

Guide for *HUMAN EXPERIENCE*, by John Russon

Write an essay that deals specifically with what human experience is and how it is constituted. Then show how we are motivated by conflict toward domination, flight, or dissociation, but can instead move toward freedom to overcome our meanings, which is to overcome ourselves in order to move toward human fulfillment. Show how such movement toward fulfillment necessarily includes the ethical relationship of reciprocity.

What are the specific steps for this process of therapy/education/philosophy and the process of rehabilitation? Clearly state what is at stake (freedom, ethics, etc), then state what obstructs the process. Finally, discuss the life-changing fundamental insight about human experience that is necessary to begin with: the sense or meaning-giving power we have, that we are co-creative hermeneutic, meaning-making, interpretive beings who live in our meanings.

More specific questions that can guide you in getting to the core issues in Russon:

1. Discuss the basic features of human experience: our basic bodily, interpretive, co-creative, erotic-linguistic nature (affective vulnerability/desire that is given form in meaning/language/gesture/behavior).
2. Human experience is fundamentally interpretive. This does not mean the superficial sense of interpretation, like interpreting a poem that is carried out in and does affect our conscious awareness. Rather, it means that meaning-making constitutes human experience and this happens on a pre-reflective level before conscious interpreting is possible. We are always already oriented, which means we always already have a meaningful situated and concrete objectivity that reflects our meaning, our identity. This insight, that is read right off experience by phenomenological analysis, completely undermines the typical beliefs about experience and objectivity.
3. Show how these undeniable features of human experience inevitably give rise to *conflict and distress (neurosis) that motivates change and growth in meaningfulness*. (how coping with what resists us, with the demands of others, and the distress of internalized incompatible narratives/meanings leads to debilitating life arresting neuroses that are the driving motive that lead to domination, flight, dissociation, and self-deception, but if properly guided can lead toward self-overcoming in order to pursue the openness to one's possibilities in the Bildungs-process.) Discuss the role of honesty- flight/domination in this struggle.
4. Show how the phenomenological "aletheia" or disclosure or revelation with regard to this *basic emancipatory drive in human beings* suggests that the very core of what freedom is, is to be sufficiently motivated, developed, and skilled to really pursue one's possibilities. Self-transcendence is our fundamental nature, the freedom to redefine ourselves and our world, the capacity to "rehabilitate" ourselves, inhabit a new world, re-world.
5. Show how self-transcendence is the imminent or inherent characteristic of human experience and provides a "logic" by which we can judge human practices in terms of health, wholeness, and fulfillment. Freedom is the capacity, in the context of intersubjective support, for moving toward human fulfillment. *What fulfillment is or looks like is always unknown because it lies beyond the enabling horizons that open on to this possibility.*
6. Show how the *immanent norm for judging human practices* provides a way to guide us in how to pursue genuine therapy, education, and an ethical life that leads to reciprocity, mutual recognition, the Golden Rule. Human experience is not just a drive toward survival but a drive toward meaningfulness and freedom to pursue fulfillment that has an immanent norm, a logic that is a basis for understanding the religious impulse that is most universally expressed in what is called the Golden Rule, seeing one's basic nature in the other and treating them accordingly
7. Show the actual process of therapy/education/philosophy:
 1. Turning toward our sense-giving or meaning-making power (away from habituated objectivity)
 2. Skillfully describing actual experience (phenomenology)
 3. Explication (critical thinking that reveals the inconsistency and inadequacy of our current habits)
 4. Re-placing intellectual habits. Reconfiguring/re-education of interpretive reflexes (overcoming myths of objectivity, etc)
 5. Re-habitation or new habituation in the PRACTICE of living (long difficult process, but we embrace this if we have not run from the suffering we are trying to overcome)

The very core of what freedom is, is to be sufficiently motivated by conflict, curiosity, suffering of the rupture of temporality (Miller), to develop the skills necessary to overcome habits of meaning in order to really pursue one's possibilities. Self-transcendence is our fundamental nature: the freedom to redefine ourselves and our world, the capacity to "rehabilitate" ourselves, inhabit a new world, to re-world. *"What fulfillment is or looks like is always unknown because it lies beyond the enabling horizons that open on to this possibility."*

Selected Comments on Student Papers:

The basic undeniable features of human experience can be revealed in a careful phenomenological analysis, namely, interpretive co-creation of identity and subsequent self-overcoming motivated by the demands of others and the distress of incompatible narratives/meanings that gives rise to the urge for change and growth in meaningfulness.

From this, the immanent norm for judging human practices emerges to guide us in how to pursue genuine therapy, education, and an ethical life (reciprocity, mutual recognition, the Golden Rule).

The main issue is how do we pursue freedom when this pursuit is obstructed by “crippling habits” and how do we most effectively and ethically cope with our suffering in light of the norms inherent in human experience (standards by which we can judge human practices to be better or worse)

What you say here is the habitual way of abstractly talking about the body. In actual experience, we do not make contact with our bodies or even through them. We ARE the immediacy of embodiment in relation to meaningful objects. Objects ARE the “there” of my body, of my meaningful identity. Body is not something that mediates experience such that I experience things through my body. I AM that experience. Experience is always meaningful, not something I have through the body and then interpret and understand. Understanding is itself always meaningful bodily contact, determinacy out of habits of meaning. There is no “mind” or “me” versus my body. That is an abstract cultural and unconscious habit that it can only be exposed as such by the effort of turning toward our fundamental interpretive sense making power from which all objectivity and meaning arises before we can even see that this was an abstract habitual prejudice that we impose on experience after the fact. It is a kind of explanation. Explanations are fine, as long as they do not mislead us, as this one does.

Memory is not conscious remembering of this or that. Memory here means the entire habituation of meaningfulness that has become unconscious and is the condition of the possibility of expectation that we live in with regard to meaningful experience. This unconscious meaningfulness, memory, together with our fundamental temporality which is our constant projection of meaning or expectation IS what makes experience a “present” or makes the present of experience possible.

The fact that I can have an “internal dialogue” does not imply something purely abstract called “mind.” My meaningful experience, including my increasing capacity to have such “internal dialogues” is an aspect of meaningful interpretive engagement with others (intersubjectivity) that can eventually be an engagement with my own awareness and experience. It is not something “in” my mind. Once you overcome the habitual abstract division of mind/body as being something fundamental to experience rather and see this as the complete abstraction that it is, you won’t use this kind of language to try to say something basic about experience. Use of the word “mind” in ordinary language, such as what’s on your mind, or did you change your mind, are perfectly good ways of speaking because we are not trying to claim anything about metaphysical minds or minds versus body in such locutions. They are practical ways of talking about our meaningful experience. However, when you are trying to understand the nature of experience you have to see that this habit does not map onto experience and only obscures any understanding of it.

Discuss our basic co-creative erotic-linguistic nature (affective vulnerability) that is given form in meaning/language/gesture/behavior. Discuss the undeniable features of human experience revealed in phenomenological analysis: interpretive co-creation of identity and subsequent self-overcoming motivated by the demands of others and the distress of incompatible narratives/meanings. Show how the co-creative pursuit of identity inevitably gives rise to distress that motivates change and growth in meaningfulness. Then show how a careful phenomenological examination of this process reveals the immanent norm for judging human practices that provides a way to guide us in how to pursue genuine therapy, education, and an ethical life that leads to reciprocity, mutual recognition, often called the Golden Rule that is found in all major cultures and religions. Such a phenomenological “aletheia” or disclosure or revelation with regard to the basic emancipatory drive in human beings to overcome debilitating neuroses and to pursue the openness to one’s possibilities in the Bildungs-process suggests that the very core of what freedom is, is to become sufficiently motivated and skilled to really be able to pursue one’s possibilities. Human freedom when it is not arrested is a process of self-transcendence, but is frequently caught in a web of fear, insecurity, shame, and desire to hold on to the self when it arrives at some level of survival and comfort. But self-transcendence is our fundamental nature, the freedom to redefine ourselves and our world, the capacity to “rehabilitate” ourselves, inhabit a new world, to re-world. Self-transcendence is the imminent or inherent characteristic of human experience and provides a “logic” by which we can judge human practices in terms of health, wholeness, and fulfillment. Freedom is the capacity, in the context of intersubjective support, for moving toward human fulfillment. **But “what fulfillment is or looks like is always unknown because it lies beyond the enabling horizons that open on to the possibility of such fulfillment.” (Russon, p.)**

If what you say is correct, that we cannot make contact with the meaningfulness of others, then why would any tension arise at all? Where would there be any conflict? The conflict of intersubjective meaning is experienced as an unresolved conflict because we are fundamentally erotic/linguistic vulnerable beings. Meaning is never private. It is always intersubjective and co-creative even though we do eventually become capable of awareness of our own experience. How do feelings of love and hate arise as a response to the conflict of meaning? What basic feature of our experience underlies this? (Hint: movement toward freedom of the “I can” from the unique perspective of embodiment of intersubjective experience).

To have a better chance to understand Russon, you must try to understand him from your own lived experience guided by Russon clearing away much of the poor thinking we are habituated to about human experience. Instead, you continue to operate in those habits without letting Russon clear a path for you to see things more directly and clearly about your experience. You even use quotes that could help you, yet do not let the insights you quote have much effect. You even mistake the points of view Russon is opposed to for Russon’s own views and don’t argue the issue one way or the other about these views. What are the views he is opposed to and why? Why are those habits and beliefs even “crippling” to our movement toward fulfillment? Why can fulfillment never take place, yet genuine freedom **to pursue** freedom vital to us?

Note: The following summary and notes are incomplete and rough. Do your own research in the text. If you have a handle on Chapters 1-5, skip to my summary of Chapter 6, then proceed or skim the whole document until you find possibly helpful comments on some particular issue.

WARNING: The view presented here is NOT *relativism* in response to failed *absolutism*. This is an **anti-relativistic** stance that there are in fact universal norms or standards for judging behavioral practices, but they are typically buried under the collective habit of naïve realism and objectivism. This is also **anti-absolutism** in that it rejects any account of or truth about what human fulfillment and happiness is. The basic phenomenological features of human experience as self-transcendence preclude absolutism. Absolutism and the form of skepticism called relativism are not genuine contradictories, but are contraries and are both false. Neither maps onto human experience. There are inherent standards or norms for human freedom, but there are no absolute truths about it.

The distinction between **abstract** and **concrete** was particularly difficult for many students. Here is another attempt at clarifying this:

ABSTRACT: the concepts that the words “chair” “love” “hand” justice” foreign policy” refrigerator” “jealousy,” etc., stand for.

CONCRETE: The actual lived and felt experience of seeing/touching/sitting in the bundle of phenomena (color, shape, location, etc.) we group together with the phrase “this chair.” The lived felt experience of what we use the words “love” or “jealousy” to refer to. These lived experiences are always in flux, every changing and variable. The words we use to pick out the meanings (concepts) and the concepts themselves are relatively fixed, though they are also variable in what they mean and how they are applied over time.

Abstraction: Concepts or meanings that are general and non specific. They do not pick out the specific determinacy of immediate CONCRETE phenomena (experienced objects, feelings, etc.).

Immediate phenomena: What shows up and is immediate in experience. We can and do apply abstract concepts to our felt sense. **Concrete:** Immediate phenomena of experience, our felt sense (not the concepts and words we apply to them.) Love is a word and a general concept, but the felt sense one has when one loves is concrete. Poetry is appropriate to such feeling as one is trying to express the experience. Literal language would be useful if one is trying to define the concept. My location (my current meaningful situation) is ontologically prior to any abstraction. The basic lived experience of being located in specific meaningful situations cannot be understood (from the standpoint of actual experience) by means of our abstract understanding of space/time, body/mind, and objectivity. Abstraction and concept use is integral to human thought. But the standard abstract subject/object or mind/body dichotomy is a “logically incoherent and untenable view of reality... a conceptual absurdity” which does not map on to our experience at all and as an intellectual habit can only mislead us about human experience.

Summary of Human Experience

by John Russon

In his book *Human Experience*, Russon attempts to provide a much more adequate way of analyzing human experience than our typical approaches based on assumptions and perspectives that turn out to be insupportable and even “crippling.” In light of this more adequate phenomenological descriptive analysis Russon then attempts to show how we come to address our primary concerns and struggles as human beings: Other people, self-esteem, and self-understanding. This process is fundamentally interpretive and is always from a standpoint of embodiment, my bodily opening to what I interpret. This arises in the family and moves to the larger human society. These aspects of the human situation, the personal, the familial, and the social can both support and be in radical conflict with each other. The tensions, demands, powers, and needs of the bodily subject are lived as a *personality* that arises in response to the condition of interpretation, embodiment, memory, mood, and interaction with other people. The basic feature of this tension is neurosis. The book finally focuses on overcoming the crippling habits of self-interpretation that naturally arise in this neurotic condition of tension in the personal, interpersonal, and social. Therapy, education, and philosophy are the proper arenas of this movement toward self-overcoming and human fulfillment. It is argued that the shift in perspective away from the standard and habitual view of ourselves and the world, a shift that is based on the analysis of human experience in the earlier chapters of the book, provides the materials and motivation for moving toward this self-transformation and emancipation.

Chapters:

1. **Interpretation:** The basic synthetic temporal process of the experience of objects and a sense of self. Experience is interpretive meaning-making and is fundamentally temporal: Experience is always a determinate flow in specific meaningful situations, not something general and abstract. An object is always for consciousness and consciousness is

always of unified objects. Objects are the determinacy of our meaningfulness. Why are they similar or the same for us? Intersubjective linguisticity (See *Eros of Wisdom*) which is fundamental, not subjectivity-objectivity. Objectivity is participation in the fundamental temporal process of intersubjectivity: conformity to habits and demands of meaning, value, the “truth about reality” one is born into. **Determinacy:** The congealed memory of patterns of intersubjective recognition we were made familiar with (objects-otherness-people). **Objects:** Significances, meanings, reflection of habits, reflection of self-identity. Not just there in themselves, but always already interpreted. Already interpreted. To be an object, to be meaningful to someone is to be meaningful in terms of bodily possibilities. (25-26, 31) There are no “sensory” or “imagined” objects that are not already meaningful. They are experienced as “being there” as they are increasingly abstracted under concepts out of prior habituation. **Goal of objectivity in knowledge and morality** is openness to intersubjectivity, to interpretations of others, a higher standard of truth and values than the family and its individual members. Main Character: Critique of self and other, openness to other points of view subjected to **standards of reasoning and justification.** (Ch 4) The awareness we have of objects is not as explicit acts, but is implicit in the very sense of another (an object). Thus conscious explicit interpretation that we are familiar with cannot reveal the basic feature of experience and is why “easy introspection upon ourselves” does not yield self-knowledge. What we take as immediate and “present” about ourselves and the world actually leads us away from rather than toward such self-understanding. It can only come “through a study of the determinate forms of interpretive synthesis (objects) that can be discerned within the character of objective *calls to action*...the terms in which we experience the object as *calling upon us* reflect the values and projects through which we experience the world.” (For example, a baseball calls upon our habituated embodiment as “to be thrown.” For a baby not yet brought into this bodily meaning, this objectivity, the mere presence of this “other” precedes “to be thrown” for the “I can” in the trajectory of meaning, but does present a bodily engagement or contact that is already meaningful. The habituation of such meaning sets the condition for more sophisticated engagement in meaningful takes of the “I can.” A baseball is an intersubjective object, not just a thing. It came into meaningful existence as “to be thrown” within the larger intersubjective situation of what we abstractly call “game.” The specific abstract “history” or meaningful story of this development is NOT what is at issue here. We are attempting to abstractly reflect a meaning trajectory or movement of the “I can” into habituation and from this into ever more sophisticated participation in the co-creation of human experience.)

2. **Embodiment:** opening into meaning, the “I can” of immediate engagement with objects. A gradual awareness of objectivity that arises in intersubjectivity, language/meaning.. **Subjectivity/body:** body is my opening into meaning/significance. Body is that through which I form my identity in a context of already established meaning (of others) (24). Body is the medium of existence within which agency (can take meaningful action) can emerge (self-conscious choosing, identity, “I” or “I can”) To be a body is to be already defined, allows action and agency to emerge that becomes increasingly determinate and complex via habit (the way we carry our “past” or prior meaning along with us).(27) **Object:** Significances, meanings, reflection of habits, reflection of self-identity. Not just there in itself. Already interpreted. To be an object, to be meaningful to someone is to be meaningful in terms of bodily possibilities. (25-26, 31)
3. **Memory:** The embodied habits of our lived temporal interpretations, commitments, and demands that arise from and within our intersubjective contacts and situations. Situations are meaningful determinacies. **Memory: What locates us, the matter of reality (39-43) Memory** is the very “matter” of reality, the ever present condition of having an experienced situation (an experience of objects in a meaningful context). Contrast this with the typical view of memory and theoretical explanations from brain science. Memory the way the body maintains the presence of the past as orienting structures of significance projecting possibility (a future) within and as the condition for immediate experience. This unreflective remembering that is always in play should be distinguished from explicit self-conscious remembering which is a “task” of pursuing a construction of a narrative, a selective actualization of the various possibilities for further thinking within the horizons of my determinate setting? Russon says these determinations that constitute the horizons of my possible explorations are points of departure that exist as a promise, an aura of expectation that permeates each determination. These possibilities are implicit but not yet made manifest in my experiential (interpretive-meaningful) location. How do forgotten memories constitute our human identities, giving us the determinateness from which it is possible to project a future?
Identity: (p33) Habituation of a way of interpreting/making sense of the world that sets up all subsequent interpretation and identity. Identity: Who I am for others and for myself, the history of the “I can.” Interpretation and identity are mutually implicative: How I interpret is who I am. “My world”, my sense of things, my mood, mirror my identity. My sense of the world is who I am. I am not fundamentally a conscious being who encounters objects, makes choices, and acts: This abstraction only refers us back to a specificity, the point of departure in such abstractions and any sense/meaning I have. **Habituation/Habits of intelligibility:** “I can” made automatic, frees us for more complex contacts and meaningful “I can” or bodying forth. Habit fundamentally shape and figure our subject-object contact. Habits are the way we carry our past along with us. Habituation advances and produces qualitative changes in our contact such that we can explore beyond our familiar zones of contact into more sophisticated environments or

situations, advance in the quality of our sense-making. In other words, we are always making the world qualitatively (not just quantitatively) new. In this *hermeneutical circle*, new contacts and situations occur within the indeterminate felt sense of things as a whole. This indeterminate sense of the whole makes possible any particular experience, but in turn each situation and particular experience gradually, sometimes abruptly, changes the qualitative sense of the whole. **Mood:** Ways into meaning, into developing a meaningful situation (43-47,77)

4. **Others:** Gradual recognition of distinct centers of power, meaning, value, judgment, we call persons. (Spend some time in Chapter 4 to flesh this out). Seeking recognition in the eyes of others is the key to understanding our freedom, and our essentially human character of self-overcoming. This character explains the role of “therapist” and Patient” (Ch 6) as the search for a kindred spirit, and attempt to connect around a shared sense of our experience. Families are inherently limited in their valuing, their sense of reality. The emergence into a transfamilial meaningful world of individualistic civil society is an advance in freedom understood as self-transcendence, but this ideal is also limiting, even crippling with its “stoic” ideal with regard to human self-understanding and emancipatory practices. (see text) So the shared sense of kinship with all humans must be found not in the universal individualist civic model, but in the inherent logic and motivation of **ALL human experience** and thus provides a **universal norm** for judging human practices: Human Freedom is the process of Self-transformation inherent in the fundamentally erotic/linguistic temporal process of self-identity in the context of intersubjective co-creation and mutual recognition. This is the inherent significance in any practice of genuine therapy and education (but is only partly fulfilled in modern institutional education, which falls short of giving us the skills and perspective to reveal the inherent logic of human experience that moves toward freedom. It still leaves us highly conflicted and neurotic. Modern secular society with constitutional law and the ideal of the civic individual is a movement beyond the narrow familial vendetta logic, but does not provide support for the essential feature of human experience. Start not with individual of civic normalcy, but with **intersubjective Community a “we”**. Collective Identity: A “we” is an interpretive project of valuing the “world,” a way of seeing things that is authoritative beyond the individual. The individual only arises in such an already interpretive collective identity or “we.” Initially, this is the **FAMILY:** Bestower of meaning/significance. Context for the bodily openness into meaning. Defining orientation: **Vendetta logic**. A struggle for supremacy of meaningfulness, power over others. Orestes (Aeschylus/Sophocles): Self-destructive logic of the family **versus** more universal impartial law court in the **city state**.

Trajectory of Meaning: Bodily openness to the demands of making sense --→ **Family** –context of meaning in which body makes contact → **Society:** projection of family? or universal values with Sub groups and multiple narratives.

Strategies of Domination: (p60) Fail to see primacy of mutuality of intersubjectivity, that the strategy of selfish or self-centered domination of one’s environment is prevalent. The need to reverse this mistaken strategy for human practices is demonstrated in the nearly universal prevalence of its antidote, the Golden Rule or rule of reciprocity: Treat others as important as you take yourself to be, as you want to be taken.

There is Challenge and Reconciliation at each step of the trajectory of meaning:

5. **Neurosis: Formation of personal identity from Originary Dissociation:** Unresolved conflict of interpretations/narratives played out in behavior. P 116: habitual intersubjective interpretive modes of flight & domination. (overcoming other vs. self-overcoming) Such conflict can be deflected in flight or domination or can motivate us toward reciprocity, recognition of self as other, and other as oneself. The *immanent logic of self-overcoming* rejects the former.

Chapter 6: Philosophy: *Testing* internalized world/meaning/value/reality (versus neurotically defending it against such testing). Passion for Epiphanies, care of oneself via honesty, Care of others is care of oneself. Caring is curing. Curing is resolution of conflict, relieving the stress of conflict.

Tragedy: We cannot escape our determinacy. Embodiment carries with it the history of our family life as our neurotic compulsions which are the memories of our initiation into the power struggles of intersubjective life as they are encoded into our most primitive bodily practices (eating, sleeping, walking, elimination, and are revealed in our fundamental erotic/linguistic engagement in life. Our neurotic compulsions cannot be removed. They are the very schemata of meaning, the developed forms by which we sense and make sense. Though they cannot be removed these schemata, like all bodily phenomena, are self-transcending, always invite transformation and development. The cure for neurosis is not the removal of these figurings, but the development of the potentials implied within them, offered by them. This development is understood as “therapy.” Situations are inherently neurotic or conflicted. Neurotic embodied strategies that develop in the individual are successful coping responses to this inherent conflict. **Such conflict is what motivates growth, change, and self-overcoming if it is encouraged and intersubjectively supported.**

Wonder: Our determinacy, our embodiment is *openness to self-identity and self-transcendence*. Self-transcendence is our fundamental nature, the freedom to redefine ourselves and our world, the capacity to “rehabilitate” ourselves. Self-transcendence is the imminent or inherent characteristic of human experience and provides a “logic” by which we can judge health, wholeness, and fulfillment. Freedom is the capacity in the context of intersubjective support for moving

toward human fulfillment. **What fulfillment is or looks like is always unknown because it lies beyond the enabling horizons that open on to this possibility.**

Our determinacy is determinacy of meaning, determinacy of objects, i.e., objectivity at any given moment or in any given situatedness in this fundamentally temporal process. **Our temporality is embodied as objects.**

Prior Commitments shape our behavior. These commitments are responses to the intersubjective demands of contacts with others. Many of these commitments and internalized demands are *mutually exclusive*, produce *irresolvable conflict* when embodied. **This neurotic conflict is a "lived argument**, living struggle of opposed claims which are interpretations about what is true, right, valuable. These claims arise from interpretive strategies of understanding and can be made explicit and **evaluated** in terms of the adequacy by the *inherent logic and standards of the universal features of human experience itself: self-overcoming, growth, change, freedom, ever wider understanding of self and inclusiveness of otherness*. The determinate and exclusive nature of commitments engender polemical debate when these commitments are articulated. They remain manifest in neurotic behavior when not articulated and understood. We can read our conflicted interpretive commitments off our neurotic behavior and evaluate them as a basis for developing new habituation to an alternative more defensible desirable and coherent interpretative stance.

Identity: Self-transcending co-creation: not a given, but an achievement

LANGUAGE:

Improper view: as a neutral instrument to accomplish specific tasks. (p 112) as abstract transfer of information in experience (narration of human identity, the narrative of civil society, normalcy → institutional education → education as information transfer

VS

Language as interpretive site of co-creation of meaning that constitutes and is constituted in projects of intersubjective confirmation process of continual self-overcoming and movement toward recognition and valuing of oneself in the recognition and valuing of the other, recognition that the care of and responsibility to ourselves IS the care of and responsibility to others. Through respect for the demands of intersubjective reality

Language is the development of our affective vulnerability (sexuality: see below), the articulation of our being-with-others expressive of and characterized by desire (113) (*verbum interius* discussed in class). It is through language that we first become legitimate members of a community interwoven with issues of self-esteem and social legitimation, like learning to walk). We can be affected by words, hurt to our core, lifted to the highest ecstasies... Poetry and literature in general and their offspring in cinema reveal the fundamental ways in which our identities are intimately interwoven with our words. Our identities are revealed in our articulation or neurotic inability to speak. Language is our entire gestural bearing toward others (114)

Fundamental erotic/linguistic engagement in life, Erotic pull toward freedom. Philosophy is the self-conscious critically-minded embrace of our erotic and linguistic character: the pursuit of caring engagements with others through creative self-expression and self articulation (145) **Habitual identity is revealed** in our neurotic coping mechanisms, in our behavior, in our gestures and clichés in language/articulation. **But Language** has a character fundamentally different than these defensive strategies of flight or domination in our more serious and more intimate affairs. In these most intimate relations we face the greatest demand to BE FREE: to be responsible, autonomous, co creative, honest... In our language our intersubjective reality is actually created. We are called upon to **bring our reality** into articulation for another and through this to engender and from a relationship with that other. In language we face the extreme pressure of honest... Language is the development of our sexuality, is the most profound sphere of self-presentation, of self-expression... is the ultimate terrain of our neurotic experience... **all neurotic behaviors are essentially forms of language expressing our most personal commitments in the sphere of intersubjective recognition...** Because language is the development of our sexuality (erotic nature) it is the articulation of our being-with-others that enacts the overarching theme of whether it enacts a flight from the experience of the other into strategies of domination and denial OR an embrace of the vulnerability and honesty of mutual creation... it is precisely through language that we become close to another or that we erect barriers between ourselves and that other. **(113)**

Subjectivity/body: body is my opening into meaning/significance. Body is that through which I form my identity in a context of already established meaning (of others) (24). Body is the medium of existence within which agency (can take meaningful action) can emerge (self-conscious choosing, identity, "I" or "I can") To be a body is to be already defined, allows action and agency to emerge that becomes increasingly determinate and complex via habit (the way we carry our "past" or prior meaning along with us).(27)

SEXUALITY: Essence of Sexuality as honesty. Sexual and genital should not be confused. (p 111) Sex is the sphere of self-presentation and of other-reception in its most intimate and singular form. It is fundamentally these notions of self-expression and responsiveness to the other that define the sphere of sexuality and honesty: the basic notions of communication. The sphere of communication, of language, is thus the offspring of our sexuality (arises from the pull, desire, need to communicate, need to be recognized)

REALITY: It is through behavior, gesture, articulation, deflection, flight, domination, that we reflect our truths about reality that were intersubjectively co-created in the family and the transfamilial society. But it is not our nature to be imprisoned in these, but rather inhabit them as necessary points of departure for growth and self-overcoming. **Freedom** is self-overcoming, the participation in the co-creation and pursuit of intersubjective mutual recognition:

“Soul Mates” as:

1) mutual support of neuroses and illusions, familiar comfortable habits, inconsistent with the inherent logic of human experience. It is attachment to meaning as “objective truth” as if truth is “out there” independent of our erotic, vulnerable, freedom seeking, sense-making nature.

VS.

2) Deep Mutual trust and honesty, shared intimacy in the process of exploration of the possibilities of our embodied trajectories of meaning, always a letting go, a self-overcoming, transformation, new realities. Our freedom is the opening on to wonder and the co-creation of the pursuit of self-identity and world making.

Philosophy is the self-conscious critically minded embrace of our erotic and linguistic character: the pursuit of caring engagements with others through co-creative self-expression and self-articulation (145)

Phenomenological Approach to human experience and relationships reveals the sense-making of the “I can,” of the bodily “making contact” in the fundamentally intersubjective meaning context. Reveals how these meanings show up in EXPERIENCE, (as opposed to representing them in theoretically constructed explanations). It is a revelation of the features of the co-creative achievement of individual identity as the task of finding a place in the narrative or system of narratives/traditions of the familial and transfamilial situation which is continually in transformation.

The project of therapy: Self-transformation. “We seek therapy because we *experience* [as distress] the form of our characteristic, habitual approach to problem-solving [living life] as itself a problem.” (p126) **Therapy** is precisely the project of engaging the erotic, expressive sphere for the sake of facilitating the self-transcendence of the neurotic determinacies of our habitual situatedness. We use expression, co-create with the other (therapist) to determine what our habitual comportment already expresses, for the sake of transforming this fundamental expression. Therapy seeks empowerment through liberating our expressive capacities, creating new identity for ourselves beyond repetition of cliché’s of habitual behavior and self-interpretation. Therapy is the very embrace of the erotic dimension of our life as the recognition of our neurotic posture. Since this project fundamentally involves the development of understanding of the significance of the determination of our world, it is clearly of a piece with the project of **education** in general; and since this therapeutic contact involves taking our identity and the identity of the world as a QUESTION through the critical challenge to our habitual prejudices (our truths about reality), it is clearly of a piece with the practice of **philosophy**. (120-121) Summary of Ch 1-5 p. 121

All education is about our intersubjective world...despite its veneer of impersonality in institutional education. It is in genuine therapy and education that we find our proper form, the practices of self-transcendence within neurotic life, and this is just a **description of our essential reality** (as opposed to what we usually called reality based on the positivistic prejudice of objectivity as independent of intersubjectivity and meaning). **Philosophy** is the self-conscious taking up of this project in the form of phenomenology rather than mere conceptual analysis. It is through phenomenology that the inherent logic of human experience is made explicit. **Phenomenology** is a project of self-knowledge as self-transcendence (versus discovery of some static conceptually captured meaning or truth). [Philosophy reveals that the demands of personal experience are fulfilled in intimate interpersonal care.] **Therapy** finds its fulfillment in education and education finds its fulfillment in phenomenology in revealing that our **REALITY** is to be drawn to self-transcendence. Philosophy is the explicit recognition of this and is a response to the call to growth, change, transformation.

To what is our self-transcendence directed? There is no answer. It is always beyond the horizons of our meaning, our sense-making, our creative co-creation to which we aspire and are motivated toward by our erotic conflicted nature. Freedom is this movement itself, not freedom from, but freedom for and in the service of this self-overcoming, self-transcendence of identity/world. Philosophy is the recognition of the immanent and inherent logic of the process of inter-subjective co-creation that makes coherence and intelligibility possible at all. We create coherent narratives to account for this. Meaning is coherence. Determinacy yields conflicting narratives. Conflict drives the pursuit of identity/reality/truth. The process is REAL. It is **our REALITY**. It is fundamentally temporal, in flux. No meaning is final or absolute, but meanings and practices can be judged by their coherence in terms of the imminent logic of experience that is a fundamentally temporal, embodied, intersubjective, co-creative, erotic/linguistic struggle for mutual recognition and care for oneself through care of the other.

The Therapeutic Process of Neurotic Self-Transcendence: freedom and self-overcoming is fundamentally motivated by conflict. **Caring for, curing the distress** of neurotic conflict: **Therapy:** “Thinking through...”

(read 139-141) Meaning of **Therapeutic**: attempted remediation of a loss of wholeness or health, restoring basic wholeness, health, happiness

Turning toward our sense-giving or meaning-making power

From Neurotic habits that embody the tensions of conflicting meaning arises a felt need for change/transformation:

- **Practice of Turning** toward our sense giving power (possibility of conversion, rebirth), away from the world interpreted as objective, of interpreted objects (standard positivistic prejudices), toward oneself as **sense-giving power operative through one's situation**. 136: the enactment or mobilization of the inherent self-transcending feature of human experience whose *central motivating force toward freedom is the very neurotic conflict and distress that otherwise cripples our freedom*. This **turning** is ALWAYS open to us. It must involve the development of the skills and practice necessary to the process:

Cognitive/Critical Thinking/Intellectual Skills:

- **Phenomenological description**. DESCRIBE: Make explicit by careful observation and description of how one *experiences* objects that will **reveal** the nature of one's intersubjective world in order to understand one's behavior, assess and address the causes. (p135) (This will not succeed without the turning away from habituated objectivity toward the sense-giving or meaning-making power, cannot be carried out within the habits of objectivity or habitual objects)
- **Logically TEST via the immanent norm/standard/logic of human experience** (self-transcending universal feature of all human experience by which meanings and practices can be judged by their coherence in terms of the imminent logic of experience that is a fundamentally temporal, embodied, intersubjective, co-creative, erotic/linguistic struggle for mutual recognition and care for oneself through care of the other.)
 - A) **By using this norm, recognize the inadequacy** of A) the family and B) the vision of "normal selfhood" C) recognize the **need for a society or at least a community or dyad that fulfills the immanent logic of human experience**.
 - B) **Evaluate one's neurotic habits** in terms of an imminent critique of universal features of human experience. Critical thinking: Test the coherence of one's implied or overt reality by the inherent logic of the project of self-identity, the logic of human experience.

Practice of new worlding:

- **Rehabilitation: until it becomes new habit**
 - A) Reconfigure ones' environment, one's "place" ("replace oneself") to remove the triggers of neurotic behavior and provide a "blank slate" for a new figuring, development of a new way of being in the world., reshape objective setting. This "re-placement" is fundamental (e.g., addiction, etc)
 - B) Other people: crucial to this new environment.
 - 1) People who populate this new environment: new and old friends, family, partners
 - 2) Most Important: One who acts as the therapist: decisive for how effective this re-embodiment of one's situation will be

The Therapeutic Process must always be approached from within the meaning of the self-in-transformation

RECAP:

Turning

Describing

Explication

Reconfiguring/re-education of interpretive reflexes

Re-placing

Re-habitation or new habituation, new home, new being at home in the world, **re-worlding**

The self has to "grow up" again, be approached from within itself and remolded by its **inherent logic of self-overcoming**

Approach oneself as an other (136) to be studied and approached on its own terms.

Philosophy-Education-Therapy-Freedom: READ p 126-7, then rest of chapter

PHILOSOPHY: Care via honesty in the testing of our prejudices according to the inherent norms of human experience.

What makes norms? The Erotic pull toward freedom. Our reality is to be drawn toward self-transcendence. Therapy, education, philosophy (as phenomenology) are the means.

Philosophy love of wisdom (erotic/linguistic engagement par excellence): passion for epiphanies... seeing into and through habits of meaning for what they reveal as limited ways of seeing toward the revelation of sense-giving, meaning-making itself. Therapy-education is the means of realizing this essential task (only partially fulfilled in institutional education and its model of individuality and normalcy). This model partially moves toward human freedom then **BLOCKS** it as much if not more than the familial because it gives the illusion of ultimate freedom. **Philosophy:** testing our habits of meaning, our truths about reality, self-consciousness engagement in this practice of describing and testing our essential reality. Philosophy is the essential movement toward self-overcoming.

Phenomenology: completed form of education

HUMAN FREEDOM: Practices of self-transcendence within neurotic life. Recognizing and turning toward **sense-giving or meaning-making power** away from objectification, objectified static truth. This practice is the recognition and description of our essential reality upon which any adequate account of human freedom must rest. Working via conflicts/resistance to mutual trust, toward self-overcoming, Self-overcoming IS human freedom, always emerging from within one's habits, but not bound by them. Human freedom is NOT the non interference with one's habits. Human Freedom is not freedom from limit or restraint by others. Human freedom is possible only via the integrity, courage, effort, and development of skill necessary to undertake self-overcoming. This is the same basic condition of all human experience. Universal demands of human development are made explicit in the therapeutic relationship. Neurosis is the universal condition and motivation from which freedom emerges... So all people are inherently motivated toward the project of therapeutic self-transcendence, the central issue is: extent to which one recognizes this and extent to which the therapeutic process is supported by others who constitute our environment.

SELF-TRANSFORMATION:

(145) Self-transformation of the neurotic condition itself takes us beyond the boundaries and terms of our already established identities. Self transformation must be a creative action launched from the tensions and fueled by the resources that constitute our embodied contact with the intersubjective world, an expression of new identity. Philosophy is the self-conscious embrace of our erotic and linguistic character, the pursuit of caring engagements with others through creative self-expression and self-articulation.

Universal Standpoint: This is the domain of ETHICS p. 141 Recognition of fundamental reciprocity. **taking on the concern and responsibility for the other**

P 141: **Self-transcendent experience** fundamentally propels us beyond ourselves toward this ethical stance. The other's perspective is an essential value, something for which we MUST care. Our essential reality as persons is to be drawn out of ourselves by others and only thereby arrive at ourselves.

THERAPY:

Therapy: is the culmination of this experience of other selves for it is the stance in which we recognize that the care of oneself IS care for the other.

Therapy as intimate, interpersonal care is our natural fulfillment.

Logic of therapeutic relation: fulfilled in education, education fulfilled in Phenomenology, result of therapy is rebirth out of conflict into less conflicted mode of being in the world: one's new habituation is more coherent with the inherent features of human experience, a temporal, erotic/linguistic, emergence of identity in the context of subjective co-creation. P 138: Dyad: intersubjective contact . Core of the process of transformation, turning, rebirth

Therapy: radical intellectual and behavioral decision to establish a new home in a new human experience, inherently in conflict with the established experience of the family.

Transcendence of the "givenness of the family." Therapist is surrogate for the other "as such" (demands of reality for self-transcending self-overcoming) who needs same recognition, confirmation/recognition in FORM as that which the patient seeks from the therapist.

Therapist: not a profession, a role shaman, priest, facilitator, care giver, midwife (helping others give birth to new self), teacher of care-giving through testing for immanent coherence a role of embodying engendering, facilitating universal values, values that pertain to all of us in our dealings w/our fellows. **Therapist:** is entrusted with the individuals own most intimate needs and powers is made the agent who works on behalf of the individual's own identity. Therapist: power to speak and act on behalf of the client's needs in relation to others. **Patient:** Must desire and be open and ready to undertake and sustain this task of self-transcending.

141: Nature of cons-self-overcoming, putting one's truths permanently to the test, not defending them, but testing them.

Education as therapeutic self-transcending... as deeply personal/intersubjective therapeutic self transcendence out of embodied determinate situatedness.

Goals of education: Student: desire to be initiated/educated. Student enters the learning relation with a **teacher** as representation of reality (139) Teacher: Has a calling/ability for representing reality (or some aspect of or skill in reality)

Goal of therapy: Same as education but narrowed to or focused on: Who am I? p 141: Therapy, pedagogy in general: self-conscious taking up of this project of recognition, reciprocity- pursue being recognized thru facilitating the recognizing of others. Picking a therapist: someone to be a representative of what it is to be human: Demands of the reality of others: i.e., opening onto meaning. Search for a kindred spirit, shared sense. **Others:** Power of confirmation or rejection of our sense of how things are, now put into the therapist's hands: initiating one into the world of intersubjectivity. Enter into the patient's "world"/meaning, not to confirm or reject, but describe and understand then immanent critique whose goal for Therapist: learn from the other how that other experiences the significance of the world since therapy must be imminent, must develop from within the needs of the patient, not imposing established solution or method

Modern Individualist society (147)

A) conflict of family value

Vs

B).Stoic normalcy-fails to meet basic need for fulfillment so FAM value push back and reasserts itself, esp. in religious form.

Both A & B miss :

C) *need for a society that fulfills the immanent logic of human experience*

Modern Individualist society : Individual is a given, world is a given

VS

immanent logic of human experience : Individual is an intersubjective co-creative achievement whose identity/significance is revealed in how it objectifies the world.

Modern Individualist society furthers itself by crippling the mental health of its members.

The failure of the model of individuality and normalcy to provide fulfillment in secular modes of life gives rise to the reactionary reassertion of Family values (especially the Religious Right), which then moves away from ethics (recognition of our universal condition, the other as oneself) toward a mentality of US vs. THEM, defensive protection of some fixed habitual identity and finally in the logic of the vendetta.

Traditional Society: (inner logic, not necessarily its actual practice) Conformity, uniformity, same, narrowing, closure, exclusion of other/difference: inconsistent with embodiment

Universal Society: (inner logic) Diversity, pluralism, self-transcending toward increasing openness, recognition of and communication with otherness: Consistent with natural Goal of inherent structure of embodiment, of human experience as opening to otherness and possibility, always self-transcending.

America as a large Family: Model is conformity and domination

VS

American as opening onto universal humanity, onto the human task of making sense, ever-present confrontation with otherness, openness that is basic to embodiment, with human experience. Model is: communication and recognition, movement toward an ever wider inclusive sense of "WE."

Domination vs. movement toward Freedom:

Confrontation of Families (Trade Towers, Iraq War: Vendetta, payback/dominate, rather than understand, recognize the other as oneself, recognize oneself in the other

Universal standpoint that includes all persona struggling for recognition and personal identity out of their vulnerability & openness to meaning that things matter.

To what is self-transcendence directed? NO Answer. It is beyond the boundaries of our already established identities
Def: self-transcendence (p145)