A Philosophical Critique of the Concept of Narcissism:
The Significance of the Awareness Movement

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In this essay I examine and revise certain assumptions about the human body, language, and politics. These assumptions are implicit in the concept of "narcissism," in Freud's metapsychology, and in much of current discourse.

Today people generally are called "narcissistic," because of their preoccupation with "inner" processes. Bookstores offer walls of popular psychology. On subways and buses one hears psychologically sophisticated, introspective talk, with subtle distinctions and puzzlements. Twenty years ago such talk could be heard only in a therapist's office. Millions are involved in psychotherapy, self-help networks, ashrams, encounter groups, meditation, interpersonal training, and other experiential processes. Some have called all this the "Awareness Movement." One cannot simply approve, condemn, or ignore it all, but it is difficult to evaluate. We can say, for better or worse, that a major social change is taking place.

The change came partly from psychoanalysis and its descendants. During our century psychoanalysis influenced many fields. It opened the language, not only to forbidden topics like sex, but to whole reaches of human feeling and interaction. Much of what Freud found is now common parlance. People can discuss what could hardly be recognized in Freud's time.

People call their entry into the current change "getting in touch with my feelings." The phrase says that they look back on a time when they lived without sensing certain events they now sense, and prize. These so-called "feelings" are not simple emotions or desires, but complexities that give rise to new aspects of living, and create new troubles.

I. THE NARCISSISM CRITIQUE

Why the Critics Call the Awareness Movement "Narcissistic"

Most psychoanalytic thinkers can see little more than selfishness and self-indulgence in the current trends. They use the term "narcissism" to say that people's inner preoccupation interferes with their social bonding. The patterns of love and work have indeed become problematic for millions of people. Social change is a real problem.

Thinkers in political theory raise a second problem: they use the term "narcissism" to mark a withdrawal from political responsibility, and a failure to perceive the external social controls which "inwardness" masks, and only seems to avoid. To believe oneself inwardly free misses the point that many intimate feelings are socially programmed. I will discuss these two important problems—unstable bonding and unseen social control.

Traditional patterns of love, courting, and marriage have become less meaningful. Many people reject marriage in favor of less stable arrangements. The Census Bureau reports a "dramatic increase over the past fifteen years in the number of persons living alone. Households containing only one person jumped 90% since 1970."[1] The emphasis on intimacy makes for a quicker rejection when there is a lack of mutuality. People move from relationship to relationship. Millions are lonely and isolated. Those who do live in the old forms no longer identify fully with them.

Similarly, people continue in the old forms of work, but they are disaffected. *Inwardly*, they pursue other interests. Many are leaving the business world, and more would like to leave. The old forms have weakened, but most situations are, at least outwardly, unchanged; there are not very many new forms (and only a hint of a new *kind* of form).

The critics of the Awareness Movement point to a real problem. They see a disintegration. Not that they approve of the old social forms, but disintegration does not look hopeful to them. They see it as a falling back to something less ordered, and inherently asocial. In terms of the old social relations, this seems to be the case.

To call the currently common introspective complexity "narcissistic" implies that it is primitive and infantile, developmentally earlier than the ego. The fully developed person is supposed to identify with the ego. The ego derives from social reality. With a traditional ego one identifies oneself with the socially given roles and forms of bonding. Traditional individuals are said to feel that *they are* their roles, routines, and social identities. "Narcissism" is the only alternative. The critics assume that a failure to identify fully with the prevailing roles must be "narcissism," a regression to infantile experience, *less* ordered than the external forms, and *a*social.

We will ask whether regression is the only alternative to full identification with prevailing forms. Could new patterns arise from experiential processes? The critics consider that impossible. New forms cannot come from individual experience; that is deeply written in Freud's concepts. The individual consists of *externally given* forms. There are serious theoretical reasons for this view. Before I come to them, let me first show the poverty
of this view. It has only this one concept, "narcissism," for anything and everything that is not the traditional ego.

The Narcissism-Critique Looks Only for the Old, Vanished Type of Person

The critics of the Awareness Movement see each change only in terms of what it is not. Their diagnosis of each new change is always the same: It is narcissism since it isn't the traditional ego.

The change in ego-identification since Freud's time has involved four well-known types. The first was the traditional type, people solidly identified with their roles—the "bourgeois ego." Adorno and Horkheimer criticized these people for believing that they were their own (subjective) source of strength, when it was actually the social system that formed their egos, and gave them their ego-strength. That blindness was called "false subjectivity."

After World War II, prosperity and consumerism weakened the family, which had been most important in traditional life. Social mobility and greater opportunities let parents do more living outside the family. Children spent their time with age-mates and TV. A second type of person emerged. But Adorno found this development worse than the previous bourgeois self. Now he thought he saw inner emptiness, people lost in a vacuous consumer culture, having an even shallower subjectivity, a selfish lack of family involvement, "narcissism."

The third type, the young people of 1968, rebelled against this very consumerism. They rejected social forms that felt vacuous to them, using the writings of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse as their texts. But Adorno considered this third type even worse, and he argued that their refusal to live in the social forms, their attempt at authenticity, could only be a delusion, a total narcissistic collapse of the ego.

Today a fourth type has appeared, but the students of Adorno can see only narcissism again. They call the current type "narcissistic" because conformity is now often merely outward, divided off from quite different inner concerns. People are now living and working in the old forms, again. On the one hand they do not rebel openly against the old forms. On the other hand, they do not fully identify themselves in them. They identify themselves with an inward complexity, even when there is no way to live from it.

But the previous, open rebellion was also called "narcissism," and the argument was that such a total refusal to live in the old forms could only be infantile and regressive. But, the type before that—the quiet "consumerism" of the postwar years—was called "narcissism" too.

With the concept of "narcissism" one ignores each new type, and looks only for the old ego-identification with the prevailing social forms. Any thing different is always called "narcissism." It was true that the old ego
was weakened with each new development. Parents were, called "narcissistic" for being so involved in consumption. But when their children rejected consumerism, the same concept was applied, because the children could not tolerate the traditional forms at all. Now the outward conformity is also said to be narcissism, because it is not the old, full ego-identification with the social forms.

This critique lumps all the changes together. It knows only a traditional ego that exists in the prevailing social forms. What is not that, looks all the same. When these critics look out the window, they see only the same thing, no matter what comes by.

"Narcissism" is a catch-all category. Anything other than the ego is narcissism. Psychoanalytic theory was always odd in reducing so much valuable human experience

to infantile regression. For example, the theory analyzed the greater intricacy and sensitivity of poetry as nothing more than regression. But poetry can exceed the ego. What it says about the world is not always unrealistic, regressive, less developed, less organized—"narcissistic." According to psychoanalytic theory, no experience can be realistic, adult, and interactional except through the ego. What is not the ego of the prevailing forms is *by definition* both primitive and autistic.

II. "UNCONSCIOUS PROGRAMMING"

What if some experiential processes are, on the face of them, more realistic and more intricate than the ego? What if they are not always autistic, but can include a better sense of interpersonal contact or its absence? What if they include more care for the intricacy of other people?

Does such intricacy prove that there is an order other than that imposed by the prevailing social forms? The greater order may simply be denied, if one continues to speak of experiential intricacy as "narcissistic" regression. But, the theory of "narcissism" leads some critics to a second answer: They grant the experienced intricacy, but explain it as stemming from past and present programming that is not being recognized. That is another version of the same critique. Again it is assumed that order must come from external sources. It is argued that experienced intricacy and relational sensitivity are only a *re*-discovery of the social order imposed by history upon the human body.

Human bodies are certainly social and cultural. Our long infancy and our language-brain attest to that. The human brain had its second great expansion *after* culture. Brain and body changed physically in the context of culture. Unquestionably, the body and experience are cultural. But this fact is mistakenly interpreted as *mere imposition* of social and political order. Upon what is this order imposed? External imposition assumes an original body without order, and without interaction. The ego is the extant social order, imposed upon a *purely individual, chaotic body consisting of mere autistic "desires."* Later I will question this theory of an unordered and asocial body.

The Two Versions of the Critique

Each version of the psychoanalytically based critique of the Awareness Movement points to a problem we will take up. Unstable interaction, regression, breakdown, and loss of "self" have indeed become more common. We must also recognize ingrained conformity even when it seems to originate from deep inside.

The two versions of the critique are often mixed together.[2] The current psychological processes are said to be regression, chaos, autism; then it is argued that their order and relational character merely reflect external repressive programming. We can see both lines of argument in the following quotations.

In contrast to the 1968 movement which demanded major social changes, the critics see

in the current Awareness Movement:

> A loss of the project of structural change [in favor of a] strategy of withdrawal from society. [There are] ... loose associations of people with a private, eclectic religiosity.[3]

The critic goes on to deprecate the inward processes, calling them *both* "narcissistic" and nothing more than a new external programming. The passage continues:

> [There are] psychologistic doctrines with a veneer of scientific ideology. [Four lines of "brand names" are listed.] These offer techniques for personal salvation and self-enhancing lifestyles based on the sacralization of the narcissistic self. That any public philosophy ... could emerge from this is preposterous.[4]

The new processes are understood as external "techniques" imposed on "the narcissistic self. " Foucault argues similarly:

> In the California cult of the self one is supposed to discover one's true self ... thanks to psychological and psychoanalytic science which is supposed to tell you what your true self is.[5]

The critics of the Awareness Movement cannot imagine an inner emergence more ordered than external programming. The body has no order of its own. For Foucault the task of his "genealogy" was

> to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.[6]

For Foucault there is not even a primitive "narcissistic" body left over. Aside from external programming there is nothing at all. For others there is a primitive narcissism. But all these thinkers assume that any intricate and relational experience can only reflect unconscious external programming.

Before we question that assumption, let us bring home to ourselves the real problem of unconscious programming. Let us grant how deeply programmed our bodies really are. However concerned we are with social change, we might create conformity if we are not aware of being programmed.

For example, people used to live on farms or in small towns, but by 1965 most of them led mobile urban lives. On farms a family works together all day; in cities we work separately with strangers all day, so that family life could not possibly have remained the same as on the farm. Socioeconomic arrangements structure the family and daily life; they affect the kind of individuals we can be.

The question of unconscious conformity applies also to our thinking about these matters. We cannot just call what we don't like "conformity," and what we like "a greater order in

experience." Such a distinction would reflect our own programmed values.

Isn't it simply an illusion, if one seems to experience an inner individual freedom in an unchanged society? Since we are all *trained* to think of ourselves as individualists, this very illusion masks itself We are stalled on the expressway at the same hour in our individual cars.

There is considerable reason to worry about such unconsciousness, because people do regard their psychological sophistication as "only inner" and unproblematic. Human beings are inherently interactional. We live and feel with, and at, others. Why, today, does "the real self' seem only inner?

The current split (inward freedom/outward conformity) accepts intricate experience as cut off from the environment. That split comes largely from helplessness, the impossibility of affecting external arrangements so that one could live from intricate experience. The self's new intricacy seems *only* inner because the external controls prevent it from being lived out. Therefore it can be lived only in private *self*-responding. But if the intricacy is accepted as *inherently* only something inner, then the social controls are accepted without having been noticed. What prevents one's outward efficacy is masked and unseen.

The rebellious movement of 1965-1972 was made possible by the wealth of the time. This movement disappeared, when the central banks of Western countries drastically reduced the money circulating in the economy. In the name of curing the (then very slight) inflation, economic policy since 1972 again and again "cut buying power," as it was officially called. Jobs were made scarce. That stopped millions of young people from living as they liked, traveling about, working only when they wanted. Now there is unemployment. Unions are giving up their gains of sixty years. The change in the spirit of young people did not happen only as a result of changes inside them. Today students are quiet and concerned to ensure that their education will lead to a good job. "Relevance" otherwise is not so important to them. They are able to go along with the "educational" system. They can also tolerate meaningless jobs. But "inwardly" they are sophisticated about experiential processes.

The misunderstanding of experience as "only inner" reflects and masks the unchanged socioeconomic arrangements in which individuals must live. If we don't see the effects on us of the social arrangements in which we live, then we don't ask the genuine political questions that might lead to genuine structural changes.

The critics of the Awareness Movement are correct in arguing that considering intricacy as "only inner" hides the social controls that make it seem *only* inner. But they are wrong in thinking that the intricacy comes from those social conditions. Only its restriction to inwardness is due to social conditions. They prevent it from becoming externally real. Rather than rejecting the intricacy as an illusion, we must consider how it could change the social conditions. We must also consider why it has not, and why so many theorists have assumed so readily that it cannot. And if such change is possible, we must also ask how it is to be differentiated from mere unconscious conformity.

Some thinkers (Foucault, for example) have assumed that, except for imposed controls,

the individual is only chaos. Freedom from control as such is therefore an illusion and a mystification. Others, critical theorists, like Marcuse, hold out for a liberating alternative, but search for it in a primitive, unrelational, narcissistic core. They have assumed that this hypothetical core is "the repressed." They all share the assumption I want to question: that, except for chaos or autistic drives, the individual is only what the power system imposes.

III. THE USUAL POLITICAL READING OF FREUD

Before we revise the assumption we have been discussing, we can learn much from Marcuse's refusal to revise it. Marcuse praised Freud for showing how the *social* order is built into the very structure of *individual* personality. The central part of Freud's individual, the ego, develops from the existing social order. Therefore no adult experience can transcend the social order. In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse argues that any modification of this theoretical plank would blind us to unconscious conformity and keep us from asking the political questions deeply enough. Marcuse writes:

> Freud demonstrated that constraint, repression, and renunciation are the stuff from which the "free personality" is made. . . . Psychoanalysis was a radically critical theory. . . . [But] its belief in the basic unchangeability of human nature *appeared* "reactionary". . . [therefore] revisions [like Erich Fromm's] began to gain momentum. (My italics).[7]

Such revisions must be superficial and conformist. They can only mask what Marcuse (with Freud) assumes, that individuals *are* the present society. Marcuse contended that,

> Whereas Freud, focusing on the vicissitudes of the primary instincts, discovered *society* in the most concealed layer of the genus and individual man, the revisionists attempt to free Freud's theory from its identification with present day society ... to indicate the possibility of progress.[8]

According to Marcuse, what we might think of as "progress" is necessarily defined by standards that are still "compatible with the prevailing values."[9] To think we could change the prevailing values is to miss how deeply they have modified our instincts. The best we can do is to know that we cannot change this deep programming by our present day society. "Progress" is always in unconscious alliance with the controls implicit in the individual. Such "progress" is only quiescent "productivity," and hides the controls Freud brought to view.

People sometimes say that Freud should not be read so literally, when he says that any experienced opposition to the prevailing social forms can only be regression—narcissism. But it isn't a question of taking Freud too literally. This assumption inheres in most of the theories proposed during the last hundred years. It is not pedantic to take this assumption seriously. We can see how seriously Marcuse took it. He wanted to side with what society represses, and so he *championed* narcissism as the only alternative to imposed

control. He called his own view "aesthetic narcissism." He assumed with Freud, that since myth and art exceed the social forms, they can only be narcissism. He looked to myth and art for an alternative to the given social order, but granted that it would be narcissism.

Marcuse did *not* say, as I say, that what is *called* "narcissism" (anything other than the imposed order) is much more, and very different from what the term implies. Rather, he assumed exactly what the term implies. He assumed with Freud, that the body consists only of autistic needs. "[The] instinctual needs ... must be 'broken' so that the human being can function in interpersonal relations."[10] Marcuse said that narcissism is like sleep and death, a self-enclosed autism, selfishness, and autoeroticism. He assumed this about any experience that would not be social conformity. Therefore, his only hope was that "Narcissism may contain the germ of a different reality principle ... transforming this world into a new mode of being."[11] He does not find that new reality, because he looked for it in the original body Freud posited. That concept of the body is too poor. The repressed drives are only chaotic and autistic. Behavior and interaction come only through the ego derived from the existing social norms. Therefore no adult experience can oppose the prevailing forms. Only *regression* can avoid unconscious conformity. Marcuse chose narcissism over unconscious conformity.

Unlike Adorno, Marcuse supported the 1968 movement: the young people's *experienced* rejection of common social behavior and their preference for *experiential* realness. By 1972 Marcuse's position had changed a little. In *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* he no longer calls nonconformist experience "narcissism." He sought, even more than before, *an experience of reality* from which society could be criticised: "a new sensibility.[12] But he never quite found it, because he continued to look for it only in myth and art.

Why look for an alternative to the imposed system in myth and in art? Since they exceed the ego, it was falsely assumed that myth and art are narcissistic and cannot be about this world. In an invented world a narcissistic regression could be enacted. It was falsely assumed that the real world is all of one piece, all formed by one common, imposed order. Reason was considered to be universal concepts, i.e., the commonalities that define classes. These commonalities were taken to be the meanings of all words. Commonalities were also the shared forms of social interaction, and "reality" was assumed to be socially defined. *One single imposed system was considered to encompass reason, commonalities, common language, social interaction, Society, and reality*. If that is all one system of commonalities, an alternative can come only from what that system leaves over—autism in an *un*real world. That assumption has dominated Western thinking for a long time. It was still compelling for Marcuse.

When so much is granted to the system of commonality-categories, what can be left? Only Freud's chaotic, unrelational "primary" instincts. But my criticism of him, here, applies only to his *theory*. I must point out that even psychosis and "primary process" are not *described* as unrelational discharges. In the *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud describes "metaphorical," "condensational," "*over*detemined" experience. Why is such experience put in a class with mere unordered drives? That comes about because all order is thought

of as the categorial order. All that his order excludes falls together as having no order at all.

But, throughout recent centuries the nature of language has not been understood. Language is not a system of commonality-categories and fixed forms. It is more "condensational" and "metaphorical", and more intricate than it is "rational."

Similarly, interpersonal interaction has been misunderstood in Western thought. Like language, it involves more than commonality-patterns. Later we will see that the nonrational, noncategorical order is not necessarily asocial and not only a negation of order. Nor is it necessarily about an unreal world.

Recent thinking still assumes that all order and all interaction is externally programmed. For example, Deleuze and Guattari (1983)[13] argue that in order to overcome social control, a body would have to be "without organs", since it is through organs that it interacts with others. The assumption is that interaction is externally programmed; the body could be free only if it could give up all points of contact with other people. (The book has a laudatory preface by Foucault.)

We can honor Marcuse's and Deleuze's courage in siding with the body against the social controls. We should heed their warning that unconscious programming will be reinstated, if we don't penetrate the depth at which repression has modified the body. But let us study the body. Let us not assume that the body is as Freud hypothesized with his reductive model—unorganized, unrelational tensions. The body might have an order other than what repression has created. But if we find more, how can we know it is not just the result of external programming? We cannot drop that question.

Marcuse assumed that there could be only an aesthetic alternative in the world of myth and art. But now, throughout Western society, people are discovering a more intricate order—and not just in myth or art. Might Marcuse's search for a greater "sensibility" now succeed? Has *experience* now become a possible source of social criticism? To think theoretically about whether that is possible, we must first modify the assumption that covertly defines nonego experience as "narcissism."

The second question is important. It takes us beyond Marcuse: Even if there is an experiential order that is not imposed, can it be distinguished from unconscious conformity? I will propose a process-strategy with which that question can at least be studied.

Tracing the Assumption in Freud

To modify the assumption that "narcissism" is the only alternative to the ego, let us examine how Freud defined these two concepts. He defined the ego in relation to an "id" which has very little order, and no interaction at all. It consists in merely individual, chemical drives, tension-increases or decreases. It gets order only from interactions which are patterned by the existing society through the ego.

Freud's metapsychology has room only for this unordered id—and, of course, the ego. But elsewhere, Freud discussed many id-experiences which are neither of these. The complexities of "primary process" (as in psychosis), the overdetermined, "condensational," "metaphorical" character of dreams and pathology are much *more* organized than mere tensions, and much of their organization does not come from the ego.

This gap in the metapsychology has not been sufficiently noticed, because, in Western science, "metaphor" and "condensation" are evaluated in terms of the fixity of "rational" logic. From this viewpoint they have appeared primitive, and as derivative from logic. Although such experience is *more* intricate than logic, it has been considered to be less, and could therefore be safely ignored.

In Freud's metapsychology, the "metaphorical" and "condensational" intricacy of our experience does not appear at all. He wrote only of id and ego, and held that the "id" has no order and no environmental relations at all. He writes:

> The core of our being, then, is formed by the obscure *id*, which has *no relations with the outside world*, and is accessible even to our knowledge only through the medium of another agency of the mind. (My italics.)[14] He continues:

> The id, which is cut off from the external world, has its own world of perception. It detects ... changes ... in the tensions of its instinctual needs.[15]

> The ego is ... a specifically differentiated portion of... the id ... *the ego is an organized entity, whereas the id is not*; in fact, the ego is the organized part of the id. (My italics).[16]

> Starting from conscious experience, it [the ego] has brought under its influence ever larger regions and ever deeper layers of the id; and, in the persistence with which it maintains its dependence on the external world, it bears the indelible stamp of its origin, [as it might be "Made in Germany".][17]

> [The ego's] function is ... to transform freely mobile energy into bound energy.[18]

Without the ego, the id has no connection to the environment, no modes of behavior, no channels of discharge. By repression and modification, one part of the id does develop such channels, and that part *is* the ego. The ego is formed under the influence of external reality—mostly social reality. Therefore there is no separate "social psychology":

> Social phenomena ... may be contrasted with certain other processes described by us as "narcissistic," in which the satisfaction of the instincts is partially or totally withdrawn from the influence of other people. The contrast between social and narcissistic ... falls wholly within the domain of

individual psychology.[19]

Such passages leave individuals no experience other than autism with which to oppose the prevailing forms of interaction patterned by their society. It is true that Freud's work can be read in other ways. Here I am concerned, not with various readings of Freud, but with the reading that has been adopted by most philosophers and political thinkers. Using chiefly his metapsychology, they take from Freud the assumption that order and interaction must be externally imposed upon an inherently autistic body.

How did Freud come to assume this originally unordered, autistic body of mere "tensions"? And, where he discussed the "metaphorical" intricacy, why did he consider it only infantile regression?

IV. HOW THE ASSUMPTION AROSE

How could Freud have thought that the body contributes nothing to interactional behavior, except autistic tensions? There were two reasons.

The concept of a body without its own interactional order seems to follow from the observation of cultural variety. Traditional human behavior is culturally diverse. If one abstracts from the variety of behavior and interaction, there seems to be a *common* body without any behavior or interaction. I call this "the remnant body." It is only a theoretical fiction; no such body could ever have existed.

Animals behave and interact. Therefore Freud said that animals have an ego too. He assumed that behavior patterns are *imposed* on the animals, in other words, that they must *learn* all their behaviors and interactions. In this way he could maintain his hypothesis of an originally autistic body that senses only its individual energy-changes. Today that view can no longer be held. The animal body is not just individual. Its interactions are not learned. Every animal species has been found to have complex *unlearned interaction patterns*, such as food-search, nest-building, mating dances, rearing the young, and so on. The autistic body of unorganized tension-desires is a fiction.

But suppose Freud had known these more recent findings of inherited interaction patterns. Might he not have argued that they are "imposed" through a "racial unconscious" that has programmed an originally selfish individual body? Such a body would have had to precede the existence of animals, since the animals we know all have complex, unlearned interaction patterns.

Human cultures did not create their interaction patterns. Culture could only have elaborated what was already the very complex behavioral order of the animal body. In humans we can no longer separate what is animal from what is culture, although the animal is ever with us. Of course, culture reforms it through and through, but never as its only organization. What repression "modifies" was never only simple drives, but already very highly organized interaction patterns. There never could have been an inherently

unorganized, autistic, merely individual, tension-body. But this means that cultural, political and social forms cannot be thought of as imposed upon such a body. The relationship of social forms to the body is not that of a pattern imposed on simpler drives.

Animal patterns have been thought of as an inflexible biology, appealed to by reactionaries to argue for traditional patterns. Actually the various cultural patterns are always only *some* of the ways in which biological bodylife can be carried forward in more differentiated ways. The new intricacy can develop other, still more differentiated ways. Life-process is more intricately ordered than a set of patterns. It is not an order of forms, but an order that can always be earned further in new ways.

That nonego experience is not simpler than the ego-forms is shown in how psychoanalysts describe it. For example, they describe dreams and psychoses as *too complex* to fit the forms of reason and practice. They continue to say that the ego-forms are needed, but not to impose order on mere simple drives, rather to *simplify* the so-called "overdetermined" "metaphorical" complexity. Whereas in theory the social forms are said to give an order to *simpler* tensions, descriptively they are said to simplify the unmanageably complex "morass" of experience.

But let us untangle this. If the body were nothing but simple tensions, then ordering and channeling them would be a one-way imposition. On the other hand, if bodily experience is more complex than ego-forms, then other relations are possible between them. Ego-forms need not always just ignore the body's experiential complexity and impose an alien form on it. And, if an ordering of the body other than sheer imposition is possible, then it is conceivable that the direction of change could go the other way: the prevailing social forms could be modified by the body's more intricate experience too.

Freud may be read as intending more complex relations, but the philosophers Freud assumes a simple scheme of imposition. An order exists before it is imposed. Then, when it is imposed, it remains the same, since what it is imposed upon has no order that could affect it in return. That is how commonality-categories were thought of. No feed-back. The so-called instances don't, in any way, change the commonality; they are supposedly subsumed by it. There are always only two participants in the process, the imposing and the imposed upon. Imposition is a simple dualism, and a simple type of process. But there are many other ways in which body and form can function. These are more complex kinds of processes. I will soon present some of these.

So long as the "metaphorical," "condensational," "overdetermined" order of the "id" was treated as if it were no order at all, order had to be thought of as the imposed kind.

The Source of the Assumption Before Freud

The assumption that order is always something imposed began with Western science. Before that time, naturalistic observations were catalogued, and many kinds of order and pattern were found. Modem science imposes its mathematical grids and records only the results of its own operations. At the beginning it was a dramatic, much-discussed idea that one could ignore everything in nature, and substitute mathematical relations. But as that method succeeded more and more, it became acceptable to say that there really isn't

anything there but what we impose. It was Kant who most fully stated this reversal: the order of "nature" is only the order we impose. "Experience" consists of rational forms imposed on unordered bits of sensation. That states the full turnabout. The complexity of experience is made derivative from the imposed ordering forms.

The source of these rational forms was said to be the human mind, "the subject": "I"—not the "I" we introspect, but an underlying metaphysical source of unity and form. Since Kant, marry thinkers have rejected this metaphysical subject as the source. They say that the imposed order comes, not from a metaphysical subject, but from "domination," from social and political power. This is not, however, the only way to reject metaphysics.

Marx rejected a metaphysical nature *without* assuming that human nature is the product of domination. Although now one kind of Marxism, it was not Marx's view that human nature simply is what is formed by the modes of production. In *Das Kapital* he said that human nature is *"crippled"* by capitalism. If human nature were only its product, there would be nothing to cripple. Moreover, Marx said that human nature is still "developing," and that it develops unevenly. He assumed no fixed or predetermined content, nor any metaphysical criterion. For him, human nature is an ongoing process of development, not a given order. He was very far from thinking that human nature *is* the order imposed by power and domination.[20]

More recently, the rejection of metaphysics has meant that human nature *is* whatever order the prevailing power imposes. This assumption did not come from Marx. Marcuse sees it in Freud, but Freud did not originate it. It was Nietzsche who rejected metaphysics only to embrace the assumption that human nature is imposed by domination. For him, organization can come only from domination.

It was a deadly assumption for those who sought a freeing social change. After Nietzsche, the Western hope for "free individuals" was viewed as mere "ideology"—inherently impossible. Individual experience was thought to have no role to play. What is not primitive in the individual was considered to be the creation of past domination. Only new domination—imposed social engineering—seemed possible to those who sought political "liberation."

The assumption I am tracing does not follow from rejecting a metaphysical source. On the contrary: *The assumption changes only the source, but retains the metaphysical notion of order as a form imposed on something unorganized.* One can reject *that* metaphysics too, rather than changing only the source and still assuming that human nature (and all order) is imposed (now by power) on a hypothetical, asocial substrate. One can agree with Marx that *human nature* is evolving. One need not assume that it *is* what power imposes, so that only some primitive core could possibly resist political conformity.

Positing an unorganized tension-body does not avoid metaphysical assumptions. It is itself an implausible assumption. I will show that we can think about the body (and language, social interaction, and politics) in other ways. We need not assume an orderless, autistic core on which order and interaction must be imposed.

The assumption is said to avoid a bifurcation: individual and society are said to be one thing, since the individual *is* the society programmed into the body. But the assumption bifurcates them after all: Society is the imposing; the individual is the imposed upon. The notion of *imposed form* splits them in two. First it postulates an animal body that was not originally social; then it tries to explain social interaction by imagining a social imposition. But it is not obvious that the body is inherently autistic, noninteractional. Social interaction is not necessarily something forced upon the body, as if only autistic, single-body discharge could be its original interest. Nor is an assumption that favors the other side of the dualism any more plausible: that mate, offspring, and community are the body's primitive interest, and that individuation must therefore be something imposed. Neither position avoids metaphysical assumptions. The problem is not in the rejection of metaphysics, but rather in the continuing metaphysical assumption that order is something imposed on something else.

V. INCLUDING EXPERIENTIAL INTRICACY IN PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

We have seen one characteristic of an imposed order: it is not modified by what is already there. An imposed order ignores what it imposes upon. That soon leads to the claim that there never was any other order at all. If more complex order is actually found in experience, it is said to be wholly *derived* from the imposed order. As in the old metaphysics, the imposed order is thought of as a *more general* order of commonalities, such as: categories, conceptual distinctions, criteria, common practices, roles, rules, values—generalities. Current thinkers don't agree about which of these to champion, but experience is always said to be "derived"—which means: from a more general order. But can an order of generalities determine much more detailed experience?

When someone asks: "How can I tell if I'm really in love?" we smile. We know there is no such single criterion, principle, or *general* category, as if a situation were a mere particular, subsumed under it. On the contrary, the general words mean newly in and from this intricacy. And so it is also with questions like "Why do you like your work?" or "When are you really yourself?" Not only big things—little ones also have the same intricacy. For example, "Why did you move away, just now?" We give a simple reply to tell "the reason," but the intricacy cannot be subsumed under those category-words; rather, it lets them work, and changes them.

It is often pointed out that Marx's analyses of events (for instance, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*) make use of much more detail and many more distinctions than his theory formally allows. But just this shows his rejection of underlying metaphysical principles. Practice does not consist of mere particulars subsumed under general categories. Experience is not just derived from underlying generalities.

People who have no experience of psychotherapy sometimes think that the patient's therapy process derives from the therapist's theory. That would be like deriving the world from a few generalities. Theory certainly has an influence; but experiencing is not derivative from simpler ordering principles.

Freud called the experiential process of psychoanalysis "working through." This, he said, is its most important part. He attributed most failures to the analyst's not knowing how to work with a process that cannot be derived from any theory. Freud knew that experiential intricacy is not derived from or subsumed under a theory. Experiential intricacy is not mere detail existing under general rubrics; it is not like the "unique" coloring of my cat, which still lets it be just a cat. The intricacy *changes* the generalities. But the intricacy he assumed in discussing "working through" could not arise, if the common categories were actually the only order.

Although it is obvious in any type of practice, this governing intricacy tends to disappear when we turn to philosophy and theory. Now "experience" is said to be *made* by the concepts. All experience does have implicit concepts, distinctions, values, rules, roles, schemes, interpretations, assumptions. A choice from among this string of words, as well as a word like "experience," also brings some scheme. *What* experience is, apart from ways of talking, cannot be said. Even mute experience has language implicit in it. So it can seem that the experiential intricacy is made entirely by assumptions, principles, schemes, criteria, values, and so on. But that conclusion is still the Kantian reversal—that it is only the imposed generalities that organize an unordered staff of experience.

Experiential intricacy is historically earlier than generalities; it is not *made* by implicit ordering principles. Intricacy is older than human beings. Animals can sense complex situations, yet they lack general concepts. If one replies here that animal experience does include concepts (distinctions, differences) and argues that "concepts" include differences that are not generalities, then one grants my argument that generalities are not the only kind of order. Then experiential intricacy need not be *derived* from generalities.

Generalizations are a late human creation, later than the beginning of language. (And, of course, explanations of language come still later.) General concepts are now, of course, implicit in our language; but no situation and no speech is these *alone*. What concepts mean and do within this intricacy is not determined just by them. They are not just imposed, as if they alone were the order of a situation.

In ordinary life and praxis it is obvious that situations are not ordered only by generalities. Moreover, the generalities *function in many different ways*. Imposing a determinative order is only one kind of process. Admittedly, we cannot separate the intricacy from its implicit generalities. We can only observe the change-steps, when events and words don't happen according to the concepts, but change the concepts instead. Later I will discuss this strategy for studying change-steps.

So long as imposed generalities are considered to be the only order, a single system is said to include concepts, language, society, and the ego. Whatever is not that system is jumbled together as the pre-ego disorder.

VI. KOHUT'S "NARCISSISM" ADDS ONE DISTINCTION

We have seen that the psychoanalytic concept of "narcissism" merges everything that is

not the imposed social system. In *The Analysis of the Self*, Heinz Kohut, an American psychoanalyst, revises psychoanalysis by marking out a distinction between psychosis and narcissism. Psychosis is thus no longer merged with all other nonego experience.[21]

How could even this one distinction have waited until so recently? It is because psychoanalytic theory is not subtle about "pre-Oedipal" experience. Most of its concepts concern the ego at the Oedipal stage. Nonego pathology was considered untreatable, and classified as "psychotic" or "schizoid." Kohut introduced one important distinction: he defined a range of people who *are* "treatable" despite the fact that their difficulties concern nonego experience rather than Oedipal issues. He classified these people as "narcissistic."

Kohut described "narcissistic" people as lacking inner experience. They must look to another person's reaction to gain any sense of themselves. The have few feelings and reactions. To help these people sense themselves, Kohut said one must hold a mirror up to them. Like Narcissus, in the myth, they have no inward access to themselves. They need an image held up to them, in order to have a sense of themselves. Only another person's perception of them enables them to feel anything inside.

Note that Kohut's narcissistic type is the *opposite* of the people in the Awareness Movement. The latter are called "narcissistic" because they are preoccupied with *so much* internal experience, that they seem to forgo outward, social concerns, and even the concern for how they look to others. Kohut's "narcissism" does *not* apply to them. Kohut's patients feel empty; they are compulsively social. They get some sense of self only through the reaction of others. That is the opposite of "too much" inner self-absorption.

Why, then, do critics of the Awareness Movement use the same term for those who have *more* interior experience than the old type of ego? It is because the theory has only two alternatives: either ego, or less than that. The theory does not allow for a *more* developed interiority than the ego's. Therefore, the term "narcissistic" is applied to more interior development as well as to the lack of interiority.

Even Kohut failed to distinguish the newer, oversensitive type (too much intricate interiority) from those who lack inward experience. How could *he* make such an error? In practice these two types of patients challenge a therapist differently. One of them has few early memories, no feelings to explore, and lacks any complexity. The other expresses very intricate experience, including pre-Oedipal memories. One gives the therapist very little to work with; the other requires an extremely exact understanding of many nuances that are far more specific than the common vocabulary. How could Kohut have put them both in the same category?

The answer is that, since the standard Oedipal material is not principally important in either type, he left them together. Before Kohut, orthodox psychoanalysts considered all neurosis as originating from Oedipal problems. All other troubles were untreatable, and were left without further distinctions at the margin of psychoanalytic discourse. Kohut opened psychoanalysis to the whole variety of human experience other than Oedipal problems. He did that by making one crucial distinction: *He showed that non-ego*

experience need not be (overt or latent) psychosis. But other distinctions are needed: All nonego experience need not be narcissism, either. "Narcissism" means *less* inner experience than the traditional ego, but, until further distinctions are made, the term is applied also to those with *more* (and more intricately organized) experience than the ego's.

What the Term "Narcissism" Still Lumps Together

Psychoanalysis has had only one "pre-Oedipal" bin, into which to put the whole vast range of human experiential complexity. Therefore psychoanalysts struggle with the term "narcissistic" in all sorts of different applications:

- Mathematicians are said to be narcissistic because they spend so much of their time alone.[22]

- Poets and artists have always been termed "narcissistic" because their experience exceeds ego-forms.

- Spirituality is understood as a narcissistic return to mother-child fusion. (Freud called it the "oceanic feeling" and said he never felt it.)

- Any *experienced* rejection of social forms is considered necessarily narcissistic. Only an *intellectual* critique is supposed to be possible.

Narcissism theoretically merges:

- the deposited history of the human race in the unconscious

- the pre-linguistic infant, from womb to age 1

- the pre-Oedipal child, age 1-4

- primary process, psychosis

- "metaphor" (although psychotics have difficulty grasping metaphors)

- the complexity Freud called "the pathology of everyday life"

- the complexity of all experience, not only pathology

The theory requires that this whole gamut of human experiential complexity be considered "narcissistic." In practice, psychoanalysts don't apply the term in the same way to all these people. For example, when it is said of poets, it means they don't always repress primitive experience. It is argued that the poet's ego imposes *artistic form* on this experience. But that view is insufficient. One knows that poetry is more than a pattern with primitive content. Poets often bring a *finer content*—truer perceptions than the common social meanings. What are these?

Nonego experience does not consist of simple drives. It has variety and complexity. More importantly, it is not all regression. What concerns us most, here, is the possibility of *new* intricacy.

We will have to modify the terms. Kohut has added one distinction. What is other than ego is now *either* psychosis *or* narcissism. That still throws together everything but psychosis. To think about the current Awareness Movement, we need more distinctions. Before I supply them, let me examine how people have changed since the days of the Freudian ego.

VII. HOW MENTAL HEALTH HAS CHANGED

How did people live and feel a few generations ago, when the "strong ego" was still common? The majority rarely felt experiential intricacy. To Freud they seemed to be their social roles; they felt their identity in the abilities and inabilities of their social status and role-definition. They *identified* with their roles. It seemed that they were their religions, their nationalisms, and their assigned cultural places. Spiritual experience consisted of the services, rituals, and prescribed statements. Education was what an educated person would know. The right way to behave was the way of the group; others didn't know how to act. Originality was being odd, "different." Today it seems that "everybody has personality problems." But those earlier generations would not have believed that. One simply thought and acted normally. Inner complexity was crazy. They rarely felt uncategorizable intricacy.

In Jung's scheme such people are not the highest stage of human development. Jung's scheme has a further stage, called "interiorization" and "individuation." But, though younger than Freud, Jung reported that most of the people he knew were still identified with the ego. In that sense Freud's definition of the mature ego does fit traditional people: their "I" seems identified with the roles. Their feelings occurred within the structures. Nevertheless, even this ego could not have been merely imposed. It had to communicate with body-life to carry it forward.

Such people still exist all over the world. Only the urban middle class has changed, and is now much alike in all countries. But the traditional people had much that we would like to regain in some *new* way, as we develop on our new path. At least when we first meet them, they seem refreshingly spontaneous and healthy. They have solid family bonds. A man is a man and a woman a woman, no doubt about it. They love intensely and get mad easily. They are "emotionally free."

It was a mistake to think of this traditional ego as merely imposed. If the body really had been nothing but simple drives, the ego might have been externally imposed: a structure to organize the drives. But now we can see that the ego only elaborated an innate bodily order: the unlearned complexity and interactional organization of the animal body. In traditional people there is a high degree of bodily wholeness. The traditional ego did succeed in carrying that whole complexity forward. The traditional ego was not a merely imposed order.

There is a continuity from animal behavior through ego-patterns, to the new intricacy. But it is not a continuity of form. The order of the body is not patterns; it is an order of carrying forward. Carrying forward can always happen in new ways—but never in arbitrarily imposed ways. Only some patterns carry body-life forward. The processes of intricacy, too, can fail to find a way, although a new way is always possible.

Even in traditional people there *were* diverse and complex nonego processes. But I am not concerned with what was already there, but with *new* intricate experience. We can *not* say that today's new intricacy already existed in the past, somehow unconsciously, nor can we say that this intricacy exists covertly in traditional people today. We cannot read today's intricacy back into the past. It is a new, further development.

Traditional people cannot find this intricacy. Asked to explain a feeling, they are puzzled: They say: "Wouldn't any woman (or man, any father, etc.) feel just this way under these circumstances?" We soon see that their feelings occur only in the culturally defined contexts. Their feelings have no murky edges from which new steps come. These people are not aware of, and really do not have experiential complexities outside the given patterns. They have a wealth of inner experience, but it occurs only in the social forms.

Today, even when a middle-class individual has what seems like the old type of ego, there is a decisive difference. This ego does not now *function* as it did in traditional people. Rather, such a person will seem to be an empty shell, clinging to outward patterns. When we meet such people in middle-class life today, we assume they have *not yet* developed very far, and we hope they soon will. Psychoanalysts who see that type of ego today do not call it "strong." It does not do well in middle-class society today. That older type of ego no longer carries body-life forward very fully. But the concepts of psychoanalytic theory have not yet changed. If the ego is by definition an imposed order, then we cannot conceptualize the difference between its erstwhile whole-bodied carrying forward of body-life, and its present incapacity to do so.

Today, Freud's classical neuroses can be found only in backward, rural areas. The pathologies we find have changed, just as what is health has changed. A few generations ago the traditional ego was healthy; but it is not healthy now. That is because today it is not *functionally* the same as it was. This tells us something about how mental health can change. Why was the lack of intricate experience not pathological in previous times? Why did the lack of intricate experience allow for plenty of inward emotionality then, whereas today that lack makes one feel empty inside?

Emotions are not fixed things inside. There is no fixed catalogue of inner entities. They arise only in situations. They come in certain places in interactional events. The classical emotions—joy, sorrow, fear, anger, guilt, respect, triumph, shame, and dishonor—*can come* only in certain situational patterns, at certain points determined by the story plots. You cannot get angry whenever you like; someone has to do something that can make you angry. An emotion comes only in a story of events. Traditional society has roles and situations that are clear-cut stories. The traditional emotions exist only in their places in such stories. For example, anger erupts in one's body when, according to the role-identity, one isn't accorded one's due.

In our society the roles and satires are now partly unclear. How do women, men, parents, sons, daughters and daughters-in-law relate to each other? In many ways. Therefore, whole-hearted righteous anger does not come in our bodies so easily. just when would it? The classical and classifiable emotions come more rarely today, because people are rarely in the traditional situations within which the human body made these emotions. Instead, we get a murky feeling that may include some rage, but does not chiefly consist of the well-known emotions.

The traditional stories are not sufficient to get us through a day. We have to define and structure much of every situation freshly, from moment to moment. The situations are more complex; we *make* them more complex. Did the change in social situations come from individual intricacy, or must we experience more intricately because the situations changed? Both, of course. Nor are there always just these two. The so-called "polarity" of individual and society greatly oversimplifies the many processes we must study. It is not the best, or the only distinction with which to begin.

Today we must let intricacy guide us, rather than the old clear roles and norms. These old forms still exist, but often as official demands, ideal models that we rarely fulfill. As expectations they are just one "social reality." But body-life is no longer carried forward by them. Our more complex and partly undefined situations are another "social reality."

The sociologist Giddens says that social rules exist as a tacit knowledge about how to act in different situations. He says that rules are "a tacit knowing how to go on" in almost any situation.[23] But now we must add: much of the time, each day, the rules don't work. They are insufficient to guide behavior. Then we have *a tacit not-knowing how to go on*.

At first what we experience is an unclear, complex blank. We are stuck. We don't know what to say or how to act. But tacit in the stuckness are *both the old rules and why they won't work just now*. Therefore we have to use that tacit sense to form the saying or the action freshly. Since the situations are subtle beyond the old role-patterns, *an unclear sense of the complexity* now comes in our bodies. And since we rarely live the old stories, the unclear complexity is sensed *instead* of the clear and simple emotions of our traditional culture: emotions such as anger, joy, respect, triumph, honor, or disgrace. Since these emotions rarely come, what inner experience *is* possible today? Intricate experience, however unclear it might be at first, is often the *only* kind.

Today, if one has not yet discovered the sensed intricacy, one senses nothing inside. In that case one is something like Kohut's type, lacking inner experience altogether. Then there are only "external" demand patterns. That is why the societywide discovery of intricate experience is so compelling. Once acquired, like westernization and middleclassness, no one wants to go back to the previous condition. And no one can. It shows that intricacy is a further development.

This development can not be "narcissism." Intricate experience must not be confused with the previously known types of nonego experience. If the traditional ego does not form, the old theory predicts only pathology and infantilism. Indeed, these *do* emerge, but in changed form. Intricate experience *does* include pathology, but it is mostly new in kind. Now that people are more than old ego patterns, some people are more selfish; others

cannot manage even a little insensitivity to others in order to take care of themselves. Furthermore, intricate experience *does* include one's childhood experience, but not just as past. There is a direct sense of the role that the past plays *in* the present, and this role can also change. But we find much more than just these changed forms of what was there before. We find a *new* process which generates steps of altogether new intricacy. That process was not on the developmental continuum before.

VIII. ADDED DISTINCTIONS: KINDS OF EGO-STRENGTH

To revise the psychoanalytic theory so that we can use it to think about the new developments, we will differentiate some of the ways in which the ego *functions*. It should be noted, though, that even before the new experiential intricacy, the ego functioned in many different ways, and never only as an imposed order.

Traditionally, the ego functioned to elaborate the already complex body-life and (with partial repression) to carry it forward. In so far as it functioned this way, there was only ego-process, *and no nonego experience occurred at all*. This is our first kind of ego-strength.

But we saw that a whole range of nonego experience was always said to occur, but unconsciously. Therefore there always was a second kind of ego-strength, in which the ego functions as a kind of gatekeeper, only to keep other experience out of awareness. Loevinger says "The ego gates experience.[24] Thus *nonego experience does occur, but not in awareness*.

In a third type of ego-strength some nonego experience does enter awareness. In that case "ego-strength" consists of *conscious control* of the nonego experience. *Ego-strength as control becomes the capacity to follow socially prescribed judgments and actions, in Spite of one's aware experience.*

These uses of the term "ego-strength" involve functionally different ordering processes. When I have characterized these three, which always existed, I will add two new kinds as well.

a) *Carrying body-life forward in ego's forms* so that no nonego experience occurs.

b) *Excluding, gating*. Nonego experience does occur, but not in awareness. (The so-called "pathology of everyday life" remains unconscious.)

c) *Controlling*. Nonego experience occurs in awareness, but it is denigrated as crazy and overpowered whenever it conflicts with the ego's social forms.

This is how the traditional ego functioned in relation to the nonego experience that was known to occur. In order to examine the new experiential intricacy, I must now add two more types of functioning:

d) *Choice.* Ego and intricate experience are both respected. One chooses when and how to move with either.

e) *A process of many steps of a certain kind, going on into the intricacy.* In the next section I will show these steps exactly. One does not remain in unresolved complexity forever. In this process a new kind of simplicity eventually arises, enabling speech and action. That is not the simplicity of a form; rather, a great deal of implicit intricacy is newly "jelled" in a new tacit knowing of what to say and do.

Orthodox psychoanalytic theory recognized only a) and b), and misunderstood both as mere imposition. In 1950 Ernst Kris added c). He called it "regression in the service of the ego." Conscious nonego experience is invited, but only the better to control it by imposing the ego order on it. The term "regression" means that nonego experience is only a return to infantile events and primary process. When we sense a new and realistic intricacy, rather than regression, it does not work well to deny or control it in the service of the ego. Many people still denigrate intricacy, or try to impose the old forms on it.[25]

Currently c) and d) are the most common types of process. People sometimes denigrate intricacy from the ego standpoint (c); but sometimes they respect it and choose to act from it (d).

The new ego-strength of type e) is not just one choice. Choice remains important; but now there are *many experiential steps*. Such steps are a very different kind of ordering process. In this type of process which I have called "focusing," fresh bodily sensed intricacy contributes to the coming of each step.[26] That is what I will now show.

IX. KINDS OF STEPS

Many kinds of nonego experience exist today, involving fantasy, imagery, and bodily experience. Most of them, however, are without the process of *steps* I will emphasize. Even without such steps, the openness to experience other than ego is a great development of the human being. Experiential openings that only poets and mystics once enjoyed, are now common. Just consider visual imagery. The old theory had held for two millennia that imagery can only rearrange previous external perceptions. Most people did not seem to know what millions now know: that there is a kind of imagery which is richer and not reducible to elements of external perception. But imagery is only one dimension. More important is the direct sensing of the body.

Many ways of sensing the body now allow it to reveal itself as much more organized than the few bodily "reactions" people used to know. So-called "primitive" experiences are definitely included: not only the mythic type, but also, for example, that directly sensed, aggressive body-energy which has often been lacking in overly careful people. But, what differs from conventionality is not necessarily primitive. The new intricacy can also be found in any moment's experience. It is not primitive, not the "lower nature."

Intricate experience changes and moves through a process of *steps* (the process defined in (e) above.) I am about to present this process, called "focusing." If one is not familiar with the *change-steps* that come from intricate experience, one might misunderstand it as forms and patterns of the familiar kind, although more complex. It seems that way when an unclear "feeling" first opens and one discovers an intricacy. It seems as if it were a formed order. Then there seem to be two formed orders, ego and intricate experience. In any one moment there do seem to be these two, often in conflict. But one can go on; and with the next steps newly intricate forms will come. One realizes that there is a process-order, a form*ing* rather than a form*ed* type of order. *The order of intricate experience is a certain process of steps, not an already formed order that merely emerges.*

But how can one study an "order" that is not itself something formed? Wouldn't any study or description reduce it to the forms used to talk about it? Any formulation we might try out to characterize this forming order would render it as formed. We can study it, therefore, only as we examine the steps in which forms change, and new, more intricate patterns arise. It is in the steps that we will see experiencing as an "order" of its own, different in kind from a form.

We live *every* situation with the body—not only by simple emotions such as being glad, sad, scared, or angry, but with a complex kinesthetic sense in each situation. That sense is what gives rise to the steps.

I will now describe the steps of this currently still rare process of "focusing." The process begins in the implicitly complex body-sense which I earlier called "a tacit not-knowing how to go on." It is the bodily sense of a situation in which the usual sayings and doings won't work. I will show how, from that sense, *many little steps* may ensue. Each step is a change in that body-sense and also brings new thought about the situation. It is in the transitions that we can examine how forms change, and how new, more intricate forms can arise.

This "focusing" process[27] can occur in any setting. I will present excerpts from psychotherapy. But such steps can occur with any concern: personal problems, practical or intellectual work, artistic activity—anything.

People say what seems true, and then have an odd, unclear sense that what they said was not quite right. That "sense" is directly felt, but cannot easily be defined. Here is one woman's description.[28]

> It's like ... that ... I don't know quite how to say it. . . . lt's like the feeling is there, but I can't quite put words on it. . . . [silence]. . . .

Then she sits silently with this . . ., stuck but not blank. The . . . . . cannot be defined, and yet it is enough to make one certain that what could be said would be wrong.

After a while of sitting with . . . . . she suddenly says:

> Yeah, [breath, whew] yeah.

Words follow. Then she checks again in silence.

>Is that right? . . . . . [It may turn out not to be.] Yeah, whew [breath], that's right.

Let me now present the whole excerpt from which I took these statements. I have put them in italics so that you can see where they occurred. Please note the role which each new silent . . . . . plays. A new step comes from each.

Note that the woman is actively interrogating, formulating, insisting on staying with an unclear sense until it opens. But she checks with the as yet undefinable body-sense in each silence. Note the progression from each silence to the next step.

>*Patient*: It's almost like . . . . . it kind of feels like . . . . . sitting here looking through a photo album. And each picture of me in there is one of my achievements. . . . . because I wasn't achieving for me. I was always achieving for. . . . .someone else so they'd think I was good enough. . . . .

>[Silence]. . . . . *It's like that I don't know quite bow to say it . . . . . It's like the feeling is there, but I can't quite put words on it. . . . .*

>[Silence] Yeah,. . . . . It's . . . I've chosen this person [a prospective mate] as my challenge . . . knowing that I'd be defeated, knowing that this person wouldn't respond to me. So that I could kind of buy right back into the photo album being flipped through. . . . .

>[Silence, checking inwardly]. . . . . Yeah. I think so. I think so because. . . . .

>[Silence, checking inwardly]. . . . . Yes, this person feels inaccessible. Yet, not so inaccessible that it's not a total impossibility. So it's like I keep trying out my worth on him and keep coming up against, "yeah, I like you, but."

>*Therapist*: "I like you but. . . . ." Always qualified.

>*Patient*: That's how I felt when my mother "liked me," when we related. I like you but. . . . But there was always something missing. Some big flaw that was so awful, she couldn't quite love me because of it. . . . .

>[Silence] . . . . . It feels like such a hurt spot. [Begins to cry]

>[Silence] . . . . . And, I always had to I always had to be a star or she wouldn't love me.

Note how her steps come from the silence, the body-sense, the . . . . . between each statement and the next.

I chose an example that can be construed as a "narcissistic wound." But that is not what makes her process-steps here. The narcissistic wound is what made her a conformist, *always* trying for further achievements, for a reward that would not come. It is these little change-steps that not only formulate this painful struggle to get an unreachable approval, but also enable her finally to reject that mode of living.

The hurt was there before, was then repressed, and is remembered now. But she says also that this unrealizable pattern *was* there all the time she conformed, although she neither saw nor rejected it. How the word "*was*" works here must be considered. She does not find that intricacy on her memory track of past conformity. It is formed for the first time in these process-steps, right here. Once formed, however, we can say it *was* already there in a way—in the way that this word "was" works here, in this very sentence. This retroactive "was" cannot be explained as if these intricate steps had actually occurred covertly, as an existing part of the old social form. More than what happened in the past is involved here. The steps are a new forming process.

Once the old form (as it functions today) is experienced *with* this intricacy, no psychoanalyst would advise her to try for this man, or to try to achieve any goal for what everyone would agree is a 'wrong" motive, once the steps formulated it. In the old form, there was certainly such a thing as working for rewards. That has always been common; nothing new in that. What *is* new is her steps, which lets her find—in this way of "finding"—what can *then* be seen as obviously unsound. Generations ago, people did not usually experience what we are calling "the unclear body-sense." Therefore they couldn't take the steps that would enable them to differentiate how they experienced the old social forms. Intricate experience did not form. There were only clear emotions, like this woman's hurt. The old hurt is made again, here, but only in some respects is it as it was before. In the past no unclear bodily sense came with that hurt. Certainly the body did *in some way* include what we now say it "was." That *might* have led to
an unclear sense which *might* then have been carried forward into intricate steps, but that did not happen.

This intricacy arises right in the steps. It is not dredged up from what was. Such steps do not uncover an already formed order; nor do they impose a formed order. We need to let our own word "order" work as these steps work. It is neither a finding of order, nor an imposing of order. The greater "order" of experiencing is not the formed patterns which result from the steps. It is *at least* the "order" of the steps. (I say "at least," because no one process should be taken as a model to think about all others.)

This process is distinguishable by its kind of steps. We do not distinguish it because we value the new content over the old one. Rather, her process had not been of this kind before. When she attempted impossible tasks, and performed for others, her thought and action *did not come in the kind of steps that are coming now*—from her own bodily feedback. This different process-mode *newly* constellates how she says she "was"— lacking in such feedback. *This kind of process is an experiencing-and-rejecting of the implicit control.*

Her old way, working for approval, was *less* intricate. It was the usual kind of process. Now this different kind of process brings more intricate content than the socially imposed order. You can recognize the difference in the mode of process.

Here is another woman talking about a prospective mate. Note how the silent "sense" corrects what she says. At each step the body's felt . . . . . "talks back" and reverses what she said.

> I've been holding him off. But he is really very special, and nobody's perfect. I'm impossibly demanding. It confuses me. . . . .
>
> [Silence] . . . . . He says he cares about me, and I know he does, but I also doubt it. Uhm . . . . .
>
> [Silence] . . . . . [sigh] No, he cares. I don't doubt that. I see it in his eyes. When I pull back even a little, he looks so hurt. It's me, I have trouble letting someone care about me. . . . .
>
> [Silence] . . . . . [sigh] It's not the caring, that gives me trouble. It's that when someone cares for me, then I have to get into *this* confusing feeling. . . . .
>
> [Silence] . . . . . He says he cares about me and what I need. And he wants us to be together. But it seems like he doesn't want to see what's true, what isn't working in our relationship. And it is mostly this not wanting to see, which is what's not working. But if he doesn't care about that, then it seems like he doesn't really care about *me*-me. It's like he wants me, but only if I'm quiet and feel weird, like not-me. So he doesn't care about whether our connection is real or not. But it makes me feel crazy. Does it sound crazy to you?
>
> Therapist: Would it feel better if he said these things separately, something like: "*I want* you for me. *I try* to care about what's good for you, and I want to think I do. *I'm scared* of seeing anything about us, or about myself, that would get in the way?
>
> Yes, it would feet better if he said that.

Why does she feel confused and crazy? Isn't it because her perceptions exceed the usual social phrases? ("He doesn't want to see what isn't working. . . . . . And it is mostly his not wanting to see, which is what's not working." "He doesn't care about *me*-me.") That is more 'intricate than the usual social vocabulary. Isn't it also more realistic—a better predictor of what will happen in their marriage, if it does not change?

One might apply the term "depersonalization" to the experience of not-me. It is not a new phenomenon. But, traditional thinking would see only loss of a clear ego—narcissism. The process of forming newly intricate relational aspects would be missed. One would see only an incomplete ego-identity. Considered in terms of the theory of narcissism, an experience of "not-me" cannot indicate anything real; certainly it cannot be the formation of realistic aspects of interpersonal interaction.

From the standpoint of the "narcissism" theory one might say something like this: "If she had a 'healthy ego,' she would not lose her sense of identity in this interaction. She would not be enmeshed in this complexity. She would stand by her first statement, in which she imposed the common social form. She knows 'nobody's perfect.' If she cannot impose her ego's dictum and bond socially in the nonmutality, it must be ego-weakness. Her ego isn't strong enough to prevent not-me feelings."

Today, women are saying that the traditional woman's role *was* a demand for women to be "not-me." "If a man cares for me, I must be how he wants." We can now see that this is a case of social control; but until recently it was not experienced this way. In the past, people did not carry an unclear body-sense forward into these differentiations by means of intricate experiential process-steps. Now, however, they say all this "was" there before. They are right—in a way. But I must emphasize that the word "was" is working here in this new way. If such a body-sense had formed, and had been carried forward, the old form might sometimes have "turned out to be" what she finds here. But, what traditional people experienced was not this; nor was it any other intricate differentiation.

It would be difficult to argue that the woman's experienced intricacy is really symptomatic of her regression to an old type of nonego experience. Our excerpts should make clear that what she senses is her present situation.

Notice that many steps make up the experiencing-and-rejecting of this control, this pull, the "not-me" demand. Each step changes the content. Each such step arises from a bodily sensed . . . . ., her bodily sensed social reality.

One cannot design such steps. They come. They happen. All one can do deliberately is to *focus* attention on the body's sense of more than can be said. We could not have predicted the next step from the earlier steps. Each step makes sense retroactively, but only as we go back and *alter* what had seemed so true at the previous step. The . . . . . has *new* implicit speech which has not yet formed. In these two examples we have seen how language and situation are implicit in the body. And we have seen how one can sense the wrongness of what one says. Our examples also show that the *new* saying is not yet *in* the unclear sense—obviously not, since a *body-change* comes physically only when the saying forms.

X. INTRICACY AND PROCESS STRATEGY

But how can one study or speak about such steps and this ". . . . ." which cannot be said? In our excerpts people *did* speak in such steps also about such steps. We can distinguish the mode of process we have been discussing because we can clearly recognize the steps of the focusing process. The steps shown in these excerpts have, in fact, been reliably defined, recognized and studied. Researchers have shown that a standardized rating system, the EXP Scale, can measure the extent to which they happen in an interview.[29] That has been correlated with other variables.

Are such reliable marks not once again just *general* criteria? The process-indicators that the EXP Scale uses go *further* into intricacy than common phrases do. Such characteristics are process criteria—*they are themselves an intricacy.* But further intricacy could change, and add to, any description of intricate characteristics. "Process" says that experiential order is always open for further steps. That does not mean we always study steps as such. There are other experiential differentiations.

The steps cannot be described in the general terms currently available. There are no words or phrases in the common language for the intricacy we are discussing. The focusing process *can*, of course, be described, but only insofar as this very process lets our words work newly. I will soon discuss the character of language which enables words to do that.

The focusing steps are recognizably different from the steps involved in ordinary talk-continuity, logical inference, and event-reports (such as: then this happened, and then that happened). In our excerpts you saw that the sequence of focusing steps is *not* one of these familiar progressions. But you did not only notice what these steps are *not*. You also *followed* the progression they *did* make. Before I discuss how the focusing steps do "follow," let me list more continuities within which they *need not* remain:

The Steps Do Not Remain Within Logical Continuity

We examined steps that could not have been deduced from the preceding steps. They were not derived from any existing forms. Rather, each step retroactively changes the earlier form: the form from which one would otherwise want to deduce or explain it. From each step one looks back and changes what the preceding step meant. Only then does the new step follow from the preceding one.

They Need Not Stay Within Any Extant Situational Form

Process-steps change situations and make new intricacy. A situation can change what it is, and become more intricate than it "was." The change-steps can determine anew the role of any forms.

The Steps Do Not Occur Within The Continuity Of Any One Time-Model

Focusing steps make time more intricate. The word "was" works in a variety of ways. The use of "was" which we examined involved two pasts: When we *now* say what "was" implicit before, that is *another* past time, not the one we have on our linear memory-track behind us. But this dual-time model cannot be forced onto every progression of steps. The steps can make other time progressions, and are not determined by a time-scheme.

Some Unconscious Controls Can Be Overcome

We saw that such steps *may sometimes* exceed *some* internalized controls. We saw that an internalized control that had functioned in one kind of process could be experienced and rejected in steps of another kind (in our therapy excerpts, having to be a star and having to be not-me).

No "Unconscious" Continuity Explains Them

The steps are not determined by something that stays the same in "the unconscious," because they can change the unconscious as well. What is said to "emerge from the unconscious" *was not* there that way before. Only now, in a new sense of "was," can we say it was there before.

Such Steps Are Not Within The Continuity Of A Self-Known Agent

They *cannot* be explained by positing a self-thing whose content would determine the steps. These steps do not stay *within* how persons know themselves. Rather, the steps can *change* the self-known person. The "subject" is not defined or unified by a metaphysical or logical continuity.

XI. THE SELF AS EXPERIENTIAL RESPONSE PROCESSES

A person is not a Kantian object held together by an imposed unity. One form is not what makes a self. Why reduce the many intricate self-processes to the empty mathematical identity of *a* self? Why abstract *one* pattern and impose it on everything else? Why assume that "the self" must *be* as the Western assumption makes everything be: as held together by an
imposed unity-form?

We reject not only the usual scheme: the self as a thing, entity, or object that is supposed to be the source and explanation of psychological content. We also reject the other general schemes proposed by some philosophers. For example, Heidegger offers a scheme of persons as *self-relatings* (my term for it). He says people relate to themselves mostly in the mode of self-avoidance. But they can *choose to be* what they *already are* and *have to be*, thereby *being in a further way*. Here the word "be" works in three different ways in a more complex pattern than the simple "is" of a brick. Like other philosophical schemes, Heidegger's does serve to undercut and correct the usual scheme of a self-thing. But it is again a scheme, and just one scheme.

We would follow Heidegger, if we said: "The self is a self-response process." But is it *a* process? We must at least say that the self is many kinds of self-response process*es*. Even Heidegger offers more than one. We *can* forcefully subsume the variety under these kinds, or under some other scheme of kinds. But there are many kinds, and many ways to formulate kinds. Nor is the self made only in *private* responding. Other people's responses can carry self-experiencing forward. Privacy and interaction are always implicit in each other: We respond to ourselves as persons involved in situations with others. Conversely, our interactions depend upon the private self responses which each presumes in the other.

Some process-modes involve a newly found sense of self. Some are spontaneous, some calculated. Some involve reserve, boredom, withdrawal, depersonalization. There may be unconscious conformity, or, very differently, a calculated show of it in which the

individual remains separate. There are many different differences in process types, and these determine what will actually result from some social process. What is lost in any general scheme is just those crucial differences in mode of process which make a sociological or psychological variable actually quite different in different instances.

But, is all one can say about "the self" just a characterization of steps? It is true that the *order* of the self is always *open* to further steps. Any differentiation can be studied as a kind of step, but much else about it can be studied. The kinds of steps is only one especially promising consideration. Rather than a scheme of things or steps, experiential differentiations *are* (make, find, have, work, step . . .) in their own intricate way. We let these words work newly in *this* "making," this "finding," in these "steps." We let them be their own ordering, rather than imposing a similar pattern to say what they are.

But should we not have a philosophical scheme, at least to ward off the effect of simpler and poorer schemes? I find that this purpose is better served by letting the steps which actually occurred stand, as themselves. An actual step can greatly exceed the patterns of a self that have been proposed.

For example, in one woman's excerpt I presented, is the *self* the "me" she refers to as "*me*-me"? Or is it the "not-me" way of being which she senses as false although there is a "pull" to be not-me? Or is her self perhaps rather the harried one who senses the one self as true and the other as false? Of course, any such answer would be foolish. It would break up her intricate pattern into several self-entities, each supposedly existing alone. We could go on multiplying such entities. There is also *the* "pull," and therefore a self that isn't strong enough to resist that pull. Which is that one? And is "not-me" her childhood self, or is it rather the adult self of the traditional man-woman pattern? Or "was" it always both, perhaps with the child-self remaining inside a woman's? Even this rough scheme of one self inside another is subtler than the attempt to define entities. And the multiplicity of entities is still better than the scheme of just one.

Why is anyone tempted to reduce this variety and intricacy to some single pattern? The temptation arises because of the belief that nothing exists without an imposed form of "unity." The variety seems to imply that there is no self, no person. Someone will ask: "Isn't each of us still *one* person?" Our answer would be: "Certainly—but not in every way." This answer is ambiguous because the oneness of a person is ambiguous *as a generality*. Here is a better answer: A person "is" and "is one" in many ways that are not in the mathematical unity-form. For example, a certain new way of being one does arise in the bodily processes I described. But that is only one of many ways of being one. Were you asking about the ways in which a person is one, and about other respects in which that isn't so? *These* can be studied.

XII. LANGUAGE AND THE BODY

How does language work in the process-steps I have presented? Can we discuss this question in language that works as it does in these steps?

Words change how they themselves work in these steps, and in talking about these steps. Since the steps of the focusing process violate logical continuity, we could say that they are "*discontinuous*." Then that word works very precisely to say this break in logical continuity. But since such steps make sense—we do follow them—we could also say that the steps are *continuous*. This opposite word works equally precisely in this kind of transition. But the two different words don't say the same thing. There is no "same thing" for the words to name. A word brings old uses into a new working. We follow this working without difficulty. But what sort of "following" is this? The word "follow' works newly, nonlogically, but in its own, very precise way. "Precise" works more precisely here than categories do. *This* "discontinuity," this "following," is made by these steps. Their possibility is in the nature of language!

Another striking characteristic of the focusing steps is the function of the bodily . . . . . Such silent sensing is *not without language*. There is implicit language in the . . . . . since one can sense in this silence the wrongness of what has just been said. Obviously, the body-sense "knows the language." New phrasings may come from it. So, it must be appreciated that language is implicit in it.

The bodily . . . . . occurs not only in therapy. Pilots fly "by the seat of their pants." Poets and painters work from a bodily felt sense of what has not yet formed. Among business people it is well known that the best decisions are made by those who can size up a situation by the feel of it. Those who have this talent are admired as having "the business instinct." The use of the body's situational understanding is known in some way in every field of human activity. When there is a problem, we cannot just impose a solution. Since there is a problem, it is certain that the old forms did not suffice. Yet they are there, implicit in the bodily . . . . ., our sense of "stuckness" in the situation. When no new pattern comes to carry that "sense" into speech and action, we remain stuck. We fail to meet the situation. At such times it can *seem* as if the old forms were the only patterns of our bodies; now that *they* don't work, nothing does. But that murky physical discomfort is only the beginning. Soon something significant arises from it. After a few steps more intricacy arises, and may carry the "stuckness" forward into new speech and action. We must remember that this process involves more than one step. People often stop after the first step, and don't know that more steps can come.

All fresh thinking involves this . . . . . We might have to read something over and over, till we say we "have it," we "get" the point. But then our further thinking is also a . . . . . To think theoretically about this . . . . . we must use it. No theoretical term can substitute for how theoretical terms change in the . . . . . We must let how it works be . . . . .

Where is this . . . . . ? It is in the body; it is a sentience of the body. *The body* can be thought of in this different, yet familiar way: After all, we meet most situations in life through kinesthetic body-sensing. We walk into a room and sense with our bodies—without verbal thoughts—who the persons sitting there are, and how we greet them. We can think very little of any event in explicit forms. When we find no way to act, when we are stuck, we sense that the body implies more than the known ways. Here the word "implying" draws a changed meaning from the function of the . . . . . in these sentences.

The Theoretical Question

Granting these common observations as well as the therapy excerpts, we must still ask the theoretical question: How can a physical body have *its own* implying and symbolizing? Can there be a bodily symbolizing other than the implicit concepts and social rules which are, of course, implicit in human situations, and are therefore learned by the body? But I have been saying that bodily process also symbolizes in a different way, not only in what I have called "generalities": concepts, distinctions, roles, rules. How is another symbolizing possible? Doesn't the very word "symbolizing" symbolize a generality—many particular cases brought under one category? Even if we let the word work freshly here for whatever happens in the focusing process, can we think theoretically about how the body could possibly function as it does, giving rise to new symbolization in the focusing steps?

If we assert that the body has a symbolizing of its own, are we making the old false assumption that "meanings" float somewhere, unspoken and unthought, as if words and symbols could come later, and only represent what were already meanings? But meanings are always the products of some kind of symbolizing. Meanings do not exist separately, so that they could merely be copied accurately—represented.

Indeed, the old notion of representational symbols applies neither to ordinary human practice nor to the body. A symbol is not a copy, not a stand-in for something; rather it changes what it symbolizes. That happens in most ordinary situations. Certain phrases or actions will change a situation. Other words or actions would change it differently. A situation *is* something that needs to be changed by some phrases or actions. We don't separate certain events out, and call them "a situation" unless some words or actions are called for. If we are puzzled about what to say or do, we don't know what the situation is. When at last we find what we can say or do in it, do we know what *the situation* "really was," all along? *It* was what required just this saying or doing. Our bodily implying, and the situation, are "symbolized" by this saying and doing. which says what the situation is—and changes the situation so as to "meet" it. So we are really very familiar with a use of symbols—indeed, it is the most common use—which changes something, while thereby saying what it was.

But the required acts are not determined by the situation, as if they could be deduced from it. Life would be easy if that were so. Rather, we often fail to meet a situation, because its *requiring* is so finely tuned, and so new, that we cannot come up with anything at all, to say or do. What is required may never have been said or done before in the history of the world.

The body's implying of speech and action is not limited to an existing repertory of actions and phrases. As we saw in the therapy excerpts, one can sense what is required even while one cannot yet phrase or do it. That is the body's . . . . . Since new phrases and actions *do* sometimes come, we see that the body can not only sense beyond its existing store of phrases and actions; it can also create new and more intricate phrases and courses of action than existed before. *In giving rise to new phrases it physically restructures the language that "was" implicit in the body.* One does not design new phrases or actions. They "come" physically—the body produces them if we attend to the body-sense of what cannot be said or done.

This functioning of words should not seem strange or incomprehensible. We need only discard the notion of an idealist world consisting of *separable* concepts, generalities, distinctions, differences, general category-names. These are not the only order of the world, nor of language. Language is "general" in an entirely different way; it does not consist of separable generalities. Words and phrases do not always have one "same" meaning in different uses. Separable generalities are a much later human development. Sometimes they *are* made to function with logical continuity. But in ordinary language and practice they do not function logically. They are changed and carried further by being part of another order, that of language in situations.

Notice that actions have the same role and function as words. Neither actions nor words merely describe or represent; rather they function to change something which, we later say, *was* the requiring of that change. If the ordinary use of words may be said to "symbolize," then action also symbolizes.

Even in an animal's physical life-process, actions have this symbolizing role. Body-tensions have been misunderstood as merely chemical. But they are also the calling for certain environmental behaviors. The so-called "tension" implies a certain behavior. When that behavior occurs, it is what the tension *was* (what the tension called for, what it implied). Animal behavior has this symbolizing role. The body physically implies its next interaction. When that interaction has happened, the body no longer implies it. When the cat first sees a mouse, its body tenses; every muscle implies jumping. When the cat has jumped, its body no longer implies jumping. The jumping *symbolizes* what the body *implied* before the jump. Hunger *implies* feeding, and feeding *symbolizes*—and changes—that hunger. An earlier and *wider* symbolizing exists, and it is richly elaborated by language.

The patterns of animal life seem endlessly repetitious. How, then, can I assert that the body can imply novel intricacy that has, as yet, never been formed? The answer is that the bodily implying, as a physical tension-event, does not contain *the formed events*. Nor does it contain their representation *as such*. Therefore the body's implying is not inherently limited to the repetitious form we usually see. The body's implying is not a form. Therefore, when an animal's body or environment change, we do sometimes see new behavior which has never been seen in that species. An ant crawls more intricately on a wooly rug. One may certainly argue that language is a very different symbolizing than animal behavior, but it does involve the role of the body which we have just discussed.

Elsewhere I have presented a theory of many modes of wider symbolization.[30] Body-process was always already a symbolizing that does not consist of separable generalities.

Since animal bodies imply interactions, culture and language did not create interaction. The cultures have only elaborated the bodily implying. Language does not consist of "encoded," stamped-in forms, which first organize experience. Language-acquisition used to be thought of as an encoding. In recent research that assumption is changing.[31] Complex mother-child interactions have been found from birth, even in infants born two months prematurely. In these interactions, the mother responds to already present

complexity; she does not impose it.[32] At about one year, such organized interactions provide the complex contexts which are now said to be necessary for language-acquisition. In the field of language-acquisition, too, the long-ignored, nonconceptual order is returning. The animal, the body, the infant, the child, and language—these are found to have a more intricate *order* than had been believed. We must pay attention to our own language in discussing "the body and language." The discussion of language must allow this reworking which is characteristic of language. Implicit speech and interaction are *lived on*, *further*, by the body, sometimes into actions and phrases that have never existed before in the history of the world. The word "order" can say this further forming, which is not just one form, or another.

The body can talk back in the silences. The phrases that form in these silences work in new ways, as a poet's phrases do. The words "body" and "talk" are in fact working newly right here. You know, from how the sentence is constructed, that "talking" works in a new way—since this talking happens in silences. Of course the word brings it old uses, but these are changed as the word works in the sentence. It is not a matter of my *announcing* that I want these words to work differently, while still using them in an old way. Rather, if you have followed these sentences, your body has already allowed these words to work in their new ways.

Words define themselves from their working—from the changes they make. Words don't work by definitions. New definitions can be devised only *after* words have newly worked. Definitions are important, but for something else. They are not this working. The words, "order," "body," "experiential," "intricacy," "language," knows," says, sense," "situation," "step," "works," and "follows" all work as you have "followed" them here. Many other words can work newly to further characterize such steps. They can say more about how body, situations, and language are inherent in each other. How words work in this way can be said—if we let "work" and "say" work that way. We can study and say that "order."

The usual way of thinking can be turned right-side up: distinctions, categories, rules, roles—abstract commonalities are a later kind of order, never the only one. Language was and is not a categorial order. Nor is the order of language superimposed upon a passive, malleable body. A living body never consisted of fixed forms which could be wiped out and replaced by other fixed forms. The body's type of order is one that can always be carried further, and language does that. Language and culture do not abolish the animal. The complex body speaks the language, and can talk back to history—much more intricately than the extant forms.

XIII. A PROCESS VIEW OF UNCONSCIOUS PROGRAMMED CONTROL

Let us now return to the problem we postponed. The focusing steps do not always exceed all controls. In the following excerpt these steps failed to overcome an internalized control.[33]

[Silence] . . . . . Like . . . like I feel almost like I'm trapped in my own self or something like that . . . . .

[Silence] . . . . . It's hard to describe the feeling . . . . .

[Silence] . . . . . Like that . . . that it's not going to get better . . . . . And I guess, like you said, there doesn't seem to be a light at the end for me, and I can't see right now . . . or at least I can't see the light.

Therapist: There's an element of . . . of. . . hopelessness. Perhaps that's too strong a word, but . . . you don't immediately see any hope of resolving this feeling.

[Silence] . . . . . Well, it looks pretty hopeless to me right now . . . but then, when you said that what came to me was . . . I sort of had an angry place that. . . . Hopeless maybe, but I'm not helpless. That bugs me if someone thinks I'm helpless because . . . even though it does look hopeless right now . . . Like I've always been able to fight and work things out before . . . for myself . . . but if . . . . .

[Silence] . . . . . there's . . . there's something real hurtful . . . . .

[Long silence] . . . . . And, my reaction to that is that I just don't care (sobbing) . . . . .

This example shows that such process-steps can miss and merely reinstance some internalized programming. Isn't this an unrecognized, programmed feeling when she says: "That bugs me, when someone thinks I'm helpless"? Isn't this the controlling code speaking: "If you are helpless you must feel ashamed. Hide the fact. It is your own individual fault. What happens to you depends on you alone. Keep working. Take a job under any conditions." This code keeps people performing. Here we have seen that a political-economic injunction implicit in the experiential change process *may fail to be overcome* by the focusing steps.

Her reaction is not created only by the social code. Animals try to avoid helplessness, too. Value-codes are not just imposed on a formless body; they elaborate the already complex animal body. But the bodily order is not a set of fixed patterns. More than one social way can carry the body forward. To sense the bodily order does *not* mean obeying a given pattern, or just imposing another. Bodily sentient steps can bring new differentiations. It did not happen in this excerpt in regard to this code.

We have seen that process-steps *can* sometimes exceed internalized controls. The other people I cited exceeded a performance code (love that never comes for being a star, the pull to be how a man wants). But focusing steps do not always exceed *all* internalized controls. There is no such "all," since later steps can always determine what "was" such a code. But as we have just seen, a well-known code may be reinstanced, rather than overcome by the focusing process. That leads us to formulate the following question: *When do these process-steps change the internalized controls, rather than being dictated*

by the controls? This question takes us to the heart of the political problem. We can consider politics in a different way, now that we have rejected concepts like "narcissism" and revised the assumption inherent in many other concepts, that the body cannot challenge or alter the forms imposed on it. If the body *can* alter them, rather than being controlled by them, when does it do so and when not?

How Can The Direction Of Change Be Made to Move From Experiential Process to the Larger System?

The question has several facets. It is not enough to avoid the dualism of society and individual. We must also ask about the causal direction. If that is not mentioned, the assertion of this unity is only a false comfort. We are made to feel that we have been included, when it is said that, "After all, the individuals and the society are one and the same system." In this joint system cause and effect might move in only one direction, as the old theory said. You and I are affected by the Federal Reserve Bank, since we and it constitute one and the same system together; but the Bank might be quite *un*affected by being in one and the same system with us. Although microsystems and macrosystems are interlocked, we must ask about the direction
of change. How can change move *from* the experiential *to* the political?

Anything human is both social and individual; it is ordered in *many* systematic ways (not just by two large systems: individual and social.) We think of events as individual, or sexual, or economic, but sexuality can be changed by economic changes, and new sexual patterns change economics. Since the "laws" of change in these orders are so different, we are inclined to trace artistic changes in terms of aesthetics, and family changes in terms of family patterns—we study each within its seeming lawfulness. But we should not forget that anything concrete belongs to the other systems as well. The systems meet each other, not as separated entities, but as they are implicit in each event. A change in one system *will* change that event, and, as the event affects other events, the change *may* have an effect on the other systems. But that is not automatic. The change *may* go in both directions between two systems, but it may not! We must look each time and trace the reciprocal change, *if* there happens to be one.

For example, millions have currently lost their jobs. Most of them are helpless, and feel ashamed of being helpless. They know hardly anything about the Federal Reserve Bank and did not take part in its action to restrict the economy (1972-1986). Their sense of themselves does not in return affect the Federal Reserve Bank. Furthermore, the experiential process-steps I described can go on and on, without ever bringing up the Federal Reserve Bank. Personal process-steps do *not automatically* change the economic system, nor even increase one's understanding of that system. Therefore we need to study and collect the factors which make for a direction of change from experience to the structural system.

Five Factors That Determine the Direction of Change

1. Firstly, political and economic concepts have a necessary role. People need different concepts to interpret events such as the Fed's taking the money out of the economy to "cut demand." Most people don't know how the economy is controlled, or even that it *is*

controlled. According to the now prevailing concepts the economy is an uncontrolled natural phenomenon like the weather. They don't think about how it is controlled anymore than they think about how the weather is controlled. Only with political-economic concepts can *experience* give rise to the need for changes in how the structure now operates.

2. Secondly, how could experiential steps have any effect, considering the fixed job-structure within which everyone has to work? The bank directors can only perform their jobs, or yield them to others who will. The slots, that is to say, the structurally different roles and positions in which we all live and work, direct what can be done in the slots. From the highest to the lowest, each slot seems to have only its prestructured leeway. What, then, might be the role of the "focusing" process I have described? It is not only personal. Although each of our "slots" is *almost* totally structured, if one focuses on one's own next steps within the slot—*including* the limitations and seemingly fixed purposes—steps that change old forms *can* come. But this possibility is at first invisible. It is not already given in the slot. And, in any one slot, what can change, even in this way, may be painfully little. One is tempted to look only at broad issues, and to ignore one's own hard-to-find and hard-to-do novelty. But if we each do work at our own possible new differentiations, the collective degree of novelty can be considerable. A collaboration of many such individuals communicating with each other, especially in *vertically* connected slots, can open much more.

3. Thirdly, a genuinely political self-experience is possible. It is not only a question of jobs and money; our deepest self-responding also has political dimensions. There is a way to move *from* the "merely inner" psychology of self *to* a self-understanding within the larger system. We can learn from how the Women's Movement moved from what seemed to be only psychological issues to politically understood issues.

Decades ago most psychoanalysts would coerce an unhappily married woman to stay in her marriage. Whenever her intricate experience conflicted with the social pattern, it was given no validity. The analysts wanted a woman to be *aware* of her dissatisfaction ("regression in the service of the ego"), but then to control it. The analysts would not grant that her dissatisfaction could be *realistic* in her present life—or that she might act on it. They told her: "Most women manage the marriage pattern, so the trouble must be *in you*." That is the internal/external split: What exceeds the existing forms must be narcissistic. Reality is what is "external."

The Women's Movement rejected this invalidation of experience. Understanding how the dualism that divides "inner" from "outer" subjectivizes and invalidates the woman's experience of social reality, it was able to move *from* "Inner" *to* "outer," that is to say *it brought about a change-direction from more Intricate experience to society*.

Currently, a woman arguing about women's rights can tell a man: "I'm supposed to let you interrupt me, because you're a man. I was trained only to listen. I can't think of a comeback that fast. But that makes my point!" The same experienced inabilities which silenced her before and kept her *cut off* from the "external structural context," are now her *connections* to that context and the source of her challenge to it.

This way was first discovered by the Black Movement. A previously "shy" black person can now speak up for blacks. A different grammar is no longer an obstacle. The person says: "See? I don't talk 'right.' That's my point!" The awareness of "bad grammar" no longer prevents a black from being listened to. The difference in grammar is now a political way of understanding oneself. Thereby it connects the person to the structural context and becomes a channel of resistance.

Such self-understanding can be extended to everyone. We can all move in this way *from* some experienced need for change *to* an experientially implied social change. Suppose someone feels something of that sort, but lacks the solid conviction necessary to act entirely alone. The old training now says: "Why aren't you sure on your own? Shame on you for needing others to corroborate what you know." But this shaming inner voice is itself an example. To come to understand this code ("It all depends on you alone") *politically* is a recognizable type of process-step—and moves past the code. The dictum: "One should never need others" is experienced *as a control* which atomizes and isolates us, and prevents mutual action. One moves some steps past that code in the very act of sensing it in this experiential-political way. The steps are like those we saw in the therapy excerpts when a control becomes constellated and rejected in the same steps, but the steps include the political dimension.

Once you look for them in this way, you will find other internalized controls. For example: Does an unpaid bill make you more tense in your body than oncoming traffic? Can you stand it if your friends drive you to the airport, but not if they give you the money for a taxi? Do you feel ashamed about not earning as much as you "should?" Does your body pull itself in, as if to take up less space, when others are around? If any of these examples fits you, can you also understand your *self* within the larger system?

People differ in what they have developed. Therefore different steps are freeing for them. Are you good at pushing, winning, riding over others—and over that in you which longs to stop the constant tension? Would you like the peacefulness to look around you, to sense others, and to find your own creativity? If any of that fits, can you also understand this as more than an "only inner" peculiarity? The "inner" is never just inner. When you consider it "inner," you keep the tension within yourself and cut experience off from the social change it implies.

A great many people are currently leaving the business world. It's called "mid-life crisis." (But it includes many younger people.) They seek new professions—often psychology. Some blame themselves for not finding interesting new work. They say: "It's me. I should know what I want." Calling it "mid-life crisis" makes it "inner"—part of the individual lifecycle. "I should know what I want" says that you should want an already existing slot. But why accept the existing system of slots, rather than pursuing the flexibility and the new slots implied in your dissatisfaction with the existing fields? And, why learn to be an *ordinary* psychologist, when you are already an expert in the fascinating new field in psychology which is implicit in your experience—the study of what it is, about the business world, that can make it intolerable? The problem is not its tasks or contents. We must study *the characteristic type of experiential and interactional processes* which the business world now requires, and the *change in process-type* which is implicit, when people find the current type intolerable.

Political self-experience is not just negative. I do not speak negatively of the present society. The idea is not to turn against it, to stop loving it, but to sense how we live in it, and what we do to others. The privileged sector we live in is the hope and envy of the world. It has not made only emptiness and atrophy in people. Intricate experience is itself a development of this very society. Now that people are finding it, they assume that it always existed and explain the fact that they hadn't found it sooner by assuming that society must have repressed it before. Not so. It existed only in rare individuals. Its current development *was partly enabled by the conditions of this society*: its literacy, its relative openness, wealth, level of production, communication, sophistication, and its history of constantly evolving institutions. The current adult individual evolved in *this* society and now exceeds its routine forms and controls.

4. The *general* concept of "control" has its proper role in *specific* research. There is very little meaning to this question if the terms "control" and "development" are merely general concepts. The one condemns, the other lauds—everything. The difference is only the evaluative tone. Every social function can be described in either term: Education *develops* children into adults, that is to say, it seeks to *control* the type of people they become. Medicine has lengthened and improved life *by* governing everyone's daily habits and keeping the sick in medically controlled institutions. The developing is itself the controlling. Foucault was quite right when he said that the attempt to distinguish is only a mystification. Development is obviously a kind of control; one can know this without studying anything specific. But Foucault did not stop with this universal concept. He also studied specific historical records and detailed practices. But, in this *specific* study he was greatly helped by his *general* view that everything is control. It is interesting that the empty general concept made such a big difference when it was used together with the details. It enabled him to discover and perceive *specific* systematic controls where others have seen only accidents and exceptions. For example, how have generations of theorists thought about the unattractive aspects of the usual education—the locked routines,
the constant grading, the ever-present, infantilizing authority patterns, and the great amount of useless content? These puzzling things were considered simply as accidents due to unenlightened administrators, byproducts that are not part of education as such. But in that view the greater part of what happens in education drops out as irrelevant. Only if, with Foucault, we consider that education is inherently control, can we perceive and study *these specific controls*—how they function to train individuals to be as their future jobs will require them to be. It is therefore an advantage to view specifics in terms of the general notion that every social function is inherently controlling. We can retain this advantage without being confused by the negative sound of that proposition. Control cannot be distinguished from development *in general*. Instead, we can study the details, especially the different kinds of processes. Then we can discover many important distinctions and a much greater variety than just control or development.

I seem to propose a *general* social theory that human individuals can exceed the social controls. But that is not what I propose. Rather, I assert that this happens only in certain recognizable kinds of processes, and that it does not happen in other, equally recognizable processes. We can study different kinds of processes and observe how controls function and how they are exceeded.

5. Different kinds of process give different, more specific meanings to sociological terms.

For example, in one kind of control our response is prescribed. In a different kind, we devise our own new way, but in response to external events we did not control.

Depending on process-differences in intricate experience, seemingly similar social patterns can have very different results. In some processes we impose a pattern and life goes on within it. Other imposed patterns totally stop some part of living. These arc different kinds of processes! Or, the imposed pattern works, but with puzzling symptoms. Some types of control make for violations in secret. Others prevent even the wish for a violation. Still other controls are explicit but resisted or disobeyed by almost everyone. These examples open up a gamut of unexplored process-differences. The focusing steps of intricate experience I described are one kind of process among many others. We can study process-differences.

A conceptual and experiential self-understanding within the slots and the specific controls is possible. I think I have shown that it can lead to a change-direction from experience to society—if political understanding and experiential intricacy can be joined. Let me now apply these points to evaluate the current situation.

XIV. OLD AND NEW INSTITUTIONS

There is now a hint of a really new kind of form: situations so structured that they make space, make room for the process of intricate further structuring.[34]

The old institutions are recognizing intricate experiencing. Many businesses, churches, and schools are moving toward including—*and also demanding!*—the individual's "creativity." A continuum of change spreads before us, with different institutions at various stages. Some corporations, churches, and schools still try to make the old way work. Others, including giant corporations, now demand that individuals *use* their intricate experience. Every year more companies and institutions change over. Now they require their employees to exceed the handed-down definitions. But, of course, only in certain ways. People must be "creative" in some ways in some situations, while keeping silent in others, as the unchanged hierarchy demands.

The invitation to create is often romanticized. Individual participation is invited. More decisions are made by lower echelons. Individuals perform better when they are involved in making some decisions. Work quality improves when people can act on what they notice as they work. "Creativity training" is now common in all industries. The employees must improve on their instructions. Meanwhile computers permanently record all their moves—a vastly heightened kind of external control.

The changes do not all remain within old bounds. It is simplistic to see only a misuse of intricacy to support a fundamentally unchanged structure. On the other hand, it must be understood that such experience does not automatically change the structure. There is neither just freeing nor just more control. *We must question and study the specifics, and especially the many kinds of experiential processes.*

Students must tell ideas of their own in class. Mere repetition is not acceptable. But the ideas must be appropriate. Is this freedom or control?

Sexuality is no longer just an official pattern. Each person must perceive and articulate feelings and needs more finely, so that sexual dissatisfactions and needs can be "worked out." Mere compliance is not acceptable from women, nor "slam, bam, thank you ma'am" from men. It brings a gamut of differences.

Women are now allowed—but also required—to have their own interests, and to act in the world. It gives some women the world. For others it means only that they *have* to work to earn enough for the family at the lowered standard of living. Or, they may feel there is something wrong with them if they devote themselves to the family: "Shame on me. My family is my life. I don't have my own thing." Is it a new freedom or a new compulsion? *The difference lies in the different manner of process.* For many women today freedom is their rejection of work opportunities in favor of their bodily desire to stay home with their children, or to let the baby sleep in bed with them, defying the demand to abandon their children.

What is control and what is freedom can be decided only from the manner of the process. Freedom is not the imposition of new roles instead of old ones. Rather, the increasing skill and differentiation of psychological processes is unquestionably a development of the human being. As was the case with mass literacy, it can be used for more control but is certain to develop people in other ways.

In 1968, the old forms were called "empty," but what would *not* be empty could not then be said. Today we speak of "empty forms" wherever something is still done as if there were no experiential intricacy. The "alternative institutions" of 1968 failed, partly because people could not get along with each other. They were willing to share everything, both property and feelings. But relations became intractably difficult. New social forms turned out to be impossible without inward and interactional sophistication. Skills in these regards were badly lacking. Precisely these skills are now developing.

Thirty million people belong to some new network or training program—in fact, new educational institutions. These institutions and experiments at the heart of the Awareness Movement arose *from* intricate experience and carry it forward at least as much as they impose on it. What they offer is not just imposed on experience. There is first the discovery of intricate experience. There are then also many process-differences, among them the ones I described in my excerpts. The current development is much more specific and different than an imposed order.

XV. CONCLUSION

After a long lapse in the history of philosophy, the non-metaphysical order of the body and language is returning to consideration. In philosophy it is still spoken of only negatively, as what *dis*organizes a supposed system of rules, roles, values, commonalities, similarities—generalities. Language had been explained as generalities,

but how it works is not determined just by them. Generalities were also thought to be imposed on the human body as its only order. Indeed, all nature was thought to be just these.

The order of the body and language is more intricate, and not a formed order. It can be studied in transitions, the steps of various processes. It is best said in the more intricately working words. Rejecting metaphysical generalities does not close further study. It opens the study of intricacy.

Experiential intricacy can lead to new theoretical concepts. The uses of theory and logical consistency are not lost. But each such use always *also* enables other moves, in and from intricacy.

No one doubts that simpler generalities are implicit in language and situations, but they do not alone determine how they function and change. The greater intricacy of the body, language, and situations determines each time what concepts mean. It lets words work in new ways that are more intricate and precise than any preexisting forms.

Experiential and situational intricacy is not derived from generalities or subsumed *under* the generalities. They are not the order of language, and never were. Language has the order of experiential intricacy.

In the current Awareness Movement people find an experiential intricacy that was rarely had by the earlier, traditional type of person. It is new; neither primitive nor ordered only by prevailing ego-forms.

The so-called "self" also has the order of body and language. It is open for experiential steps that need not stay in a formed order. Many processes show the order, greater than any pattern, even an intricate one.

We are in the midst of a great development of persons and situations. The repressed, and the primitive, turn out to be more than had been thought, but experiential intricacy is new, not primitive. Its language can be spoken and can speak about itself. How the body functions in the languaging has to be considered. To call it "narcissism" exactly misses what is happening: Processes of new intricacy are moving beyond the "reality" assumed in the concepts of "ego" and "narcissism."

The term "narcissism" is reactionary. Its use denigrates the current social change, and opposes the far greater social change which experiential intricacy now implies—and may bring about.

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