by engaging in reflection. The implication that I'm drawing from both Kegan's and Sass' and Parnas's thought is that there is no clear demarcation between normal and abnormal functioning— reflexivity occurs in both. I suggest that it would be more productive to place normal and abnormal functioning on a continuum with hyperreflexivity on the far end and prereflexive engagement at the near and a mixture of those two variables in between. Next, if this splitting can occur without the troubling of self-presence that plagues the schizophrenic, then it is theoretically possible that a large portion of western populations is over utilizing the reflective, conceptual mind. That is to say, that they share many aspects of the psychic style of schizophrenia—most notably an exaggerated reliance on the conceptual mind— without the emotional distress associated. This claim gets modest support from Parnas and Sass (2003) who state, "dissociative identity disorder patients, who lack a continuity of self, generally have little or no disturbance in their moment-to-moment ipseity" (p. 430). In other words, people who have two or more distinct sub-personalities don't experience the schizophrenic's loss of trust in their experience. Possibly, they are not aware that they have two different sensibilities—a curtain of forgetfulness allows them to remain ignorant of their alternate state. Significant others will notice these state shifts even though the subject doesn't. For the majority of people, on the other hand, a split is happening but neither the subject nor significant others are aware of their divided selves.

I've spent some time with this illuminating exception in order to support the possibility that a significant portion of western populations live primarily from their reflective, conceptual mind, while remaining out of touch with their prereflective self. Being out of touch, they remain unaware of the gap between their emergent experience and the meanings by which they've been navigating. The schizophrenic, in contrast, is all too aware that their meanings were derived from a different sensibility than the one they currently inhabit. Metaphorically, they are aware that they are navigating through Seattle using a map of the city of Vancouver.

Now I wish to shift my focus to the process by which this came to pass. I will focus on some obvious parallels between the schizophrenic experience and recent philosophical trends. Then I will widen my perspective to see how some of those philosophical trends might be playing out in the

culture at large. I turn to schizophrenics for support because they, unlike those with dissociative identity disorder, are conscious of their dilemma. They experience a subjectivity that has lost its ground in the prereflective. For instance, Sass and Parnas (2002) report complaints such as "I don't feel myself"; "I am losing contact with myself"; "I am turning inhuman." They go on to state

> The patient senses an inner void and complains of the lack of an "inner nucleus," which seems normally constitutive of his field of awareness and crucial to its very subsistence. (p. 105)

Is this not strikingly similar to philosophical announcements regarding the death of the subject. Moxey (1999)[136] lists the philosophers responsible for articulating this position:

> One of the most important questions haunting the writing of history in the wake of poststructuralism is that of identity and the definition of subjectivity. Poststructuralist authors as various as Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida argued, not so long ago, that the autonomous subject of the humanist tradition, a subject capable of knowing both the world and itself, was a utopian dream of the European Enlightenment. (p. 1)

Was it a utopian dream that was impossible from the outset or did the very methods of rationalism and reflexivity cause a diminishment of the "inner nucleus" that some of these poststructuralists interpreted as the death of the subject? I suggest the latter.

In the above, I compared the schizophrenic experience with the poststructuralist school in philosophy. However, there are differences as well similarities. The schizophrenic is reporting an existential experience, whereas these poststructuralists are conveying a philosophical idea. There is a significant difference between these two positions. For example, when I read a poststructuralist I get the impression that the ground of their being remains unperturbed by the radical ideas that they are exploring. Perhaps these poststructuralists are floating above or dissociated from their prereflective selves. For schizophrenics, on the other hand, their lifeworld has become strange and they struggle to express and describe that strangeness. Parnas and Sass (2001) attempt to convey this shift as a change in the "metaphysical coloring" or taint of the schizophrenic's experience. They claim that this taint, which colors everything, is the form of schizophrenic experience.

> It is therefore not a perception per se of the world, nor a conviction per se of the subject...but rather a Gestalt reflecting the disturbance of the "Self as a founding

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[136] Moxey, K. (1999). "The History of Art after the Death of the "Death of the Subject". *In visible Culture:* An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies University of Rochester. Retrieved May 6, 2011

instance" (Blankenburg, 1988[137]), which is perceivable both in the subject's perception and conviction. What we are confronted with...is, therefore, a phenomenon of emergence: the emergence of an entirely new existential paradigm. (p. 112)

There is a noticeable shift in the quality of the schizophrenic experience and, at least initially, they struggle to express the ineffable change being wrought in the quality of their experience. On the other hand, Sass is claiming that the west's most influential thinkers, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, have seemingly arrived at the same conclusion as these schizophrenics: the unity of the subject is an illusion, there is a void where the "inner nucleus" supposedly existed. Yet, I don't recall reading of their loss and anguish over such a discovery. I imagine that they continue to experience and behave as if they were traditional subjects operating within a familiar existential paradigm. Admittedly, this is speculation on my part. It is based on extrapolating from my experience in graduate school. There I hear people intellectually valorizing uncertainty but rapidly backing away from it when it shows up in their lived experience. Furthermore, postmodernism's revolutionary undermining of master narratives as well as its problematizing of the unified subject seems to have little influence on how academic conferences are conducted. Those that I've attended have an 'expert' at the front of the room and passive (and frustrated) participants, in the audience. It seems that we default to a "used up" social imaginary to organize our exchanges. To appropriate McLuhan, the medium seems to be the message. That is, we still believe in the form otherwise our behaviour wouldn't fulfill it; while, at the same time, the content of the presentation is claiming that we believe something else. To give an obvious example: it is as if a teacher were to preach on the values of democracy, while not tolerating any debate in the classroom. Or, to draw on a vocabulary germane to this thesis, we claim to believe that true education involves much more than transmitting concepts. There is gradual acknowledgement that learning is affective as well as cognitive, that questions of identity are involved, that transformative learning requires reflecting on and changing basic premises. Implicit in these views is the sense that it is the prereflective self that needs educating while our pedagogical practices continue to address only the reflective mind. Perhaps this is because whenever the prereflective self shows up in the classroom, (anger, conflict, tears, etc.) there are no established practices for working with it. We seem to be going through a liminal zone where the old forms are hollowed out, yet still followed and the new forms have yet to appear. I realize that I am raising questions here that can only be answered with the unfolding of time but will never be answered if not asked. One final note before I close this section: as I edited it I recalled reading somewhere that

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[137] Blankenburg, W. (1988). Zur Psychopathologie des Ich-Erlebens Schizophrener. In *Psychopathology* and Philosophy, ed. M. Spitzer, F. A. Uehlein, and G. Oepen, p. 184-197. Berlin: Springer.

schizophrenics don't believe in most social conventions, yet often they continue to act in accordance with them. They do so ironically. I wonder if this is what is occurring in the academy as well.

## Making Language Strange

There are further parallels between the hyperreflexive schizophrenic and contemporary philosophical thought regarding language. As Sass writes of the schizophrenic experience of language

> [W]ords and syllables themselves will come to seem object like: no longer the transparent signifiers of meanings lying beyond themselves, they may turn opaque…demanding to be paid attention to for their own sake. (p. 50, MM)

For example, one patient answered his own question—"But what is a train?" with "It's a word. The word has nothing to do with a solid thing like a train." This patient was making note of the convention that links a sign to its referent. He was attending to language as separate from meaning. de Saussure (2006)[138] took this further by breaking down the sign into its component parts: the signifier and signified. He was exercising his analytic rationality in order to distinguish or separate that which has been conflated. Certainly, de Saussure was taking language as his object of study rather than as a "transparent signifier of meaning." However, for Renee, the schizophrenic girl, the disconnection between sign and its referent was more than an intellectual exercise; it was an existential experience. For her, things and names had been disconnected and existed in different dimensions. Her experience embodies the Saussurian notion that words don't refer to things but rather to each other. I suspect that Saussure arrived at his conclusion through reflecting on language. Renee, on the other hand, was thrown or catapulted into a strange sensibility that could not be domesticated by the abstract categories sedimented in her previous, but now lost, prereflective.

> I said, "chair, jug, table, it is a chair." But the word echoed hollowly, deprived of all meaning; it had left the object, was divorced from it, so much so that on one hand it was living, mocking thing, on the other, a name, robbed of sense, an envelope emptied of content. Nor was I able to bring the two together, but stood rooted there before them, filled with fear and impotence.[139] (p. 40-41, emphasis mine)

Of course, she was full of fear because she was impotent. That is, her previous, sedimented prereflective would have organized her perceptual field in a way that would suggest an appropriate response—it would be organized as a sensori-motor field; or as action guided by perception. But now, as Sartre put it: "The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their

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[138] Saussure, Ferdinand de. (2006) *Writings in General Linguistics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[139] Sechehaye, M. (1970). *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*. New York: New American Library

methods of use, and the feeble points of reference which men have traced on their surface." Renee was impotent because she no longer knew "their methods of use"—their functionality was obscured because

> [T]hey became 'things' and began to take on life, to exist…. The stone jar, decorated with blue flowers, was there facing me, defying me with its presence, with its existence.

That is, the thing (jug, chair, table, etc.) could no longer to be assimilated by, and into her sedimented prereflective. She was viewing them with her naked prereflective. Thus, stripped of their functional meanings these things revealed their independent, brute existence. They "had lost the harmless look of an abstract category."

Both Sartre and Renee tried to evoke or call back their familiar world through language. They seemed to know (in a prereflective way?) that it was names that domesticated the world of things. They knew—what I am contending that most in the West don't—that we've made concepts stand in for things. That is, we don't actually interact with the world as much as we interact with our model of the world. Perhaps this is what Derrida (1976)[140] was unconsciously implying with his assertion that there was nothing outside of text.

Renee and Sartre, I contend, were able to step outside of text, and thus experience the world of things as completely separate from language. Language was then revealed as a thing in itself, a signifier without a signified. Sass expands on this

> Instead of grasping the overall meaning of something read or heard, schizophrenics will often attend to material qualities of the signifier, to the sounds of words or their graphic appearance on the page. (p. 178, MM)

That is, the schizophrenic is experiencing what a semiotician thinks. It is startling to see the embattled mind and the sophisticated one, coming to very similar conclusions with regard to language. With the embattled mind we are witnessing the struggle to once again make sense of what was formerly unproblematic. For example, in childhood I remember looking at the word 'the' until it drained of all meaning becoming, instead, arbitrary marks on a piece of paper. This was a lived experience. The semiotic investigator, on the other hand, seems to be working out an intellectual puzzle that may have little effect on her or his lived experience. This outcome would be possible if their reflective mind had become disconnected from their prereflective life. That is, rather than

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[140] Derrida, Jacques (1976): *Of Grammatology* (trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 158, 163.

referencing the world, the semiotician is studying a self-referential system. That is, they both make what was formerly pragmatically useful into a thing in itself.

## The Fluid Prereflective: Expanding and Contracting

The motive generating the organization of this chapter—culminating as it does in the schizophrenic experience—was to reveal the possible downside of overvaluing the reflective stance. Utilizing examples drawn from case studies of schizophrenics, I will now detail some of the particular losses attendant on such a move. Let me begin with Sass's term "diminished self affection." By that, he means that the schizophrenic person rather than inhabiting a first person perspective begins to experience his or her self primarily as an object. They might even refer to their self in third person terms. I focus on Sass's term "diminishment" because I think that it highlights something that my term "disconnect" doesn't. Recall that I've claimed that we, as individuals and collectives, get into trouble when we sever or disconnect the reflective mind from the prereflective self. My term 'disconnect' implies that these two entities persist unchanged but that their relationship is disturbed. Sass and Parnas (2003), on the other hand, are claiming that the prereflective self is diminished. I would take this even further and claim that the prereflective self waxes and wanes—that it is much more fluid than the reflective mind. When feeling strong, my prereflective self is expansive; when weak, it shrinks, pulls away, recoils. I find some support for my position in the following:

> If a person ceases to be interested in what lies out there in the world, or desists from adopting an active, exploratory posture, then gradually the person's focus of attention, and with it the tendrils of selfhood, may pull backward. (Sass and Parnas, 2003, p. 432, emphasis mine)

"Interested," "active, exploratory" are terms to be applied to the expanding prereflective self. "The tendrils of selfhood" pulling backward is a description of shrinking or diminishment. When inhabiting a first person perspective I live from my body and engage the world. With diminishment, on the other hand, I not only withdraw from the world but also my body becomes an object, a recalcitrant object—as Sass and Parnas (2003) put it, this withdrawal "causes the person's actions and expression to lose its qualities of ease or unconscious grace."

At one time, I was doing considerable work with persons afflicted with panic disorder. The experiential symptoms are similar to the schizophrenic's in some respects, but acute rather than chronic. I had seen their awkward body movements and heard the disconnected thoughts. I remember speculating that it was an expansive prereflective that produced coordination (grace) in the body and coherence in the mind. This speculation was supported by the frequently reported

experience of cold feet and hands during bouts of anxiety. When a person is anxious it seems that blood withdraws from the periphery of the body resulting in lower temperatures in the feet and hands. Hence, I wondered if blood circulation was "following" the shrinkage or diminishment of the prereflective self. These thoughts occurred to me long before I read Parnas' and Sass's interesting phrase regarding the "tendrils of selfhood pulling backwards(p. 432)" away from active exploration of the world. I had focussed on phenomenon internal to the subject whereas they were making note of the subject's withdrawal from the world. Both aspects compliment one another. Accordingly, not only was the prereflective disembedding from its situation but also it was, at least partially, disembodying.

### Art and Philosophy Withdrawing

I ask myself, "Where have I seen this pulling backwards from the world previously?" I'd seen this retreat in recent art and philosophy. In art "realism," an attempt at fidelity to the thing itself, was re-named illusionism (Foster, 1996)[141]. Op art came into vogue because it represented nothing in the world. Rather, it produced effects in the viewer's vision. Op art made the viewer aware of their perceptual processes...turned the viewers attention away from the world and toward the self. My recent immersion in philosophy told me that we couldn't know the thing in itself—we could only know appearance. That is, in both the art and philosophy there were strong tendencies to retreat from active exploration of the world in favour of studying the self—turning the self into the only knowable "thing" (rather than the knowing "thing"). It seemed to me that the West had encountered a limit in its attempt to "objectively" apprehend the world. Our exploratory activity was then redirected to the self. Superficially, meditation seems to share this focus on the self. However, I think that the goal of meditation is either to become aware of, or undo one's conditioning in order to apprehend the world more accurately. This is in contrast to western social sciences, most notably mainstream psychology, where the object of study, the self, was to be known from the outside, as an object. As psychologists were going to get "outside ourselves" and study what we found when we looked back. This has certainly been the path of the social sciences...and, according to Sass and Parnas (2001, 2003) the path of the hyperreflexive schizophrenic.

### The Inability To Grasp The Everyday Significations Of The World

Now I wish to turn my attention to another aspect of a diminished self affection or shrinking prereflective: the loss of common sense. Blankenburg (1971) claimed that the lack of early correct diagnosis of schizophrenia was due to the vague non-specific way in which patients couched their complaints: "a trivial complaint of fatigue turns out...to be caused by a pervasive inability to grasp

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[141] Foster, Hal. (1996). *The Return of the Real.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press

the everyday significations of the world" (Parnas & Sass, 2001, p. 104, emphasis mine). They give a very nuanced description of "common sense":

> This so-called operative intentionality...is pre-reflectively functional without being explicitly engaged in epistemic acquisition. It procures a basic texture or organization and hence a coherence and familiarity, to the field of experience. (p. 105, emphasis mine)

The coherence and familiarity tell me that this is my world. Although their explication focuses on the individual, I would make the claim that common sense partakes of the social imaginary that enables the practices of a culture. Wittgenstein (1980)[142] makes, I think, a similar point about how we interpret a particular human behaviour:

> Surely only by showing the actions of a variety of humans, as they are mixed up together. Not what one person is doing now, but the whole hurly-burly, is the background against which we can see an action, and it determines our judgements, our concepts, and our reactions. (p. 629)

Apparently, the schizophrenic has lost the ability to read this particular behaviour, tone of voice, or facial expression because they lack a background of human interaction by which to measure it. That background, in a normal subject, would be sedimented in his or her prereflective. The schizophrenic has lost contact with the ballast that orients them in a social world. By contrast, in healthy functioning, a person responds spontaneously to demands of the situation.

> The call for action in this mode does not originate from an explicit content in the mind (i.e. from a represented goal) but rather from the thing itself, perceived as a certain deviation from the optimal Gestalt and leading to a globally attuned response. (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1999)[143]

Something in the situation commands my attention and a suitably responsive action to carry the situation forward. This suitable reaction is drawn from an array of commonsensical responses. By way of contrast, Parnas (2000) discusses the case study of "Robert," a schizophrenic man:

> He reflected on self-evident daily matters and had difficulties "in letting things and matters pass by" and linked it to a long lasting attitude of "adopting multiple

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[142] Wittgenstein, L. (1980), *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology,* vols. 1 & 2. G.E.M. Anscombe (ed.) & G.H.
Von Wright (trans) Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 624-629
[143] Dreyfus, H.L., and S.E. Dreyfus. 1999. "The challenge of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment for cognitive science. In *Perspectives on embodiment: the intersection of nature and culture,* ed. G. Weiss and H. F. Haber, 103-20. London: Routledge.

perspectives," a tendency to regard any matter from all possible points of view.  (p. 124)

The difference between Robert and an ordinary individual is that he reflects on the self-evident rather than experiencing it as a given.  He deduces what daily events must mean only after considering multiple alternative interpretations. His call for action does not come "from the thing itself," from its deviation from an optimal gestalt. Instead, he deliberated on all possible points of view. Robert had lost the intuitive spontaneity that a trustworthy prereflective would have supplied. Although Nietzsche advocated for multiple perspectivism, he also warned that health was only possible if one held a single perspective.  "Every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon; it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself...it will wither away feebly or overhastily to its early demise. (p.14)"[144]  Through attempting to transcend the prereflective realm of interest and attain the "view from nowhere," one encounters the danger of a loss of anchorage and perspective. That is, we lose touch with what is personally significant for us. Thus, we are left without an embodied compass to inform our decision making.  One has left behind an ordering, embodied self for a realm of near infinite possibility—"it could be this way, on the other hand, it could be that way, come to think of it, it could be many other ways." Not one of which these many ways are felt to be superior to any other—all appear with equal intensity.

The perplexity that multiple perspectives produce is not confined to individuals. According to Sass (1992) Nietzsche identified the remarkable symptoms of the modern age as a "madly thoughtless fragmentation and fraying of all foundations." He was stating that modern, western culture is rife with such perplexity. In the next and final chapter I will be outlining a corrective for this condition; a corrective that both acknowledges and values the prereflective. The prereflective provides stability and constancy (familiarity and coherence in Sass's and Parnas's vocabulary). It provides the stable ground from which we can act. In other words, it provides an ontological foundation—not absolute truths, but emergent gestalts of needs and desires. It is these needs and desires that foreground some objects, people, situations in our environment while eliding others. Contrast this with the schizophrenic experience of Robert. Parnas and Sass (2001) [145]attributed "Robert's" incertitude to a more global fragmentation of meaning, a loss of "natural evidence" or

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[144] Nietzsche, F. (1886). *Beyond Good and Evil.* Trans. J. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1973).
145 Parnas, J. and Sass, L.A. (2001). "Self, Solipsism, and Schizophrenic Delusions." *Philosophy,* Psychiatry and Psychology - Vol 8, Number ⅔, June/September 2001, pp. 101-120

"loss of common sense." Blankenburg (1971)[146] described patient Anne whose main complaint was her

> [I]nability to grasp the world's natural significance and appeal. Nothing was self-evident, and Anne had a distressing difficulty in the automatic understanding of people and situations: "It is not the question of knowledge; it is prior to knowledge; it is so small so trivial; every child has it!

Rather than intuiting the meaning of the situation, via common sense, this person would have to laboriously deduce meaning. I've worked with clients who have a similar relationship to their emotions. They don't experience them directly but rather deduce what they "must be" feeling given the situation in which they find themselves. Their prereflective self is like a black box that emits no signals. Their reflective mind is "lit up" while their prereflective remains in darkness.

Parnas and Sass (2002) get at the essence of self-disorder in the following observation

> Hyperreflexivity and diminished myness are often associated with a peculiar splitting or a doubling of the Self...into an observing and observed ego, neither of each assuming ipseity function. (p. 109)

The observing self feels very thin when compared to the thickness of the sedimented layers of the prereflective self. Moreover, the familiarity formerly associated with the prereflective tonality has gone missing. That consciousness was abandoned because of unsought shift in sensibility that left the subject "a stranger in a strange land." Thus, instead of being the dwelling of experience, the prereflective was turned into an object of scrutiny. "What is happening here? Why is the tone of my experience changed so radically? Where is this coming from?" The reflective mind is anxiously pursuing these vital questions. This desperate doubling, into observing and observed selves, doesn't replace the grounding effect of dwelling within the prereflective. Ipseity, or "myness," has gone missing. Instead, reflective consciousness hovers in midair anxiously scanning. In some cases, this dilemma is acted out physically. Thus Parnas and Sass (2001) report a young man who

> When walking on the street, scrupulously avoided glancing at his mirror image in the windowpanes of the shops, because he felt uncertain on which side he actually was. (p. 109)

That is, this person was physically acting out his psychic dilemma—he was split into an observing and observed self but couldn't be sure which one was real. The ipseity, which would have confirmed

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[146] Blankenburg, W. (1971). *Der Verlust der naturlichen Selfstverstandlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur* Psychopathologie symptomarmer Schizophrenien. Stuttgart: Enke.

that he was the walker and not the reflection, had gone missing. We need no more dramatic example of the consequences of abandoning the prereflective in favour of the reflective.

### A Point Of Contrast: A Healthy Child Versus the Modernist Observer

On the other hand, a healthy child would know which side of the mirror he was on; he would know what was real. Childhood exemplifies a time when we naturally dwell within and move from the prereflective. As such, childhood serves as a contrast to the hyperreflexivity and diminished self-presence of the schizophrenic.

> Most developmental theories hold that the world of the infant and young child is imbued with a dynamic sense of visceral and emotional involvement. To the child everything is utterly real and utterly alive. Knowing and feeling have yet to be differentiated; and objects tend to be experienced through their emotional resonance for a perceiver who is not yet capable of more neutral and objective forms of perception. (p. 58-59, emphasis mine)

The child is an embodied intelligence. As a result, the world is real and alive. The world is affirmed rather than doubted. This aligns with my claim that the prereflective works by affirmation and the reflective works by doubt. Compare this with the adult modernist experience as articulated by Kahler[147].

> [F]ar from resonating in affective concert with an animate or magical external world, the modernist observer seems profoundly disengaged; and, accompanying his emotional detachment there is a fractionating focus on details, an unremitting "mental microscopy" that fragments and negates the larger coherencies of human meaning by concentrating too sharply on isolating elements. This detached hyperconsciousness decomposes all unities—not only abstractions, rational explanations, and pragmatic meanings, but also perceptual objects, time and history, and finally the ego-sensation itself. (p. 59, emphasis mine)

I can't help but wondering if the fragmented self, the decentred self, the death of the subject, etc. that postmodern writers discuss is not partially a side effect of the "detached hyperconsciousness."[148] The unity is gone, not because human selves are essentially fragmented and dispersed, but rather they appear that way, possibly even become that way due to disintegrating effects of hyperreflexivity. If one abandons the prereflective with a consequent loss of the ipseity function, then the spirit or energy, which formerly animated it, connecting its various parts into a whole, goes missing. I am

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[147] Kahler, E. (1969). *Tower and Abyss*. New York : Viking Press,

[148] In the above I'm suggesting that some modern and postmodern thinkers are not reflexively aware of the effects that their methodology introduces to their outcomes. A similar critique was leveled by Karl Jaspers in *General Psychopathology* published in 1913. Jaspers attacked the forms of disenchantment that madness has suffered in the modern world, under the cold gaze of reductionist science.

reminded of Sacks' (1990) work with brain injured patients. He claimed that they didn't display a self but rather a collection of selflets. During an emergency, these selflets would coalesce into a self and once the crisis passed, would return to being a collection of selflets. It seems that the arousal produced by an emergency generated sufficient life force to organize the selflets into a coherent self. Whereas the cause was organic with Sacks' patients, it seems that the cause is functional for some schizophrenics and , possibly to a lesser extent , to the postmodern subject. That is, when the reflective gaze turns its attention to the prereflective it finds, at best random fragments, and, at worst, nothing. The following quotation is drawn from Musil's, The Man without Qualities,[149]

> What has arisen is a world of qualities without a man, of experiences without
> someone to experience them...Probably the dissolution of the anthropocentric way of
> relating, which has held the human being for so long at the center of the
> universe...has finally made its way to the self. (p. 175)

This is Musil's way of saying that "the detached hyperconsciousness decomposes all unities" including "the ego-sensation itself."

In what immediately precedes I've been focussing on the self—when living from the prereflective the self is 'real,' when living from the reflective, it appears illusory. There is a corresponding change in the experiencing of the world.  Milosz (1998)[150] expresses the consequences of this shift.

> In my early youth, I got somewhere a conviction that "alexandrianism" meant a
> weakening of creative impulse and a proliferation of commentaries on great works of
> the past. Today I do not know whether this is true, yet I have lived to the epoch when
> a word does not refer to a thing, for instance a tree, but to a text on a tree, which text
> was begotten by a text on a tree, and so on. "Alexandrianism" meant "decadence." (p.
> 30)

Reading the above, I see parallels in the relationship between the "creative impulse" and "commentaries" and the relationship between the prereflective and the reflective consciousnesses. The reflective is like a commentary on the emerging content of experience.

I'm also suggesting that the creative impulse is prereflective[151] in nature. Milosz implies that the increase in commentary is at the expense of the creative impulse and therefore, decadent. Mapping

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[149] Milosz, C. (1998). *Road-Side Dog*. New York: Farrar; Straus and Giroux.
[150] Podvoll, E. M. (1990). *The Seduction of Madness*. New York: HarperCollins
[151] I like the term 'impulse' because of its decidedly non-intellectual connotation. It is an energetic phenomenon. In the creative act, I *will* it so. I bring something into being via the agency of my prereflective self. I find some support for this position in the differentiation between dynamic and crystalline intelligence. Dynamic intelligence is required to deal with novel situations and is characteristically higher in child hood. Crystalline intelligence deals with the previously encountered and measures highest in adults.

this onto my concepts: the increase in reflective thinking is at the expense of the prereflective living, and lacking the latter's robustness. Further, he is regretting the severing of the sign from its referent—the retreat from the world of objects into the world of ideas. He is making note of the poststructuralist thought that reality is "text all the way down."

Yet, in the next quotation he depicts an experience that expresses the horror of being bereft of the meanings that text produces.

> A parrot screeches. Ventilators turn. An iguana walks vertically up a palm trunk; a shining ocean wave puts foam on a beach. When I was young, I was driven to despair during vacations by the boredom of obvious things. In my old age, finding myself in the tropics, I already knew that I had always searched for medicine against this horror, which lasts because it means nothing. To give a meaning, any, only to get out of this bovine, perfectly indifferent, inert reality, without aims, strivings, affirmation, negation, like an incarnated nothingness. Religions! Ideologies! Desires! Hatreds! Come to cover with your multicolored fabric this blind thing, deprived even of a name. (p. 41, emphasis mine)

The emphasized portion is not a little reminiscent of the Sartre's encounter with a root in his novel Nausea; and not unlike, the schizophrenic girl's experience of a jug or chair—for both Sartre and the girl, names had been severed from existence. The two polarities, the "decadence" of language without referents and the "incarnated nothingness" of a world devoid of meaning are both problematic when it comes to human flourishing. For me, this suggests that the "creative impulse" is that which produces new symbols that are still joined to their referents. It also suggests that the birth of a symbol is fecund with meaningfulness while its decay terminates in "an envelope emptied of its content."

## A Case Study: To Insanity and Back

To this point, I've been presenting a pastiche, a collection of disparate symptoms that accompany hyperreflexive functioning while also pointing at the potential horrors attendant on the loss of sedimented, prereflective meaning. Now, in an effort to gather these up into a whole, I will present a case study of a man, Sir John Perceval, who kept a journal of his descent into, and back from insanity. Much of the material that I will be presenting is drawn from Podvoll's, The Seduction of Madness (1990).[152] Podvoll is an American psychiatrist who explored alternatives to the traditional conceptions of mental illness, which equated the more-than- rational with the less-than-human. Podvoll used Perceval's journals to support his contention that a human being was present even in psychosis. He believed that the journey back to sanity succeeded most when that personhood was acknowledged, respected, and supported. Toward that end he set up a home based, treatment research project in Denver, Colorado.

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[152] Podvoll, E. M. (1990). *The Seduction of Madness.* New York: HarperCollins

Perceval (1803–1876) was a Victorian English nobleman, the son of the prime minister of England. He was committed to an insane asylum at the age of twenty-nine. Most of his recovery was made in the first year of his commitment but he was confined for two more years. His struggle to be released was only attained after he threatened to prosecute everyone connected to his treatment. However, it is the inner story, his subjective narrative, which is the most cogent to this thesis. Perceval offers the reader a first person perspective on psychosis. This is in marked contrast with the third person accounts articulated by the majority of psychologists, psychiatrists, and philosophers. Third person accounts rely on operationally defined criteria[153].  As Parnas and Sass (2003) observed, a purely operational approach to diagnosing mental illness has intrinsic limitations. The operational approach relies on third person observation of behaviour. However, Parnas and Sass (2003) referencing Weiser et al (2001, p. 962)[154] noted, "behavioural deviations, without exploring subjective experience, lack the specificity necessary to predict future schizophrenia." They go on to note that those behavioural symptoms can be widely observed in the normal population. In other words, behavioural criteria do not adequately distinguish between the two populations. Rather it is the subjective meanings—the first person accounts—that generate these behaviours that provide the more adequate distinction. Perceval's case supplies a rich account of his subjective experience.

I will utilize Podvoll's (1990) quotations from Perceval's diaries and then interpret them in terms of the theoretical concepts that were established earlier in this dissertation.  Perceval was restrained to his bed with leather straps for sometimes weeks at a time. He records, "the idleness of mind and body left me at the mercy of my delusions. I began to lose all command of my imagination" (p. 29).  Recall my earlier statement that the prereflective was an interactional intelligence—a kind of call and response with the environment. When leather restraints prevented such interaction, Perceval was left with only his representational and imaginary schemas. Normally interactions with the environment act as a reality check—tethering our representations and thereby stabilizing them. Podvoll underscores this point by noting that under the assault of hallucinated voices "his [Perceval's] mind became unhinged from both his body and the environment."  It is embodied, prereflective awareness that engages with the environment. On its most rudimentary level, a complete sensory-motor circuit joins the person to the environment to produce an interactional whole. Both action and perception are expressions of an intentionality that take the immediate surround as its object. That is, I perceive features of my environment that might address my emergent needs. I then act on those

[153] Operationally defined variables focus on observable behaviors rather than theorizing essences that supposedly generate those behaviors.
[154] Weiser, M.; Reichenberg, A.; Rabinowitz, J.; Kalan, Z.; Mark, M.; Bodner, E.; Hahon, D.; and Davidson, M. (2001). "Association between nonpsychotic psychiatric diagnoses in adolescent males and subsequent onset of schizophrenia." *Archives of General Psychiatry,* 58: 959-964

features in a way that brings them closer to hand. I feel thirsty and notice water fountains to which I then draw near. Furthermore, the body generates the ipseity that marks this experience as a first person experience. That is, living from the prereflective consolidates the 'reality'[155] of both the world and the self. Because of the restraints put on Perceval, interaction with his environment was severely curtailed. Accompanying this disconnect was a surrender of judgement: "[U]ntil now I had retained a kind of restraining power over my thoughts and beliefs; I now had none…. My will to choose think orderly was completely gone" (p. 31). Could it be that this lapse into disorder occurred because his "thoughts and beliefs" were no longer tethered to his immediate environment—a context that had dramatically shrunk, because of the restraints that confined his movements? In contrast, Podvoll reports, "All [Perceval's] senses were in disarray. Faces changed even as he looked at them." (p. 32) It seems to me that Perceval was giving a first person account of the prodromal phase of schizophrenia—the alarming recognition that one's sensibility has changed? "My sense of feeling was not the same, my smell, my taste, gone or confounded" (p. 32). He was now living on a strange existential plane.

When Podvoll goes on to discuss Perceval's return to sanity, he allocates significant importance to the re-emergence of doubt. Matters can become quite tricky here because doubt seems to play a complex and shifting role. On the one hand, the hallucinated voices are described as a dissuading influence, robbing him of any self-confidence. All authority is ceded to the voices, which he must unquestionably obey. That is, the voices undermine his ipseity or sense of self. Thus, his prereflective experience is stripped of its 'givenness,' its immediacy, because of their harsh scrutiny and criticism. As Sartre (2004)[156] pointed out in the Transcendence of the Ego, even when we are self conscious, the agent of that self consciousness is not reflected upon. That is, it is beyond critique. Being beyond critique it is experienced as an oracle. It has all the authority. For a person to reclaim agency, that authority has to be transferred back to the subject. And this is exactly what Perceval did at a later point in his journey. As that time arrived, Perceval employed doubt to undermine the authority of these persecutory voices. "To confirm the suspicion I had of being deluded, my mind needed these circumstantial evidences to be corrected entirely of its errors" (p. 42). That is, his voices could be effectively combatted with evidence derived from his situatedness—his being-in-the-world was used to correct the distortions that his mind was manufacturing. In some respects, his process

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[155] When using the term 'reality' I am referring to a phenomenological quality—"this feels real." This is in illustrative contrast to the condition of derealization and depersonalization in which both the person and the world are experienced as unreal.
[156] Sartre, J. (2004). *The Transcendence of the Ego*. London, New York: Routledge.

parallels a strategy that I employ with clients displaying punitive superegos[157]. The superego is constantly haranguing them for their shortcomings.  Their vitality and capacity for agency withers under this constant attack. I suggest that when the persecutor shows up that my client respectfully ask it, "Are you trying to help me?"  If your superego replies, 'of course I am,' then ask it, 'in what way is this supposed to help me?'"  This reverses the usual superego-ego relationship of "command and obey." The superego is comfortable with challenging but awkward and vulnerable when challenged. Through strategies such as this, the hold that the superego exerts on the subject is loosened. Similarly, when Perceval took notice of the contradictions in the voice's admonitions, he began to diminish their hold on him. In this sense, his reflective mind came to his aid.

Later in his recovery process voices would sporadically occur that would urge him to "recollect" himself; as Podvoll puts it, 'recollection' means "to become more aware of his [Perceval's] situation and prevent 'going into a wrong state of mind… by keeping my head to my heart and my heart to my head.' (p. 41) Two points need to be made here: firstly—referring back to my theorizing regarding the nature and function of the prereflective-—it is a situated intelligence.  It is an intelligence that is registering its circumstances. Secondly, Perceval built in a reference point: keep body and mind together. In other words, his journey back to sanity involved learning to relate his reflective mind to his prereflective self.  (This anticipates Gendlin's therapeutic approach that will be examined in the next chapter.) In addition, Podvoll notes "a distinct kind of effort was required to recollect himself and bring himself back to the details of his physical world."  Perceval had come to realize that being imbedded in his world was a corrective to detached rumination. In this case, it was his prereflective, perceptual self that came to his aid.

To complete this abbreviated case study I will quote Podvoll at some length as his thoughts about the process leading back to sanity, bear directly on my thesis.

> Anyone awakening from a night dream, a daydream, or even a moment of absentmindedness "comes to." This is usually moment of sudden expansion of awareness into one's environment. It is this kind of environmental awareness that Perceval tried to cultivate in himself. He studied the mechanism in himself: "Having to recollect myself, I became more aware of my real position, my thoughts being called out from myself to outward objects": He pinpointed the sensation of being "called out" from delusion as being a kind of passionate energy toward the world— shot out like an arrow to sensory objects--and he tried to train himself to recognize it more quickly. But there was a major obstacle. He found that this sudden openness to his sensory environment was chronically being interrupted and covered over by a mechanism that felt like a "film," or fog, insidiously descending over his mind and clouding his awareness. Inevitably, he found himself projecting images onto this film,

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[157] For the remainder of this paragraph I utilize a psychoanalytic vocabulary--ego, super-ego. How do these terms relate to my primary ones--reflective mind and prereflective self? I would say that the superego

images that became animated, thus cutting him off from external sensory awareness. (p. 46)

This extraordinary passage calls for further interpretation. The colloquialism, "coming to," is phenomenologically descriptive. One has been on autopilot, absent minded, when suddenly one becomes aware—one comes to presence. Podvoll seems to be making the claim that the primary form of coming to awareness is being called out from one's self. This is quite different from Kegan's (1982) developmental imperative to "stand outside oneself." In the former, awareness is directed toward the world; in the latter, directed toward the self. As the latter part of the quotation indicates, there are potential dangers inherent in this turning inward—chief amongst them the loss of connection with "external sensory awareness." Yet, as this thesis contends, that inward turn has been an increasing feature of western culture.

## Western Culture: A Process of Interiorization

Taylor's[158] work, Sources of the Self, claimed that the development of western culture was characterized by an increasing interiorization. That is, the self's autonomy was increasingly seen as contingent upon disengagement from the world in favour of an internal world of stable representations. These clear and distinct ideas were ideal for the operations of the reflective mind. One can understand how these stable concepts might be preferable to a seemingly messy and unpredictable external world. Moreover, some of these stable, conceptual systems were available, fully fashioned, from the culture itself. Ideologies, for example, seem to offer world maps of stable representations where the quest for certainty can be realized. There is another, more useful purpose, for standing outside oneself. In summary, a preference for the reflective, conceptual mind can be motivated either by a desire for a safe and ordered internal world or by a drive to examine one's sedimented, prereflective premises that might be generating unwanted outcomes.

Some of the above casts a dubious eye on the value of reflection, implying that it is, in many cases, a pathological turn. However, in so doing, it overlooks that indisputable fact that humans are cultural as well as biological. That is, as dependent, rational animals (to use MacIntyre's[159] pithy description) we live in two environments: the natural, and cultural. Human beings are born into and formed by the cultural contingencies of their time. The wide-ranging import of this is conveyed succinctly by Becker[160] in the following:

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[158] Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

[159] MacIntyre, A. (1999). *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago: Open Court.

[160] Becker, E. (1971). *The Birth and Death of Meaning*. (2nd edition). New York: The Free Press.

The world of human aspiration is largely fictitious. It is a...symbolic creation by an ego-controlled animal that permits action in a psychological world, a symbolic-behavioural world removed from the boundness of the present moment, from the immediate stimuli, which enslave all lower organisms. Man's freedom is a fabricated freedom, and he pays a price for it. He must at all times defend the utter fragility of his delicately constituted fiction, deny its artificiality." (emphasis added).

That is, to be human is to protect the meanings/fictions by which one lives. Becker makes a persuasive case that we do so via reification. That is to say, that we naturalize our cultural concepts. As stated earlier, ideologies are systematic, relatively coherent conceptual models. Moreover, because an ideology is a cultural production then it is more than likely to have a number of adherents who form a community of belonging. Members beliefs are constantly being validated by other members thus obviating the need for reality checks. An example would be the conflicting positions between Republicans and Democrats regarding the best way through the current economic turmoil. To this observer, neither side seems to understand what has occurred and so, instead, relies on ideological explanation to defend against the other's ideology. That is, their arguments reference their own and the other's conceptual position rather than the situation in which the country finds itself.

Broadening the discussion beyond American politics, doubt or scepticism is seldom valued in ideological communities. The fragility of an ideological system must be protected by denying that it is a fabrication—naturalizing or reifying it instead. When doubt does show up, the results can be extreme. I'm thinking of the death threats Showalter received upon the publication of Hystories[161]. In that book, she asserted that tales of alien abductions, myelofibrosis, Epstein Barr virus, satanic ritual abuse, etc., are hysterical narratives that seek to explain mysterious symptoms of unknown origin. These narratives provide the closure that is so highly valued in this uncertain time. Not only do they offer closure, but they also assign causes to an external agent—thus removing the curse of blaming the victim. Earlier, I made the claim that a psychological frame of reference encouraged pathologizing the individual. If the unit of study is the individual and something is amiss then it is consistent to locate this problem within that individual. This clearly is the case with regard to Perceval. However, not only was it done to Perceval, it was also done by him. Perceval would construct idiosyncratic meanings, which he unwittingly projected onto the environment. For example, ambient noise would be transformed into imperial voices that must be obeyed. In that process, a substitution has taken place—images have substituted for objects; internal thought has been conflated with external event. In this manner, these images achieve an ontological status—they were experienced as real. And who can defy reality? One must obey. Someone standing outside, observing

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[161] Showalter, E. (1997). *Hystories: hysterical epidemics and modern media*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Perceval would clearly see that he was delusional but from the inside, Perceval's meanings were objective truths. Moving from an individualistic, to a collectivist level of analysis, I wonder if the models that we construct to "make sense" of our world, though internally coherent, are increasingly outdistanced by the rapidity of cultural and social change. It is the prereflective self, on the other hand, that remains at least partially in touch with the evolving circumstances in which it finds itself.

### Merleau-Ponty's Corrective

Perhaps this insight motivated Merleau-Ponty's (1962) philosophical project. He was drawn to a philosophy that would concentrate all its efforts "upon reachieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status" (p. vii).[162]  Relevant concepts would take their shape as a result of the reflective mind attending to prereflective experience. At the same time Merleau-Ponty acknowledged that reflection brings with it potential dangers. Sass paraphrases him as follows

> [R]eflection always seemed to subjectivize the world, to transform the brute actuality of perceived entities into mere thoughts existing 'for me' and, in addition, to cerebralize the experiential self—by understanding it as a constituting intellect rather than a worldly entity in active interaction with a physical universe that is shared with one's fellow beings. (Sass, 1992, p. 346)

Merleau-Ponty is making the claim that reflection is responsible for depleting the world of its objective nature. And further that the prereflective self is elided by the reflective, cerebralizing, mind.  Sass goes on to state that for both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger

> [M]any of the modernist and schizophrenic modes of hyperreflexivity...would involve transformations or even perversions of authentic human existence—an existence that...would be characterized by a sense of contact, by active engagement and participation in meaningful social action rather than by doubt, distance, and unreality. (p. 347)

This is essentially the point that I make throughout this dissertation: hyperreflexivity is a transformation of human nature. I am aware that 'human nature' is a controversial term; that some thinkers claim that there is no such thing. For them, it appears that we are cultured, not natural creatures. I am raising the strong possibility that human nature is "disappearing" because the humanities are hyperreflexive. If this is true, then the humanities have found themselves in the same situation as the schizophrenic quoted earlier: "I don't feel myself"; "I am losing contact with myself"; "I am turning inhuman" (Sass & Parnas, 2002, p. 105)).

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[162] Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The Phenomenology of Perception.* trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, and Kegan Paul.

For a contrasting view on reflexivity, Sass cites De Man (1971)[163] who thought that hyperreflexivity was not a "perversion of authentic human existence" but rather our unsurpassable predicament. Sass's reading of De Man concludes that the self-consciousness that reflection makes possible is an act of "dividing oneself in two (into a empirical self and a disinterested spectator" (p. 349). This echoes an earlier quotation of Parnas and Sass: "Hyperreflexivity and diminished myness are often associated with a peculiar splitting or a doubling of the Self...into an observing and observed ego, neither of each assuming ipseity function." The difference between De Man's and Merleau-Ponty's positions shows up in the concept 'ipseity.' That is, reflection that is useful doesn't replace, but attends to, the prereflective. De Man's quotation, on the other hand, does not refer to the sense of 'myness' or ipseity that the prereflective automatically gives. This begs the following question: does De Man's methodology predicate and 'confirm' that hyperreflexivity is our unsurpassable predicament? The following quote from Hatab (1997)[164] makes a case for that possibility.

> Attention to prereflective experience has been one of the great contributions of existential and phenomenological thought. This opens the door to resolving many philosophical problems that can be traced to what I call a praxcentrism: since the practice of philosophy requires a reflective pause from world involvement, philosophers have been naturally prone to interpret knowledge as a form of reflection that is distinct from the world (e.g., 'ideas' versus 'things'); such distinctions create perennial philosophical problems (e.g., How are ideas related to things in the world?). But here philosophers have been guilty of imposing a model of knowing that simply follows from the way philosophers think, and that misses or distorts other forms of engagement. In other words, philosophical reflection itself can lead to obfuscation of human experience and its circumstances. (p. 242)

Whereas De Man couldn't see any way out of 'our' predicament, Hatab is suggesting that there are forms of knowledge other than those derived from the endless deferral of meaning that reflection seems to produce. I suggest that prereflective engagement with the environment is   the way out of our "unsurpassable predicament."

### Conclusion: Naked Renderings Of Theoretical Abstractions

In anticipation of the next chapter and to re-contextualize the contents of this chapter I begin with a quotation from Gendlin (1992)[165]:

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[163] De Man, P. (1971). *Blindness & insight : essays in the rhetoric of contemporary criticism.* New York: Oxford University Press.

[164] Hatab, L. J. (1997) "Language and Human Nature". In *Language beyond Postmodernism.* Ed. D. Levin Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

[165] Gendlin, E. (1992). "Thinking Beyond Patterns: Body, Language and Situations." In *The Presence of* Feeling in Thought. Edited by B. den Ouden and M. Moen. New York: Peter Lang

> Many people treat concepts as if they were a separate world…. They drop all of their naked understandings the moment they turn to theory. They try to operate just with formed conceptual patterns. But without their own naked understandings, they can think nothing new. They can only rearrange concepts that are available in the library. And even these can be understood only very thinly in this way. But if we take the implicit intricacy along...then even the purely logical steps are powerful because they work in it. (p. 60-61)

For most of this chapter I've been suggesting that many citizen's in the west live in their reflective, conceptual minds rather than with their natural and social environments. The support that I offered for this position relied on the theoretical concepts of psychology and philosophy—thus dallying with the danger at which I was attempting to point. In this, the concluding, section of this chapter, I would like to return to my "naked understandings" in order to carry forward my conviction that disengagement from one's surround is widespread. In the case of the schizophrenic, my implicit understanding was that they had experienced an alarming shift in their prereflective self. It seemed reasonable to me that having once experienced such a tectonic shift, the pre-schizophrenic became hyper-alert in the hope of warding off further change. This understandable reaction would have the effect of dragging their attention inward. This inward turn would ironically promote the very effect that they were trying to pre-empt. It would do so in the following way: by disengaging from the natural and social environments they are no longer tethered to a consensual reality and so lose their "common sense." Here I am using "common" in the sense of shared meanings. The schizophrenic is pulled away from a consensual world by his hyper-vigilant scanning of his private world. Parnas and Sass offer support for this reading with their observation that schizophrenics frequently report anticipating "something strange" was about to happen. They sense that the strangeness originates internally.[166] Hence their attention is directed inward.

When I read Podvoll's (1990) account of Perceval's fog or film, I interpreted it literally: some external covering (like cellophane or wax paper) would form over the object. Perhaps it would be more accurate to state that I interpreted it theoretically—I confused myself by abandoning my "naked understandings." However, when I got in touch with my own experience, I discovered that when I was preoccupied, the world appeared less vibrant or intense. The situation through which I was living was faded like old wallpaper or sun-bleached upholstery. Or it became spectral rather than solid; image rather than object; as if the world was being perceived through a gauze or partially opaque film. As a result the world becomes less compelling and, one's internal preoccupations are foregrounded. In my own case, I would "wake up" to find myself a passenger on a train of signifiers.

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[166] It would seem that a paranoid schizophrenic would be an exception to this generalization as they locate the danger as arising from the outside.

The train seemed to be on a track not of my conscious choosing—but a track that, nevertheless, conditioned my conscious experience.  Prior to "waking up," I was being a "they man."  As Heidegger[167] put it, "The 'they' prescribes one's state-of-mind, and determines what and how one 'sees'." The cultural signifiers were living me.  Let me return to a fragment of Gendlin's opening quotation:

> Many people treat concepts as if they were a separate world…. They drop all of their naked understandings the moment they turn to theory. They try to operate just with formed conceptual patterns. But without their own naked understandings, they can think nothing new.

I recognize those same tendencies in myself as I wrote this chapter. Sometimes, instead of checking my verbal productions against my prereflective sense I would check them against the logical coherency of my argument or against the ongoing conversation amongst other theorists. The resulting discourse does seem to exist on a separate plane than the one in which I live, breath, and act. With this in mind, I would like to recount a personal experience that will express some aspect of my naked understandings of the issues being discussed. I was on vacation in Greece as I wrote the conclusion for this chapter. There were two or three occasions when I felt myself becoming suddenly annoyed at my partner. My irritation was unacceptable to me — I didn't want to ruin a vacation; I didn't want to slide into a cold war; I wanted continued intimacy. Yet, here I was experiencing the undesirable. I was being judgmental and critical first of her, then of myself. Moreover, such feelings were incompatible with my desirable self image as an "easy going, fun loving guy." I was in the throws of internal conflict—fighting with myself. This account is far more articulate in retrospect than it was, as it was lived. Then, I felt tossed about by forces that I didn't really comprehend. I didn't want to inadvertently express any of my naked negativity for fear that it would lead to disconnection and estrangement. So, I avoided contact in order to preserve the connection—clearly an absurd solution. Because my attention had been dragged inward, I was no longer in or with my environment.  In fact, I began to experience my environment as adversarial. That attribution did not extend only to my partner. I experienced my situation as frustrating and defeating. Even rearranging the towels in the bathroom seemed unnecessarily difficult. My behaviour had become awkward because I was no longer situationally attuned.

To join up my "naked understanding" to my earlier theoretical expositions, I was not only disconnecting from my environment but also disowning my prereflective responsiveness—"my irritation couldn't possibly be legitimate!" Later, when I attempted to look at my irritation

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[167] Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row.

dispassionately rather than judgmentally, I could see that it had a legitimate basis. I was attempting to make some travel arrangements over the Internet. The forms were difficult to understand and required concentration. At the same time, my partner continued talking. This had the effect of splitting my attention, followed shortly by irritation. My irritation was calling to my reflective mind, knocking on its door, requesting entry. And my reflective mind was opting for judgement—"you're bad for being irritable"—rather than curious exploration of the situational factors that might be producing this agitation. Once I adopted the latter approach, my prereflective experience began to inform my reflective mind. With this freshly purchased understanding I could address and carry forward the whole situation: "I notice that I get irritable when you talk to me while I'm trying to grapple with instructions on the screen."

This process was not easy. Most of the time, the prereflective self is not glib and facile but instead, rather inarticulate. It takes a patient reflective mind working with an open prereflective self to carry the situation forward. The process involves a lot of false starts and stops. Each provisional formulation needs to be referred back to the prereflective for aptness of fit. "That's not it...that's getting warmer...that fits!" It certainly seems easier to just live in the clear, light air of prefabricated concepts and theoretical understandings. However, those understandings would be mere rationalizations or confabulations if they didn't address, but rather covered over, the particular situation in which one finds oneself. They might have led me to say, "Sorry, I've had too much coffee this morning" or "Why do you always have to be right?" Nether comment would really address what had happened. I might have won the argument while not improving the situation. I hope that I am not alone in recognizing this experience and that many others will recognize their own tendencies in this small slice of autobiography.

**Chapter Four: Toward a Re-Balancing**

To summarize the main points that have led to this chapter, I began with Kegan's[168] (1982) claim that psychologic development was dependent on our ability to stand outside our selves. What had been previously experienced as subject, at an earlier stage of development, was now experienced as object—for example, when one reflects on one's self concept. I then turned my attention to the potential dangers involved in such a move. In chapter three, I devoted considerable attention to the dilemma of the schizophrenic. I conjectured that an alarming transformation had occurred in their prereflective self. Their sensibility had undergone a radical shift such that both their self and their world had been made strange. For many schizophrenics, according to Sass (1992), the defensive reaction was to abandon their habitus[169] within the prereflective self in favour of the reflective, indeed hyperreflective, mind. "Standing outside themselves" had become their permanent condition. Thus, instead of living spontaneously from their implicit meanings—their taken for granted—they wilfully and self consciously generate meanings which they then attempt to impose on their circumstances. I also suggested that the description of this schizophrenic sample could be used to illuminate and reveal a second, much larger group who lived largely in accordance with meanings that their culture provided. This group may be vulnerable to the dangers of living from the reflexive, conceptual mind rather than from the prereflexive self. However, unlike the schizophrenics cited, this group is unaware of the potential dangers attendant on living purely conceptually. I suggested that this larger group had identified with those meanings.  Rather then constructing meanings based on their personal experience, they unselfconsciously 'imported' or 'downloaded' the prevalent meanings of their social surroundings.  This may be a viable approach when living in a stable, relatively homogenous culture. However, as the pace of change accelerates and pluralism replaces homogeneity, those "downloaded" meanings no longer map accurately onto emergent social conditions.  For many subjects holding traditional beliefs, however, these meanings have been reified and naturalized—experienced as reality rather than as a social construction.[170] Given this ontological confusion it is understandable that "reality" has to be defended at all costs. This clearly is a paranoiac position. That is, the threat to their meanings is experienced as externally based—arising from others trying to overthrow "the natural order of things."  Therefore, to surrender in this "cultural war" would be equivalent to relinquishing

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[168] Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self : problem and process in human development.* Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press.

[169] Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge Mass: Cambridge University Press.

[170] Becker, E. (1973). *The denial of death*. New York : Free Press,

one's grip on reality. It is virtually the same as "going insane[171]." It is not surprising, therefore, that the fight is so ferocious. This analysis suggests an underlying commonality with Rene, the schizophrenic girl. For Rene her "insanity" is foregrounded, for these subjects, "insanity" is in the shadows. The bulwark of traditional meanings is consciously foregrounded to ward off this unconscious threat. The purpose of this dissertation has been twofold: on the one hand to reveal the danger of living conceptually without reflection and critique and, on the other, the danger of excessive or hyper-reflection. This concluding chapter will suggest some approaches that might address both.

### A Rough Typology: The Healthy Individual, the Schizophrenic, and the Mass Man[172]

To schematize my argument to this point, I've identified three, groups: the schizophrenic group is hyperreflective; "the unreflective citizen" lives through the reigning myths and meanings of his or her culture; and the healthy individual evolves because they have the capacity to reflect on, and critique the meanings by which they live. What distinguishes the "healthy individual" from schizophrenics is that the former live primarily prereflectively, only engaging in reflective practices when encountering repeated difficulties. They are also distinct from third group who seldom reflect on their meanings, preferring instead to "explain" anomalies via external attribution. My claim is that healthy living is evidenced more by one's engagement with one's situation and less with inspecting the self. Reflective philosophy and psychology are practiced only when repetitious errors occur—that is, when results don't actualize intentions. When this happens, a healthy person reflects on the beliefs, assumptions, premises that might be producing these unwanted outcomes. The ultimate purpose for critical reflection is to detach or separate from one's inadequate assumptions, in order to open up a placeholder for more efficacious ones. This is the transformational learning process of which Mezirow speaks (2000). For a more precise understanding of how new meanings can be generated from experience, I turn to the work of Gendlin (1962).

### The Sourcing of Meaning

We live by our meanings. But where are these meanings sourced? It seems to me that there are two primary sources: our experience and our linguistic/cultural context. Adequate meanings must reference both. A person asks himself or herself, do the usual cultural categories fit my experience or is some invention required? Will the common stock of phrases do, or must I reach for an original metaphor? In either case, one's meanings arise through reflectively attending to experience and then

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[171] I'm using the term "insanity" because of the power of its connotations. I could say, "cognitively disorganized" or "a breakdown in one's frame of reference" but those terms don't foreground the existential threat as powerfully.
[172] This term was originally coined by José Ortega y Gasset

finding or formulating symbols that adequately express it.   While I cannot express the totality of my experience, I can pick out some aspect that is salient for me and give it a symbolic form: a meaning. While the source of such meanings is the stream of experience, they find their home within a separate realm: the reflective, conceptual mind.  This second realm is also populated with meanings derived from one's language community.  Those symbols and concepts arrive ready-made and are utilized to make sense of one's experience. Furthermore, these meanings are widely shared and thus facilitate communication. Communicability is an advantage that partially compensates for a lack of particularity—a ready-made meaning cannot be as precise as one that is forged from this, particular experience.

To summarize: my primary terms experience and meaning, are intimately related. Experience animates language, giving it plenitude; and, from the other dialectical pole, language enables us to interpret and communicate our experience. It is a reciprocal relationship. But what happens if that reciprocity breaks down or was never developed? That is, what occurs when we stop referencing potential meanings to our experience? Often we are left with only empty abstractions, political slogans, ideological frameworks[173]—hollowed out meanings.  This is not to say that these meanings lack all force or power. However, I suggest that the power of these meanings does not come from their relationship to one's situation. Rather their force results from identification with those meanings. Threats to those meanings, therefore, are experienced as threats to one's core identity. Ontological insecurity.

### No More Eternal Truths?

Empty abstractions, political slogans, religious dogma, ideological frameworks are easy to critique (but hard to surrender). Traditionally, philosophy promised to transcend these totalizing methods of making sense.  However, according to Gendlin[174] (1997), philosophy is at an impasse.

> Today most philosophers find only discouragement in the recognition that all statements and logical inferences are conditioned by someone's situation, by the biases of culture and social class, usually summed up as "history and language." (p. xiv)

That is to say, the philosophical project of finding eternal truths (decontextualized verities) has floundered with postmodernism's claim that all truth is situational. Gendlin noted that Wittgenstein,

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[173] The political left seems uninspired by those meanings. Uninspired, listless. Whereas the political right seems personally identified with their meanings. As Yeats said, "all the best, lack conviction while the worst are filled with passionate intensity."

[174] Gendlin, E. (1997). *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning.* Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press

Dilthey, and Heidegger had explicated this situationalist position earlier. All three had demonstrated that our subjective experiences are "not just inner reactions rather they are our interactions in life and situations (p. xiv). This leads to an obvious, if unpalatable, implication: "if universal and 'objective' concepts are not possible, it can seem as if there is nothing for philosophy to do." (p. xv). Rather than despairing, Gendlin makes our interactions in our situations the domain of his research. He states that this new orientation requires very different concepts and methods than those previously employed. He differentiates between the old concepts, which he refers to as content concepts, and the new concepts, which he more aptly terms, process concepts. His object of study is the dynamic, interplay between self and situation and therefore he wants concepts that do justice to that dynamic. The process with which both Gendlin and myself are most interested is the relationship between prelogical experience, which is situational in nature, and meaning. In the introduction of this dissertation, I cited a hypnosis experiment, which demonstrated that experience exceeds conceptual meaning and therefore can act as a corrective to our meanings.

This issue, however, is more than an argument amongst philosophers. It has implications for the wider culture. I can do no better than to quote Gendlin (1997) once again.

> Today, in the West, society no longer gives the individual any one scheme or set of forms with which to interpret experience. The individual is aware of many different, contradictory, and unrelated forms and schemes. Thus, he has to come to confront life and experiencing directly. (p. 4)

That is, we can no longer take our meanings 'off the shelf' but rather we must learn how to forge custom made, i.e. precise, meaning by direct reference to experience. Gendlin wants a science of human behaviour that makes use of concepts that depict the relationship between felt experience and conceptual and linguistic forms. That is he wants to map the optimal relations between experience and meaning.

> We must investigate prelogical, 'preconceptual' experience as it functions together with logical symbols, but not substitute one for the other. (p. 3)

Gendlin's emphasis is never idle. For me, it points at rather than representing the phenomenon in question. Experience functions with logical symbols. It is a reciprocally influencing relationship. It is dynamic not static. He wants to develop a scheme

> of how experience and logic can relate. Even then, experience must be referred to directly—it must be thought of as that partly unformed stream of feeling that we have every moment. (p. 3)

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## The Experiential Sources of my Meanings

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, I am a practicing psychotherapist. A number of years ago I trained counsellors through a series of workshops. One of the frameworks I used made a distinction between a "product self" and a "process self." These distinctions had occurred to me before I read Gendlin and thus I experienced no small measure of validation when I came across his work. A "product self" was very similar to a static self-concept. A "product self" is what I know myself to be. That is, a" product self" is largely conceptual. To illustrate my point, I would characterize my "product self" as a middle age male, husband, father, middle class, professional. The "process self," on the other hand, was a matter of becoming or emerging. "For example," I told them, "your process self might be daydreaming, feeling uncomfortable in your chair, being soothed by my voice, wondering when lunch will happen, planning tonight's dinner, being curious about the participant sitting beside you, etc." In addition to all these relatively clear, if unnoticed, experiences, there will be some vague tensions, yearnings, sensing of things incomplete. All these experiences seem to occur simultaneously, a steady stream of "unseparated multiplicity"—to borrow Gendlin's descriptive phrase. The "product self" has a clear and distinct set of meanings that are easy to articulate. The "process self," on the other hand, is a constant streaming that goes on unnoticed unless one turns one's attention to it through an act of reflection. Such attending has the effect of bringing that vague, gnawing incompleteness into focus—where it can be given form. Once symbolized it can be integrated as self knowledge and included in the "product self."

## What can we Trust: Received Meanings or Personally Generated Ones?

What is so remarkable about Gendlin's contribution is that he asks us to reconnect our logical, symbol making mind to our preconceptual felt sense. He is counselling us to trust that source— a source that initially appears vague and murky but, with focussing, gives precise information about our situation and what it asks of us. This procedure is in marked contrast to the predominant style in the West: suppress or bracket one's feelings in order to adopt the highly prized view from nowhere. He turns this dictum on its head:

> The role of felt experiencing in all our conceptual operations is not illegitimate "biases." They are natural and proper functions…. We cannot even know what a concept "means" or use it meaningfully without the "feel" of its meaning…. If we do not have the felt meaning of the concept, we haven't got the concept at all—only a verbal noise. (p. 5-6)

Gendlin's contribution moves past the pejorative that feelings are biased and prejudiced to a more positive valuation of those sensations. It is the felt sense that lends our concepts their significance, making them meaningful.[175]

I make the further claim that the felt sense brings indispensable information to the proceedings because it is a situated knowing. That is, it is responsive to our circumstance, whereas a purely conceptual comprehension can be internally coherent without being externally adaptive. Schneider (1997)[176], however, makes the point that language use is not necessarily disconnected from a situated knowing.

> Instead of speaking of the situatedness of speech, once could as well talk about its being 'rooted' in activities. According to this image, not the different regions with their characteristic plants and trees are of primary concern, but rather, the normally hidden, the 'underground' parts of single exemplary plants, as they appear on close investigation'" According to this picture, speaking and knowing appear to be (rather small) visible parts of a bigger whole." (p. 98)

That is, speaking arises (at least initially) from our activities. In other words, our conceptual knowledge is the tip of a much larger iceberg made up of "know how" or human activity. One could say that our conceptual knowledge is a distillation and formulation of some of those activities[177]. Schneider goes on to say, "A complete grasp of our practical [knowledge] by our theoretical knowledge is impossible" (p. 99). For example, it would take some time and considerable effort to write down the procedures and sequences involved in tying my shoes. Tying my shoe would take far less time than writing instructions for doing so. The know-how is there as an unarticulated or implicit schema. This know-how, or practical knowledge is actually an interactional circuit that relates my ongoing perception of the untied lace to my efforts to make a bow—in Varela's (1999) terms, "action guided by perception."[178]

That "know-how" is, nevertheless, available for sensing. Tuning into the felt sense of lace tying, I can begin to access the experience that I wish to articulate in writing. My intuition guides my verbal productions. "The word 'intuition' comes from the Latin word 'intueri,' which is often roughly translated as meaning 'to look inside' or 'to contemplate.'"[179] In other words, I attend to, or reflect on,

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[175] I would go further and say that logic cannot indicate what direction one's existential project must proceed. Logical reasoning may be able to lay out the options or alternatives but it cannot assign value.

[176] Schneider, H. J. (1997). " "The Situatedness of Thinking, Knowing, and speaking: Wittgenstein and Gendlin." in *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy.* Evanston, Illinois. Northwestern University Press.

[177] *The Executive Brain*, by Elkhonon Goldberg (2001) offers some support for this point of view.

[178] Varela, F. J. (1999). *Ethical know-how: action, wisdom, and cognition.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999

[179] Flora, C. "Gut Almighty". *Psychology Today*. Vol 40. Issue 3:68-75,2007.

my preconceptual experience.   Because I stepped on an undone lace or I could see, out of the corner of my eye, the lace flopping freely, my attention is drawn to my shoes. That is, my attention is drawn to the situation.  I look and see what has happened and what remedy is at hand—re-tie the lace. The same process can be applied to activities that are far more complex: like facilitating a meeting; painting a picture; writing a poem; having a family dinner. In each case, one can sense that the situation "wants" or needs something in order to develop further. That "something" can be a comment, a joke, or an action that "fits" the situation and carries it forward.  For example, for the comment or joke to be a lubricant it must be "rooted" in the ongoing activity of the dinner party. That is, for the contribution to carry the event forward, it must arise out of the situation in which we're all prereflectively engaged. The joke or comment is probably a reflection on that activity but one that partakes of one's participation—and thus made up of a contribution from both prereflective experience and reflective meaning.

## The Relationship between Ordinary Language and Behaviour

Schneider (1997) conceptualizes the nested relationship between language and behaviour as follows:

> The 'ability-to-say' is a special case of the (normally nonlinguistic) 'ability-to-do'; the first always remains embedded in the second and has to be understood as so embedded, if pseudo problems are to be avoided (e.g., the problem of how an action can be meaningful and not 'mindless') without the acting person having entertained a thought while performing it. (p. 99)

Clearly, my ability to articulate instructions for tying shoes is nested in my learned ability to tie my laces. Schneider goes further with his comment that an action does not require representational thought in order to be purposeful. For example, when a sports announcer comments that soccer player 'X' has "smart feet" he is referring to meaningful action (skill) that is not consciously planned. The athlete's display of skill is breathtaking because it is intelligently responsive to the rapidly changing conditions of play. It is perceptual-action, intelligence rather than representational thinking-consciously intending, intelligence. The first is always situational, whereas the second is often decontextualized.

Schneider thinks that it is fundamental to acknowledge that our thinking, knowing, and speaking are situated or else it will "lead to mistakes in the higher sphere, the thinner air of highly developed language" (1997, p. 100). I am grateful to Schneider for pointing to the possible distinctions between language that is clearly rooted in an activity and the "thinner air of highly

developed language."[180] This has particular import for my project given my claim that many in the West are largely aware only of the content of their conceptual mind. In other words, many in the West communicate primarily via ungrounded or "unrooted" language. Here I am talking of the kind of speech one hears on radio talk shows, in pubs and restaurants. Gasset (1985)[181] does a better job describing this condition:

> Take stock of those around you and you will…hear them talk in precise terms about themselves and their surroundings, which would seem to point to them having ideas on the matter. But start to analyze those ideas and you will find that they hardly reflect in any way the reality in which they appear to refer, and if you go deeper, you will discover that there is not even an attempt to adjust the ideas to this reality. (p. 75, emphasis added)

Instead, often what is being represented is an ideological position[182]. It is interesting to me that this condition is being diagnosed by self described, political pragmatists who characterize their opponents as ideologues. I'm thinking of Barack Obama who identifies himself as a pragmatist. Our former provincial premier, Gordon Campbell, described himself in the same way. They appear to pride themselves on being situationally based, while disparaging their opponents as being ideologically driven. Evidently, the notion of language untethered from reality has begun to enter mainstream discourse. For me this is a significant cultural shift, signalling as it does an emerging public awareness of the difference between ideology and reality.

### Situationally Determined versus Self-Sustaining Thought

Let me examine a more intermediate position—a position somewhere between speech that is clearly situationally referenced—action thought—and thought that bears no obvious reference to the situation. Here I am looking for that stage in psychological development where thought is not constrained by circumstances. The following anecdote is an exploration of that developmental turning point—an anecdote that will display my "naked understanding."[183] By juxtaposing the

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[180] Scheider gives several examples of highly developed language (e.g. "uninterrupted calculi") but the example that is of most interest to me is when "a *particular* know-that is ahead of a *particular* know-how." He cites "a person who knows 'in theory' at what point to keep her center of gravity does not necessarily know how to act as a tightrope walker". My contention is that much conversation is of this ilk, the participants "knows-that" but don't "know how". That is, they are articulate about the "shoulds" but don't know how to get "there" from "here".

[181] Ortega y Gasset, J. (1985) *The revolt of the masses*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.

[182] Cliché is another language form where the relationship between sign and referent has been attenuated.

[183] I understand that phrase to mean one's understanding before analysis or lengthy reflection. That is, "naked understanding" as I'm using it, is closer to prereflective intelligence then to reflective knowing with its abstract, theoretical concepts.

following anecdotes with my theoretical interpretations, I will demonstrate how each informs the other and each reveals a different aspect.

A number of years ago, I was asked to give a talk on childhood and adolescent depression. As part of my preparation, I talked to a psychiatrist, Dr. Laura Doyle, who worked in our local children's hospital. According to Dr. Doyle, the best intervention for childhood depression, prior to the onset of puberty, was "environmental manipulation." In ordinary language, she was telling me that if is a child was depressed and you moved them from their current living situation, their depression would dissolve. After puberty, that intervention was less effective. In adolescence, it was more likely that their mood would persist despite a change in their living situation. My interpretation? Somehow, the adolescent was able to maintain their mood by living within their memories of past injustices, deprivations, abandonments, and abuses. When their environment changed, they didn't. Instead, they lived within a symbolic psychic environment that maintained their depressed state and presumably located moments in their new environment that re-confirmed that injustice, deprivations, and abuse were an inextricable aspect of reality[184]. These adolescents were no longer existentially situational. This same tendency often gets consolidated in the adult years. I witness it in couples who come to me for relationship repair. With a recent couple, the wife told me that when her husband made an appeal for more intimacy all she saw was the drunk that he had been ten years ago. Her symbol or representation of him generated her behaviour rather than the demands or challenges of their current interaction. I find myself wondering if the same thing applies to the ideological wrangling that occurred in the American debt ceiling debate. These warring adversaries are paying more attention to the ideological interpretations of their opponents then they are to the circumstances that embroil them both.

At one time, I was part of a group that set up residential treatment programs for assisting dysfunctional families. There was about a month delay between the hiring of the staff and the arrival of our first residents. We were going to use that time to develop our treatment philosophy. But very little was accomplished. There was no way to arbitrate between the competing claims as to which approach was the best one. However, when adolescents began arriving, it quickly became apparent which staff were skilful and which were not. Staff who interacted effectively in stressful situations earned credibility for their subsequent verbal productions. This was particularly true when their thought, behaviour, and speech were rooted in their interactions—they were all sourced from the same gestalt. This resonates with a Buddhist precept that one should sense the texture of a situation before responding. It also seems to me that teacher training is moving in that direction with its emerging focus on mindfulness.

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[184] Blenkinsop, S. personal communication. December 2011

Where have we come to?  I began with the claim that 'the ability to say' is imbedded in the 'ability to do.'  Then I pointed to a wide spread exception to this relationship: ideological speech which made no attempt to reference reality. I would characterize this kind of speech as a lower level parody of a "highly developed language." Next, I wondered how this separation between language and circumstance could even come about.  I cited the developmental achievement of formal operational thought[185] that allowed one think beyond one's immediate circumstances. I stated that this achievement in adolescence made teenage depression more intractable to a change in circumstance. I then went on to observe that youth counsellors who were most skilled in their interactions, automatically were granted credibility for the speech. Other staff assumed, often with good reason, that their ability to speak was imbedded in their ability to do.

## Confabulation and the Need for Closure

This last point supports an argument that situational truth would emerge if we just attended to our felt sense as we spoke. According to this argument, doing so would both constrain and guide our communication with others. This account suggests that everyone wishes to have an honest encounter with reality and with each other. This is clearly not always the case. People lie wilfully. More frequently, people confabulate. That is, they fabricate a false narrative without any awareness that they are doing so. It is our capacity to confabulate that I wish to explore because such a condition would make it possible for many in the west to be conscious of their conceptual models while remaining unconscious with regard to their situation[186]. When I use the term 'unconscious' I am not implying that are zombies, in a coma, or hypnotized. Clearly, the great majority of these people cope adequately with their everyday lives. That is, they have 'know-how' but are unable to thematize the beliefs and perceptions that govern their behaviour.  My position is supported by the work of Edelman (2006)[187]. He discusses the case of a patient with a severed corpus callosum who was asked to name his favourite musician. He gave a verbal response that was different from his behavioural one[188].  That is, when his answer was sourced from his left-brain, the language proficient hemisphere, he would give one answer but when he was asked the same question and told to spell out his answer with his left hand (controlled by the right brain), he would give a different response. When asked about the discrepancy between the two, he confabulated an answer that "papered over" the contradiction.   Edelman thinks that this has a bearing on epistemological issues in normal persons:

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[185] Piaget, J. (1973). *The child and reality; problems of genetic psychology*. Trans. Arnold Rosin. New York: Grossman Publishers

[186] To do so would require them to attend to their prereflective experience.

[187] Edelman, G. (2006). *Second Nature: brain science and human knowledge.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

[188] With his left hand, using something like Scrabble letters, he spelled out the name of a different musician.

It suggests that the brain of the conscious verbal individual must close a pattern or "make sense" at whatever the cost. (p. 113, emphasis added)

Closure or intellectual coherency appears to be of higher value than reality testing for the reflective mind. This idea is supported by the work of the neuroscientists Deglin and Kinsbourne (1996)[189] who conducted experiments which involved temporarily deactivating one of the brain's hemispheres. They found that

> [W]hen completely false propositions are put to the left hemisphere it accepts them as valid because the internal structure of the argument is valid....
> However, the right hemisphere knows from experience that the propositions are false. (p. 285—307, emphasis added)

Although my vocabulary differs from these neuroscientists—my term, reflective mind, mapping onto their term, left hemisphere; and my term, prereflective self mapping onto their right hemisphere—we seem to be investigating the same phenomenon. McGilchrist[190], a psychiatrist, describes left hemisphere functioning in ways remarkably similar to my own comments with regard to the reflective, conceptual mind. He states that the left hemisphere has a "narrow, decontextualized and theoretically based model of the world which is self consistent and therefore quite powerful" whereas the right hemisphere "has no preconceptions, and simply looks out to the world for whatever might be."[191] While I differ from his assertion that the right hemisphere has no preconceptions—I believe that habits, acquired skills, expectations, etc. condition the perceptions of the right hemisphere—I do agree with his generalization that the prereflective self engages the world rather than a representation of the world[192]. McGilchrist makes the claim that the left hemisphere is better able to "inhibit" the right than vice versa. In other words, the left hemispheric or reflective mind can overlook or even block "news" from the prereflective self. Confabulation will take care of any apparent incongruity between one's conceptual understandings of one's circumstances and one's actual situation. Often my client's will offer me a conceptual explanation of their difficulties that is internally consistent but

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[189] Deglin, V. L. & Kinsbourne, M., 'Divergent thinking styles of the hemispheres: how syllogisms are solved during transitory hemisphere suppression', *Brain and Cognition*, 1996, 31(3), pp. 285–307.

[190] McGilchrist, I. (2009). *The master and his emissary: the divided brain and the making of the Western* world. New Haven: Yale University Press.

[191] "Two worlds of the left and right brain (audio podcast)". *BBC Radio 4 Today*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8360000/8360221.stm. Retrieved 2009-12-24.

[192] I say, 'conditions' perceptions as opposed to eliding them by living exclusively within one's conceptual system...flying by instruments.

fails to lead them out of their difficulty. Let me turn to Gendlin[193] for further elaboration of this point. He wants us to check out our verbal productions against our felt sense of our situation. This is the path that leads beyond confabulation to reality testing. Referring to our felt sense doesn't guarantee that our thinking and speaking will lead to 'truth' in the philosophical sense. Rather it will increase the chances that our response to the situation in which we find ourselves will be more accurate and precise. Gendlin claims that it is the best way to develop or carry forward the situation. He asks us to retrace our transitions from one thought to the next as we think through an issue "and let the distinctions come, to reveal both the sense and the gaps and errors." In my understanding, this means that if we attend to our felt sense then we can notice when the next sentence or logical unit is "off" or "on" track. When the next sentence is off track, it's similar to a radio receiver drifting off the broadcast frequency. As we examine what we spoke or wrote, we ask, "Is the next sentence still staying 'true' to the implicit experience?" He counsels us that by attending to the felt sense we can "sense anything soggy, dishonest, or too easy. We can also sense anything that is still opaque, or merely avoided." He goes on to ask,

> How do words even form, when they don't speak from there [experience]?
> People use a phrase from the common store, without noticing whether it speaks
> from what they are living in their situations. The commonly used phrases come
> easily in each situation. Most people assume that one of those must be what
> they are experiencing. (Gendlin, 1997, p. 20)

This quotation restates my opening position: our meanings either come from reflecting on our experience or they come from the common stock of phrases that our culture makes available. HIs second point is worth emphasizing. Many people assume that one of those stock phrases actually represents their unique experience. Many people don't realize that they are navigating with borrowed meanings. Gendlin (1997) is suggesting that at our current historical moment, personal experience should be the source for one's meanings—or that one should think with one's personal experience as one entertains those stock meanings. In this way, we can begin to distinguish what rings true from what clangs.

> This mode of language also has major political implications, because it can free
> people to speak from how they are living, instead of being silenced by the
> common categories. (p. 20)

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[193] Gendlin, E. (1997). "How Philosophy Cannot Appeal to Experience, and How it Can." *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and Thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy*. Ed. David M. Levin. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

## Common Categories and the Mass-Man

Using "common categories" has an "up-side": the warm and fuzzy feeling of belonging to a collective. However, the more one defaults to the common categories—instead of developing one's own expressive powers—the more dependent one is on the collective. When one makes the effort to formulate one's experience, one's sense of self is enhanced. When one has a strong sense of self, one is less vulnerable to being manipulated by mass culture. It seems to me that the task of the educator is to assist students to begin to challenge their usage of stock phrases and "zombie categories"[194] and to, instead, develop a more nuanced expression of their experience. The educator needs to be aware that initially such an approach will often be resisted when the student has identified with the common categories. It is helpful to direct the student's attention to their experience when they use stock phrases as compared to when they forge their own particular metaphors. My experience as a therapist has repeatedly shown me that once given that kind of experiential evidence, my clients begin to use their felt sense as a trustworthy guide for decision making. This does not necessarily eliminate rational analysis but rather offers an embodied perspective that expresses the subject's uniqueness.

## How the Felt Sense Shows Up

I would now like to utilize some of Gendlin's examples to make the experience of the felt sense more palpable. He uses the example of bumping into someone on the street. Something about this person is familiar but you can't remember the context or their name. You have a feeling toward them...maybe a mixed feeling. That feeling is your sense of that person; a sense that arrives before you have cognitive categories in which to place them. Attending to that prereflective sense might lead you to the context where you met them previously...and that might lead you to their name. It is also the source of your behavioural response. You smile but not too much, nor too little. Your smile is precisely and spontaneously suited to your relationship to that person. A consciously willed smile would not be as appropriate as the one that arose naturally from your felt sense. This example shares some similarities with awakening from a dream. One can make sense of that dream in one of two ways: one can analyze it utilizing theoretical concepts or one can attend to the feeling that accompanied the dream. That is, one can let the prereflective experience continue to unfold—even though one is now awake.  In the case of the latter, you let the feeling that generated the dream continue to inform you; the feeling carries forward, or continues to develop, the meaning that the dreams images were conveying.  One suspends one's wilfulness and instead, adopts an attitude of "passive volition" or "active surrender." That is one becomes a witness rather than an agent. When

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[194] This term was developed by Ulrich Beck to refer to categories "that are dead but somehow go on living, making us blind to the realities of our lives." Excerpted from *New Statesman*: "The New Statesman Essay - Goodbye to all that wage slavery." published March 5, 1999. Accessed March 27, 2012

you use the analytic approach, the reality of the emerging dream tends to "dry up." Its quality of "givenness" is more likely to disappear.  The second approach is more like an unfolding—a continuing revelation—whereas the first is more static—a series of logical operations conducted on fixed concepts.  This description of the difference between these approaches echoes Gendlin's claim that psychology and philosophy would be refreshed with the addition of process concepts—concepts that direct our attention towards experiential sequences rather than fixed concepts. In regard to personality theory, Gendlin (1997)[195] states

> We will have to devise categories for a felt, preconceptual process that we can only momentarily divide into contents…. We cannot expect even a process logic to be fully adequate to experiencing. We must let the concepts refer to experiencing, for they cannot fully represent it.  (p. 33)

Gendlin offers a second example of the felt sense at work.  You and a friend see a movie together. It was a good film and touched you both. You go for a coffee or a drink to discuss your reactions. If you pay attention you will notice that some utterances carry the experience of the movie forward, while others cause the felt sense of the movie to shrink or even dry up. In the first instance, the felt sense is developed; in the second, it dissipates. As Gendlin puts it:

> We can know whether silencing or maximizing is happening, by sensing how each little step affects the unarticulated experience....with which we began. (1997, p. 23)

That is, one's experience takes on volume or thickness whereas when the "silencing" happens my experience has become very "thin."  The term "small talk" refers to the quality of "thinness" when the conversation lacks all prereflective engagement.

He offers a third example.  He teaches a course on Aristotle's De Anima. For students who don't know Greek he suggests that they use two translations.

> "Read only one" I say, "but when it doesn't make sense, turn to the same spot in the other one." Each translation knocks out misimpressions created by the phrases of the other. But what did Aristotle say? One comes closer by assuming that it was something that could give rise to both of these two different English sentences. The students understand Aristotle best when they think with—that . . . What they say next shows whether or not they thought further from that . . . (LBP, p. 12-13)

That something that could give rise to both; that something that could fill in or generate both translations is the prereflective experience that generated Aristotle's original utterance. Reading both

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[195] Gendlin, E. (1997). *Experiencing and the creation of meaning : a philosophical and psychological* approach to the subjective. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

translations points to something beyond either…something that exceeds either conceptualization. To fully grasp Aristotle's meaning the reader has to move between her own prereflective experiencing and the words on the page…a kind of back and forth movement.

To this point I have been laying some philosophical groundwork for my claim that the valorizing of reflective thinking is misplaced if that thinking isn't situational and interactional. When that type of thinking has been untethered from the reality checks that actual situations provide, solipsism becomes possible. I'm interpreting solipsism as an extreme preoccupation with one's feelings, desires, thoughts, etc.; an egoistic self-absorption along with a corresponding lack of engagement with the world.

## A Response to William's critique of Gendlin

Earlier I provided familiar examples of the felt sense—bumping into someone whom you know but can't place; reading different translations of Aristotle—that were intended to help the reader access their own felt sense. It seemed to me that by referring to their own felt sense—their "naked understanding"—should enable the reader to assess the validity of Williams' (1997)[196] criticism of Gendlin.  Williams thinks that Gendlin makes an unwarranted generalization about a poet searching for the next line or a psychotherapy patient attempting to articulate her experience, as "the most revelatory about the relation between language and the world." (p. 130). She refers to those examples as "atypical human situations." If by atypical she means that most people do NOT make an effort to relate their language to the world, then her apparent difference with Gendlin melts away. As shown earlier, Gendlin acknowledges that "people use a phrase from the common store, without noticing whether it speaks from what they are living in their situations." (p. 20, LBP).  The fact that many people don't make that effort (and moreover don't see any need to) is the condition that this dissertation is attempting to address.

Gendlin makes it abundantly clear that experience includes and is a response to the situation in which one finds oneself.  Therefore, generating a language that is sourced from one's experience precisely articulates the relation between self, language, and world. Language that is drawn from the "common store," on the other hand, often only loosely relates—if at all—to the situation at hand. More frequently such stock phrases merely paper over actual differences in experience while promoting a kind of frictionless sociability.  If there is an objection to be made to Gendlin's claims for language usage, it would probably be on the grounds that words have precise meanings. Otherwise, so this thinking goes, they would be useless as a vehicle for communication. This

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[196] Williams, M. (1997). "The implicit intricacy of mind and situations." *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and Thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy*. Ed. David M. Levin. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

precision, therefore, facilitates social communication by guaranteeing shared meaning. At the same time, the implied fixity of word's meanings, places limits on their ability to describe this, unique circumstance. However, this objection ignores the powerful role of metaphor and its ability to create new likenesses. As Gendlin states

> Currently the metaphoric creation of new likenesses, the "emergent qualities," has been recognized, but it is not yet understood that every word has a newly precise emergent meaning in its situation. (p. xviii, emphasis added)[197]

Thus, according to the way that Gendlin understands language, a person possesses the creative power to combine words in a way that points to new meanings that refer specifically to the situation at hand.

Sometimes Williams (1997) reads her own interpretations into Gendlin. For example, at one point she interprets Gendlin's "….." as equivalent to a blank. She then critiques the words that she has put into his mouth. Gendlin's actual claim was that the "….." is the place from which the next line of the poem will show up for the poet. Williams argues that, "A blank does not imply or determine anything. The blank is not itself an intricacy" (p. 127). She is being literal here. Whereas Gendlin uses this non-linguistic sign, "…..," to refer to something that is more than conceptual (rather than less, as a 'blank' would be). This same more is what I sense when I meet someone familiar on the street whose name and context I can't explicitly summon. Williams might be persuaded that such an experience is more typical of our language community than that of the poet or psychotherapy patient. But she overlooks this example—perhaps because it doesn't serve her argument. However, this example is instructive in that it illuminates and clarifies that to which Gendlin is pointing. My failure to find the familiar stranger's name permits me to become aware that it is in "the back of my mind" or on the "tip of my tongue." That is, when language fails me, I can become aware of the presence of the "…..." Normally it is always operating, filling in the concept that I'm employing and doing its job so well that I don't even notice it. However, when the concept doesn't show up I become aware of this vague insistence that is looking for a home in a concept, name, or line of poetry. In each case, I am experiencing a felt sense and searching for an appropriate form. Understanding meaning making in this way makes it easier to understand the procedures that both the poet and psychotherapeutic patient are utilizing. They are attending to the same source as when I attempted to recall my acquaintance's name. It is with this felt sense that the poet assesses her candidate lines. It is that vague feeling, that "…..," which identifies which line fits best.

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[197] Gendlin, E. (1997). *Experiencing and the creation of meaning: a philosophical and psychological* approach to the subjective. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

I received some confirmation for these ideas the other day while visiting with a friend. He was describing some incident to me when his account came to a halt as he searched for the name of one of the participants. Initially he came up short. Suddenly he was able to retrieve the name. I asked him, "How did you do that?" He replied, "I've learned that if I relax, then the name comes to me." I compared that to my own strategy: when I can't remember I adopt an attitude of acceptance for my limitation, then frequently the "forgotten" item returns to me. My "acceptance" was his "relaxation." In each case, there was a cessation of conscious striving in favour of "active surrender." Temporarily suspending wilful activity opened up a space for the prereflective experience to show up more clearly. Earlier I used Gendlin's example of discussing a film with a friend and how certain comments maximized the feeling that the film had evoked whereas other sentences caused it to dry up or disappear. One learns to follow these sensations as they lead to provisional truths that are more and more meaningful. Of course, this understanding of how the felt sense and conceptual language interact has tremendous implications for education. For, as Gendlin states, "If we do not have the felt meaning of the concept, we haven't got the concept at all—only a verbal noise. (p. 5-6, ECM). I find myself thinking, "That is a good phenomenological description of learning by rote."

### Utilizing the Felt-Sense Therapeutically

Both Williams (1997) and Margolis (1997)[198] object to what they see as Gendlin's invocation of an extra-cognitive faculty that acts as a check or corrective on the cognitive productions of the reflective mind. They claim that there is no such extra-cognitive faculty[199]. But I don't think that Gendlin is making such a claim. Rather Gendlin is asserting that there is a bodily felt criterion that adjudicates the fitness or aptness of the verbal description. For example, when I am working with a client who is conflicted, I appeal to that felt sense for more information about the situation. For example, a woman comes to me complaining of dreaming of her ex-lover. "I want him out of my head," she angrily exclaims. But who "put him in her head"? Surely, it is herself. That is, one aspect of herself wants his continuing "presence" while another part wants to evict him. She doesn't realize that to erase him from her psyche is also a kind of self-amputation. (She wants to get rid of the woman who is attached). Rather than working through the grieving process, she is impatient to leap over it. Once I've identified what her conceptual, reflective mind wants—"I want him out of here!"— I then construct two phrases. The first phrase gives voice to what she wishes to reject; the second, accepts the fact that her ex-partner is still psychically present. I then facilitate some experiential

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[198] Margolis, J. (1997). "Language as lingual". In *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and Thinking* in Gendlin's Philosophy. Ed. David M. Levin. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
[199] Perhaps I don't understand what Margolis means by extra-cognitive. Does "extra" mean super cognitive or meta-cognitive or does he mean that it is non-cognitive.

training where the client learns to "tune into" the fluctuating responsiveness of their felt sense. I begin by asking them to notice the sensations arising from the ball of her foot. Nobody has any difficulty in doing so. I then ask, are you making judgements about that feeling—calling it a good or bad feeling? The answer inevitably is "no." I then ask her to expand her field of body awareness to include her whole being. I often refer to it as a field phenomenon—metaphorically similar to an electro-magnetic field.  Next, I tell my client that I will give her two phrases that I will ask her to repeat, "as if she meant it."  "Notice how your feeling field responds to the first statement. Now let that feeling fade and I will give you the second phrase." Most of the time, the person reports a dramatic drop in their tension level with the second statement—the statement that implied acceptance of their experience. One client said that it was equivalent to a tight elastic band suddenly going slack. Occasionally I'll be with someone who rejects the acceptance statement even if it entails a rise in his or her anxiety level. I advise them that anxiety seems to be the price for the change that they seek. But in either case, the message conveyed is that two sources of information are better than one. Perhaps "sources" is the wrong word as it suggests separation or independence. Perhaps, modalities would be a better word—I'm asking my client to process the same experience with different methods. The reflective, conceptual mind works by linear analysis toward a rational solution. Whereas the felt sense processes multiple factors simultaneously and generates an action inclination. My clients make better choices when they consult both: the conceptual and the felt sense or "unseparated multiplicity."

Let us return to Williams' objections to Gendlin's account of the poet's creative endeavour. Gendlin's account depicts the poet—having written several lines—now searching for another line that will carry her poem forward. Her search produces several candidate lines.  She tests them by referring to her felt sense, to her "…..,." That unseparated multiplicity responds to the candidate line that is the most appropriate. I think that Coetzee, the Nobel Prize winning writer, is referring to the same process when he states that he tests each word to see if it "rings" or "clangs."  Walter Murch[200], a film editor who worked with Francis Ford Coppola, talked about his editing process in a similar way.  He would watch the daily "rushes" and hit the edit button when he thought the scene had been realized. Then he would watch it again, and again, spontaneously, hit the cut button. If he stopped at the same frame on each run through he would make the cut permanent. This "decision" is not the result of a rational or analytic process but rather a felt sense of completion. The feeling is "ah!," a release, a coming to rest. Williams (1997), on the other hand, implies that the process actually is a conscious and explicit weighing of factors.  For example, when she ponders how the poet produces the next line of a poem, she produces a list of contextual factors that constrain what the next line

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[200] Ondaatje, M. (2002). *The conversations: Walter Murch and the art of editing film.* Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002.

could be. They include what the previous lines said, the poet's intentions, various poetic conventions, the problem being expressed in the poem, and so on. Gendlin sees no need to make those factors explicit. Rather he claims that the poet, after trying out various alternatives, ultimately senses the best one. The "right" line releases the tension that was inherent in the search for the best way to carry the poem forward. Williams' account of the explicit, constraining factors is true retrospectively but not generatively. That is, we can see that the line produced obeys all the criteria that she has articulated. However, I claim that hers is a third person explanation rather than a participative or first person description of the actual creative process.

### Accessing the Prereflective: Passive Volition

This poet's process is similar to what many artists describe in their creative projects. They come to a point where they ask, "What does the painting want?" This way of speaking suggests that the work expresses an intentionality that differs from the artist's conscious intention. This raises the question: "What agency is responsible for the creative act?" I suspect that this question is the basis for William's objection to Gendlin's account. She objects to an account that has the blank, the '.....,' writing the poem and not the poet. Who is writing the poem—the poet or the implicit intricacy emerging from the prereflective? My answer involves several strands. The first strand comes from the Zen scholar, Suzuki,[201] who stated that appropriate attitude for a Zen practitioner was one of "active surrender" or "passive volition." These seemingly, paradoxical orientations point the way to accessing the implicit intricacy. One's conscious, wilful intentions are suspended in order to access or receive one's preconscious preoccupations, desires, moods, etc. That is, active surrender allows one to get in touch with what is running in the background. That background is the context that generates figurative meaning. Or, stated differently, it is the context that gives meaning to the content. The fullness of this meaning is determined by the many strands that connect the focal meaning to the "unseparated multiplicity" (like the conventions of poetry, the topic of the poem, the poet's intentions, the lines preceding, and so on).

Let me return to the issue of agency. Who actually writes the poem? Recall my claim that Williams' objection to Gendlin is based on her discomfort with attributions of agency to the '…...' Williams insists that it is the poet's conscious, reflective mind that weighs[202] the criterial factors with which she forges the next line. I'm sure that her claim is true of some but not all writing. For example, "I" consciously intend to write this sentence, and then, the one after that, and so on. They

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[201] Suzuki, D.T. (1956). *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*. Ed. William Barret. Doubleday, New York: 1956. t.
[202] My word "weighs", suggests an extra--cognitive evaluation. I get a "feel" for what combination of criteria would be optimal.

may all cohere logically. However, if I wish to write something meaningful, I pause my volitional activity and engage in some active surrender.  I am willingly opening myself to a consciousness that "I" am not willing. That is, I'm widening the circle of my consciousness to include that, which exceeds my conscious intentions.  When operating from my conscious, conceptual mind I am aware of clear content that is organized linearly—one idea at a time, in sequence.   I am the architect of this sequence. When I actively surrender, however, I become aware of ongoing mental activity that I didn't intend[203]. Sometimes the content is a chain of associations that unfold according to their own purposes.  At other times, active surrender introduces me to something murky, something vaguely felt. If I wish to bring this content into focus, I try on various images and metaphors until I hit on one that resonates with, and expresses that feeling. That vaguely sensed feeling is an "unseparated multiplicity" of my emergent needs combined with the implicit demands of my situation. The form (metaphor or image) and the feeling working together generate meaningful utterances. Gendlin claims that this is the same process that the poet experiences as she rummages for the next line.

This also suggests why the cut and paste technique of writing poetry might work. The technique, which was popularized by William Burroughs,[204] involves writing a poem and then randomly rearranging the lines. One would expect nonsense from such an organization or non-organization. Yet, the poem expresses an uncanny coherency. I submit that, that coherency arises from the implicit intricacy that generated the poem in the first place.  Because the form is chaotic, its coherency has to be attributed to another source—perhaps the same source that was capable of generating two different translations of Aristotle's work. I remind the reader that Williams' critique of Gendlin may have arisen from troubling the notions of author agency—who writes the poem: the conscious reflective mind or the implicit intricacy? In the best poems, they work together.

The term 'active surrender' identifies the orientation that is required for the procedures that Gendlin suggests. Such an orientation promotes an awareness of the relationship between the form and the '…...', or between meaning and experience. In the vocabulary of this dissertation, active surrender, promotes a heuristically rich relationship between the reflective mind and the prereflective self.

I understand that the unseparated multiplicity, or the implicate intricacy, of which Gendlin writes, is a simultaneous registering of all events in one's immediate situation and all, possible responses to those events. Someone throws a baseball my way. I don't calculate the velocity of the ball, wind speed, trajectory, position of my body vis-a-vis the approaching ball, the position of my

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[203] This is where the problematization of agency shows up. Rollo May made a distinction between conscious intention and unconscious *intentionality*. The latter could be at odds with the former and therefore the question of agency arises. May, R. *Love and Will* (1969), W W Norton. NY, NY.
[204] William Burroughs 1914-1997

arm in relation to the rest of the body, and so on.  All those calculations, if they can be called that, happen instantaneously and without my awareness.  My conscious awareness is focussed on one thing only, the flight of the ball.  "Who catches the ball?" is like asking "Who is writing the poem?"  If we answer, the self conscious or reflexive agent is the one that catches the ball, then we have an impoverished description of what it means to be human.

### A Case Study: Illustrating the Influence of the Prereflective

The abstractions of which I write are embodied in a hypnosis experiment conducted by Erickson (1935)[205].  More specifically, the processes which Gendlin (1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2004, 2007)) spent a life time articulating are imbedded within the experiment that I'm about to present.  Before presenting this fascinating material, I will sketch out an interpretive framework that will lift out certain aspects of the case study narrative.  Varying relationships between the prereflective self and the reflective mind can be placed on a continuum: at the left end, the unmediated prereflective; one step over, the mediated prereflective; one step over from that, reflectivity; and on the far right, the hyperreflexive.  Mediated prereflective experience is equivalent to a second nature. What initially was learned and volitional has now become automatic.  When someone is on 'auto-pilot,' it is likely that the mediated prereflective is conditioning both the experience and the behaviour.

I now turn to the Erickson's account of inducing an experimental neurosis via hypnosis.  It should serve as an exemplar of the dynamic interplay between the mediated prereflective and the reflective, conceptual mind.  Erickson's experimental subject was a younger colleague with a Ph.D. in psychology.  Let us call him "John."  He had approached Erickson for help in overcoming his progressively debilitating experience with premature ejaculation.  Erickson offered John the option of "paying" for his treatment by agreeing to be a subject in an experimental project that Erickson was conducting at the time.  His junior colleague readily agreed.  That agreement was a ploy on Erickson's part as he wanted John to believe that treatment would start sometime in an unspecified future, when in actuality, treatment was to start almost immediately.  In doing this, Erickson's intention was to bypass the hopes and fears that would be aroused if the patient knew that treatment was about to begin.

Erickson hypnotized John and "implanted" a story that had some existential parallels with the subject's actual wishes.  John had been seeking an academic fellowship and was looking for support from a professor with whom he was acquainted.  The narrative line of the story had John visiting the professor's home for a meeting; a meeting that never took place as the professor had been called

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[205] Erikson, M. H. (1935). "A study of an Experimental Neurosis Hypnotically Induced in a Case of Ejaculatio Praecox". *British Journal of Medical Psychology*. 15, p. 34—50.

away on another matter. Before it became apparent that they would have to reschedule, John was shown into the library by the professor's wife and introduced to her lovely daughter. The wife left the room and a lively conversation ensued about art and art education. The daughter showed the subject an ornamental ceramic ashtray that she had fashioned in art school and which she intended to give to her father. During the conversation, John began to have an increasingly urgent need for a cigarette and finally asked permission to do so. The professor's daughter offered him the use of the ceramic ashtray. As his attention became increasingly absorbed in the conversation, he laid his cigarette in the ashtray. Suddenly, they heard a loud crack and, upon looking down, saw that the ashtray had snapped due to uneven heating. John was mortified and continued to be so in spite of the reassurances of both daughter and wife. Consequently, he was relieved when the professor called and said that they would have to reschedule. He hurriedly paid his respects and left. So concluded the implanted story.

Before awakening him, Erickson instructed John that although he would not consciously remember the incident, it would continue to control or influence his speech and behaviour. Which— as you are about to discover—it did. Upon awakening, he was engaged in a conversation by Erickson and two other colleagues. The subject appeared to turn every conversational topic to the subject of art, of damage to art, of fire insurance, etc. He would show signs of distress when he realized where the conversation was going and attempt to begin a new topic. Nevertheless, that new, apparently undetermined topic would turn once again to those themes and the process would start all over again. Despite his conscious intentions, some other intentionality was determining his speech.

The same phenomenon occurred with his behaviour. He readily accepted a cigarette and an offered ashtray but he

> appeared afraid to use it. Instead, after many hesitant, abortive and apparently
> compulsive attempts to flick ashes into it, he put them into the cuff of his
> trousers. (p. 303)

Later, he held his cigarette butt until it burned his fingers, then, looking at the floor lifted his foot as if he were going to crush it but then, seemed too embarrassed to do so. His visual search of the room disclosed a metal dish which he used to dispose of the remains of his cigarette, examining it several times to make sure it was out; and then, as if that weren't enough, held it between his thumb and forefinger to insure that it was completely extinguished. Clearly his mediated prereflective was also determining his behaviour.

Later, the subject was re-hypnotized and instructed, upon awakening, to recall his first session as well as the follow up conversation with Erickson and his colleagues. When he awoke, he

was able to recall and describe how his conscious thoughts and the implanted, but then unconscious, story had interacted. That is, he was able to describe his experience when the reflective mind and the prereflective self were out of sync. For example, in recalling the conversation that occurred after awakening from the first trance, he mentioned recurring feelings of distress although he could find no source for them in his present company. On the contrary, Erickson and his colleagues appeared friendly and interested. This disjunction between external perception and internal experience implied that the source for his feelings was not in the here and now. This realization initiated an internal search for an alternate source. That search, guided by the feeling of "mortification," reached back into his history for incidents where similar feelings had been evoked. That feeling locked on to experiences of premature ejaculation.

I will conclude this interesting account with a description of its resolution. Let us return to the point where Erickson had re-hypnotized John and instructed him to recall the implantation of the story and its aftermath. The subject had some difficulty in doing so but when the "light came on" he recalled his tentative manner of smoking. He then gave a demonstration of how he had smoked then which he interrupted with the statement, "I'll show you how I do it now." He lit a cigarette, appeared to enjoy it thoroughly and when finished stubbed it out against the bottom of the tray, and remarked; "Now I can feel satisfied about it." Three days later the subject returned to Erickson's office and exclaimed, "I can do it!" He went on to explain that he had, had a very satisfying sexual experience the previous night. When he was asked to explain the change he said that he felt no need to do so because the situation had resolved itself spontaneously. To me the world "spontaneous" suggests that the transformational change occurred in the prereflective self—without conscious symbolization. This experiment suggests that in order for transformational learning to occur the mediated prereflective must be engaged, and further, supported to enact a new response to a familiar situation—to be bold rather than tentative. The educational implications will be addressed in the concluding section of this chapter. For now, however, the explanation runs counter to much of the literature on transformational learning which suggests that reflection plays a major role. Due to space restrictions, I won't be exploring this startling possibility here. It would, however, be a very interesting topic for future research. I imagine that Erickson was interested in this same question because he wasn't content to let John's explanation of spontaneous resolution stand. He suggested that John sit down and think hard, "letting his mind wander at will" and as he did so recall all the various emotions that had occurred during his experiences of premature ejaculations. After some time the subject "became uneasy and in a low monotonous tone of voice" said

> I see it now—I put my cigarette in the ashtray and it broke—spoiled
> everything—I felt terrible—just the same way—I see it now—I was afraid to
> use the ashtray—I'd try to—I'd pat the ashes to be sure there were no sparks—
> I'd use my trousers." (p. 306, emphasis added)

He then went on to reminisce about his earlier epiphany—of how he had broken through his hesitancy about smoking and then, had boldly snuffed out his cigarette. That recollection seemed to open up another insight, "[N]ow I know what I meant when I said I could be satisfied." That is, the subject became uneasy as he became reflectively conscious even though it had produced an "insight."

I want to briefly suggest how such an issue might be resolved "spontaneously"—that is, prereflectively. The induced complex acted as a metaphor for the presenting problem. What does a metaphor do? It utilizes objects and events drawn from the external world (a young man and woman; a cigarette and an ashtray; an unfortunate outcome); then forms a relationship between these elements that is isomorphic with an internal psychic relationship (the disappointing experience of premature ejaculation). A metaphor maps the relationship amongst one set of elements, to a similar relationship amongst a different set of elements. The following excerpt from the transcript supports this interpretation:

> I see it now—I put my cigarette in the ashtray and it broke—spoiled
> everything—I felt terrible—just the same way—I see it now. (p. 306, emphasis
> added.)

I'm hypothesizing that the string "spoiled everything—I felt terrible—just the same way," refers to both the fabricated experience and his discouraging sexual experiences—he felt terrible about each and the resolution for one became the resolution for the other. The implicit intricacy readily recognized another context where similar dynamics were at play. I suggest that the implicit intricacy, operating in the background, that is responsible for our capacity for pattern recognition. And, further, that it is this implicit pattern recognition that makes our experience meaningful. If reading the account of the hypnotically implanted neurosis was as meaningful for the reader as it was for me, it was because their own implicit intricacy brought the account to life long before I offered my theoretical explanations.

### The Role of Metaphor in Prereflective Engagement

I make extensive use of metaphor both as a therapist and as an educator. In the latter capacity, I use it to flesh out theoretical abstractions that otherwise would be empty concepts for the student—"verbal noise" as Gendlin put it earlier. For example, in teaching about the superego I might state that it begins as a guardian but frequently it turns into a guard. Initially it protects, but eventually it imprisons one in a structure of self-criticism. Given these metaphors most students can

feel their way into an experiential sense of the superego.  Metaphor evokes a familiar felt sense through reference to the relationship between known elements.  By so doing, it sensitizes the listener or viewer to "discover" that same relationship amongst elements that has yet to be symbolized.  Using a different vocabulary: metaphor invites prereflective engagement—language as the house of being.  Erickson makes a similar point in the following,

> The transformation of the fabrication into a reality for him [the subject] had been achieved readily upon his identification of the father with a gentleman whom he knew slightly and whom he had wished might play such a role.  (p. 304, emphasis added)

That is, the patient's prereflective co-constructed or elaborated the narrative initially supplied by the hypnotherapist.  Erickson goes on to state this idea in a more abstract manner:

> An important consideration is the patient's demonstration of the phenomenon of interpolating into a communication of one's own feelings, ideas, and experiences.  (p. 308, emphasis added)

Thin or empty concepts and symbols come to life as the subject fills them in from their own implicit intricacy.  I am reminded of the experience of seeing a film based on a book that I had previously read.  Often I would be startled to notice the difference in appearance between the character on the screen and the one I had imagined: "He doesn't look like that!"  I would not have been conscious of my internally generated image until it was "disconfirmed" by the film.  That is, the image was prereflective.  Yet, it was there, operating in the background, bringing the novel to life, making it real.

### Action Based Learning

This experiment can yield even more insights with regard to the themes of this dissertation.  One of the ways that prereflective functioning has been characterized is action guided by perception (Varela, 1999)[206] or sensori-motor[207] (Piaget, 1973) or interactive (Gendlin, 1973[208]).  These various vocabularies are all pointing to the transactions that take place between the organism and its environment.  They are not pointing to the processing of representations in reflective thought.  Rather they are pointing to action.  Can this characterization by applied to understanding the successful outcome of this experiment?  It seems that both the implanted and the original neurosis were

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[206] Varela, F. (1999). *Ethical know-how : action, wisdom, and cognition*. Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press.

[207] Piaget, J. (1973). *The child and reality; problems of genetic psychology*. Trans. Arnold Rosin. New York: Grossman Publishers.

[208] Gendlin, E. (1997). *Experiencing and the creation of meaning: a philosophical and psychological* approach to the subjective. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

successfully overcome through action . . . through changing his behaviour.  This is to suggest that closure could only be achieved through action: first, he stubbed out his cigarette boldly where his previous efforts had been timid and hesitant.  Then that definitive response potential was carried over and acted out during his subsequent sexual experience.  It seems that action is required for existential rather than intellectual change.  That is, the action carried the situation forward to its conclusion or resolution.  This could be termed one-trial learning in that the new response elicited a dramatic drop in his anxiety and so reinforced the responsible behaviour.  That would be a behaviouristic interpretation.  A pragmatist might say that his action created a new habit.  An existentialist might say that he adopted a new attitude or predisposition towards his situations—one of assertiveness rather than timidity.  A gestalt therapist might say that the "unfinished business" was there waiting to be discharged by an appropriate action.  These interpretations, along with the "spontaneous" resolution of his original problem, suggest that the prereflective self exercises more potency than the reflective mind.  But it's not quite that simple.  In another experience, Erickson worked with a man who couldn't wear dentures because they induced a gag reflex.  Erickson hypnotized him with the suggestion that the gag reflex wouldn't occur.  He inserted the dentures while the man was still in trance and after he was awakened, handed him a mirror and asked him to smile.  This patient's life took a decided turn for the better including a promotion from the parts, to the sales department.  Six months passed and one night before going to bed, he removed his dentures, putting them in a glass beside the bed.  His wife asked why he did that and he responded, "I just felt like it.  Don't worry I'll put them back in the morning."  But he never did.

What was going on here?  My interpretation is that his conscious, reflective mind felt duped and it took six months for it to re-establish control.  This indicates that while the prereflective may have more potency, if it doesn't collaborate with the reflective mind, its power will be compromised.  These thoughts lead me to the concluding section of this chapter.

**Prereflective Affirmation; Reflective Doubt**
"If you don't stand for something, then you'll fall for anything."  anon
"What is an Oak tree?  A nut that stood its ground."  anon

Let me return to the beginning.  What was the purpose motivating this question of the optimal relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective, conceptual mind?  I've devoted my energy to this task because my forty years experience as a psychotherapist has demonstrated repeatedly that dis-ease results when they are out of relationship.  When my clients live exclusively according to their conceptual or representational meanings they seem to repeat rather than learn from their experience.  Their healing begins when they learn to consult their prereflective experience and its fit or lack thereof with their conceptual understandings.  In addition, my motivation has a larger

purpose. My sense is that our culture is in crisis that will not be resolved through a war of ideologies. I suggest that the way through will be revealed, piece by piece, by attending to our prereflective response to our current situation and not by thinking with "zombie categories." Moreover, I believe that the strength to forge ahead will be experienced by attending to that prereflective ground.

In this final section, I want to explore the possibility that strong values are anchored in the prereflective. By "strong values," I am referring to values that are enacted rather than merely discussed. I want to lead into this discussion by unpacking the folk wisdom imbedded in the opening quotations of this section. With the first sentence, I'm drawn to the word "stand"—as in, "stand for something." The second quotation brings "stand" into association with "ground." When I truly understand, I feel grounded. I recall reading a distinction between "knowing" and "understanding." Knowing something could be attributed to a more surface, even rote, learning, whereas understanding meant a more intimate and fundamental familiarity. Understanding something allowed one to apply it in a different context than where it was learned[209]. A simple example: rote learning 'knows' that water boils at 100 degrees Celsius; a deeper understanding realizes that the boiling point is a function of altitude—water boils at a lower temperature at a higher altitude. An even deeper understanding would relate the boiling point to air pressure—which, of course, reduces the higher the altitude. The relationships hold as the context changes. One understands the underlying generativity that produces the surface pattern.

The same can be said of psychological functioning. A psychologist works to understand the assumptions that support and possibly even produce the contents of consciousness. Kegan (1982), for example, worked out psychological stages where the defining characteristic depended on where the boundary between subject and object is established. Knowing this ur structure allows one to predict certain behaviours and experiences. An accurate assessment of where a client makes the subject/object distinction, would allow Kegan to ascertain that for which the person can assume responsibility and that for which he can't. For example, if a person hasn't objectified their feelings of tiredness or low blood sugar they won't be able to take responsibility for the resultant emotional reactivity. They will insist that their outburst was caused by some external factor—by the way their teacher spoke to them, for example. For them, their reaction was an appropriate response to real provocation. That was the ground from which they moved. The fact that I chose an example (low blood sugar) that demonstrated flawed attributions, neiher undermines nor obscures the fact that the tired person acted with conviction. Living from one's prereflective ground is the *sine qua non* of wholehearted commitment—even though subsequent reflection might reveal that one's assumptive ground was inadequate.

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[209] Blenkinsop, Sean. Personal communication. Dec. 21, 2011

In summary, my point of departure is this: to commit entails responding wholeheartedly to one's perceptions—perceptions that have been conditioned, but not completely determined, by the prereflective. That is, one must commit even while acknowledging one's truth is, at best, only a partial truth[210]. Ironical detachment and sceptical doubt might prevent one from looking foolish at the cost of consigning oneself to the role of passive witness—someone who never makes mistakes having ceased to commit. An alternative way forward is offered in the following Buddhist aphorism: "You Westerners are always looking for a soft place to land in case things don't work out. You'll learn much faster if you let yourself fall on rocky ground from time to time." It seems to me that reflection might be the soft pillow that we look for to pre-empt learning from falling. Reflection involves a stepping away from the ground of our prereflective experience. At its best the act entails examining that prereflective ground for fault lines; at its worst it means taking up a permanent position at least one step removed from one's experience. What if we went the other way and inhabited our prereflective and let our experience and behaviour arise from that? What if we let our mistakes crash into us rather than absorbing them with the airbags of irony?

### Going Forward requires Affirmation

By exploring the relationship between prereflective ground and committed action, I hope to contribute[211] to an understanding of the malaise infecting Western culture. I want to attribute some of that malaise to liberals who appear to be weakened by their penchant for reflection and perspectivism. These orientations often correlate with an ironic stance with regard to one's beliefs. Liberals have learned that beliefs often change and so they hold them loosely or provisionally, whereas the fundamentalists on the right, grip their beliefs fiercely—as if they were defending not a view of reality but rather reality itself[212]. Admittedly, my claims are highly speculative and other

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[210] Elsewhere in this dissertation I've associated the prereflective with the existential and the reflective with the cognitive. When one makes an existential move one does so with one's whole being. A midlife crisis is existential for that reason.

[211] I say "contribute" because I'm sure there are many other factors at work—economic, political, environmental, to name just a few.

[212] 68 percent of self-identified Democrats, as well as 76 percent of political independents, say they want Democratic leaders in the House and Senate to make compromises to gain consensus in the current spending debate. By comparison, 56 percent of self-identified Republicans — and 68 percent of Tea Party supporters — want GOP leaders to stick to their position, even if it means the inability to achieve consensus. A May 2010 Pew Research Center poll leading into the midterms also found a partisan divide on compromising: More than twice as many Republicans (40%) as Democrats (19%) or independents (15%) say they would be less willing to favour a candidate willing to compromise. A Nov. 2010 Gallup poll found a similar break: Americans think it is generally more important for political leaders to compromise to get things done (47%) rather than sticking to their beliefs (27%), but Republicans and Democrats hold differing views on the matter. Republicans tilt more toward saying leaders should stick to their beliefs (41% to 32%), while Democrats more widely endorse compromise (by 59% to 18%). New York Times, Feb. 23, 2012

interpretations are available. For example, the liberal progressive's penchant for reflection has revealed that ideology is a screen masking reality and, and as a result, some choose to become pragmatists. But even pragmatism is suspect as we come to understand that our experience of reality is a mediated one. The ground upon which liberals wish to stand seems to be disappearing. Past candidates for the status of ground included religion, tradition, metaphysics, ideology, rationality, and objectivity. Each of them offered a way to justify or "guarantee" one's understanding of a situation. However, each of those has been problematized and found wanting by the intelligentsia. While having lost their legitimacy for those on the left, religion and tradition apparently still serve the grounding function for those on the right.

Perhaps the whole culture is moving through a liminal zone where the old structures are dissolving and the new structures have yet to be created. If my supposition were true, then how would those new structures come into being? In this, I anticipate my argument that in these postmodern times, the prereflective is the candidate of choice for ground.

### Spring in contrast with Ground

Before developing this line of reasoning, let me address some connotations that adhere to the concept of ground. It has come to mean stable, unchanging, eternal, or absolute. In other words, it doesn't depend on my agreement for its truth status. Supposedly, therefore, it is beyond the contaminating biases of subjectivity. However, the ground the I am proposing is not absolute but rather, provisional. It is one's best intuition at the moment. One encounters the world from that intuition or prereflective sensing and the world responds with corrective feedback. It is an interactional feedback loop or circuit—it is sensori-motor, to recall Piaget or action guided by perception, to recall Varela. Those interactions either confirm or disconfirm one's grounding assumptions. In the latter case, one's ground is revealed as inadequate and new ground will be sought—or constructed through some existential commitment. Thus, in health, the prereflective ground is evolving or emergent rather than solid and unchanging. With my clients who've located their security in a stable belief system (that is also generating their difficulties) I offer the following metaphor: instead of being supported by ground, you can be buoyed up by the artesian spring of your experience—the constantly arising flow of your experience.[213]

Gendlin shows us a way forward by asking us to reflect on our arising, prereflective experience. That is, he is implying that the appropriate use of reflection is to give form (conceptually, linguistically, metaphorically) to our inchoate experience. In this section, I want to consider a possible exception to this general rule. I have already given the concrete example of the

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[213] Perhaps "ground" was the working metaphor for modernity as "spring" will be for postmodernity.

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resistance encountered when Erickson pressed the subject to consciously "explain" his spontaneous healing. I suggested that his resistance was directed against the reflective, conceptual mind's analytic rationality. My claim will be that rational analysis belongs to a different ontological register than does experience[214]. Next, I hope to show that the disengaged, reflective approach eviscerates or elides an embodied sense of valuing in favour of deduced values or ethical rules that may be legitimatized rationally but are not grounded existentially[215]. Finally, , I will claim that It is the prereflective subject that imparts significance to, and derives significance and value from, the world. This latter claim will be based on the presupposition that the prereflective works through affirmation whereas the reflective mind operates via doubt. By valorizing reflection, the balance is tilted in favour of negation over affirmation. I believe that this generates long-term consequences some of which we seem unaware. Wittgenstein's last book, On Certainty[216], states that there are some things that must be exempt from doubt in order for human practices to be possible. This addresses one of my central concerns as our culture works through the late stages of the Enlightenment. The "Age of Reason" sought to employ rational scepticism to undo the harmful effects of superstition and religion. However, if Wittgenstein was right, and I believe that he was, then there is a limit to the beneficial effects of doubt.

## An Individual Value Vacuum

I will now use a case study of a client who was experiencing panic disorder to point to some of the unintended consequences of a methodology of doubt. In doing so, I hope to bring forth the parallels between an individual who found himself in a world devoid of existential significance and the scientific convention that valorized the "view from nowhere." Some time ago, I worked with a client who was employed by a brewery that was merging with a much larger one. He was a blue collar millwright from Wales; a soccer player from the "old country." He was coming to me because of the sudden onset of panic attacks. He had many legitimate complaints regarding his condition but the one I wish to focus on was his disclosure that he no longer knew what to do with his Saturdays. Formerly, this day would unfold without much thought. One task completed would make room for another emergent task, chore, or playful distraction. The next activity would present itself spontaneously. Now, however, he had to plan a day, to make a schedule, prepare a to-do list.

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[214] The form produced by the reflective mind should serve to highlight or bring the experience into sharper focus; it should not elide or replace the prereflective experience. The form should serve and not replace.
[215] At early stages of psychological development following the rules may be the most reliable way of behaving but at a certain point of development one gives up that slavish dependency in favour of reading and responding to the situation appropriately. At that later level sometimes the behaviour will follow the rules and at other times, seemingly break them. Here "rules" function like assumptions—good for most occasions but not for all.
[216] Wittgenstein, L. (1969). *On certainty.* ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright ; tr. by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: J. & J. Harper,

Nothing on the list was more notable or important than anything else—they were all just means to fill the day...that was their only value. Another client, who had been traumatized by a motorcycle accident, said the same thing...what was formerly important, no longer held any significance. For example, he was now discarding everything that he had previously hoarded. I interpret their joint dilemma as follows: both men had disconnected from their prereflective self—the source of their needs and desires and their panic attacks. Both subjects intuited that their panic arose from their prereflective, existential self. In order to manage the panic state they disconnected from the source: the prereflective. By making that move, however, they also lost touch with the source of their needs and desires. Consequently, neither man could sense what he wanted. A person experiencing panic disorder has temporarily lost their ground—the background feel of an identity persisting over time. One can imagine how carefully, how cautiously they must proceed with their lives, when nothing, absolutely nothing can be taken for granted[217]. Instead of moving confidently from solid ground, the person finds himself or herself skating on thin ice. As a result, affirmative action becomes virtually impossible. As Wittgenstein said, some things must be exempt from doubt for human practices to be possible.

## A Collective Value Vacuum

There are several other results arising from their disconnection. When I mentioned the client who had to "make up" a list of activities for his Saturdays, I was exemplifying someone who had lost their prereflective orientation to the world. The world had lost its personal significance. Nothing in his environment "called" him. I find myself wondering if this is an extreme manifestation of a more wide spread phenomenon that Weber[218] termed the disenchantment of the world. His term suggests that this cultural phenomenon resulting from increasing rationalization—producing a culture of reflexivity.

Another disturbing, and related, side effect of wholesale reflexivity is increased suggestibility or "suggestion slavery." I'm noticing that people who are excessively reflective are like a sailboat lacking ballast; any passing breeze can upend it. Lacking ontological rootedness in their experience, they become more vulnerable to the suggestions of advertisers, public relations, and political campaigns. For some, however, an opposite reaction can also occur. Sensing a danger in their "wishy-washiness," they become rigidly inflexible. Their brittleness suggests the fear that if one

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[217] This anticipates my later argument that the postmodern candidate for ground is the prereflective. If skeptical analysis corrodes the givens of the prereflective how do we move forward with any certainty?
[218] Basit Bilal Koshul (2005). The postmodern significance of Max Weber's legacy: disenchanting disenchantment. Macmillan. p. 11. ISBN 9781403967848. Retrieved 23 March 2011.

were to give a little, one would break.  Both suggestibility and reactive rigidity imply an insecure ontology.

Giddens[219] (1990) observes the same condition in the collective.  The

> [U]nsettling quality of modernity's "wholesale reflexivity"—which is turned not only on all traditions but even on the nature of reflection itself, resulting in the dissolving of anchored vantage points and a universal "institutionalization of doubt."  (p. 39, 176, emphasis added)

Both the institutionalization of doubt and ironic detachment seem like the opposite pole of positive engagement with the world.  A metaphor that expresses the experiential difference between affirmation and doubt depicts prereflective experience as the sun and reflection as the moon— the warmth and vitality of affirmation versus the cold comfort of scepticism.  This metaphor also implies that the prereflective is primary with reflection occurring secondarily.  There are therapeutic and educational applications to be derived from this construal.  For example, many of my clients report that when they experience anxiety, they resort to defensive measures that offer immediate relief at the cost of long term self loathing.  They might avoid a situation (like applying for a promotion) because of its potential to arouse anxiety; or they might respond to a perceived threat with automatic compliance.  After the danger has passed they become extremely self-critical.  Their critiquing of self disempowers them further.  Challenged to show them how to relieve their suffering, I instruct them as follows

> When you are about to engage in a behaviour that you know you will regret later, ask yourself the following question: "What would I do right now if I loved myself?" … Then wait for an answer to begin to come to your mind.  You will find that enacting that answer will always yield results better than would the compulsive behaviour with which you were about to engage.

From their reports, the possibility of self love brought with it two effects.  Firstly, the person begins to experience something akin to psychological warmth and secondly, instead of constriction, they experience expansiveness.  The warmth melts their rigidity while the experience of expansiveness marks an opening up to the prereflective.  It is the prereflective that generates or synthesizes a response that is more appropriate to the situation.  And this creative response comes to their mind. This simple word, "comes," describes the experience of the reflective mind—it receives an answer. I've  described this technique to counselling students in an educational setting.  From reading their journal assignments, I learned that the students applied it successfully to their own lives.

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[219] Giddens, A. (1990). *Consequences of Modernity.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

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## The Postmodern Flattening of Value Hierarchies

In Varieties of Religious Experience, James[220] (1982) asks us to,

> Conceive yourself...suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it as it exists, purely by itself, without your favourable or unfavourable, hopeful or apprehensive comment. It will be almost impossible for you to realize such a condition of negativity and deadness. No one portion of the universe would then have importance beyond another; and the whole collection of its things and series of its events would be without significance, character, interest, or perspective.

When I read that, deprived of personal emotion, the world appears to be "without significance, character, interest or perspective" I see a parallel with my panic disordered clients and postmodernism's adoption and elaboration of cultural relativism[221]. That is, through attempting to see from a number of perspectives, the extreme postmodern worldview gives each viewpoint equal weight. Differing cultural perspectives can not be arranged in a hierarchy because to do so would posit a criterion that assigns value to each perspective according to some transcendent value outside of, and greater than, the competing perspectives. For example, if a relatively homogenous and coherent culture preserved a place for the sacred, then all points of view would be measured against their approximation with, and fidelity, to that sacred. The result would be a hierarchy of perspectives—from the sacred to the secular to the profane. However, with cultural relativism "no one portion of the universe would then have importance beyond another." The difference between James' description and the postmodernism characterization sketched out here is that the former identifies a causal factor: the withdrawal of one's personal engagement with the world. Postmodernism's pronouncements, on the other hand, seem to naturalize this condition—they describe a world without a subject. Musil (1953)[222] anticipates this condition in The Man Without Qualities: "What has arisen is a world of qualities without a man, of experiences without someone to experience them." Gendlin (1997)[223] makes a similar claim in the following

> [Heidegger] convinced many philosophers to reject the subject/object distinction, but now there seems to be no way to talk about ourselves. And the topic we seem unable to discuss is still called "the human subject." (p. 8)

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[220] James, William. (1982). *The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature.* Ed. Martin E. Marty. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books.

[221] Cook, J. (1978). "Cultural Relativism as an Ethnocentric Notion," in *The Philosophy of Society.* ed. R. Beehler and A. Drengson. London: Methuen.

[222] Musil, R. (1953). *The man without qualities.* tr. from the German and with a foreword by Eithne Wilkins & Ernst Kaiser. New York: Capricorn Books. Vol. 1, p. 175

[223] Gendlin, E. (1997). "How Philosophy Cannot Appeal to Experience". In *Language Beyond Postmodernism: Saying and Thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy*. Ed. David M. Levin. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

According to Gendlin, the human subject has been elided from a scientific understanding of the world. I'm suggesting that the elimination of the first person point of view, that is the hallmark of the scientific orientation, mirrors and amplifies the individual's disengagement from the world to which James referred. That is, the psychological act of reflection and science's purging of subjectivity mutually reinforce each other.

I am suggesting that this line of inquiry might produce fruitful results. For example, we might be able to use our knowledge of panic disorder symptoms to guide us to detect parallel phenomena in the collective? For example, does western culture oscillate between apathy and hysteria as do my exemplary clients? Low voter turnout could be symptomatic of the former while the spate of end-of-civilization movies (The Road, Time of the Wolf, and Melancholia to name but a few) exemplify the latter. My clients' apathy arose from a disconnect from the ground of their experience, whereas their hysteria arises when their experience breaks through their conceptual descriptions. It seems to me that something very similar is happening with the collective. This is not the place to work out the details of that parallel, but in broad strokes it seems like scepticism has undermined the meanings ,both religious and metaphysical, that formerly contained our panic — allowing it to be experienced, for example, as awe. That is, those belief systems "made sense" of the mysteries of existence. Eagleton[224] (2010) seemed to be pointing to a similar conclusion with his claim that the Muslim revival laid bare the contradiction between our need, in the West, to believe and our inability to do so. According to Eagleton postmodernism claims that all passionate conviction is dogmatic while certainty is associated with authoritarianism. While we undercut our ground, the Muslims stand firmly on theirs. Obviously, this is not the place to explore these questions completely but they do suggest a line of inquiry.

### The Proper Unit of Study: Not Perception alone; but Action guided by Perception

Earlier I quoted Gendlin's observation that since Heidegger problematized the subject/object distinction there seemed to be no way to talk about the "human subject." Later he challenges the primacy given to perception by philosophy in general and science in particular. Perhaps he has identified a source of western malaise.

> Perception always divides what is seemingly over there from a perceiver here….
> Science presents the world as something observed, something external, consisting of
> percepts. But this depends on an idealized observer who supplies the connections….
> The objects are there; we are dropped out of the universe. We are elevated to be its
> "constructors," disembodied, floating beside the universe. Within the universe

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[224] Eagleton, T. (2010). "The God Debate." Gifford Lecture on March 1 at the Playfair Library

presented by science we seem impossible.  But we know something is wrong with this, since we are here.  (p. 14-15).

Gendlin offers an alternative.  He gives interaction, not perception, primacy.  "Between two people there is one interaction." (p. 15).  He is implying that the unit of study is the complete circuit, the complete feedback loop, that is, the interaction of self with environment.

My claim, therefore, is that we cannot extract ourselves (from this circuit) to achieve "the view from nowhere" without producing a seemingly empty, dead world.  What gives the world its significance, according to James, is the emotions that it inspires in us.  There is a relationship between self and world; between my emergent needs and the world's capacity to address those needs[225].  James gives us a world that is capable of inspiring us, of calling to us.  Not the "view from nowhere," therefore, but rather a situated, embodied interaction.  Dohn[226] (2011) gives an interesting reading of the interplay between self and world

> [T]he conversation with the situation might be called "situated reflection."
> Reflection would then refer to the process of continuously taking account of and
> adjusting to the situation—of, as one might say, allowing one's saying, doing, and
> visions to adequately "reflect" the overall gestalt of the situation and any events and
> changes.  (p. 705)

Not only does Dohn articulate this interaction but she also uses the term "reflection" in a fresh way: applying it to interaction rather than to representational thinking.  By characterizing corrective feedback as reflection, she carries the whole topic forward.

The sedimented prereflective is an orientation or disposition to one's situation.  Without this initial orientation, it is virtually impossible to go forward with efficacy.  Multiple perspectives, while possible for the reflective mind, undermine decisive action—instead they produce the paralysis of over-deliberation.  The prereflective, on the other hand, intuitively offers a limited number of responses to "the overall gestalt of the situation."  The prereflective participates in a feedback loop that relates need to action to circumstance and back again.

### A Phenomenological Account of Value Loss: From a Meaningful, to a Pointless Life

Earlier I offered an explained panic disorder syndrome as arising from the disconnect between the prereflective self and reflective mind.  I will now turn to a less extreme and more recognizable example of the loss of connection.  This loss is felt acutely when a romantic relationship

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[225]Belatedly we are coming to realize that the world has needs as well and we're wondering about our capacity to address them.

[226] Dohn, N. B. (2011). "On the Epistemological Presuppositions of Reflective activities." in *Educational* Theory. Vol. 1, no. 6.

comes to an abrupt end, not of one's choosing. I'm currently working with two individuals who are having such an experience. They had, had an affair, and then left their marriages to be with each other. But their affair had ended badly and they separated. During the initial stages of the relationship, they both reported that they were "following their heart." For each of them, their experience felt more "true and real" than anything that they had previously experienced. That quality had convinced them that yes, indeed, this was trustworthy. Their worlds were infused with meaning. However, since their relationship ended, each reported that their lives were "pointless." Personal significance had vanished from their worlds. Or, more accurately, their prereflective self had recoiled from its engagement with the world leaving it dead and lifeless. Their experience had come to resemble the world that William James described which I quoted at the beginning of this section—a world "without significance, character, interest, or perspective." Although their experience had gone from meaningful to meaningless, these characterizations should not be confused with questions of truth—in the sense of truth as an eternal verity. What I'm driving at is more a matter of ontology rather than epistemology. Recall, for a moment, the earlier discussion of a client who experienced the twin symptoms of depersonalization and derealisation. He was experiencing ontological insecurity. Both his world and self were experienced as unreal—not a question of true or false, which would be an epistemological distinction, but rather one of, real or unreal, a matter of ontology. What I am hoping to uncover and reveal with these examples is the psychic dynamic at work when a whole culture steps back from engagement with their situation in favour of reflection and representational thought. I am suggesting that the disenchanted world that Weber[227] named can be understood in the same way—where scientific understanding is more highly valued than belief.

### The Power Potential of the Prereflective as revealed by Hypnosis

I've been putting forward the claim that taking up a reflexive orientation drains the self of its potency. Perhaps this is another way of saying that the prereflective is the ground from which we act. With the certainty that, that ground provides, we launch our projects. There have been other authors who've made similar claims and they've been cited earlier (Nietzsche as quoted and elaborated by Sass). Now I'd like to augment those philosophical claims with some empirical support, drawn once again from the realm of hypnosis. Jaynes[228] (1976) cites an experiment where the subject was asked to immerse his hand in a bucket of ice water and leave it there without feeling any pain; or to stare into darkness and contract the pupils of their eyes in response to an imagined light. Both tasks were

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[227] Weber, Max. (2011). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Translated and introduced by Stephen Kalberg. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

[228] Jaynes, J. (1976). *The origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, c1976. Hereafter referred to a OC

easily accomplished in the hypnotic state but impossible to consciously produce. With hypnosis, however, even the "involuntary" contraction of the pupil could be manipulated. The term "involuntary" tips us off that it is the prereflective that is producing this result. The point that I want to stress is that the prereflective actualizes whereas the conscious, reflective mind tries. Yet there is something disturbing about this experiment as it also suggests that what is being affirmed is a lie—the ice water is cold not warm. That is, the results of the experiment suggest that the prereflective doesn't necessarily have unmediated access to a situation or circumstance. Let us probe a little deeper to see what else might be revealed by this simple experiment. Here is one possible interpretation: the conscious mind of the hypnotic operator colonizes the prereflective self of the subject. As a result, the subject's experience becomes what the operator suggested. This interpretation aligns with my intuition that the reflective mind can elide the actual prereflective experience in favour of a suggested one. (Recall my earlier ruminations about "suggestion slavery.") I wonder if something like this happens when a person's conscious ideology becomes the Procrustean bed into which the person forces their personal experience. Gendlin (1997) states something similar in the following "people use a phrase *from the common store*, without noticing whether it speaks from what they are living in their situations." (p. 20, LBP, emphasis added). It seems to me that Gendlin is making distinctions between people who make sense with the stock phrases supplied by their culture and those who make the effort to relate language to their experience. Relating his observation to this experiment, it seems that the culture performs the function of the hypnotic operator.

Despite the many interesting implications in the above, the main thread of my argument is that the prereflective is the ground from which experience is generated and committed behaviour, produced. Jaynes (1976) goes on to ask the question: "Is it 'we' that do them? Indeed in hypnosis it is as if someone else were doing things through us." (p. 402)[229] His question is an interesting one as it returns to the questions of identity and agency that were touched on earlier. We seem to identify with our conscious volition and its promised autonomy. Yet, I suggest that it is the prereflective self that has the power to contract the pupils and to not feel pain. Contrast this with what Jaynes has to say with regard to our conscious, reflective mind: "On another level, why is it that in our daily lives we cannot get up above ourselves to authorize ourselves into being what we really wish to be?[230]" (p. 403). He then contrasts pre-reflective power with the limitations of our conscious minds:

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[229] This is reminiscent of certain postmodern notions that "culture is living us" and "language speaks through us."

[230] Jaynes lament that we cannot get "up above ourselves" sounds a lot like Kegan's definition of reflection as "standing outside of ourselves".

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> [W]e who must scuttle along on conscious models and sceptical ethics, have to accept lessened control. We are learned in self-doubt, scholars of our very failures, geniuses at excuse and tomorrowing our resolves. And so we become practiced in powerless resolution until hope gets undone and dies in the unattempted.... And then to rise above this noise of knowings and really change ourselves, we need an authorization that 'we' do not have. (p. 403, emphasis added)

Clearly, Jaynes is linking scepticism, self-doubt, and lessened control. Our identity is equated with our conscious, volitional mind, yet it is our prereflective self that exercises the potency of affirmation. Jaynes' thought supports Nietzsche's intuition that consciousness is the dissuader and critic. Sass (1992) identifies other philosophical traditions that have made the same point.

> Various writers in the romantic, Nietzschean, surrealist and poststructuralist traditions have pointed out dangers in this enshrining of reason, such as how it can splinter the unity and authenticity of the human being, stifling imagination and physical vitality while bringing on the paralysis of overdeliberation and self-consciousness. (p. 4, emphasis added)

Recall the client, suffering from panic disorder, who didn't know what he wanted from his Saturdays. Instead, he rationally deduced a to-do list. The natural vitality that was available before the onset of his disorder was gone. Instead, he "flat-lined" his way through the day. He had lost the certainty of his "instincts" and impulses and instead "over thought" his possible reactions to his circumstances. He had becomes conscious of self rather than the task at hand. He had become trapped in his reflective mind. Now, I will turn my attention to a collective manifestation of this same tendency.

### Implications for the Academy

Before delving into the topic of this section, let me remind the reader of the earlier declaration of my subject position. On pages 28 and 29 of the introduction, I went into some detail about a transformational experience that I underwent in my mid twenties. This experience radically altered my way of being-in-the-world—and provoked a prolonged epistemological quest. Much of what I now believe and communicate in this dissertation regarding the unacknowledged dangers of reflection is the product of that experience. Therefore, my critique of the Cartesian paradigm that framed scholarly work is founded on my originary "upheaval of thought."

I will begin with a previous quotation of James (1982)

> Conceive yourself...suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it as it exists, purely by itself, without your favourable or unfavourable, hopeful or apprehensive comment.

In his account, our natural condition is to be inspired by the world. He asks us to become conscious of this by contrasting it with an experience of the world stripped of all emotion—a world that is purely and eerily Cartesian. Cartesian duality sees the self as separated from the world rather than a being-in-the-world. In Beckett and Hager's (2002) recent work the "standard paradigm of learning" understands the learner as thoroughly Cartesian: essentially an individual, rational, self-contained, and independent mind who takes on the detached spectator role in relation to the world and action.[231] In the Cartesian account, the world is transformed into a picture that we navigate via remote control. This is a far cry from a world that is capable of inspiring our emotions. James' version implies that the world 'calls' to us. For example, water calls to thirst and thirst calls for water. This call and response interaction is a more robust characterization of our prereflective existence than the notion that we are merely responding to our projected representations. Implicit within James' conceptualization is the idea that our nature necessitates contact with otherness; we need to get beyond ourselves. It is necessary to state this explicitly because Cartesian premises are so deeply imbedded within the social imaginary[232] of our culture that they are not noticed. When they are assumed, they are not critiqued and thereby come to inform our prereflective experience—they become a part of the taken-for-granted—"of course there are subjects and objects that are separated by a gulf." In the same way as the hypnotist's reflective mind operates on and through the subject's prereflective capacities, the social imaginary comes to influence, if not structure our experience. If we're Cartesian, we experience ourselves as separate from the world with only a world picture as its pale substitute[233]. This broad generalization may not apply completely to today's university as Cartesian duality is being problematized on many fronts. However, those assumptions had already migrated to the culture at large. To be a citizen in the west is to be an unconscious Cartesian. Its assumptions are imbedded in what Taylor (2004) refers to as our "social imaginaries."

> The social imaginary is not a set of "ideas"; rather it is what
> enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society…. It has now become so
> self-evident to us, that we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among
> others.[234]

Taylor claims that his social imaginaries are not a set of ideas but elsewhere he states that initially they were—certainly in the case of Descartes. Originally, his ideas were explicitly stated but now

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[231] Beckett, D. & Hager, P. (2002). *Life, Work and Learning: Practice in Postmodernity*. London: Routledge. p. 95.

[232] Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham : Duke University Press, 2004

[233] Environmentalists are a recently emergent group that experience their connectedness with, rather than a separation from, the environment.

[234] Taylor, C. *On Social Imaginary*. blog.lib.umn.edu/swiss/archive/Taylor.pdf. Accessed Nov. 18, 2011

those ideas are assumed and enacted in the culture at large.  Because they are so widely assumed they have a functional value: they help organize our interactions.  This partially explains their persistence.

## From Static Concepts To Flowing Processes

However, I find myself wondering, if there are other reasons for their staying power.  For example, I wonder if they persist because they accurately thematize the operations of the reflective mind.  That is, his depictions were phenomenologically faithful.  One's reflective mind does work more with concepts than with objects in the world.  Or, perhaps one's concepts are "stand ins" or representation for those objects.  Those concepts and representations supposedly "mediate" the gulf that separates the Cartesian mind from the objective world.  However, while this account of human functioning accurately represents conceptual thinking, it naturally omits prereflective operations.  That is to say that the very method of reflective thinking occludes the prereflective.  This outcome is exacerbated by language, which also directs our attention to conceptual functioning.  Frameworks work by exclusion.  A boundary is drawn.  Everything within that boundary is potentially legitimate while everything outside, simply doesn't exist.  For example, a quantitative framework assumes "if it can't be counted, it doesn't count."  Similarly, the prereflective, by definition, cannot be included in a representational system.  As a result, reflective meaning persists while we are seldom aware of our prereflective experience[235].  In other words, what can be expressed through language tends to persist[236] and that which has not yet been given form, our experience, tends, in comparison, to be ephemeral—a stream of becoming.  As a result, representation depicts a stable world of separate and distinct things and events.  On the one hand, representational language provides the basis for reliable communication amongst subjects.  Yet, on the other, categorical language makes it difficult to perceive the emergent, the yet to be symbolized.

Our situation is this: we live in postmodern transiency—a constant becoming—, which explains Gendlin's[237] (1997) insistence that we need process concepts.

> Our concepts will have to follow a "process" model, rather than a Newtonian
> "content" model.  We will have to devise categories for a felt, preconceptual process
> that we can only momentarily divide into contents.  As an example, I may speak of a

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[235] Gendlin makes the point that we only become aware of prereflective experience when conceptual functioning breaks down. For example, I meet someone on the street but I can not remember their name or the context in which we previously met. That is, I lack meaning but I do have an experience—a gnawing feeling in my body that insists that I 'know' them from somewhere.

[236] Reification seems to be an understandable outcome of language's ability to 'entitize' an aspect of the stream of becoming. As a result concepts are given the ontological status of 'things.'

[237] Gendlin, E. (1997). *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning: A philosophical and Psychological* Approach to the Subjective. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

boy who happens to be running, or I may speak of a running, which happens to be a boy. (p. 33)

There is a place for the reflective mind in this process: it can do the work of symbolizing what is emergent instead of forcing an interpretation that conforms to pre-existing, conceptual categories. As Gendlin stated, "People use a phrase from the common store, without noticing whether it speaks from what they are living in their situations." (p. 20, LBP). Each situation is unique; therefore, if we restrict ourselves to phrases from the common store we miss that uniqueness. New meanings, new symbols can be formed to capture and express that specificity. Gendlin claims that words "cross" with their situations and develop further meanings as a result. For example, when a sports announcer describes a tennis player as "spraying" their forehand strokes, he is using "spraying" in a temporal, rather than its usual spatial, sense. Its meaning has been elaborated or extended by its use in that situation. Because the broadcaster's reflective mind is serving, not overriding, his prereflective experience, he was able to use language creatively—to point to a process—rather than staying with a common store of stock phrases.

Moving from this specific example to a more general application, I suggest that the circumstance of postmodernity places increasing demands for us to dwell within the circuit connecting the prereflective self to the emerging situation[238]. While attending to that circuit or interactive loop, language can come to give meaning and form to what we sense. In a meeting, for example, we sense or feel what the discussion implies as a possible way forward; then we give voice to it. If our comment resonates, others pick it up and the discussion takes a more fruitful turn. For example, I recently moderated a philosophers' cafe whose purpose was to explore our current economic system and discuss possible alternatives. The discussion became quite heated at times as various frameworks competed with each other for dominance. However, this competition was implicit and until it was explicated, there was no way forward for the group. Rather, these implicit frameworks guaranteed that participants were talking past each other. Finally, I recognized what was occurring and commented, "It seems that our cafe represents a microcosm of our society in that until we agree on a framework we are very much in the same situation as the people who built the tower of Babel." This had the effect of shifting our focus from the content of each person's contribution to the framework in which it was embedded. Now we were in a position to have a more fruitful discussion. Before my remark, participants seemed to be identified with the content of their contributions; after, they were more mindful of the process that was occurring amongst us. As a result, they were less likely to reify—to experience their concepts as if they were reality rather than a representation.

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[238] Both the master narratives, and the more prosaic stock of common phrases, obscure rather than illuminating our current situation.

**Cartesian Based Practices versus Action Learning**

I stated earlier that Cartesian assumptions were being critiqued in the academy. Representational thought was being problematized. Epistemological problems generated by the Cartesian model were stubbornly resisting solutions. For example, if subjectivity and objectivity are mutually exclusive then how can mind "capture" reality? Yet, in spite of these critiques, it has been my experience that many of the practices of the academy continue to enact those Cartesian premises. That is, there is a disjunction between the content of academic discussion and the process by which these discussions take place. The content problematizes Cartesian assumptions while many of the processes continue to enact them. For example, a well reasoned argument is privileged over aesthetic presentation. This is so even though the validity of argument has experienced a sustained a philosophical attack. As Gendlin (1997) puts it,

> People recognize that logical arguments can be devised for mutually exclusive positions on any question.... Arguments are not only various; each ends in contradictions if pursued. There is no longer any belief in the power of argument to criticize and found itself. (p. 4, LBP)

Gendlin's point suggests to me that there is a powerful need in all of us to stand on firm ground as we deconstruct that, which may be falsity or illusion. Logical argument has been problematized as unable to found itself—so where do we turn? Perhaps we are in a hiatus. In the meantime, we make do with a patchwork that works because they operate as functional agreements rather than truth claims.

Dohn[239] (2011) points to a possible explanation for the disjunction between academic content and academic practices—they take place in different ontological registers. While the discourse content may problematize a detached spectator theory of learning, a praxis discussion is seldom invoked. The discussion takes place haphazardly, informally—sometimes conforming to Cartesian views of the subject and at other times veering away into another register. I suppose that if we to give a larger place to praxis we would be forced to allow in an action theory of learning. If I understand Dohn (2011) correctly, action learning is an emerging paradigm that has yet to be integrated into our practices—at least our institutional practices.

> This action-embedded feel for the unique situation—which is not a "feeling" in the sense of an inner "process," but rather a situational attunement—is what Wittgenstein tried to capture in his word "practice."
> (p. 684, EPRA)

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[239] Dohn, N. B. (2011). "On the Epistemological Presuppositions of Reflective Activities." in *Educational Theory*. Vol. 61, no. 6. pp. 671-708. This work will be cited in the text as EPRA.

"Situational attunement" is a matter of dwelling in the circuit that is the self-in-its-situation. Not detached spectating and representation but rather a responsive dialogue between self and one's circumstances. She continues,

> If adequate action in point of fact relies on a tacit, practical embodied understanding that has primacy over linguistic expressions of rules, than any representation of adequate action will be a reconstruction that has an essentially different ontological nature than that of the phenomenon it aims to represent. (p.685, EPRA)

She makes a crucial distinction here between the ontology of representational thought and that of adequate action. In other words, representational thought distorts the experience it purports to represent[240]. For adequate action, as Wittgenstein (1969) claimed, mental representations are neither necessary nor sufficient. Instead, we evaluate adequate action based on what a person does[241] and the effect it has. Yet, our institutional practices continue to enact Cartesian assumptions about learning. In order for this to occur, our prereflective selves must still be operating according to those assumptions. Of course, I am talking about the mediated, or conditioned prereflective. We seem to be thinking and living from two different models of learning—an explicit one that critiques assumptions and an implicit one that enacts those assumptions. Dohn comments as follows,

> Precisely because we are not Cartesian learners, the persistent influence of traditional dualisms is not primarily a question of explicit accounts of learning, but of implicit understandings inherent in practices. The Cartesian view of the learner is embedded in our educational, professional, and social practices—it is...part of the implicit "practice logic" of these practices. (p.680, EPRA)

There is something very tangled going on here that I'm doing my best to unbraid. On the one hand, I am claiming that many educational practices are based on a traditional or Cartesian account of the learner. Then we have a new, explicit Wittgensteinian account that learning is an activity—enacting moves that are responsive to the situation and carry that situation forward. And that this is the way it has always been. We learn to play soccer not so much through representation as through practice. Yet this new account of what is involved in learning has to overcome the biases embedded in educational practices that already condition us to experience the traditional dualisms—a subject, over here, representing a world, over there. The prereflective engagement with the situation is heralded as the best account of learning yet, that same prereflective is the "villain" in that it already presupposes

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240 The dilemma with which myself and Dohn struggle, is how to write conceptually about the preconceptual. Gendlin "solves" this problem by referring to the preconceptual as the "…..".

241 Wittgenstein, L. (1969). *Philosophical Investigations.* Trans. G.E.M. Anscomb. Oxford: Blackwell. This work will be cited in the text as *PI* for all subsequent references.

duality. Perhaps some of the confusion comes from sublating a diachronic account through a synchronic presentation. That is, it might be more accurate to say that there is a dialectic occurring between the conditioned prereflective and the emergent one. The struggle is to overcome an old habit of thought and to establish a new one.

Dohn (2011) is more specific or more restricted in her focus than I am. Perhaps her articulations will dispel the confusion that my more abstract and general account invites. She uses Wittgenstein to support her claim that reflecting on teaching practices presupposes that reflection can map or represent the activities of effective teaching practices without distorting the ontology of those practices. That is, she is making the claim that reflective, representational thought belongs to a different ontological order than does action learning. The examples to which she appeals are twofold: solitaire reflection as practiced in reflective diary writing and communicative reflection or reflective dialogue with other practitioners (EPRA, p. 674-678). The first activity presupposes that reflective learning consists in the construction of representations in the mind and after reflection, greater competence is constituted by mental representations. The second activity, communicative reflection, presupposes that

> Reflective learning consists in the construction, reconstruction, and transformation of linguistic representations in dialogue with others.
> (p. 679, EPRA)

Using these specific instances as possibly pointing to a wider phenomenon, I suggest that similar assumptions are functioning in the formal context of oral defenses. Statements that are received as legitimate most likely refer to the tradition of representational thought in that particular discipline. In the less formal context of classroom discussion, statements that are picked up and developed are those that most clearly articulated the here and now experience of most of the participants. That is, those statements that gave form to prereflective experience took hold—they were situationally attuned. I suppose that it is understandable that the more formal context would demand the more formed concepts of representational thought. Likewise, informal contexts would be more "friendly" to the introduction of emergent models of action learning.

To reiterate, I am making the claim that the academy continues to "act out" Cartesian assumptions in its more formal practices. For example, the humanities employ critique or the methodology of doubt[242]. Dews (1987)[243] references Lyotard's thoughts on this matter:

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[242] Gasche, Rodolphe. (2007). *The honor of thinking: critique, theory, philosophy.* Stanford University Press. Stanford, California. pp.12-13
[243] Dews, P. (1987). *The Logic of Disintegration.* Verso. London & New York.

[B]y 1972 he has concluded that the very concept of critique implies an unjustifiable claim to pre-eminence over what is criticized: 'critical activity is an activity of selection: a certain experience, a certain declaration, a certain work, a certain libidinal position is displayed in its insufficiency, denied therefore, seen from the standpoint of its limit and not of its affirmativity, challenged to match up to the object of desire of the critic, in other words, to infinity, to universality, to necessity...from where does the critic draw his power over what is criticized? he knows better? he is the professor, the educator? so he is universality, the university, the state, the city, leaning over childhood, nature, singularity, the dubious, in order to raise it to his own level?[244]' (p. 202)

His thought parallels but goes further then my claim that the reflective mind is over valued in western culture. In particular, he makes explicit the "unjustifiable claim to pre-eminence [of critique] over what is criticized"—the assumed superiority of the methodology of doubt over a methodology of affirmation. By making that claim explicit, he problematizes a position that, in my experience, continues to be largely unchallenged in the practices of the humanities. Anyone who has attended academic conferences (with their "frozen texts") or oral defenses will recognize this phenomenon.

I hope I can shed some psychological light on this collective practice by pointing to parallel processes occurring within the individual. The superego is often granted final authority within the politics of the psyche. It takes up the work of the "dissuader and critic." Often I work with clients who have a command and obey relationship with their superego. It commands and they obey. It can criticize but it can't be criticized. For example, I have a client who automatically feels guilty for being attracted to a woman other than his wife. His conscience or superego has an "unjustifiable claim to pre-eminence." Reason cannot come to his aid, because to challenge his superego would be unthinkable. I wonder if what is true of the superego is also true of the reflection. That is, reflective consciousness is capable of problematizing the prereflective assumptions but is the prereflective self capable of standing up for itself against this assumed superiority? Is the prereflective self capable of affirming its bedrock as that which is beyond doubt? For, as Sartre [245](2004) pointed out in the Transcendence of the Ego, even when we are self conscious, the agent of that self-consciousness is not reflected upon. That is, it is beyond critique. As Dews (1987) goes on to point out:

[T]he critical standpoint, concerned only with the limits of a perspective, robs that perspective of its intrinsic force: 'it is not true that a political, philosophical or artistic position is abandoned because it is "superseded," it is not true that the experience of a position signifies ineluctably the development of its entire content to the point of exhaustion. (p. 202, emphasis added)

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[244] Lyotard, J. (1972)."La place de l'alienation dans le retournement marxiste". *Derive a partir de marx et* Freud.
[245] Sartre, J. (2004). *The Transcendence of the Ego.* London, New York: Routledge.

Let me paraphrase–the reflective standpoint, in some instances, steals the prereflective of its "intrinsic force," draining its affirmative power. The metaphor that seems apt is that of seesaw or teeter-totter—the reflective mind takes up its position at one end and the prereflective self takes the other. Depending on where consciousness locates itself, the balance will be altered. If consciousness takes up the reflective, conceptual position, the pre-reflective will lose some of its vitality; some of its ground. In this manner, the third person perspective diminishes the first person experience. Furthermore, because it has disengaged from the prereflective ground, the reflective mind is able to consider multiple, alternate perspectives. By situating one's consciousness in the reflective, one is no longer confined within a single perspective. This clearly has advantages but its disadvantages are not so self-evident. Recall Nietzsche's (1866) warning that health and robustness is only possible from a single perspective[246]. "Every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself...it will wither away feebly or over-hastily to its early demise." That is without a horizon that is implicit in a single perspective, the existential integrity of the person is compromised,—instead they are dissipated or dispersed. Or, to put it another way, if I don't take up a position that is embodied and situated, how do I go on? It would be like being in a strange city with a map but no "you are here" icon. Without that situated starting point, it is virtually impossible to proceed. Sass (1992)[247] traces the consequences of perspectivism (the adoption of multiple perspectives) to postmodern irony.

> [I]ronic detachment presupposes a critical distance from one's own emotions as well as from the audience. Perspectivism and (subjectivist) derealisation stem from an intensified awareness of the role of the observing subject—of the uniqueness and limitedness of any particular standpoint…. Disengagement and devitalisation are obviously central elements. [T]he modernists have opted either for an extreme inwardness, an egoism or solipsism that would deny all reality and value to the external world, or else for a radical materialism or positivism in which not only nature but man himself is stripped of all human, and even of all organic qualities. (p.421)

The under acknowledged price of reflexivity is devitalisation of the prereflective self and a fading of the reality and value of the external world. This seems like a high price indeed. This implies that in order for a person to exercise a robust agency, the authority of reflective knowledge has to be limited, and prereflective being empowered.

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[246] Nietzsche, F. (1886). *Beyond Good and Evil.* Trans. J. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1973.

[247] Louis A. Sass. (1992). *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

**Political Implications**

In the previous section I made the point that although the academy may critique the Cartesian approach, its influence continues both in the social imaginaries of the west and in the practices of "higher learning." Zizek (2009) makes a similar point about politics.

> The formula of a regime which 'only imagines that it believes in itself' nicely captures the cancellation of the performative power ('symbolic efficiency') of the ruling ideology: it no longer effectively functions as the fundamental structure of the social bond. Do today's preachers and practitioners of liberal democracy not also 'only imagine that they believe in themselves,' in the pronunciations? In fact, it would be more appropriate to describe contemporary cynicism as representing an exact inversion of Marx's formula: today, we only imagine that we do not 'really believe' in our ideology—in spite of this imaginary distance, we continue to practise it. (p. 3)

Although I find Zizek's use of language a little confusing, his main point is crystal clear: we do not believe in our ruling ideology even though our practices are based on it. To explain why we would do so, I turn to functional rather than metaphysical reasons. Because these practices are so widespread, they provide stable and predictable scripts for social interaction. They function as social imaginaries. However, I find myself wondering how viable such ungrounded practices will be in the long run. Coetzee[248] (2003) provides a possible answer with his intriguing metaphor: beliefs are like batteries that we plug into ideas to make them run. When the power runs out, we are left with devitalized ideas—or zombie categories. Consequently, behaviour will display a lack of commitment. Any countervailing force will be enough to change one's mind. "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything."

How does this devitalisation play out in the world of politics? I want to explore the possibility that we in the West believe but that our beliefs are psychological and individualistic rather than metaphysical and shared. In either case, however, my claim is that belief is rooted in the prereflective. That is the ground from which characteristic behaviour springs. Let me refer to a case study to make my point more clearly. I had a client who I would characterize as hyper-masculine. He came to me because his wife had, had an affair. He told me that before that event, he was sure that if his wife were unfaithful, "I would be out of there." Yet, he didn't leave. Much to his surprise, he believed in preserving his relationship more than acting out his conscious intention. His prereflective dependency needs were valued more highly than upholding his conscious honour. Much later in the course of therapy, he told me of his realization that he had been a "caricature of a man." The notion of "caricature" nicely captures his condition: his conscious intentions were "thin" while

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[248] Coetzee, J.M. (2003). Elizabeth Costello. New York & London: Viking

his prereflective needs were "thick." Stated differently, his conscious intentions exemplified "weak thought" whereas his unconscious beliefs were strong.[249]

In the above, I seem to be conflating two terms: belief and value. In order to identify the commonality which I sense but find difficult to articulate, I turn to Coetzee's notion that beliefs were like batteries that we plug into ideas to make them work—"belief" as an energy source. In a similar vein, the term "value" has, for me, connotations of force or energy. My client valued his nurturer[250], and he was willing to invest energy to keep that relationship.

My felt sense still niggles me that my attempt to clarify made some progress but not enough. Perhaps moving the discussion back to a political domain, the relationship between value, belief, and energy will be clarified. My felt sense leads me back to a similar confusion in the Zizek (2009) quotation at the beginning of this section:

> Note the precise characterization of the German ancien regime as the one which 'only imagines that it still believes in itself'…. In fact, it would be more appropriate to describe contemporary cynicism as representing an exact inversion of Marx's formula: today, we only imagine that we do not 'really believe' in our ideology—in spite of this imaginary distance, we continue to practice it. (p. 3)

I look for a framework that offers some possibility of reconciling the two positions that he reports. Once again, that framework is diachronic: that is, ideology functions differently depending where it shows up temporally. In the first instance, we only imagine that we still believe in our ideology but in fact, it is no longer "the fundamental structure of the social bond." For example, China has a communist ideology but its practices are often market driven. In a recent uprising in an agricultural region, the local government was forcing farmers off their land and then selling the land to developers for substantial profit. In the second instance, however, we only "imagine that we do not 'really believe' in our ideology" yet we "continue to practice it." This was the point that I was making earlier about the academy: it only imagines that it no longer believes in a Cartesian world, because its practices continue to enact its premises. In each case, therefore, there is a disjunction between thought or idea and action. In the first case one, still mouths the official ideology while no longer committing to it. In the second case, we continue with habits (practices) that originally were based on understandings that we no longer hold. These disjunctions would be fruitful phenomena for

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[249] Vattimo, G. (1991). *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*, Translated by John R. Snyder, Polity Press, Translation of *La fine della modernità*, Garzanti, Milan, 1985

[250] The template, which he superimposed on his wife, was that of his relationship with his mother. That relationship divided up the functions: mother was his emotional support, someone who believed in him and, in return, he would protect and provide for her. Consequently he expected his wife to play out the same function and would blame her when she didn't meet his expectations. His expectations were prereflective and therapy consisted of him focussing his attention on them rather than on his wife.

education to address. Even at the graduate level I've been party to many a class room discussion where the behaviour of the participants belied the beliefs that were being espoused. My attempts to point that out were met with a lot of resistance. I suggest that this resistance arises because of the reflective mind's fear of self-contradiction. However, when the instructor explicitly frames such reflections as a legitimate method of inquiry, that resistance begins to transform into curiosity.

To return to my hyper-masculine client. His espoused principles were not in line with the fundamental structure of his personality. That is, to say that he didn't know himself—his reflective, conceptual mind knew little of his prereflective self. This illustrates on an individualistic level what Beck (2003) was pointing to culturally with his claim that "zombie categories" were making us blind to the emergent realities of our lives. My client needed to believe that he was a real man who was capable of acting decisively when someone broke his rules. Yet, he was not able to act on this belief. His prereflective values trumped his conscious beliefs when it came to determining his behaviour. Eagleton is saying something similar with his conclusion that we in the West are caught up in a paradox: we live in a rationalistic, materialistic, technological society which uses traditional values or "zombie categories" to justify itself but whose actual practices undermine or hollows out those values. In other words, we navigate through the postmodern landscape prereflectively while justifying our actions with reflective categories that no longer apply.

Earlier I suggested that the reflective mind recoiled from self-contradiction. Yet writing this dissertation introduced me to many of my own. In working those through, my thinking transformed. I'm at the beginning of such a process now. On the one hand, I am claiming that the prereflective is biased or committed to certain expectations, and that this investment enables and often determines subsequent action; while, on the other, I claim that it is our prereflective self that navigates through confusing postmodern times, which implies that the prereflective is not biased but open to the situation through which it is living. The two positions seem to contradict one another. The way around this dilemma is to identify "contradiction" as a judgement made by the reflective, analytical mind[251]. For the prereflective, bias, and perceptual autonomy are not contradictory but different aspects of one's experience. I'm thinking of the hypnotized subjects, who avoided bumping into a chair even though it had been suggested that they would not see it. Their avoidant behaviour clearly indicated that they did see it; but their conceptual explanations confabulated a different reason. I am suggesting that we, like those hypnotized subjects, are navigating through a postmodern culture that we've yet to conceptualize. Our behaviour is not determined solely by conceptual templates. In

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[251] Just as contradiction is a term appropriate to logical, rational thought, "aspects" may be a term appropriate to prereflective knowing. Every phenomenon has many different aspects and their relationship is not one of contradiction or mutual exclusion but one of addition or complementarity.

addition, our suspicion of master narratives makes it unlikely that any unifying framework will arrive soon. Yet, navigate we must. I suggest that we do so in a way that parallels those hypnotized subjects who avoided colliding with the chair. That is, we do so prereflectively.

To my knowledge, Bauman (2000) is one of few educational thinkers who is beginning to thematize some emergent patterns. That is, he is producing some reflectively derived descriptions of our time. Most of the living styles that he has identified, as emergent responses to liquid modernity, display a lack of commitment but rather keep all options open. Perhaps this is a survival strategy when commitment to traditional values handicaps one's ability to respond to a non-traditional or postmodern culture. Modern values have been given conceptual form; postmodern values have only begun to be symbolized[252].

### Liquid Modernity and Reflexive Identity

In the past, when tradition and custom changed slowly, individual citizens 'downloaded' both as reference points for a reliable and trustworthy prereflective self. That is, custom and tradition functioned like scripts defining one's place in a social order. However, the cultural logic of late capitalism produced a Tsunami of change that inundated tradition and custom. Our time, according to Bauman (2000), is the time of "liquid modernity." Social forms and institutions no longer have enough time to solidify and cannot serve as frames of reference for long-term life plans. Consequently, individuals have to find other ways to organize their lives. Bauman has identified emergent, postmodern styles that are non-committal, focussed on the present and living on the surface. However, many who were formed by modernity, turn to reflecting on our condition as an attempt to compensate for the loss of stable, cultural anchorage. Giddens[253] (1991) claims that in the post-traditional order, self-identity is reflexive. It is not a quality of a moment, but an account of a person's life—a story we tell ourselves about ourselves. That is, instead of being ourselves (a prereflective modality) we narrate ourselves (a reflexive modality). However, as mentioned earlier, when push came to shove, the story my hyper-masculine client was telling himself about himself, quickly gave way.

Bauman's term is suggestive—it suggest that traditional times were like a unchanging landscape while postmodern times are more like an ocean. The question becomes how can we navigate without charts. When our customs and traditions are hollowed out or displaced, how do we proceed? According to Gendlin, we now have the opportunity to refer directly to our experience for

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[252] Or perhaps we are reaching a limit in our ability to "go with the flow"; perhaps a robust prereflective can only flourish in the ground of a stable, enduring culture.

[253] Giddens, A (1991) *Modernity and Self - Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press

direction—our "situationally attuned" experience. This is in contrast to our previous reliance on competing and contradictory master narratives. My hyper-masculine client had been living according to a traditional marriage contract: "I'll take care of your needs and you'll take care of mine." After events demonstrated that his equation was not shared by his partner, he began to attend to his own needs—first acknowledging, and then addressing, them. In so doing, he began to plumb his prereflective self and to ascertain what was in the best interest of the totality of his person—and not just the imperatives of his ego ideal...his "caricature of a man." His prereflective self and reflective mind began to operate collaboratively. If I take this example as prototypical of individuals in the West then it suggests that collective unity no longer comes from a shared religious or ideological template but rather from individuals responding to local conditions—that is "situationally attuned" individuals. Because the situation is a shared one it begins to generate commonalities— commonalities that are not imposed by religion, metaphysics or ideologies.

Edelman (2006)[254] suggests that the commonly shared environment is responsible for the way that both ant colonies and collective brain neurons operate as a collective—without a central authority directing each individual entity. I find his idea intriguing if somewhat difficult to grasp. The phenomenon that illuminates his conjecture is that of a group of starlings in flight. This collective acts as a single entity yet consists of thousands of birds. How is it possible for them to act in what appears to be a coordinated fashion without a central authority? The explanation that I favour is that each bird responds to the movements of its immediate neighbours and the sum of those adjustments produces the larger pattern we observe while watching the flock[255]. Likewise individuals ants respond to previous ants' responses to the local conditions they had encountered, producing colonies that appear to be organized by a central authority but rather are an aggregate of individual responses to the local environment. If anything organizes the collective's behaviour, it would be the environmental conditions. Can we extrapolate from this to the "market" as an organizer of capitalist economies versus the central planning that was characteristic of the Soviet Union? It seems to fit Edelman's model nicely. While in traditional societies master narratives, customs, and social roles coordinated the actions of various individuals, post-traditional societies often require each of us to fashion one that is adaptive to our local environment. The summation of countless individual responses to local conditions is registered as a collective by the market. In this account the collective

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[254] Edelman, G. (2006). *Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
[255] Each bird keeps under surveillance, a fixed number of neighbours – seven other starlings – irrespective of their distance, which is the secret of how they stick together. A flock under predator attack may expand dramatically, but birds can regroup very quickly because the cohesion does not depend on the physical distance among starlings, but rather on their ability to interact with a fixed number of neighbours. The results, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,

is an emergent phenomenon in the same way as an ant colony is an emergent entity. Giddens (1991) brings the first person perspective back into the account:

> What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are the focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity—and ones, which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day behaviour. (p. 70)

When our sense of who we are is formed discursively, Gendlin shows us a method for grounding it: "tuning" into our felt sense. That sense will be an expression of an unseparated multiplicity that includes emergent needs and "news" from the environment. Following attunement to our prereflective experience, we give it a form. That is, we generate meanings that consist of symbols, metaphors, images, or concepts. When we come across the form that best fits our experience; a form that will carry our experience forward—we will discover "what to do, how to act, and who to be."

Sass and Parnas (2003)[256] give a brilliant account of what follows when we inhabit a first person perspective and the potential disaster that awaits if we opt for a third person, reflexive point of view.

> Normal self affection is a condition for the experience of appetite, vital energy, and point of orientation: it is what grounds human motivation and organizes our experiential world in accordance with needs and wishes, thereby giving objects "affordances" (Gibson 1979)—their significance for us as obstacles, tools, objects of desire, and the like. Although clearly associated with a sense of energy, vitality, and the capacity for pleasure, self-affection is something more basic: a matter of "mattering"— of constituting a lived point of orientation and the correlated pattern of meanings that make for a coherent and significant world. In the absence of this vital self-affection and the lines of orientation it establishes, the structured nature of the worlds of both thought and perception will be altered or even dissolved, for then there can no longer be any clear differentiation of means from goal, no reason for certain objects to show up in the focus of awareness while others recede, no reason for attention to be directed outward toward the world rather than inward toward one's own body or processes of thinking. (p. 436, emphasis added)

That is, only by living from the prereflective do we experience our orientation to the world and our motivation for action. Sass and Parnas (2003) go further with their claim that self affection is "a matter of 'mattering'." Here we our getting closer to my contention that Western progressives no longer feel or sense what really matters. We might know what matters in an intellectual way but not be able to enact our concern because we are no longer living from our prereflective source—our "lived point of orientation—and toward a "correlated pattern of meanings that make for a coherent

[256] Sass, L. A. and Parnas, J. (2003). "Schizophrenia, Consciousness and the Self". *Schizophrenic Bulletin, 29*(3), 427-444.

and significant world." In Margaret Sommerville's[257] Massey lectures, she lamented the fact that in the West we had lost the ability to establish goals, or ultimate values. Instead, ends have been collapsed into means—making "efficiency" (a method for evaluating means) the supreme value. That is, there seems to be no standard or criteria by which to adjudicate between competing ultimate values. Reflection is useful only within clearly delimited horizons—a side effect of a single perspective. Defaulting to the criteria of efficiency then makes some kind of sense because a single perspective often assumes an ultimate good. However, as soon as we open up to include multiple worlds and competing goods—as we do in a pluralistic, postmodern culture—we become disorientated[258] by the plethora of perspectives.

## Postmodernity as Liminality

One way of understanding postmodernity is as a liminal phenomenon—a transitional zone between two ways of being. We might be able to grasp what this means for a culture by extrapolating from individuals who have undergone a liminal experience. Such individuals are often not able to act rationally "because the structure on which 'objective' rationality was based has disappeared" (Szakolczai, 2009)[259]. At times, it seems like poststructuralist writers such as Derrida, Barthes, Lacan, and Foucault have undermined the structures of modern categorical thought. It seems that much of what was formerly considered a natural, and therefore objective, fact has been problematized in our current world. Citizens of this world, like the schizophrenics I discussed earlier, are uncertain as to how to proceed. If we understand schizophrenia as a kind of permanent liminal experience then we might learn something from them that would illuminate our own condition. For example, Sass and Parnas (2003) claim that in the absence of self-affection there can be no clear "differentiation of means from goals" and, further, no reason to direct one's attention outward toward the world. Recall that loss of self affection as the experience of no longer adopting a first person perspective. One no longer inhabits one's embodied experience but rather views it from at least one remove. Instead of knowing what matters, one attempts to deduce it. It seems that liberal Western intellectuals might be vulnerable to similar maladies as the schizophrenic. When we don't feel what really matters then ethics becomes a process of intellectually establishing rules or principles of ethical behaviour. Here I am pointing to the difference between following a rule and behaviour that is rule following. The former seems to be a matter of obeying a received injunction without really

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[257] Somerville, M. (2006). *The Ethical Imagination: Journeys of the Human Spirit.* Toronto: House of Anansi Press.
[258] See the previous chapter where Sass and Parnas discuss the schizophrenic's loss of ipseity as involving a loss of orientation to the world; a loss of perspective; a loss of an entry point into one'ssituation.
[259] Szakolczai, A. (2009). "Liminality and experience: structuring transitory situations and transformative events." *International Political Anthropology*, Vol. 3. p. 154.

understanding its appropriateness; whereas the latter is more a matter of noting and abstracting certain regularities after the fact. When one deals effectively with certain challenges over a number of instances then one will notice a certain regularity. That regularity could be called "rule following."

## Conclusion

However, ethics, according to Gendlin[260], is 'best cared for as distinctions between kinds of [experiential] processes,' not in terms of battles over rules or principles. He gives the following example:

> Suppose, for example, a friend plans to marry; you know the intended spouse; and marrying this person seems in general a good thing. Is that enough for you to call the decision right? Would you not need to know more about how your friend decided? What if the decision was made on a drunken afternoon to get married that very day? Suppose your friend badly wants money and the intended spouse has some? … What if your friend talks mostly of not wanting to live alone? The problem here "is not exactly in the reasons themselves'; it lies in the 'something more' that is indicated by these reasons, vis a vis, 'the lack of a kind of decision-making process that we respect.' Just as with finishing a poem, in which only a certain ending will 'do,' so it is possible to study also how it is to 'live from' various moral decision processes. For it is the 'experiential process, not the value-conclusions alone, [which] tells us what a value really is in an individual. (p. 202)

The "value-conclusion" of all these processes was" marrying this person seems in general a good thing." However, the differing experiential processes that led to this same conclusion would predict different eventual outcomes. A drunken afternoon might predict a dissolute marriage, for example. So while all the experiential processes conform to the same "value conclusion"—marriage is good—the quality of that union depends more on the experiential processes that led to that temporary conclusion.

Gendlin is throwing us back on our own resources. Or, more correctly, he is announcing the fact that plurality has thrown us back on our own resources. Does this mean every man for himself, the bogeyman of moral relativism? For Gendlin the fact of conceptual pluralism and controversy, in ethics or elsewhere,

> [N]eed no longer appear to either threaten the practice nor make us long for final criterialogical cures — if we start considering the various concepts, values, and principles in terms of the steps they might bring in an experiential process, and not as 'merely float[ting] on an independent conceptual level.' (p. 202)

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[260] Gendlin, E. (1997). *Language beyond postmodernism : saying and thinking in Gendlin's philosophy.* ed. David Michael Levin. Evanston, Ill. : Northwestern University Press.

That is, those concepts, values, and principles are our point of departure. We choose those that appear most relevant to our situation. That is, there is a conversation between our orientating disposition and our circumstances—which we sense or intuit prereflectively.  Then, we make a move from that point of departure and evaluate the result—have we moved closer or further away from our goal? Has our behaviour improved the situation; carried it forward? We also reference our experience. Do we feel more alive and certain about the way forward or more constricted and wilful? This contrasts with reflective thinking that doesn't reference the prereflective. The former can throw up multiple perspectives that "float in an independent conceptual level." Thus, the longing for "criterialogical cures" or rules is an attempt to transcend the welter of choices that we seem to confront.  James[261] (1956) points to a way beyond

> Well, of two conceptions equally fit to satisfy the logical demand, that one which awakens the active impulses, or satisfies other aesthetic demands better than the other, will be accounted the more rational conception, will deservedly prevail.  (p. 75-76, emphasis added)

In other words, the prereflective highlights which option promises to address both our desires and our care. We can move forward with more vitality.  This final section of my final chapter has made the claim that affirming, then acting on our values is a matter of being supported and guided by the constantly arising experience of the prereflective—no longer dependent on conceptual sameness for ontological security.

### Educational Implications

The foregoing exemplifies this dissertations objective to highlight the optimal relationship between the prereflective self and the reflective mind as it applies to ethical decision making. Now I would like to ask how this optimal alignment might be invited or addressed in an educational setting. I begin with a simple description of therapeutic encounter that embodies and exemplifies the approach that might be generalizable to other contexts.

Recently I began work with a young man from Eastern Europe who was experiencing panic disorder. It didn't take long to recognize a strong sceptical streak in my client. I interpreted his barely veiled scepticism as follows: he didn't want any false hope. He couldn't afford another let down...he was afraid that he would break if that were to happen. Based on that interpretation, I invited and welcomed his sceptical self into the room: "Don't let anything slide by that seems like a con," I told him. "If this is going to work, we need all of you here," I continued.

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261 William, J. (1956). *The Will to Believe.* New York: Dover

I was doing this because I had come to believe that transformational learning does not occur without engaging the whole self—no sceptical self hiding in the weeds, undermining, and discounting the authenticity of one's encounters.  I'm using the "doubting/sceptical self" as a stand in for other dispositions that are normally not engaged in the learning process. The fearful, the lustful, the manipulative, the defended aspects—to name but a few—are all self-fragments that alternate in operating the levers of behaviour. The therapeutic process involves recognizing, engaging, and *integrating* these various parts. Transformational learning will also be more likely when the teacher or instructor *recognizes* that these silent part selves are monitoring classroom interaction. That recognition is conveyed implicitly, for the most part. The examples used, the stories told and the instructor's behaviour are all concrete manifestations that either reinforce or undermine each other.  If the teacher's message is not congruent with their behaviour, the student attends to the teacher's behaviour rather than the learning objective. Perhaps the most powerful aid facilitating transformative learning is the teacher's attunement to the prereflective markers that qualify the student's questions. Voice tone, volume, behavioural gestures, etc. all disclose more than the manifest content of student's questions and comments.

Let me continue to develop this concluding section with a metaphor that depicts a dynamic, developing self. I want to do this because I believe that the image of self that one implicitly carries, generates while constraining the range of one's educational and psychotherapeutic strategies. This certainly has been my experience. The image of self that comes to me is that of a comet with a glowing orb and a fading tail. That image partially resonates with my felt sense but it calls for more refinement, more precision. Let me move the glowing orb nearer the middle of an elliptical shape — like an elongated egg shape with a glowing, diffuse orb near its centre. This orb represents the incarnated, embodied, and inhabited self — the sedimented, prereflective self.  In front of it, but still within its ambient shape, are the possibilities to which it is open; possible changes that it is considering but not inhabiting.  Behind it, in the "tail," are the configurations from which the self is separating. These are former subjectivities that have been transcended — ways of being that have been let go. The whole constellation is moving through time. My job as an educator or therapist is to join that constellation and help to guide it towards fulfillment.

Let me attempt to articulate how the image that I hold of the self influences how I join the other in the therapeutic project.  My way of apprehending the other has become a prereflective premise. I "see" them as having a neurosis rather than being one. I seldom identify my client with his or her symptoms. Consequently, my speech inherently implies a separation between their self and their symptoms. A critical space is suggested by my vocabulary and speech. Such a space is often not available to my clients when they enter therapy. For them, their illness *is* their identity. They

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incarnate the premises and embody the assumptions that generate their affliction. One could even say that they attach to those problematic assumptions because they function as ground—providing them with a continuous sense of self.  I remember the director of one social service agency who had asked me to present a workshop to her staff.  At one point she said that she tried to not take away all of her client's problems as they needed something to worry about. In her folk wisdom way, she was stating that symptoms serve a purpose. I suspect that their primary purpose is to rid the self of an experience of spaciousness or, to rid the haunting sense that there is nothing there—only empty consciousness. Too little space produces claustrophobic symptomology, too much space produces agoraphobic panic. My presence and my speech enable the client to reconfigure that space. My presence mutes the agoraphobic fear of too much space; while my speech holds open a space that was formerly filled by the client's symptoms. The client, feeling supported by my welcoming presence, can afford to loosen his or her grip on their assumptions and explore other possible configurations of self.

The above images and metaphors are evocative but how does therapeutic engagement actually play out in concrete, observable terms?  It is obvious to me when my client's sense of agency begins to mobilize. Their body language is completely different from a detached client. They are alert, sitting forward; making eye contact, this is similar to the difference between a tennis player who is intent on winning and one who realizes that defeat is inevitable. The former is "pumped," while the latter slumps. The engaged client is energized and animated. Even a fatigued client will become animated when relevant issues are addressed. Likewise, every teacher has no trouble distinguishing between an engaged classroom and one "going through the motions."

Keeping in mind the metaphor of a glowing orb inside an oblong or elliptical shape, join me as I consider my own experience of being a student and ask you to consider yours. For the most part, I was expected to be a passive receiver of imparted information. Perhaps my reflective, conceptual mind was active while the rest of me languished in suspended animation. For the most part teachers didn't engage the luminescent orb of my prereflective self[262].  To be sure, the existential decision to engage was ultimately mine to make. However, if learning is a joint venture between teacher and student, then the teacher should have at least been aware whether such an engagement was occurring. That seldom was the case either with secondary schooling or with undergraduate work. Consequently, when I find myself in the teaching position I try to engage with students where they already are. I don't ask them to join me; I join them. For example, I begin the class by asking them to take several moments of silence to identify what is preoccupying them and what they hope to gain from today's class. "Where are you coming from; and what are you looking for?", I ask. Then I ask them to share what they identified with a partner. After that exercise is completed I ask if anyone would like to state

262 English literature courses were an exception to that general rule.

what he or she learned with the whole class. There are usually some "takers" and a conversation begins that informs not only me, but also the rest of the learning community as to what kind of state its members find themselves in. We receive a reflective interpretation of their prereflective state. I can now tailor my delivery accordingly. I know that influence is only possible after rapport has been achieved. Facilitated transformation would be impossible without it. I engage with my clients/students and together we engage with the possibilities confronting us. Implicated in all this is my own willingness to change—that willingness being a condition for my joining them.

My instructional approach acknowledges their current state and encourages or inspires them to engage with their ambient possibilities. Wherever possible, I address the embodied, prereflective self in addition to an idealized, abstracted mind. When I am able to do this in a therapeutic encounter, I can "see" the client's self coming to the surface. Their facial expression and body language becomes more animate. Although I am joining with them, my perspective will be different from theirs. Nevertheless, I don't assume that my perspective will trump theirs. It is *not* a zero sum game. And, because it is not, it makes it more likely that my communication will be received. Having received a different perspective, the students can become conscious of their own. That is, they can come to see that their construal is just that…a construal and not a reality. This is somewhat similar to the lifting or breaking of a spell that has held them captive. Now they are aware that it wasn't necessity but rather contingency that held them in place. Eventually this can lead to a transformative shift in their embodied, prereflective self. Rather than moving from their "default setting", they choose and enact an alternative.

Let me offer an example of how I've worked with this approach in a group setting. I was contracted to provide counselling and consulting to a school program for educating deaf and hard of hearing adolescents. Some sexual acting out was happening amongst the teens and the teachers were alarmed. They asked me to "talk to" the students. I knew that if I gave those teens the "sex ed" talk, I would see a lot of dismissive eye rolling. I would be presenting information to their sceptical, conceptual minds. Instead I chose to begin by saying, "You know, I think that parents are amnesiac for their teen years — they've forgotten what it was like — these are the years when you make the most important decisions of your life: what will be my work and who will be my mate? Your parents made those decisions long ago and now they're just working out the details. They've forgotten how fraught with anxiety their first romantic relationship was, how mysterious and exciting your first sexual encounters are. What if I get (her) pregnant? What if
she or he is not the one for me? Would I still have to marry him? What if I say no to this one and there is no one else? How am I supposed to learn these things?" With this preamble their existential, prereflective selves were most definitely engaged and a rousing, engaged conversation ensued.

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How does this existential approach interact with educational institutions as they traditionally conceive of themselves? Whereas I think that my disposition is primarily existential, and secondarily, epistemological; I believe that the reverse holds true for traditional educational models. That is, they are concerned with knowing and not so much with ontology. Because of my concern for being, I put the self at the centre of my deliberations—and I conceive of that self as a semi-permeable container. Traditional educational purposes seem concerned with, among other things, adding content to that container, imparting methods for analyzing, manipulating, and applying that content, and, at the highest levels, asking how we know, what we know—epistemological concerns. In contrast, what I, as a therapist and an educator, I am more concerned with how that container changes its shape over time. I am concerned with the vicissitudes that it encounters along the way. Like Kegan (1984), I want to know how the self experienced

> the rhythms and labours of the struggle to make meaning, to have meaning, to protect meaning, to lose meaning, and to lose the 'self' along the way… From the point of view of the 'self,' then, what is at stake in preserving and given balance is the ultimate question of whether the 'self' shall continue to be, a naturally ontological matter. (p. 12)

### Incremental Change Process

Furthermore, I want to know what pedagogical approaches encourage the student to see the transformational processes all the way through and what educational practices cause the process to be aborted. I think that Gendlin comes closest to articulating what processes would encourage the former and reduce the latter. He gives multiple examples of an approach that insures that the reflective mind takes its bearings from prereflective experience—the head and the heart move as a unit. In philosophical language, his approach produces incremental ontological shifts. My educational strategies are, therefore, instantiations of the process that is imbedded in the following example. After enjoying a movie together, two friends decide to discuss it over a cup of coffee. As anyone who has done the same will recognize, *some comments carry the experience of the movie forward, while others cause the felt sense of the movie to shrink, go flat, or even dry up*. When the comments accurately refer to and express the "unarticulated experience" that was aroused while watching the movie, one feels that one is honing in on the significance of the experience. This is the reflective and prereflective working together optimally.

Using that example as a reference point, consider some approaches that I've used either in the classroom or in therapy that have this same optimal relationship as their objective. This list is certainly not intended to be exhaustive nor even the most important methods. Rather it is drawn up with the purpose of showing how the "rule" of collaboration between the reflective mind and the

prereflective self has been instantiated.  By providing these examples I'm hoping to show the process of application rather than a list of "how to" techniques.

Notice when the dialogue is becoming animated; notice when the group conversation is becoming energized.  Ask if others noticed this.  Ask them when it became animated.  Ask them to notice what comments contributed to amplifying that liveliness.  Notice the opposite: when does the energy begin to leave the discussion.  What changes in the content of the discussion seemed to be associated with the conversation going flat?

Ask the client/student to identify some repeating and unsatisfying interactional pattern.  Help them recall those experiences  by pointing out that such unsatisfying patterns produce results that were not intended but occurred anyway.  Ask them to employ an exclusively third person approach to the description of the pattern.  Next, ask them to imagine and describe a plausible subjectivity that would want that outcome.  Encourage a respectful dialogue between the two parts as in Gestalt therapy's chair work or write out a respectful dialogue where both voices incorporate their interlocutor's last comment into their subsequent response. Ask them to to work toward an optimal resolution between their conscious intent, and their previously unconscious, intentionality.

In group discussions, notice the differences between what is being discussed and how it is being discussed.  The "what" of the discussion is probably being generated by the conceptual, reflective mind; the "how" of the conversation is being generated often by the prereflective self. Notice when the "how" contradicts the "what"; notice when they align.  Comment on this.  Watch what happens next.  Is the conversation carried forward?  Does it stall?  Is there shame at being "found out" when the "how" contradicts the "what."  Is there curiosity?  What attempts are made to integrate the two, or is force evoked to banish one or the other?

Have them sketch out a biographical incident that they haven't been able to put to rest. Show them how to identify emergent conflictual feelings, soggy reasoning, and confabulation by the experience of a tightening or constriction in the body.  Have them use that feeling as a honing device to explore the issue that triggers it.  Have them notice when it gets tighter and when it eases.  Teach them to recognize the feeling of release when they come up with an action plan to address the source of their distress.

Teach the subjects how to recognize the state of active surrender or passive volition. For example, have they ever slept in, gone back to sleep, woke up, then returned to sleep, and so on. During those intermittent times of wakefulness, they might have experienced watching their thoughts unfold as if by themselves.  They had fallen into a state of reverie.  This is the experience of passive volition or active surrender.  Between mindlessness and wilfulness exists passive volition.  As a

therapist, I support the client to access a state that they have already experienced but perhaps had not represented to themselves. By identifying it explicitly, they can find their way back to it more easily.

## Long Term or Transformational Change

All the above examples are existential rather than developmental in character. By that I mean that they take place in a "here and now" of relatively short duration. In that respect they fit with Gendlin's therapeutic approach: tune into one's current experience and search for the symbols and metaphors that fit, express, and carry the experience forward. The changes produced by such an approach are incremental in nature. In contrast, a developmental perspective is more long term and addresses structural aspects of the self. A developmental model attempts to map the macro changes of the self: changes in the frame of reference, changes in foundational premises; changes in the self-object boundary. This is what Mezirow (2000) and his associates refer to as transformational learning. As I said earlier, these changes are not usually generated by a conscious intervention on the part of a teacher or therapist. Rather the subject's life experiences have begun to take on an all too familiar pattern—familiar but undesirable. The person comes to the realization that they are the only entity in common across a wide variety of contexts and events. They begin to suspect that somehow they are generating the outcomes that they consciously find so disturbing. When this happens they begin to consider discarding their current intuitive compass in order to search for or construct a more adequate one. However, the teacher or therapist who wishes to assist them in their project would be well advised to look at A Guide to the Subject-Object Interview: its Administration and Interpretation. This workbook was developed by Kegan (1982, 1988) and his associates. It maps the structural changes that the self typically traverses as it moves through the developmental stages. Fundamental to those changes is the moving boundary that separates subject from object. When one's assumptions are implicit, one is subjected to them. When one is able to reflect on those assumptions and make them explicit, they begin to move over to the object side of the equation. One begins to "know one's self." Kegan points out that while one is subject to one's assumptions one cannot take responsibility for them. Only after taking a critical distance can one begin to work consciously with one's assumptions. This interview workbook, would therefore by a valuable assessment tool for educators who wished to design and teach a course that addressed each student at their current developmental level.

## The Cocoon of Assumptions

Permit me to finish this conclusion with another metaphor that conveys my understanding of the self. I view it as an awareness wrapped in a cocoon. My earlier metaphor of a comet with a glowing orb near its centre conveyed the luminescent quality of that awareness. Now I wish to place

this luminosity *within* the cocoon of its assumptions.  Those assumptions are its habitus—its shelter protected it from direct impingement by every environmental event.  Those assumptions mediate the challenges of one's circumstances — they offer prefabricated ways of responding.  In the dominant language of this dissertation, the cocoon is the sedimented prereflective—the embodied history of one's patterned interactions.

I remember my experience of culture shock when the assumptions that I had developed in one culture proved to be inadequate for another.  Shock is a good term for the experience of existing outside one's cocoon.  However, one doesn't need to move to another culture to discover the inadequacy of one's assumptions.  Living in our time will do it.  Bauman (2005) has appropriately named our current circumstance as liquid modernity.  The pace of change is so rapid that one's assumptions can quickly exceed their "best before" date.  This being true it is all the more important that our educational institutions become familiar with the transformational process and how to support it.

I will conclude this arduous journey with a quote that puts its implicit demands in reasonable terms

## The Spiritual Friend

In the Mahayana, the teacher is a spiritual friend.  At this point, the spiritual friend
tells us, "Don't just work on yourself.  Do something about others.  Relate with your
projections rather than with the projector alone.  Do something about the world
outside and try to develop some sense of sympathy and warmth in yourself."  That is
usually quite hard for us to do.  We are upset and uptight and resentful that life is
painful.  It's very hard to relax, but it can be done.  It's being done in the present,
and it will be done in the future.  So how about giving an inch?  Just letting go a little
bit? Opening a little bit."  Choygam Trungpa

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