

**THE COLLECTED WORKS OF PETER G. OSSORIO**



**VOLUME VIII:**

***SEMINAR ON  
POSITIVE HEALTH AND TRANSCENDENTAL THEORIES***



SEMINAR ON  
POSITIVE HEALTH AND  
TRANSCENDENTAL THEORIES



*Peter G. Ossorio*

DESCRIPTIVE PSYCHOLOGY PRESS  
ANN ARBOR

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## PREFACE TO THE SERIES

### *The Collected Works of Peter G. Ossorio*

Peter G. Ossorio's works are unique.

In a trivial sense the same can be said of anyone's work—it is Jones' work, nobody has the same interests and style as Jones, thus the work is unique. But Ossorio's works are unique in the most profound sense possible and on several counts: in the breadth of his subject matter, the depth and rigor of his analysis, the power and clarity of his exposition, and the absolute coherence of his conceptual framework. Most importantly, they are unique in their significance. Peter G. Ossorio has accomplished what nobody else has seriously attempted: he has articulated a rigorous and coherent framework for understanding persons as persons.

If past experience is any guide, this claim will strike some as impossibly overstated, while others wonder why that would seem to be a worthwhile accomplishment. These reactions say a great deal about the intellectual climate of “behavioral science” in the twenty-first century—and they are substantially the same reactions which greeted Ossorio's first book, *Persons*, in the early 1960's. To those who doubt the possibility of such accomplishment, this series serves as a reality check: read the works and judge for yourself. The second group may be reassured by scanning the list of Ossorio's publications; you will discover that the concept of “persons as persons” includes behavior, language, culture, the real world, and the doing of science, psychotherapy, computer-based simulations, and many other significant social practices.

Indeed, Ossorio's work—which has become the foundation and core of a discipline called Descriptive Psychology by its practitioners—has had profound influence in a remarkably broad and diverse set of arenas. Directly, Ossorio has influenced the practice of psychotherapy and the conceptualization of psychopathology; the teaching of numerous aspects of behavioral science including personality theory, projective testing, and multi-cultural studies; the understanding of language, verbal behavior, and its technical implementations within computer environments; the practice and philosophy of science; the understanding of cultural differences and their implications; the technology of information storage, retrieval and utilization; and the creation of robots that exhibit increasingly the important characteristics of persons. Indirectly, through his students and colleagues, Ossorio has influenced many other fields; among them are the theory of organizations and the practice of influencing organizational culture; the development of computer software and artificial persons; economics and behavioral economics; the conceptualization of spirituality; the theory of consciousness, hypnosis and altered states; teaching of ethics and moral judgment; and much more.

Any editor of a series of “collected works” faces an obvious question: why collect the works? Why not let them stand on their own, as published? The answer in this case is simple to give: the large majority of these works have been published only in limited circulation working editions. These works, with few exceptions, were unpublishable within the “mainstream” of behavioral science when they were written. Ossorio was making, literally and intentionally, a “fresh start” on the doing of behavioral science, for reasons which he clearly articulates in *Persons* and elsewhere, and which have become increasingly cogent over time.



Metaphorically, Ossorio was talking chess to tic-tac-toe players, who responded, “That’s all well and good, but does it get you three-in-a-row?” Suffice it to say that the tic-tac-toe players decided what was worthy of publication in mainstream journals and books. And to extend the metaphor a bit further, it is evident that the mainstream of behavioral science has progressively realized that tic-tac-toe is a no-win game, and we perhaps should have been playing chess all along.

For those who have tired of the trivial insularity of tic-tac-toe behavioral science, the present series represents a substantive and substantial alternative.

**Anthony O. Putman, Ph.D.**  
**Series Editor**  
**Ann Arbor, MI, 2014**

## Editor's Note

Descriptive Psychology is a living, growing tradition. Many of its most important concepts and methods—and much of its craft—were presented by Peter G. Ossorio only in spoken, interactive discourse in classes, seminars and talks. We are fortunate to have transcriptions of three seminars given by Ossorio in 1976 to graduate students, primarily in the Clinical Psychology program, at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Dr. Ossorio specified that these three – Seminar on Clinical Topics, Personality and Personality Theory, and Positive Health and Transcendental Theories—be included in his Collected Works.

Transcriptions of seminars published as books pose special challenges for both reader and editor. This *Seminar on Positive Health and Transcendental Theories* is a true seminar, as Ossorio states at the beginning: “an inquiry, with some presentations, but by and large, we will be looking at new material and sometimes starting from scratch.” Ideas flow, but not in the orderly sequence of written material; instead, questions and challenges arise, misunderstandings are identified and corrected, one thought leads to another and to yet another. This is simply the ordinary give-and-take of live, unscripted intellectual discourse, and the wonder is how Ossorio patiently responds and encourages the dialogue until clarity is achieved, while keeping a continuous sense of discovery. Add to this the fact that Ossorio was exploring much of this material publicly for the first time, and you have the recipe for an exciting, exhilarating expansion of our viewpoint on how to think about some core issues in psychology. It also demands of the reader an engaged attention to keep track of what's going on.

One unusual convention: from time to time it proved impossible to decipher a word or phrase from the tape, even with Dr. Ossorio's help. In those cases we use the elliptical form ### to mark something said but not transcribed. Even when a good guess can be made regarding what is missing, the editor followed Ossorio's famous prescription for case formulation: Don't make anything up.

**Anthony O. Putman, Ph.D.**

**Editor**

**Ann Arbor, MI, 2014**

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# Introduction

In the summer of 1976, at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Peter G. Ossorio offered a seminar on Positive Health and Transcendental Theories to a group of psychology graduate students. Most participants had studied with Ossorio for several years and were well-grounded in the conceptual framework of Descriptive Psychology; indeed, many had done their doctoral work under Ossorio's direction and were defending their dissertations that same summer. The seminar was recorded and carefully transcribed by one of the participants, Mary McDermott Shideler. The result is this uniquely valuable document: an extended record of what it was like to experience Peter Ossorio making sense of people and the world.

Pete—as he was known to all his students—offered three seminars in 1976, all of which were recorded and transcribed. His *Seminar on Clinical Topics*, the seventh volume of this Collected Works series, consisted largely of his articulation of concepts and methods that Ossorio himself had worked out over the course of his career as a practicing therapist and teacher/supervisor of therapists. His seminar on Personality and Personality Theories distilled material he had been using for at least 10 years in courses for both undergraduates and graduate students. Both of these seminars were largely a matter of Pete presenting material and helping participants understand it.

But the Positive Health and Transcendental Theories seminar was another matter. Ossorio announced the topics of the seminar: “I want to cover the notion of positive health, transcendental theories, and other realities” and went on to say: “...this one will be much more of an inquiry than some of the other classes we've had, which were more like presentations of stuff that has already been discussed, talked over, etc., and is well organized. In this seminar, it really will be a seminar, which means an inquiry, with some presentations, but by and large, we will be looking at new material and sometimes starting from scratch.”

In short, Ossorio set out with the participants to make sense of largely unexplored conceptual territory. In doing so he spent considerable time demonstrating how to think rigorously about people and the world, and engaging with participants' habits of thought that did not contribute to clarity. While the subject matter of the seminar is itself fascinating, the greatest, indeed the *unique* value of this book lies in what it shows us of how Ossorio thought.

1976 was a dynamic time in America, and notably for clinical psychologists. The “medical model” of psychopathology was widely questioned and in some quarters dismissed. Ossorio offered a powerful alternative, articulating pathology as “a significant restriction on [a person’s] ability to participate in the social practices of the community” (Ossorio, 1997 p. 11). But others abandoned the idea of pathology altogether, instead offering models of “positive health” to which one aspires. This was a popular move, but it raised some tricky conceptual problems. For instance: “Is the notion of positive health continuous with the notion of health in the ordinary sense? Is it just a continuation, an extension of the same notion, or is it basically a different one? If it’s different, how do they relate? If it’s continuous, continuous in what way?” (PHTT, p. 2). Ossorio’s initial move here is quite distinctive; at the time few if any raised such questions, taking it for granted that “health” was some sort of linear scale. Ossorio launches the inquiry from this point and digs into the conceptual issues uncovered.

At this point many commonly react, as did a few participants, “Conceptual analysis – that’s philosophy, not psychology. Let’s see what \_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with your favorite philosopher) had to say about that.” Ossorio consistently (and remarkably patiently) rejected that approach. An aspect of his uniqueness was his insistence that psychologists take responsibility for their own conceptual formulations. Saying exactly what psychologists do and do not mean when they use a particular term may entail some heavy conceptual lifting, but it’s the psychologist’s job to do, not some other discipline’s. As he put it in a 1972 paper: “The appropriate model is not that of a simple taking or exchange, but rather that of assimilation. Philosophical ideas, arguments, or conclusions have to be transformed, transmuted, beaten, or otherwise wrought into psychological form if they are ever to be part of psychology. And vice versa.” (Ossorio, 1972).

The reader would not be served by an attempt to summarize the content of this seminar beyond what Ossorio announced—“positive health, transcendental theories and other realities”—because it would quickly degenerate into a tepid outline of topics or, worse yet, a bare statement of issues and conclusions without Ossorio’s illumination. Allow me instead to offer a brief historical context for the seminar, and some thoughts about how one might most effectively approach reading this document.

In 1976 America was in the midst of a tumultuous expansion of alternative worldviews. In the light and aftermath of wide-spread exploration of psychedelic experiences, the world and reality as we know it was up

for grabs for many people. Spiritual practices and teachings from Hindu, Zen, Buddhist, Sufi, Native American and other traditions had entered the intellectual conversation. These borrowings were mostly partially digested and poorly understood, but they were also provocative in that they pointed the way to other realities that somehow transcended what we knew. And at the center of much of this ferment were the teachings of the Yaqui shaman don Juan, as “reported” by Carlos Casteneda.

Some in academe—especially more traditional and established members—rejected all this out of hand. Others embraced the foment wholeheartedly. But few if any took it seriously as a topic for inquiry: Does this make any kind of sense? If so, what sense can we make of it? Must we adopt concepts from Eastern traditions for this, or can we find ways of talking that do it justice in our own terms? What is reality, anyway—and what could we possibly mean by “other realities”?

These, and more, are topics of inquiry in the Positive Health and Transcendental Theories seminar. Not every topic is brought to a final resolution – but the conceptual territory gained is remarkable, while the inquiry is (mostly) fascinating.

The “mostly” in the previous sentence is a gentle warning that, considering the subtlety of some of the questions, the inquiry quite naturally involved struggle for some participants. Readers may find themselves less patient with this struggle than did Ossorio, perhaps inclined to skim or even skip. I suggest this would be doing yourself a real disservice. Occasionally the struggle is just a hard slog for the reader; far more often, from the chaotic dialogue emerges an articulation of great power. The struggle turned out to be insight in the making.

This serves as a bridge to the final thoughts in this Introduction: How to best approach this material?

First, be assured that you do not need substantial knowledge of Eastern religions or alternative realities to get value from the dialogue. Indeed it should be noted that none of the participants—Ossorio included—had significant personal experience with Eastern traditions (although as academics they had of course read about them and knew people who had.) Getting value from this seminar does not require insider’s knowledge.

One might take guidance from how the actual participants approached the seminar. Broadly, they fall into three categories:

1. Many participants engaged actively with the material and Ossorio's leading of the inquiry. They offered their own thoughts and listened to the response; they tested their understanding as they went along, and challenged what they were hearing until clarity emerged. This is classic seminar behavior, and it seemed to work well. If you find one of the participants voicing your own thoughts or reactions, note especially carefully how Pete responds.
2. A few participants attempted to restate what Ossorio was saying in other technical language, from a particular philosopher or a tradition such as psychoanalysis or phenomenology. This is also classic seminar behavior, but a little bit goes a long way; insisting on such restatement gets in the way of understanding. Ossorio routinely rejected these moves as adding nothing to the dialogue or, worse, changing the subject. If your intent is to perceive how Ossorio thought, you would be well-served to pay careful attention to his way of saying things instead of routinely trying to restate them in other words.
3. Some participants were notable mostly by their silence; they said almost nothing at all, apparently satisfied with watching how Pete made sense of things and learning from that. It is worth noting that one of them, Mary McDermott Shideler went on to write *Spirituality: An Approach Through Descriptive Psychology* (Shideler, 1992), a book that was deeply informed by the transcendental material in this seminar, while another, Mary Kathleen Roberts ("Tee" in the transcript) has authored a number of profound papers building on and expanding the ideas about reality. (Roberts, 1985; Roberts, 1991)

Some participants clearly derived great value from this seminar by listening and observing carefully. I suggest that the same will hold for any reader who engages with what was said and done in it, these four decades later.

**Anthony O. Putman   Ann Arbor, Michigan   December, 2014**

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## SEMINAR 1

13 July 1976

**Peter:** I guess I'd better announce the topics that I would like us to cover, since this just has the general title of "Clinical Seminar". I want to cover the notion of positive health, transcendental theories, and other realities. These are three topics that sort of hang together, in that when you start pursuing the question of positive health, which is a notion that has become prominent in, say, the last ten or fifteen years—when you start pursuing it, you get into either transcendental theories, other realities, or both.

So much for the content areas that we want to inquire into. And this one will be much more of an inquiry than some of the other classes we've had, which were more like presentations of stuff that has already been discussed, talked over, etc., and is well organized. In this seminar, it really will be a seminar, which means an inquiry, with some presentations, but by and large, we will be looking at new material and sometimes starting from scratch.

As far as meeting times: I originally thought we would have some fair leeway about meeting times. It turns out we don't have all that much... Unless there are some fair number of people for whom one to four is going to be a hardship, we might as well keep it one to four, Tuesday and Thursday... You probably ought to remind me to have a break somewhere in the middle of that three hours. Okay—any comments, discussions, etc.?

**Wynn:** *I was just wondering if fairly soon you're going to demonstrate why it is that you get into those sorts of theories, to talk about that subject?*

**Peter:** We'll just get there somewhere along the line. Anything else?

Well, let's plunge in with the notion of positive health. That's the major point of historical continuity, that psychologists—clinical psychologists—had been dealing with a notion of health based on the traditions of medicine, where to be healthy is to not be sick. And this is easily carried over, in some ways, in dealing with psychopathology, because there you can say to not be psychopathological, you simply have to not be sick psychologically.

You recognize that this is a double negative formulation: to say that you're not sick is to say that there is something that isn't wrong with you. So it's kind of like talking about an automobile and saying, "Well, it's functioning okay," which is to say there's nothing wrong with it. It still doesn't differentiate a better from a worse automobile. There is some dimension, some notions of positive value that are not gotten at with double negatives. So this is what clinical psychologists—or, I suppose, more generally, you would say the humanistic psychologists—have focused on, some sort of region of positive values that you don't have access to when you simply talk about pathology or the absence of it.

Once you introduce this notion of positive health, from this kind of background, you generate several problems. One is continuity. Is the notion of positive health continuous with the notion of health in the ordinary sense? Is it just a continuation, an extension of the same notion, or is it basically a different one? If it's different, how do they relate? If it's continuous, continuous in what way?

By and large, my impression is that people who talk about it talk about it both ways. Sometimes they're inclined to emphasize that this is just an extension of our usual notions of health. Other times, they're inclined to emphasize that they're talking about something quite different than merely the absence of pathology. So it kind of just depends upon when you catch them, which way they talk. Which would lead you to suspect that both are true, that in some way, there's some continuity of an important sort, and that there is discontinuity of important sorts. So to pursue that issue, we come back and review what you might call the ordinary notion of psychopathology.

Suppose we take the definition that says, when a person is in a pathological state, there is a significant restriction in his ability to participate in existing social practices. What this reminds us of is that we have a general notion of what a person ought to be able to do, and when a person falls short of this is when we say he's in a pathological state. You can sometimes introduce taxonomy, and people have. For example, in specifying the range of things that we expect people to be able to do, one of the specifications is: the person ought to be able to function successfully in love, work, and play. Those are well-known specifications and simply an elaboration of the notion of what we expect a person to be able to do. We divide it up into three major areas and say, "He's got to do okay in each of those, or there's something wrong." You can see that there would be other ways of dividing it up. Some categories like work, love, would get almost universal agreement; others, like play, you would get more disagreement. But the content-free reference to the

ability to engage in existing social practices leaves room for such taxonomy.

Also, then, as soon as you introduce any content like love, work, and play, you introduce the problem of judging when somebody is in a pathological state. When *is* a particular person sufficiently restricted in the ability to work or play, etc., so that you would call him pathological? And here we're faced with a typical dilemma, that we have been talking in a way that sounds quantitative. We said, "If he's restricted enough." That wasn't present in the original formulation of "a significant restriction in one's ability", but as soon as you start saying "restricted enough", "he's handicapped enough in work or play or love", then it sounds like you have something quantitative going. And if you follow that line of thought, you will come to the conclusion that there is some amount that's "enough". And that there's some amount that's "not enough". For example, that there is some amount of handicap with respect to work that's too much handicap. And then when you look for these, they disappear. You find that there isn't some amount that's enough, that you can look at one person and compare him with another, and say, "This person is more handicapped than this one," and yet *this* is the one that you want to say is pathological. Or you ask ten different people whether this person is showing enough, and they will disagree. Or you encounter cases of which you say, "I would have sworn ahead of time that anybody *that* handicapped would be in a pathological state, but somehow he isn't, even though he is that handicapped."

So it turns out that when you coordinate the notion of "handicapped enough" or "restricted enough", and the notion of pathology, that one is not a royal road to the other. That you can't, practically speaking, really make independent judgments of how much is enough and then from that conclude whether a person is in a pathological state. Essentially, you decide both questions simultaneously. If the person is so handicapped that he can't work, then that handicap is serious enough. These two notions go together; you can't use one as the entree to the other. Not rigorously, not conceptually. Practically speaking, sure. You can say, "If the guy can't hold down a job, that's enough."

**Wynn:** *But don't we, in ordinary usage, say, "significant enough", use significance in a similar sort of—in a way that at least suggests quantitative changes?*

**Peter:** You can do that; but notice that I didn't, because you don't have to, and it's I think a more rigorous formulation to stay away from the quantitative connotation.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, that's the point: that we use the word "significant" to cover the same ground, in actual usage, that you would use by going to some quantitative maneuver.*

**Peter:** No. You can use "significant" categorically. Either it's a significant restriction, or it isn't, and you don't have to imply a degree of significance such that enough is really significant. You simply say significant versus not. That usage carries the nature of the judgment, that it's going to be one place or the other, and you're not really working a prior quantification. You can superimpose a quantification.

**Wynn:** *But significance can have a ###, in the sense that in a conflict—*

**Peter:** You can do it that way, yeah, but you don't have to. There's some advantages to it if you can assess the degree of significance, if you can assess the degree of handicap. But even when you can, you come up with anomalous cases like the guy who (according to your index of handicaps) is more handicapped, you don't want to say he's pathological; and the guy who's less handicapped, you do. So you can try to work these things for practical purposes, but don't take it for granted ahead of time that the world is so neat and simple that there exists an ordering on a dimension of seriousness, or significance, etc., that will correspond exactly to your judgment of significant restriction or not; or that will correspond exactly to your judgment of pathological or not. Because you will find out that it won't be there. What you'll get are practical—sometimes practically useful approximations, practically useful correlations between these two, but not rigor. So when it comes to understanding it, you want to stay with the rigorous formula, then you decide what you can fudge practically.

Now where does that leave us, if we introduce that notion of pathology, that it's a significant restriction on one's ability to engage in existing social practices? Notice one of the things—it does not carry much of a connotation of perfection, universality, or anything of that sort. For example, it carries no implication that if you can't engage in any and every possible social practice, you're in a pathological state. It says *existing* social practices. It doesn't imply that even the ones that you can engage in, you ought to be able to engage in perfectly or at a level of expertise. It just says *participate*. So the general connotation of that definition is that you've got to be able to do the things that are done, in the ways that they're done, rather than maximization of expertise or extent or anything else—just do the things that are done in the ways that they are done. And that that is what you can significantly fail at.

Now why this definition rather than some other one? You get back to the fact that definitions and concepts are for the benefit of whoever uses them, and this is the social definition, and the importance of a social definition is that everybody is faced with the at least potential problem of dealing with somebody who is in a pathological state. And when we talk about participating in existing social practices, we are talking generally about social behavior, which means that other people are involved, and they have a legitimate and vested interest in whether you can do your share, whether you can participate with them in the ways that they have a right to expect. They may not have a right to demand it, but they have a right to expect it. So anybody in a given community or society has a legitimate interest in whether other people in the same community are able to carry out their joint activities in ways that all of them have a right to expect. And activities wherein the failure of one or another person is important to the other one. So the judgment of pathology, in effect, is a general judgment of that sort: whether that person, whom you're making the judgment about, is able to carry out his end of the bargain, over the range of bargains that we have with people—the range of understandings, agreements, cooperations, joint enterprises, etc. Notice that there's no implication that you have a list that exactly specifies what those joint enterprises are, what you have a right to expect, etc.

**Wynn:** *On the surface, the formulation you're presenting sounds a-cultural. What I'm wondering about is whether you could ever be in a position to wonder about a culture in which, as an observer of that culture, you could claim that the existing social practices that individual members are eligible to participate in are limiting in such a fashion that you call that whole enterprise pathological, such that anybody who takes part in that thoroughly is also pathological.*

**Peter:** Okay, you sneaked it in. If you do that, you're dealing with transcendental theories. You can indeed do that, and that's one of the connections.

**Wynn:** *If you have to deal with transcendental theories, I'm wondering if instead what you need is—*

**Peter:** Either you're just being parochial, or you're dealing with transcendental theories. It's the second case that's of interest to us. As I say, that's why that social definition is not simply an arbitrary one, and it's not simply an academic one. It's the kind of thing that any person in any society has an important interest in. So it's one of those that you could say, if it didn't already exist, it would have to be invented. It has that kind of inevitability.

So we're left now with the notion that there is some level and range of participation in the activities of a group that each of the members has a right

to expect (and, in general, does) of other members. If you think about the actualities of this, what it amounts to is not that there is *a* set of activities that everybody has to be able to engage in; but rather that if you just surveyed all the things that go on—and let's just hypothetically say there's a hundred of those things—that you can get by generally if you can participate in, say, 62 of those. But they don't have to be the same 62 for everybody. If you're just dealing with a group of people, each of whom operates at the level of about 62, they can get along and do what is done in that society, and that's normal: that's the definition of normality there—that the things that are done are done between people who agree to that extent, and therefore, you don't have to have more than that to be one of them and do things the way they do.

Secondly, you can see that there isn't going to be some magic number like that, because a lot will depend on which of the hundred you can do. Some will be more crucial than others. And if life is simple, there may be some which are so crucial that you can turn to them and say, "If you can't do those, it doesn't matter what else you can and can't do ###." There may or may not be things of that sort.

**Steve P:** *It seems to me, though, that frequently those are determinations that are made after the decision is made that you are no longer "one of us, you don't behave the way we behave," and then you cite specifics: "You don't have a job"—*

**Peter:** That's why I emphasize that one of those is not the entree to the other, that you make them both at the same time; and that you may, essentially, make one and reconstruct the other. You may decide that this person is pathological, and then in explaining why, then you bring out these things that you hadn't really thought of before. But you have to be able to, or you're going to either give up the pathology description, or disclaim and say, "Well, I think so. I have a feeling, but I can't tell you why."

**Steve P:** *It just seems that, more frequently, it goes from A to B than from B to A.*

**Peter:** I would say so, too, and that's why I emphasized, in talking about the word "significant", that I want a use of the word "significant" that does not imply quantification, because I think it much more often happens that way—that you say, "This person is sick, and here's why," rather than "A, B, C, therefore, he's sick." But you can do it either way or do both simultaneously.

**Steve P:** *The question of cases that don't fit, don't fit when you're trying to go from B to A, but A seems to be the critical—*



**Peter:** No, sometimes you say, “I’ll swear I’m convinced that this guy’s pathological, but I just can’t tell you why. I just can’t make a good case.”

**Steve P:** *But he is. “I don’t know why, but he’s not one of us.”*

**Peter:** Yeah. You can say he is, but you can’t say why, and then you’re stuck at this intermediate point, where you don’t have a full justification because you can’t present the limitations that make him not one of us. At the same time, you don’t want to give up saying, “He’s not one of us.”

**Steve P:** *But I can’t imagine anybody except clinical psychologists being stuck in that dilemma.*

**Peter:** People do.

**Steve P:** *Everybody else would say, “He’s not one of us,” and treat him accordingly.*

**Terry:** *It seems like any social scientist would be, because it seems like there’s a problem of concept formation, that there’s an essential circularity, that you have the concept of a pathological state, to recognize individuals that’s in it, and yet you can’t really abstract from certain features of the person’s behavior, in an empirical way, the concept that you’re going to use. There’s a circularity there that—*

**Peter:** It’s not a circularity. It’s just an object lesson that most concepts are not arrived at via abstraction. In fact, it’s dubious whether any of them are.

**Terry:** *But you wouldn’t want to say in a straightforward way that it’s arrived at in an a priori way, in terms of constructing it, either.*

**Peter:** No. Again, remember the formulation: “You acquire concepts and skills by practice and experience.” There’s nothing there about abstraction, but there’s nothing there about a priori.

**Terry:** *So how would you describe the process of concept formation?*

**Peter:** You wouldn’t. You wouldn’t take it for granted that there was a process of concept formation. You deal with the fact that concepts are acquired. And that you know. You do not know that there’s a process. So if you want to talk about “process”, you’re theorizing, and you’re off into your own world to that extent, and nobody else is responsible for that process except you. But for the fact that concepts are acquired, we are responsible.

**Terry:** *So you’re willing to deal with the fact that there is a concept of pathology, but not how that concept is built up or formed or—*

**Peter:** Given *that* it is built up or formed—that’s theorizing.

**Terry:** *So you won't make any genetic account of the concept of pathology.*

**Peter:** Well, I did. I said you acquire it by practice and experience. Which is only to say that there is a genetic account, but not to pick one as the true one.

**Terry:** *And it also doesn't delimit it from other concepts. It doesn't say anything unique about the formation of social scientific concepts as opposed to ordinary linguistic concepts, or logical concepts, or any of that.*

**Peter:** Yeah, because I wouldn't presuppose that there is anything any different. Again, you start with the facts, and if you want to suppose other things, then you're into theorizing. If you want to insist on giving a certain kind of account, you're into theorizing. Practically speaking, I would say, avoid it, because it always gets you into trouble. However, that's my point of view.

Okay, so here we are with this common notion of pathology, based on level, kind, acceptability of participation in social behavior. And given some notion of that sort, it's clear why you can talk about failures. That goes right along with it. Because if you have the notion of a certain kind of success, you certainly have the notion of the absence of that kind of success; therefore, the corresponding kind of failure. And that's what our normal concept of pathology is. It's the concept of a certain kind of failure. And if you introduce taxonomies into it, then you have the concept of more specific types of deficit or more specific types of failure which account for, or explain, or exemplify the more general failure, i.e., the pathology. So, for example, you might say, "He's pathological *because* he's unable to work." The "because", here, is an elaboration, not a prior explanation. It's simply a way of saying in more detail that he is pathological. On the other hand, if you say, "Because he had an unhappy childhood," then you're not elaborating the pathology; you're giving a causal explanation.

Given this kind of norm about the level of participation below which it's going to make an important enough difference to use the word "pathological" and make judgments of that kind—given this kind of norm, where is there a place for talking about something positive? Where, now, against this background, can we introduce a notion of positive health? *Can* we introduce such a notion?

**Steve P:** *In the same kind of way, through practice and acculturation, you learn to recognize people who do not fit, who are pathological. So, too, you learn to recognize people are—okay, and that state is something to which you do not aspire. You don't want to be like that. But on the other hand, there are people whose behavior, you say, is not like ours, but you want to behave more*

*like that. They become a model, a hero, somebody to emulate because of the way they engage in social practices.*

**Peter:** Yeah. The question is: has that got anything to do with health? Is there any excuse for calling it “positive health” rather than hero-worship or socialization or something else?

**Steve P:** *Well, I think if you grant the ability of people in general to make one discrimination, you can grant the other—the discrimination in the other direction.*

**Wynn:** *Would you call the Lone Ranger healthy? Do you want to call certain figures healthy merely because they're attractive?*

**Peter:** Are heroes, by definition, exemplars of positive health?

**Steve P:** *Not necessarily, but I think that's a part—*

**Terry:** *—might be able to get clear about it. You take something like engaging in a conversation or something like that; and you have a paradigm of that; then you would have a baseline from which you could talk about departures in both directions. There would be people who couldn't engage in it very well, and you might call them pathological; and there would be people who were extremely good at it, and you might want to call them—I don't know.*

**Peter:** Introducing a paradigm wouldn't help you much. It would just organize the judgment of how well the person was doing, but it wouldn't get you any more than that.

**Joe:** *Well, once you make those determinations on a continuum between how well or how worse they're doing with respect to the baseline—*

**Peter:** The baseline is what?

**Joe:** *Whatever social practice it is that you're fleshing out. I mean, it seems like a heuristic way of proceeding.*

**Peter:** You're presupposing a dimension, again. Try it with speaking English. You can certainly think of somebody who was so handicapped in the way he talks that it is a real handicap, and you have trouble understanding him, and he gets into trouble. Can you simply extend that in a positive direction and arrange people up to some infinite degree of expertise in speaking English? And does anything hinge on where a person is on that dimension, the way something hinges on whether somebody is below the tolerance limit for speaking English? Do we have different ways of treating people that depend on how well they can speak in this positive sense? Well, I think there would be very few, if any. We certainly don't go around making that kind of

judgment very commonly.

**Steve A:** *Is there a point where we make any sort of judgment that when someone is more competent in any sort of practice, it makes a difference? And there are times when you make this—*

**Terry:** *That's professionalism—you become eloquent in a certain area—I mean, if you're a lawyer, presumably you're eloquent and can—*

**Peter:** Okay, but now look. That's a different ability than the ability to speak English better. If you can present cases in court better, that's different from if you can lecture on learning theory better, and both of those are different from if you can talk a customer into a buying a car better.

**Terry:** *There are all kinds of eloquence, then.*

**Peter:** Yeah. You see, we've gotten away, then, from speaking English better, which is the case I introduced as one in which there doesn't seem to be a positive end; and if there is, it's a relatively trivial one in that it doesn't have an important place in our lives the way the negative end has. It doesn't have the importance comparable to the importance of somebody being unable to speak English.

**Steve A:** *In terms of status dynamics, it increases your eligibility—if you're more competent at a certain particular social practice, it increases your eligibility to engage in other behaviors.*

**Peter:** That's why I raised the question—are there, in fact, practices that you're more eligible to engage in if you're better at speaking English? What qualifies as being better at speaking English?

**Steve P:** *We call someone a "spokesman" because they have a greater competence in speaking than most of the people.*

**Terry:** *Or you distinguish between an enlightened conversation and a pedestrian one. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Is that a matter of speaking better or a matter of doing something else better? You see, they're all tied to some content or some domain of activity, because if it was a matter of speaking English better, you would expect this person who was high that way to succeed in all of these things that you name. Then it would be the case that somebody who was a great salesman would also be a great attorney and would be a great lecturer on learning theory and on and on and on; and you can see that it isn't so.

**Steve P:** *No, but would you hire people like Alexander Scourby is hired, to read words, because he does that better than an awful lot of people?*

**Peter:** Reading words is not the same as speaking English better.

**Wynn:** *We've got the eloquent speaker, but we've also got the fast talker, and the kind of thing we're trying to tease out is that certain skills, certain excessive—There's a point where we talk about "excessive skills". Like when you're on an admissions committee in clinical psych and somebody's got sixteen 100's on his Boards, you begin to raise eyebrows. For instance, the notion of psychopathy, where the person may be incredibly skilled at all the existing social practices that you're likely to run into—you still come away from that person, perhaps, with a shaky judgment as to pathology. Certain excessive skills, certain greed, a contempt for other sorts of social practices, perhaps, and—*

**Steve A:** *Are they excessive skills, or something—another deficit, that you would—?*

**Wynn:** *Let's assume that the character, in fact, doesn't have any real deficit in terms of ability, but he does this so well that he doesn't have to do anything else.*

**Steve A:** *He doesn't have the ability to value certain kinds of relationships.*

**Terry:** *I don't think that's the issue. If you take eloquence as a fact, that there are eloquent people, as well as people who can't speak well enough to be understood, then it seems if you're willing to connect that in some way with your notion of positive mental health, that there is some positive contrast. There is a way in which you can be constituted.*

**Wynn:** *That would be like adding up attributes—a whole range of possible human attributes, when we would be selecting which ones we would count as important. I suppose that's what you do anyway, so—The thing is that merely referring to speech gets you into the problem, because a person whose competence was incredible—this guy was a walking thesaurus—that same character may, in fact, because of that skill, because of his eloquence there, not do anything else; or use that as a quick-change artist, so to speak.*

**Terry:** *We're just using that as one example, though. We're not saying that he's limited to that or anything else. We're talking about can we talk—is it meaningful to think of a positive content to the concept of mental health?*

**Wynn:** *That's my point. If you point to a specific ability and describe it as a parameter on which, as ability increases, health increases, it strikes me that you run into a peculiar game of deciding beforehand, from the cultural facts, which skills we're going to count.*

**Peter:** Okay, let's separate the two things, (1) that we have concepts that have a positive dimension of variation. The answer is clearly yes. Things like

eloquence, things like the ability to present cases in court, the various particular examples you mention, I think you'd say, "Yeah, you can rank people on how well they're able to do it," and that goes from "okay" to "better" and "better and better". On the other hand, (2) there are others—and I suggest that speaking English is one of them—where the dimension of variation is in the negative direction; and if there's any variation in the positive, it's relatively trivial. Then we need to ask, "Is there a concept of positive health that has the other kind of variation, rather than the negative one?" Because our normal concept of health and mental health has the negative type of variation. You can't be more healthy than healthy.

**Terry:** *I don't think you've made that case yet, that it's trivial on the other end. Speaking English is the baseline, and then the remedial speaker on the one hand and the eloquent speaker on the other hand—the argument seems to turn on the point as to whether there is a correlation or a connection of some sort between that and degrees of health.*

**Peter:** No. First you need to worry about the example itself. The contrast between the importance of differences on the negative end, between a normal speaker and one who is severely handicapped. Think of the consequences of that difference, and then think of the consequences of the difference between a normal speaker and somebody who can speak English better. And keep in mind that speaking English better is not the same as being more eloquent. Being more eloquent is a case of being able to get a point across better, and that's different from speaking English better.

**Sherry:** *Because one is grammatical and the other one can be concepts. You can be an eloquent English speaker, very eloquent, and you go to Germany, and you're at the other end in German. That doesn't mean you got dumb, you just—*

**Peter:** Yeah. Think of a comparable thing of driving a car. Is a guy who drives on a race track professionally a better car-driver than a normal guy who drives to work? Well, no. There are some things he can do better with a car, but that doesn't imply he's a better car-driver. And somebody who's eloquent: there are some things he can do better by speaking, but it doesn't mean he can speak better.

**Steve A:** *It's just that the difference doesn't make a difference.*

**Peter:** There is a difference there, but it's not a difference in how well you speak English. It's a difference in how well you can accomplish certain things.

**Wynn:** *But you could argue that how well you speak English is a question of*



*accomplishment.*

**Peter:** Or try seeing. As we all look around the room, we can see what's in the room, and if you think of a blind person and what he's missing, and the importance of that kind of difference, and then look at the difference between somebody with normal eyesight, and somebody who has twice the visual acuity, or three times or N times, you'll see that there's almost no difference in what the person with exceptional acuity can do, as contrasted with how much is missing for a person who can't see, given the existing social practices. Very little hinges on being able to see better. A whole lot depends on whether you can see at all, or whether you can see well enough to engage in the world around you in the way that we do.

**Steve A:** *So we might make it something like the concept of mental health, it might not make a difference within the existing social practices, the same difference that it gives you for a definition of—*

**Peter:** Yeah, you have the problem, namely, there is that kind of discontinuity, that if you want to introduce a positive concept, you're almost going to have to make up the whole thing—that you're not already having something important.

**Daniel:** *Someone who isn't sick, we usually call healthy, but above that, beyond that, there's degrees of mental health.*

**Peter:** But notice that we no longer call it health. We call it "conditioning", we call it "well-being", we start talking in other terms.

**CJ:** *If a person's English is up to what he has to say, then he's not pathological. But if his English isn't up to what he has to say, he is, even if—*

**Peter:** No. He may have things to say that are very difficult to say, and if his English isn't up to it, we say, "Well, it was super-difficult."

**Wynn:** *If those are the areas of his concern, then (at least for that kind of activity) he's in trouble. He may not be pathological, but he's in trouble.*

**Peter:** Yeah. In the same way, if I want to run a four-minute mile, even if I want to and a lot hinges on it, the fact that I can't doesn't mean that I'm in poor shape physically.

**Wynn:** *Okay.*

**Terry:** *But then you get into sociological problems: like if the guy is hanging out—if the people he's with are four-minute-milers, and it really means a lot to him to remain with this group of people, and he's in the six-minute class—*

**Peter:** Unless you're back to the norm that people ought to be able to run a four-minute mile. Then my being unable to would be pathological.

**Terry:** *But then it seems relative to the reference group.*

**Peter:** Exactly. That's what we just went through. In a given society—

**Terry:** *But then you have a group—you have a sub-group that's extremely eloquent, and to be clumsy in that group would then be a source for conflict, and then those positive notions would have reference back.*

**?:** *Being too eloquent for ###.*

**Peter:** What that reminds us of is: that the person who makes judgments of this sort is also a member of the sub-group, and he is engaging in some social practice in making that judgment. So you keep that in mind when you're picking your reference group for deciding whether a person is handicapped. When it comes to four-minute milers, I don't know of any group of that sort, so I feel safe in saying, "If I can't run a four-minute mile, I'm not hurting." [General conversation] But if we do have such a group, and you were thinking of it, then I might have to say, "Well, I'm not thinking with reference to them; I'm thinking with reference to us. Within our group, I'm not pathological."

**Terry:** *But what if he's your client, and he says, "But all that really matters to me is that I be able to do what these people do."?*

**Peter:** My desire is not the issue. It's the norm that's the issue. As I say, I may be eating my heart out because I can't run a four-minute mile. It still doesn't make me pathological for not being able to. I'm distressed—

**Wynn:** *But the fact that you're eating your heart out—[General conversation]*

**Terry:** *The fact that you can't run a four-minute mile, but the results of not being able to, and what those results mean to you—what it means to you not being able to, may be pathological. The results can be.*

**Peter:** Yeah. I may be pathological on the grounds that I can't live with that kind of difficulty, but that's a different sort of pathological than saying I'm pathological because I can't run it in four minutes.

**Wynn:** *The logical issue here—are we going to talk about performance in terms of norms? Are we going to refer to that reference for performance or significance? And it strikes me that most of these examples are unfolding around the issue of performance, whether or not it's important to perform a four-minute mile, as for instance the question of the significance of ### perform a four-minute mile, and it strikes me that questions of health will ultimately be in the*



*language of significance rather than performance.*

**Peter:** Well, if you had your choice—think of a full-fledged representation of a social practice and of the behaviors that parts of that whole have. Those behaviors will have a significance aspect as well as a performance aspect, and the inability to participate may reflect a deficit in either the performance aspect or the significance aspect. [change tape...should come from the right words but not understand them...] would be deficient in the significance aspect. You can have either together, or both, or one or the other, any of which will qualify as a significant deficit.

**Wynn:** *So in principle you can point to any of the Intentional Action parameters and point to a deficit there—my not wanting to finish my dissertation might be pathological at this stage.*

**Peter:** After all, you're in the midst of a bunch of four-minute milers. [laughter]

**Gene:** *It seems if we're going to talk about positive mental health, we should look at what people generally mean by that—look at people that exhibit positive mental health, instead of trying to get from the concept ### that isn't too different. I think Daniel has a point in saying that in the medical field, you talk about someone being extraordinarily healthy if they have a great deal of resistance to disease, if their immunity is greater than my immunity. We can say in a sense that they are more healthy than I am, they are less likely to contract disease than I am. Psychopathology likewise: some people can be exposed to extraordinary stress and not crack up. And yet some people can be exposed to a lot less and crack up.*

**Wynn:** *If they haven't cracked up, are they pathological? The person like—let's say it requires—my gamma globulin has got to raise to 10 units per 100 units for me to show hepatitis, whereas it would take 30 or 40 units for you to show that disorder. But when neither of us are showing that kind of problem in our blood, is either of us pathological? Or when I'm not showing it, am I any less pathological than you? Or healthy, though? When neither of us has the disease, are we not both healthy? [General conversation]*

**?:** *In view of the stress, some people fall apart.*

**Wynn:** *But that's in terms of the situation, it's situation-specific in terms of the stress.*

**?:** *But pathology is situation-specific and is the result of an interaction between the person and his world.*

**Wynn:** *But both characters, before the event of the stress—you see, I’m just arguing it. I’m wanting to buy it. But I don’t want to buy it in terms of the language of health, yet. I’m not sure that—it sounds like “more resistant”. “More resistant” may in fact reach a wider domain of places in which I can be healthy, but it’s not the issue. I don’t see how to discriminate a relative well-being.*

**Gene:** *It may be difficult to discriminate a relative resilience in the face of stress, but that doesn’t mean that someone couldn’t be more resilient than someone else.*

**Wynn:** *Oh, of course. I’m just saying, does the fact of being more resilient imply necessarily the fact of being more healthy?*

**Gene:** *If you think of disease as something that happens to the person, then being able to ward off that disease—*

**Wynn:** *I’m talking about when disease is not happening to the person, because that’s what I’m—*

**Peter:** Let’s go over that. (1) I don’t hear people talking about health in that way in medicine. Maybe you do, but I don’t. As I say, they start talking in other terms, like resistance, like well-being, etc. But suppose we bypass that and take the example: you can see that you now have two concepts of health. One has to do with your current state and whether you have symptomatology and deficits now. The other has to do with what you might call a background state that has a bearing on the likelihood that you will develop a current pathology under a variety of conditions. And both of those are legitimately, I think, concepts of health, but we need to distinguish the two. Now, if you take the second one, the background condition that has a bearing on the likelihood that you are going to be in a pathological state, that is still a negative one. It still has reference to the likelihood of negative variation. It does not have a reference to something positive. It’s simply a second-order negative type of notion.

**?:** *It is second-order, but I think people who are resilient to stresses differ in ways from people who are not quite as resilient. They might be—a*

**Peter:** Okay, but you’re not getting at those by saying “resilient”. By saying “resilient”, you’re only getting at the negative aspect. If you want to get at those positives, you don’t connect them to this negative notion. You’d get at the positives, and that’s what we’re asking: What are the positives?

**Joe:** *Are there indications that certain forms of pathology would show that resilience, to stress?*

**Peter:** Sure. You never saw anybody as resilient as a good paranoid personality when he's being attacked, if he's not attacked too strongly. He has infinite resilience.

**Joe:** *His resistance to stress is amazing.*

**Wynn:** *But he's not describing the primary condition as health.*

**Steve A:** *If you had a group of psychologists who are competent at observing and describing behavior more than most people—taking the society ###—do those abilities, those competences, make someone more healthy? Are they able to engage in social practices in a different way or in a more healthy way? Does that gain access in a more positive direction?*

**Peter:** Any expertise will, including this one.

**Steve A:** *Would you say they're more healthy?*

**Peter:** No.

**Steve A:** *You're dealing with social practices and the ability to engage in social practices.*

**Peter:** Remember, there's no qualification on that ability to engage in existing social practices, and when you mention just one, like that, or like intelligence or like eloquence, I think the general constraint on just doing with one is "Beauty is as beauty does." If you only mention one, you have no idea how that works within the totality of a person's ability to engage in existing practices. All you know is he's better than most people at this one, but he may be totally deficient in all others. So until you have ways of referring to the whole set, you can't move from any particular ability or level ability to conclusions about pathology. In one sense or another, you are talking about a person's total range of behavior potential when you draw a difference between pathology and health.

**Terry:** *I think the point Gene was making, though, is that along with this background notion of health that has to do with resistance—which is maybe a double negative or a second-order negative formulation—there seem to be some visible characteristics that that person possesses that correlate with that, such as being robust; and that this robustness seems to be an extension beyond an ordinary healthiness, and that this is connected with the background notion of a less likelihood of less potentialities developing a pathological state—*

**Peter:** That's exactly where the problem is, that as soon as you get into notions that clearly have a positive range of variation, you have lost your direct

contact to notions of health, and you're back to talking about a correlation or something like that.

**Terry:** *Well, okay, but I think it's a meaningful correlation and needs to be—*

**Peter:** But it's still only a correlation.

**Wynn:** *It can be better than a correlation, though, if the person, for instance, who—let's say that we've got this general situation in which both of us are healthy in terms that neither of us is now showing symptoms of hepatitis. I'm more likely to show it than he is. Now, because I'm more likely to show it; I'm also more likely to see myself as a vulnerable person than he is. And that's not simply correlational. That's a manifestation of the state of my world. From that point, we can talk about my lack of confidence, my fear of touching people who have yellow eyeballs, and things of that sort.*

**Peter:** But that does become correlational, because it doesn't follow from your recognition that you're vulnerable to hepatitis—it doesn't follow that you're lacking in self-confidence. As soon as you make that kind of transition, you're back to correlation.

**Wynn:** *I see what you're saying, but the fact of being vulnerable, recognizing that I'm vulnerable, doesn't mean anything at all.*

**Peter:** You see, you've just got a third-order negative notion, rather than a positive one.

**Steve P:** *We're up against a situation where, in day to day social practices, the minimum is what's important, and our vocabulary and our way of thinking deals with that. But like Cassel's work on the psychosomatic component of things like cancer and heart disease and all that indicates that there is some way to discriminate the healthy population into the healthy and the healthier, less prone to dysfunction. Also, it seems like if you buy Darwin's evolution and all of that, for a species, you can say that, when the time comes, it is very easy to discriminate members of a species who are healthier than other members. They're able to get along, but conditions change such that some were no longer able to get along, and this change was more functional.*

**Peter:** Functional is not the same as healthy. You can have a disease that's very functional, very valuable in an evolutionary sense, and it's still a disease. All you've got to do is be ingenious enough to specify the nature of the conditions under which being sick *that way* would be advantageous. And you can't.

**Wynn:** *If you want to buy Darwinism's argument, then what you'd probably do is go to a demographic table and find out which group has the highest reproductive rate, and accordingly describe that group as the most adaptive, because that's Darwin's definition of fitness. It's the differential reproductive rate.*

**Peter:** At this point, I think it would be a good idea to bring in the kind of things that people have been talking about when they said, "Here's an example of positive health." At this point, we're in danger of going too far in some directions that are beside the point of (what at least the psychologists have talked about as) positive health. What kind of examples have been brought forward to us as examples of positive health?

**?:** *Maslow's.*

**Peter:** Anybody familiar with any of those sets of examples or taxonomies, etc.? I guess Maslow is the name that comes to mind most easily. Okay, what are some of their descriptions or some examples that they bring out as "here's an example of positive health"?

**Gene:** *Maslow talks about the self-actualized person who lives his life according to Being values and is motivated by Being rather than deficiency—that means he's self-accepting; he's open to experience; he sees truth, beauty, goodness almost everywhere around him; he's a combination of Buddha and Christ and Franklin Delano Roosevelt [laughter].*

**Peter:** Well, you can see again how you get into transcendental theories here: what it takes to be a self-actualizing person is a combination of Buddha, Christ, and FDR. Pretty goddamn transcendental.

**Gene:** *He could find them, you know, just hanging around on street corners or something. But usually they were people who had in some way achieved a great deal. But they could be housewives who just lived their lives normally and got peak experiences—that was one of his criteria, the frequency with which they could—[laughter].*

**Peter:** If you wanted to give a direct, explicit statement of what does it would take to qualify for positive health as far as Maslow is concerned, what would you mention?

**Gene:** *He has that list of the twelve—*

**Peter:** What are some of the items on that list? [*blackboard*]

**Self-accepting**

**Open to experience**

**Unitary perception of the world**

**Being value vs deficiency (instrumental)**

**Healthy [sic] and non-naive optimism**

**Insightful -- extent**

**-- clarity**

**-- accuracy**

**Gene:** *I have it in my office—you know the two that are ###, because they're double negatives: self-acceptance and openness to experience.*

**Gene:** *A unitary perception of the world, a wholeness of viewpoint. You have to see the synthesis of all of them. The ability to synthesize different things fits in with that. Being values—*

**Peter:** What is the contrast to Being values?

**Gene:** *Deficiency. Well, present-centeredness, but that's not something that Maslow ###.*

**Peter:** How about going downstairs and getting the list? Does anybody have it handy somewhere? In all of this distinguished collection—[laughter...]

**Daniel goes to search for it]**

**Wynn:** *I feel a little uncomfortable—even in Maslow's attempt to define or parameterize the actualizing person, it strikes me a lot easier to do just part of what he's done, which is to say what the person isn't, which simply is his motivations aren't primarily to fill up deficiencies. To describe what he is to be, from my status, strikes me as a bit presumptuous.*

**Peter:** That's why I want the whole list, because if you look at these, they all look like double negatives.

**Gene:** *Optimism is sort of a healthy, non-naive optimism.*

**Peter:** You see, this would be questions like ### in terms of a definition of health, and this is clearly a negative formulation.

**?:** *Is insightful part of Maslow's—? The clarity with which people perceive others and themselves.*

**Peter:** That should go under “insightful”, shouldn't it? Clarity should be part of the notion of insight. Those still look like negatives.

**?:** *How is “insight” negative?*

**Peter:** Not confused, not inaccurate, not incorrect.

**Terry:** *There's a positivity to that concept that isn't exhausted by saying what insight is not.*

**Peter:** What's the positive?

**Terry:** *Something like lucidity or clarity or—*

**Peter:** Not confused, not garbled, is lucid.

**Terry:** *To be able to perceive more, more of the possible significant relationships. If you work from a baseline that there's an almost infinite range of significant relationships, interrelationships, that can be apprehended, then the range of perceived and inapprehended signification would be a continuum along which you could describe people. People that perceive more of the possible significations, more possible meanings, would be those people that have more talent in that regard.*

**Peter:** Except those who perceive more of those possible meanings and are wrong.

**Terry:** *They're wrong? They're obviously a sub-case that wouldn't be as ### the case where they're perceiving more relationships and are right.*

**Peter:** That puts the emphasis, then, on not being wrong, rather than just on how much you can see or how clearly. There's also the requirement that you be right. Otherwise, it doesn't look like a very positive value.

**Jane:** *No, but that doesn't take away from the fact that if you see more ##.*

**Peter:** That's why I said this breaks down into extent and clarity, and you have to be non-deficient in both of these ways in order to be insightful.

**Wynn:** *Is that any different from "not stupid"?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *Yeah, there's more positivity to the concept than simply not being stupid and not being wrong. There's something positive in the concept.*

**Peter:** What is it?

**Terry:** *Being right. Being able to see a lot.*

**Wynn:** *It's like "insightful" takes the place of words like "bright", or—not "clever" or "smart" so much as "bright". There's that—*

**Peter:** By the time you get to extent, clarity, and accuracy—



**Terry:** *The fact that there are locutions in ordinary language, like “not stupid” vs. “he’s a smart guy”, which to me, the existence of those locutions would suggest that there’s a difference in the concepts between “he’s not stupid” and “he’s smart”, and that the difference is in the one end that he merely has the absence of a deficit, and on the other, he’s got a certain positive attribute that people typically don’t have, and that the determination “smart” is an attempt to delineate that and not the absence of a deficit. So you do have some concepts in ordinary language, some locutions, which would speak to that.*

**Peter:** Is this one of them?

**Terry:** *It would appear so to me.*

**Peter:** What’s the norm with respect to which you’re talking about “insightful”?

**Terry:** *The baseline would be something like probably a conceptual norm concerning the usual or typical man of insight, man of understanding, man who perceives interrelationships among things and people and so on, essentially.*

**Wynn:** *When you start talking about norms, with this case, it strikes me that you end up saying things like “a Stanford-Binet of 100”, which clearly isn’t what you want.*

**Peter:** A Stanford-Binet which is normed at 100, you can still talk about an IQ of 150.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but that doesn’t render the person particularly any more healthy. They may be more neurotic than—*

**Peter:** Well, again, you see, we’re continually faced with this dilemma that to the extent that we have genuinely positive concepts, they no longer seem to be attached to the notion of health.

**Wynn:** *They also seem to be attached to the notion of norms, like we’ve already discriminated the healthy from the normal, and the normal from the pathological, so it’s like there’s that middle ground of “normal”—we have to decide on normal—which we haven’t decided yet whether we want to describe as “healthy” or not.*

**Jane:** *Is “functioning adequately” and “functioning well” or “not functioning well”—that seems to fall into the—*

**Peter:** Yeah, if you say “functioning well” versus “functioning adequately”, you’re pointing to there being some positive domains, but is it a domain of health? Then you raise the same question: what is it to function well, as against to function adequately?



**Terry:** *Then you would flesh out descriptions of those behaviors that would constitute both those categories.*

**Peter:** And then you're faced with the problem of relativity. Whatever you specify there, other people are going to say, "Nonsense."

**Terry:** *You have to have a series of examples that you would present for functioning well versus functioning adequately. These would be terrific examples—anyone that attempts to extract a single criterion out of those examples—then you could push that single criterion and explode the examples, but if there were a number, you ostensibly attempt to point to the kind of attributes that you are talking about.*

**Peter:** If you try doing that for the normal concept of health, you could do that, and you still wouldn't have accomplished what has been accomplished, namely, given an explicit, conceptual specification of psychopathology. And it is possible, even though (for teaching purposes) you may have to point to examples and say, "There's an example of somebody that's sick"—there's still the question of the conceptual formulation, and we can do that for the normal concept of health. I'm raising the question, "Can we do that for some other concept of positive health, or is that an illusion?"

**Wynn:** *Would functioning well necessarily be healthy? Because I can imagine—*

**Peter:** No. You can function well for some purposes or from some points of view, and you still wouldn't want to say "healthy".

**Wynn:** *And you can perhaps function very well in a particular society, in terms of the range of social practices that we would ascribe to that society, and that transcendental observer still might have good, sound reasons for calling that—[general conversation]*

**Terry:** *Take a psychopath, which would be a prime example of someone who might function very well, at a normative standpoint is psychopathological, yet that's the uninteresting case as far as we're concerned. We're concerned with the person who's functioning well, doesn't fall into one of these sociological subtypes—we want to talk about the person who functions well and is at one with his society—the orchestra conductor, or the violinist in the Cleveland String Quartet or something like that.*

**Wynn:** "At one with the society" gets you in trouble right from the start.

**Peter:** Because again, that looks like a concealed double negative. A person who is “at one with the society” is the person who’s not at odds with his society.

**Terry:** *That’s just a manner of speaking.*

**Wynn:** *But health then becomes equated with adjustment.*

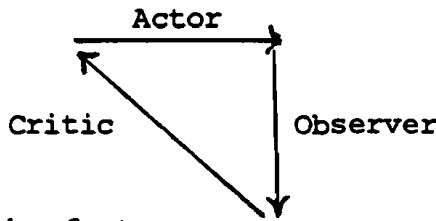
**Terry:** *No, not at all. It’s just a manner of speaking.*

**Joe:** *I think the next item on the list should be a break.*

**Peter:** Okay, let’s take five.

**FIGURE 1**

**Before the fact**



**After the fact**

**Not enough X**

**Too much Y**

**Sick**

**Healthy**

**Diagnosis-Treatment**

**Summing Up**

**Peter:** Partly as a result of having gone through some of these considerations a year ago, I begin to spot where we’re getting diminishing returns from a line of development. I think we’re reaching that point here, so let’s turn to a different line and start connecting them up. This line stems from your Actor/Observer/Critic set of distinctions, and let’s tick off a couple of things. One is that Observer and Critic are crucial if, as, and when something has gone wrong up here [Actor]. Because as long as things are going right, you don’t need to be observing or criticizing. Secondly, you recall, this [Actor] is before the fact, and Observation and Criticism are after the fact. Specifically, it means that you must have a behavior in order to observe it or criticize it, whereas you don’t need to have a behavior in order to generate a behavior.

Now, along with the conceptual distinctions of Actor/Observer/Critic, there are also some relatively distinctive ways of talking that go with these ways of operating. And among the ones that go with Critic are these: any time you say there’s too much of something, you’re operating as a Critic. If you say something is sick, good, healthy, wrong, etc., you’re operating as a Critic.

Now recall that when you think of this as a functional feedback loop, the function of the Critic is to provide ways of correcting when something is going wrong. And so that's what I would call the Diagnosis-Treatment function.

**Joe:** *Is it ways of correcting or just ways of identifying?*

**Peter:** Ways of correcting. Identifying what's wrong and ways of correcting that. Unless you have both, it's not going to be of any help over here [Actor]. Now you also—you have a different Critic function, which is simply a summing up without any—and the summing up may have the form of a diagnosis—but what it doesn't have is any clue as to what to do about it. So that kind of Critic judgment is, in general, not helpful, precisely because it doesn't contain this element [Diagnosis-Treatment].

**?:** *Won't the Actor be the one who actually does the correcting?*

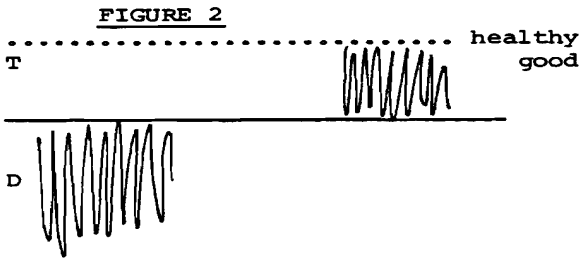
**Peter:** Yeah. That's why it's a feedback cycle—back to Actor. Actor does something that is monitored by the Observer. It starts going wrong. The Observer describes it. The Critic decides what it is that's going wrong. First he decides *that* it's going wrong, then *what* is going wrong, and then what to do about it. Then, given that, the Actor has something to work on to do differently.

**Terry:** *So this is sort of a description of a complex behavioral system, with a positive feedback loop which ###?*

**Peter:** It's a representation of that aspect of it, the self-regulatory aspect which comes out, I think, fairly cleanly, in a negative feedback loop.

**Terry:** *It's like Pierce's logic of inquiry.*

**Peter:** Okay, now these [**Not enough X, Too much Y**] are going to be this sort of talk [**Diagnosis-Treatment**], and this [**Sick, Healthy**] is going to be that sort of talk [**Summing up**]. Because if you simply say that somebody is sick or pathological or healthy, you're doing a summing up type of Critic's judgment. If you do it in the form of "He's got this deficit or that excess," then you're doing a Diagnosis-Treatment kind of thing, because clearly (at least in principle) what you do about not enough X is to get more X. What you do about too much Y is less Y. So these kinds of judgments [**Diagnosis-Treatment**] carry with them at least suggestions or a priori prescriptions, whereas this kind [**Summing Up**] doesn't.



Now let's come back to this line, and remember we have a normative baseline of how people operate in a given society, and we said that pathology judgments are judgments about this range [D], namely, is there a deficit or not; and if there is a deficit, is it a significant deficit?; and somebody who's in a pathological state is one who is operating down here [D], namely, with a significant deficit. And what we've been worrying about is whether we have any way of talking about things extending upward, and we did find those in terms of talent and other special abilities. Because we have no difficulty starting with normal and talking about people with more and more musical talent or artistic talent or athletic talent or ability or eloquence, or a whole variety of things where you go from here to positive. And with respect to these [T], we found it hard to then connect them to health. Or to good. Is it good for somebody to have an extraordinary amount of eloquence? Is it better to have more than less eloquence? Is it always, is it necessarily better? Or what?

When you come to examine the kind of social practices that hinge on these differences [T], by and large, they're not as important as these [D], but you can find some. If you have more musical talent, you've got certain things open to you that wouldn't if you had less, and the same for any of these. So it's not that these differences don't connect to behavior potential. But do they connect to health in the sense of: is having any of these part of an overall good or healthy pattern vs. less?

**Terry:** *I'd like to take a shot at how they would be. Take that feedback loop, the schematic representation, and take an individual who's articulate at describing his own behavior and making those kinds of evaluations. And I would say that someone who is articulate versus someone who's not articulate at being able to describe his behavior is going to be in a better position in terms of that feedback loop, to regulate his own behavior, to identify (1) what he is doing, (2) to diagnose then what is to be done about it, and that consequently, he would have a greater amount of personal mental health and personal self-control and so on.*

**Peter:** Only if you have this kind of anchor [solid line], because if you allow free variation of what he's attempting to do, then you lose that assurance, even practically speaking. If somebody who's more articulate has a more difficult problem because he's trying more complex things, you have no guarantee that he is more adequate to the task of describing what's going on with him. It's only if you anchor to a public, non-personal baseline—then you can say with respect to that, “Somebody who has this kind of talent is more likely to do a good job of that, but not of whatever he's up to.” Because he may be up to something different—as you might expect.

**Terry:** *You're saying that he might be up to something where even his powers desert him in terms of being able to identify what's going on?*

**Peter:** As a matter of fact, you would predict that.

**Terry:** *On what basis would you predict that?*

**Peter:** Common experience.

**Terry:** *That bright and intelligent people do things that are over their heads?*

**Peter:** Not quite, but that being bright and intelligent in no way, practically speaking, guarantees that you have fewer problems than if you're un-bright and unintelligent. All it guarantees is that you have the *kind* of problems that a bright, intelligent person would have, rather than the kind that some other kinds of person would have.

**Terry:** *So if you hold the quantity of problems constant, it would seem like the key comes in the Actor; and the Observer and Critic—*

**Peter:** That's part of the power of the normal notion of health, is that it's anchored on a public norm of accomplishment. As soon as you relativize to a private norm, then you lose all of that kind of assurance that more is better.

**Wynn:** *It strikes me that, in part, the articulate person—the only almost guarantee you've got is he's likely to talk about his problems more often, and have more to say about them, and—*

**Peter:** No. The power doesn't imply frequency. All it implies is: were he to try, he'd do a better job at it than if he had less ability.

**Terry:** *I don't know if I follow, then, why if that person with that great a capacity is in a position to do a better job at that feedback loop, and gave him systematic modification of his behavior in carrying out the way in which he's going wrong, and reinforcing ways that he's going right, why he wouldn't be in a position to—*

**Peter:** He'll formulate everything more complexly; therefore, have more complex decision and description problems; therefore, be no more adequate to those than somebody who has less ability and formulates all of it in simple terms. And that's the kind of thing that you would expect, is that people operate around their capacity, so that if you have more capacity to make distinctions, you'll use them, but then, because you've used them, you're dealing with more complexity, and your degree of ability to handle that level of complexity is about the same as somebody who has less ability, formulates less complex things, and his ability to handle that level of complexity is about the same as yours.

**Wynn:** *I don't know if we're talking about "articulate" in a sensible way now, because we could talk about "articulate" in terms of the person makes a lot of verbal distinctions and speaks about those distinctions well, whether or not they're distinctions that, in fact, describe his behavior or not; he talks a lot and says things clearly, whether or not they refer to anything. There's that sort of articulateness, versus—*

**Peter:** Articulate is as articulate does.

**Wynn:** *—versus the articulateness of accurate, clear speech. Now that character strikes me as being in the position that Terry's describing, because he could accurately describe his situation. Then he's not describing it in a way that bears too many concepts or makes discriminations that aren't there.*

**Terry:** *All you've got to do is make a case for an empirical type. Because even though there's the type that you describe, it may be conceivable that we can get the empirical type with a person working around their capacity, if it's a high capacity, that they don't go over their heads, that they do formulate their problems with more distinctions, more clearly, then they are in a position—as an empirical type—to have that greater success in mastering in that self-regulatory feedback.*

**Peter:** Only if, in fact, it's true, and it needn't be.

**Terry:** *If in fact it's true, but we're using an a priori method anyway.*

**Peter:** I know. That's why it won't work. You're just guessing that it would work that way. You can't base a definition of positive health on guesswork about how something or other would actually work out.

**Terry:** *No, I was saying if we can construct a type, the chances are we can go out and find it, that there will be someone who will instantiate the type.*

**Peter:** Yeah, if it's the right kind of type.

**Terry:** *And then, at that point, you've got a very strong position from which to say that there is some positivity to the concept of mental health—somebody who's got this kind of increased self-mastery and increased self-observational capacity, increased ability to have technological control over his own actions and to modify them, and that that would be part of the positivity of the concept of positive mental health.*

**Peter:** If you think of some of the possible cases that would fit that, they'd all sound an awful lot like Maslow. You could think of a guy sitting on a garbage heap picking off the flies and being very content with that, and he can exemplify *that* criterion of mental health. Because you've got it purely relativized with no public norm. That means that no matter what he's doing, so long as he's operating at—for him and his task—the right level of complexity and clarity, it's all it takes, which means if his task has near zero complexity and clarity, then he can be operating with near zero complexity and clarity, and be doing 100% effectively.

**Terry:** *Now add to that empirical type that the task happens to be one of some social and public value, and then undercut that one.*

**Peter:** That's what you have here in the usual notion of health. It's exactly—we take the things that are important and say, “If you're missing enough of those that are important, then you're sick.” What do we have up here, beyond this normal level of participation?

**?:** *Highly dynamic, aggressive—*

**Peter:** Okay, but let me introduce a formal possibility, namely, you put your norm up here [dotted line], and that norm is perfection. You see, this [solid line] is simply good enough to do it the way it's done, effectively. This [dotted line] is absolutely nothing wrong with it, no deficit of any sort, no failure of any sort, no applicable criticism of any sort. Now you can introduce a baseline of that sort and say, “That's the norm that I'm operating with, as a Critic,” and now I can assimilate the same logic of negative variation relative to that norm and make use of the same kind of concept, namely, a negative variation relative to a norm. Except, because this is perfection, it's not the ordinary concept of health, and that's why I call it “positive health”. Now relative to that baseline, all of these things can be seen as double negatives. Relative to perfection, “insightful” means not un insightful. “Unitary” means not fragmented at all. “Open to experience” means shutting out nothing. So when you introduce that baseline, you can use the same logical structure as the normal concept of health, to pick up things that are on the other side,



the positive side.

**Andrea:** *Don't you have to depend on some of the qualities that the further you go from that baseline, the more likelihood of getting away from—the closer you come to pathology? Because of inability to engage in those practices that these people down here do?*

**Peter:** One of the things we've lost is the reference to practices. What we've said is that no criticism is applicable. That's perfection.

**Terry:** *But it's in a practice of some kind.*

**Peter:** You leave that open.

**Terry:** *Put it in a practice and see what happens.*

**Peter:** That's what I was pointing out you had trouble doing, that what kind of practices hinge on having complete insight versus having anything less than complete. I don't know of any such practices.

**Terry:** *But complete—in effect you'd load the deck. It's like someone with no insight versus someone with complete insight—those are two abstractions. You find people with—*

**Peter:** Well, but here [solid line] is insight enough. What is there between insight enough and complete insight that's of interest to us?

**Terry:** *A lot of insight.*

**Peter:** But what would that be? What would “a lot of insight” be?

**Terry:** *Very perceptive.*

**Peter:** With respect to what?

**Terry:** *With respect to whatever it is that is of interest.*

**Peter:** Well, what is of interest?

**Terry:** *Specify the domain, and then we'll have—for psychologists, I guess it would be with respect to conflicts—*

**Peter:** Okay, but isn't that a specification formally of how far short you fall from having *no* limitations of this sort? Saying that you have more perceptiveness is a way of specifying how far short you fall from perfection in perceptiveness—unless you want to specify perceptiveness—in respect to what? And then you have the relativity problem.

**Terry:** *Or else you just think of it asymptotically, and you realize that perceptiveness is something you can approach an ideal—*

**Peter:** Well, perfection is something you could approach, in principle. You



might even attain it, in principle. That is, formally, it's an okay for a baseline. You can indeed assess and appraise things in terms of the degree to which they fall short of, or measure up to, perfection.

**Wynn:** *This will get us beyond the cultural problem.*

**Peter:** Yeah. And it has the advantage—it retains the culture-free formulation, whereas as soon as you start saying “perceptive in regard to what?”, you’ve lost your culture-free formulation.

**Wynn:** *What it emphasizes is if, for instance, we did make the judgment that that culture—for instance, psychoanalysts looked at the Nazis when they were making their case for their distinction between normal and healthy, because to be a normal Nazi is to be a repressor of a certain sort, is to deny certain kinds of experiences; and although a person may be adequately functioning in terms of all those social practices, he isn't open to certain kinds of experience, although he is open to the experience of that culture. But this would claim that the experiences of that culture aren't enough. They arbitrarily define the range of possible experiences.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's why you go to perfection rather than practices. Given perfection, you can criticize the whole set of practices as a unit, and say, “Somebody who can merely do those still falls short of perfection, because doing only that is criticizable in certain ways. Therefore it's less than perfect.” Whereas if you were restricted to considering only that set of practices, you'd have to say that the perfect Nazi is perfect.

**?:** *Isn't this a transcendental theory, then?*

**Peter:** Not quite. Again, you see, we've moved in that direction. As soon as you start talking about perfection, that is typical language for transcendental theories.

**Wynn:** *It smacks of Hinduism, in the sense that you've got a situation in which the character—the more he renounced the cultural vehicle, the surer the type, and it's not a good argument for health that you can see how the notion of “perfect” can ### non-culturally contaminated.*

**Peter:** It can also be pathological.

**Steve P:** *The trouble is you're loading the deck. We're moving from positive mental health to perfect mental health—*

**Peter:** Well, as I say, is there somewhere in between that we can introduce a baseline that would do the job of a baseline?

[change tape....]

**Steve P:** *Take an assumption like, there's a dimension "mental health" along which people are distributed, and we have—I can't think of a prototype, somebody who is perfectly pathological, he's totally and completely and beautifully ill, the epitome of pathology. We can recognize a large group of people who fall on that end of the continuum. I'm coming against the problem that we have no cultural or societal patterns for recognizing, acknowledging, promulgating, the other side. As long as you meet the criteria, that's cool. Beyond that, you just go off and do your thing.*

**Terry:** *No, in the arts, you have literary criticism and aesthetics, which deal with performers in literature and music and so on, where those kinds of decisions are made, the determinations are made about—but that's not how ill.*

**Peter:** But it's exactly there that Critic language is typically negative.

**?:** *How about a guru?*

**Peter:** Well, I don't know.

**Wynn:** *It strikes me as not an historical accident that we don't have these concepts, that we don't have these norms. It's a conceptual issue. You can't grant more status than you have, and as a result, most of us wouldn't notice or be in a position to describe those things.*

**Peter:** No. We can introduce a perfection baseline without being perfect ourselves.

**Wynn:** *We can use it as a baseline, but when we want to refer to what that would be, in terms of an historical particular, it's beyond our realm.*

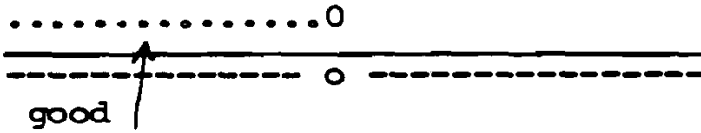
**Peter:** Yeah, but you have the same trouble down here. If somebody said, "What would be the most pathological person you could think of?", you'd have a hard time.

**Wynn:** *But it's easier, though, for me to point to things that are deficits in relation to my abilities than things that are superior in terms of perfection.*

**Peter:** I don't know about that! All you've got to do is think of your deficits, and then suppose that you have no deficit of that sort, and you're up at the other end. Remember that formally, "negatives and positives" and "double negatives and negatives" are simply interchangeable. As soon as you have acts, you can have non-acts; as soon as you have non-acts, you can have non-non-acts. There's your double negative, your negative, and your positive. So when I talk about these things, remember that I'm not talking about the formal convertibility of one to the other—that's trivial. I'm talking functionally whether one of these is the real thing and the others are merely derivative,

whether there's any symmetry of that kind. As a matter of fact, I think I just had a good example. Think of psychological-mindedness. [blackboard]

**FIGURE 3**



And then think of this as being zero, and extending in a positive direction as much as you want. And now the question is: what's on the other side over here? And the answer is: nothing. It does not arrange itself in a positive and negative range of variation. It's basically a zero to N variations. In contrast, if I said, "good", you could introduce something over here and say that's a single continuum. That is, some ranges relative to a given baseline will go both ways. Others will only go one way. And if we introduce something here [arrow] as a baseline, then indeed it would go both ways from here, but it would still be essentially a concept that has only a positive variation rather than both positive and negative.

**Wynn:** *How about variations that are neither positive nor negative, in which continuity wouldn't be your—it strikes me that forms of what we're doing here is for indicating the irregularity of certain forms of life, in terms of how we go about describing—*

**Peter:** Well, one of the places where this came out is subject-matters, and that's why I thought of psychological-mindedness. If you're rating things in terms of degree of relevance to subject-matter, and you're looking at tests and saying, "This is relevant to psychology," what is the opposite of being relevant to psychology? Well, there isn't anything, because nothing is opposite to psychology. You've got zero to something, but there's no opposite, there's no other side. You could formally introduce something as an opposite, but you can see that basically, this is not a symmetrical two-range of variation, that some notions are of that sort and others are not, and this is one that isn't; and no matter how you play formal games by introducing something here to get something on both sides, it is still a zero-to-N sort of variation. And that's what you need to be sensitive to in regard to these, because sometimes the formality is such that you do have above and below, and that still doesn't make it the two-way variation.

And that's what we have here, according to the positive health people—that you have variation above and below [see Figure 2, p. 25]. And I've been suggesting that you have from here a negative variation, and there's an

open question about the positive, and then introduce something up here [dotted line] with respect to which you have nothing but negative variation.

**Jane:** *Would perfect health be health instead of possibilities?*

**Peter:** No, just perfection.

**Wynn:** *The direction from normal to perfect would be positive—you could introduce the term that way.*

**Steve P:** *What may be happening is that that middle line, that normal, isn't a line: it's a band. It's not a point, it's a range.*

**Peter:** It's still—the issue is still what's above and below, and you notice I have kind of drawn it as a band. Being a band rather than a line is not crucial.

**Steve P:** *### a zero Fahrenheit point: anything below that is pathological; anything above that is positive. Or is it still in the normal range?*

**Peter:** Remember what I said initially about there's no basic quantification here. When we talk about above and below, remember that's quality.

**Steve P:** *Then somebody who had positive mental health would engage in a social practice in a way that is unacceptable, because it's not normal.*

**Peter:** No. You see, there's no necessary relation between a state and a behavior. You can be in a pathological state and be engaging in perfectly acceptable, normal, rational behavior. There's not a necessary connection there.

**Steve P:** *Let's take the work example. If we are somebody who has demonstrated a long history of being incapable of working—pathological, okay. But within "working" is all the way from somebody who's just managing to get by from job to job, to somebody who's gone from the lowest possible position in the firm to owning the world, or whatever. Those are all normal. That's all "normal social practice". Okay. What kind of work-behavior is there that would be more than normal, and non-pathological?*

**Peter:** Well, is there any?

**Steve P:** *Or would it be said that that's pathological, that's not normal?*

**Peter:** Is there any positive variation on work-behavior?

**Wynn:** *Enjoyment?*

**Peter:** Isn't that just some other description?

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but there's certain kinds of adjectives you could apply to—*

**Steve P:** *But lots of people enjoy their work. It's normal.*

**Wynn:** *But the point I'm trying to make is that I can be working well within the existing social practices of my job, and do a fine job, and be miserable; or I can be doing that same fine job and be quite happy. Now, before the fact, describing which is—I'm saying that happy or unhappy is a relevant issue of "normal". It may have only a subtle relationship to the issue of health, but that there are all those different sorts of dimensions that we can talk to about this person who is perfectly healthy and working. You can imagine the place work has in his life has the possibilities of being different from the place that work would have in the life of a deviant, or somebody who's pathological, or somebody who's near the normal.*

**Peter:** Happy is as happy does.

As I said, in general, when you mention only one thing, like happy or good at work, you have that problem. It all depends on what else there is in the picture.

Let's introduce another thing here. Come back to the notion of the Critic in the way that we know him, like a critic of a play, a critic of a novel, and reflect on the fact that Critic language is typically diagnostic language, that critics have language for saying that something or other of a certain kind went wrong with this play or with this novel or at this athletic performance. Primarily, Critic language is diagnostic. Now a Critic can get by with saying that a certain failure did not occur, because within the context of criticism, it is already given what it is he's criticizing. It's already given that what he's criticizing is a play. Or what he's criticizing is this athletic performance. Or what he's criticizing is this poem. So his language doesn't have to include the Observer's language for describing it. His language is primarily for saying what is and isn't wrong with this kind of thing. So one of the things about Critic language is: it's defective in the positive, Observer-type description of what it is that's being described, because ordinarily that's given. However, there has to *be* such a thing, or there is nothing to criticize.

**Jane:** *How is it defective in—*

**Peter:** Criticism is different from description and exposition. You always have to do some [description or exposition], but your primary task and your primary focus, and the emphasis in your language, is not on the description of what you're criticizing but on the criticism.

**Wynn:** *What about descriptions of novelty? Is novelty more the Observer's game or the Critic's game?—to point to novelty as novelty?*

**Peter:** Probably Critic.

**Wynn:** *Be cause it strikes me that one of the realms the Critic does have a positive place, to point to the novelty or the creative—*

**Peter:** “Creative” is certainly a Critic’s term.

**Wynn:** *And that’s positive.*

**Peter:** Yeah. It’s a term of praise, but again, terms of praise translate into the absence of certain deficits.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but novelty—it strikes me that “novel” is a little different from simply describing it as “creative” in the sense of praise. To describe it as “novel” is to say that this hasn’t been on the scene before. And it strikes me that a Critic who identifies that—that’s a positive activity, to say that it’s new on the scene.*

### **Living life**

### **Social practice**

### **Play**

**Peter:** No. Some things, if they are new on the scene, that’s good. Other things, if they’re new on the scene, that’s bad. So it depends on *what* you’re criticizing whether saying it’s “novel” or “creative” is a term of praise or not. This [**Social Practice, Play**] is what we have of a positive sort in the picture that we know of, that whenever there is criticism, there is something that is being criticized that is already there. And our prime examples are things like plays, novels, etc.; that is, artistic products. But we can also do the same with social practices. We can criticize the way that somebody plays a football game, the way somebody conducts a lecture, the way somebody arrests a criminal, that is, any social practice. If you know of it, have mastered the concept, you can criticize a given performance as better or worse, having failed in certain respects or as not having failed in certain respects.

**Steve A:** *Are you saying it infers something positive, or that the fact is something positive?*

**Peter:** No, I’m saying that it presupposes something positive, namely, the actual something that is being criticized. And that given something to be criticized, that gives you a certain kind of baseline. That determines which criticisms are relevant, which failures are important, which non-failures it is important to mention. All of that stems from the positive content of the play, the practice, whatever it is that’s being criticized. Okay, now think of criticizing a performance of a play, think of criticizing how somebody plays football or conducts a lecture, and then think of criticizing how somebody lives his life. The language that you use for plays is relatively different from the lan-

guage you use for other practices. The language you use for social practices is not quite the same as what you use when you criticize how somebody is living his life. So for different areas of criticism, different types of things to be criticized, you will find characteristic language, *if* there is a body of criticism. If there have been people who have engaged in criticism of that sort, they will evolve a characteristic language. And we see this all over the place in just those areas where there is historically, customarily, criticism of that sort.

Now when it comes to positive health, I've made the point that you've got to consider the totality of what's going on. You can't just consider one thing like intelligence or musical talent, and draw conclusions about mental health or positive health. What that amounts to is that you're in a different ballpark, and it's roughly the issue of how a person is living his life. That when you make judgments of positive health, you are operating as a Critic, and this is the kind of thing that you're criticizing [Living life]. Now, the problem with this perfection baseline is, it leaves out the content. The strength, namely, that it's culture-free, content-free, gives you a little too much freedom, because what it amounts to is simply the formalization of a form of criticism in which one says, "Nothing has gone wrong" or "Something has gone wrong".

**Wynn:** *Would you introduce the general content of your bias (as a therapist, anyway) as being love, work, and play? That the domain in which perfection is at issue, for health, is play, work, and love?*

**Peter:** It's not unreasonable—notice the double negative of the Critic—but I wouldn't just stick by that as pre-eminent for therapy.

**Wynn:** *Is there any other form of life that doesn't have a place under one of those headings, that you would really be concerned with in terms of a description of pathology or health? Can you think of any form of activity or form of life that doesn't fit under the heading of love, work, or play, and that would also get you a label of healthy or pathological? In principle you could probably—*

**Peter:** Could you connect humor as play?

**Wynn:** *Sure.*

**Peter:** Some people wouldn't.

Anyhow, I'm prepared to grant that those will cover the ground exhaustively, without buying that that's the best division of things into exhaustive categories. But as I say, I wouldn't object to them.

**Wynn:** *It's like what else is there to do?—love, work, and play.*



**Peter:** That's like, well, you've got to have either too much or too little of something, because that's the only way you can go wrong. Sure, but it doesn't get you that much further.

At this point, we're into an intermediate stage, where criticizing the way somebody lives his life is not entirely content-free and culture-free, but neither does it have the culture-specific problems of saying, "Well, if you can't work in a factory, you're pathological." It's not so specific that the cultural relativity is an acute problem. On the other hand, clearly your criticism of ways of living will depend on which way of living you're criticizing. And then if you look at these kinds of things [see Maslow list on page 13, pdf pg 17, lines 126-133????], you could say, "Well, these look pretty content-free." Any of them would qualify as a criticism of a way of living. But surely, any way of living in which significantly you were shutting things out would be worse; in which you were rejecting yourself—that would be worse; in which the world was fragmented; in which you were not clear, not accurate; etc. So all of those will qualify as the kind of language suitable for a critic who's criticizing ways of living. And as critic language, we'll see why it's tempting to think of them all as double negatives, and since you have a perfection baseline, everything is either a negative or a double negative. And what takes the place of perfection is the actual thing being criticized. For one thing, either you can do it perfectly or you've gone wrong in some way. That is, some criticism is there. So once you introduce the actual thing being criticized, you have essentially the same set-up as if you have a perfection baseline, because you can conceive of doing that thing perfectly, i.e., no criticism is applicable.

**Wynn:** *It's interesting, because there are certain forms of life that are automatically beyond that kind of situation. For instance, a murder—I could perform, so to speak, the perfect murder, but the fact of performing that is open to criticism—is necessarily open to criticism—and so those kinds of things drop out as things we have concern ourselves with, in terms of our definition of health. Because that isn't beyond—there's no point at which that would be beyond criticism, at least in terms of eligibility.*

**Peter:** Well, calling it murder already includes a criticism.

**Wynn:** *To label it as that kind of form of life.*

**Peter:** Yeah, to label it as murder is to criticize it.

**Steve A:** *Pete, I don't see how this fits into positive mental health at all. It seems to me you're doing—whether you have that top, that perfection baseline, you're doing the exact same thing, you're not dealing with positive mental*



*health, you're dealing with something—you're still dealing with deficits.*

**Peter:** I know, but when you're dealing with deficits from either of those baselines, there's nowhere further you can go. You can't go past—

**Steve A:** *You've escaped the problem of positive mental health.*

**Peter:** No. The positive mental health is, "Are you living your life in a completely exemplary fashion? Rather than merely as exemplary as most of us."

**Wynn:** *Won't that range, though, between "most of us" and "perfect"? Presumably perfection is, in principle, possible, but I'm not going to wake up tomorrow that way. From the baseline, any activity that I spend in between the baseline and the top is an area that is at least within the subject-matter of being healthy, positive mental health. Which ### you develop a potential range of subject-matter, range of facts, a location for that range of facts.*

**Peter:** Yeah, you see, what that does is enable you to use the logic of pathology, but to cover a range which the normal notion of pathology doesn't, by pushing it to the extreme, and by definition the extreme, so that you know that everything falls on one side of it. Then I point out that what's positive in the picture is simply these kinds of things [Living life, Social practice, Play], and that therefore, if you've got something positive to criticize, you can, in effect, use a perfection baseline, namely, are you doing that thing perfectly? And it's easy when you get simple things. You now get a new problem when you've got something as complex as living your life. But by now, you see, we have a lot of apparatus, terminology, etc., that can be brought to bear on it.

**Steve P:** *I don't see a Critic operating on the basis of perfection. Because there's an implication that the Critic knows what perfection is and would recognize it if the Critic saw it. It seems to be more on the basis of—*

**Peter:** The word is "definitive". Somebody who says, "This was the definitive performance of *Hamlet*," is in effect saying, "This is something that has no flaws for that sort of thing."

**Steve A:** *Not being able to imagine something better?*

**Steve P:** *And what that usually indicates is you have a defective Critic.*

**Wynn:** *But you have a difference between a Critic saying, "I don't see anything wrong with this," and saying, "I see this—I think it's perfect." It strikes me that a lot of critics might be in a position often to say, "I don't see anything wrong with this," without wanting to extend themselves to—*

**Peter:** Remember the Super-Critic, who says, "My taste is so exquisite that nothing ever really satisfies me." That's a bad Critic. So when somebody says,

“This one really has it all, there is absolutely no way this one falls short,” if you’re a Super-Critic you’ll say, “Well, you must have missed something.” But if you’re not a Super-Critic you may just rejoice with him that we’ve got this thing that is so good. Notice that saying “this was a definitive performance of *Hamlet* does not imply that some other performance of *Hamlet*, that was different, couldn’t also be definitive. Again, you don’t have a simple range of variation. You have judgments that this one is one that there’s nothing wrong with. And recall the negotiation: it fits exactly that paradigm, that a correct answer, a good answer, is one that withstands criticism; and there isn’t necessarily one correct answer. Well, the same thing goes with criticism here. There isn’t necessarily one perfect performance of *Hamlet*. Any performance of *Hamlet* that doesn’t have anything wrong with it is a perfect performance, is a definitive performance. So you approach this from the viewpoint not that there is a thing that is perfect, but rather that perfection consists of not having any criticism applicable.

**Jane:** *Something seems wrong with that, namely, it doesn’t allow for the differences between several that don’t have anything wrong with them.*

**Peter:** It does, precisely because it doesn’t imply that there is only one definitive performance, that you can have several definitive performances. Since you haven’t made any commitment about the degree of resemblance, there can be as much difference among them as there can actually be and still have definitive performances. So there’s your qualitative difference. Now think about the task, the Critic’s task, of criticizing ways of living.

**Sherry:** *Isn’t that always subjective then, from the Critic’s point of view?*

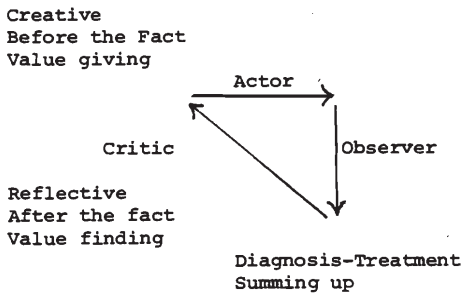
**Peter:** “Subjective” is a Critic’s term itself, and ask yourself, what failure is being implied if you say that a judgment is subjective? What isn’t it, if it’s subjective? The usual answer is “objective”. What would be an “objective” judgment? Well, a judgment that couldn’t be shown to be wrong would be an objective judgment. But there could be a number of them, and if there are a number of them, that might tempt you to say “subjective”. But if so, keep in mind that those “subjective” judgments would have every virtue that we normally attribute to “objective” judgments.

For the next time, think about the task of a Critic of examining how people live, and passing judgment on it, and what kind of judgments one could pass, and what kind of problems one would face, and what kind of answers people have come up with.

## SEMINAR 2

15 July 1976

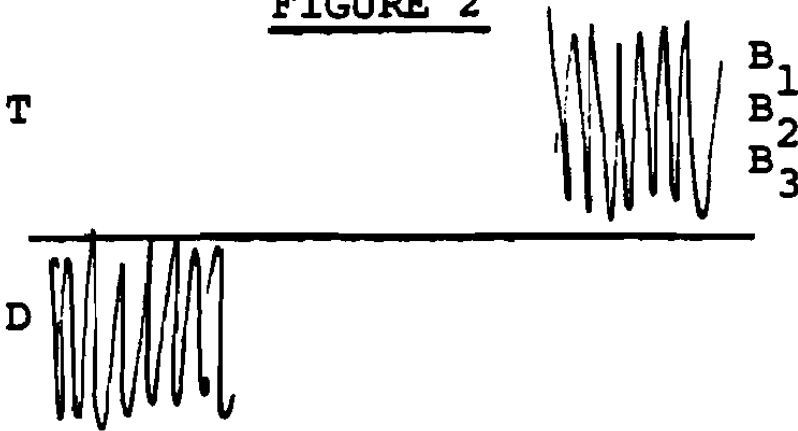
FIGURE 1



### Criticize:

- (a) a behavior
- (b) a picture  
a play
- (c) a social practice  
an institution
- (d) a way of life  
how someone is living

**Peter:** This is where we got last time: criticizing a way of living. We introduced some preliminary cases here to give the general idea [list above]; talked about the kind of language that a critic uses, in contrast to Actor or Observer, including the fact that critic language is to a large extent negative or double negative—negative in the sense of a diagnosis of what’s wrong or double negative in the sense of saying that a certain thing could have gone wrong but hasn’t. We also went through something that I think maybe we better go back through again, namely, the basis on which one makes a judgment of pathology. [blackboard].

**FIGURE 2**

As I said, there is some kind of norm of how much, how well you have to do to be a member in good standing in a social group. Whatever that is, is good enough, and that's the baseline that [T] you use in judging pathology. The problem with going beyond it and going better is with what I call the positive range of variation. You lose this concept of “good enough”, and you lose the systematic implication that more is better. In this range of variations [D], since you're anchored at the top, more is better because more brings you closer to being good enough. Beyond that, there is no implication of more is better. In fact, more may be worse.

Now, what we identified was that there are things that come under the general heading of abilities or talents such that more is better in the sense that there is a set of behaviors that you can engage in if you have more, and that you can't engage in if you have only this much [**baseline**]. So in the sense that more, here [T], makes you eligible for these [B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>], more is better. You still have the problem, now, of anchoring on each one of these, of saying “How much does it take to do each one?” Once you specify how much it takes to do this [B<sub>1</sub>], then you're back to the situation here where there is no implication that more is better. If it takes a certain level of skill or talent to do this, then having that much is good, because it enables you to do that; but there's no implication that having more is better. So in this range down here [D], more is better, and there is such a thing as “good enough”. And there is a significant totality, namely, the way the whole society operates.

Now, each of those three features is missing in this range [T] where we want to talk about positive health. There isn't a significant totality of these behaviors [B<sub>1</sub>, etc.], because these simply break up into the kind of things

you can do if you have more talent of various sorts. If you have great athletic talent, you've got these [B1]. If you've got great musical talent, you have these [B2]. But the two sets don't connect in any coherent whole. So you lose this notion of "good enough" in any kind of total sense. You simply have particular advantages that you get from having more talent or ability along a particular line. If you anchor on the particulars here [B1, etc.], then you regain the notion of "good enough", but then you have as many notions of "good enough" as you have different behaviors and social practices.

**Terry:** *Would you say that there are any central behaviors, forms of behavior that are more crucial to the judgment of pathology?*

**Peter:** I wouldn't say so, but I certainly wouldn't deny it. It's the kind of thing you want to say only if you already have it in hand. Otherwise, you can say that it's plausible that there would be some; it certainly is overwhelmingly plausible that some behaviors are more important than others in this regard; but unless you have one that you can say, "Look, there's a crucial one,"—

**Terry:** *I have one: communicative failure.*

**Peter:** That's not a behavior. It's an achievement. You can communicate in all kinds of ways.

**Daniel:** *Without behavior?*

**Peter:** No, but the behavior that succeeds in communicating isn't a single kind of behavior. There's a vast range of behaviors that succeed in communicating. I can talk, I can write, I can wave my arms, I can make hand signals, I can use other sets of conventions, I can write in code, all kinds of things.

**Terry:** *I would further specify the process is dialogue, such that monologue kind of communication—such as a scholarly article or something of that sort, or writing a musical piece—wouldn't necessarily be involved in this. It would involve social interaction—*

**Peter:** Okay, but social interaction is not a social practice. It's exploiting the fact that almost every social practice is a social interaction. A social interaction is not a particular kind of crucial social practice. There's something crucial about it, but it's not in the sense that there is a kind of behavior that's crucial.

**Terry:** *I guess I'm thinking of psychotherapeutic systems, such as Gestalt or psychoanalysis, where one of the primary points of focus for those systems is focusing on disjunctures between verbal content, experiential expression, and*

*general features of behavior, such as in the Gloria tape. Gloria says she's scared but she's smiling. In this kind of disjuncture, there's an incongruency of semantic content and the facial expressions seized upon by this interpreter, and so on. So there seems to be something about what I'm calling a "dialogic process" which would be apparent in paradigm cases, central cases of a kind of behavior that we don't look to for departures for diagnosing psychopathology.*

**Peter:** Isn't that just a special case of performing inconsistently in a social practice?

**Terry:** *I wouldn't say so, because if I perform inconsistently in running a track, and one day my time is five minutes; and the next day, it's ten; and the next day, it's fifteen, that doesn't really have too much implication about my psychopathology.*

**Peter:** Suppose you run the track, and one day you run on the track and the other day you wander off, and the next day you come back on the track—

**Terry:** *Even that, I think, is a good example, because I could run on the track one day; and the next day, I could start on the track and wander over and look at some flowers and things, and that would still not—*

**Peter:** Or you sign up for the 440, but one day you run a 220 and the next day you run an 880—

**Terry:** *—I'm working inside the structure, and—*

**Peter:** And if you have a social practice that you can engage in on a number of occasions, either across occasions or within, what you do in the first part as against what you do in the second part—for example, you run the 440. The first half, you really run in; and, all of a sudden, you start walking. The coach would have a right to be kind of teed off at you. And likewise, if I tell you that I'm happy, but I don't act that way, that's like having signed up for a race and then waltz through it. The proper participation requires a number of things, and if I do only some and not others, you'll say, "He's inconsistent. He's giving me conflicting messages."

**Terry:** *I think the analogy is there, that there's different kinds of interactions, but I guess the case I was trying to make is that ### communicative behavior or something of that sort—symbolic interaction involving verbal use of language, that there's something more essential about that—systematic differences between that and analogous cases like running the 440 or something, are important.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but the importance of communicating properly is parasitical on the importance of communicating. It's not the other way around. Communication doesn't assume importance, because look what happens when communication goes bad. Rather, it's important when communication goes bad, because look how important communication is. But that's the general case, that doing it right—whatever you're doing is important to the extent that what you're doing is important, and that will hold across all social practices.

**Terry:** *Wouldn't you say that that one is more important than most others?*

**Peter:** Well, like I said, communication is not a social practice. So it's not the one that is more important than others.

**Terry:** *Marx would say labor, for example, but I'm trying to say that there's one that's more important than labor, which would be—*

**Peter:** No, if anything what you have is something of this sort, an institution. So you can call commerce, raising a family, making a living, politics, art, etc., you can call them institutions. The definition is: an institution is an organized set of practices. Now speaking English, if you have to assign it somewhere here [see list on previous page], you'd assign it there, saying, "That's an important institution."

**Terry:** *Well, what I would say is, what's presupposed for institutions to work? Institutions are organized around an instrumental action—that is, to say, labor. The thing that's presupposed is that they can effectively talk to each other.*

**Peter:** No, there's no presuppositions, and particularly not that one. Anything that works, works. Any institution is what it is; it has a place in a society that's viable, then it doesn't have to have any particular instrumental value. It's simply an intrinsic part and an intrinsic thing.

**Wynn:** *Could you build pathology out of lack of intrinsics, out of a lack of intrinsic practices? I was wondering if you can ground it on the level of behavior, as opposed to significance or one of these other things. I can see how you could ground it in state, but I'm having trouble with the concept of behavior as simply action, because with the exception of things like breathing, eating, and sexual behavior, I can't see psychotherapists having too much concern with specific behavior, except when they're dealing with criminal activity, and then their position is changed. But to label behavior, a specific behavior—we don't know whether that's an expression of pathology or not.*

**Peter:** ### to a specific behavior?



**Wynn:** *I could be way off here, but I'm under the impression we're looking for a ground-point in terms of which—whether we can talk about pathology in terms of behavior itself. There's certain behaviors that, if lacking, you'd want to describe the person as pathological.*

**Peter:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**Wynn:** *Because if you can't ground it there, then you have to start raising the level of inquiry to—*

**Peter:** So far, I'd say we haven't found any behaviors or practices that are just plain crucial.

**Wynn:** *Eating and breathing.*

**Peter:** Those are activities, not practices. Those are achievements.

**Daniel:** *Would you reiterate on the ###?*

**Peter:** Yeah. If you take some of the dimensions of ability, here, you can extend some beyond the point where you've got enough, in the sense that you're not pathological. And there is some point to doing that, because there are behaviors that you're eligible for if you have that much. So that's the point of extending the dimension up here, is that there are indeed things you can do, if you have that much ability of that kind. But there isn't a significant totality with those behaviors, the way there is a significant totality of simply the whole way that the community operates. So you lose your notion of how much is enough, which is one of the critical ones for talking about pathology. Somebody who hasn't got enough is in a pathological state, and what we said about "enough" is that it was non-arbitrary, because it is the kind of thing that every member has a vested interest in, as to whether other members have enough. But as to whether somebody is an extraordinary violinist, we may have an interest, but it isn't that kind of interest.

**Daniel:** *Are we talking about behaviors, when we talk about "enough" or abilities?*

**Peter:** Abilities. If you have enough ability, you can engage in behaviors that you couldn't if you didn't have that much ability. But then, if you take any given behavior and say, "If you have enough to do that"—it's not a given that if you have more, you're better off, because you may be worse off.

**Daniel:** *After the break-even point, ###*

**Peter:** You see, it's not clear in general that "more than enough" is better. If it's better, it's going to have to be better for something else; and for that



something else, there's going to be a certain amount that's enough; and then, again, it's not clear that more than that is going to be better.

**Wynn:** *There's logical reasons why we can't ground pathology in specific behaviors. But can we ground pathology in forms of life, in terms of—it seems to me your paradigms—*

**Peter:** That's what we're doing here [**"Criticize" list, p. 27**].

**Wynn:** *I think we need to be more specific in terms of at least the history of the practice of therapy, because you've got theories like psychoanalysis, concerned with sex and aggression; and you've got the Gestalt which is concerned with integration of specific tasks. But it strikes me that what we have in our traditional personality theories are sort of metaphysical terms that we can apply to forms of life, in terms of digging out which ones are the social practices that are done in a particular culture. Because a form of life carries with it a significance, so we don't have to worry the dropping of that, that would occur if we were specifically talking about, like, being able to raise cups to our mouth.*

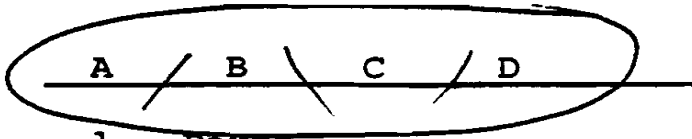
**Peter:** How about an example of how that does or would work?

**Wynn:** *Well, the character who, for instance, hadn't developed any sexual forms of life, there's no activity in his life that had that significance to him. Now from a historical perspective of say, psychoanalysis, that person would be showing a deficit in the expression of certain things that you would expect to be there, and that you would have to have very strong reasons not to be there. For instance, the person would have more reasons not to, but those reasons would have to be on the conscious level in the form of renunciation, rather than simply the lack of an identification or a mislabeling. And so I think you could ground—from the historical perspective of psychoanalysts' concerning themselves with a society that generated a faulty hedonic perspective, you could see how those forms of life could be forms of life that could be focal for a study of pathology.*

**Peter:** Let's introduce categories here. Suppose [**blackboard**] we start with a community or a way of living, and say you can divide this up in at least three different kinds of ways. One, you can divide it into Parts. That would correspond to dividing it into institutions. And then you can say that you can have different analyses of what parts a society consists of. Then you can say that if you have the right division into parts, every single one of those parts is essential; therefore, anybody who is significantly lacking in any one

of those is significantly lacking with respect to the whole; and, therefore, is pathological.

**FIGURE 3**



1. **Parts**
2. **Activities**
3. **Abilities**
4. **Competence**

Okay, Number 2, you can divide it into Activities, and here you have things like walking, talking, eating, drinking, etc. These are not social practices; they are activities. And these activities may be found, in general, in any of the Parts, so that this way of dividing it up is more or less orthogonal to that way of dividing it up. Now you can say, “Anybody who is significantly lacking in any of these crucial activities, since those activities play such an important part across the whole range of things, to be significantly lacking in any of these activities is to be significantly lacking in the whole; and, therefore, the person is pathological.”

Then you can do it in terms of the Ability that enables the person either to engage in those activities or to participate successfully in the parts or institutions. Then you can say, “If a person is significantly lacking in any of these crucial abilities, then he’s significantly lacking in the whole, and so he’s in a pathological state.”

So if we’re going to get analytic from this point of criticizing a way of living, and introduce some taxonomy, we have at least these ways of doing it. But we also don’t want to take it for granted that we have to introduce taxonomies, that we have to systematize by dividing things up in these sorts of ways. These may give us a technical assist, or they may just get in our way.

**Joe Silva:** *Where, in this picture of pathology, is a psychopath who’s doing the right things for the wrong reasons?*

**Peter:** Either here [**Parts**] or here [**Abilities**]. Doing the right thing for the wrong reason—if you gave an Activity Description, the Activity Description would be the proper one, but if you specified what ID characteristics

those were an expression of, you'd get the difference between him and a normal person. If you take institutions as arrangements of social practices and specify the point of the practice (the significance), then your psychopath would be participating with the wrong significance, and so he wouldn't be participating adequately or properly.

**Joe Silva:** *And so he wouldn't be participating on a level of "good enough".*

**Peter:** Yeah, "good enough" in these respects [**Parts and Activities**], but he wouldn't be good enough in this respect [**Competence**].

**Joe S:** *So that's not analogous to competence? Because you made Activity—competence in respect to participating in the social practices. So "good enough" is not tied directly to competence, and where does the competence—*

**Peter:** That's what I said, that you can divide it up in these ways, one of which is Competence.

**Joe S:** *Where would competence fit in, then?*

**Peter:** It would connect to either of these [**Parts and Activities**]. The ability to engage in activities like talking, walking, etc., or the abilities—whatever they might be—required to participate in various institutions adequately. Keep in mind that things like appreciation and sensitivity can be formulated as abilities.

**Joe S:** *But that would be the danger in postulating competence as a baseline, is that you wouldn't be able to have within that the case of the psychopath who is participating successfully?*

**Peter:** A psychopath won't have the proper competence, because he won't have the right appreciation or sensitivity. He'll only have the right performances. It's the activity that gives you that danger. If you put it purely in terms of activity, then indeed your psychopath would come out looking good. If he was the right kind of psychopath.

**Joe S:** *So the notion of competence is not tied just into achievement, or the behavior, or the performance of the behavior? The idea of competence encompasses all the parameters of behavior.*

**Peter:** No, the ability is not just the ability to perform; it's also the ability to appreciate, the ability to give priorities.

**Terry:** *It seems like, then, you're not going to be able to use just one, or even two, of those taxonomies. You're going to have to use them all in an interlocking way to get at the most subtle cases.*

**Peter:** That's why I said that this may just get in our way. You can approach it in any of these ways. Certainly, since they're independent, you can approach it in all of these three ways simultaneously. But beware of introducing taxonomies, because oftentimes it's more trouble than it's worth. About the point where you talk about them all simultaneously, you ought to start asking yourself, what are you getting out of all of that that makes it worth carrying all of that apparatus?

**Terry:** *I thought of an example that seems to be someone participating in a social practice and being pathological at the same time, in model form. I wonder if it would be worth taking time to bring it out and see how it—*

**Peter:** Well, remember what we went through last time, is that you can't key judgments of pathology to any single behavior. It has something to do with pathology, so anything you can say about a single social practice is not going to be crucial for judgments about pathology.

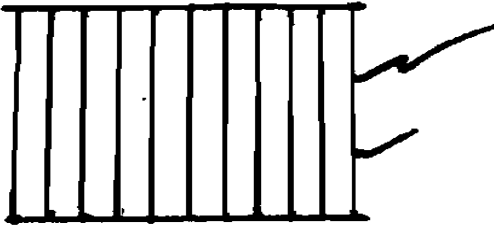
**Terry:** *Except that it makes the identification of a particular occasion of psychopathology exceedingly problematic. It's almost as though ### have such a cross-section temporally that it's only at the outcome of therapy that you could have said what the pathology was in the beginning.*

**Peter:** Okay, you've got us all curious. What's the example? [laughter]

**Terry:** *All right. You have two women talking, and one woman is telling the other what she thinks of her current activities and relationships and so on, and the other woman is replying to her and saying, "I think you're really right, sweetie. I think it's really funny the way you're saying it, but I think you're really right on." And in a way, she's participating in a social practice, but she's not standing up to this other woman. In other words, what she wants to say is, "Get fucked to you for telling me how to live my life." But she can't do this. And furthermore, if you get a long cross-section of her behavior, you see that she consistently can't stand up to people, and you can take this back to her whole oedipal conflict or however you want to think of the etiology, such that she became intimidated and couldn't express these kinds of things. So there's an instance where she's participating in an existing social practice. There's just a subtlety, because when she says, "funny", the other girl doesn't realize that she's angry with her because she's thinking of the usual meaning that we share in terms of the word "funny", and she's got a private meaning, which is, "You're an idiot," and things like that. So these are extremely subtle kinds of distinctions you have to make in order to know what the nature of her deficit is, or—*

**Peter:** Those are garden-variety distinctions. We use them all the time. It simply exemplifies the fact that if you've got a phenomenon that's spread out, you often can't tell what it is by looking at one piece of it. You remember the heuristic I gave you for exactly that kind of problem: [blackboard].

### FIGURE 4



You have a hard time telling what the whole thing is by looking at just a piece of it. [A soldier and his dog walking behind a fence.] And if I erase that part [bayonet and tail], probably nobody could tell. If you've got a pattern extending across a person's whole life, and you just look at one occasion in which he does something that both exemplifies the pattern but is not in itself noticeably deviant, indeed, you're going to have a hard time deciding that this occasion is an exemplification of this pathological pattern.

**Terry:** *I guess the assertion I want to make is that you need other concepts that are more sensitive to the internal workings of that behavior—*

**Peter:** No. You just need more information. All you've got to do is to have known her since childhood, and you wouldn't have to have any other concepts to see what was going on.

**Terry:** *That's right. And the formalisms then would work for you, even the empty formalisms would help you. But if you want to spot it on the first time, the empty formalisms would desert you in terms of spotting it. You'd have to have more specific concepts that would cue you in to just that kind of phenomenon.*

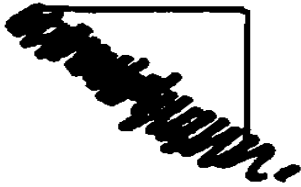
**Wynn:** *It sounds like the danger of personal questions, though, in the sense that as an observer dealing with all of the expression, the verbalization, the behavioral moves, that any impression you form is eligible to be mistaken in terms of the significance of that behavior, so you do need the pattern, in any case.*

**Terry:** *For verification.*

**Wynn:** *In fact, most things are fucked up just by looking at them, if that's your bent, but at the same time, the need for a variety of information is because of the varieties of forms of life that that person's likely to exhibit is necessary for a diagnosis.*

**Peter:** Okay, here's an example of what Wynn is saying. Suppose I show you this [Figure 5], and say, "What's this a piece of?"

### **FIGURE 5**



You say, "Hell, it could be a square, it could be a triangle, it could be a rectangle, it could be a trapezoid, it could be a hexagon, there are a hell of a lot of things it could be part of." Now what subtle formalism would tell me from this [Fig. 5] what it was a part of? There isn't any formalism; because, in fact, it is ambiguous; and it could, in fact, be part of countless sorts of things.

Now, if we, in addition, have information that, in fact, in this kind of context, a corner like that is usually part of a square, then we could use the information. But it's information that we would need, not some kind of formalism. And not some kind of theory about corners. We already have a theory of corners—that's how come we can say that this *is* a corner. The same goes for this episode: you have this [Fig. 5], and this is very much like that. What's it part of? Well, all you've got to do is look to see if you can see something that you recognize this as a part of. And if you have ideas about what sorts of things people do—like, up here, we have ideas about squares and rectangles and triangles—then if one of them *is* present there, you'll probably recognize it. And all you need is exposure to the facts, not some other, more powerful set of ideas.

**Terry:** *I guess that's what I'm wondering, if that is in fact some—*

**Peter:** It has to be some. It's a tautology.

**Joe S:** *Some of it's getting lost, unless you explicate your doodle, there [Fig. 4], because we've never reached that here.*

**Peter:** Oh—does everybody recognize the original doodle? This is a picture of a soldier and his dog walking by a fence. It's a classic doodle. I use this routinely to indicate some of the kinds of problems that you're dealing with—observational problems—in doing clinical work, that often you have a pattern, it's a perfectly familiar pattern except that you're only looking at part of it. And if you're looking for the whole pattern and have it in mind, even a small part may tip you off that the whole thing is there. But if you don't have it in mind, you can look forever and not have the foggiest idea about what it is.

**Steve A:** *Isn't that what Terry is saying?*

**Peter:** No. I take it that Terry is saying that somewhere there is a magic language such that if we applied to that, it would tell us that this was a soldier and this was his dog. [**general conversation**] That's what I said: all you need is the concept of the pattern of which this is a part, and beyond that, you need information.

**Terry:** ### *more specialized kinds of theory—*

**Peter:** No. This is simply social practices and ID characteristics. And you can invent ID characteristics ad nauseam and ad hoc, and psychologists do. But they don't substitute for the ones we already have. They just give us more and more. But we're constantly adding more and more anyhow. Because the kinds of ID characteristics we look for today have only a moderately good overlap to the ID characteristics that we would have been looking for in people 50 years ago.

**Steve A:** *I don't think anybody's questioning that the ambiguity of describing behavior—that more facts helps. But we know how people behave, we know people, and from that you develop certain concepts, certain ways of looking at behavior; you see certain common social practices, certain common things that people do. And often, looking at a certain phenomenon, you can say, "This is this because I know people and because I have this concept."*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's what I said. If we had data that said that mostly corners are parts of squares, then indeed, we could look at this and say, "Probably that's part of a square. Probably there's a square behind this." Likewise, over here, if we were familiar with the fact that people often don't stand up to other people, and then we looked at this episode, it might occur to us that this was a case of somebody not standing up to somebody, and say, "Well, quite possibly this is characteristic of her." You see, that pattern was already



mentioned, the relevant pattern was already mentioned as soon as you said, “A was not standing up to B.” There is not some other arcane, theoretical language that would tell us, from this episode, that that was part of that pattern—which is what I thought you were suggesting.

**Terry:** *Well, I was suggesting more along the lines—when I was coming back to the initial formulation of her definition, depending on the status you ascribe to her of psychopathology, which was “not participating in existing social practices,” or “inability to participate in existing social practices”—*

**Peter:** No! Not “inability”—“a significant restriction”—

**Terry:** *A significant restriction in participating in existing social practices. And what I was trying to do was to bring up a case—at face value to an observer, it would seem that the person was participating in a social practice*

**Peter:** I know. That’s why I emphasize that it’s not inability to participate. The restriction is shown by the fact that in that social practice, there are some options that she couldn’t take. And you wouldn’t find that out except by seeing other cases where she also didn’t take the corresponding option. That’s why it’s hard to tell from that occasion.

**Terry:** *I guess that’s what I was driving at in terms of attacking the definition—I was attacking it in terms of saying that from a particular episode, we can’t really get a clue as to whether—I mean, short of a really gross example where, let’s say, people are sitting around a dinner table and everyone’s talking except one person who is sort of autistically sitting there—that would be an obvious case where, upon a single episode, you could look at it and say “significant restrictions and being unable to participate in social practices”. Okay, but a with a wide variety of probably more interesting and more typically seen cases, it’s going to look like the people are participating in social practices. And in terms of the formalism, it won’t clue you in as to what you’re trying to snuff out that’s going to show you that they’re not participating in the way that they apparently were. And it’s that tension between appearance and reality, I guess, that I’m talking about, that I’m frustrated with in terms of the definition not helping me to get at that.*

**Peter:** But do you suppose that any formalism could possibly do it?

**Terry:** *Well, maybe not formalism, but maybe that’s where you drop down a notch to specific theories about certain kinds of behavior.*

**Peter:** No, that’s where you drop down a notch to specifying particular social practices, particular ways of living that this one that you’re looking at



may be part of. No formalism will do that job.

**Wynn:** *I think there's a subject-matter here, though, that's trying to be dug out, which is to the effect: are there any behaviors, anything you could watch, that would give you, as a therapist, good grounds for suspicion? Because you listen to dialogue, and you hear things, and certain things make you wonder about that person. I'm wondering if there's any way get it systematically, or in terms of just asking people what they think, that would serve as specific behavioral hotspots.*

**Peter:** In general, I would say no.

**Wynn:** *You see, that I'm not so sure about, because—*

**Peter:** I said: *in general*, I would say no. I'm not saying that you never have it.

**Terry:** *Take conceptualizing the present behavior, and part of the conceptualization is that the person's conflicted about their dependency needs, and they really want to reproach others, and they're really resenting giving anything to other people, and that's part of your conceptualization of what they're doing when they're being depressed—okay? Now if you look at depression, it doesn't look like—it doesn't say that, doesn't jump out and speak to you and say, "I'm really holding out on the world and I'm really in a—"*

**Peter:** No. If that's what you think depression is, it better jump out and speak to you, or you'd never be able to tell when you had one.

**Terry:** *No, because you see, the point is that people that have prior—I guess what's involved in the sedimentation of knowledge over tradition, is that people prior to that have seen the whole episodic structure and they have gone through having the person—*

**Peter:** Then you're back to "We have discovered that mostly corners belong to squares. We have discovered that mostly depressions occur as a consequence of this conflict-full pattern of dependency and withholding."

**Terry:** *So then when you see it, you can expect that all these other things go along with it, and there you have—*

**Peter:** But again, I emphasize that all it takes is facts. You need actuarial statistics. You don't need any kind of theory.

**Wynn:** *Your theory might be dangerous, though, if it's the sort of theory that we've usually had in psychology, because it usually provides that the way you get to depression is by having a certain kind of ego relation or something else, and so you spend a lot of time trying to demonstrate that fact, when—even*

*though that's one of the possible ideologies and may likely be the case—having a statistical or ### view of how you get there frees you from the necessity to find it as one particular kind of case.*

**Terry:** *Then the corroboration would come from if you make interpretations that are generated by your developmental schema, of how that came to be, if they're accepted by the person in terms of giving you more information that goes along this line, that corroborates your interpretation.*

**Peter:** Let me give you a heuristic for the dangers inherent in that approach, while recognizing that that kind of approach is possible and may sometimes pay off. Imagine that we have some of these glass ashtrays around here that we're familiar with in this building. And now suppose that I define an ashtray as something that is made of glass, which you can tell by looking; and that it is made by Libby-Owens-Ford; and that it is made by a particular technical process. I can certainly do that. And then we run into certain kinds of difficulties, namely, at that point, it becomes impossible to tell just by looking here now whether you've got an ashtray or not, because there will be things that resemble ashtrays in all other respects except that they weren't made by Libby-Owens-Ford, or that they weren't made by that particular process. Now, the fact is that the way we treat ashtrays in no way depends on whether they were made by Ford or whether they were made by that particular process. It only depends on the kind of features of the ashtray that you can establish here now. So what will turn out is that that definition will be markedly inconvenient, because we will have established two classes of things: one, ashtrays; and the other, things that are like ashtrays in some ways but aren't, and then we're going to treat them the same. Well, you run into the danger of doing that with the depression, because a person is depressed if he's not thinking much, if he slows down, if he's showing certain things—then he is depressed. If you add a definition to the definition, that it also must have evolved according to a particular history, then you're faced with the prospect of having conditions that are exactly like a depression, except that they didn't evolve from that particular history.

**Terry:** *You said that you had schemas that would be more general than that, that wouldn't be—*

**Peter:** The same problem with any other schema, too.

**Terry:** *And the other similarity—the analogy would be the behavior, that the significance of origins of behavior—they are significant in a way that the origins of an ashtray aren't, that you're only concerned with the path of the behavior*

*and the way in which it interfaces with the present, that is to say, the way—*

**Peter:** Well, again, look at the example of the depression. If I add a history, then I'm faced with the possibility that I've got something that's exactly like a depression, but I'm going to have to say it isn't because it doesn't have that history. Now unless I'm prepared to go to those lengths to separate the two kinds of cases, and unless I'm going to do something different with the two kinds of cases, I've just generated problems for myself. That's the danger. So when you think of taking a genetic approach and giving definitions of those, keep your eye on that danger, because it is a clear and present danger. I'm not saying that it isn't always useful, or that it always fails, or that it's never worth the trouble.

**Terry:** *And isn't it in fact true that sometimes when we describe and conceptualize a behavior, that part of that description and conceptualization involves a genetic account of it?*

**Peter:** Either never or hardly ever. I can't think of an example, but I wouldn't care to swear that it never has. As I say, you can invent them, and then you have one. [laughter] But when I think of the kind of examples that we deal with clinically, I'd be willing to say either never or hardly ever. Because the behavior is what it is, and no doubt it has antecedents, and we're sometimes interested in the antecedents, but we don't *define* the behavior in terms of the antecedents.

**Wynn:** *You might ### the psychoanalysts, though, in the sense that the theory they work from has such a general mechanical language that they end up talking about ideologies for their disorders as being "the one that got us to this one", in the sense that they have a wide variety of possible paths that a person could take—*

**Peter:** Everybody has a wide variety of possible paths.

**Wynn:** *I mean, in terms of the actual run-of-the-mill personality theory, as a background for psychotherapy or for diagnostic decisions that psychoanalysts, for instance, might make. They don't seem to be encumbered by, say, Abraham's pronouncement that orality with schizophrenia and so on—I mean, in point of fact, there is a general enough almost ordinary language sort of working the machine, that they don't require only to have one history to get depression. And so ### they play anthropologist in that they do the same thing that we're talking about here, and that they end up tracing back seeing which way we did get here, and they publish. And that sometimes makes it easier for us, because*

*it suggests—*

**Peter:** Yeah, because that enables us to find out that there are various ways of getting to the same thing.

**Terry:** *Sometimes they're versions of the same type, and then you start to have a diagnostic developmental theory that's of some use to you.*

**Wynn:** *Maybe you've got it most of the time, or that 97% of the time depressives got that way because they had that kind of relationship—you have at least the beginning for discussions of intervention. But you don't get that from Peter. You get that from the statistics.*

**Peter:** Now keep in mind who's explicitly in the business of criticizing ways of life are the Existentialists, with their notion of mode of living, mode of existence. And not that they do not introduce elaborate taxonomies, which doesn't mean that we shouldn't, but as I said, sometimes taxonomies aren't worth it. Sometimes it's better to just have them there as reminders and use them ad hoc rather than just systematically incorporate them into your approach. For the time being, I'd recommend let's keep these in mind, but if we're going to use them, use them ad hoc.

Now, one reason I recommend that is: if you come back over here to the basic paradigm of Actor/Observer/Critic [**Fig. 1, p. 41**], it occurred to me sometime between Tuesday and now that you can criticize something without being able to describe it, or at least without being able to give a description that supports or ties into the criticism. You can look at a play and say, "That was awkward", without being able to give a corresponding description of those features that made it awkward. So the language of criticism, then, is not tied to the necessity for a systematic description of just those things that are relevant to the criticism.

**Wynn:** *At that point, though, wouldn't "awkwardness" become the description, the only description that person could offer?*

**Peter:** It's not a description; it's an appraisal.

**Wynn:** *And from the mouth of that person who could say nothing else about it, I'd wonder about his use of language there.*

**Peter:** I wouldn't. You often find yourself doing that in actual criticism of things like plays or music or people's ways of living. You say, "That's ugly, that's awkward, that's too narrow." And oftentimes you can say, "It's too narrow because—" or "It's ugly in this way," but sometimes you say, "Mmmm."

**Terry:** *That's a hermeneutic approach. You start with an interpretation of the whole of the work—*

**Peter:** Not an interpretation. A criticism.

**Terry:** *Okay, you've got an interpretation of the whole of the work and then you go back to different parts of the work, which you've made independent judgments about, may either corroborate or force a revision of that initial holistic judgment that you made.*

**Peter:** Or they may not. You may not be able to carry that second point off.

**Terry:** *Well, if you can't, then in terms of other critics who can provide that kind of corroboration internal to the work, their interpretation holds the floor against yours, and—*

**Peter:** Not necessarily. You may become celebrated as the guy who got the right answer for the wrong reasons. But also, if they disagree with you, other people may agree with your judgment as against their reasons.

**Wynn:** *But usually when you're in that situation, where you just don't like something and you say—*

**Peter:** No, I'm not talking about something that crude. Saying "I don't like it" is different from saying "it's awkward".

**Wynn:** *Okay, I'm looking at a piece of art, or I'm watching a play, and I come away with the impression or the description or the criticism that it's awkward, and you say, "Well, what else can you say about it? What do you mean, 'it was awkward'?" I've nothing more to say, and I'm wondering if that claim, "I've nothing more to say," is a lie, in the sense that, in fact, potentially, I could explicate what I mean. I'm just not doing it now, or it's difficult, or—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but saying, "I have nothing more to say," is not saying that there is nothing more to be said. It's just that *I* can't say it, and I don't have to be able to in order to say *this*.

**Wynn:** *Okay, then you're describing Critic as a specific sort of use of language, that when a person enters that domain, he—*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's what I mentioned last time, that there are concepts and terminology that are relatively distinctive for Critics. There are other language and terminology that's relatively distinctive for Observers, and also still a third for Actors.

**Wynn:** *I guess there's confusion in my question, and it comes from the notion of: could you, in fact, simply have a system that was simply Actor/Critic, without also the Observer-Describer somewhere in the historical—*

**Peter:** No. Remember, Critic is a special case of Observer-Describer.

**Wynn:** *Okay, that sorts out my confusion.*

**Steve A:** *The statement “the play is awkward” and then not being able to give his reasons—[change tape] It seems to me that a person would still have access to the distinction he's making in that case, in that he might not be able to specify a distinction satisfactory to the person he's talking to, but he'd be able to say what some sort of criterion—why that distinction is made or how that distinction was made.*

**Peter:** It doesn't have to.

**?:** *But if he does it—if you're with a bunch of literary critics, and you go to a play, there are certain standards that they've got for playing that game.*

**Peter:** If you're with actual literary critics, they'll find a reason, even if it's the wrong one. [laughter]

**?:** *That's right. That's one way they can go wrong.*

**Peter:** All I'm pointing to is that the person who makes the criticism can have a legitimate criticism, and be unable to give the corresponding description.

**Terry:** That, in fact, happens.

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *Okay, beyond just the fact that that happens—that's all you're saying.*

**Peter:** I'm also drawing a moral from it.

**Terry:** *And then you take the additional step, though, when you compare that person who merely said that and nothing more, and compare it with a person who says “it's awkward”, and then you go on to corroborate in terms of showing different elements internal to the work—he's got the superior interpretation, and those are the standards that that kind of—*

**Peter:** If, in fact, he can do it. Now, what I said—the moral I drew was that since you can give good criticism without being able to give the corresponding description, you can't take it for granted that for every relevant and appropriate criticism, there is a systematic description. Period. I didn't say there wasn't. I said you can't take it for granted that there is.

**Terry:** *### take it for granted that, in fact, it would be produced, which, again, would be an empirical event.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Since we have to work with what we have and not some ideal, hypothetical possibility, we have to deal with situations where there is criticism available, and no systematic description—or at least whatever systematic description there is, is not good enough to support that criticism.

**Joe S:** *Isn't that just another case of acting on a discrimination without being able to say what the discrimination was?*

**Peter:** No. The discrimination is “awkward”, and I can say, “It’s awkward.” What I can’t do is give you a different set of discriminations that connect to its being awkward. But certainly, as soon as I say it’s awkward, that is the discrimination I’m making.

**Steve A:** *But logically, in the fact that you’re doing it, there is a discrimination made, and there is an appropriate description corresponding to it. That’s where the bugaboo is.*

**Wynn:** *Can you simply see that as awkward?*

**Peter:** Yeah. [General conversation]

**Steve A:** *You don’t have to say why, but there would be a corresponding state of affairs, a corresponding description.*

**Peter:** Take the general principle that things are what they are, number one; but number two, they don’t need something else to make them what they are. If a thing is awkward, it doesn’t have to have something else to make it awkward. It can just be awkward.

**Steve A:** *### the Observer-Describer, and in that case, you wouldn’t have that logical connection to an inappropriate description.*

**Peter:** No. Remember, saying it’s awkward is a description. It’s just a description of a special kind.

**Terry:** *You don’t need an inference from any other prior cues, that’s true—*

**Peter:** Nor from any other description.

**Terry:** *Okay, and that point I’ll grant, but I’d say that in hermeneutics—Dilthey talked about this a lot, and Dilthey said that there’s an initial judgment, a holistic judgment on the total work, that’s made, and that then what happens a lot of times, very often, is that that initial judgment is constantly revised and reworked as different elements in the artwork, in the text, are gone over. And*



*that revision indicates that although there's an initial recognition of its being a certain way, that that recognition is independent of the judgment of the parts in the sequence of the text, that also revolve, in that the interpretation, the actual working up of the interpretation, involves that revision between that initial judgment—let's say, "awkward", to why it was awkward or even maybe you want to change the word from "awkward" to "stiff" or something of that sort.*

**Steve P:** *There's a whole lot of words that are both appraisals and descriptions.*

**Terry:** *It doesn't have to be done. What I'm—oftentimes, in fact, you do let people go. What I'm pointing out, though, is that in terms of hermeneutics, in terms of interpretation, in terms of the art of interpretation, that's the way it's done.*

**Peter:** I know, but look, I keep saying that I'm not talking about interpretation! I'm talking about criticism.

**Terry:** *Well, I think you'd be hard put to draw the line between criticism and interpretation.*

**Peter:** Absolutely not. I'm talking about criticism, and it has *nothing* to do with interpretation. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

**Terry:** *A person comes out of a play, and they say, "That was awkward."*

**Peter:** That's right—nothing to do with interpretation. Look, if I taste an apple and I say, "That's a bad apple," that has *nothing* to do with interpretation, but it is an honest criticism. In general, criticism does not connect to interpretation unless you explicitly set up the task, and we are not talking that.

**Terry:** *Okay, maybe a play was an unhappy example, because—*

**Peter:** Well, think of the apple, and then think of how many bad apples we have coming through the clinic. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *Dreams might work here, in the sense that I can wake up in the morning and say, "That was a bad dream," and it really was a bad dream, and it shook me and was very unpleasant, without having either a commitment to or an ability to interpret it. This way you can see how they become separate events in terms of ordinary usage.*

**Terry:** *And the facticity of that I wouldn't argue. If that's all that's being asserted, it's okay.*

**Wynn:** *What's ### about in terms of ordinary behavior, Actors, Observers, and*



*Critics, most people acting in the role of Critic are simply going to announce it as a bad dream, not that my mother was behind the image of whatever was—*

**Terry:** *And the fact that that typically happens as a fact is also an assertion that's sort of uninteresting, I mean—*

**Peter:** Now where does that get us, back on the task of criticizing ways of living?

**Jim Chase:** *I have a question. I thought I was following it until you said that interpretation is not part of criticism, because it seems like to me it's part of your making a diagnosis and making a description, that there's going to be some kind of interpretation in that process.*

**Peter:** What do you understand by “interpretation”?

**Jim:** *I don't know. I'm not really sure of the definition, but it seems like you're saying—you're making some kind of a process there of what is and what could be and what should be—it seems like that involves some kind of interpretation, interpretive process.*

**Peter:** Interpretation of what?

**Jim:** *Of the event, of what could have been, and what should have been, things like this.*

**Peter:** Look. If I watch him for a while and then say, “This guy can't read, he has a reading disability,” is that any more than a description of him based on what I saw him do and not do? Where do we need to talk about interpreting?

**Terry:** *How can you draw the line there between description and evaluation? If you say he can't read, what's to say that that's not an evaluation as well as a description?*

**Peter:** It is an evaluation. Evaluation is a special form of description. There is no such thing as drawing a line between them.

**Terry:** *Okay, then how come you can draw a line between interpretation and criticism?*

**Peter:** Because they are two different tasks.

**Steve A:** *Interpretation involves behavior description?*

**Steve P:** *In interpretation, there seems to be a premise that things are not the way they seem. They have to be thus interpreted. They have to be transformed somehow into being what they really are.*

**Wynn:** *They don't have to be; they just are eligible for—[general conversation]*

**Terry:** *All I was saying was that when you talk about the bad apples who come through the clinic is that there's some kind of a process—you're working on your own personal theories, or there's some kind of an interpretive process and a critical process, and in the process of criticism; it seems like there's some kind of peculiar process at work, is all I was saying.*

**Steve P:** *Something is going on that leads you to make that ### “awkward”, “bad apple”, whatever.*

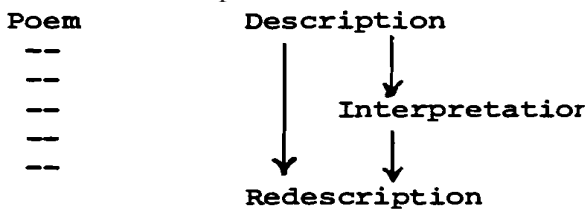
**Terry:** *And something is also going on to prescribe some kind of behavior—*  
[general conversation]

**Steve P:** *Why does that have to be more than just the discrimination?*

?: *It doesn't have to, but it often is. And there are social practices—*

**Steve P:** *Although it may be—*

**Peter:** Hold up, and let's look at this and see if it clarifies.



I offer this as a candidate for a schema for what an interpretation is. It goes this way: you have an interpretation when you have a description of something—let's say you have a description of a poem, and the description is simply the poem itself. These [—] are the words, these are the lines of the poem. And you start with that description, and you arrive at a redescription of the same thing. You start with the poem, and then you say, “Here is what we are to make of this poem,” and getting from the original description to the redescription is interpretation.

**Steve A:** *In terms of behavior, would it be—*

**Peter:** Any schema will hold. If I watch him, and I see him go like this and see him look this way, and then I hear him say a word that isn't on the printed page, and then I see him look over there, and then after a while, after seeing these things, I say, “He has a reading disability.” “He has a reading disability” is the redescription, and in this format, I have gone from that [description] to this [redescription]; therefore there must have been a process of interpretation.

**Steve A:** *Is that different from symbolic behavior?*

**Peter:** No. Now one of the things I've been operating on is that you can go directly to this description. It doesn't have to be a redescription. Therefore there needn't be any interpretation. However, you can always set yourself the task of introducing something of this sort and getting an interpretation that is a reconstruction of your description. If you set it up that way, then, indeed, it is an interpretative task.

**Terry:** *I guess you need to flesh out the concept of interpretation and redescription before I would see more than a terminological—*

**Peter:** Almost any process of getting from here [**description**] to there [**redescription**] will be interpretation, will qualify as interpretation. Because remember, a lot depends on what kind of stuff you've got here—the interpretation of a poem has some different features from the interpretation of behaviors. And both of those have some difference from the interpretation of an EEG tracing. So there's not much that you can say generally of the interpretation, except that it is how you get from here to here.

**Terry:** *I thought part of our confusion, though, was that we were sort of trying to distinguish between an interpretation which involved a duration, where you had to go through a number of steps, versus this sort of instantaneous being able to deliver a judgment on it. And if we wanted to say that something like “it's awkward” is a criticism” because it was just an instantaneous judgment—*

**Peter:** No. There's nothing instantaneous about looking at him for five minutes and saying, “He's awkward.” It takes five minutes to do that. There's no issue of instantaneous. The issue is: when I say “he's awkward”, is that a redescription of some particulars, or is it a simple description of what I saw? If it's a simple description of what I saw, it is not derived from any prior description via any process of interpretation.

**Terry:** *So you're saying that interpretation involves a derivation?*

**Peter:** Yes. Whether historically or in reconstruction, it is a derivation.

**Terry:** *And that redescription involves recognition?*

**Peter:** Redescription requires that there be a prior description, and if there's anything that connects them, the connection will be interpretation. Keep in mind that you can have redescription and a prior description and nothing connecting them.

**Steve P:** *It sounds like there's always an element of interpretation, because you're never "doing awkward", you're never "doing reading disability", you're never "doing" those things. They're interpreted as that.*

**Peter:** No.

**Sherry A:** *The play is one thing, and your criticism is your interpretation of it. You didn't ### the description of what you saw him doing was looking at the word, saying a word that wasn't there. That's the description. Your interpretation was that he can't read. I don't see—*

**Peter:** You have both. The issue is: did you go from the one to the other? Sure, I have the description of him looking over and him saying the wrong word. I also have the description that he can't read. The issue is: did I get this one from those [—], or do I just have all of them right there?

**Terry:** *You have all of them, but what are the modes of connection between them?*

**Peter:** No. *Are there any connections? Was I making any connections? Now you can set that task up, but you don't have to. You can simply describe this without having derived it from anything, without having gone through any kind of interpretive process.*

**Sherry:** *But you mentally did that.*

**Peter:** No.

**Wynn:** *Is there any reason why I can't, for instance, see you having trouble reading, or see you having trouble answering a question, see you being angry. I don't have to interpret the facts*

**Sherry:** *You might think I'm having trouble reading, but in fact I might be preoccupied.*

**Wynn:** *I can always be wrong by any standard. You can be wrong about anything.*

**Steve A:** *So then you've got a lot of cases where you can see just about anything, and you can see things that other people might have to interpret, might have to derive, and so forth.*

**Peter:** One man's description is another man's redescription. [laughter]

**Steve A:** *Is the line between inference and observation relative?*

**Peter:** No. The line between inference and observation is absolute. [general conversation]

**Wynn:** *But it seems like ###*

**Peter:** That's right. That's why I say for one person it's a redescription; for another person it's just a description. If we were both looking at him, he might have noted these various things and thought that over, and said, "Hmmm, when somebody does that, the most likely explanation is that he has a reading disability, so I guess he has a reading disability." When I look at him, I might simply say, "He looks like somebody with a reading disability," and I don't have to have gone through any such process. So for me it was merely a description; for him it was a redescription based on a prior description and interpretation.

**Daniel:** *Pete, what would cause you to say that he can't read?*

**Peter:** What I saw, namely, he looks like he can't read.

**Daniel:** *What do you see?*

**Peter:** What he does. I see what he does, and what he does looks like somebody who can't read.

**Sherry:** *Because you already know what somebody who can't read looks like.*

**Peter:** Well, I know in the sense that I can tell when somebody looks like that, but I can't tell you what somebody would have to look like, to look like somebody who can't read. Because he could have done very different things and still look like somebody who can't read. I can't give you a list of what you have to have here [—] to legitimize this [**description**]. I can recognize when I'm seeing something that looks this way.

**Terry:** *The legitimacy of observation, and you're not working observation into any sort of specialized epistemic process where you have to justify inferences, or anything like that.*

**Peter:** Right.

**Terry:** *On the other hand, it seems like you're opening up a sort of domain where there's danger of arbitrariness, because no matter what you're seeing—*

**Peter:** There is always a danger of arbitrariness, because there is never any certainty. We're not opening it up here. It's been with us from the very beginning.

**Terry:** *I guess what I'm driving at is that no matter how subtle the processes—let's say that someone is passive-aggressive or something. You don't see it—you just know that something's happening to you in therapy. Finally it dawns on*

*you that while this person has been getting you, and then you would say, “Well, you know when you see it,”—I mean, when you see it, it’s there, and so people could conceivably jump off and sort of—well, like “I know what I see, and I see what I know,” so there it is. And they could do that on a number of occasions and be wrong, and it could be wrong in a dangerous way, in an arbitrary way, because you say, “Don’t expect me to justify the description I’m giving of this behavior, or whatever, because that’s what I see, and I can’t give you any reasons. I just see it that way, and that’s the way it is.” That seems to be the arbitrariness that opens it up to. Whereas interpretations—we were talking of the play—when you say it’s awkward, the canons of interpretation force you to go through a process of justifying that initial judgment by substantiating your position in terms of elements of the work.*

**Peter:** Remember the infinite regress arguments. If you’re going to reject the case where you can’t give a justification, you will never be able to give a justification because the things that you point to, to justify your first conclusion, will themselves need to be justified, and you’ve got an infinite regress going. Unless something is acceptable without justification, nothing is acceptable at all.

**Terry:** *Okay, what’s acceptable is the second step, the elements inside the work that are used to corroborate the initial judgment..*

**Wynn:** You’re describing rules of caution.

**Terry:** *No, I’m describing the way, in fact, that literary criticism, for example, works.*

**Peter:** But look, we’re not concerned with those people and what they do. Those are simply some of the peculiar social practices in our culture. They have nothing to do with what we’re doing here.

**Terry:** *It seems like they have ### the world view—*

**Peter:** They don’t.

**Terry:** *—using a world view as one of your examples.*

**Peter:** I’m using an apple as one of the examples, too, but we’re not being farmers. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *A simple paradigm for recognition—[general conversation]....Just in terms of a simple case of recognition: if I’m watching two insects doing something, and I’m an entomologist, I can look at that and say that what’s happening is that he’s inserting the ### into her mouth, and that’s—but you’re looking*

*at that, and you've got to grab your book and track it down, and first you've got to figure what that part is, and the part is described, so you go through all of that, and that's at least an analogy to this sort of thing. Whereas I recognized it as a case of that, you have to go through something to recognize it as a case of that. But I've already gone through that, so now it's at the level of recognition, and there's no time deal.*

**Peter:** Okay, I'm saying something stronger than that. I'm saying that there needn't be the equivalent of the book that tells you what it is.

**Wynn:** *I could find it out for myself, in the sense that I could call it that, and then be the criterion if I wished.*

**Steve A:** *But would it be right by someone else's criteria?*

**Wynn:** *But I was just dealing with that because of the fact that there are the books, and that is a process that people do go through so that they can have recognitions that they don't have before they begin.*

**Peter:** You see, *if there is an interpretation, if there is an explanation, it may be of help. The point I'm making is that there doesn't have to be such a thing. That's all. I'm not saying it's not useful, I'm not advising anybody not to do it, I'm not saying that, in general, we slough off demands for justification cavalierly. I'm just saying there doesn't have to be such a thing.*

**Terry:** *Unless you want it. [laughter]*

**?:** *Where did that come from? [laughter, general conversation]*

**Peter:** To come back to where we digressed, we're talking about criticism of ways of living, and here [Fig. 3, p. 48] we're talking about taxonomies or systematic descriptions. I said, one reason why I would not recommend introducing systematic language here is that we are able to criticize in ways that are not matchable by systematic description. Therefore, if we tie ourselves to what we can systematically describe, we will almost certainly not achieve a representation of what we can, in fact, do by way of criticism: if you restrict yourselves only to those pieces of knowledge for which you can provide adequate justification, you will have eliminated all of your fundamental knowledge. So when it comes to understanding how criticism operates, we do not want to restrict it to the kind of criticism for which we can give the systematic underpinnings in the form of a description. And that's why all this business about description versus criticism.

Now if you look at the way that the Existentialists do—by the way, I mention Existentialists not because I think they do good criticism, but



because they're the only ones that I know of who do it overtly, criticism of ways of living—what you'll find is: they very frequently make criticisms without backing them up, even though very often they make criticisms that are elaborate enough so that you can see how come they say what they say. So some of the major examples we have of criticizing ways of living do indeed reflect the fact that we can criticize in ways that we cannot back up by systematic description.

What you have in cases like that is fundamental, namely, the appeal to the other person to see what you see. That's the ground level, and you can do that with those, and the chance you're taking is that the other person may not be able to, and then you have nothing that carries weight with him. Whereas if you were able to give him evidence and reasons, you'd have a second shot at it. By giving him the evidence and reasons, then he may see what you say. But if you can't give him that, he may still be able to see what you're saying, and in that case, then, you don't need reasons or evidence.

**Joe S:** *Would it be useful at this point to introduce that ladder of appeal, since you brought in that?*

**Peter:** Let's take ten minutes, then, and come back and do that.

[BREAK]

**Peter:** Let me continue on the difference between having a systematic description for a theory about how to live, contrasted to having a body of criticism on how to live.

It turns out that it is very difficult to describe how somebody's living. It is very difficult to describe a general way of living. I can report first hand that I spent about a year meeting with a colleague a couple of hours each week, in which our central problem was, "How do you describe ways of living?" And in the course of that, we came across Maslow's description of this, that, and the other, and he was working with Kelly's REP test and some variations that he'd introduced. And we never got any particularly satisfying results. Instead, what we decided was that because it was so difficult to describe any way of living, that we'd probably be better off simply comparing, identifying ways of living and comparing them, and doing factor analyses, so that we could distinguish that way among ways of living without ever having to describe them.

**Steve A:** *Wait. Describing specific ways and comparing them, so you wouldn't have to describe them?*



**Peter:** No. Identifying them. You see, there's a lot of ways of indirectly identifying a way of living. For example, you identify paradigm cases—the way of living that a Hindu fakir has, the way of living that an American banker has, so that you can use those phrases to identify and evoke people's knowledge of different ways to live without ever having to describe those different ways. And so you can ask people to compare, in terms of degrees of similarity, the way an American banker lives and the way an American businessman lives and the way a Hindu fakir lives and the way a poet lives in France. If you get enough of those and do a factor analysis, the kind of dimensions you get would be, sort of crudely speaking, dimensions of ways of living. And you could do that without ever having to describe them.

The problem is comparable to the problem of describing a picture. Just think of a complex picture, a complex scene—and remember that saying: that one picture is worth 10,000 words—that when you try to describe a scene, it can be an extraordinary task, and, in a sense, impossible. You can get a lot of information. You can evoke a lot of things. But it's hard to do justice to even some of the simplest things of what you can see. You see, complex patterns almost inevitably will provide this kind of difficulty. A picture is a complex pattern, a scene is a complex pattern, and a way of living is an even more complex pattern. That's why it's difficult to describe. So one can think, then, of using some technical muscle to get around the problem of description by getting along without it. That's how hard it is to get descriptions. It might be better just to give up entirely and try to get along without.

**Daniel:** *What did you use for your factor analysis?*

**Peter:** Well, he left before we got around to actually doing it.

**Daniel:** *But did you have anything in mind after you'd done it, like a banker and a fakir?*

**Peter:** That was one of the ideas we had.

**Daniel:** *If you didn't describe it, what would you do with it?*

**Peter:** You identify it that way. You see, I can mention a banker, and that will evoke—if I say, “Think of the kind of life that a banker leads,” that will evoke a way of living. Those don't need to be stereotypes, although they might.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, that's what I was wondering. There's obviously a present danger in stereotypes, because stereotypes don't get that way for nothing, usually, and so I'm wondering if there's a—*

**Peter:** Well, the good thing about stereotypes is even if they are stereotypes, they may tap the right dimensions, and that's all you need.

**Wynn:** *I guess you face the problem of familiarity with—*

**Peter:** Yeah.

Anyhow, if you've got a complex pattern, you've got this problem, and we've got this problem here. The second kind of observation is when we turn to the transcendental theories that we see in the text book, having been sensitized to the problem, you'll recognize it in how they deal with the subject matter. And what you will find is that those theories emphasize much more the critique of ways of living (criticisms, descriptions, concepts) as against straightforward theorizing and systematic description of ways of living and right ways of living. And in fact, one of the systems—if you can call it that—that is represented in the book, namely, Sufism, has zero in the way of systematic description.

**Steve A:** *What book are you referring to?*

**Peter:** There's a textbook for this seminar, and it's called *Transpersonal Psychologies*. It's by Charles Tart, and it has an introductory section by Tart, about four chapters long, and then eight different ways of living represented by different chapters by different authors. That's why I selected it for a text. I don't know of any other place where you have eight of them right in a row.

**Wynn:** *That's for this—we're supposed to be reading that?*

**Peter:** And—be reading that! [laughter] I ordered it some time ago, so the bookstore should have them with no trouble.

**Wynn:** *Have you read it yet?* [laughter]

**Peter:** Three times. Because usually things look good, but on second reading they start looking bad, and on third reading I give up the idea of using them for a text. In point of fact, that happened with Tart's section. I kept it mainly for the eight sections, eight chapters, written by other people.

**Wynn:** *Charlie sees this as great computerisms.*

**Peter:** So anyhow, be reading those eight chapters, and skim through the earlier ones, because they're not without interest. The other thing is: be reading *What Actually Happens*, up through Section 2, and the section on Self-Concept. When you read those eight, you'll see how much of the emphasis is explicitly on criticism, without a basis of systematic theory or systematic description. So this whole business of criticism without description is going

to be important, at least historically, when it comes to dealing with ways of living. Because everybody else faces that same problem of how difficult it is to give a description.

With that preamble, let me give you a bunch of descriptions that I came across, sort of accidentally, but they're the best things I've seen, and we can criticize these. [**Appendix I**] One of the tasks that we might undertake would be to review and revise these descriptions, because some of them look fairly redundant, and I think they don't really span the full range of possibilities. I got this from Tony Putman.

**Joe S:** —*the last sentence in Way 10.* [**laughter**]

**Peter:** One thing: you can see that this is not exactly systematic. These things are some kind of conglomerate of values, prescriptions, descriptions, choices, and other things, which is one reason why you might get the urge to re-write these more systematically or to add to them. One exercise you can do with these is to pick out the one that fits you best. You probably are not as familiar with any other way of life more than your own, and then try it out on people that you know well, and see which one fits them best. And then come back to yours, and tailor it so that it really fits you instead of just approximates. And then look at the contrast between that one and others, and sharpen up the contrast. Ask yourself, "Why would I reject those? What is the difference? What are the crucial differences?" So by making moves of this sort, you can sharpen up your sensitivity to what the positive way of life is, what the differences among them are, and what the range is that's represented here.

**Wynn:** *In very rare cases, some of these might be descriptive actually of forms of life, people's lives, but most of the time you find them to be descriptive of what certain individuals would be forced to say they'd like their lives to be. Because all these present outwardly a guise of coherence, and that the various parts fit together.*

**Daniel:** *More a theme, just—*

**Wynn:** *Yeah, that there's thematic coherence, which I suspect isn't there very often.*

**Peter:** A person may live his way of life badly. All of these have a kind of an idealized sound, because in effect they are descriptions of doing it right. But one can be living a general way of life, such as one of these, and not doing it well.

**Jim:** *Would it be possible to arrange these in some way so a person could select the ones that he liked, and then find out which ones—it would be interesting to see if he had some sort of balance in his life, like Ellis talks about crossed—I don't know just what his term is, but anyway—one thing he believed in conflicted with another thing, this sort of thing.*

**Peter:** There's nothing in any of these ways of life that prevents you from having conflicts. It would be pretty hard not to have conflicts.

**Wynn:** *I think there's another question here. I can imagine ways of life that most people in fact live, are ways of life that would require you to take descriptions from a variety of these, to hang together, and because of that lack of coherence, the conflict would be—would at least appear to be part of the way of life. I can't see how, except in cases where you're dealing with people that are actually going out trying, intending to live a way a life, as you see in monastic pursuits or things of that sort, I would suspect that you would never really find these kinds of unifying statements that would actually be descriptive.*

**Peter:** Well, don't think of ways of life like a computer program, that is, a specification of these steps that one goes through during his life. They have to be much more flexible than that and allow room for variation. And because of that, you can be living ways of life like these even though you're doing a whole lot of different things that don't, on the face of it, hang together.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but I take it that part of this is that this list isn't set up so the person can say, "Well, I'll take three from column A and two from column B". It's instead to say that these are types, and I guess I'm not convinced that in principle, they even could be.*

**Peter:** I don't think there's too much difficulty with these, in supposing that they are possible ways of living. If you took some pieces from one and others from others, you might have a problem in making it plausible that that combination was itself a way of living rather than two pieces.

**Wynn:** *I just don't believe that—it's difficult to suspect that people have a way of life like this. I can see people making the claim to having a way of life that's like this, but I think it would be at the expense of the descriptions that would be—*

**Peter:** Again, I think, you're thinking too much like a computer program, that people say this but they don't actually do that.

**Daniel:** *What's not acceptable about that one?*

**Wynn:** *I have a—it may reflect my personal difficulty, but I see dominant themes as being in there—I think in any description you'd have a lot of almost co-equal dominant themes, and this acted as if there would be a dominant theme that was superimposed on the rest. And for certain people who are intentionally trying to shape their lives in a particular way, that would be the case, but I don't think that most people intentionally are trying to shape their lives in a particular ways.*

**Daniel:** *But they do shape their lives.*

**Steve:** *And they do act according to particular values.*

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but I don't think the values are coherent in terms of a way of life.*

**Peter:** One thing to keep in mind—as you see at the top of the first page, these things come from a book which deals with values. That's why so much of what's there, you can look at and re-interpret as values, and probably that's what they originally intended it to be, are value specifications, even though they call them “ways of life” or “ways of living”.

**Steve A:** *I think you're just objecting to the extreme cases, in terms of apparent integration with these ways of life that seem so non-contradictory.*

**Wynn:** *No, what I'm objecting to is this—I very likely am formally wrong in my objection, but what my objection is about is: I don't think, in fact, that people have ways of life, as a rule, without intentionally piecing one together. An item like this—any form of life that would be coherent, hang together in a paragraph, which you could develop governing principles that would follow from each other, as these do.*

**Jim:** *I'm not sure I would agree with that, but I'm not sure that the limit is 10. I think that it would—[laughter]*

**Wynn:** *That would be a way of undermining my point, if you could demonstrate that in fact there's not 10 but there's 10 million. But the point that I'm objecting to is that they could be labeled in any unified form as a way of life from which you develop a set of principles that you could then derive other principles from. I guess I see this like a computer program—these descriptions—and because of that, I'm violating—*

**Peter:** You're also re-raising Allport's problem of uniqueness of the individual. By that same line of reasoning, we wouldn't also be able to describe individuals, as the kind of consistency that they have is not gotten at by a set of traits. If that's the kind of consistency you're looking for, that there is a

description of what a person keeps doing, you won't find it. And if you might then say, "Well, people's lives don't have any consistency."

**Wynn:** *No, I'm not going to say that. I guess, in principle, you can take this list and run it out to three and a half billion so that you've got a way of life for every individual in the world. What I'm objecting to is whether in fact—*

**Peter:** You'd have lives, not ways of life.

**Wynn:** *Okay. If that's the case, then there's no necessity in ways of life, as unified wholes, being descriptive of a person.*

**Peter:** Since we have biographies, we have no need for ID characteristics?

**Wynn:** *No, that's not the case, because the ID characteristics aren't derivable from A to ID characteristics, in the sense that these descriptions are derivable from the first statement.*

**Peter:** They're not derivable.

**Wynn:** *They all fit into a kind of a common Jell-O of consistency that you—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but they're not derivable. I defy you to derive anything from anything in there. They're just consistent, but that's part of what gives the coherence to that way of life, that those various things fit together at what you might call better-than-chance level. What you might do is try contrasting, and write something that's similar to this but that doesn't hang together and see what kind of contrasts you can provide.

**Wynn:** *It would more likely be in the form of a biography.*

**Steve A:** *When you take a particular way that you think is equivalent to the way you would like to be, or the way you are, and then try to modify that more towards your own values, and add and subtract them, you will come up with something more highly tailored, obviously, to yourself, and in that sense, it will be more balanced.*

**Wynn:** *I just think to claim unity in a way of life is to invite hypocrisy, almost necessarily, because the conflicts and basic wishes that come out in terms of the decision, that are—I don't know.*

**Peter:** Nobody has made an issue of unity. I've just said "ways of life".

**Wynn:** *Okay, but it sounds like it is a way of life—[tape change]*

**Peter:** You get a sense of what you might say, "because it's there", not that there is a claim being made of any particular kind of unity or coherence. And in fact, one of those ways of life, in effect, says, "You don't want consistency.



You want to try a little of this, this, and this.” But that itself is ### system.

**Wynn:** *It follows. So I guess the mistake I’m making, if it is a mistake—and I’m not convinced—is that I’m describing this as if the first statement—or there are a couple of statements that we could look at as rules for this way of life, which these other descriptions follow from, and I’m not sure that’s applicable to the human—to worlds or to lives.*

**Jane:** *Would you prefer “patterns” to “worlds”?*

**Peter:** No. Suppose you think this way: think of whatever descriptions you have, and they needn’t be these, as a set of rules for living, and the rules, again, you can interpret as broadly as you want: policies, maxims, rules, principles, whatever. They will be the things that you appeal to for guidance, for justification, for explanation about how you’re living. You can then look at your various behaviors and say, “Here I was consistent with these,” but then, as you’re reminding us, over here you say, “Jesus, here I wasn’t consistent with those.” Now, the fact that you did something that wasn’t consistent with your own principles doesn’t mean that you don’t have the principles. What shows that you have them is precisely that you consider that a violation, and there is the consistency, that when you don’t follow it, you consider it a violation. You don’t just say, “Well, there’s another thing I did.”

**Wynn:** *I guess I’m raising the question whether, in fact, there’s a unity to the principles that the person is acting on.*

**Peter:** There has to be. If it’s a principle, it has unity.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but does it have to have a unity, so to speak, a coherence in relation to other principles the person has? That’s what this describes.*

**Peter:** Well, you could work that several ways. You can say it necessarily has, because otherwise a person couldn’t live in a way that involved both principles. If they were self-contradictory, you simply couldn’t live in a way that was consistent with both. So you couldn’t have both. Or you could say, “Well, you can have independent principles and generate conflict, but then you have an over-riding principle, namely, that you have these two principles,” so that you can formally generate consistency that way, too. I think the thing that takes care of the most serious objection about the lack of unity is that you might do something that isn’t consistent in the sense of literally violating your principle, and there I’d say, if you see it as a violation, then you have still been consistent, in that sense.

**Wynn:** *That is, if you saw it as a violation.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *Wouldn't you say, though, that these were ideal types?*

**Peter:** I guess they could aspire to be ideal types, but as I say, what they are, are descriptions of how you would do it if you did it right, and in that sense, yeah, they're ideal, without being ideal types.

We raise another question. Assume for the time being that you know your own way of living, and it's because you know it that you live that way—in whatever way you live. Now, in what form do you have that knowledge? What do you have now that enables you to say, "Well, if I were to do that, that wouldn't be me." Or "If I were to do that, that's what I want to do." Certainly you do not have it in the form of a program or an explicit set of statements. There's nobody who has that. And yet, you can often make judgments of that sort with confidence. You know, "I would never do that—that wouldn't be me," etc., etc. What kind of knowledge is that? You see, it is a different kind of knowledge than a theory, a systematic description, or anything of that sort.

**Steve A:** *Can you take a Deliberate Action description and examine its consistency, or over time, what counts for you and what doesn't, what reasons and what don't—I think you'd derive some sort of pattern of values for yourself and, from that, a way of life.*

**Peter:** But then—is that knowledge?

**Steve A:** *You're aware of what counts for you, and that's knowledge.*

**Peter:** How? Aware how? In that you constantly have it on your mind, or that you know it when you see it, or you're able to write it down somewhere, or what?

**Steve A:** *Given particular situations, we make judgments, and we can reconstruct—in particular situations, we have to examine circumstances in your life and reconstruct what counts with you.*

**Peter:** You can't always do that. That's why you simply look and say, "Not for me." Or you look over here, and you say, "Awkward," or you look over there and you say, "Reading disability."

**Wynn:** *It's kind of like when somebody says, "Well, last week what you told us was—" and then they give you a quote, and you say, "No, I didn't say that." And yet you're not remembering that you didn't say that. You simply know that that statement doesn't fit.*



**Terry:** *Unless you're really defensive. [laughter] That's the point I was going to make. From the self-concept, you can generate a number of statements about "that's me" or "no, that's not me". However, this process of psychotherapy—if you buy some notion of disowned parts of the self, then what's going on is that the person discovers that in fact, they precisely aren't at one with that list of statements that they would make about what they identify with and what they don't. But there's a whole bunch of things that they are, in actuality, through the concrete patterns of being in the world, that they resist knowing about, they resist identifying it with themselves. And so this—part of the problem with this is that this would work in terms of the self-concept, in terms of what I could identify with, as opposed to what I wouldn't identify with, or what I might disagree with. But it doesn't deal with that uncomfortable space in between, when you're going through a process of self-examination and discovering that there are all sorts of ways that you don't think—or didn't think—that you were.*

**Peter:** I'm raising questions of how we do it right, because if there's no such thing as our doing it right, there's no such thing as our doing it wrong, which is what you're pointing to—that we can do it wrong. But we can't do it wrong if there's no such thing as doing it right.

**Terry:** *Doing it right involves that self-concept, and what you can identify with, what you can get behind—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but so I have my self-concept, and when I say, "No, that wouldn't be me," what do I have by way of knowledge that that wouldn't be me? Can I write it down? Can I just recognize it when I see it? Do I go by feeling? Is it competence, a skill, or what? We want to say, "I know my way of life, and that's why I can live that way, and that's why I can make the choices that fit and reject the choices that don't, or feel guilty when I don't;" but when we say, "I know," it doesn't seem to fit any of the usual paradigms for my knowing. I can't write it down. I can't give you a theory. I can't always explain. I'm not always right.

**Terry:** *If the concept is typically formed in the family—*

**Peter:** Forget it. Forget it. Forget it.

**Terry:** *You get a sense of who you are—*

**Peter:** Forget it. I'm asking what it is, not how you get it. If there's no such thing as that, there's no explanation—

**Terry:** *I'm taking it for granted as a fact, that we can all agree on the fact that there is a self-concept that people have, in that they can identify with certain*

*things and not identify with other things.*

**Peter:** No. Self-concept only comes incidentally. The primary question is: “When I know my way of life, what kind of knowledge is it?” And I point out that I can often make judgments that say, “That wouldn’t be me,” and that’s why we think in terms of self-concept. But I’m not asking questions about self-concept. I’m asking questions about what kind of knowledge is this?

**Terry:** *And I’m saying it’s self-knowledge.*

**Peter:** What kind of self-knowledge is it?

**Terry:** *It’s the kind of knowledge that—then I would have to start speaking genetically about the formation of that form of knowledge.*

**Peter:** That’s irrelevant.

**Wynn:** *What about in terms of aesthetics? Because it bears a family resemblance in the sense that the issue is—I take it that the issue is “fit”. The issue is, does that fact fit, when it’s offered to you? Does that attributed status fit?*

**Peter:** No. It’s not a question of correctness. It’s what do I have that enables me even to claim correctness? When I say that, I’m not guessing. That’s why the natural form of expression is to say, “I know my way of life.”

**Wynn:** *It strikes me that it’s a basic recognition on the order of aesthetic recognitions, in which you recognize that A doesn’t fit B. You might not be able to say how you recognized that or why it is you recognized that. You simply recognized that “I don’t say those sorts of things”. Although in fact you might have said them. The question isn’t whether your attributed status is accurate. It’s a question of what you recognize, and it strikes me that sometimes you can spend time trying to reconstruct, trying to think, “Well, under what circumstances could I have done that?” where it’s fuzzy. But oftentimes, you simply know you’re not that kind of person.*

**Peter:** What kind?

**Wynn:** *The kind that would do those things—the things you’re disowning.*

**Peter:** And what kind of knowledge is that? That I can recognize—

**Wynn:** *Well, maybe if you gave us some notion of categories of knowledge, then it would be easier to—what kind of answer you—*

**Peter:** No, try to give paradigms. I know something when I can tell you what it is. I know something when I can give you a list. I know something when I can recognize an example of it. I know something if I can create you

a copy. And does the kind of knowledge that I have about my way of living fit any of these paradigms, with or without transformations?

**Bob:** *You know something when you can make it an example—“That is an example of your way of life, that is not an example of your way of life.”*

**Peter:** It's not that that's an example, that it either fits or not. My whole life is an example or not of my way of life, and this particular either fits or doesn't fit.

**Terry:** *And unless you're willing to talk about self-formation processes, and the sort of self-reflection on the formation—*

**Peter:** Forget it, forget it.

**Terry:** *You keep waving me away. You're asking this question and then you reject the answers to it. Self-reflection seems to me to be one of the ways in which you become aware of your way of life.*

**Peter:** We're asking questions about what it is, not how we get it.

**Terry:** *That would also tend to generate some possible conclusions as to what that kind of knowledge is, which is your question.*

**Peter:** Do you have any other possible conclusions about what kind of knowledge it is?

**Jim:** *It seems like it's feeling knowledge, intuitive knowledge, reflective knowledge. It's gained by recognition and through reflection ### on your own life.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but intuition isn't a kind of knowledge.

**Jim:** *What is it, if it isn't knowledge?*

**Peter:** Something tells me that we've gone through this before, but let me go through it again, because I don't think—Think of my looking over there and putting the chalk in the wastebasket, and you look at me and you say, “Well, he thinks that's a wastebasket.” She looks at me and says, “He knows that's a wastebasket.” He looks at me and says, “He sees a wastebasket.” He looks over here and he says, “For him, that's a wastebasket.” She looks out here and says, “That's a wastebasket, and he knows it.” Now all of these ways of talking are potentially proper. What we need is a neutral terminology, and by convention, I've introduced that terminology: “I take it that that's a wastebasket.” Now, that description might be replaced by [blackboard]

**P takes it that X**  
**knows**  
**believes**  
**intuits**  
**is of the opinion that**

**sees**  
 ---  
 ---  
 ---

Now, what happens is that this whole range of terms stems from a Critic, who looks at the facts in question and makes a decision—makes a Critic’s judgment—about the basis for my taking it that X. If the basis is a good, sufficient basis, he’ll say, “He knows that X.” If it’s good, but not that good, he’ll say, “He believes that X.” If there’s no basis at all, independently of that, he says, “He intuits that X.” If it’s at the level of belief but liable to disagreement, he’ll say, “He’s of the opinion that X.” If I acquired that knowledge, belief, or opinion in a certain way, he says, “He observes that X.” So the difference among these ways of talking is not in the kind of thing it is up here, but rather in a Critic’s judgment of where this is grounded.

In the case where P is not prepared to offer any evidence at all, he offers it as intuitive. And normal observation is intuitive. I can’t give you evidence that that’s a wall, at least none that I had when I looked and saw a wall. I can’t give you any evidence that this room is lit, at least none that I had in deciding that it was. Ordinary observation is intuitive. And the reason it’s intuitive is another one of the infinite regress arguments. It can’t always be the case that when I find something out, I had to find something else out first. Then there’d be an infinite regress. So whatever I find out without having to find out something else first, that’s intuitive. And observation, in general, then, is intuitive. So in saying that I have intuitive knowledge about my way of life, you’re entirely right. Insofar as I can’t offer any basis for that knowledge, it’s going to have to be intuitive if it’s knowledge at all. But that’s simply a formulation of the same problem, namely, what is it, and how come it’s knowledge if I can’t offer any evidence?

**Wynn:** *I suppose you can make a case when a person is confined within his attributed status in some form—all those are possibilities. He can know it not to be the case, believe it not to be the case, etc.*

**Peter:** That's why I'm raising questions about the successful case. How is it possible at all? We're not worrying about how it can go wrong.

**Bob:** *How about using the business about when you have a concept, it's because you're able to use it, and your knowledge of the concept is your knowledge of its use and your ability to use it, then being able to say that your way of life is in some sense a concept for you, that you can apply and use in making these decisions over and over, both things that do and things that don't fit. And that knowledge is knowledge of the same sense that you have knowledge that ### and ability to use it correctly.*

**Peter:** Okay, that's a good solution, and I think it *is* a solution: that it is not knowledge of a discursive sort. It's a competence-type knowledge. It's like the knowledge you have when you ride your bicycle down the street, and somebody asks, "How did you know where to turn and how to hold it?" And the answer is not a theory or a description, but "I know how to ride bikes."

Now, formally, I think that is a good solution, but it still, in certain ways, simply postpones the problem. [**laughter**] Namely: normally, when we say that I know how to do something (for example, that I know how to ride a bicycle), there are observational criteria for when I've done it successfully, so there are ways of validating my claim that I know how—namely, that I do it successfully. It isn't clear how much of that we preserve in talking about my knowing my way of life, that way. Are there criteria for my having done that successfully? Well, no. There are not criteria. But certainly one can make judgments about whether I'm living my life successfully, if one has some notion as to what kind of life it is that I'm even trying. But then, those judgments will, by and large, be the ones that we're talking about, namely, Critic's judgments that aren't backed up by a systematic description. Except that now, as Critics, we are looking for the—what you might call the "competent management" of one's life, in accordance with certain patterns or principles of coherence. Why? Because what we're criticizing is a way of life, and not a play and not an action and not an institution. So what constitutes success is that it should have the kind of coherence and success that that sort of thing has. So that sharpens our critical judgment. It doesn't give us a set of guidelines, but it sharpens up what we look for and how we judge.

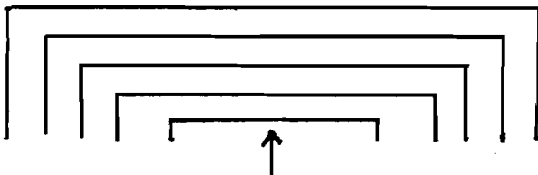
**Steve A:** *### coherence?*

**Peter:** Yeah, I said that if I'm managing my life successfully, then my life has a kind of coherence that (1) a way of life has, and (2) the kind of coherence that *my* way of life has. You have two kinds of contrast, two kinds of

coherence. You have the kind of coherence that goes with a way of life versus something else, like a play or a football game or a book or a poem. You also have the kind of coherence of a way of life as against a particular life. So if my particular life has the kind of coherence that goes with this way of life, then you might say that I'm managing my life successfully. But you need a sense of what this way of life is, because if you have some other way of life in mind, you might judge me to be quite a failure because I'm not succeeding in *that* way. This is very much like saying that if you're judging an abstract painting, it's very different from judging a portrait, because the kind of coherence and unity that you find in abstract painting is different from the kind that goes with portraits, and it would be a mistake as a Critic to judge a portrait in terms of the standards that go for abstractions. You have to have a sense of what you're judging.

Now, you can reproduce some of this in a fairly different framework, namely, the context of justification. If I'm managing my life, I will have reasons for doing what I'm doing. You might say, I will have reasons, whether I can tell you about them. But let's suppose that I can tell you, and what you will get is this kind of pattern, namely, you can pick anything that I do, and say, "Why are you doing that?" and I'll give you the reason for an answer. And then you'll say, "And why are you doing *that*?" and I'll give you another one. You'll say, "Why are you doing *that*?" and I'll give you another one. And each answer enlarges the scope of what I bring to bear, because it's the context that provides the reason for doing the particular, when it's this large particular that provides the reason for the smaller particular, and so on down to the specific behavior in question.

**FIGURE 5**



Now, at the point where I run out of answers is where I'm now referring to the context of my entire way of life. At that point, I will not give you a reason. I will identify the way of life, and say, "I'm living *that* way of life, and this is how it's done." And that's no longer giving you a reason for an answer. It's giving you a part/whole description. So that's a different way of arriving

at the other kind of coherence and unity that goes with that way of life, is that ultimately, the answer I give you by way of justification is that *that's* the way of life that I'm living, and I'm doing it in the way that it's done; therefore I'm doing okay.

**Joe S:** *Isn't it the case, though, that people don't necessarily—don't usually choose their behaviors on the level of a way of life?*

**Peter:** Yeah, but neither do you choose most of your behaviors when you're riding a bike.

**Joe S:** *If it's similar to the paradigm of Choosing Your Movements—you don't choose your movements, and you also don't make your behavior choices on—*

**Terry:** *But it's dissimilar in a way that brings back the genetic or origin problem that I was harping on, which is that you have a formation of a particular set of values, a particular set of interests in the family structure, oftentimes long before a person is in the position of picking and choosing between a set of options. You might say that the boundary constraints on the range of options that they have is already generated before they're in a position to choose them. And that kind of formation process has already taken place in childhood.*

**Peter:** That's not a restriction on the notion of a way of life. That's one of its essential features, is that you are not outside of ways of life and choose one. You are always in one that you have.

**Terry:** *I guess part of what I'm saying is that part of the explanation of your initial question as to what kind of knowledge that is that's involved in a way of life is intimately tied up with explaining the genetic processes of self formation.*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *Because that gives you a comprehension of how it is that that—*

**Peter:** It simply reflects that the way of life I have is one that I have acquired genetically. Because that's all that there is to be acquired. If I acquired a way of life, I acquired it in one of the ways that I can acquire it.

**Terry:** *Precisely, and that—*

**Peter:** But that has no bearing on *what* way of life it is.

**Terry:** *Well, what way it is, is a separate phenomenon, and however it comes to be, oftentimes we do shed light on what it is by how it came to be, and that it doesn't—I won't go so far as to say that the fact that you have a particular way of life makes the genetic considerations irrelevant, which is what you said*



*earlier, because I think it's one of the ways we go about illuminating what way it is, is how it came to be.*

**Peter:** But the history is part of that way of life, it's part of that life, it's not something outside of it that explains it. It's part of it. It's simply the early part of it.

**Terry:** *I'm thinking of adult life where people are consciously concerned with—*

**Peter:** No. I have a life, and we'll see how it works. A feature of life is not why do I choose it, what reason do I have, I don't choose it. And I don't have reasons, then there aren't any reasons. By the time anybody gets to the point of considering choices, etc., he already has a life.

**Terry:** *He's already in a situation.*

**Peter:** Yeah. He's already alive. So this notion itself does not come under the heading of what one chooses, what one has reasons for. It is part of the pre-conditions for there being any such thing. A way of life is the same as that for a person. By the time a person has knowledge of his way of life, he already has a way of life to have knowledge of. It's like over here [Fig. 1, p. 41]. In order to have an Observer or a Describer, there already has to be behavior to be observed or described.

**Terry:** *That, by the way, is part of the reason that psychology has trouble being an empirical science, the way the natural sciences are. Because you don't have the kind of complete separation between subject and object that you do in natural sciences. Because you have a subject that's already a part of the object you're studying, and the object is already a part of the subject. You don't have that kind of neat independence, ### methodology.*

**?:** *Why didn't I think of that? [laughter]*

**Wynn:** *That top perspective, though, that way of life, it strikes me there's another point that Terry is pushing here, which is that the fabric of that way of life was that history, that that world is, in very important ways, that history, and when the person recognizes that something does or doesn't fit, he recognizes that it does or doesn't fit into that sort of history.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but that's part of the coherence that ways of life have. They have the longitudinal coherence that the earlier parts fit the later parts.

**Wynn:** *But that's what brings history into the argument. This is a legitimate concern for the question of a way of life.*



**Peter:** Well, yeah, but as I say, it's merely the early part of it. It's not something outside of the way of life that sheds light on it. It's simply a distinctive portion. It's like death. The end of it is a distinctive portion of it, too.

**Terry:** *But it actually forms the sort of constitutive knowledge interest that you have in your own life. That genetic process—*

**Peter:** No, that's a deterministic argument, and you know about those.

**Terry:** *It seems really tight to me, though.*

**Jane:** *How do you formulate someone who is changing their way of life? Is that simply a way of life that includes change as a transition, as a kind of superstructure between the two ways of life—*

**Peter:** No. It's comparable to how would you formulate a Republican who becomes a Democrat. There is a place within the notion of being a Republican who had been a Democrat, the same way that there is a notion in being allowed by a citizen to have committed a crime in your youth. Likewise, there is a place in the notion of being a Democrat for becoming a Republican. The difference, though, is that you have different descriptions depending on whether you're a Democrat or a Republican. At the time when you're still a Democrat, to become a Republican is to desert the party. However, once you become a Republican, to have been a Democrat is to have not yet seen the light. So no matter which one you're in, you're dealing with a pattern that extends for your entire lifetime. The fact that you can switch patterns doesn't mean that the patterns are not life patterns.

**Wynn:** *Like switching theologies.*

**Jane:** *So is that part of a life, and then a transition between ways of life?*

**Peter:** No. You have a complete picture. What you have is a redescription. At the point where you change, there is a redescription of what your earlier history was. And that earlier history, under that description, is your subsequent history.

**Jane:** *What is it when you are changing, can you—*

**Peter:** There's no such place.

**Terry:** *Pete, isn't the kind of knowledge that self-knowledge is, like the knowledge you have of grammar? It's the same kind of knowledge. Because if we say a sentence in here that we don't know whether it's nonsense or not, what people can do is draw that that's grammatical or that's not grammatical. In the same way, I can say that's me, that's not me. And, in fact, if you look at language*

*games, the way Wittgenstein does, grammar organizes all of your conduct even from a little kid, in the way that it organizes sentences in particular. So self-knowledge is knowledge of the order of grammar, of deep structure.*

**Peter:** I think if you took competence at bicycle-riding and competence at speaking English, the one is a little too loose and the other is a little too tight for the kind of competence for ways of life. We don't have the kind of detailed specification or recognition ability that goes with grammar. But we do have more than goes with just riding a bike. So you could kind of bracket going to examples on either side.

**Jane:** *I'm still not comfortable with that, because I don't see how you can describe the difference between someone who is in the process of changing—*

**Peter:** You can't until after he's changed, because who's to say that that was the process of changing to being a Republican until he becomes a Republican? Up to that time, all it was, was a change of some sort, which can be described within the framework of being a Democrat—becoming a less and less loyal Democrat. Afterwards, you describe that as the process of changing, but not until he's changed to a Republican. Because given a different outcome, he would have continued a Democrat, and then that wouldn't have been the process of changing. So, after the fact, you can talk about, "For a certain period of time, he was already becoming a Republican," but at a point in time, he becomes one. And at that point, your frame of reference for describing everything has changed, and there is no process there. There's simply a division line.

**Jane:** *Okay, but back to in terms of white or black rather than Republicans and Democrats, what kind of terms do you use within that part of—it seems like it has something to do with appearance.*

**Peter:** Yeah, like I said, as a Democrat here, you say he's becoming disloyal, he may desert the party. There is a place for deserting the party. Over here you say, "He was beginning to see the light; he finally saw it." Those are your different descriptions, your different norms.

But it's the same set of events. That's why each set of norms will give you a complete description. It's a life-sized unit. And when you shift, you simply shift the norm, the frame of reference, which gives you a new description for your whole life. Take it in terms of religious conversion. Up to a certain point, you're simply a law-abiding citizen, and you don't know anything about these guys who go around in yellow robes. After—somehow—you become converted, your prior history was a history of blindness

and ignorance, and now you've seen the light. What has shifted is your frame of reference that gives you a new description of your past history.

**Jane:** *The trouble I'm having is that within that frame of reference, before you get to the new frame of reference, it seems like all you can say is that he's becoming less and less—that that framework is either less and less descriptive of him—*

**Peter:** No. Being a disloyal Democrat—there's nothing undescriptive about it. Disloyal Democrats are just as sharply defined a phenomenon as loyal Democrats. Being a confused person is just as sharply defined a phenomenon as an unconfused person. There's nothing fuzzy there.

**Wynn:** *I guess part of "being confused" is not only what ways of life are descriptive, or how to deal with that set of facts, but to be confused as to what place an element has in your world.*

**Peter:** Or saying that he's ambivalent is not a fuzzy description.

**Jane:** *Yeah, but that is to say that someone in transition is always doing that one wrong—I mean, if you're disloyal, you're being a Democrat wrong.*

**Peter:** Yeah. There comes to be something non-paradigmatic somewhere along the line. Unless you can achieve a transition like that, there is a period of time in which, in retrospect, you can say, it was non-paradigmatic and that was the process of transition. But only after the fact. Because remember, you can have a history that goes out there and then comes back to being a loyal Democrat. So until you know the outcome, you don't have certain descriptions of the process. But you always have some description of it, within the old framework. And you always have some description of it in the new framework. That follows from the fact that these are totality concepts. You have concepts for everything there is. So here you have concepts for that prior history, and in the other one you have concepts for that prior history, but since they're different ways of living, you have different descriptions and different concepts. But each of them will stand conceptually your entire lifetime.

**Jane:** *But who is doing the describing? Anyone?*

**Peter:** When I speak of description, you can paraphrase that as your own understanding of yourself. Your own understanding of yourself when you made the transition is that over here, you weren't that loyal; and that over here, at that point, you hadn't yet seen the light.

**Terry:** *But then that sounds like self-deception, which, in those kinds of conversions, usually keep ###.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but as I say, I'm not worrying about defective cases. I'm worrying about whether we have any genuine cases. Anything you can do right, you can do wrong. So we're not worrying about doing it wrong. We're not interested in pathology. We're interested in the logical possibilities of success.

**Terry:** *But he's observing himself accurately as a disloyal Democrat—*

**Peter:** No. He's still a good enough Democrat to sense the disloyalty in him, not that he's observing himself. He senses the reservations that wouldn't go with being simply a loyal Democrat.

**Jane:** *Is that the connection to—*

**Peter:** No, he might not sense it. He might just be disloyal. All that's required is that he start *being* disloyal. You generally take it that he knows something about it, but that's not being required.

**Jane:** *Is that the connection to transitions as necessarily being somewhat self-kind of turbulent, and somehow the kind of problems of self-conflict that occur?*

**Peter:** No, they're not necessarily clearly known. It's just that a lot of them are, but they don't have to be.

**Jane:** *It would seem like, looking at it that way, that you'd have to be seeing it from one perspective or the other.*

**Peter:** Because both are total perspectives.

**Jane:** *Then it would necessarily be ###.*

**Peter:** It's plausible, maybe even very plausible, but don't universalize unless you have to, because you're probably wrong if you do.

**Jane:** *I just don't see how you can avoid it with that.*

**Peter:** It isn't easy to see how you could avoid it, but don't jump to the conclusion that one must. Don't give anything away, because it'll come back to haunt you somewhere. That's a prudential way of life.

Let's come back to this one [Fig. 5, p. 52], where you started with a given behavior [arrow] and started asking for reasons or justification, and got the justification in terms of larger and larger contexts, until you reached the total life context, beyond which there is nothing. And that's why that's where you stop. Now, you can duplicate that logic within smaller contexts, because there are discontinuities. Our original heuristic example that way

was a tennis game, where you start out by asking why you're waving your racket that way, and you say, "Well, I'm serving the ball." "Why are you serving the ball?" "I'm trying to get the ball into that court." "Why are you trying to get the ball into that court?" "I'm trying to make a point." "Why are you trying to make a point?" "I'm trying to win the game—I'm trying to win the match." "Why are you trying to win the match?" "I'm playing tennis, and that's how it's done." The game is something that is logically complete, logically refers to nothing outside itself. Therefore, if you start within that kind of context, you're going to reach one of these boundary points where you say, "I'm doing X and that's how it's done." Now you may, then, because it's not a total context, start a new line of questioning: "Why are you doing X at all?" Given that you're doing X, it's understandable that you would be doing it in the way it's done. But then you simply introduce a wider context and say, "Why X rather than Y? Sure you're playing tennis, but why not play bridge?" That's a new line of questioning, of the same kind that you started earlier, and then you pursue it once more, to where you have an intrinsic practice, and then the answer is, "I'm engaging in this intrinsic practice, and that's how it's done." And if that's not a total context, then once more you have the possibility of raising a new line, namely, "But why that rather than one of the alternatives?" So by that kind of logic, you are driven to that totality.

**Wynn:** *What happens when this turkey asks you why you did that way of life, why you chose that way of life?*

**Peter:** "Because I'm me. That's how I live." Or you say, "I said it was me, didn't I? I'm not talking about a hypothetical person who's free to choose—I'm talking about me. That is me." And that's the equivalent of "I'm playing tennis, and that's how it's done."

**Wynn:** *I guess it's the equivalent in that direction of Wittgenstein's notion that you ground meaning eventually in a form of life.*

**Joe S:** *Isn't that ### that you make choices among behaviors, and then those choices among behaviors, as a totality, reflect a way of life?*

**Peter:** You see, a way of life is kind of like tennis. Given that you're playing tennis, that makes clear why you would make the kind of choices that you do, and also what would count as a failure. And if you keep that kind of logic, and extend it to the widest possible context, that's the problem of the way of life.

**Wynn:** *It strikes me, in therapy one of the things that happens is that sometimes people act under the guise, at least, of trying to choose a way of life, choose a new way of life, and the doing of that reflects a way of life, but—*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's where you have all of these images of Being and Doing, that mostly that's a fruitless endeavor because you already are who you are, and you can't just be somebody else. And usually that's what you want to focus on therapeutically.

**Wynn:** *### her claims that, "Gee, I'd like to be able to act under those motivations."*

**Peter:** Okay, now let me just ### over here. You can see the continuity between ordinary life activities—simple, visible, obvious, everyday behaviors—and this notion of totality or way of life. You have a continuity because you can ask certain kinds of questions about anything ordinary, and that gives you a connection to a totality and a boundary condition beyond which there is no going. It also gives you an ultimate answer to normal kinds of questions, like "Why are you doing that?" Now we can use this kind of thing and the notion of the sequence generated by a certain kind of question or certain kind of move, to characterize in a formal way what I've called Transcendental Theories. The characterization is very simple: a Transcendental Theory is one that deals with totalities, boundary conditions, and ultimates. And those three things go together: totalities, boundary conditions, and ultimates. You can see that illustrated here [Fig. 5, p. 52]. You have a totality. You have a boundary condition, because you can't go further with the question "why?". And you have an ultimate answer to "why?". So those three things—the totality, the boundary condition, and the ultimate—have logical relations among them. So a theory, then, that deals with this kind of domain, that deals with ways of living, that deals with the totality of a person's life, will be characterized by these three things.

We'll go on with this next time, so read *What Actually Happens*, sections 1 and 2, and *Self-Concept*, and the eight chapters in *Transpersonal Psychologies*.

## SEMINAR 3

20 July 1976

**Peter:** Will someone who took good notes volunteer to summarize what we did last time?

**Wynn:** *That means you don't remember where we are, eh?* [**general conversation**]

**Daniel:** *I can tell you the last three things you said.*

**Peter:** Okay, let's start off with that and work backward.

**Daniel:** *You concluded with the transpersonal creates a universe by the following domains, and you listed them.*

### **Transcendental Theory**

**Ultimates**

**Totalities**

**Boundary Conditions**

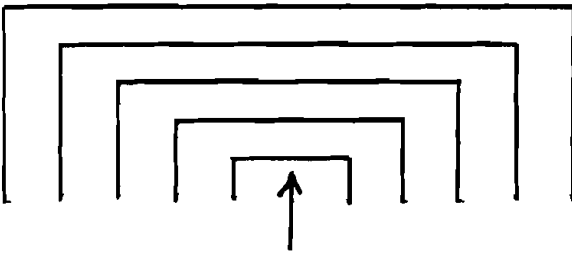
**Peter:** [**blackboard**] Okay, that's where we'd arrived, but we got there by starting to talk about the notion of criticizing—being a Critic of—a way of living. And my recollection is we spent a lot of the time dealing with being able to criticize when you can't describe (or without being able to describe), and then from that into how come you can do that. And secondly, when you do know how you're living, what your way of life is, what kind of knowledge is that. Which of our common knowledge paradigms does that knowledge assimilate to? And I think one of my major points was that you would be missing out on a lot of the possible criticism if you stuck to the kind of criticism or the kind of situation where you could give a back-up description—that that would be a severe limitation on what you could say as a Critic, if you always had to be able to back it up with some kind of description of something from which the criticism followed, if not deductively, at least plausibly or in the sense of interpretation. I think I suggested that there's an infinite regress argument on that: that if you could do that, where would you



ground the description that you gave to back up your original criticism? You would be in danger of an infinite regress situation, then.

One of the things that is a mirror image of criticism is justification. Because you can generate justificatory dialogue in response to criticism. So you can think of justification as in the format of a mirror image to criticism. If you have a criticism, you have a corresponding justification. For every justification, there is a hypothetical criticism for which it is the response.

**FIGURE 1**



And somewhere along the line there, we got into a particular sequence which I drew the diagram, where you could start with something that you're doing, and ask, "Why are you doing that?" and you give the answer in the form of a reason which involves a larger context; and then you can raise a question about that, and you get a new answer in the form of a reason that involves a still larger context; and you keep asking until you run out. I said: where you run out, if nowhere else first, is your way of living. But also, there are examples of running out short of that, and those will be intrinsic practices, of which games are prime examples. So we used the example of the tennis game, that you can go through all of this within the scope of the tennis game, and then when you come to the boundary there [**top line**], where you're involving the whole tennis game, then you give a distinctive kind of change in the way you talk and in the way you answer the question. And you switch from giving a reason to giving a different kind of reply, namely, "I'm playing tennis, and that's how it's done."

Okay, it was this example here that I came back to, to exemplify these features [**ultimates, totalities, boundary conditions**]. With a game, once you get to "I'm playing tennis, and that's how it's done," you can then start a new series by asking, "Well, but why are you playing tennis rather than something else?" so then you start all over again, and the whole tennis thing becomes your first thing here [arrow], and now you start asking ###.



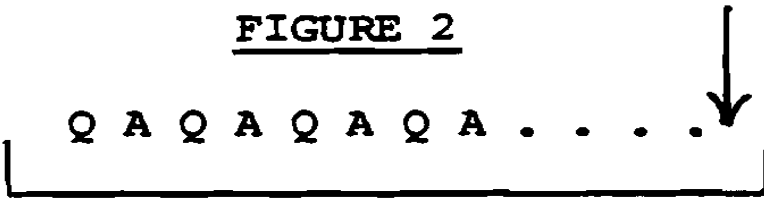
**Joe J:** *Is this the ladder of justification?*

**Peter:** No, that's the thing that I forgot to mention, that has a bearing here, and it has a bearing on the issue of criticizing where you can't describe. We'll get to that almost immediately.

Anyhow, you can see that you can have units within which you reach boundaries, but if those units are not life-sized, i.e., a way of life, then you can start a new series taking off from that. But eventually, if you keep doing that, you are going to run into ways of living. And the answer is going to have the same form, namely, "I'm living such and such a kind of life, and this is how it's done." So no matter what the unit, the form of the reply—at least paradigmatically—will be the same, namely: a mention of what it is you're doing, and then the statement that you are doing it in the way that it is done. And that doesn't imply that there's only one way that it's done. I means that what you're doing qualifies as that, and that's the ultimate answer that you're going to get.

Now if you look at these three things, you see that they're all involved in that one example, that if you think of a series of "why" questions and answers—[blackboard]—

**FIGURE 2**



then that gets you to a boundary condition, namely, where you run out of answers, where you run out of reasons. And the reason it's a boundary condition and not a boundary is that you don't know where you're going to run out, and you don't need to. What you do need to know is that you *will* run out: this is not an infinite sequence. So the nature of this whole series is that it comes to an end. Not that it comes to an end after three questions or ten, etc., but that it comes to an end. And it comes to an end in such a way that it's not a barrier that you can't get to the other side of. It comes to an end in that there is nothing beyond it. It isn't that there is a further question that you don't have the answer to; it's that beyond a certain point there *is* no further answer. So that's the kind of thing that we mean by a boundary condition, as contrasted to a boundary. A boundary always has something on the

other side, and it impedes your getting to the other side. But there is such a thing as “the other side”, and, in principle, it’s possible to be there. Whereas a boundary condition deals with a limit of some sort beyond which there is nothing.

**Bob:** *That means there’s no larger context than ### a way of life, then there’s no such question to be asked?*

**Peter:** Right. It’s not that it’s senseless; it’s that it’s not a *question*. It’s a perplexity or something else than a straightforward question. Because, remember, I said the answer to that one is, “I said *I* was living that, didn’t I?” It amounts to asking, “Why are you \_\_\_ ? Why are you living the kind of life that you are living?” Since you can’t stand outside of your life and choose it, there’s no such thing as the reason why you’re doing that rather than something else. Or you could give a historical explanation—“Well, I was socializing to that kind of life”—but as I said last time, that’s simply referring you back to the earlier parts of that very way of living. So that’s like asking, in a tennis game, “Why are you playing this last game?” and you say, “Well, I’ve already played the first two games in the match.” In a sense, that’s an answer; but in a sense, it’s not really an answer to that question.

**Jane:** *Usually when people ask that question, though, they’re not really saying, “Why are you you?” but they’re saying, “Why don’t we choose some other way of being?” and there isn’t—*

**Peter:** I know, but that’s my point: that you don’t choose your way of being, any more than you choose who you are.

**Jane:** *Could you distinguish that so that it doesn’t sound deterministic? Or is it?*

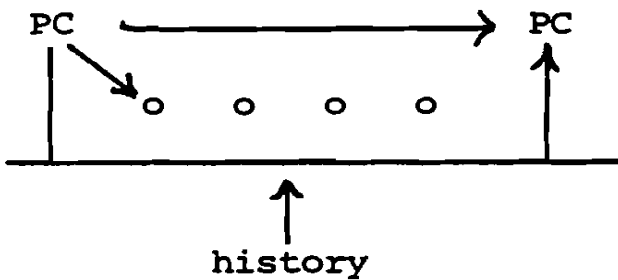
**Peter:** Well, it’s a logical truth.

**Jane:** *Okay, but there’s a sense in which it sounds like you’re having no choice about who you are, and there is a place for choice.*

**Peter:** Yeah. What you choose is what you do. You do not choose your ID characteristics. You do not choose your identity. You do not choose your way of life. You choose only what you do.

**Jane:** *Isn’t there some sense in which choosing what you do, then, determines who you are?*

**Peter:** Remember the developmental schema [blackboard].

**FIGURE 3**

You have a schema: Personal Characteristics here at an earlier time enter into the explanation of your behavior, because it took you as you were then to engage in that behavior in those historical circumstances. But your having done those things then makes a difference in your characteristics later, and then you can say, “Well, my characteristics later reflect my characteristics earlier,” or you can say, “My characteristics reflect my history.” But remember that history reflects your prior characteristics. So what you did makes a difference in what you become, but notice that you choose to do these things [o’s]; you do not choose to become that way, and indeed, you can’t, because there is no guarantee that if you do those things, you become that way. And as a matter of fact, remember the paradox for psychotherapy: when somebody is trying to become that way, that the usual appropriate answer is: You Can’t Get There from Here—that if you try to do that, you’ll wind up somewhere else, unless you just luck out. So the way we alter the characteristics we have is not something that we simply straightforwardly choose, in the way that we straightforwardly choose what we do.

**Wynn:** *The “straightforward” seems to be the tension point in the argument, because it strikes me that there’s a logical statement that you couldn’t choose to be someone else, to be different in the sense of being someone else—that you have no choice about. But you do have a choice, if you identify it as such, to change some of your personal characteristics if you see a way in which that can be done.*

**Peter:** “If you see a way in which that can be done”—but part of my point is that there isn’t any way that’s guaranteed—

**Wynn:** *No, there’s no guaranteed way, but then there’s—*

**Peter:** I mean practically guaranteed. I don’t just mean logically.

**Wynn:** *I think it might depend on which characteristics we're talking about. For instance, if a person had very, very poor vision, and there was a practical way of changing that, and they don't want any longer to be blind or a bumbling blind person, they might go through those procedures to improve their vision.*

**Peter:** Then I would say: what you do is, you choose to try, and that is straightforward.

**Wynn:** *But choosing to try has to already have a place in your life, so it's not choosing to be a different person.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but *trying* is simply a redescription of your behavior, and I said, you choose your behavior. So if you say, "You choose to try to make that change," that is straightforward.

**Wynn:** *The reason I wanted to tease it out is because it's—I think—part of any confusion that might rest on this point, rests on the epistemological notion that, in fact, you don't choose to be someone else, but you can make choices that will result in your being, at a later point, described under a different set of ID characteristics.*

**Peter:** Yeah, and the main reason why I say "not straightforwardly" is that you can talk in such a way that it is allowable to say that you choose to be who you are, that you choose your characteristics, etc., and that's not the way that I normally talk or would want to talk about it. That is, you can make the distinction between straightforwardly choosing and what you do choose, and any derivative senses or other ways of talking in which you talk about choosing those things. And that's the distinction I'm interested in carrying.

**Joe J:** *Isn't there an Actor/Observer distinction in here? It seems that there are two things there: that the personal characteristics are our description—let's say, my description of his behavior—*

**Peter:** No, here's the description of the behavior. "Personal characteristics" is a description of his individual differences.

**Joe J:** But he can't choose different personal characteristics—

**Peter:** He already has them.

**Joe J:** *That isn't what people do—people do as they behave—and we can say that it doesn't require further explanation in view of his personal characteristics. And if he behaves in another certain set of ways, we can say, "Oh, well, it looks like his personal characteristics have changed." What happened is, he's behaving, and we're describing it that way.*

**Peter:** One way of bringing out something is to introduce a phony time-order here, and say that your personal characteristics are what you have to behave with. That's why, in choosing your behaviors, you can't choose your characteristics, because that's what you have to make your choices with. You already have to have those at the point when you're choosing, and that's why they are not open to choice.

**Wynn:** *But you only really have to have the ability to identify—to know that you want that, in the sense that I can imagine somebody—*

**Peter:** No, that knowledge is itself one of your personal characteristics. That's what you have to work with.

**Wynn:** *It's a misleading sort of notion, though, because you can imagine somebody going into the behavior modifier of the future and being given a sheet of paper like a menu in a Chinese restaurant, and picking one from column A and one from column B, in terms of what he wants to be different, because he has a notion of what those things are. He's not that way, but he has a notion what those things are.*

**Peter:** You don't have to wait for that. You do that when you come to college and choose a major or enter a degree program. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *Except we don't find them as effective.*

**Peter:** They're almost 100% effective.

**Wynn:** *There's a difference between going to a Chinese restaurant and ordering from A and B, and then getting C, and in ordering A and B because you are identifying that and getting what you order.*

**Peter:** Yeah, or in ordering A and B, and getting A and B, and being awfully surprised because you didn't think it was going to be like that! [laughter]

**Wynn:** *But that would be the test of the argument, in effect, because the person did choose A, he ended up differently than that, but it's within the realm—*

**Peter:** No, he didn't choose A. He ordered it. But what he chose was to order it. Again, there is the same distinction.

**Steve A:** *You have somebody who says, "I'm greedy and I'd like to be generous—I'm going to be generous." Okay, so he—*

**Peter:** My first reaction is that that looks like another expression of his greed. [laughter] You want all these good qualities.

**Steve A:** *"I'm generous and I want to be greedy." Anyway, it seems to me you*

*can still say, “Okay, I know these are things that generous people do—” Well, I guess that comes down to behavior. Isn’t the person just like a person who says, “I’m going to walk from here to there,” rather than, “I’m going to take this step and then that step and then this step”? Isn’t that the same thing as saying, “I’m going to be generous” versus “I’m going to do this, this, this, this, this”?*

**Peter:** Yeah, but remember, somewhere last semester we talked about that. That is, I can say, “I am doing X,” if I have a certain level of confidence that I can succeed. When we talked about courses of action and the competence parameter, we said, “There are a whole lot of things that people succeed at, like psychotherapy, like getting elected president, that there is no way to guarantee, so you can’t straightforwardly be said to know how to cure people or to know how to get yourself elected, but you can certainly succeed.” Now if you’re *really* sure, you say, “I am getting myself elected president,” and this is back in January. There you’re presenting it as though it was simply a matter of going through the right moves, but the end, basically, is guaranteed. Well, there are very few people who are in a position to say that kind of thing about a wide range of achievements, so where there is that kind of doubt, you don’t say, “I’m getting myself elected president.” You say, “I’m trying. I’m doing things that I know how to do, with the aim of getting myself elected.” So if you know you can get from here to there, then you say, “I’m walking to the blackboard.” If you don’t have that level of competence, you say, “I’m taking steps to arrive at the blackboard.”

**Steve A:** *So you say, “I already can be generous,” or something like that.*

**Daniel:** *Would you say, “I’m going to the blackboard,” if you know ### ?*

**Peter:** Yeah, because then the whole unit of getting there is something you choose, and there is no internal uncertainty as to whether you’ll be able to bring it off, so you’re choosing the whole package. As soon as there’s uncertainty, then you break it down so that what you say you do are those units that you have no doubt about, so you say, “I’m taking steps,” and that you have no doubt about.

I think this is a sidetrack, because it was simply a particular question about a particular example of a question that has no answer, and I was just using that as an elucidation of boundary conditions, namely, that a boundary condition—unlike a boundary—there’s nothing on the other side. So there are certain kinds of questions which there’s nothing to keep you from asking them, like the “why” questions here [Fig. 1, p. 94]. It’s not that at a certain point you stop asking why, because after all, you don’t know when

you're going to reach the end, so it's always legitimate to ask why. But it may, at some point—it will, at some point—be legitimate not to answer that question but to reject it; and the rejection constitutes a claim that there is no such question. But you had to ask it to find that out. Which means that we will have in our repertoire all kinds of questions that formally are questions—in a performance sense they *are* questions, but in a social practice sense they are not. There is no such uncertainty, no such question to be asked. The only way you find out that *here* is a case of that is to ask it and have it rejected.

Okay, that's the nature of boundary conditions. Now totality, we brought in because as you go through this sequence [Fig. 2, p. 95], when you ask the second question to the first answer, to generate a new answer you have to enlarge the context within which you answer it. So as you move along the sequence, the context that you're bringing to bear on the question gets larger and larger, and the limit of that is a total context, outside of which there is nothing. Now when you reach that point where you have the total context, outside of which there *is* nothing, then the answer you give is the ultimate answer. There is nothing beyond it. So these three notions have logical relations among them. They're not just three distinct, separate things that have a bearing on transcendental theories. They're all involved with one another. And a paradigm of this sort brings out the way in which all of these are simultaneously involved.

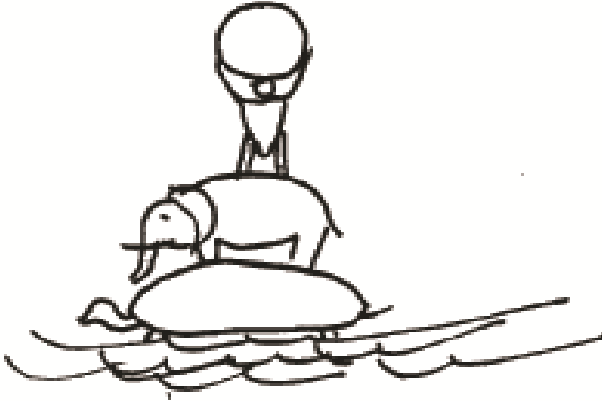
**Steve P:** *Pete, what is the relation of those three to intrinsic practices?*

**Peter:** [blackboard] An intrinsic practice gives you a unit where you can stop, and then if you're going to go on, you have to start afresh and ask—and start a new series.

**Steve P:** *And the intrinsic practice is an ultimate of sorts?*

**Peter:** It's an ultimate for whatever is within it, but not an ultimate for people. Because engaging in practices, and in various practices, are things that people do, and for any person there are alternative in the way of practices. But for any person, there are not alternatives in a way of life. Okay, you all remember this—I won't call it a drawing; let's call it a schema.

And you know what this is a schema for. It's a schema for the traditional resolution to the problem of ultimates. There, the form that that takes is the problem of foundations, because traditionally, ultimate answers are answers that give the foundations of things. Particularly issues of truth and justification are thought of in terms of what underlies what they're founded on, what they rest on. And so the Greek mythology has a very nice portrayal

FIGURE 4

of the logic of that and of the problem with that, namely, that you have an infinite regress and no place to stop non-arbitrarily. And you can see why. If everything has to be supported, the only thing that can provide the support is another object, but every object has to have a support under it, and there is no place to stop without having an unsupported object. Cleverly enough, what happened was that the last unsupported object was the eternal sea that the tortoise was swimming in, which pictorially gets you away from objects. So even there you have a switch in idiom from the next to the last to the ultimate answer. But an eternal sea is just as much an object as a tortoise, and if it isn't held up by something, then you have the same problem as the tortoise that isn't held up by something.

This—you might say, in a nutshell—is the history of our intellectual traditions: the search for foundations and the coming to grief on the fact that all of the choices for ultimates are arbitrary. And demonstrably arbitrary. Now it's in contrast to that kind of approach that you have what you might call a “bubble” approach, in which you simply have a domain of things[**blackboard** FIGURE 5] that go together.

FIGURE 5

They're related to one another. They may mutually support one another. But in any case, everything is related to everything, and since there's

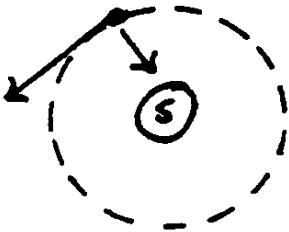


nothing outside of it, there is no problem of what holds it up. That is, there is no foundation problem.

**Joe J:** *Since there's nothing outside of it, what would pull it down?*

**Peter:** Or where would it be pulled toward? Now you have a minor example of that when it comes to this same problem as Atlas holding up the world, because remember now the kind of diagram you have in your textbooks [**blackboard FIGURE 6**], where you show a solar system with the sun here and the earth out there going around it.

**FIGURE 6**



Now if you looked at that picture and asked, “What holds them up?” the first thing you’d get is a puzzled reaction, because this diagram doesn’t even suggest the problem of what holds it up. In this approach, you just don’t generate that problem. But if you had to answer it, it’s instructive that you have two different answers—answers that sound very different, but they’re equivalent. The one is to give an answer to “What holds it up?”—and that answer is, “They hold each other up.” So formally, that’s an answer to “What holds them up?” It’s a peculiar answer, to be sure, but nevertheless, formally it is an answer. The other answer, which is equivalent, is, “Nothing holds them up. They don’t need to be held up.”

Now, when it comes to the question and answer of the “whys”, you can also work it the same way. At the end of the series, you can either reject the question overtly or give an answer that formally is an answer, but it’s of a special kind that brings it all to an end. One of the kinds of answer that formally is an answer is, “Because I want to.” “Why are you doing that?” “Because—”, “Why are you doing that?” “Because—”, etc. In the end, you say, “Because I want to.” Or “Because it gives me pleasure, or because it satisfies me,” or something on that order. And those, classically, are used to bring the series to a close.

The problem with them is: it sounds as though you have a very special kind of reason or motive, as though you had a universal motive for pleasure or for satisfaction or something like that, because there is no sequence that you couldn't bring an end to with that one, so it sounds like we've discovered a universal motive. And that's one of the dangers of talking that way—that it sounds like you've got a peculiar species of reason. It turns out that that kind of reason amounts to a non-reason, just like this kind of answer to what holds them up amounts to saying, “Nothing.”

Now it's typical of boundary conditions that you talk in strange ways when you reach the boundary condition. The reason is because our normal ways of talking are involved in that sequence, and the way you talk when you can't carry the sequence has got to be different somewhere, somehow, than the way that you talk when you can generate the next term. Here you can ask for a reason and get an answer. Here you can't ask for a reason and get an answer. Therefore, you have to talk in some other way than asking for reasons, or the reason you ask for has got to be a very peculiar kind of reason. So something has got to be peculiar here in order legitimately to bring the thing to a close. Otherwise you have the situation like with the tortoise: that you have to cut it off arbitrarily.

**Wynn:** *It seems like an insistence on following out that question and answer chain to some underlying motive is what's prevented a lot of traditional personality theories—most notably, probably, psychoanalysis—from having a sophisticated place for intrinsic practices.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Wynn:** *Because the belief that it all has to be linked in a web back to an origin—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but then, that's what becomes intrinsic. Pleasure then becomes *the* intrinsic motive.

**Wynn:** *But because of that one becoming the general intrinsic-motive, specific ones that don't easily link up—*

**Peter:** Everything else then can become instrumental, so nothing else has to be intrinsic.

**Wynn:** *But then when you run across what apparently is intrinsic, that doesn't connect in any sensible way or obvious way to this other motivation, you've got to—*

**Peter:** Then it's got to be ulteriorly motivated anyhow.

**Steve P:** *I don't see the distinction you're drawing between arbitrary and peculiar.*

**Peter:** Remember the other diagram, of the tortoise [Fig. 4, p. 102]. You could cut it off anywhere, and people have cut that series off at different points. But if you look at the turtle, there's nothing about the turtle—why stop there? The turtle really does need something else to rest on. So if you stop there and say, "He's the ultimate," that's arbitrary because it really does call for something else, and you are stopping there for no good reason. Whereas on this question and answer [Fig. 2, p. 95], if you legitimately stop, there has to be something special there, and that's why it either has to be a very peculiar reason, or the question itself has to be rejectable. Not merely, in fact, rejected, but rejectable.

**Steve P:** *I'm trying to conceive of what's peculiar but not arbitrary.*

**Peter:** Well, it isn't arbitrary that in the end, you say, "I'm playing tennis, and that's how it's done." That's a perfectly good reply to the question, but it's not an answer to it. So there's the peculiarity: that you're dealing with a sequence in which you have a question and you have an answer, and you have a question and you have an answer, and they're all legitimate. And then you reach a point where either you have to give a peculiar answer to the question, or you have to reject the question because there isn't an answer to be given. And so either there's a special answer that has the function of cutting it short, or you reject the question and give a reply that shows that you're rejecting the question. And that, then, is different from simply stopping after the third exchange and saying, "Just because." Or after I say, "Well, I'm trying to win the game," or "I'm trying to get a point," then you say, "Why are you doing that?"; then I say, "Just because." Then it leaves the whole thing hanging. The fact is that there is such a unit as tennis, and when you have it implicated in your answer, there is no further to go. You have reached the end. So it's the whole structure of the game that's involved when you start somewhere in it, pursue it, and you reach the end. At all times, you're really dealing with a whole game. That's why you're able to give the answers that you have, and that's why the answers arrange themselves in a sequence. You're really using the resources of your concept of the whole game all the time, and it's from that—

**Steve P:** *I was thrown off by the solar system diagram, which seems to me as arbitrary as the—*

**Peter:** It's arbitrary in the sense that it's not guaranteed to be true, ultimate, etc., that we may, ten years from now, be using different diagrams. But it is different in that even pictorially, it doesn't raise the questions that the tortoise diagram does. The tortoise diagram, if you look at that, you damn well are going to ask what holds it up.

**Steve P:** *In the same way, the tortoise diagram doesn't ### if you stop at the globe. If you just have the globe there, that doesn't suggest that it needs anything to hold it up, any more than the orbit and the sun.*

**Peter:** The globe is somewhere in the middle. Everything that you see around you needs something to hold it up, and so when you get that series and you reach the globe, you just continue and say, "But what holds the globe up?" And that's like within tennis you have answers, and then if you just keep going, you're going to have to invent a super-tennis, or something. If you don't recognize that you've started a new series, you're going to have to have a super-tennis game or a transcendental tennis game, or something. And likewise, if you don't recognize that the whole business of holding things up, that the proper context is the globe and not something beyond it, you're going to ask what holds the globe up. And then you generate that hopeless series. So you might say that whole series reflects not knowing where to stop, not recognizing that there is a stopping place.

**Steve P:** *Proceeding with a series of illegitimate questions.*

**Peter:** On the other hand, you could say, "Look, what holds it from falling down?" There is an interpretation of "down", namely, why doesn't it fall into the sun? And there is an answer to what holds it up, namely, the motion out this way [arrow from planet in orbit]. So it's not entirely senseless to pursue "what holds it up?" into this ###. But you can see where that might have risen from a misunderstanding and an inability to recognize when you had a good stopping-place, when you had a non-arbitrary one.

**Wynn:** *The question then becomes, "What maintains the relationships?"*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Steve A:** The other chain, that ends with, "He goes on playing tennis," it seems to me—

**Peter:** *No, remember, "And that's how it's done."*

**Steve A:** *It seems to me you still can go beyond that, but the point you get to is again a way of finding that— "Why are you doing that?" "Well, because I'm the*

*kind of person who plays it, because this is the way I live my life.” I’m wondering if there’s anything between that social practice and the other. It seems like you can all of a sudden make that jump. You reach a social practice, and then you make that jump to a way of life, and—*

**Peter:** No. For example, you could say, “Well, I’m on vacation, and this is the way one spends a vacation.” So there are intermediates. There’s no system I know—no neat mapping for where those divisions lie. I doubt whether there is such a thing. You can simply see with examples that you can have intermediates, and that in different cases, you will have different intermediates, but that the way of life is going to be the end no matter how you got there.

Okay, that’s some of the features of the boundary condition notion, in that it’s based on some kind of sequence where you have a domain, and you start somewhere within it, and because of the relationships among them, you can, with a certain kind of question, generate a sequence that then takes you to a boundary condition.

**Bob:** *How can you recognize, when you get there, if like the Greeks didn’t know that they were there when they said, “Atlas holds up the earth,” they were over the boundary long before they knew it?*

**Peter:** Well, there is not a rule, but I can give you advice.

**Bob:** *Like I’d attempted to answer a question that said, “Why are you living that kind of life?” and be into three or four questions past that before—without ever recognizing that I had transgressed the boundary.*

**Peter:** Well, the advice is: stay with substance rather than method. Go by your understanding of the phenomena rather than by the procedural rule that whenever you have an answer, you can always ask, “Why?” That’s the kind of thing that leads you blindly past stopping points and into left field. Because the method—since it’s simply repetitive—will not identify a stopping place. Think of method as being like counting. If you just went by the fact that you could always add one, and you wanted to count the tables here, you’d say, “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.” And then if you’re going to add one, you’ll find things to add, and pretty soon you’re counting them over again because there’s no place to stop. So it’s the focus on method—I think, that’s my diagnosis—that generally leads people into trouble with boundary conditions, because in terms of method, any stopping point is arbitrary. And if you’re focusing on method, you’ll just go blindly or mechanically into the Q and A form, into that kind of performance. But if there’s no substance that you’re dealing with, that fits, then it’s a ceremony, not a question and an

answer. So there isn't a way to tell when you've reached it. But if you keep your eye on substance rather than method, your own competence, your own set of understandings will come into play there.

**Joe J:** *In doing it for myself and trying to get that through to other people, it seems like after a number of questions and answers, it's not a purely formal thing, it's a social practice, and when there's no answer, then no question has been asked. If nothing happens after the kick-off, then it isn't a football game, it just looked like one for a while.*

**Peter:** Yeah. You see, those are things which, if you're sensitive to, you're less likely to get in trouble, but as I say, there's no rule, plenty of times.

**Jane:** *Is it a question of competence because—I'm thinking of the case where somebody begins to give that kind of an answer and—*

**Peter:** Yeah, you can only deal effectively this way with things where you have mastered the concepts, where you have the competence. Just having the procedure of being able to ask questions or being able to ask, "Why?" will not enable you to do it. It's your understanding of the concept in question, of the phenomena in question, that enables you to recognize when you've run out of questions, when there isn't a question.

**Jane:** *Or when there's a question but no answer yet to it?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

Okay—now totalities. There's a few peculiarities about the notion of totality, also. I think one of the common paradigms for a totality is a pile of sand, where you can say that's a pile of sand, and you don't have to know how many grains there are, but if you counted them—you'd be able to count them. It's tedious and so we don't, normally; but, in principle, you could. And when you're talking about the totality, that's a shorthand for actually counting all of them. If you have that kind of paradigm in mind, you get embarrassed by the fact that we talk about totalities where it's out of the question to do that kind of counting. For example, when we talk about "the whole world", there's no issue of going out and examining everything there is in the world. And yet, how come it comes so easily to mind to talk about the whole world?

Or we talk about a number, like the number 63419. We say, "This number is one of a totality of numbers," except that you can't examine that totality of numbers one by one, because you'd never finish. So numbers, and a lot of formal sets of things, are infinite sets. There is no issue of examining

them one by one to get an acquaintance with the whole set, so as to be able to talk about that totality. And yet we do talk about totalities.

Again, we talk about “the whole person”. We haven’t examined his entire life. We haven’t assessed all of his characteristics, nor could we. And we wouldn’t know if we had. And yet it trips easily off the tongue—“the whole person”. [**change tape**] So the notion of totality is not an empirical notion. It’s not a notion along the model of “there’s a bunch of things, and you examine them one by one, and you look at the pile, and you say that’s the totality”. That’s why the totality gets tied into procedures. You have a procedure of counting, and you couldn’t actually count every number, but that procedure will give you access to any number there is. And it’s because we have such a procedure that the notion of “all of the numbers” is intelligible.

**Joe J:** *How about cases in which you have a procedure and you say, “In principle, you can get to it,” but given what is, in fact, the human world, you couldn’t.*

**Peter:** This is a kind of access. Take any number, and you can get to it by counting, but—

**Joe J:** *That’s exactly what I’m saying. Take a number that’s really there, say a number like 10 to the 10th to the 10th to the 10th, now we say that in principle we can get to it by counting, but in fact, in the human world, we couldn’t. It would take you—you know, 25 pulsations of the universe to get you half-way there, or something. What does it mean, then, to say that you could get there in principle?*

**Peter:** That’s why we say “in principle”.

**Joe J:** *How are you using “in principle”, then?*

**Peter:** It’s a standard use of “in principle”. You don’t say “in principle” when you can actually get there. I don’t say, “In principle, I can walk out there and take a drink from the faucet.” I just say, “I can take a drink from the faucet.” But when it comes to these things that I can’t, in fact, do, I’ll say, “In principle, I can do them. In principle, we can do them.”

**Wynn:** *It might be safer to say, “In principle, it can be done.”*

**Peter:** Yeah, right. Or we could work it like a relay race, where when I die, you pick up the baton. [**laughter**] And we could do that, because it’s a public thing. It’s not my private counting; there’s a whole set of practices involved there. So we could indeed—work it like the baton race.

**Joe J:** *But in fact, you couldn’t, given the world.*



**Peter:** Why not? Unless you postulate that the thing is going to come to an end after a while, in a shorter time than it would take to count. But who knows that? [**general conversation**]*—10 to the 10th to the 10th to the 10th.*

**Steve A:** *Why stop there? [laughter]*

**Peter:** You couldn't ask for that until after you'd counted that high. The moral of this story is that we have direct, intuitive grasp of totalities, rather than empirical counting-type access. The type that presents us with problems, the type that it's important to understand, is the type that you have a direct grasp of the totality as such. You don't arrive at it by enumeration. Because keep in mind that even if you could enumerate things, unless you have the concept of that totality already, you don't know what to include in that totality. That is, you don't know what it is to count, you don't know *what* to count.

**Terry:** *Would you say you have an intuitive grasp of the concept of infinity, an intellectual comprehension?*

**Peter:** No, they're equivalent.

**Terry:** *I don't intuit infinity, in a sensuous domain.*

**Peter:** No, you intuitively know what infinity is.

**Terry:** *As a concept.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's intuitive knowledge.

Okay, now unlike these two, once you have these two [**totalities and boundary conditions**], ultimate doesn't seem to have a whole lot of peculiarities. Its peculiarities distribute across the peculiarities here [**the other two**]. When do you have a final answer? You have it when you reach the boundary condition or where you've brought in everything. You can see that because these are related like that, you can talk in terms of one rather than the others, and you can bet that this is the way it's usually done. Somebody talks about an ultimate answer, he usually does not mention these two things [**totalities and boundary conditions**] explicitly. Somebody talks about a problem of foundations, he usually doesn't mention totalities; he may mention ultimates.

**Steve A:** *I see the utility of having a separate term, a separate concept like totality from ultimate or boundary condition. I'm still not clear about the distinction between ultimate and boundary condition. Is "ultimate" a special case of a boundary condition?*



**Peter:** No. “Ultimate” goes with these notions [**blackboard**]: value, and answer. You have ultimate values, ultimate answers, something of that sort, whereas the boundary condition is the boundary condition for a sequence of some sort, for a procedural sequence. So the reference to boundary condition, you might say, is anchored on procedure, whereas the ultimate is anchored on substance, on the kind of thing that you’re asking questions and giving answers about. You can see that those two do not do the same job, then, and that’s why you have both.

It’s these kinds of devices that are required to have a grasp of the whole from the inside. You remember, last time, we went through some portion of the time saying, “Well, nobody is standing outside the world, giving a description of it, and that’s one of the reasons why, for certain kinds of things that we know of, descriptions are not available,” because they would require somebody standing outside who was merely watching it. So from the inside, any given observer who is part of this whole domain has access to that whole by virtue of his place in it, which gives him a start on raising questions—observing, raising questions, from where *he* is in it, because of this kind of procedure. The procedure connects him to everything else in the domain, because of his concept of totality and ultimate, then the procedure doesn’t go wild. There are constraints on that procedure, and having available all three simultaneously gives a person a way of understanding the totality of which he is part, and a totality beyond which there is nothing—which is to say, a genuine totality. For this, there is a reasonably neat heuristic analogue, but it’s only reasonably neat, and that is the physicists’ cosmology for space. The way that space is constructed by physicists is that it is curved. The thing about curvature is, if you go in a straight line, you come back to where you started—if you go far enough. That means that you can’t ever get further away than some distance from where you started, because if you go out, pretty soon you find yourself coming back. And that’s a limitation on how far you can go, and it’s this kind of limitation, because it’s not that somewhere you encounter a boundary that keeps you from going farther. There are no boundaries in space to keep you from going beyond that. But the way the entire space and what’s in it is arranged is such that if you keep going, you still are never going to get farther than that. There is a limitation on distance, not with a boundary but because of how the totality is arranged, and so you have a boundary condition. Now that’s a good heuristic example for when we get into the sequences, that you can just keep going but you can’t keep going indefinitely. Either you’ll do the equivalent of coming back to

the starting point, or you'll hit something beyond which there is nothing—which is the kind of thing we've been talking about.

**Wynn:** *This is probably a little off the subject, but the issue of curved space is kind of misleading, at least as I understand it. I think it comes in general from general relativity theory, and as I understand it, the claim isn't made that space is intrinsically curved, but that space has—there's a property of the description of space that allows us to talk about it as curved, under certain conditions—under conditions of relationship to mass. But it strikes me that that doesn't imply that necessarily, if you keep going out that way forever, you get back here, that it's curved that way, but that sometimes "from here to there" is different than "from here to there"; it depends on what the mass relations are.*

**Peter:** Okay, I'm not dealing with any kind of logical necessity. I'm pointing out that they have a kind of representation of space, including the special case where the curvature is such that you come back.

**Wynn:** *Under great gravitational stresses, that would occur.*

**Peter:** No, it doesn't have to be exceptional. I think the standard representation of the universe is that you would come back, but the fact is, it's possible—it's the general kind of description they give of curvature, and curvature such that you would always come back is not an extreme case of that sort, and that's all I want to point to as a heuristic example of how you can have a whole domain in which the internal arrangements are such that you can make statements about the edges, as it were, about the limits. This is what we have routinely in human life, I'm suggesting: that we have a whole set of things, and the way the whole thing is arranged is such that you can make statements about the limits of it. And because you can do that, because the limits depend on the internal structure, the limits are not brought in from the outside by some foundation or by some external constraint. Therefore, the whole package is coherent and understandable to somebody who's in it.

That's about as far as we can get in a purely formal way, in delineating what's going on when you talk about a person's whole life, his whole world, what are the final answers to certain kinds of questions. That if it does make sense to ask for final answers, it does depend on these notions, and the fact is that we do intuitively have a grasp of this kind of thing, that these are not extraordinary things that only some people can understand or have.

I guess the next thing is to get a more direct feel for this domain by generating some of these series and seeing what kind we have that lead us to boundary conditions. And that's an exercise, I think, that you can work on

and bring in some examples, and introduce a few examples here today. My impression is that most of them will deal with truth or value. That is, the primary examples are “why?” or “what for?” on the one hand; and “how do you know?” on the other hand. Others are “where does it come from?”—origin questions—but these strike me as the general kinds that are most frequent, that get us into most trouble.

**Mary:** *How about the significance questions?*

**Peter:** Those are going to be, I think, under “what for?” or “what are you accomplishing by doing that?” Now, the one we had was this question [blackboard].

**Why are you doing X? Because R.  
P. How do you know that P? Because P'.**

You have a “why” question, and then a reason, then a new “why” question and reason. Or a “how do you know” question. You start out with a statement, P: “We’re standing in a classroom.” Then, “How do you know that we’re standing in a classroom?” “Because—” and now I mention some evidence, something that supports P. Then you have the new question: “How do you know that P’?” And I think we went through this one, too, that the end of this is “I just do”. That is, it came to intuitive knowledge, knowledge that is not backed up by some further evidence.

**Wynn:** *There’s also a maxim or a tack that you can almost always take in that situation, and that’s the tack that Wittgenstein bases uncertainty on, and that’s that you ask if there’s any reason to doubt it.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Okay, let’s introduce that ladder now. [blackboard]

### FIGURE 7

Competence	Perspective	} Q
Principle		}
Theory		
Custom		
Judgement		
		A

This is a sequence that does a number of jobs. One is, it's a justification sequence, that you justify your moment-to-moment or day-to-day judgments by appealing to custom. If I say, "That's a wastebasket," you might say, "What do you mean, that's a wastebasket?" Saying that's a wastebasket is a judgment. "Why are you calling that a wastebasket?"—one of the things I'll say is, "Well, it's something that you put paper in. It certainly looks as if it was made for that purpose, and it's being used for that purpose, and why not? That's what we normally use as a wastebasket." And then we might challenge that. "Well, yeah, that's what we normally think of as 'wastebasket,' but why do we have to do that?" With wastebaskets, our customs are probably not backed up by theories, so try a different one. "It's wrong to hurt people. And it's wrong to hurt him." "How come? Why are you refusing to hurt him?" "Well, we don't do that kind of thing." "Well, yeah, we don't do that kind of thing, but why shouldn't we?" And up here, then, you have theories that, in general, it's wrong to hurt people, or you appeal to a particular theory that includes that principle, and then up here you appeal to just the principle. The ultimate of all of these is the "Can't you see?" Can't you see that it's wrong here, to hurt him? Whether or not there's a theory or principle that says in general, can't you see that here, now, it's wrong?

**Joe J:** *What's the difference between—how does it look different when you appeal to theory and then when you appeal to principle?*

**Peter:** These two—the differentiation is not as clear-cut as with all of the others. I take it a theory is a set of principles—that's what I have in mind here, that a theory is a body of principles. You can accept principles separately, without accepting any of the theories that incorporate them, and in fact, the general way one justifies a theory is to point out that it integrates a bunch of acceptable principles, that is, principles that are acceptable in their own right. But as I say, the separation is not that great, and usually, you get one or the other but not both. There is a sharp division here [**between Competence and the rest**], and it's of that sort [**he adds Q and A to Fig. 7, p. 113**]*—*that here you're dealing with something that enables you to understand a certain kind of question, and here you're dealing with a variety of proposed answers.

**Steve A:** *Would you make that distinction again?*

**Peter:** Yeah. Here [**Competence**], you're dealing with something that enables you to understand a certain kind of question, whereas from here [**Principle**] on down, you're dealing with a variety of proposed answers. That is,

here [**Judgment**] is my answer here now; here [**Custom**] our usual answer; here [**Theory**] our systematized answer, not merely for this but for other occasions. So these deal with answers, but if you couldn't even understand the question, like "what's the right thing to do here?," none of these answers would make sense, and they would appear arbitrary. So the competence to understand the question of what's right, is it true, is it beautiful, etc., has a kind of priority over any kind of answer.

**Daniel:** *That's for the person who's asking the-question?*

**Peter:** Just generally, logically.

**Wynn:** *In the case of common identification of particulars, like, "This is my hand before me," it seems to me, usually, if there's any doubt about that, the first move is to go to the competence thing. Wittgenstein's pointed out that if somebody doubts this is your hand before you, you can always say, "Look closer", and he's building a bridge directly to competence: that if you have no reason to doubt it, and you still don't see it, then you're not exercising competence.*

**Peter:** Things like that we don't—as I say—have theories about. We don't even have customs.

**Wynn:** *We just go right to the issue of what you see.*

**Peter:** Right. On the other hand, there are things that we do have theories about. For example, we have theories about motivation, and we have theories about knowledge. We have theories about evidence, and we have a lot of customs and principles dealing with those things, so those, when you're asked for a justification, you will normally touch a few bases here before you reach the point of saying, "But can't you see?"

**Wynn:** *I think often it probably happens that because a lot of these questions do have a place in other social practices and theories, we're tempted to go to them for justification, as opposed to simply saying, "Can't you see?" And you get into a lot of verbiage, because you have that liberty.*

**Peter:** Except you don't want to be too quick in going to "can't you see?," because if the answer is "no", that has a tendency to start fights or bring things to a standstill. You're better off appealing here, in the hopes that you can get agreement, because if you can, then you don't have to go further.

**Joe J:** *It's interesting to me to see the relation between this one and the one about ultimate answers, how they show up with crystal clarity dealing with little kids. I try to tell my three-and-a-half-year-old daughter why she shouldn't*

*hit my one-year-old daughter with something big and heavy. She keeps asking, "Well, why shouldn't I?" I take her right up the ladder*

**Peter:** What do you tell her?

**Joe J:** *Well, usually, she's willing to accept, "We don't treat people that way."*

**Peter:** And when she isn't, what do you tell her?

**Joe J:** *When she isn't, I say, "Well, it's just wrong to treat people that way." And if she says, "Why?," usually the move I make is, "Well, how would you like to be hit like that?" It's the only way that I can get through to her.*

**Wynn:** *If she doesn't understand that last move, do you hit her?*

**Joe J:** *Well, she does. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Okay. So the last one is a kind of a prompting, a sort of auxiliary, "Can't you see what's wrong with that? How would you like to—"

**Joe J:** *Well, usually, it's just, "Well, how would you like it?" and sometimes she can get that. But most of the time, she gets that we don't want her to do it.*

**Peter:** That's not what you want her to get!

**Joe J:** *That's right.*

**Peter:** What you want her to get is that that's not what you do.

**Joe J:** *The same thing comes with justification of—she went through some ###, why was I doing something with some food I was making. "Why are you doing that? Why are you doing that? Why are you doing that?" and I finally just cracked down and said, "That's the way I like it, that's all." It was indicating to me that she is—as long as I keep giving her reasons, she's perfectly willing to keep asking why. But also, when I say, "That's just what I want to do," or "That's the way I like it," she's perfectly willing to accept that, because she clearly understands that perfectly.*

**Peter:** My impression is that this "why" stage is where children are mastering intentional action and a lot of the ramifications. Some day we may get around to doing a developmental study on that.

Now the appeal to competence is the thing that we had going in saying that you can criticize without being able to give the back-ups. Imagine saying, "Well, yeah, I know this, and I know this and this, but can't you see that that was an awkward performance?" If I can't give you a theory and a description that shows (in terms of that theory) it was awkward, if I can't give you a principle that governs awkwardness in plays, and then show you

that this fits that, I can still say, “But can’t you see that it was awkward?” And then I might do some prompting. I can say, “Remember when he said such-and-such?” or “Remember how it was when the ghost appeared?” But that’s not a justification. That’s just prompting you in the hopes that your competence will take hold.

**Wynn:** *In therapy, oftentimes you’ll get descriptions like that from a client. He’ll describe something as awkward, and you’ll say—you’ll want more than just that statement, because you weren’t there; and you, in fact, couldn’t see it, so you end up having to ask him things like, “How are you using the word ‘awkward’?” You want more conversation, at least—not a justification, but other descriptions under which it is that sort of thing also.*

**Peter:** And sometimes you can get them, and sometimes you can’t.

Let’s introduce a notion, and let’s call it “a mystic”, and define for our purposes a mystic as somebody who operates directly from here [Competence], without passing through these intervening stages. So the things he does are completely intuitive. He sees it as “what is to be done” without being organized through Principle, Theory, Custom, but goes directly from Competence to Judgment.

**Wynn:** *Making a special case with mystics—mystics potentially have gone, usually, through all those other things in the course of—like I’m trying to find the difference between a mystic and, say, somebody who is totally illiterate—*

**Peter:** Some mystics aren’t totally illiterate.

**Wynn:** *—on the grounds on which a person in fact didn’t have Customs, Theories, or Principles that he was even aware of as ways of dealing with facts—that usually there’s a notion of renunciation.*

**Peter:** Sometimes, and sometimes not. What happens in these cases is that you get exactly the kind of liberation that I talked about in connection with criticism. If you’re not burdened with a given principle, theory, or set of customs, you have a lot more leeway in what you do. You can be more creative, you can exploit possibilities that would have been cut off from you by virtue of any or all of these. The cost is: you can get into an awful lot of trouble, too. That is, what’s embodied in our customs, theories, and principles are a lot of safeguards against getting into the kind of the troubles that human beings can get into. So you’re giving up the safeguards when you achieve that kind of freedom, and if you don’t really have the competence, you’re just going to



cut your own throat. So, in effect, you really would have to *be* a saint in order to get away with acting purely on competence.

**Joe J:** *It's probably why a lot of the mystics' schools have a very strong custom of a master who certifies the prospective mystic as having either achieved or not achieved enlightenment.*

**Peter:** And that itself is a kind of safeguard, but it's a different kind from these. You have something of that sort, again, in professional training. When you get certified as a clinical psychologist, part of what's going on is that your competence has been certified. It's not merely your mastery of principles and theories, etc., and you're being certified as somebody who's competent to make his own judgments, to do things on his own, so there's a certain element of that. But in any case, even when you have all of these, there is necessarily an underlying competence that makes all of these things make sense. Because if there's not a question of a certain kind to be answered, there's no such theory, principle, or custom to give *that* kind of answer. If there's no question of "What's the right thing to do?" or "Is this statement true?", then we have no use for any custom, theory, or principle that gives us answers to that question. So the understanding of the question is primary, and any ways of arriving at answers are secondary. You can always bypass those to the relevant competence with a "Can't you see?" or some equivalent thereof. And, as you can see, it's a chancy move.

Let me mention another series, which is a variation on "How do you know?" This is a—

**Bob:** *I'm uncomfortable with saying that the answers are secondary, sometimes, to understanding the question, in that it seems there's no way to demonstrate an understanding whether that's an answer. If you ask me a question, and I constantly give you incorrect answers, you have a reason to say, "You don't understand the question."*

**Peter:** Only if they were not merely incorrect but irrelevant.

**Bob:** *But still, your judgment about my understanding of the question somehow is—you need answers to know whether I—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but you don't need right answers. At most, you need to be able to distinguish between better and worse answers, or more and less adequate answers. And if you can make that kind of distinction, neither of us may have the ultimate answer, but we still have the competence to raise that kind

of question and give answers that *are* answers, even though they're not perfect answers or foolproof, etc.

**Bob:** *I guess I was just sort of—when you mentioned certifying clinical competence, the way that that happens is by things like dissertations and comps and all sorts of answers, and that's the only avenue that you have to seeing whether people understand the questions. So to say that the answers are somehow secondary to the understanding of the question—*

**Peter:** No, but that's a different issue. When it comes to finding out whether somebody has competence, or deciding whether he has competence, indeed, you're right. There's very little that can substitute for having him recognize when he's facing that kind of question, and generating a good answer. But that gets at the issue of "How do you tell?" or "How do you decide that somebody has the competence?" And that's not what I had in mind in saying that this is primary. What I had in mind in saying that this is primary is that you can raise a certain kind of question; and understand it; and generate answers that you recognize have limitations as answers; and never have a fully satisfactory answer; except that there can be a variety of answers, and they all make sense because they are answers to this question. So the understanding of the question has that kind of priority—that it doesn't depend on already having a good answer. It just depends on being able to recognize that *kind* of answer, but you don't have to have an answer. So that for example when I say, "What's the right thing for me to do here?"; I don't have to know or have an answer to that. It's because I already understand the question that I can then be in a state of perplexity and go look for answers. Whereas if I didn't understand the question, what would I make of your advice if you said, "The right thing to do is console him in his pain." How would I understand that if I didn't understand the question, "What's the right thing to do?" Then I would have to think that you were advising me to do something in my self-interest or something like that.

**Bob:** *I guess then that—to give a particular example, of certifying competence in clinical work, it seems to me that that kind of certification has nothing to do with competence in understanding the question. If I showed my understanding of the question by giving a series of rather poor but enlightening answers—enlightening so that you'd say, "Yeah, you know that question. You just don't know any of the answers," that certainly wouldn't count as competence on that.*

**Peter:** We would call it "sensitivity", then. But part of how you show your competence is to be able to recognize when you've got that kind of question.

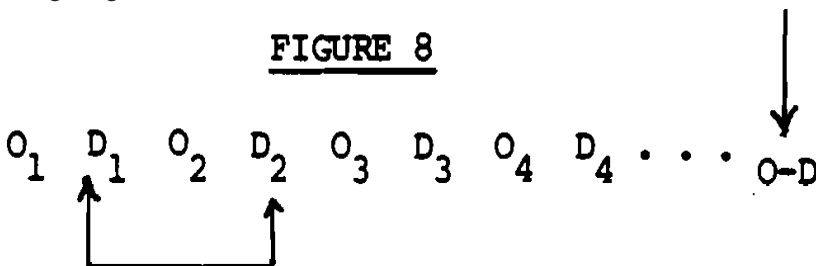
It's not merely that one poses you with a question and here's what kind of answers—one just turns you loose and sees if you can recognize when you're dealing with that kind of issue. And that, too, is an expression of competence. Now, if you don't come up with good answers, then we say, "He's sensitive, but he's not very skilled." And that cuts it exactly right: that you are sensitive, you have that kind of competence to understand the issue and raise the questions, but you're not very skilled at a certain kind of other thing, namely, at producing good answers or maybe at acting on them.

**Wynn:** *Your instructions for the two cases, when—in which you ask the question and give different answers, are very different. If you said to me, "Fourteen and twelve," and I'd say, "Red,"—your way of dealing with me is different than if you say, "Fourteen and twelve," and I say, "Twenty-five." In the one case you say, "Be more careful with your addition." In the other case, you figure I don't understand the question.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Or think of going over a therapy tape and I say, "Why did you do that?", and I see an issue of arousing his anxiety, and you say, "Well, because I was trying to teach him that such-and-such." And I'll hear that, and I'll say, "You're overlooking the issue of anxiety." And so then I call it to your attention and hope that the next time something like that happens, and I ask you, you'll mention the anxiety issue, too. That's like Joe saying, "How would you like somebody to do that to you?" It's a prompt, to call something to mind now, but the thrust is to get you sensitized, too, that there is such a thing to be asked, to be looked for.

Okay, let's go to a variation on "How do you know?" Think of starting with an empirical observation—what's the example we had? "There's a car going down the street."

**FIGURE 8**



So you have an observation, and then you have an observation report. And this [ $D_1$ ] is the one that you raise a question about, and you say, "How do you know?" or you say, "Are you sure?", and then I check. So suppose you say, "Are you sure?" Now the report is a description, so let's call it  $D$ . And you check on the description by making a new observation [ $O_2$ ].

So if the question is, “Are you sure there’s a car going down the street?” Then I look again, and I say, “Yeah, it looks like a car, it’s shaped like a car, and it’s moving.” Now what it turns out is that the only way the observation will provide a check on my first description is if you give a second description [ $D_2$ ]. You see, the observation won’t do it alone. You have to describe what you observed, here, and then this description serves a check on that one. So then I look again and I say, “It looks like a car, and it is moving,” that’s the description in question. That wasn’t just observation; it was a description based on that observation.

Then you say, “Are you sure it looked like a car?” I say, “Well, let me take another look.” So there’s a new observation, but that, too, has to be accompanied by a third description [ $D_3$ ], and I say, “Yeah, it had a body and wheels and tires, and I could see the wheels moving around.” So that does indeed check on whether it looked like a car and whether the thing was moving.

You say again, “Are you sure?” and I’m very obliging, so I take another look. **[laughter]** In each case, the observation checks on the description, but the observation requires a new description, and the new description, then, becomes something you can check on, and so that sets up a new observation, which sets up a new description. And you can see how that’s again a familiar sort of sequence. Formally, you can just keep doing that.

Well, you come to an end. And you don’t know where you will come to an end, and not everybody will come to the same end or after the same number of stages, but we can say with confidence, “You will come to an end.” And then we can ask, “How do things work in the end?” And the answer is, “You bounce back.” What happens is that you use the description to check the observation. In here, you’re using the observation to check on the description. When you reach the end, you’re going to use the description to check on the observation. Because my last answer to “Are you sure?” will not be to observe and then give you another report. Instead, the equivalent of, “I’m playing tennis and this is how it’s done” is “That’s what we call ‘black.’” There’s no more ultimate way of checking on whether what I see is black, than to say, “That’s what we call ‘black.’” So in the interior of the sequence, you check on descriptions with observations, but when you reach the boundary conditions, you check the observations with the description. And that’s the typical sort of thing, that at the boundary, you have to do something different that makes it not just an arbitrary stopping place.

**Wynn:** *But you could choose any spot along the road to do that move. You could simply say—*

**Peter:** You may run out of answers any time.

**Wynn:** *No, I'm suggesting something a little different. You say to me that there's a car going out there, and I say, "How do you know that?" and you say to me something of two sorts, either, "Can't you see it?" or "That's what we call those" or "Do you have any reason to believe otherwise?"*

**Peter:** Yeah. Those are different sequences. I'm stipulating that it's *this* kind of sequence.

**Wynn:** *The trouble with that kind of sequence is that instead of going to each of those descriptions, which are just buying time and providing more information, you could instead simply say, "This is as far as I'm going to go, and, in fact, this is far enough."*

**Peter:** Yeah.. That's why I say that at some point, you reach the end, and that point may be here [ $D_1$ ]*—that's the degenerate case. But however long you do it, you're going to have to stop somewhere, and the way you stop is with this reflection: that you reverse the order and use the description to check the observation, instead of the other way around.*

Now, saying, "That's what we call 'black,'" is a perfectly good answer. It's a perfectly good reply there. And yet it's different from in here, where, when the question is raised, I go out and make a new observation. "That's what we call 'black'" —notice, it's an appeal here [ $O-D$ ], but it's also implicitly—suppose you tried this answer instead of "That's what we call 'black'": "It looks black to me, and I can tell that sort of thing when I see it." There I'm bypassing this [**custom**] and going up here [**competence**]. So it's a Maxim 1 type statement. It's the kind of thing that I have the competence to judge, and I'm doing that now. And that could be introducing, "Are you sure it was a car?" "Yeah, I saw it." But notice that you can do this, and we're often tempted to, that we don't—that we stop at the first move. We do generate these kinds of things. And if our socialization is proper, we don't start this kind of sequence arbitrarily. We start it when there is some issue, when there is some question, when there is some point to doing it. And then these come to an end, and at the end, there is something different that makes it not just arbitrary.

Again, think of "What are you doing that for, or what's the value of it, what's it good for?" You can see that you're going to get the same thing as in

“Why are you doing that?” So questions—”What value is it? What’s it good for? Why are you doing it? What are you doing by doing that? How do you know that? Are you sure?”—all of these will get you the kind of sequences that I’m talking about.

**Bob:** *Is there any such thing as a mixed sequence, or are those just like, “Why are you doing X?” “I’m doing it because of Y.” “How do you know that?” “Well, I—”*

**Peter:** You can construct mixed sequences, but it doesn’t add to the methodology, because each of those sequences—either you happen to drop it after asking once, or you can pursue it to the end, which is what we’re dealing with, like we’re dealing with a pure one.

**Bob:** *I was thinking of—like a clinical supervision. “Why did you do that?” “I did it because he was really very anxious.” “How do you know that he was anxious?” “He did this, that, and the other thing” and—you know—go on to some of those other questions. And whether that makes sense as one sequence: would that bring you to a boundary—competence—*

**Peter:** No. It means that these are—this is a dialogue between two people, and the person who asks will generally ask until he’s satisfied and then will stop asking. So if I said, “Why did you do that?” and you said, “Well, he looked anxious,” that may satisfy me. If it doesn’t, then I’ll say, “How do you know he was anxious?” And if your answer to that satisfies me, then I’ll stop there and come back, etc. The point of these sequences is: how far can you go that way? If I wasn’t satisfied, how unsatisfied could I be? Where would it end? What are the resources that I’m drawing upon when I ask this, and then this, and stop? The resource is given by the entire chain. [tape change] I guess we’d better take ten minutes.

[Conversation during the break.]

**Wynn:** *On that space and mass question, it’s that space is curved in the presence of mass. Without the addition of mass in the concept, you don’t posit the curve. But as there is mass, it is curved.*

**Peter:** No. You wouldn’t talk about empty space as space, either.

**Wynn:** *That must be kind of interesting: here’s a scientific process in which you come out with concepts that are counter to Maxim 1, in the sense that have no reason ever to suspect it was like that, but you follow the line of logic, and it will get you there. And indeed, you would get to the point where you would then see in the sense of being able to—*

(**sound overlaid with general conversation in the room**).

**Peter:** Jane has a story to tell about the curious owl.

**Jane:** *I'm trying to remember the way it ends.*

**Peter:** Just get started.

**Jane:** *Do you remember how it ends?*

**Peter:** Just get started and end it, and—

**Jane:** *The owl, instead of asking “Who?” is continually asking “Why?” and its parents get very frustrated with him and try to send him on to other wise animals to try to get the answer to the “why” questions that he’s always asking, to settle his asking, because they figure he’s going to acquire a lot of knowledge. But I can’t remember how it ends. [laughter]*

**Peter:** That’s probably how it ends.

**Wynn:** *Where’s the punch line?*

**Jane:** *I figured Pete had it. [general conversation]*

**Peter:** Let me bring in a different sort of notion. I call this one, “Fixing Carburetors”. Imagine you’re going to teach somebody how to fix a carburetor, and he doesn’t know the first thing about carburetors, so you’re starting from scratch. Typically, what you would do—in the beginning, you would tell him exactly what to do. Since he doesn’t know anything about carburetors, you say, “Look, this is a screw, this is another screw, and this is the barrel, and this is a valve, and now what you do is: you take this screw, and you unscrew it, and you lay the screw over here, and you do this for each of these four screws,” etc. You are emphasizing in a positive way instructions of what to do.

Now, after a while, after some amount of this, the person will get to where he knows a screw and a barrel and a valve, etc., and he’s been through the whole routine some number of times, so he has a general idea of what’s going on. Somewhere along that line, then, at that point, you switch from telling him what to do to telling him what not to do. So that instead of saying things like, “This is a screw,” you say, “You’ve got to remember to tighten the screws in order. You’ve got to remember not to set that flutter valve too tight.” So typically, in instruction, you pass from a stage of saying positively, “Do this, this, and this,” to a set of negative injunctions of, “Don’t make this mistake, don’t make that mistake, don’t make that mistake.”



The reason is that in the first case, what you want him to do is to do it at all. If you had somebody who didn't know the first thing about carburetors, and you just turned him loose in the garage, what he would do—most likely—wouldn't qualify as fixing a carburetor at all, much less doing it right. So your concern initially is to get him to do it at all. So you give him the positive instructions for doing it. And what you're doing is exercising your judgment for that particular sample of how you do it. But in the end, you want him to have the kind of judgment that would enable him to reproduce your kinds of success. Which means that he is not going to have simple prescriptions of what to do, because there are none. If you're going to fix carburetors, you've got to be able to fix a carburetor in whatever condition, for whatever car, etc., over a fairly wide range. So you're not going to be able to have a cookbook that tells you exactly what to do, and people don't need that kind of thing. So in the beginning, positive things to get him to do it; in the end stages—you might say, the refinements—advice about how not to do it wrong, advice about common errors that he is to avoid, and perhaps how.

Now use that paradigm, and apply it to the problem of how to run your life. Initially, when you're a small child and are growing up, by and large, what you get is the "do this, do this, do this, because this is how we do things here, this is what's right, do this because—" And that gets you into the game, as it were. It gets you to where you're living life in kind of the same way that one does in that society.

Then, when it comes to refinements, nobody can tell you precisely what to do. Instead, what you get is a lot of advice from a lot of different sources about how not to do it wrong. We're back to the fact that transcendental theories, to a large extent, consist of either statements or resources for telling somebody how not to do it wrong, rather than programs and prescriptions for how to do it right. So that fact depends not merely on that we can criticize or we can't describe. It's also responsive to some of the gross facts of learning, that initially you can use positive suggestions of what to do, but when it comes to the higher levels of achievement and skill-development, you mainly proceed by learning how not to do it wrong. So by the time you get to the age where you are explicitly concerned about how to run your life, you're past that first stage of learning, past the stage of doing it at all, and you're into the issues of how not to do it wrong.

**Jane:** *How not to go wrong? Or just, if you do these things, you will have gone wrong?*

**Peter:** Either way. If you do X, Y, and Z you will have gone wrong—that, in effect, translates into advice about how not to live your life wrong, namely, don't do X, Y, and Z.

So it's more than just accidental, then, that what you find in transcendental theories, to a large extent, is of a critical rather than descriptive sort; to a large extent is warnings rather than prescriptions. And to a large extent is unsystematic. You think of how systematic you can be about how not to fix a carburetor wrong, about the most you can get is a check-list of common mistakes—you say, “Well, I won't make this one, I won't make this one.” And that's a far cry from having systematized the competence of somebody who knows how to fix carburetors. So you can have two kinds of things: general principles for how to fix carburetors, and then check-lists of common mistakes. Neither of the two exhausts the competence of somebody who knows how to fix carburetors.

Now what would qualify as a mistake in living your life? What would qualify as doing it wrong, or failing, or having a deficit? Here, we're away from the methodological aspect and into the substantive aspect, because for this kind of question, the answer depends on what your subject-matter is. How you can go wrong in fixing a carburetor is quite different from how you can go wrong in writing a play or how you can go wrong in living your life. So for a given subject-matter, like criticism of life, there will be certain kinds of concepts which have the ### as being relevant and which will be embodied in our principle series; and questions relating to that kind of criticism, which means that that's the kind of thing you'll be finding in transcendental theories. If we were starting from scratch on that task, if there were not already in existence transcendental theories, what could we come up with just from what we know?

**Joe J:** *Start from the perspectives, and consider the kinds of restrictions that would result from various inabilities with each of the perspectives and balancing them. At least, that's where I'd start.*

### **FIGURE 9**

#### **Perspectives**

**Hedonic**  
**Prudential**  
**Ethical**  
**Esthetic**

**Peter:** [at blackboard] Okay, what would you do with those?

**Joe J:** *Well, I'd consider what happens—in what ways a person would be restricted if he didn't—if he had each of those perspectives less than fully. Somebody who lacked—who didn't have a good handle on the hedonic, wouldn't get much joy out of life, wouldn't have a very good time. Somebody who didn't have a good handle on the prudential perspective would wind up screwed in one of the ways that people get screwed. Ethical would be various degrees of psychology, and esthetic would be—I can't think of a word for it, but—there are various kinds of fittingness you cannot have.*

**Peter:** So this is a deficit approach rather than a choice approach? That is, if you're deficient in these kinds of competence—

**Joe J:** *Those are the ways that people can go wrong, that's why I start looking there.*

**Wynn:** *Could you talk about somebody renouncing a perspective? I'm wondering if you can renounce, say, the hedonic perspective. That strikes me as the one that's the most often talked about in that form. I'm not sure that's what's really happening, when a person makes that renouncement, but—*

**Peter:** No, you don't renounce the perspective; you renounce the priority. You don't say, "I'm going to stop thinking about things as pleasurable or not." You say, "I'm going to stop choosing things on the basis of their being pleasurable."

**Wynn:** *Although the claim is sometimes made that "I'm going to stop even seeing things that way." I don't know how a person goes about doing that, except to feel guilty when he does, but—*

**Peter:** No. You might be able to achieve a state where you in fact were missing that outlook, but I don't think I'd call that "renunciation". It's not simply a matter of choice; even when you decide that you're going to get along without it, you have yet to accomplish it. That fits back into "if I decide I'm going to be generous, and I've been stingy all my life, I can resolve that and announce it, but it has yet to be accomplished." And its accomplishment is more than an announcement or resolution.

**Wynn:** *This set of perspectives is a good way of going about looking at cultural psychopathology, in the sense that certain cultures end up with almost necessary rankings of which of these should count, and that can get the members into trouble.*

**Peter:** Let's do some background on this. Why does this have any kind of appeal in this context? Why do these notions have any kind of appeal for the job of criticism of how people live their lives? Remember that what they are initially presented as are bases for choosing among behaviors. They're not, in their original presentation or definitions, connected to ways of living. So we need to ask, given that they're presented as bases for choosing among behaviors, how come they're relevant to criticism of ways of living?

**Steve A:** *Since they're related necessarily to an appeal to principles, theories, customs, and judgments, and not to competence and perspective—*

**Peter:** These *are* competences. That is, to say that you've mastered the hedonic perspective is to say you're competent to choose among behaviors on the basis on pain, pleasure, etc.

**Wynn:** *That's a different logical category, though, from the category of behavior itself, because there's no behavior that's pure and simply hedonic behavior.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Now remember, these are bases for choosing among behaviors, and they're competences in that they are something that a person masters.

**Wynn:** *But you'd suspect that a deficit in a behavior potential wouldn't be talked about primarily in terms of a deficit in behavior, but a deficit in discrimination, or limited to "did he even want to do that?", or to identify that as such. It's a—*

**Peter:** Okay, but how's that connected to—

**Wynn:**—*to have a deficit in the world, because it's not to be able to see the world in that way. It's to lack vision.*

**Peter:** Yeah, you can be blind in these ways. In fact, traditionally, a psychopath was called somebody who was morally blind.

**Joe J:** *Where I started—to get there I started with the definition of psychopathology as a significant restriction on your ability to engage in action, and that just seemed like a natural division of the significant deficits a person could have.*

**Peter:** We still need some filler, though. You might say, intuitively, it's obvious that these are relevant, but if you've got to fill in how come, what would you fill in?

**Jane:** *The trouble is also that those aren't real good in the sense—kind of advice—they kind of are perhaps a way to categorize the ways that people do go wrong but not as good in describing how to avoid doing that.*

**Peter:** Yeah. So far, they look taxonomic rather than instructional.

**Jane:** *And they do ### neatly taxonomical.*

**Peter:** Well, look, one of the things—since these are bases for choosing among behaviors, one of the ways to draw a connecting link is: what’s the relevance of choosing among behaviors to living a certain way? The answer would be: one specifies how somebody is living, in large part, by specifying the kind of choices he makes for his behaviors. So that anything that’s relevant to choosing behaviors is going to be relevant to how somebody is living. I think that will at least provide a minimum link between these notions [**the perspectives**], and dealing with how somebody is living. The connecting link is choices. In effect, somebody who’s living his life wrong is somebody who’s made some wrong choices, and if he’s made some wrong choices, then the wrongness of his choices can be reflected in this kind of schema. It may not be the most illuminating one, but you can pretty much guarantee that it will be reflected in this schema.

**Suzanne:** *I’m not sure that I understand what you mean by “wrong choice”. He made the choice—you mean, literally, he made the wrong choice? Otherwise, it’s not wrong for him. He made the choice and didn’t make it knowing it was the wrong choice.*

**Peter:** Remember, we’re dealing with an Actor and a Critic, and the Critic says of the Actor that “he made the wrong choice”, and from the Critic’s point of view, it probably doesn’t matter whether he knew about it or not. It was the wrong choice. So from the Critic’s point of view, he’s done something wrong here [**choice of behaviors**], that can be expressed in these terms [**the perspectives**]. The choice he made was wrong because it was not sufficiently prudential, or it tended to an over-emphasis of the hedonic perspective, so this would be the way the Critic would ###. It would provide a very special problem in the case where the Critic said, “And he knew that that’s what he was doing, and he still did it.”

How far can we get, pursuing this kind of thing? What do we do? Taxonomize? Or look for actual sets of practices and then classify them here? Or what? How would you carry that forward, this general idea that wrong living can be reformulated as wrong choices, and wrong choices can be formulated as the wrong management of these four perspectives? Is that a dead end now, or can we get some mileage out of it, or what?

**Sherry:** *Would you repeat that?*

**Peter:** No. Yeah. If somebody is living his life wrong, you can formulate that fact as, “He’s made some wrong choices.” You can formulate the fact of having made wrong choices as having managed these perspectives wrongly, that is, of having mis-managed them. Then the question is: can we go further with that, or can we exploit it at that level of description, or what?

**Terry:** *In terms of psychotherapeutic systems, you get sort of a mixture of something like that. For example, a Freudian would give you warnings in terms of if you’re consciousness is being dissociated from your unconsciousness, and at a certain level of dissociation, you’re starting to risk archetypal eruptions and things like that. And so according to the implicit ontology of a hedonian position, or something like that, there would be warnings that would map out along those perspectives, but not neatly into any of those categories. Because the ontological substrate, so to speak, is really generating those warnings and the type of warnings, and it’s a mixture of all of them.*

**Peter:** Okay, suppose instead of talking about ontological substrates, we talk about human nature.

**Terry:** *That’s what I’m talking about.*

**Peter:** And then say: one way of formulating substantive notions that will then fit here is to have a formulation of human nature, and then say, “Right living consists of unhampered expression of human nature.” It’s a little crude, but you can see the logic of that now. If you can specify something as being “human nature”, then certainly a face-value candidate for right living is to have those characteristics expressed in one’s behavior without hindrance or without distortion.

**Wynn:** *Would that be different than a way of life, in that it’s easier for me to accept—*

**Peter:** Yeah, that would be simply a formal criterion, rather than a way of life, because then you can imagine a variety of ways of life—maybe—that would all fit this one picture of human nature.

**Wynn:** *I’m trying to tease out a little different problem, in that I get the feeling that there’s a difficulty in starting with wrong ways of living a way of life, because I can see how, for instance, if you want to start at this point, the point where you’re talking about human nature, that you could see ways of life as being contrary to the expression, so to speak, of human nature, so it could probably be more primary than—I’m not trying to state yet what it would mean to live a way of life wrongly, but I can see how it could make sense that the way of*

*life that you are living produces problems.*

**Peter:** Well, that's living it wrongly—unless you believe that one ought to have those problems.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but I guess what I'm saying is that if a person lives a certain way of life, not that he ought to have those problems, but that he will have those problems. There are certain ways of life that are tantamount to having them.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but you wouldn't call that way of living—you wouldn't call that life a failure unless you believed that one oughtn't to have those problems, or that there's something else wrong with that.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but I'm just trying to pull out the fact that there might be a tension between identifying human nature as one of your concerns that would necessarily fit into the kind of concerns you get by talking about ways of life. I can see how a way of life that a person is, consciously or unconsciously, trying to live could be antagonistic to human nature.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but then we would decide it was wrong. We would see it as a failure.

**Wynn:** *A failure to live a way of life? Or to live that way of life? That's the grammar business again.*

**Peter:** A failure in living your life. Think of the existential notion of inauthenticity as exactly that: that you're living in a way that has a certain coherence formally, but it doesn't fit *you*. Well, if you have a general picture of human nature, you'll have a conceptual criterion for which ways of living are authentic and which not. And a way of living that violates human nature, you're going to say is inauthentic—period. What can happen is that if you have different people with different notions of human nature, and then the associated ways of living, then for Theorist A, the way of living that goes with Theorist B's notion of human nature may violate A's notion of human nature.

**Wynn:** *So as soon as we end up talking about human nature, we end up talking about ways of life anyway.*

**Peter:** There is some kind of correspondence, I think that if you're willing to talk about human nature, then either you are committed, or you ought to be willing to talk about ways of living rightly versus wrongly, because the notion of human nature gives you a conceptual criterion for rightly or wrongly. You don't have to use that criterion, but it's available.



**Wynn:** *As soon as you end up talking about human nature, you end up talking about manifestations of that, and that gets you grounded in ways of life.*

**Bob:** *What about the people who say that the right way of living is, in fact, against human nature, that humans by nature are greedy and malicious and all sorts of horrible—*

**Wynn:** *Seething cauldrons of wickedness.*

**Bob:** *—And that the right ways to live are fights against the expression of human nature?*

**Peter:** No. There you get a division into lower nature and higher nature or animal nature and human nature. It's got to be part of human nature to be able to achieve, or to be motivated to strive against, these urges, drives, temptations, weaknesses. Otherwise, why would it be appropriate for people? Why would it even be possible to try? Why would it make sense to try? In one sense or another, it's got to be fitting for me to try to overcome all of these original-sin, animal-nature type things, and if it's fitting for me as a person, then by gosh, that's part of human nature to have that be fitting. As I say, traditionally the division is higher and lower nature, or human nature and animal nature.

**Bob:** *Could I think it was unfitting and yet still considered to be the right way of living? Like I really consider myself a hedonist, but I go to a monastery to try to fight that? I don't see that as a spontaneous and natural expression of my nature, but I still think it's the right thing to do?*

**Peter:** One thing: I didn't mention "spontaneous". I said, "What would be an expression?", and you have to be accepting it as a right way to live, or what's the motivation for fighting all of these other inclinations of yours? What you can say is that you appreciate what you get from the hedonic, etc., and you might even say that you're carried away by it, but that, then, fits the principle that in violating this principle of balance, etc., you're recognizing it even though, behaviorally, you're not implementing it. So it's something you accept even as you violate it. If you accept it that way, you have to be seeing it as the right way, in contrast to simply the way you're acting.

**Wynn:** *This kind of question comes from the tradition of man in a culture versus human nature, a kind of Freudian notion of renunciation, that civilization naturally creates repressive pressures, or that people get themselves into situations in which, because of the choices they make, they have to renounce, consciously or otherwise, certain kinds of things.*

**Peter:** One caution here: appropriateness, fittingness, right/wrongness is not a monolithic concept. You can make judgments of that sort in a variety of contexts, in varying sizes and degrees, so that you can say, “It’s fitting for people to act on hedonic motivations,” and at the same time say, “It’s fitting for people to control their hedonic motivations,” and those two are not obviously in conflict—that the fittingness of one sort simply says that people do have hedonic positions, and so there is a kind of fittingness there. But then, in the context of having a variety of inclinations and having to get them together, then one can say, “It’s fitting to exercise control over any of these, and not to get carried away by any of them.”

**Joe J:** *The more I look at it, the more the “inauthentic vs. authentic” issue seems to capture better the notion of living well your life, and I’m not sure how to put that together with how ### it really goes that well. Somehow it seems like—the original question was, “What does it mean for a person to go wrong in living his life?”, and it seems like inauthenticity versus authenticity is a better way to look at it. If a person has gone wrong, he’s inauthentic. I’m not sure that—*

**Steve A:** *That’s the same thing as saying something like, “Your expressions are not congruent with human nature.” It seems like the same notion: it’s just one word versus two phrases.*

**Peter:** No, it’s a different logical paradigm, because talking about authenticity is using an origin type of paradigm. The notion of “human nature” is an origin type of paradigm, that expressions that are consistent with the origin will be authentic.

**Daniel:** *What’s the difference?*

## FIGURE 10



**Peter:** If you’re looking at a life, and you’re judging it, you judge it on the basis of *it*—there’s something wrong with *it*. Whereas a notion of inauthenticity depends on having something else, namely, human nature, which you

can specify, and then your criterion over here for your life is whether it fits this other thing called Human Nature [HN], or your essential nature. So in the one case, you're criticizing the life directly; in the other case, you're criticizing it implicitly by referring it to something else called "nature" or "human nature" or "your nature" and then looking at the fit. And what I suggest is that this [HN] is mythological, and that we don't have access to it except as something that corresponds to this [**the rectangle**], that we don't have independent access to a "nature" or "my essential nature", that saying that I'm being inauthentic, that I'm doing something that violates my essential nature, must be equivalent to saying that there's something wrong with how I'm living, and *that we do* have access to. We have access to how I'm living; we don't have access to my inherent nature except via this [**rectangle**]. So even though we do talk this way, and it makes sense, I prefer to approach it here [**via the rectangle**], because that's what I know we do have access to, and this one [HN] is dubious in the sense of having access. And you can bring that out by taking the role of Actor and being faced with the decision what to do; and it's very hard to choose on the basis that it is or is not compatible with my inherent nature, because when you do have choices, you mainly have choices among things that all look good, but take you off in different directions. And then, phenomenologically, your ### is that "I would rather do this" or "This looks better than that" or "There's something wrong with this", and that's decisive, but not directly matching it against my essential nature. So it seems to me that visibly, we work with the living itself and with the choices themselves, rather than really working with this notion of "human nature" or "my nature". Even though we can talk in ways that set up the correspondence, our access is here [**rectangle**].

Let's stop for today, and continue.

## SEMINAR 4

22 July 1976

**Peter:** We wound up last time talking about human nature. And I think what I said was that the reference to human nature is a way of indirectly making reference to features of lifetimes and ways of living, formally by pointing to an origin, an actual life. If there is such a thing as human nature, it is going to be an expression of human nature, it is going to be an instance of the working out of human nature. And I said that if you can plug any content into the notion of human nature so that you could say, “Human nature is of this sort and not of that sort,” that would carry, in one way or another, some standards for judging whether somebody was living okay or not okay. But that fundamentally, you’re making judgments about the life, the way of living, and you don’t really have that direct access to human nature, to operate on that basis. You can add to that, that if you think of our three notions of ultimate, totality, and boundary condition, the notion of human nature carries two of those, namely, ultimate, and total. Human nature is ultimate; you can’t go beyond that. Talking about what does or doesn’t violate human nature, you have the notion of totality: *all* of human nature, human nature—the whole person. So the reference to human nature, then, brings with it—by connotation—two of our three primary notions.

One of the impressions I have from reading those eight chapters several times—did you ever try to read those eight chapters three times, quickly, in a row? What I was trying to pick up was a kind of an over-all sense of what people were saying just altogether, without keeping them separate, but what sorts of ideas were coming out in the entire eight chapters. I didn’t do too well with that. One of the ideas I did get is that there is a fairly strong theme in there concerning human nature and concerning whether there is such a thing as a self. You probably find that most explicitly in the Buddhist chapter, but it does appear here and there. I think part of the reason why there is that emphasis—if, indeed, there is—is that when you think of the kind of admonitions that are given to people, if you were giving somebody advice about how to run his life, one of the explicitly most common admonitions is, “Don’t be selfish.” Apparently one of the commonest ways that people go

wrong in living their lives is being selfish. And there is hardly any religion, any transcendental theory, any advice-giving institution, where the issue of being selfish, or being too selfish, doesn't have an important place.

**CJ:** *There are books about how to be selfish, too.*

**Peter:** If you take the Critics' advice to be unselfish, as an Observer's description that there is such a thing as being unselfish, and then you try to be unselfish, you can be in trouble, and then you need to read a book that tells you how to be selfish. [laughter] And that may help you break even and be where you were if you hadn't gone through any of that. But remember the Demon Businessman—that if you're thinking along one track and somebody criticizes one end, the common reaction is to go to the opposite extreme. So the movement from selfish to unselfish and then the reactions against unselfish back to selfish—it's that kind of movement.

One way of undermining people's selfishness is to say, "Look, you don't even *have* a self, so what's all this agonizing for?" And that would indeed—if you got people to see that—I think it would undermine their tendency to be selfish. On the other hand, it would have other consequences, probably. Certainly denying that there is such a thing as a self has other consequences than to get you to be less selfish, and you might summarize those consequences by saying, "Get *who* to be less selfish?"

**Joe J:** *I think you're being cryptic.*

**Peter:** Well, if somebody is trying to get me to be less selfish by telling me there's no such thing as me, who are they trying to get to be less selfish? In at least one of the Buddhist traditions, there are arguments designed to do the undercutting on the notion that there is such a thing as the self, and these arguments have a parallel in the history of psychology. I think it was William James who reported an experiment in which he introspected the contents of his consciousness, in order to locate that part of it which was his "self". And the line of reasoning, "Since we're aware of ourselves, and since what we're aware of is our consciousness, then my awareness of myself must consist of there being something in my consciousness of which I am aware, so all I've got to do is direct my attention there, and I will find it"—well, he did that, and what he found didn't make him happy, but he stuck to his guns, and what he reported was that our experience of oneself is really the experience of a tightness around the throat, and a certain sensation in one's chest. [laughter] That kind of result is enough to stop you short in your tracks.

The Buddhists have the same argument. They say, "Look. Direct your

attention to the contents of your consciousness—sights, sounds, smells, sensations, impressions, whatever is there. Examine it closely. Pay attention to it. And say, ‘Is there a self there? Do you find there a self?’ The answer will be, ‘No.’”

**Joe J:** *I get this image that that’s like having somebody take a pool, a body of water, and look within the body of water for the body of water. What would it be to find it there? It strikes me as the same logical error.*

**Peter:** You might arrive at that conclusion, but it would have to be as a conclusion, because that approach to the self certainly is not the most obvious one. It’s not obvious in your experience. You certainly seem to experience yourself, and everything else you experience, you can locate. You wouldn’t get that notion from the way the language of talking about self-awareness works, because that sounds again the same way: that you’re aware of yourself in the way that you’re aware of chairs or pains. It is built into our common experience, and the way we talk that it’s plausible to approach the knowledge of oneself along the lines of knowledge that we have about everything else. After all, knowledge is knowledge. So if we have knowledge of ourselves, and it’s immediate knowledge—it’s not deductive knowledge, it’s immediate knowledge—so it has all the characteristics of observational knowledge. All observational knowledge appears in our experience. Observational knowledge is knowledge of what we directly experience. So if we have direct experience of ourselves, what’s more obvious than that we experience ourselves? And if we do, we have to be able to find it among the contents of our experience. It’s very plausible, almost—you might say—obvious.

**Bob:** *But it’s among the contents of our experience in a different way than other things are. Sort of an analogy is to walk around campus here and say, “Now this is the psychology building and this is the history building and this is the physics building,” and go through and enumerate all the buildings, and at the end the guy says, “Yes, but where’s the university?”—looking for another sort of building. And, in some ways, the university is what we were seeing, and we directly experienced it, but it wasn’t simply another building. In the same way, you can look among the objects of your consciousness, and still be looking for the self as simply another object, and it’s a different sort of thing.*

**Joe J:** *The self is the totality of all those things.*

**Peter:** That argument has its attractions but there are some problems, namely, what’s the unity among the experiences that marks them as *a single person’s* experience, rather than, say, three persons’ experiences?

**Bob:** *The most obvious unity is ###.*

**Peter:** No, but that's exactly what's in question. If you didn't already know that they were the experiences of one person—in which case, you wouldn't have the problem of discovering that person—how could you tell from examining those things? How can you tell that of all the buildings in this square mile, these and only these, are the university, and those are not?

**Bob:** *There's nothing about the buildings that distinguishes this building as the university.*

**Peter:** Well, how could you tell? How does one, in fact, tell that these are? Because one observes other things that have that consequence. You observe people's behaviors in going to this building and this building but not to the house across the street, and you read things about classes that are in these buildings—there's a whole network of things which, when you put them together, it has a coherence that says, "These buildings, and only these, are the university, because these buildings are the ones which are involved in university activities." University activities are themselves distinguishable observationally—you don't have to distinguish them transcendently. You put all that together, you say, "Yeah, these things hang together as against those things," and that, then, works: that you can pick out a set of things that—the university is not just an extra building among these, but you can also tell from these things themselves which go together and which don't. The question is: can you do that with experiences? Can you do that with contents of consciousness? It's not clear that you can. As a matter of fact, in those cases that we call "multiple personalities", we're strongly tempted to do this kind of segregating and say, "These belong to this person and these belong to that person," and then somehow *sub rosa* add, "But they're really all the same person." But also, you can raise a different kind of question: "If I am just the totality of my experience, in that sense, what becomes of my body? My body is not experience, and yet if you remove my body, you would have removed me, too." You would then want to run the same argument, that there's an arm and an eye and an ear and a leg and all of the other parts, and "me" is not anyone of them, it's just all of them.

**Steve A:** *The same ###—your experience of that chair, or of a certain thing that's part of yourself, is similar to your experiences of arms, for instance. That's the way you have the exclusive—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but here's the thing, that you've now got "me" consisting of nothing but two sets of things which are logically quite incompatible or



disparate. Because the set of experiences is a very different kind of thing than the set of body parts, and somehow, I seem to be nothing but both of those. It's like you gave me something that was nothing but a set of numbers, but it's also over here nothing but a set of colors, and you wonder is there such a thing, or are we just making it up? Do you know of anything that could be both of those?

**Steve A:** *What's problematical about saying something like, "This totality of experience—"? Why do you hold onto that kind of body kind of ### you're talking about?*

**Peter:** Because we do. The main way I know you is that I can see you over there, in your material embodiment, not as a totality of experiences but as an embodied individual. So it would be hard for us to give up the notion of bodies and still maintain our notion of people. Certainly we don't work directly—

**Steve A:** *People themselves, I don't—*

**Peter:** See, when I look over at Dan, and I recognize him as Dan, it's not because I recognize that group of experiences.

**Steve A:** *You're not recognizing—all you have to do is say you're not recognizing Dan's self.*

**Peter:** Well, but I am. I'm recognizing Dan.

**Daniel:** *When we talk about science fiction—when we look at Star Trek, you don't need the bodies. For us to look at entities and know what they are and what's going on—you don't need any bodies for that. So there is something—*

**Steve A:** *It's your interpretation that you cannot see yourself?*

**Daniel:** *Because if I'm still interacting with you and you didn't see me—then all the ### self would be there, but my body wouldn't.*

**Bob:** *How about when he calls you up on the phone and you say, "Oh, Dan."?*

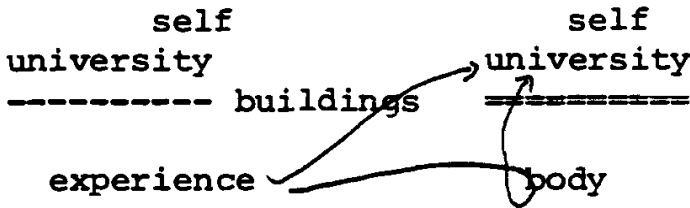
**Peter:** Then I'm responding to his voice, not his experiences.

**Bob:** *Go home and dream and ###.*

**Steve P:** *In a sense, you're responding to his experiences, because you're treating him as a body embodying a set of experiences that are distinguished—that you distinguish between somebody else's body incorporating another set of experiences, and you treat people differently based not on their body, necessarily, but as their experiences. The recognition is of physical features or a voice, but*

*the interaction is based on their experiences.*

**FIGURE 1**



**Peter:** Remember the analogy of the buildings [blackboard]. Here's these buildings, but the whole thing is the university. You could say that you recognize the university because you see the buildings, and those buildings are the university, but then over here [=]= you've got a different set of something else, and you want to call that the university, or to put the parallel [self...self]. You're talking as though you needed to make a connection here, when, in fact, we make the connection there. When I hear him on the phone, I don't respond to him as a set of experiences that the voice gives me a clue to. I respond to him as Dan, a self who has a voice and has experiences, but the self isn't those any more than it is the body. That's the whole point of the separation, is to say this is not *just* these things. So the self isn't *just* the body parts, any more than it is *just* the experiences. Otherwise the word would be totally redundant.

**Daniel:** *How do you get to that point where—who's implying that the self is the experiences or any one thing?*

**Peter:** The way we got there is via the formula that "we know ourselves directly". What we know directly is by observation. What we observe, we can identify and distinguish. Therefore, if we know ourselves directly, we ought to be able to distinguish and identify ourselves as one of the things among experiences. And then we find that the various things that we can do that with, in experience, namely, different experiences or different things that we experience, like body parts, those things fit that paradigm of knowledge. But self doesn't. So we need to construct a relation between self and these things that we do operate with that, in order to reconstruct why it's plausible that we say, "I know myself, and I know myself directly." Remember, the connection between this has got to not be inferential, not be indirect, because we start recognizing that our knowledge of ourselves is direct. That's why we're tempted to talk about observation, because observation is our paradigm for

direct knowledge. So when it turns out that what we know when we know ourselves is not the same as what we know when we know of a chair or a feeling of pain, then we have the problem. Either we give up saying that we know ourselves directly, or we have to explain how come we do, since our knowledge of ourselves does not fit our primary paradigm for direct knowledge.

**Terry:** *How about Inside/Outside?. The chair is Outside—you know it from that point of view, and to reify inside—that will be the entity. But there's no entity, so you're back to the start, substantializing ###.*

**Joe J:** *What strikes me is, self-knowledge—what knowledge of self I have—I notice that I treat myself as a calm kind of person, or I notice that I have assigned myself the following status and then acted on it.*

**Peter:** That *who* has?

**Joe J:** *I. "I" being an object of a certain type with various eligibilities which are codified—eligibilities for various relationships which are codified in some status.*

**Peter:** Is my knowledge of that object—

**Joe J:** *And since I'm a human, it also must include the status-assignment.*

**Peter:** Look: is my knowledge of that object an experiential knowledge? That is, do I experience that object in the way that I experience other objects, or what?

**Terry:** *I am a body in a special place.*

**Peter:** Yeah, particularly your ###.

**Terry:** *It sounds like "I can't see with my own eyes". And that's a special kind of place that everybody has as opposed to other people, or objects.*

**Peter:** Notice that we keep being driven away from this primary paradigm of simple observational knowledge into other, less direct sorts of notions, all of which have some problems with them.

**Jane:** *Isn't it the relationship among those experiences, and you're making some claim to knowing some relationship among them, in the same way that just observing the buildings in the university doesn't give you the university?*

**Peter:** Right. The summary of the problem is, "What holds that group together, that makes it or qualifies it as that?"

**Jane:** *That's exactly what you're saying, that it's knowledge of what it is that brings everything together, is why there's some ambiguity about the cases. So it's the same problem.*

**Steve A:** *When we say we know ourselves, it's more on the ladder—it's intuitive.*

**Peter:** There's no problem saying it's intuitive, any more than there's a problem of saying that when I walk through here, I really do see the university. I don't deduce it from the buildings—I see it directly. You could do the same thing with the self.

**Steve A:** *Okay, how about the question, "Do we know ourselves?" We say, "Yes, we know ourselves in the way that we know other things"—that turned up this whole question.*

**Peter:** That's why I say that part of the tension is that given the difficulties, we're inclined to seek a solution by saying, "We don't know ourselves after all," or if we want to insist still that we do know ourselves, then we look for other paradigms or auxiliary explanations, because the simple observational one doesn't seem to be working.

**Bob:** *Can we say directly that that chair is on the floor?*

**Peter:** Yes.

**Bob:** *So we can recognize a relationship, or we can see the relationship.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Essentially, all you ever observe is states of affairs. That's the rigorous and universal form. Grammatically speaking—there's some peculiar grammar in ordinary language. If there's a chair, it's grammatically correct to say, "I see the chair". So objects, processes, and events, grammatically you say, "I see it." I see that chair, I see that flash, I see that movement." States of affairs, you have to say, "I see that such-and-such is the case." Now once you have that last one—"I see that such-and-such is the case"—and you think about the other ones, what you recognize is that that last formulation always fits. It's not that I see a chair; what I see is *that* there is a chair there. It's not just that I see the flash; what I see is that there was a flash then and there. It's not just that I see a movement somewhere or other; I see that that movement occurred here, that way, there. So what is always established by observation is a fact. Grammatically, we can elide it into "I see a process, I see an object, I see an event".

**Bob:** *What is a relationship, then, in terms of process, state of affairs, event, object?*

**Peter:** Remember the rule that says, “A state of affairs is a totality of related objects and/or processes and/or events and/or states of affairs.”

**Bob:** *A relationship is—*

**Peter:** Relation is one of the fundamental terms. You don’t reduce it to others. But it enters in just that way, that a state of affairs is a set of related things, be they objects, processes, events, or states of affairs.

**Steve A:** *Is a relationship a state of affairs?*

**Peter:** No. That there is a relation *is* a state of affairs, but not—

**Steve P:** *So a university is a state of affairs that happens to consist of some—?*

**Peter:** No. That there is a university here is a state of affairs.

**Terry:** *Then relationships fall outside the reality-system in terms of its representational capacity.*

**Peter:** No. You just enter in in a different way. That there is a relation between the chair and the floor is a state of affairs, so the relation is not somehow outside that system. It just enters in in a different way than the chair and the floor enter.

**Jane:** *Given that relation, that is one of the things—you could discover it—*

**Peter:** By observation.

**Jane:** *By observation, but just as the self can be discovered to a degree by observation, but if that were the only thing involved—?*

**Peter:** Yeah, but see, if there were a relation among experiences such that any set of experiences that had that relation among them were the experience of a single self, then, indeed, you could argue, “Yeah, we establish that relation by observation”. But what relation among experiences could possibly qualify?

**Bob:** *Personally, I could say I can identify the relationship among all of my experiences—they’re related by that they’re mine, and I can distinguish mine from yours, or mine from—*

**Peter:** How can you distinguish yours from mine? [**laughter—general conversation**] That is, you don’t distinguish them observationally, do you, in the way that I establish the relation of the chair to the floor, observationally? You don’t establish yours from mine observationally.

**Joe J:** *There’s nothing to distinguish—*

**Jane:** —*about a novel and portraits of certain characters, one of the ways that we judge that as a literary work is also whether the characters hang together.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but look, whether the character hangs together comes back to, “Does his life hang together? Do his behaviors hang together?”—not “Do his experiences hang together?” Because one thing you can say about a fictitious character is, there is no experiencing. So it’s not his experiences that hang together; it’s his portrayed behavior that hangs together.

**Terry:** *How about his portrayed experiences? If he had an experience that seemed really anomalous with his character and his behavior patterns?*

**Peter:** What about that? You’re back to something of which the—

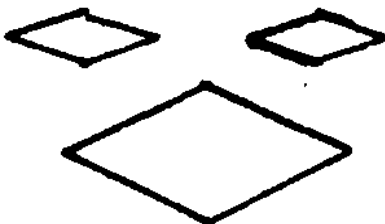
**Terry:** *You have some and suddenly he’s, like, having fantasies of being Mary Magdalene or something like that, it’s kind of weird.*

**Peter:** Okay, in what sense is behavior the expression of experience? What would you want to say—when you portray a character in a play, you portray his behavior, but you can also talk about his experience, and one of the things you require is that behavior be an expression of that experience, or it’s a bad play.

**Jane:** *Usually you use it the other way. You say that one behaves, and how he experiences what he’s—that’s usual, but ###. It’s some second-order appreciation of the behavior that one has engaged in.*

**Peter:** You mean it’s deliberate action? [blackboard].

## FIGURE 2



**Jane:** *Yes, it’s a kind of knowledge of one’s behavior. It doesn’t fit behavior in your paradigm, but that’s—*

**Peter:** That’s knowledge of one’s behavior.

**Jane:** *And that’s usually what one is describing as “experience”, isn’t it?*

**Peter:** Knowledge isn't experience. Look: you can tell me that there's a cat outside, and if I believe you, I'll know it, but I don't experience that cat outside. If I look outside, I find out the same thing, but finding it out by looking and seeing him is quite different from finding it out by your telling me.

**Bob:** *But that isn't knowledge of your behavior, that there is a cat out there and that you know that—that isn't knowledge of your behavior.*

**Peter:** Even so, my knowledge of my behavior is different from my experience of my behavior. For example, suppose that I close my eyes, and I write something on the board—I write my name on the board. Experientially, it's the experience of writing my name

**Bob:** *With your eyes closed.*

**Peter:** Yeah, I don't see it. Now I may open my eyes and find that I haven't written my name. I made a mistake. My experience was that of writing my name, but my behavior was not, and now what I know about my behavior is that it wasn't a case of writing my name, even though my experience was that of writing my name.

**Jane:** *That sounds like an achievement problem, rather than—*

**Peter:** Yeah. My knowledge of myself is an achievement, and it is something else than my experience of my behavior, just like my knowledge of the cat is different from my experience of it.

**Jane:** *But no one was making a claim that, based on your statement, that there's a cat outside, that somebody was experiencing it.*

**Peter:** No, I'm saying that knowledge is different from experience, and giving you an example where the knowledge is the same, but in one case there's experience, and in the other case there's not. So that the knowledge can't be the same as the experience.

We can clarify that by saying that experience has several features that knowledge doesn't, and these are logical features. Number One: experience is a historical particular. Experiences occur at a time and place and never occur again. When they're gone, they're gone, and they're replaced by other ones. So the experience has that "you can't step in the same river twice" characteristic, and that is characteristic of historical particulars. So you have whatever experience you have at a given time, and you *never* have it again. It is historically particular. At most, you can talk about having another experience that resembles it or is similar to it in certain ways. For example, I can have a pain this morning and a pain this evening, and under the description



“pain”, it’s the same experience. But it is not the same experience—it is not the same particular experience. I had two experiences.

**Bob:** *How about if you had a headache this morning and it lasted all day, then this evening, couldn’t you say it’s the same headache?*

**Peter:** You can say it’s the same headache, but you’d hardly say it’s one experience. You could say it’s a whole series of experiences, because I can distinguish the experience of having it start, how it felt early on, how it feels right now, and then how it feels as the afternoon wears on. Since I can describe it as a number of sequential experiences, you could say, “Yeah, it’s the same headache,” but it’s a whole series of experiences.

**Steve A:** *What’s the boundary of a single experience?*

**Peter:** Anyone you want to make.

**Terry:** *So it seems like there’s a real sort of grammatical ambiguity there.*

**Peter:** No, there’s a judgmental ambiguity, and there always is. You can have a perfectly clear concept, and have some question as to whether what you’re looking at is an instance. In this case, you’re free to draw whatever boundaries you want. I could, with a little stretching, call that whole headache one experience. I could refer you to my experience during the first five minutes. Or I could refer you to my experience of going from no headache to some headache. Or I could refer you to the entire morning and say, “That was a bad experience.” I can draw those boundaries wherever I want—so long as I can get away with it.

**Daniel:** *What is it about the concept of experience, that we keep going—becoming circular with it? No matter when ###, you have single questions and the same questions and different questions. It’s sort of an unacceptable term between you and some of the rest of us.*

**Peter:** It’s not unacceptable. It damn well is a problematic term, because it has about twelve different uses, and one tends to switch from one to another. That’s what I have against it. It’s so damned equivocal.

**Terry:** *So does the self. The concept of the self is the same.*

**Peter:** And the concept of self.

**Terry:** *And it means a lot of different things. It can mean my body, it can mean my personality, my needs, my agency, my subjective space—the word self means all those different things in different contexts.*

**Peter:** That's why we have to do some work of clarifying, agreeing, stipulating, or whatever. You can't just use terms like that and be understood.

**Terry:** *It seems to me, though, that presupposed is the question about theory of language or a theory of signification in general.*

**Peter:** Nonsense. Forget it.

**Terry:** *Why is that nonsense? Because the problems are symmetrical with the concept of experience and the concept of self, so presumably if you solve the general semantic question, you solve the two tokens of that problem, which would be "self" and "experience".*

**Peter:** Huh-uh.

**Terry:** *Why not?*

**Peter:** You're seeing the results of just such an effort, namely, to take it that knowledge is a single thing, and, therefore, when we say, "I know myself, and I know that chair," that the same thing is going on. That corresponds to having the solution to the general theory of knowledge and then applying it to two cases. There's no such thing, and we're finding that out the hard way, by acting as though it were and finding out that it isn't. The same would hold for a general theory of language and any of these others. We have to deal with the particular problem we're dealing and not derive its solution from some purported more general solution, because there aren't any.

**Terry:** *So we can solve the problem—how are you going to go beyond establishing the different meanings of the concept of "self" or concept of "experience" in the different ways they're used?*

**Peter:** We're not going to do that. We're looking at the concept of "self" for what it tells us about our problem, namely, the criticism of ways of living. But we're only going to deal with "self" insofar as it's relevant, and we're going to work on that notion having in mind what we want out of it—that it does connect to this, and we're not interested in the whole variety of ways that the word "self" is used, or into that. We have a task at hand, and that's going to orient us as to which features of the problem of "self" and "selves" are going to be relevant.

**Joe J:** *Didn't you thrash out this business of "self" in the last part of What Actually Happens?*

**Peter:** Well, no, I didn't thrash out this problem of "self". What I did was simply ignore all of this stuff, and talked about "self". That's a very different

kettle of fish. [laughter]

**Joe J:** —*self and self-concept were already known, and so forth. Isn't that what you're now asking?*

**Peter:** Remember, here I'm saying, Look: there is a certain kind of argument that is used—among others, by Buddhists—to convince you that there's no such thing as your “self”, and that the logic of your argument is the stipulation that if you have a “self”, it is something that you experience, and then, if you look at your experience, there is nothing there among the contents that you could call your “self”. Therefore, there is no such thing as “the experience of the self”; therefore, there is no “self”. That's the structure of the argument. We're looking at that argument critically and trying to get around it by various devices or by challenging some of the stipulations.

**Joe J:** *If we're going to try and criticize, it seems to me that we've got to talk ###—some kind of a careful explication of what it means to say you've experienced yourself, or you experience anything else. My problem with that is what you mean by “my experiencing”.*

**Peter:** That's what we're doing. This is an explication of that. One way to explicate is just to start out in a simple-minded way and take the way people talk at face value and see where it leads.

**Joe J:** *How about giving a process or object or state of affairs description instead?*

**Peter:** Well, what I was going to say about this is: it's a state, and your behavior is an expression of your experience in the way that your behavior is an expression of the state that you're in. For example, when I say that “This behavior expresses his headache,” I'm saying that his behavior reflects the state he's in. If I say, “His behavior is an expression of his experience,” I'm saying that his behavior reflects the experiential state that he's in. So, in effect, experience has the logical characteristics of a state.

**Jane:** *Could you go back and describe what you mean by “your behavior reflecting your experience”, because that's something that—*

**Peter:** I took that as “this is how one does talk”, and I think somebody mentioned something about a play and its kind of coherence, or in a literary description—that if one portrays the experience, and one portrays the behavior, the coherence is expressed by the fact that the behavior expresses the experience.

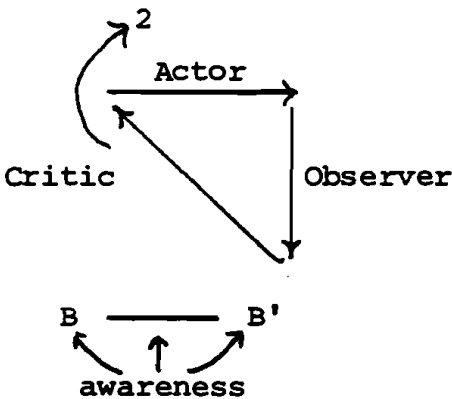
**Jane:** *I think when I raised that, I was almost going out ###—I'm not sure I still understand what's—*

**Peter:** Well, ordinarily, wouldn't we say that a person's—if we're going to talk about experience at all, wouldn't we say that a person's behavior expresses or reflects his experience? No? What would you say?

**Bob:** *If you were to introduce what you might call a "phony chronology" and put "behavior" first and "experience" second—not "behavior" second—to say that behavior reflects experience, a phony chronology would say you're having some sort of experience and expressed it in your behavior—to say it the other way, which I think Jane wants, and I'd be more comfortable—*

**Terry:** *How can you assert it either direction when they're obviously correlative notions? It's sort of like saying a person's situation determines them, or a person determines their situation. Obviously, the concept of "situation" and the concept of "person" are correlative. They're interdependent, and to assert the primacy of either one seems to be a logical fallacy. So you can work the relationship in terms of behavior expressing experience or experience expressing behavior. Because they're part of a totality which is conceptually coherent.*

**FIGURE 3**



**Peter:** [blackboard] Here's a phony chronological thing. Take the Actor/Observer/Critic cycle. Here you have a Behavior [**Actor**]; here you have the Observation of the behavior; the Criticism of it; and the new behavior generated [2]. So you've got a Behavior; you've got Awareness, and then you've got a Behavior. Now in this position, you can either refer it back to here—all you need is to recognize cycles. And the chronology comes from the fact that you

can't observe a behavior that isn't already there. So there's your chronology: first the Behavior, then the Observation, then the Description—although this one *is* phony, because you can go directly to Criticism—and then a new behavior based on the Observation-Criticism. So in this case, this behavior [2] is an expression of this experience, whereas this experience is the experience of this behavior.

**Steve A:** *The Observer I would say, is the experienter.*

**Peter:** Yeah, both of them are.

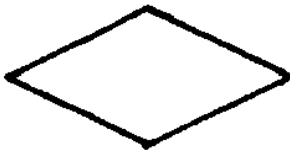
**Steve:** *One's your Observer-Actor—*

**Peter:** That's why I say that this behavior reflects or is an expression of this experience. This experience is not an expression of the behavior; it's simply an experience of it.

**Steve A:** *Why are you separating that as part of the behavior? The idea of an expression of, or experiencing, it seems to me, that that is included in the description of the behavior.*

## **FIGURE 4**

**K**



**Peter:** [blackboard] Again, there's the place for experiencing.

**Steve A:** *Then when you say something like, "Behavior is an expression of your experience," why not say, "Experience is part of the behavior," or something along that line?*

**Peter:** It is. That's why we needed a cycle. Look: right now, I have the experience of the chair, of the room, etc. Now I'm going to engage in behavior that reflects that experience, namely, I come over and sit on it. Now having engaged in that behavior, I now have a new experience, namely, the experience of having done that. So I have behavior that depends on the experience.

**Steve A:** *A behavior that depends on another behavior* [tape change]

**Peter:** And then experience that depends on that behavior.

**Steve A:** —*sitting down on the chair depending on the previous behavior of experiencing the room, which is making those relevant distinctions that you make.*

**Peter:** Remember, I acquire knowledge through experience, and the experience of walking over here and sitting is different from merely knowing for a fact that that's what I did at that time.

**Joe J:** *Doesn't it depend on just how—just exactly what state-of-affairs description goes up in that K parameter?*

**Peter:** Yeah. At a given time, you've got both of these going. You have the experience or the distinctions of whatever you're going to act on, here [Fig. 4], but you're also carrying with you the knowledge and the memory of your past behavior, including your immediately past ones. So you can get confused about the time order, but if you carry the picture of a cycle, I think that you won't be confused, because you can see that you can refer it backward or forward [Fig. 3, B-B'], and you really can do both.

**Joe J:** *It seems wrong, though, to say that it's like a state. A state is an impression of behavior in that at times we use a state to explain differences in behavior, like I'm drunk, etc.*

**Peter:** It's the same with my experiential state. If I experience a chair over there, I may go sit in it, and I won't do it if I don't see a chair there. So my behavior does, indeed, reflect my state, and I will behave differently if I'm in a different state.

**Joe J:** *So if I ### place to sit down, unless you tell me that, when I see a chair there and I say, "Why the hell doesn't he sit in that chair?"*

**Peter:** One explanation is: he doesn't see it.

**Joe J:** *Or is afraid of its breaking or what have you. Or he's had some bad experience with it.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *One of the key points you made was that there's a difference between the experience of sitting in the chair, and knowing for a fact that you're sitting in the chair, and I think if you would amplify on that, it would elucidate some of these problems.*

**Peter:** But that's what I was doing in saying that the experience is a state. It has the features of states.—having a continuous duration, which is what states do.

**Terry:** *But there's a logical structure which is atemporal, and you're drawing on that sort of logical structure as a resource in making certain distinctions within the temporal structure, but the temptation is to reify the logical structure as though it were a part of the temporal structure.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's why it's very important to distinguish knowledge from experience.

**Steve A:** *What kinds of distinctions, logically, within the framework, are there between an experience and a state? Because I can see the logical connection, how they can be used in similar ways in relation to the description of behavior, but—*

**Peter:** Think of a state of pathology. Think of a vitamin deficiency. That's a state. Now, that doesn't necessarily involve any difference in other states, for example, experiential states. So not all states are experiential states. On the other hand, there's a whole lot of them that are. Being in a bad mood, you might say, is an experiential state. But it's also a motivational state. So even these other states that are experiential states are also other kinds of states.

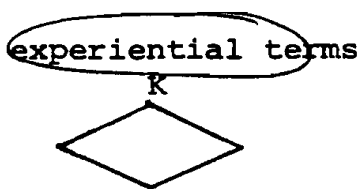
**Steve A:** *They share the same logical characteristics, but they're different.*

**Peter:** Yeah. You can be in motivational states that don't have experiential components. You can be in experiential states that don't have any motivational components.

**Joe J:** *Is it right for me to say that an experiential state will be one in which there is motivational change in what we experience, ###?*

**Peter:** You can divide that via this [blackboard].

**FIGURE 5**



What you can say is, in a state, since it makes a difference in your powers or dispositions, ultimately it shows up at all—it shows up in that you are more or less likely to engage in certain kinds of behavior. The kind of behavior that you're more likely to engage in, by virtue of being in a state, will involve a certain kind of discrimination. If that kind of discrimination is the



proper kind, then, that you can put in experiential terms, then you can make the direct connection from state to experience and say, “If you’re in a given state, you’re likely to be having a certain kind of experience.” For example, if you’re in a bad mood, or if you’re in an irritable mood, you’re likely to have the experience of irritation or annoyance or something like that. And indeed you are—no, you’re just more likely.

**Bob:** *Do we call sleeping a state?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Bob:** *The same problem*

**Peter:** The same problem as perceiving the university, namely, we don’t perceive states. We perceive—if we do at all—*that* he is in a given state. I don’t perceive his anger, I don’t observe his anger, but I can observe that he is angry, or that he is behaving angrily.

**Terry:** *In logical terms, does that make—I assume you don’t want to talk in terms of anger being an aspect or an attribute or a property or anything of that sort, in terms of a substance-predicate kind of relation. So what would the logical—*

**Peter:** It’s a fact that you are angry, and I can establish that kind of fact by observation.

**Terry:** *What’s the relation between anger and agent, though?*

**Peter:** Only an agent can be angry. Because to be angry is to be motivated to engage in certain behaviors, and only agents engage in those behaviors. So you have to be an agent to be angry.

**Terry:** *I guess I put it in the wrong way—so is anger an attribute of an agent?*

**Peter:** What’s the alternative to attribute? If it’s not an attribute, what else could it be?

**Terry:** *Well, if you wanted to completely do away with things like the substantialist notion of the self, you might say that the self is just a chronology of actions: you are what you do. And in that sense, there’s such a thing as angry action—you’re acting angrily—but to say that it’s an attribute would be to imply that there is some thing of which it is an attribute. However, if you think in completely dynamic terms, there’s only different kinds of actions—*

**Peter:** So its being an attribute depends on there being a thing of which it is the attribute. There’s nothing funny about attribute itself, eh?

**Terry:** *Right.*

**Peter:** Then I'd say yeah, it's the attribute of a person.

**Bob:** *If the Buddhists, then, won't allow for a self, on the theory that you can't perceive it, and that we can't perceive a particular state, either, how do they get away with saying that people can achieve a state like Nirvana?*

**Peter:** It's a state of non-experience.

**Bob:** *But they can perceive someone, or perceive that they are, or—*

**Peter:** No. You see—

**Terry:** —*dissolving time.*

**Peter:** Hold it. You start with ordinary ideas of reality, and you say of that, in that context, that everything that's real is something that you experience, because that's all you ever have. Your entire life history is a history of experiencing one thing or another, and anything you know, anything that's real, has to appear somewhere in your experience. Therefore, the bounds of what is real or could possibly be real are given by the bounds of your experience. And if "self" does not appear within those bounds, then "self" is not real. The next move is to go to a transcendental realm, which is why these are transcendental theories. You get beyond experience into something, that with some charity, we can talk about but is not something you're going to go out and just observe. And then you can introduce some of these other notions.

**Bob:** *Like "self".*

**Peter:** Well, in point of fact, they don't then introduce "self"; they introduce other things. Because, after all, once you've got rid of self that way, in this domain, you're under no obligation to reintroduce it transcendently. But if you were, that's where you'd probably bring it in.

**Terry:** *But like with Zen, you get beyond—it's misleading to imply that you get beyond experience or get beyond a sense of self, because it implies that the only obstacles that you're getting beyond—but as I understand it, there's a complete dissolution of temporality and change, and of the phenomenal world as we know it, so that you're not only getting beyond self or experience, you're getting beyond everything.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's why I say it's transcendental.

**Joe J:** *The real world does not unroll through time.*

**Terry:** *Yeah—in Nirvana.*

**Joe J:** *Period. In fact. Quote from What Actually Happens. [laughter] “The real world does not unroll through time.”*

**Peter:** I think there’s a more relevant one, namely, “Reality is not what you see when you look around you, nor is it a cosmic or microscopic version thereof.” That has much the same force as saying, “Look, what’s real, what’s ultimate, is not the kind of thing that you experience.” It comes from a different place and goes to a different place, but at that point, on that specific issue, there it goes.

**Terry:** *So we’re setting up a relationship between what you experience, and what—which is the source of the real?*

**Peter:** No. I don’t know where that comes from, but wherever it is, it’s wrong.

**Steve A:** *It sounds like—I forget what this other thing is, but if you’re saying you don’t perceive the relation between that chair and the floor, you perceive that there is that particular relation, with “self”, you don’t perceive—it’s not a matter of experiencing the self, you’re experiencing that the expressions of self, or that the self exists, or that that relation, that state exists. It’s not a matter of we don’t—*

**Terry:** *We have experience of the self, though. I have an experience of the self. [laughter] I don’t think that’s the issue, because—*

**Peter:** Was it an extraordinary experience, or what?

**Terry:** *It was like it’s more like the Cartesian problem of the experience of certainty, and the gap that opens up—Tart’s talking about it in the first chapter of that book that you assigned to us. He’s talking about the fact that you can experience certainty, but after the Cartesian method, we know that the experience of certainty is very much different than having certainty in fact, which is the distinction you were making before. And one of the logical problems, it seems to me, is that you can have an experience of almost anything; and in altered states, you often do have the experiences of being very profound, of being very certain, of knowing many things; and then, if you tape-record what you did that night, and you go back and listen to it, you know, in fact, that you weren’t so profound, you weren’t so certain, and so on. So again, it’s back to that wedge between “experience” and “knowing in fact” that’s critical.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but remember the arguments from illusion—I think that’s what you’re giving us, and it fails. You’re saying that there is a gap between

experience and knowledge, etc., because sometimes your experiences are non-veridical. But the only way you discover that certain experiences are non-veridical is if other ones are.

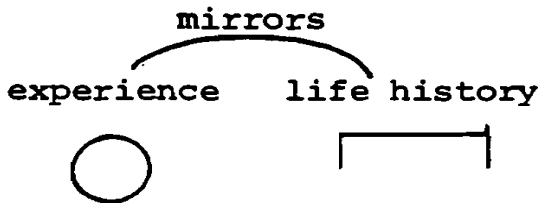
**Terry:** *In the texture of experience, yeah.*

**Peter:** So still your knowledge depends on your experience, and the totality of your knowledge is within the bounds of your possible experience.

**Terry:** *But within experience, we have that experience that Merleau-Ponty talks about in *Phenomenology of Perception*, of distinguishing between real and illusory love, and he talks about it in the metaphor of returning to yourself. At the point at which you return to yourself and stop being distracted by all the things that were taking you away from your actual relationship—let's say, Swann's relationship to Odette—at that point, Swann realizes that he's been deceiving himself all along, that he's not in love with Odette, and things follow from there. And that's within experience, but yet, it's a reflection back to an experience.*

**Peter:** That's right. But again, as I say, what that shows is that knowledge as a category is not something outside experience. It's within experience. So you can't appeal to it transcendently. All you can do is set off some experiences against others, and that's how you get the coherence theory of truth instead of the other one, is that you look for truth in the way these things hang together, not that you compare one with how things really are. Experience mirrors life history. [blackboard]

### FIGURE 6



During the time when you're awake at all, in your life history, you're having experiences. And you might say: having experience is your normal waking state—here again, experience mirrors as a kind of state.

**Terry:** *But isn't that a misleading sort of locution? I mean, do we have experience or—it seems like you're leading us to think of experience as a thing,*

*in the same way that if I say that I have a self, that leads me to think that there's something, a self, that I have, that's like having my bicycle. So that these ordinary ways of talking constantly lead us back into the bewitchment, into the reificationist tendencies, to substantialize our experiences, substantialize ourselves.*

**Peter:** If you keep that firmly in mind—

**Terry:** *Then you can use ordinary language.*

**Peter:** —some ways of talking may be doable. That is, between keeping it in mind and talking in moderately careful ways, we may be able to bypass serious problems of that sort.

**Terry:** *Or does it mean that we have [to] start developing a theoretical language which departs from ordinary language, since it's obvious that ordinary language invites us to make that kind of reification all the time.*

**Peter:** As I say, if we can manage to resist it, then we won't have to do anything extraordinary.

**Daniel:** *Pete, is your statement that knowledge as a category is within experience—would that be another way of saying that knowledge is a special case of experience?*

**Peter:** No. That's why I say it's important to distinguish knowledge from experience. Because look: experience is a state; what is knowledge? Knowledge is a power, not a state. You remember the definition of knowledge as the set of facts that you have the ability, the power, to act on. So a power and a state are two different sorts of things. Knowledge is a power and experience is a state—they're simply different kinds of things, and nothing but trouble will come if you confuse them. On the other hand, what we can say is that how we get one—or what we get in the way of knowledge requires this other sort of thing, namely, experience. So that you can say: without experience, no knowledge. But that doesn't imply that knowledge *is* experience.

Now let me jump to something a little different but which has a bearing. In the section in *What Actually Happens* that you've read, at the very beginning, I made a point that any general way of talking about people is going to have to pull together three things, and that those three things must coordinate, they must fit together and be mutually supportive, or they will be mutually destructive; and we'll have zero left. And those three things are [blackboard].

**Theory**  
**Method**  
**History**

**Ultimacy**  
**Boundary Condition**  
**Experience**

Now recall in our discussion of ultimate, totality, and boundary condition, I said the difference between boundary and ultimate is that boundary has to do with procedure or method, and ultimate has to do with substance, content, theory. Now, in bringing in experience, we've brought in the third, namely, history. As I said, experience is historically particular. The way these things have to go together is this: that your account of yourself, the world, what happens, has got to satisfy some requirements of method, because there has to be some difference between a good account and a bad one. Therefore, no method that says that all theories are inadequate is an acceptable method, but no theory that says that methods are impossible is an acceptable theory. One of the special cases of theory is historical theory, where, if you think of simply a sequence of history, one of the things you have to account for is that what happened happened when and where it did, as a historical particular, and you have ways of connecting up historical particulars and explaining occurrences in those terms.

Now, when you use the word "merely", then you're cutting your throat. If I say, "'You' re *merely* saying what you're saying because of the way that you've been conditioned by your past history," I am undermining the validity of *what* you're saying, because if all it is is a symptom of what happened as a historical accident in the past, then there's no question of its having any validity. And if I say, "Your cosmology, your religion, theory, is only a historical accident of your having been raised in this society in the late 20th century," I'm undercutting its validity by saying, "There is no such thing there. All we have are symptoms." However, notice that since historical theory and historical explanation is simply a special case of that, to say that we don't really have knowledge because all our knowledge is parochial, because it's merely a symptom of history, is to undercut historical explanation, too, which is why you wind up with zero.

**Joe J:** *It's reflexive.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but at the same time, you see, it is a criterion of our complete and adequate understanding to be able to show how the fact that we have these theories does fit the fact that we were born in the 20th Century and

were socialized into this society and not some other. Those are part of the facts that need to be accounted for, and that are accounted for in historical explanation. So part of understanding the whole thing is to recognize that we're seeing the history of the world from the vantage point of this place in history. Just as part of our understanding here [**Theory—Ultimacy**] is to recognize that we're seeing this room from the vantage point of where we're standing and from the vantage point of the kind of person we are. And that had we been a different person, we'd be seeing it differently; had we had a different place in history, we'd be seeing it differently. But that doesn't mean that we're not seeing it, that there's no such thing as seeing it. It just means that these things have to be coordinated.

So the reference to experience, in one sense, is an appeal to a different kind of totality, not just to Totality, in contrast to human nature. There's a difference between appealing to experience and appealing to human nature. Appealing to human nature is not an appeal to historical particularity. Appealing to experience is. So now, you think of these three things [Theory, Method, History], and say, "Where do those different things appear in the totality of things?" Some of them will appear as historical particulars, others will not—others will appear as facts. Then you can say, "What isn't a historical particular is not going to be an object of experience." Therefore, anything that isn't a historical particular, if we have knowledge of it, it's not going to be through experience. It's not going to be in the sense of experiencing it like I experience the chair. It's going to be some other way. There, we still run into problems with selves, because persons are historical particulars. As historical particulars, I see Terry very well: he's right there, right now. It's one of the good features about having bodies, because bodies are historical particulars. As a collection of experiences, I'm not sure that Terry is a historical particular. But as Terry, yes. As a body, yes. As having a particular experience, yes.

Now we look at another totality problem, here: the whole stream of your experience during your entire lifetime. That will be a parallel to the way you live your life. Notice how inter-translatable those two things are: what he experiences during his lifetime, and how he lives his life.

**Bob:** *Did you say they're interchangeable?*

**Peter:** No.

**Bob:** *What was it you said just before—?*

**Steve P:** *Play it back, Mary. [laughter]*



**Peter:** Utterances are historical particulars, and when they're gone, they're gone. [laughter] I don't know what I said. I meant to draw some kind of correspondence but not an identity. I think I said "parallel" or "corresponding" or "how nearly inter-translatable" or something like that.

**Steve A:** *Since it corresponds to a kind of totality of one's historical experience?*

**Peter:** Yeah, they're both totalities, they're both historical totalities, and they're both life- or person-sized totalities. Furthermore, you can map one onto the other in the sense that experiencing is your normal waking state during your lifetime.

**Daniel:** *What are you contrasting?*

**Peter:** The history of experience and a history of action: a person's history, the way he lives his life and the history of his experiences. So they're not only parallel, they're not only the same kind of thing: you can connect them with statements like, "The experience you have is your normal waking state during your lifetime."

**Bob:** *I'm concerned about making them too much of a mapping one on the other—I'm thinking like the experience of, say, a social pattern, and the way he's living his life may be very different, have a very little relation, or something. Someone could look at his life and say, "You're living your life in a shambles, you're doing all sorts of horrible things," and his experience may be not that at all.*

**Peter:** Well, but then neither is his behavior. It's only his performances. What you're saying is that performances can be misleading, cannot give good clues to what the action is.

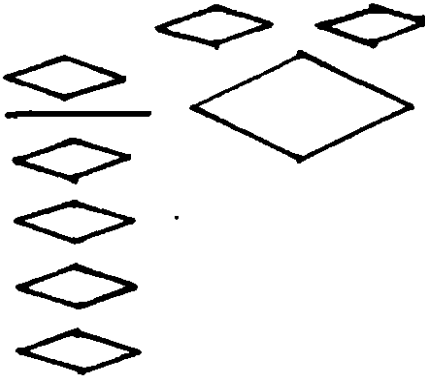
**Bob:** *Okay.*

**Peter:** So again, it's parallel. You can be mistaken about both the experience and the action, if you focus too much on performance or if the performance is a good counterfeit.

Okay, now we can tie them even more closely, because remember over here [Fig. 3, p. 89], in the three-way sequence, behavior is an expression of experience. Furthermore, the way it's an expression of it is, at least in part, an expression of your experience as a critic. That is, it's a function of your critical evaluations. And you can enrich that connection phenomenologically by using the phrase "how it strikes you". Your critical evaluation of your behavior is a matter of how it strikes you. Your experience of things is a matter of how they strike you. So it helps to clarify how it is that experience

can function in a critical way, how your operation as a critic can be via your experience. Now one of the things about Critic and choice [blackboard]—

**FIGURE 7**



Remember, in *Deliberate Action*, the choice is of one behavioral alternative from among others. Not only is it the case that none of those exist before you engage in the behavior you do, but even after your behavior, only one of them exists and the others still don't. Yet to understand what behavior it was, you have to know something about these other ones, too. Because depending on what the other ones were, the choice was different; therefore, the behavior was different. If you don't know what I turned down in favor of sitting in the chair, you don't know the significance of my sitting in the chair, and you don't know what behavior I was engaging in.

In terms of this issue of where do things fit into the total picture, and which things are historical particulars and which are not, we come across an important set of things that are not historical particulars, namely, the options that were turned down. Those are not historical particulars. And yet they're crucial in understanding—not merely in understanding: they're crucial for the behavior's *being* what it is.

**Jane:** *Couldn't they have been historical particulars?*

**Peter:** They could have been but they're not—that's the difference. The difference between historical particulars and not, it's the difference between the actual world and possible worlds.

**Jane:** *Okay, but the having of that choice and having made a decision in favor of one—*

**Peter:** That's only a fact, not a historical particular. That I *had* the choice is a fact, but it's not a historical particular.

**Terry:** *The reverse side of that, I guess, is conditional actions, or the potential to engage in certain kinds of actions, which you have, and which is an ID characteristic.*

**Peter:** But your having it is not a historical particular. It's a fact about you.

**Terry:** *Isn't a fact about you a historical particular?*

**Peter:** No. I am a historical particular.

**Terry:** *Aren't facts about you historical particulars?*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *What are they?*

**Peter:** They're Platonic forms. **[laughter]** Yeah. Facts are timeless. The fact that I'm standing in the room on this day—the fact is not on this day. The fact is outside of time. It's not a historical particular.

**Terry:** *It's starting to sound like Alice in Wonderland. The facts are not on this date—you're on this date—are you—*

**Peter:** I'm here on this date. I'm here in this room on this date, but the fact that I'm here in the room is not here in the room.

**Jane:** *Okay, are you saying, then, that having had a choice is a fact or a historical particular?*

**Peter:** It's a fact.

**Terry:** *And what's the experience of a fact?*

**Jane:** *The experience of having had that choice would be an historical particular?*

**Terry:** *Like strangers when we meet? The guy who has to leave ### behind and go to Hawaii with his wife? And that was a tough choice.*

**[laughter, general conversation]**

**?:** *The experience of knowing facts would be a historical particular.*

**Peter:** Yeah. You get some sense of the relation between the two in the notion of realization. I can have knowledge—in fact, normally, the knowledge I have, I am not constantly running through my head, and that's not what it takes to have the knowledge. For example, I know that Peking is the capital of China, but I'm not constantly thinking that even though I always know it. Now suppose that I'm engaged in a certain problem dealing with figuring out what the Chinese are going to do and various things of that sort, and at a

certain point in time, I realize that Peking is the capital of China and therefore, some other conclusions follow. That realization, which you might say embodies my knowledge, experientially, occurs at a given time and place. *It* is a historical particular.

**Terry:** *In a way, you 're talking about disembodied knowledge being timeless, or floating in some other realm, or—*

**Peter:** No. Knowledge isn't embodied or disembodied.

**Terry:** *You used "embodied" to differentiate between a realization—*

**Peter:** For that purpose at hand, that's okay to talk that way. For *any* other purpose, I will reject it.

**?:** *Perhaps ###. Is it free-floating in time, then?*

**Peter:** That's right.

**?:** *Where is it?*

**Peter:** It isn't.

**Terry:** *Are you undercutting the presupposition of the question?*

**Peter:** No. There's not an "it" that needs to be located somewhere.

**?:** *Where is the light when you turn it off?*

**Peter:** There isn't an "it" that has to go somewhere. The fact of there being a language is the fact that people speak that language. There isn't an "it" called "a language" that has to be located somewhere.

**Steve P:** *There's a question, though: where does your knowledge that Peking is the capital of China go when you're not thinking about it?*

**Peter:** It isn't anywhere. Any more than the fact that Peking is the capital of China is somewhere. Peking is somewhere, and China is somewhere, but the *fact* is not somewhere.

**Steve P:** *But the knowledge of the fact—*

**Peter:** Neither is the knowledge of the fact.

**Jane:** *Do you keep that on ice, too?*

**Terry:** *What kind of descriptive predicates can you apply to knowledge that is not being used at a particular time? Since you're rejecting his descriptive predicate of "where does it go?"—that's not the way you'd characterize that kind of thing.*

**Peter:** You can characterize it in a lot of ways. You can say it's accurate knowledge; you can say it's knowledge about China; you can say that it's knowledge that implies certain other things. There's all kinds of things you can say about knowledge. None of them have anything to do with time and place in the sense that the knowledge is somewhere.

**Steve P:** *What's critical is that there is a focus "you" that at some times is using that knowledge, and sometimes is not using it, but it stays with you in some way, shape, or form.*

**Peter:** *What stays with me?*

**Steve P:** *That knowledge.*

**Peter:** My knowledge no more stays with me than I stay with me. I don't stay with me—I'm just me. And part of being me is what knowledge I have.

**Steve P:** *But it seems to me that this very closely ties back to this notion of the self.*

**Peter:** Remember the whole notion of individual differences is that they are not things, they are not internal causes, they are not internal goings-on; they are simply ways in which one person can differ from another. So where are they? They aren't anywhere. They are simply facts about the differences and similarities between one person and another.

**Terry:** *But Pete, you just said that your knowledge was part of you, and this is the point I was going to make—*

**Peter:** Say that again.

**Terry:** *You said that I have knowledge and it's a part of me. You said that.*

**Peter:** I don't believe it! [laughter]

**Terry:** *You want to take it back, is what you're saying?*

**Peter:** I probably said, "my having that knowledge is part of being me", which is not the same as saying that the knowledge is part of me.

**Terry:** *Okay, "my having that knowledge is part of me"—*

**Peter:** Part of being me.

**Terry:** *Part of being me—okay. That whole locution suggests to me that you're still working in the terms of the logic of part/whole, and that that knowledge isn't (in some sense) a part of a whole, although it seems that we want to reject reifying knowledge as any kind of thing that could be a part of some other thing—a whole which would be a person or something of that sort.*

**Peter:** I'm using the idiom of part and whole, but not the logic, and I just explained that knowledge is a parameter of persons, it's a way that one person can differ from another; therefore, it's not a part of the person. It's a way that one person can differ from another.

**Terry:** *It's a comparative characteristic.*

**Peter:** As such, it certainly is not a part.

**Terry:** *And as a comparative characteristic, it has the same logical character as the knowledge of Peking being the capital of China. Correct? In the sense that it's not a thing that you would make a spatial or temporal determinations about. But that suggests to me an image of sort of like having these sort of slide rules, vast slide rules of parameters in which we're distinguishing between one person and the next on these various dimensions, but yet it's all elusive, it's all slipping through your fingers. It's never really there.*

**Peter:** No. Here's the slide rule right here [**Fig. 7, p. 161, the possibilities that are not chosen**]. The way you decide about people is, you know about their choices. From their choices, you give ID descriptions. But that's why these [**the possibilities not chosen**] are important and essential, and it's important that these are not just historical particulars. Because it gets us an entree into the notion that not all of even practical, simple, real life is historical particulars. And seeing how that can be for ordinary things will give us some understanding of when you get into some of the more esoteric things.

**Terry:** *What I'm reacting to is the temptation to—I guess—reify or physiologize. If you talk about, say, my capacity or potential to engage in a certain range of actions that I don't engage in, I refrain from acting on those possible choices and choose to do other things. In some sense, it's tempting to think of that potentiality as somehow being coded or wired into me as body; and in that sense, a part of this thing, me. And it seems like we're trying to move against that kind of way of thinking—*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Terry:** *—to a non-substantialized way of conceptualizing the same range of facts, which is: I have this potentiality to engage in these actions that I don't engage in, and yet that is an important way to characterize me. But I guess I'm not following out, as yet, how that conceptualization gets away from locating it as a part of me, as a thing about me. Or is it a physiological set of structures, or knowledge structures—*

**Peter:** I said that the behaviors that you don't engage in are definitely, indisputably, not historical particulars. And yet, your choice having been the choice of this one as against them is essential to your behavior being the behavior it was. And your behavior is a historical particular. So we have a situation that says, "This historical particular being the one it is depends, in a fundamental and essential way, on something that isn't a historical particular." That's the important conclusion.

**Terry:** *That starts reminding me of Jacobson, talking about binary opposition, and it does seem to suggest to me again that you're going back, without acknowledging it, to some sort of implicit theory about language. His whole notion of binary opposition, that for me to use the word "here" and have it have a meaning, there has to be an opposing concept of "there", and this kind of constant binary opposition is what gives terms meaning and significance. And it seems like that's the kind of thing you're saying.*

**Peter:** Remember, Rule 3 in interpreting projective tests is, "Don't make things up." [laughter]

**Terry:** *I didn't make it up—he did.*

**Peter:** And the same thing holds for reading authors, and also for interpreting lectures: don't make it up. I haven't said anything about physiology. I haven't said anything about Jacobson. The fact that one could, and that I might be doing those things, is merely a logical possibility. But it shouldn't be looking as though that's what I'm doing, since I haven't made the slightest move in that direction.

**Terry:** *Except—unless you're trying, as I am, to assimilate you to models that—*

**Peter:** I said, keep your eye on the task at hand. Forget about them. We have our own task that we've laid out. The point I'm making here is simple, straightforward, and it leads to a certain conclusion which is important, namely, that here is a case where there is a historical particular, and its being the one that it is depends fundamentally on something that is not a historical particular. That's all.

**Steve A:** *What is the status of those notions, then, that aren't historical particulars?*

**Peter:** Well, look. If I sit in the chair, when I could have gone over there and drunk the soup from that orange Thermos, the fact that that was the thing that I turned down in favor of this, is part of what my behavior is. It makes



my behavior the behavior it is and not some other behavior. Now my drinking from the Thermos is not a historical particular because I didn't do it. So it's a non-existent something, and yet it's essential in this thing being what it is.

**Joe H:** *Wouldn't it also be valuable to make a second distinction between those things that you consider as possible, which are historical particulars? In other words, thinking about drinking that soup could be a historical particular.*

**Terry:** *It would be a discrete action you'd engage in, whereas—*

**Peter:** Sometimes, but I'd rather not get into that, because that's a special case, namely, when you think about. Mostly you do not think about it.

**Joe H:** *In other words, there'd be places where you'd consciously choose among alternatives, and others where you don't even see a choice.*

**Peter:** Right. Even in the case where you do, that being the choice makes the behavior what it is, whether you saw it or not. So even in those cases, it doesn't depend on my thinking it over even when I do think it over.

**Steve A:** *But what is the status of those non-historical particulars?*

**Peter:** That's what I said. If you think in terms of reality or that the totality of things includes more than historical particulars, here's a case where in the totality of things—and not a mysterious one but an everyday one—there are non-existent things that make all the difference in the world to some actual thing.

**Joe J:** *Are those—one of the diamonds you do choose, are those options in the social practice in which you are engaging?*

**Peter:** Right.

**Jane:** *Would you finish off the connection between what's—of what importance it is that those are not historical particulars? You said they were essential to—what?*

**Peter:** We don't have a word for it. "Reality" is ###.

**[change tape-also a short break]**

Now I'm torn between two ways to go from where we are now, and we may [**general conversation continues**]. Number one, let me just report as a historical fact that the Buddhist argument would explicitly reject the university formulation, because the next step in the argument is to direct your attention to each of your experiences—sights, sounds, smells—and ask you, "Who experiences?" And the answer is, "Me." And then the rejoinder

is, “So you are not the same as those experiences.” So there is, I think, a fairly explicit rejection of the building-and-university type formulation. That has a parallel over here [Fig. 7, p. 161]—I think. Because over here we’d say, “Well, had I chosen this—had I chosen to drink from the Thermos instead of sitting in the chair—would I then not be me? Would I have to have been somebody else to do that?” The answer is no. Being me is compatible with either of those possibilities. So my being me is not the same as my having done the particular things I did, because had I done some other particular things, I’d still be me. So whatever this “me” is, or “I”, is not tied down to the particulars of my history, including my experiences. Because it could have been the same if those things had been different, so there is not an identity.

**Daniel:** *But you wouldn’t be the same you.*

**Peter:** I would.

**Daniel:** *Not that you wouldn’t be the same with those experiences that you had, if you had different experiences.*

**Peter:** I’d just have different experiences. My experience now is different from my experience two hours ago. Have I become somebody else because my experience is different? No.

**Suzanne:** *You have changed, or have—*

**Peter:** I’ve changed but I’m still me. I’m the same me that I was an hour ago—

**Terry:** *Maybe the more heuristic way to approach it would be to take the special case in which we would talk about someone being a different person, and then by exploring that special case, it would throw light on all the cases where you wouldn’t go that far.*

**Peter:** That’s attractive, but I’m afraid to. I’m afraid it would take us too far afield if we really get into the issue of really being a different person, etc.

**Steve A:** *You would say that it could be tied to a particular experience, in that you might have a different experience if you had chosen option B. There’d still be the possibility that there would be a special case where that person had changed. “I am a different person because I did this.”*

**Peter:** Okay, but keep in mind that when you say, “I am a different person,” you do not mean, “I am now somebody else.” What you mean is, “I’ve changed.” But that’s routine. Everybody changes. But the way that people change doesn’t keep them from continuing to be the same person. So when

you say, “I’ve changed, I’m different,” etc., what you don’t mean is, “I am now somebody else than who I used to be then.”

Now consider the consequence if I couldn’t do anything different from what I did and still be me. What you would then wind up with is that I had no choice, either. Because if my being me depends on my doing this at this time, then there was no choice, given that I am me.

**Terry:** *Doesn’t one make a distinction there between sort of an experiential language and theoretical language?*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *Because it’s familiar that people would say something like “I have to do this—”*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *“—in order to be me.”*

**Peter:** No. I do not want to distinguish between experiential language and theoretical language.

**Terry:** *What I’m driving at is, that’s a familiar thing for people to work themselves into a place where they say, “In order to be me, I had to do that, or I couldn’t do that.” But it’s unfamiliar for theorists to talk about whether the person did or didn’t do that thing that that person thought about, that they would actually be different. That’s what I’m driving at.*

**Peter:** I was going to use that the other way. I was going to say: remember, last semester we talked about “I couldn’t do that and still be me” and how strange that sounded, and how we had to work to make that sound okay. Think now about how strange it sounded, and it sounded strange because of the consideration that I am now reminding you of, namely, if I had done that, you wouldn’t say that I was somebody else. That’s why it sounds strange to say, “I couldn’t do that and still be me.” If, in fact, it is one of your choices, you *could* do that and still be you.

**Terry:** *So how would you make that differentiation? I said “between experiential and theoretical language”—what would you do to make that distinction?*

**Peter:** Nothing. We’ve already made it.

**Terry:** *But don’t we want a technical—*

**Steve A:** *For a reminder, maybe?*

**Peter:** Authenticity. Use that for a reminder. In the one case, we're talking about authenticity. That's what we mean when we say, "I couldn't do that and still be me." Here, we're talking about identity. Does my being me, the person who I am, depend on my doing that? And the answer is no. So when you're dealing with issues of authenticity, you can say, "I couldn't do that and still be me," but when you're dealing with issues of identity, it's nonsense.

**Terry:** *But here's the confusion, though, that actual people with psychological confusions would often confound those two.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Terry:** *So that that's why it seems to me that it makes sense to talk about theoretical talk versus experiential talk, because you have clients who frequently would make that sort of confusion, that "I couldn't have my identity and do that kind of thing," and yet, as theorists, we would say, that they're just logically confused. If they really understood the logic of identity, they would never make such a fatuous statement. But yet, it has a real impact on their life because they are thinking that way. It's part of their history.*

**Peter:** It's important to make the distinction, but it's not the distinction between experience and theory. It's the distinction between authenticity issues and identity issues.

**Terry:** *What about where they're confused, where the person—*

**Peter:** They're confused as between those two issues. They're not confused between experience and theory. They're confused between authenticity and identity.

**Terry:** *Maybe—to put it another way: could someone who understood the logic of identity, and how concepts like identity and self and authenticity work, in fact, could that kind of person actually work themselves into that kind of bind?*

**Peter:** It would be unlikely, and it would need explanation.

**Terry:** *Well, then?*

**Peter:** We have now done what you said, namely, we have markers: identity and authenticity. And you're probably right: markers help.

But now back to the thing that I am not tied down to the particulars of my history, because I couldn't be me if these non-existing things weren't also somehow within the scope of me.

**Jane:** *You generally hear people make two kinds of statements—I'm wondering how you would—you can say to somebody, "Gee, that sure wasn't like him," or*

*“Boy, he sure has changed since I knew him last,” and you also hear people responding, when they haven’t seen somebody for a time, “Boy, he hasn’t changed at all.” And on this basis, how would you—*

**Peter:** You’re dealing with the logic of ID characteristics. Remember the principle that if you have a given ID characteristic, and your behavior is an expression of it, that calls for no explanation. If it violates it, it does, and then an explanation is needed. Well, saying that he isn’t being himself is to say that you know that he has characteristics and his behavior violates those. So that calls for explanation. The explanation is, “Well, he’s under extraordinary tension,” or “After all, he was drunk at the time,” or something like that, and that would do the job of explaining how come he wasn’t himself then. On the other hand, somebody who you say hasn’t changed a bit, I think, that straightforwardly, he still has exactly the same ID characteristics, practically speaking.

**Steve A:** *Can you say something about “in a particular state”, when that person is not being himself?*

**Peter:** The reference to the state would explain how come the uncharacteristic behavior.

**Steve A:** *And you wouldn’t say, “They’re not being themselves”?*

**Peter:** Yeah. That’s how we talk—“He’s not being himself.”

**Jane:** *In the first case, I wasn’t really harping on a state change. I was talking about something more along the developmental line—*

**Steve A:** *Change in ID.*

**Jane:** *Yeah, where he has—it’s the problem that he didn’t really become somebody else, but he isn’t, by virtue of having behaved over a course of time differently than he used to—*

**Peter:** Oh, you mean, “My, how you’ve changed!”

**Jane:** Yes.

**Peter:** Again, remember public norms. They’re fuzzy, but nevertheless, they’re norms about how fast people change and what they change into from what. And if you find somebody who, in a relatively short time, has made changes that are unusual—because people who start out where he did don’t usually wind up over here; they wind up over there—then you have occasion for the “My, how you’ve changed!” And it still comes back to “that needs some explanation”, and the explanation is almost certainly going to be an

atypical history. You don't acquire a very opposite set of characteristics in a short time without having a fairly atypical history.

**Jane:** *Atypical of what?*

**Peter:** The norm. Look: most people who at age eight are selfish little beasts, ordinarily at age ten are not perfect angels. When you see somebody who has made that transition, you can figure that something unusual has been happening in those two years. Because it doesn't usually happen that way.

**Jane:** *That can never be a question of identity, obviously. But neither is it really a question of authenticity, is it?*

**Peter:** It may or may not be. If you want to raise the question of authenticity, you say, "I wonder if he really has changed that much. Is he putting us on?" If you're not raising a question of authenticity, you say, "My, how he has changed." And it's surprising, but no matter how surprising, it's still him.

What you're verging on, I think, is the thing that I said I was afraid to get into, namely, a genuine identity switch. Suppose that at a certain date, all of a sudden, he has a new set of memories, a new set of ID characteristics, a new everything except the same body. What do you say? Well, what I say is, let's stay away from that. [laughter] And not because it isn't interesting, but because it's time enough consuming and not directly relevant to what we're doing. But if you read a journal called *Analysis* and look through the issues for about the last eight years, sprinkled through that whole period of time you'll find little articles on various aspects of this issue of "can you switch identities?", "what's the criterion for personal identity?", "could there be totally separated times and places?". It's an interesting body of stuff. So if you're interested, I'd suggest that you look it up.

**Terry:** *There's also a little monograph in the Oxford Series, in the last three years, by David Wiggins, called "Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity," which is a sort of distillation of a lot of those articles, which is real good.*

**Jane:** *Can you say something more substantive about identity in contrast to—*

**Peter:** No. And as a matter of fact, it may not be possible, because if you've read the stuff that's been written on identity, you may come to the conclusion that it's a lot easier to reject certain statements of identity than to systematically formulate a theory or a definition, or anything systematic about identity. After a while you get discouraged about those possibilities when you see the meager results that result from some very brilliant and clever and sincere people trying it and failing.

**Terry:** *Would you say then that that sort of enterprise is sort of a dead end, at this point—developing a systematic theory of the self or of identity?*

**Peter:** I wouldn't say it, but I wouldn't deny it.

**Terry:** *It's looking that way, in other words.*

**Peter:** I would say there are facts to support either position, so you wouldn't be unreasonable either way. However, if you took the positive one, I'd say you were an optimist.

**Terry:** *Either you'd make yourself famous, or you'd waste a lot of time.*

**Peter:** Maybe like trying to trisect the angle.

Okay, now back to the fact that I would still be me if I had done something other than what I did. I said, the implication of that is that when I talk about me, I'm talking about more than a set of historical particulars. I'm talking about more than a history of occurrences. And when you look at what this set-up actually is, what these are [Fig. 7, p.161, the diamonds below the line], are possibilities. If we take that simply and straightforwardly and make the transition, we say, "It looks like when I talk about me, I'm not talking about a set of occurrences; I'm talking about a set of possibilities." All of these possibilities are *my* possibilities, and it doesn't matter which of them I actualize; they are *my* possibilities, and so I categorically span all of those possibilities.

**Jane:** *Isn't it a bit strong to say it doesn't matter which you actualize, because—*

**Peter:** From the point of view of my being me. I would be me no matter which of them I took, because if that weren't the case, they wouldn't be *my* possibilities.

**Daniel:** *It's tautologically true.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Daniel:** *Pete, what is this? That's common sense, somehow.*

**Peter:** That's fortunate. [laughter] Because it means that we now don't have the problem of squaring a thought-out conclusion with common sense, because they coincide.

At this point, you'll recognize a prior formulation, namely, that one's self concept is a summary formulation of one's behavior potential. Because that, in effect, says what we just got through saying here: that I am my possibilities. And that isn't just common sense.



**Joe J:** *It seems to me that you've just succeeded in what you said may be impossible, that you've got at least the beginnings of a theory of identity. Because there's the opening move.*

**Peter:** No. It's not a theory of identity.

**Joe J:** *What would be a theory of identity, then?*

**Peter:** I don't know. You see, I didn't say anything about identity. I just said "about being me". What happened was that we succeeded in saying something coherent about selves and self concept without raising issues of identity, which would suggest that you can be clear on the subject matter without raising identity issues and then having to answer them. You may be able to get clear on the whole thing without ever raising those issues. I would consider that a higher likelihood. In which case, you don't need a theory of identity, and that's nice, because it may not be possible. But I wouldn't go so far as to say that for a fact. Because you don't have a theory of identity unless you first raise identity questions, and then answer them, and we haven't raised identity questions, at least not in that form. We just talked about "When am I me? When wouldn't I be me?" etc. Now, if you're somebody who's into identity theory, you'd say, "But those are the very questions," and I'd say, "Yeah. When you ask them, they're identity issues. When I ask them, they're something else." Because look: we haven't got unanswered questions there for an identity theory to—

**Steve A:** *Before, when you're talking about how we experience our self, I know that I am me and that what I do is me, etc., etc., okay. In talking about self concepts, summary formulation, and behavior potential, your relationship with the rest of the world and what behaviors you're eligible to engage in, or those options—so what you experience when you experience the self would be that you don't—*

**Peter:** Do you have the experience of a set of possibilities? Here you're back to the tension between historical particulars as being what is experienced, versus saying, "I experience myself, but I am a set of possibilities."

**Steve A:** *But you don't experience a set of non-historical particulars. You can't.*

**Peter:** Right.

**Terry:** *You can have the experience of a sort of being on the threshold of so many different things.*

**Peter:** No, no. Remember the thing that we used for bridging the gap,

namely, realization. You remember I said that at some point in time, I realized that Peking is the capital of China, etc. Now think here not of just those possibilities, but of my having them. And now think of my realizing that I have them.

**Joe J:** *Realizing that you have those options, you mean?*

**Peter:** Yeah, realizing that I have the possibilities I do. Any realization of that sort clearly is not going to resemble an enumeration of them. But I made the point earlier, normally one does not list one's options, think them over, and then say, "I'll take #3." The kind of survey that one makes of one's options is not that kind. When one realizes, then, one's options, it won't be like realizing a list.

**Steve A:** *How would you redescribe the statement, "I experience myself, I know myself, I just know"—that kind of trip. How do you redescribe that in terms of—*

**Peter:** Well, when I realize something, I don't accomplish that by doing something else. I just realize it.

**Steve A:** *Yeah, but that statement is not a matter of—your not realizing my possibilities.*

**Peter:** I'm realizing that I have them. Here, "realizing" doesn't paraphrase as "embodied". It's not like self-realization or something like that.

**Steve A:** *Could you substitute "experience" in that—"I experience that I have them"?*

**Peter:** Yeah. Or you can say, "I experience having them."

**Joe S:** *It's the same thing as the logic behind having a concept of a totality, you don't have to have knowledge of all the elements within that totality to have it as a totality.*

**Peter:** Yeah. You can make a link of that sort, that links this kind of phenomenon that's non-historically particular—you can link it to experience, to something that is historically particular. The link we made may not be adequate, but it will provide a model and a sample for how one might do that, and if you think it over and it's not adequate, then next time round, you'll be able to ask other questions about it that may help us improve it.

**Jane:** *What were you saying about—you said if one is realizing their options, it's not like a list, but that's what you'd call experiencing—what? One's potential?*

**Peter:** I was drawing in the prior example of choosing among a set of options, and I said that normally, when one chooses among a set of options, one does not go through separate steps of listing them and then picking one out. One surveys them in some other way. I didn't say what way that was.

**Steve A:** *That would be in the same way that surveying a totality would be.*

**Peter:** Yeah. For example, when I walk in the room, and I survey it, I know what my options are. The one glance tells me all of these things. You might say that's because my options follow from my place in this whole scheme, and my place in this whole scheme, you might say, is a single fact. Even though, analytically, you can paraphrase that as an innumerable set of facts, it is a single fact; and so if I grasp that fact, then I am able to act as though I had all of these particular facts.

**Steve A:** *There's some knowledge of the particulars, though, that—*

**Peter:** Well, there probably is. What I'm pointing to is that you don't speed through a long, long list. It's not that somehow you go through it real fast. It's that there is something else, namely, the single fact about where I am in this room, and that will do the job. From that, you can reconstruct and derive all of the relationships, all of the particular options, from that.

**Steve A:** *There seems to be some historical status of those options, maybe not for that particular moment, that particular historical incident, but there is some historical status for those options, whether they're actualized at that moment, or ever in the future, whatever. It seems that there has to be some previous knowledge, some previous distinctions made.*

**Peter:** Yeah, sure.

**Jane:** *And what sort of knowledge is that? Do we ever ###?*

**Peter:** No. We've got a different version of it when I say, "When I survey that, it's not surveying a list." Remember, in the advanced stages of expertise, we talk about what not to do rather than what to do.

**Steve A:** *You also feel very—have some sort of anxious feelings when you're—*

**?:** *It's not an affirmation about your—*

**Peter:** I've got to go to CJ's oral, too, so let's call it quits for now.

## SEMINAR 5

27 July 1976

**Peter:** [blackboard] W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, and C. Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor*. If you can get hold of these two books, grab them and read them, particularly for next time. I had intended to start today and to do some talking about Buddhism—I think we may want to postpone that to Thursday, but we do want to look at some of these systems of thought that are in those eight chapters [of Tart's book], and Buddhism is certainly one of them that I think we want to look at. This one [Rahula] is a far better presentation of Buddhism than your chapter in the book. It's a small paperback, I guess about a hundred pages. It's a new book—I got it at the bookstore just from walking through, and it was just there on the shelf. Apparently this one is also highly regarded by Buddhists—this one, and some book jointly authored by ### were the two books recommended to me for an exposition of Buddhism, so this confirms my impression that that is a good one for us.

This one [Turbayne] is background for the Carlos Castaneda stuff. It is background, it isn't directly applicable, but it goes some way to undermine this notion that what's really real are those particles of which everything is made. And he carries this off not only via critique, but via a second metaphor, namely, of seeing the world as language. The two metaphors he contrasts are seeing the world as a mechanism, as clockwork, and seeing the world as language, as messages. He does a pretty good job of showing that the language one will do at least as good a job as the mechanism one.

**Joe J:** *Since the mechanism one won't work, that's not saying a lot.*

**Peter:** Well, it is. If, as most of us are, you've been educated to "that's the really real thing", you've come quite a ways to be able to see those two things on a par.

We left off last time—we'd been looking at the self concept—[blackboard]: we went through this kind of sequence.

That is, we started from the point of view of critiquing ways of living, and I said that one of the themes that appears in that book is the notion of selfishness or egoism as one of the most common ways that people go wrong in how they live. Then I introduced an argument that can be used to

undercut this [**selfishness**], namely, that you don't have a self at all, so we got into that one. The nature of the argument is that you don't have a self because your self is not one of the items of your consciousness. So then we got into

**Selfishness - egoism**  
**Selflessness argument**  
**Consciousness**  
**Self concept**  
**Experience**

**Existent/non-existent**  
**Self as potential**

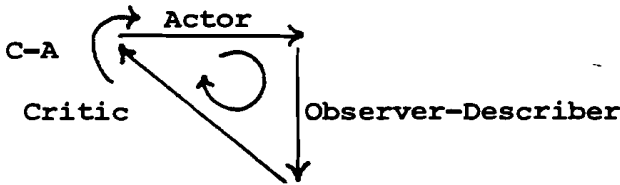
a long discussion of self concept, experience, and the difference between knowledge and experience, the one being a power, the other being a set of historical particulars, assimilating experience to state as well as to a history of particularity. Then we made this kind of move [existent/non-existent] of showing how some things that are real depend on things that are not real, specifically, the nature of the behavior you engage in depends on the behavior that you don't engage in, and came up with this kind of formulation [Self as potential]. If you include both the unrealized possibilities and the actualized possibilities, both of them are included in the notion of myself. And both of them, then, are included in this notion [of self as potential]. At that point, we connect to the formulation in *What Actually Happens*.

Remember, I commented on that one that I did not arrive at that as the end-point of any kind of argument. I got that formulation simply by starting to talk about the self concept and what it was. So what we've done, then, is to connect the self as behavior potential, or self as status, with some of these prior considerations, and we did indeed find a path of argument that would lead you to the formulation that is in *What Actually Happens*. You don't have to get to it from along that path. There are other ways of getting there, and we certainly didn't start out to do that, but we wound up there. What I would recommend is that you review the chapter in *What Actually Happens* on the self concept to see where you can go with this from that starting point. Then we may want to come back and talk more about it, after having talked some about some of these theories and what they do with the notion of self.

Another strong theme running through there is the notion of freeing you from your prior learning. There's a prominent place in, I think, just

about all of these viewpoints, is that one of the things that people suffer from is that they've learned the wrong things. So the task is how to free people from the wrong learning that is currently hurting them, imprisoning them, or in one way or another doing bad things for them. [Blackboard]

**FIGURE 1**



**Diagnosis  
Treatment**

If we use this as a vehicle for examining that kind of issue, you look at these three things and say, “Where is learning most strongly represented?” In this diagram, where is your personal history of learning most strongly represented? And it’s clear that it’s down here [O-D, C], that both observation and description, and the special form, criticism, are very definitely learned sorts of competence, skills, training. These do not come naturally. Neither description nor criticism comes naturally. It has to be learned. This is not to say behavior doesn’t have to be learned, or it just comes naturally. But if you had to pick where the learned part in this thing is, and where the natural part is, you would darn well pick Actor as the natural part and Describer and Critic as the learned part.

Furthermore, in this arrangement, the Actor is the only one it makes sense to talk about “freeing”. It would hardly make sense to talk about “freeing” the Observer-Describer or “freeing” the Critic. It does make sense to talk about “freeing” the Actor. Why? Because the primary control link is here [C-A], from Critic to Actor. Remember, when we discussed this as a feedback cycle, we said under normal operation, as long as things are going okay, you just need an Actor, you just need to be doing whatever you’re doing, but that since you never know when it may go wrong, you routinely are monitoring how it’s going, and judging whether it’s going okay or not, and if it’s not okay, then you come up with a diagnosis and a treatment. That is, how has it gone wrong? and what could be done differently? And then the “what could be done differently?” is what feeds back to change your behavior.

So this is, then, the primary control link, you might say, of the three links. Here's where you would say comes the control. And it's clear that bad criticism will lead to bad decisions up here [**Actor**]. That criticism can limit the Actor, can constrain the behavior potential up there in ways that are distorted, unrealistic, or in some other way subject to criticism. It's because of that that it makes sense to talk about liberating the Actor, freeing the Actor, which is to say, getting rid of constraints that hadn't ought to be there.

**Daniel:** *Pete, is the Actor generating the hypothesis about—or is it the Critic?*

**Peter:** Observer and Critic.

**Daniel:** *Generating the hypothesis?*

**Peter:** Yeah. The description of what it is that has gone wrong is simply a description of what's happening.

**Daniel:** *Yeah, but it's not a description of what would go right, of ways of going right.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Daniel:** *It seems like the Actor would be the one who would generate hypotheses that the Observer-Describer would—*

**Peter:** Again, remember that these are not people. These are roles. And criticism is a special form of action, and so it has—even within the scope of criticism—you still have the kind of creativity you have up here [**Actor**], and one of the places where it shows up is in coming up with ideas about what it would take to make it go okay. But you're also largely drawing on your store of learned solutions to learned problems. Think of a mechanic and a checklist of what goes wrong with a car and how you fix it. Then think of that as a paradigm for what goes on here—that you learn diagnosis in conjunction with ways of treatment. You learn certain things go wrong in conjunction with what it takes to make them go right, and it's not that stereotyped, but it's a good paradigm to start with. So even the treatments largely reflect past learning, although, as I say, there is a certain amount of creativity you can show there.

**Wynn:** *Does the Critic have any responsibility for pointing out what's right, how the behavior has gone right in the way it has? Normally, we don't speak about those things, but it seems (especially in the Don Juan stories) it seems one of his major roles as Critic is pointing out to Carlos how he is successful even if he doesn't recognize it. He criticizes Carlos's description, but he affirms*



*his action.*

**Peter:** Well—

**Wynn:** *So I'm wondering if you can find out what's gone right, without that being just a double negative, to point out what hasn't gone wrong.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That stems from that these are special cases of ###.

**Joe J:** *Think how ###, though, to walk around telling everybody everything they're doing right.*

**Wynn:** *Sometimes in therapy that's what you have to do, because the client needs some success to go from. He doesn't recognize that he's doing a damn good job of presenting—just—telling him that he's doing it right produces, sometimes, a sense that he's acting on the occasion toward those goals and succeeding at those goals.*

**Daniel:** *It would be strange if we were always telling everybody what they're doing wrong.*

**Peter:** I wasn't so much thinking of overt behavior, there, because telling the client what he's doing right—you're back up here [**Actor**]. What I was thinking of was the sense that you have of yourself, that not merely are you not doing something wrong, but that things are right. And that's the one I said, "Yeah, that belongs to the normal way of operating."

**Wynn:** *It's often, though, what the Critic seems to do, is to point—well, this is usually in a two-person system—to point out that the actions are okay, it's the descriptions of the actions that are amiss.*

**Peter:** I don't think so. I think usually criticism is directed at the action under some description.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but the Describer is a special sort of action—verbal action.*

**Terry:** *Possibly if we thought of it as a ballet between what's lived and what's known, it might be easier, since a Critic can be a form of action. I think what you're trying to get at is that what's lived are certain forms of action, and the way in which those ways of living are known is where the area of freedom is, and where the area for change is possible.*

**Peter:** Say anything more about that?

**Terry:** *Well, take an accident to someone's existence, like El Greco's astigmatism, and Greco finally turns that into an expression of the deeper meaning of his life, by his paintings which show elongated bodies and various things which*

*are distorted in various ways, which reflect the astigmatism, and a physiologist might end up saying that Greco's paintings are because he has an astigmatism. But on the other hand, you might equally say that his astigmatism is because of his paintings, and in that sense, he's integrating what was an accident of his existence into the deeper meaning of his life, into his way of living.*

**Value giving**  
**Creating**

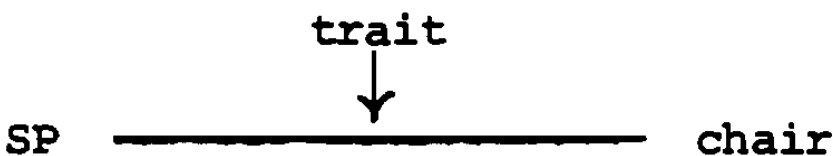
**Value finding**  
**Reflecting**

**Peter:** [blackboard] I think that would come under this heading: that El Greco gives things a certain place in his life, and in his life, these things have a different place from what they have for most of us. But when we understand how they are for him, that does something for us about how they are for us. But from his point of view, it's garden-variety value-giving. For him they have that place.

**Terry:** *Well, his coming to grips with the accidents of his existence, which make him up, and he finds himself already living in the way that we talked about the last couple of times. In terms of the self, you're already somebody, and he comes to apprehend who he is, and goes beyond just recognizing who he is, to integrating every one of his actions as an expression of himself. And in doing so, he takes what could be an accident which could dominate him, like his astigmatism, and he turns it into an aspect of his freedom, into a modality of his self-expression. Whereas before, it could have been construed as something that was merely a deficit, merely something external to him which was dominant.*

**Peter:** Remember when we talked about Allport and the trait [blackboard], and one of the functions of the trait was to render stimuli functionally equivalent? Is everybody familiar with that?

**FIGURE 2**



And remember the discussion of rendering stimuli functionally equivalent, namely, that it was introduced to account for the fact that we see chairs, and as chairs, chairs are pretty stable, commonplace, recognizable

things. As stimulus patterns, they're extraordinarily variable and hard to pick out from the stimulus patterns for other things. But if you insisted that we really go by stimulus patterns, and you're faced with the observable facts that we see chairs and chairs are pretty stable, then you also need to introduce something to bridge that gap, to render these stimulus patterns [SP] functionally equivalent into ordinary perception of chairs. And to accomplish that, you then need to introduce something that does the job, namely, the trait. But if you did not start here, then there was no job of that sort that needed to be done, and therefore, you didn't need to introduce something to do it. Now any time that you're inclined to use the word "synthesize", I suggest that you count to ten and ask yourself whether you're not rendering stimuli functionally equivalent. This holds for the description of El Greco, and the givens in his life which he then synthesizes into meaningful expressions of himself. It's if you take them as givens—discrete and unconnected—that they then need to be synthesized. If you start with El Greco, you would say that their being coherent is to be expected, and since they are *his* behaviors, his actions, it would be surprising and abnormal if they were not different. He doesn't need to do something to make them coherent—they're coherent because they're his, and he's coherent.

**Terry:** *Except that the whole thing you were talking about, in terms of the Actor gone wrong and needing the Observer and Critic, falls into this kind of similar dialectic, where Greco takes accidents of his existence and comes to know them in a certain way—observe them, describe them, criticize them, understand them, reintegrate them into his life in terms of their meaning. Though the fact itself doesn't change, maybe the descriptions under which it's construed change.*

**Peter:** Well, something's different, but that comes under the heading of criticism: good or bad? You don't need to introduce another set of terms for talking about somebody accomplishing the job of criticism and changing what he does.

**Joe J:** *It seems to me there's a confusion of language between you and Terry. On the one hand, there's Intentional Action, what the Actor does as he acts, and when you say El Greco took this and did that with it, that has the form of an Intentional Action Description, but it's not, because he couldn't do that. It seems to me that that assimilates to the paradigm of status: he had that place in the world, so he straightforwardly acted in one of the ways that he was able to act. He wasn't able to act as though he didn't have astigmatism because he*

*had astigmatism. But it's not as though he said, "Oh, I have astigmatism, and I want to create myself a decent world and not a shitty world, so I will put those together, and I will do this."*

**Terry:** *Right. By the same token, a similar individual with a similar astigmatism may have never integrated that into that into his over-all conduct. It may have been something that limited him in various ways. It may have been something that he made disclaimers for when he explained when he couldn't do certain things.*

**Joe J:** *That's why it's so absurd to say that he took and he did something with those things.*

**Wynn:** *Except that he may have—he may have done it in the sense—*

**Joe J:** *It's not doing in the sense that when I lift the table, I'm doing something.*

**Wynn:** *What I'm wondering about, in the example of El Greco, is that if he—when he was painting landscapes, I take it he was painting them as he saw them, he was painting the long, narrow scenes as he saw them. Now if he had corrective lenses available, maybe he'd have painted differently, and under that set of constraints, there might be criticism to the suggestion that he was painting as a man would paint who had astigmatism. I'm not sure that that's the case. Then he could be in that position to say, "Well, I affirm my astigmatism, and I'm painting that way because of stylistic reasons." But I suspect, in this case, what we're really talking about is a very fortunate handicap, and this handicap rendered his style very effectively.*

**Terry:** *But my point is that for some people what would have been a handicap, for him was a asset, and therein lies the difference between a great man and an average one. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Consider these two notions that are associated with Actor: an Actor has to give things a value, which is to say, he has to give something a place in his life in order to treat it accordingly. If you then look at why do we say "giving" rather than, say, "taking" or "receiving"—why does it make sense to say, "He *gives* things a place?" The answer is that the place that things have in a person's life do not follow either deductively or causally from their being those things. There being a chair there does not imply, nor does it determine, what place the chair has in my life. From that lack of necessary connection, in order to carry that connotatively, we say, "I *give* that chair a place." Because that place doesn't follow from its being a chair. At that point, you see, you can introduce all of that kind of language about being creative,

synthesizing, etc., and it will all be redundant, because the fact that one does something that isn't already given is part of the logic of this. It does not have to be introduced via some process, particularly not some extraordinary process.

**Terry:** *No, it's available to everyone, but nevertheless, it doesn't take away from the fact that only certain people act on that freedom.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but again, that follows. Not everybody will give the same thing the same place. So obviously, people are going to do things differently, and the way they do things differently will reflect them. So certainly you wouldn't expect everybody to use astigmatism the same way or for astigmatism to have the same place in everybody's life. Again, that simply follows directly from the logic of this. You don't need any special considerations or any special language for it. It's just right there.

**Terry:** *You seem to be doing more than that. You're saying it's commonplace, that the difference between what El Greco does with his astigmatism and what—*

**Peter:** No, no. What I'm saying instead is that it's El Greco who is extraordinary. It's not that there's an extraordinary process that accounts for what he does. It's *he* that's extraordinary, not some process of synthesizing, etc. Those are commonplace. Everybody has them. But when he does it, it's different.

**Wynn:** *If El Greco had been given corrective lenses at an early age, could he have still been a great man?*

**Joe S:** *They didn't have corrective lenses at that time. As a matter of fact, they didn't even have the concept of astigmatism. As a matter of fact, it's pure speculation that El Greco had an astigmatism. [laughter]*

**Wynn:** *That's irrelevant to the point that's trying to be made—*

**Joe S.:** *It shows that the point itself is irrelevant. [laughter]*

**Peter:** You do have historical accidents. You recall that history was one of the things that we had to reconcile, and this is a minor example that it's true—that if El Greco was astigmatic, you would need to be able to account for that fact rather than dismiss it. The fact that we don't know for sure that he was just means that when we do this with El Greco, it's all hypothetical. It's not an actual fact that we have to explain. But we have to be able to say, "If El Greco had been astigmatic, how would we account for it?" And we have to be able to account for it, because he might have been. So generating

the solution in the abstract is an exercise in the logic of it, rather than an exercise in historical reconstruction, because we don't know the history. But as a logical exercise, it's fine.

**Daniel:** *Taking up Terry's point about people turning what most people consider liabilities into assets, that's an extraordinary—that's what separates a great deal of—in different areas, it separates people. For example, in art, in sales, talking about it, it sounds like it's a skill that one can learn—*

**Daniel:** *Yeah, you can teach that.*

**Joe J:** *Is status assignment a skill?*

**Daniel:** *No, I'm talking about—*

**Peter:** It's not a skill, any more than succeeding is a skill.

**Daniel:** *I think it's an ability.*

**Peter:** No. You can teach people things, and you can get them to acquire abilities that will make it more likely that they succeed, or that will make it more likely that they don't get thrown by handicaps. You can achieve that kind of result. But it's not because they have a skill, and the way that shows up is that if you teach me about business, and you teach me right, you can get me to not be fazed by business set-backs, so I'll surmount them and keep on going.

But that won't do a damn thing for me if I receive a set-back in psychotherapy. Whatever I had there that kept me from being fazed by the business set-back will not transfer over here. That means that what you taught me was not a skill for not being set back by set-backs. It was something to do with business.

Or if, as a therapist, you acquire that over here, in psychotherapy where you're not thrown because your clients quit or this or that, that doesn't do anything to prepare you for what happens when your bank closes down, and you're broke. So it's not that you have a general ability not to get fazed by set-backs. It's that your level of competence with a given subject-matter is such that within that, you're less likely to. But you're less likely to because you're competent in the subject-matter, not because you have a special competence for not getting thrown.

**Daniel:** *Then the thing is to use what most of us would term "a liability" and change it into an asset. So that all the examples you just gave—I could see how it comes across: a person could do that. So why would it not be an ability?*

**Peter:** Because you'd be differentially able across different areas. You see, I could give you a policy—in fact, I often do as an exercise in therapy—it's called *Where Do You Go From There?* And that's for somebody who talks as though the fact that a certain thing happened, or the fact that certain things might happen, is the end of the world. Everything comes to a stop if that happened, or there he is with nothing since it did happen. And the counter to that is, "So what?" "That's where you are; where do you go from there?" And that's an exercise for taking adversity and turning it into something positive. So you can give people policies of that sort, but they will still be differentially able to apply that policy effectively across different areas in their life. And that's what you would expect, because different areas in their life, they have different levels of competence, and so a policy will tend to evoke optimally the competence they have. But following a policy is not a competence. It's just something you do.

**Daniel:** *Could you reiterate why it's not an ability?*

**Peter:** The mark of ability is that you identify a class of successes that you could be expected to achieve if you tried. What I'm saying is that there is no such class of "successes" generally, except within particular domains, that you get differential results in different domains, and that's the mark of there not being a single ability at work. It's like the difference between "I can add and subtract very well, but multiplication and division I do just moderately well." You wouldn't want to say I knew arithmetic well. You'd say I knew how to add and subtract, but I didn't know how to multiply and divide. So when you get a domain, and you have different areas where I'm operating at different levels of success, that's a mark of there being different abilities present. So that's why I say that with things like succeeding, it's just totally implausible that there is a general ability to succeed. But within a given domain, if you're competent in that domain you may be more likely to succeed.

**Daniel:** *Even bouncing back from adversity would not be an ability. It would be something different.*

**Peter:** Yeah. It would be an achievement, primarily.

**Wynn:** *Although would you find it surprising if a character who had met a lot of adversity in his business dealings and had learned to master them, in therapy, when he reaches a set-back, going, "Well, I've dealt with set-backs before."? Because he'd done it before.*



**Peter:** Exactly. You get into self-concept again. “I can handle whatever comes up.” Compare that to having the policy, “Where do you go from here?” You get almost identical results from those two. And the relation between them is very much like the one we had up here before, where you have standards for criticizing ways of life, and you can do that explicitly; or you can go to an origin formulation of what human nature is and what violates it. But here, you can either have a policy extending across your behaviors and have that explicitly apply to your behavior; or you can incorporate it into your self-concept that “I’m *this* kind of person,” and that will carry it across all of your behaviors. Then you don’t need a policy; you just need to be you.

**Wynn:** *So in the two cases, when the person identifies himself as a person who can handle adversity, regardless (although he might be wrong), versus the person who can recognize a particular adversity as bearing a resemblance to types of adversity he has been to master—*

**Peter:** Somebody who has this kind of confidence can handle adversity, but within particular areas—somebody who says, “I’m a good mechanic, I can fix it, no matter what.”

### FIGURE 3



Okay, back to the primary notion of freeing you from your learning. I said that this is pretty much equivalent to freeing the Actor, and over here [S] you see what there is to be freed. Because if, as an Actor, you’re primarily creative rather than reflective, if you generate values rather than merely find them, if you give things a place rather than merely finding the place things have, then your scope in doing this may be unnecessarily restricted. If it is, then, as an Actor, you’re constrained, and you could stand some liberating.

**Terry:** *Aren’t we talking about the meaning of actions, at that point, that in terms of the actual actions you engage in, there’s a certain finite set, but that there’s a high variability in terms of the way in which we can see the meaning of those actions; and that under some descriptions, those actions are more narrow than they could be under other descriptions. So we’re wanting to emancipate the person from a certain sort of narrow meaning-perspective or something of that kind.*

**Peter:** That's the story told from this end [Fig. 1, p. 179: O-D, C]. That's an Observer-Describer and Critic's account. You're talking as though the action was already there, and it was simply a matter of not having the wrong description, or too narrow a set of descriptions, etc. That's fine out here, but when it comes to producing that action, it isn't already there. It isn't already under some description. You have to generate it under some description. So the narrowness of the description translates into the narrowness of the actual range of actions that you can engage in. There isn't a contrast between the two. It's a matter of *which* action you produce, not merely of which description you give an existing action.

**Terry:** *Because those are sort of part and parcel of each other.*

**Peter:** Up here, they are; down here, they can be separated. You see, when I sit in the chair, whatever the meaning of that behavior, I choose it that way. Different meanings involve different behaviors.

**Terry:** *There's more dramatic contrast, in a way. I'm sort of imagining a young priest who's engaging in certain rituals, in his training, and, for the most part, he's going through the motions, and he's very bored and unhappy doing these things, and, as time goes on, he's doing the very same act in terms of the different steps he goes through, but he gradually is getting a deeper and deeper appreciation of it because he's ### the meaning of the act, the ritual.*

**Peter:** Okay, let's say it again. Part of the virtue of having some technical language is that you don't have to talk that way, because you can say "the same performance he's engaging in," but as he goes through, it will be different actions, different deliberate actions, different symbolic behavior, involving the same performance. And then there's no confusion between the same behavior and different behavior. You don't have to talk about the meaning of the behavior versus the behavior. What's the same, in what you've described, is performances, since we have that distinction of a Performance Description and performance, you can say it.

**Terry:** *I thought you didn't want to tie the performance parameter to visible features.*

**Peter:** Why not?

**Terry:** *I didn't know why not. I thought you had reasons.*

**Peter:** No. The main thing I said was that the performance is not something separate from the behavior. It's the process aspects of it, and the behavior is usually no less visible than the performance is. What I'm concerned to deny

there is: the inferential move from the performance to the behavior. It isn't that the performance is really visible, and, from that, you infer the behavior. You see both the performance and the behavior. Normally, you see the behavior. Remember that test, that if I ask you to describe the performance that I engage in—for example, what I just did right now [**picking a piece of chalk off the floor**]*—it's much easier for you to describe the behavior than the performance. So it isn't that the performance is somehow more visible or the thing that is visible. The behavior is visible.*

**Terry:** *The example I always come back to with that, though, that highlights the difference, is someone comes into a board meeting and spills coffee on someone else, and in the one instance it's an accident; and in the other, he's feigned it, he really doesn't like the guy, and he's delighting in the fact that he's just burned him. There you have the same performance, but in each one, they're a member of a different intentional action. And there it appears that there is wedge between the physical features of the performance, and the intentional action as a whole. Certainly I can't—*

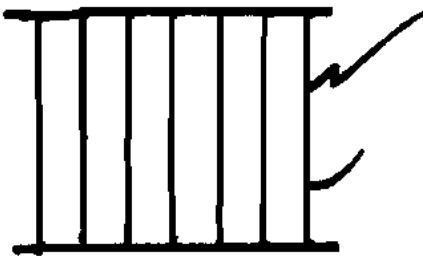
**Peter:** It's either one action—

**Terry:** *—which one of those behaviors is being engaged it.*

**Joe J:** *You might be sitting across from me and spill coffee on me, and you might very well—*

**Terry:** *If you could assert those kinds of feature, then the performance is not identical in the two instances.*

## **FIGURE 4**



**Peter:** [**blackboard**] We're dealing with this kind of problem, and we've already dealt with that many times—that you're only seeing part of it. And you're pointing out that until you know what the rest of it is, you don't know

what this is. [See pp. 31-32, lines 357-364] That fine, but that's commonplace, that indeed, you can't see the beginning of the football game until the time when it's ending; and if what's going on there is an expression of hostility, unless the provocation were there, indeed, you can't see them both at the same time; and if you weren't looking in the right time and place for the provocation, you might not recognize this as hostility. That's the chances we all take. We can be wrong about what we see.

**Terry:** *Yeah, except that by saying it's commonplace, you seem to imply that there's something non-problematical about that.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Terry:** *Whereas, in fact, it's extremely problematical, because of the ambiguity of behavior in just that way. In many particular occasions, we are left in a quandary as to what is going on. In the light of that fact—*

**Peter:** Yeah. Because it poses no methodological problems. Again, I point out that the fact that we have defective forms of behavior description enables us to say exactly what we know or are sure of and peel off what we don't know. And again, we don't have to talk about behavior in ten different senses. We can give a Performance Description and say, "That's all I know about it." Under a Performance Description, he spilled the coffee. Then you're being explicit about what it is you don't know about that behavior. So what's the thing?

**Terry:** *I guess what you don't know, and now that you need to know it.*

**Peter:** But that's a practical problem, not a methodological problem. I may need to know whether it was really hostility or not, but that's a historical accident.

**Wynn:** *I think Terry was coming off with a different point in your argument, and that was that you said that the behavior was, "I bent over to pick up the chalk." That's confusing in the same way that it would be confusing to say that "the behavior was that he spilled coffee on him." Although both of those are behaviors, in ordinary language, if you simply say "performance" you won't be committed, and I think that's where—*

**Terry:** *If you use that as a behavior description, it implies that it's a complete or exhaustive description of the action, as opposed to what actually would be a complete description, which would be, "He had an accident in spilling the coffee," or "He did it on purpose because he wanted to feign an accident for the purpose of burning him."*

**Peter:** Did I say that the behavior was bending over and picking up the chalk?

**Wynn:** *You used the word “behavior” rather than “performance”. We do that here a lot, and that’s the reason for the—*

**Peter:** Well, let me inform you that that *was* the behavior. It wasn’t just a performance. I *intended* to pick up the chalk. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *Walking in here, and simply seeing you bend over and pick up the chalk, I can say in either case, in ordinary language, “what his performance was” or “what his behavior was”. It’s just that by using the term “performance”, we make the distinction that we’ve been trying to—that’s been made here.*

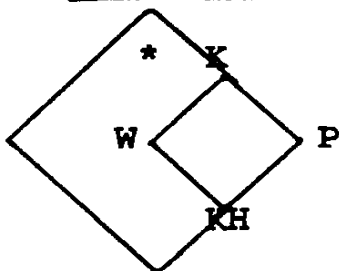
**Terry:** *There’s a different commitment in terms of what you know and don’t know.*

**Peter:** But again, there’s nothing in behavior description that says you always give complete descriptions. So if what you can give is the behavior of picking up the chalk—

**Wynn:** *That’s not fair, because you did that right after you made the distinction between behavior—*

**Peter:** Then, the fact that there’s some other description that you can give, again, is just garden-variety history. [Blackboard]

**FIGURE 5**



Because had you seen other things, you would have been able to give another. In fact, this one [P] you could give just by having seen what was going on. You could make up several other descriptions here [\*]. But that has no guarantee of being complete, either. So again, you’re back to the garden-variety fact that no description is guaranteed to be complete. That’s simply part of what goes with the whole enterprise of describing behavior, that

you're always at that kind of hazard. And practically speaking, it's not that much of a problem, because the things that we have to do with one another don't call for exhaustive knowledge or exhaustive description most of the time. Which is fortunate. Look where we'd be if we had to have those things.

**Steve A:** *In one of the earlier sessions, you were talking about teaching someone—the example of fixing carburetors: first you show them what to do, and then you tell them what not to do at a later stage of learning. On your description here, about where something can go wrong about what there is to be freed or liberated when the Actor is being constricted, is it because we're talking at the level of these ways of living in the books, at the second level of what not to do—it seems to me ways things can go wrong in terms of competence—you know, it's not just a faulty Critic that has to be dealt with. I'm wondering what we're missing—*

**Peter:** A good Critic—if it's a matter of competence, a good Critic will detect that and will adjust accordingly. It's the kind of thing that you can take care of that way.

**Joe H:** *Would the thing that's lacking be environmental ###? When you have a lack of—in other words, you don't see the possibilities that are possible.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Joe H:** *For example, you'd see a chair, and you'd see it as something to sit in, but might not be able to see it as something to stand on.*

**Peter:** Or I might not even think of it as potentially an El Greco-type chair. [change tape] You see, what happens here is that you make use of the possibilities you know, and these are geared to the thing that you are doing, positively, and what's elusive is some of the things that you might have done, that you had the basic competence to do, you have the ideas to do, but you don't think of doing them because they're unthinkable for you. That's what's hard to—that's the kind of change that's hard to produce.

**Terry:** *And just sort of add a rider on that, that if one wanted to characterize modern thought as being most concerned with thinking that one thought, and that that's what most plagues contemporary people.*

**Peter:** Say that again.

**Terry:** *Well, the concern that Joe just raised, which was that there's something that you could have done, but that you just didn't think of doing it, that's within your competence and all this; and in the post-Freudian world, there's always*

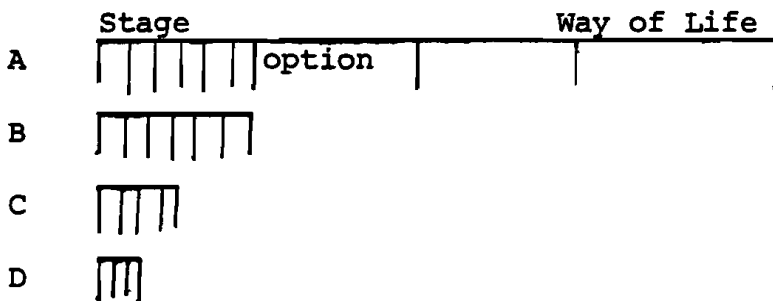
this sense of “there’s something I could do, it’s something that’s un-thought that if just thought about it, then I could do it”; and this is something that plagues a lot of people now.

**Peter:** Yeah, I shouldn’t wonder.

**Terry:** *It’s that untapped possibility, that stone you didn’t turn over that could have led to—*

**Peter:** Let’s come back to something technical, namely, a Process Description. Recall the Stage and Options structure, where you can divide it into stages, and then each stage has a number of options.

**FIGURE 6**



Each option is itself a process that can be divided into a number of stages with options, and so on. Now think of this schema, when you fill in all of this, being directly applicable to any person at any time. That is, there is a description of what he’s doing [D]; there is a description of what he’s doing by doing that [C]; there’s a description of what he’s doing by doing *that* [B]; and ultimately he’s living this kind of life [A], and this is the way he’s doing it.

**Daniel:** *There’s an option within each stage?*

**Peter:** Yeah. Now remember that every practice, every form of behavior, there are standards for what it takes to qualify as doing it at all, versus not doing. There are standards for what it takes to do it well rather than badly. So you have those applicable at all of these levels.

One of the major sources of coherence in this whole thing is that standards work from the top down. That is, the primary standard for whether you’re doing this [D] okay, is whether it fits okay in this larger thing [C] that you’re engaged in. The primary standard for whether this [C] went off okay is how it fits in the next larger thing you’re doing [B], until when you reach the end, the ultimate standard for whether anything is okay is if it has



the right place in your life. One of the things this means is that your criticism will tend to be instrumental. You ask, “Is this going okay? If not, I’ll change down here. I’ll change how I’m doing it.” So the control that we’re talking about over here [A], namely, “Is it going okay?,” and if it isn’t make an adjustment down here [B, etc.] in how we do it. So we’re geared to an instrumental thing of means to ends.

Now, in an instrumental paradigm, the one thing it will overlook is alternate ends. We ask, “Is this going okay?” We don’t ask, “Should I be doing this instead of something else?”—not unless you go up here [A]. If you ask, “Is this going okay?” then you can raise the question, “Should I be doing this or something else?” But then you don’t raise the question of this [B, etc.] unless you go to the next higher level, and there you can raise the question of should I be doing this at all, or something else. When you get to here [A], since that’s your ultimate resource for this kind of adjustment, this way of living is not susceptible to the same kind of correction. That’s what you have to work with for every other correction. But it itself can’t be corrected that way.

That means, as you might expect, that changing somebody’s way of living is something more than the normal technical problem of changing somebody’s behavior. Because changing somebody’s behavior *within* his way of living is a technical problem. Changing the way of living itself is a different problem. The more you raise questions at higher levels, of “Should I be doing this at all?,” the more you’re going to get into unthinkability. And it converges up here [A], where I said that you can’t raise the question, “Should I be living a different life?”—because, after all, it is you. Keep in mind that most of these—what do we call them? religions, theories, etc.—are ones that aim to change a person’s way of life. They are not just normal behavior-changing systems. They are systems for changing your over-all approach to things.

It’s at that point that you come back to here [Fig. 1, p. 179: Actor] and say, even though the person himself can’t raise this kind of issue in the normal way, about “should I be doing it differently?,” still he has that potential. He has the potential for living in a different way. He has generally untapped potential not merely at that highest level, but all the way down.

**Jane:** *Are you using “unthinkability” there in the usual sense? It seems like somebody could conceive of the possibility, and simply say, “But that wouldn’t be me.” In some other cases, it seems like it really isn’t an option that you could conceive of.*

**Peter:** But “it wouldn’t be me” is also an option you can’t conceive of. Saying that it wouldn’t be me is to also mention an option that you can’t conceive of. You can conceive of somebody doing it, but not you. So it’s doable, but not by you. So in that sense, it’s unthinkable for you to do. And it’s in just that way that one’s self-concept can place unrealistic restraints here [**giving X a place in your life, etc.**]. On the other hand, they may not be unrealistic. It might indeed be the case that you’d have to be somebody else in order to do it.

**Sherry:** *I was just going to say that you can see something and you can say, “But if I did that, it wouldn’t be me, but just this one time I’m going to do it, I need to do something that’s not at all me.” So in that case, it is thinkable.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but in that case, it also is you.

**Sherry:** *I know it would be if you did it, but—*

**Peter:** What you’re doing there is adopting a conventional Critic’s stance—there’s a certain level of consistency that we refer to when we say that a person is acting in character or he’s acting out of character. Somebody who usually does things in a certain way, or approaches things in a certain way—we see him doing it on a given occasion, and we say, “Well, that’s good old Joe.” And if we see him doing something markedly different, we say, “He’s not himself today. He’s out of character.” Being out of character, in that sense, is not the same as being inauthentic. Saying, “That wouldn’t be me,” in that sense, is not the sense in which one says that one has an integrity problem.

**Terry:** *The instance she’s talking about is someone who’s—like, say, the Walter Mitty, timid type who suddenly decides to go on a vacation to Tahiti with his two secretaries or something like that.*

**Peter:** Not one but two, eh? [**laughter**]

**Terry:** *“It wouldn’t be me, but I’ll hack it just this one time.”*

**Peter:** Notice that one’s normal reaction to this guy is not that it wasn’t really him, but rather that he had it in him all along, and it just wasn’t showing until now.

**Terry:** *Except that from his point of view, internal to his point of view on the matter, it really is—it’s not him, you know, he just never does things like that.*

**Peter:** But then, when he is doing those things, what’s he going to say? “That I never do those things?”

**Terry:** *No. He's going to say, "I can't really believe that I'm doing these. It's the most marvelous experience in my life."* [laughter]

**Wynn:** *In the conceptual discrimination, you attribute him status, and self-status assignment has some use here, because the character could say, "That isn't me," and yet his behavior is within his behavior potential. And an Observer could point that out, in which case you just negotiate the accuracy. In the case that Jane brought up, it seems that just the standard notion of defenses is of some use, in which you can compare repression to, say, displacement, and a person simply cannot think that. Those thoughts aren't available, period. For displacement, the thoughts are available, but the identification of whose thoughts they are has to change or something of that sort. And various defenses seem to be nice ways of teasing out the different kinds of unthinkabilities.*

**Peter:** You can see that you have a number of possibilities of configurations of what the person says, how he reacts to it, whether he really does it, how he reacts to somebody else telling him, etc. And my inclination is to keep taxonomies to a minimum. There are so many possibilities there that I'd be dubious about the value of any taxonomy, because it would have to be tremendously complex in order to get at everything.

**Wynn:** *Well, an ordinary grammar construction, like "What are the various ways a person can distort or defend?" won't lead to a particular taxonomy, but from that question, you can see that there's a hell of a lot of ways that people do it.*

**Peter:** Yeah. I had rather leave it there than introduce taxonomy. That, by the way, is simply a special case of what we're talking about here—AOC. Taxonomies are Observer-Describer and Critic devices, and they have a tendency to stifle your creative impulses. If we left ourselves the free-form task of asking and answering, "How do people distort?", we would almost certainly routinely think of possibilities that were not incorporated in any taxonomy that we might think of. In the interests of parsimony, let's mark places where you could introduce a taxonomy—it would probably be worthwhile—but unless there's such a definite need that it's worth the investment to create and to learn it, and then to learn how to use it, it's better to keep it here [Actor].

**Steve A:** *You got to a point with this Process Description where you're raising these notions about thinkability, that's the limiting factor that you're talking about at that point, where you're not considering a way of living as an option because you can't see—how do you—I think you may have done it already, but*

*I might not be seeing it, to ### the differences between that analysis and the AOC. You're getting at something different, there.*

**Peter:** The schemas are different, and so they have different features, but they also relate to one another. I use this [Fig. 6, pg. 194] to indicate that the structure of decision-making comes from the top down; and that gives a lot of it an instrumental cast and indicates what you appeal to. Then you take the whole thing, and one thing is, you show the boundary condition up here [A], that can't be dealt with that way; and that gives you a sense of what it's going to be hard to change and what it's going to be easy to change, if this is the way you're operating. And then you come back over here [AOC—Fig. 1, p. 179] and say, the things that are hard to change are the ones that you probably wouldn't think of on your own.

Whereas the other ones, the easy-to-change ones, are exactly what you're going to be doing here [C-A], because you'll be involved in *what* you're doing, namely, this; and how; and you're going to adjust the “how” to the “what”. And that's what I drew here as the normal function when you look at this as a feedback cycle.

**Joe J:** *It seems to me like this is a way of living, when I provide a way of formulating various classically very-difficult-to-treat problems in therapy, in which we usually get terrible results.*

**Peter:** Like what?

**Joe J:** *What popped in mind is that in the literature, it's incredibly difficult to help someone change his sexual identity—homosexuality, heterosexuality. It's also apparently very difficult to deal with people who found themselves in a very psychotic position, to get there without having to resort to the standard physiological formulations like ###. There might be a point to doing that, depending on what kinds of things you might hope to do with him, like that.*

**Peter:** You would certainly want to try. I can't report much in the way of first-hand experience with those, so... Certainly, if I was dealing with cases of sexual identity or psychosis, I wouldn't probably be approaching it that way.

There's one other connection here [Fig. 1, p. 179] which connects us back to the notion of consciousness, and we have some spotty but supporting data. And that is that what a person is conscious of, what he's aware of, lies in a narrow range in this up-and-down hierarchy [Fig. 6, p. 194].

The way that was predicted, and the way it was derived, stems from

the example like the Dinner at Eight-Thirty, where your behavior is marked not by your performance but by your choice. And then the reasoning goes: if most significant behavior consists of making choices rather than engaging in distinctive performances, then since we are aware of, we do have knowledge of, our own behavior, what we are aware of is our choices. And since you can run a logical analysis on this that says that the range of choices is going to be in the middle, and you won't have it at the top end [A], and you won't have it at the bottom end [D], and if there's a lower ground to where you're going to make choices, it would follow that your awareness is limited to some limited range of the whole top-to-bottom sequence here.

And by commonplace observation, you know that that's true, that your experience ordinarily does not include experience of your way of living. And down at the bottom, it stops at your muscle movements. You're aware of your gross movements, but you're not aware of your fine muscle movements or anything of a more molecular sort than that. All of those would be diagrammed further and further down here, down to the last subatomic particle.

So you're aware down to only a certain level, and you're not aware at the highest ones. You're not making choices down here or up there, so given the notion that your behavior consists of choices and that you're aware of your behavior, it follows that your awareness is limited in the same way that your choices are limited in range. That, you see, you can certainly collect some relevant data on; and the kind of data that we've gotten is to simply stop people at a given time and ask, "What are you doing now?"—with no ifs, ands, or buts, just "What are you doing now?" and taking whatever answer they give. And usually people will answer, instead of asking, "What do you mean?"

Also, different answers can be compared as to whether they are at a corresponding level, and the degree of agreement among judges for what level it is, I think, reaches about 90-95%. So it isn't that hard—there's not that much disagreement. The data is that what you get are primarily two adjacent levels, exemplified by "I'm eating a sandwich," and "I'm having lunch." If you ask people, "What are you doing now?" the answers you get will correspond to one or the other of those two levels.

**Wynn:** *Occasionally you get surprised with some characters who answer nothing like that—that I'm engaged in something that's quite surprising.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's right.

**Bob:** *They're usually graduate students in clinical psychology.*

**Peter:** Or philosophy students.

**Bob:** *Pete, are you saying that you can't have conscious awareness, or that you just don't, outside that—*

**Peter:** It's a limiting-case argument: that the higher up you go, the harder it's going to be, and there's a real question up here [A] as to what would qualify as "being aware of your way of life," being conscious of it.

On the other hand, we have reports on peak experiences, and some of those reports of peak experiences sound very much like a realization of the way of life that you're living. So you might say, "Okay, that puts this [A] in a kind of middling category." The argument simply says that you run out of room here, but it's not strict enough to tell you whether that top line is out of bounds or in bounds. It does tell you there's nothing beyond it. Then the reports on peak experiences are not so unambiguous that if you wanted to insist that the top line was out of bounds, that those reports would force you to change your mind. On the other hand, the nature of the language used makes it attractive and plausible to say that one is experiencing one's way of living.

And you say, "Okay, what we're showing is maybe that it is difficult, so difficult that to do it up here [A], it takes a peak experience, and even when you have it, it's not that clear-cut a case."

**Bob:** *Theoretically, why would you want to limit it, one way or the other? Why not include the entire range and say that it's all possible that it opens to experience, but practically, it takes something special to get either high or low out of that comfortable middle? There's no reason to limit it, is there?*

**Peter:** Yeah, there is. There's an infinite regress argument down here [D...n] that says you can't forever be doing something by doing something else by doing something else by doing something else—that sequence has got to end. Otherwise, you have an infinity of decisions to make, and you can't do that. So you can argue strictly that there's a lower bound to the level of decision-making. It's the upper bound where this last line is—

**Joe J:** *It seems that you always won't be aware of what you're doing. What I'm doing is never molecular movements and chemicals under my control, and so on.*

**Peter:** No, it could be. One of the interesting things about biofeedback is that it seems to extend the range of things that we could literally be said

to do. It extends it down one notch. And it would make sense, then, to say, “What I am doing is raising my blood pressure,” etc. But then you just go down to the next one, and you’re back to the same thing. So again, it’s a boundary condition argument. It’s not to say that we will never do that, or that you can’t, but that you will reach an end.

**Wynn:** *But even there, it’s peculiar, because we have some reports that are not very good about people who can change amino acid balances and skin color balances by manipulating very subtle chemicals. They don’t know yet how they’re doing it or what they’re doing, but they can regularly come in and change colors, etc.*

**Peter:** As usual, with a boundary condition argument, you’re arguing the logic of the whole set-up. You’re not guessing at where a given person has to stop, or where we all will, because that has a tendency to be different among different people and across time. But you can argue that there has to be a stopping place, because nobody is going to make an infinity of decisions. So once you have that, then you simply refer to that boundary, wherever it may be, and you’ve got a schema.

There’s something more than sheer accident in all of this. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *Surprise!*

**Peter:** I don’t mean about all of that—I mean about the criticism being instrumental. Think of the notion of being open to information, or being open to alternatives. I can be open to alternatives up to the time when I start doing the particular thing at issue. At that point, I’d better be *not* open to alternatives, because if I am, that screws up my doing—something. Once I start it, then the emphasis is on getting it done effectively, because if I start considering alternatives half-way through, I’m going to screw it up, generally speaking. So one of the things that action calls for is *non*-openness to information, *non*-openness to alternate possibilities, once you’re decided. You might say, that’s what the decision is all about, is when you stop looking at alternatives and opt for one and implement it. So, you might say, once you’ve decided to do this, then you don’t raise questions about alternatives, because that would interfere with effecting it. You simply ask how. Once you opt for this as “how”, you don’t raise alternatives because that would gimmick up its effectiveness. You ask how. So you keep doing that. So having the whole thing run off properly involves screening off possibilities, rejecting possibilities, rejecting information, not being open. Otherwise you’d never get anything actually done, because you’d simply be awash in a sea of possibilities, with



no way of choosing. So it's not an accident, then, that as an Actor, you may be closed to a lot of possibilities that you have theoretically but which might come under the heading of "if I were somebody else". On the other hand, since it's not a given—what place things could have in your life—you may be setting the limits too narrowly. By and large, it seems that people set the limits too narrowly rather than too broadly. That is, over and over again we see people being able to do things which they wouldn't have thought was in them, or it wouldn't have been them, but then afterwards, it is. We very seldom see somebody over-extending himself and doing something that really isn't him, and then he cracks up because he can't hold it together afterwards. I can't say that I've ever encountered a case of that sort. It's conceivable, you can see how could happen, but in fact it's much less often than the other, where somebody is too constrained. And I take it that the message from all of these, which reflects a few thousand years of history, is the same. That is, these people are not directing their efforts toward keeping people from over-extending themselves. They're devoting a lot of effort to freeing up people from constraints that needn't be there.

**Joe J:** *Could you make up an example to show what it would look like for somebody to be over-extending himself? I'm asking, because I was sitting here trying to do that, and I couldn't make it fly.*

**Peter:** Yeah. The most common one that I'm familiar with is the Vietnam veterans, where people went over there and did things in response to the situation, where later on they can't live with themselves because they did this. That's a genuine case of "I couldn't be me and still have done that," and there you do get psychosis.

**Wynn:** *I think you get—a phenomenon something like that that occurs to political people and people that are in the entertainment industry, when they get—*

**Peter:** "I couldn't be me and be a has-been."

**Wynn:** *There's the has-been notion, there's the clinical phenomenon of the let-down after the moon landings, but I think that you can conceptualize differently, as "everything is downhill from here". But the case in which a person does something and then has things attributed to him that, in fact, he isn't capable of performing, but then has to live with that—the kind of Buffalo Bill—Altman's film, *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, is a story about a character of just that sort, whose myth—who has to live with a myth that's beyond his behavior potential.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that, too—you can buy into that and then find it unbearable. So as I say, it is clearly logically possible. You can think of actual cases, but in fact, that doesn't seem to be the general tendency of human error. It's in the other direction.

**Steve A:** *You're saying that once the choice is made, it's a matter of how and not a "which" kind of thing, and you made kind of a jump, that because of the nature of behavior, behavior being that way, you're saying something along the line that it's easier to make mistakes? Or does that sort of generalize to other ways?*

**Peter:** No, I'm saying that it's fundamental to the whole notion of behavior that you reject possibilities, you close off possibilities. That's the price of realizing any possibility, is closing off the alternative possibilities. There's no escape from that.

**Steve A:** *Okay, you're closing it off once the choice is made. But here we're talking about the problematic case of limiting the Actor, limiting the options that the Actor sees.*

**Peter:** Yeah. And again, back to this [Fig. 6, p. 194]—you see how this thing works hierarchically—there will be choices that, in principle, would be possible but which will automatically get rejected. The higher up they are, the more likely they are to automatically get rejected. Then over here [Fig. 1, p. 179], you'll say, "This Actor is arbitrarily limiting the place he gives to things, the value he gives to things." He's limited in his creativity—unnecessarily—because he could, but it just happens he doesn't, because of the—you might say, the "statistical thrust" of this whole paradigm [Fig. 6]. But that's what you would expect.

**Terry:** *But the way in which that happens oftentimes is more subtly an act than just over-restriction. In this example of Buffalo Bill—it's a good example, I think, because ###, when he talks about extravagance as a psychological concept, uses the image of a mountain-climber who has climbed too high, so that he can't get down any longer, and, at the same time, he can't climb any higher than where he is. He's stuck on a precipice. And the nature of that is that he's laid claim to a certain status that he does not, in fact, have, and he's constantly trapped in acting of the image of someone who has this status, but, in fact, he doesn't have it, and since he's constantly doing it, he's trapped from going any higher in terms of acquiring behavior potential from that place, because, in fact, he isn't there. And yet he can't come down from where he actually is because he's constantly engaged in the image-making of being someone who's*

*more capable than he is, so he can't start where he is in order to learn the things he would have to do in order to really be there, in order to then acquire more from there. And that kind of extravagance is one of the most typical forms, I would say, of inauthenticity in psychological disturbance that I see.*

**Peter:** Again, the general notion is an unnecessary limitation, and then you can start diagnosing for particular cases, and give a positive story of what the person is doing wrong. And the image of somebody climbing too high would be one of these [Fig. 1, p. 179: **Diagnosis**]. Here's what he's doing wrong: he's over-extended, and being over-extended, he can't go further, and he can't go back, and that's the bind he's in, and that's the limitation that you see enacted in his behavior, in his way of living, and his choices.

Now let's turn to something that might seem unrelated, but I think is, and that is the notion of play—play, as against work and ###.

**Joe S:** —a break?

**Peter:** Yeah. I want you to start thinking about that, though, before we take the break, because play is one of the places where you think of being cut loose from constraint, of its having a positive value, and so it has some of the features that we've been talking about. So let's take ten.

**Peter:** Generally speaking, one of the worst things you can do is to ask questions that have this form: "What is X?"

**Daniel:** *Worse than asking "why" questions?* [laughter, general conversation]

**Peter:** I'm saying that you can get into more trouble, faster, asking questions that have this form, than almost anything else I know of. The reason is that whatever you answer is something other than X, and you're off talking about something else. And that's why I'm constantly reminding you that things are what they are, and *not* something else.

**Terry:** *Except—I would like to expand on that in such a way as to show that you're not really ending up with—*

**Peter:** However, in spite of that, let us ask, "What is play?"

**Daniel:** *What's your reason for asking that question?*

**Peter:** Intuitively, it seems like a good question to ask, because even if we do get into trouble, probably that will be instructive. [general conversation]

The commonest form of trouble you get into is that there's no answer, and you never find that, and then you start lamenting that you're missing it.

**Wynn:** *Is that the same logical form as Wittgenstein's question, "What is a game?"*

**Peter:** What is language, what is reality, what is meaning, what is a person, who am I?

Okay, we distinguish play from other sorts of behavior. That's the notion that some things are cases of play, and other things are not. That's good enough to get started on—you know, we're qualified! Is it purely absolute intuition, or what? Is there something we can say about what qualifies, or if not that, at least what kind of differences are there between play and other forms of behavior? As a matter of fact, we might start by contrasting. What forms of behavior contrast most clearly with play?

?: *Work.*

?: *Games. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Anything else?

**Wynn:** *The tri-partite business is usually play, work, and love, so we'd probably find some contrast between play and love.*

?: *Non-enjoyment.*

**Peter:** Non-enjoyment is not a form of behavior.

**Joe S:** ###

**Joe J:** *Paradigm case!*

**Peter:** We'll do an experiment to find out. [laughter]

**Jane:** *Being hassled.*

**Peter:** That's not a form of behavior.

?: *Fighting...killing...worrying...*

**Joe J:** *When you're doing it by choice and knowing it's a choice.*

**Peter:** We haven't got to characteristics, have we? Just some of the forms of behavior, especially those that provide a clear contrast to play.

Okay, let's just take these three and say, "What separates play from each of these?" And now we're into things like fun, enjoyment, or whatever.

**FIGURE 7**

	killing fighting	
play	games	worship
	work worrying	

**Steve A:** *It seems that these other categories are categories where—it seems like that with play, you have something along the lines of a sense of intrinsic enjoyment, intrinsic social practice, satisfaction, appreciation of that, versus—in the others, the significance of the behavior is beyond that.*

**Peter:** Work is not intrinsic? [laughter] Worrying is—? Certainly worshipping, at least paradigmatically, would have to be intrinsic. Fighting, if you take the provocation over here—that would be intrinsic. Apparently you can have intrinsic behavior in any of these.

**Daniel:** *But play stands out, with very little option as far as “What are you doing?” “Playing.”*

**Steve A:** *Or non-instrumental versus instrumental.*

**Peter:** [blackboard] Let’s see.

**FIGURE 8**

<u>Instrumental</u>	<u>Intrinsic</u>
non-optional	optional
?	pleasurable
serious	non-serious
crucial	non-crucial
deliberate	spontaneous
controlled	non-controlled
old	young (over 16)
problematical	non-problematical

**Daniel:** *It’s more intrinsic, more likely to be intrinsic.*

**Steve P:** *It can only be intrinsic.*

**Joe J:** *It seems to me like it's when you know that you're doing it just because you're doing it, seems to me to be a crucial issue with play; whereas when you're working, then it's like I have to work. When I'm feeling like—when I'm treating it as though don't really have another choice, then it's not play anymore. If I'm playing chess, and I really have to play chess, I'm not just playing any more.*

**Wynn:** *It sounds like you could look at any particular behavior, and, depending on your attitude towards that behavior, you could describe it as work or as play.*

**Joe J:** *That's right. It's whether I know that it's my choice, and whether it's a real choice for me.*

**Wynn:** *Some things are a real choice for me in terms of work, and I don't enjoy doing them. I have the choice to do them, and I nevertheless do them.*

**Daniel:** *Sometimes work is like play.*

**Jane:** *Something to do with the rules. There seem to me, some of the distinctions that I've been reading about ### are involved, the kind of contrast we have between recreation and other sorts of things, like sport isn't quite the same as a recreational activity, or play, because it is a—the rules, and opportunities for more serious engagement than play. So it seems like play is more free than some of the others.*

**Peter:** *Free in what way?*

**Joe J:** *It seems to have a relationship with how high up in that hierarchy towards way of living it is. When I'm just playing, I can just stop playing—say, I'm playing chess, that's cool, or I can say, "Let's play checkers," and that's fine. But you can't play at your way of life. When you get up to the top, it gets to be—it has to do with seriousness, when it's more serious, then it's not play.*

**Wynn:** *I think that both Buddhists and Hindus would argue that you very well could play at your form of life—their concept "lila", and—*

**Joe J:** *Sure, you can, but look at all the work you have to do to get to the state where you can do that.*

**Wynn:** *Okay, but the point I'm trying to make is that at least for the so-called very evolved creatures in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, these characters—their performances may be identical with everybody else's performances, but all their performances are acts of praise.*

**Joe J:** —*status assignment, then you know that you're not limited to that.*

**Wynn:** *I'm not trying to—I'm not trying to ### a direction that is good. I'm just trying to get at the sense that there's no particular performance that's purely a work-performance, love-performance, or play-performance, yet that sometimes we have more reasons to call it play, rather than others. And part of this comes through the reminder that there are certain philosophies that see the major category of activity as play, with other things as sub-categories.*

**Daniel:** *This seems to be a major category. though. [Peter at blackboard, writing "young" on Fig. 8]*

**Bob:** *That's less than 16.*

**Daniel:** *Speak for yourself, Bob.*

**Peter:** There speaks a discriminating Critic.

**Wynn:** *I get a clue on part of this from the Karma Yoga practice, in that when behavior isn't attached to—I don't know exactly what it means to say that one isn't attached to one's behavior—but when one isn't attached to one's behavior, one plays. And that seems to be part of the goal in at least some of these practices, is that looking for a non-attachment, a breathing-space with the work.*

**Joe J:** *All the mystical stuff that I've read, non-attachment is a key issue.*

**Peter:** It may be a key issue, but it certainly is not a clear concept. Could either of you explain the notion of non-attachment?

**Joe J:** —*have struggled for years to get it clear.*

**Wynn:** *Non-attachment seems to be the sort of thing in which the person isn't attached to the product of his work, that whatever comes up is sort of okay, although he may be moving in a certain direction, he'll skip it. The reason it comes from the Karma notion, it comes from the notion that if my action goes wrong, then I'm not going to be upset.*

**Peter:** This sounds like Instrumental versus Intrinsic—not being attached to the product of your work says it's not instrumental.

**Wynn:** *I can't quote further than that, but I'm feeling that they need something besides just that.*

**Peter:** I get a feeling of that, too.

**Joe J:** *It seems to fit the self concept. For me, a crucial part of the concept of "me" is something—my house, my wife, my kids, something that I'm attached*



to, which you couldn't discover by taking them away and then watching what happens to me.

**Wynn:** *Although that doesn't seem—the only counter I can provide within these frameworks, although there is a lack of attachment, there are still goals that are taken seriously. Although there's that place where I'm becoming—*

**Peter:** Seriously, but not really seriously.

**Wynn:** *Seriously but not attached.*

**Joe J:** *It has to be all anti-### though. You can't be doing anything by doing that. You have to just be doing it. Some things I've seen in the Zen literature—the key point is to be able to get to the point where you are just sitting, and if you are striving for enlightenment, forget it, baby, you're not going to get it.*

**Peter:** How about if you're doing something by doing that?

**Joe J:** *By doing what?*

**Peter:** By just sitting there.

**Joe J:** *I think the idea is that what you're striving for is a state where just sitting is intrinsic, so you're not doing anything by doing that. At least, not necessarily. That's as far as I can get it.*

**Steve P:** *The distinction between doing something else by doing that and something else happening while you're doing that.*

**?:** *Good, Steve. [laughter]*

**Peter:** What was that about accreditation ceremonies? [laughter] Well, how do we use all of these? These are contrasts that come to mind. Are any of them crucial, or is some set of them crucial? Are any of them necessary? Or what?

**Wynn:** *Sometimes I think we could get rid of the control/non-control—I can think of all sorts of things that are play, that are the result of incredibly controlled activities. Most of your developed sports would be things of that sort, in which the person could surely identify himself as a player, in the sense that I'm not attached to the results—I don't really know what that means—but if a person identified what he's doing as “playing”, and yet being incredibly careful about the curl of the wave and where it was going.*

**Peter:** “Careful” is different from “controlled”, isn't it?

**Joe J:** *What does “control” mean here? I don't get that distinction.*

**Peter:** You're seeing to it.

**Steve A:** *So those years and years of being trained as a great ball-player, you might not call that “play”, but you get to a point where you’re just doing that.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *The same with dance, where you practice and through the repetition, it becomes natural. So what originally was a very difficult act, now is—*

**Peter:** As a matter of fact, there’s an old distinction: it’s controlled versus ballistic movement. When I bring my arm back here, I’m controlling it as it goes back, but once I swing, the swing is ballistic. I let go. I don’t control it as it goes forward.

**Joe J:** *But if I try to control it, that’s a way of going wrong?*

**Peter:** Yeah. So that’s the kind of thing I had in mind here.

**Wynn:** *I’m wondering about this as a paradigm case, the—*[**general conversation**]

**Peter:** Wynn just suggested that we might get some clarification by going to some paradigm cases. How about a few paradigm cases of play and non-play?

**Joe J:** *Games are obvious—playing chess and playing checkers.*

**Peter:** Is that play?

**Joe J:** *Oh, yeah.*

**Wynn:** *Personal examples, I think, work a little better, because the persons themselves can claim that it was play. Like I can claim that this morning when I was chasing my cat around the house, I was playing, and when she was chasing me, that was play.*

**Peter:** Okay, but if you have to claim it, it’s a bad paradigm case.

**Daniel:** *Children, I think, would be the easiest.*

**Peter:** Okay, how about playing tag? Or playing catch?

**Sherry:** *Playing in a sandbox.*

**Peter:** What would you be doing in a sandbox that would qualify as playing, rather than, say, building a sand castle or something else that might not be play?

**Sherry:** *Who’s to say that’s not play?*

**Peter:** It can be, but some of the things that you do in a sandbox wouldn’t be play. What do you have to do in that sandbox to—

**Daniel:** *All you have to do is be in there.*

**Steve P:** *It's play unless you can show that it's not play in one of several ways.*

**Bob:** *—had a sandbox built in his house and put his piano in it so he could play in his sandbox. [laughter]*

**Joe J:** *How is chess not a game?*

**Peter:** How about this notion that you're playing unless you're doing something else? What's the symmetry argument on that?

**Daniel:** *You're doing something else unless you're playing.*

**Peter:** No, you're working unless you're doing something else.

**Wynn:** *The psychoanalysts have finally got around to the fact that it looked like that people also played, rather than just—you know—sex and aggression. And he couldn't hold sex and aggression as the basic motive for play, and he ended up describing the two sorts of things as play—the things that you see in species that lead to later mastery, and the things that animals or people do that don't seem to be tied into any particular issue of mastery beyond the act itself, the play. The mastery in terms of something else wasn't important. But a child playing catch, throwing back and forth, is play, and a child whose father is making sure that his curve ball is just right—it becomes very cloudy.*

**Peter:** But then he's not playing catch. Then he's practicing.

**Steve P:** *He's learning to do some work.*

**Suzanne:** *I've been thinking that all this—could you use any of the games that children do as totally play unless, as Wynn said—*

**Peter:** These are not guaranteed to be play. These are just things which, at face value, unless you had reason to think otherwise, you'd say are playing.

**Suzanne:** *But I don't know if it's—say, in timing yourself—I know myself that it's—"I'm going to get that"—it becomes competition, it becomes "I'm going to gang up on the person we don't like, and everybody's going to gang-shag him"—it's not really play. It becomes more than that or less than that.*

**Peter:** Except that that's what you're tempted to say: it becomes something else. If it's pure and simply playing catch, you'd say it was playing.

**Suzanne:** *Okay, but just using that as a catch-all term for play—like playing tag or playing catch or playing in the sandbox—it's play because it's what the person's doing while he's doing that.*

**Peter:** At least it gives us some points of reference, as against these just abstract things.

**Terry:** *The unfortunate thing is that it seems like it's coming down to a sort of attitudinal differentiation, that if you get too serious about football, or too competitive, or something like that, then it becomes work or a job or something like that.*

**Steve A:** *Competence is an important issue in play.*

**Wynn:** *It might be useful to do just the opposite of the paradigm case, to provide the most confusing case, the case that seems to have aspects of work, play, and whatever else you want to throw in, seeing what it is we could identify that looked like play, in that, because—*

**Peter:** We've already got that here [Fig. 8, p. 206]. It's as if we had a bunch of distinctions that would just about all be applicable to the case that you mentioned.

**Terry:** *You've also got one on the further side of play, which is like random action, random behavior, which is so disorganized that you wouldn't even say it's play—*

**Peter:** It's a behavior.

**Terry:** *—but it has certain kinds of features that play has, in terms of its not being as organized as deliberate—as work.*

**Peter:** It probably wouldn't be behavior either, then.

**Terry:** *What would you call it? Movement?*

**Peter:** Yeah. Symptoms of confusion, something like that.

**Terry:** *What about someone who's just sort of out in their yard, sort of running around and—*

**Peter:** Either they're engaging in behaviors, or showing symptoms of being in a euphoric state, being in a relaxed euphoric state.

**Jane:** *What about ### make-believe?*

**Peter:** Probably more like games.

**Joe J:** *Wait a second, though. The thing with the kids reminded me—the paradigm case that came to my mind is my little girl is into “Come on, Daddy, let's play,” and then we go off, and what happens is that she creates some kind of a structure, known as, “What happens if—”*

**Peter:** “You do this, I’ll do that,” etc.

**Joe J:** *To my mind, that’s play if ever there were play.*

**Peter:** We probably should have had “structured/unstructured” here. What you’ve said is that you can have something structured, and it’s still play.

**Joe J:** *What happens all the time is that she’ll invent one, and we’ll do that, then she’ll get tired of it and say, “Let’s do this instead.”*

**Jane:** *It sounds like a game is what you’re saying has structure versus non-structure, but there are some games—*

**Steve P:** *The issue doesn’t seem to be so much what you’re doing, but why you’re doing it—period, not what else might also be happening.*

**Peter:** Clearly there’s not going to be a performance criterion for play. Anything that looks like play, and from a performance end is play, may be something else. So we’re not looking for a criterion there. If it’s not going to be in the performance, where is it going to be?

**Joe J:** *### choice is crucial.*

**Steve A:** *And also attitudes.*

**Terry:** *It’s going to tie into person characteristics, too.*

**Peter:** This one [Fig. 8, p. 206, Intrinsic list] seems—is there anybody who would object to saying that this is an essential characteristic—that is, play is intrinsic rather than instrumental?

**Wynn:** *I’m wondering if we could talk about—there’ll be confusing cases where the behavior certainly does serve an instrumental purpose. Playing tag is instrumental in the sense of—*

**Peter:** No. As behavior it’s not instrumental. A person who chooses it isn’t doing it for a further reason. It may serve some purpose, but it isn’t *his* purpose.

**Steve A:** *Does it make sense to take a whole other tack and do something about behaviors—something that Steve was beginning to make—an analysis of states and description of states?*

**Peter:** No. It takes us too far afield.

**Jim:** *How about a question of meaning for the Actor?*

**Peter:** Essentially, all of these are in terms of meaning to the Actor. The one that Wynn mentioned—if the kid is playing tag, he’s probably learning

something useful, but that's not why he's doing it. So that's not part of the meaning to him, the Actor. And that's how we're handling all of these, is from the Actor's point of view.

**Wynn:** *In any case, the Actor wouldn't care how this came out.*

**Terry:** *So that a particular point of view is crucial to our description or constituting the concept of play.*

**Peter:** No, it's the specification of the behavior. Remember, there's an identity parameter in the specification of the behavior, so it does make a difference whose behavior it is, and then all of the other parameters, other than Performance, are going to capture the information that I think you're including under "point of view".

**Terry:** *In other words, you're saying that there is a parameter of behavior which subsumes the point of view.*

**Peter:** That "point of view" gets distributed across various parameters, like ID characteristics, like a particular knowledge that's in question, like a particular reason or motivation involved in the behavior. All of those would be included under "point of view".

**Terry:** *It strikes me, though, that "point of view" might be crucial to keep in as such, because one of the things that we're distinguishing, in Wynn's example, is the reasons that the Actor has versus other descriptions that could be—*

**Peter:** But those reasons are part of the description of the behavior. You don't need to bring in "point of view".

**Terry:** *But there are other descriptions of that behavior, from the Observer's standpoint, which are still descriptions of that behavior, which involve—*

**Peter:** The Observer's descriptions that are not identical to the Actor's descriptions are irrelevant. Because it's not the Observer's description that makes play, play. It's how the Actor produces it that makes it play. That's why I say that all of this is in terms of the action that is being done, not in terms of a description given by somebody. So the Actor's motivation is what's crucial, not the Observer's description of the Actor's motivation, and so on down the line.

**Terry:** *But if you're saying it's irrelevant, in a way you're saying it is relevant, because what you're saying is—[laughter]*

**Peter:** That's a neat trick.

**Terry:** *I learned it from you.*

**Peter:** I know.

**Terry:** *Because you're saying that it's something that we're not going to consider at all—we're not going to consider the Observer's point of view at all, so it seems to me if we can say that systematically, then we're saying that it's the Actor's point of view we're going to consider integrally to thinking of play or what it is.*

**Peter:** I just said that what we're concerned with is the specification of the behavior that qualifies it as play, and anything that you could specify under "point of view" will be included under the specification of behavior, so we don't need to bring in "point of view" as something separate.

The specification of a behavior, in effect, is a specification of the Actor's behavior, *not* a specification of some Observer's description of it. When you talk about what behavior qualifies as hitting a home run, you talk about what the essential conditions are; you don't talk about what an Observer's description of it is. So that's what we're doing here. What qualifies as play?

**Joe J:** *Do you mean that there has to be some non-...there has to be some reference to what's going to happen or how it turns out, or something?*

**Peter:** It's some combination of this [from Fig. 8, p. 206: "**serious, crucial, deliberate, controlled**"], this, this, and this. You see, when something is problematic, there's something at stake, and you're working at that. There is a problem to be solved. And there's no problem if it's not important. Solving is something that doesn't just happen, so it's deliberate and controlled. It is, I guess, instrumental, since your solving a problem is directed toward a solution. "Optional/non-optional", I don't know. I guess it depends on how serious, how much of a problem, how problematic it is. The more problematic, the less you have a choice, the more it's crucial.

**Terry:** *But there again, the point of view comes in, because you have a little girl who is dressed up like her mother, is looking in the mirror and acting like her mother, and talking on the phone like her mother—she's imitating her mother, and from the point of view of the little girl, there's nothing problematic about it. But a psychoanalytic observer or someone like that might say that she's solving a problem, which is identifying with her mother, and gaining certain preparations for certain adult roles that she'll meet later on. And it would be problem-solving behavior from the standpoint of an Observer, whereas from the standpoint of the Actor, internal, it would be non-problematic.*



**Peter:** It's precisely because Observers have very little reality constraints on them that we want to not talk about Observers; we want to talk about the phenomenon.

**Bob:** *A while ago we went through this in some very different context. You asked me—there was Don Weatherly walking down the hall, and you asked me, “Who is that walking down the hall?” And then you said, “Are you sure?”. I mean, it could be someone who just looked like him. And you went one step at a time, and finally you got to the point where—“Well, imagine—close your eyes and draw in your head a picture or an image of him,” then you said, “Are you sure that's really an image of Don Weatherly and not just something that looks like him?” And the answer is, “Yes, it is, because I created it to be that way.” How about for play, in that same way, in that play is play simply because that's what the Actor created it to be? There's nothing that looks differently, there's no way he can be mistaken about it. You ask them if that's play, and if they say, “Yes,” they are.*

**Peter:** That works for adults, but you have trouble with children. Very often you would expect that the kid who's playing doesn't know that that's what he's doing, because he hasn't yet distinguished playing from some other forms of behavior, so he doesn't know that what he's doing is playing. So you might say that when he's playing tag, he doesn't produce that behavior as play. He simply is playing tag. But I don't think that solution is available—unless you want to rule out kids as being non-paradigmatic, and there is a certain strain in that.

**Wynn:** *I would prefer ruling out kids as non-paradigmatic. It's just that the other cases become a little more difficult, because we don't usually see kids as eligible to work—we have those laws about children working and all that stuff. But the thing that seems to be making this thing conceptually confusing is—*

**Peter:** There's nothing to keep a kid from worrying. [laughter] Kids do find things problematic. You still have that.

**Steve P:** *They don't consider going to school “play”.*

**Wynn:** *Sometimes they do. No, I'm saying that ### has this distinction of work and play. The question is: for him, can he be wrong about that?*

**Bob:** *If you're motivated to play, then you're playing.*

**Peter:** You can't be motivated until you can distinguish it.

**Terry:** *Then you're also ruling out self-deception. People could be deceived*

*about what they're doing. Maybe someone will like to think they're playing when they're really being cutthroat.*

**Wynn:** *That's why my question arises, if we knock the Observer out as where we're going to look for this sort of answer. If I claim that I'm playing, unless I'm lying, is there any recourse?*

**Peter:** Look: an Observer is an Observer even if he's the person in question, and when [we] say that we're not going to an Observer's description, I mean including the individual himself.

**Wynn:** *Okay, within my ordinary vocabulary, I have the terms "play" and "work", and there's certain situations where I'm pretty sure I use that accurately. Insofar as I'm a paradigm case individual who has both of these concepts, can I be sensibly accused of being wrong, reasonably accused of being wrong, when I claim that what I was doing was just fooling around, I was just playing?*

**Joe J:** *Yes.*

**Wynn:** *Okay, now what would be your grounds for that?*

**Peter:** *That you had ulterior motives, and it wasn't just play.*

**Daniel:** *A lot of people do that—"I was just teasing."*

**Peter:** And very often we don't believe them. Because—who asked them? [laughter]

**Wynn:** *From that standpoint, then, if we are resting our definition on intrinsic versus instrumental, if that's where we're grounding our ###.*

**Jane:** *What was that?*

**Wynn:** *I can be wrong if you can indicate that there were instrumental reasons that I'm aware of or that I have access to.*

**Peter:** Or we can agree among ourselves that you're wrong, even though you don't see them.

**Joe J:** *It seems like seriousness is another important distinction between—in the extreme cases that it's crucial that it's not play. If it's crucial for me to walk down that hall, then I'm on awfully shaky grounds to claim I'm just playing when I'm walking down the hall.*

**Steve A:** *Somebody says, "Play!" [general conversation]*

**Peter:** Let's settle something, here.

**Daniel:** *Are you kidding? [laughter] Does play have to be play all the way*

*through? Does it have to be homogeneous, or can it include, in the course of the play, things that aren't play, things that are instrumental, things that are controlled, etc. Does it have to be homogeneous or not?*

**?:** *No.*

**Peter:** Who says yes?

**Wynn:** *You can tell which way he's going to go, then. [laughter, general conversation]*

**Peter:** Who says no? Does it have to be homogeneous? Does play have to be play all the way through, or can it have aspects of work, control, instrumentality, etc.?

**Teresa:** *It can have those aspects, but it shouldn't—*

**Joe J:** *It depends on—*

**Wynn:** *You can still say it's all play; you can also say it's also play. Like a lot of work that is also fun.*

**Peter:** Okay, but it's clear; then, that all of this has to do with the unit, because if you look back at this [tag], if I'm running after you to catch you because we're playing tag, that is instrumental—

**Joe J:** *No, but then the entire significance—the Significance Description is that we're playing tag.*

**Peter:** I know, but that's the point. That's why the play doesn't have to be play all the way through, in that it can have an instrumental aspect as long as the whole thing is play.

**Joe J:** *You look at a stage, and the performance of the thing, and it doesn't make sense to call it either play or not play. Because that's not what you're doing.*

**Peter:** Okay, I just wanted to get that settled.

**Steve A:** *Settled? Now wait a second—[laughter]*

**Wynn:** *Play can involve goals.*

**Steve A:** *It may be settled for you. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Play doesn't have to be play all the way through, it can have elements that are not play, or that themselves would be antithetical—for example, instrumental behavior. You can have instrumental behavior as part of an episode, the whole of which is your playing.

**Teresa:** *Would it—if you turn it around, like if you had to go down the hall in order to get to the other end, but you did it by turning handsprings. Then you would be working in a play format?*

**Peter:** Well, I don't know—[**general conversation**]

**Peter:** Probably the stage model would work, because if the over-all task is to get to the end of the hall, then the “how” is subject to criteria of efficiency, and unless doing handsprings were an equally good way of getting down there, he wouldn't have that option. If it were, if it worked, then maybe indeed he could play and be doing the job at the same time, because playing at that would be a good way of getting the job done. In the same way, recreation works that way, too. If what I need is to recuperate, and I can accomplish that equally by making baskets or playing basketball, I might choose to play basketball, and then I'm playing; but it's also instrumental in that I'm recuperating. It sounds like both ways, instrumental behavior can have play components, and play can have instrumental components, and so the distinction has to be tied to the given unit of behavior. It's the unit that's going to be play, not its components.

**Steve P:** *But then you're identifying the unit as play, not as “play with some instrumental components”.*

**Peter:** Right.

Now notice this one [**problematic/non-problematic**], which we got to last, has elements of most of the rest. Something that is problematic is not completely non-serious. It may range from a little bit serious to crucial, and it involves being (at least to some extent) deliberate. It involves to some extent exercising control, because you're working toward a solution. And this one, I think, we can take out [**old/young**].

**Joe J:** *There are some empirical similarities there, I guess.*

**Peter:** Suppose we collapse these [2] into one, and we're left with these three.

**Joe H:** *I'm not sure if we don't need them to deal with the case of worship. Is that problematic or not? Or do we need some categories to deal with that? For example, I'd say it was probably serious but not problematic.*

**Peter:** Okay, we may need that, then.

**Steve A:** *I think that finally, “problematic” includes all of them, but they don't, in turn, make up “problematic”. You could have all those things, and nothing problematic there.*

**Peter:** I think you could collapse that anyhow and say that even when there's no difficulty, it is problematic because something is at stake. Even when it's no effort to do it right, since there is something at stake, you want to see to it and you have that concern; so in that sense, it is problematic. On the other hand, so long as it's not costing us too much, we might as well keep serious, etc.

**Joe H:** *Also, there is a definite distinction between the instrumental use of worship and the intrinsic. In the sense in which it's truly worship, you wouldn't have something at stake, and it wouldn't be problematic.*

**Peter:** There's more to having something at stake than just being instrumental, because if I'm playing a game, there may be something serious at stake if it goes wrong, in which case it's still not instrumental, but I have a stake in it.

**Wynn:** *You might argue, then, from this perspective, that a person whose perspective was the course of his life could do nothing but play. So these characters who have reached enlightenment, in the sense that, say, the consciousness of the realm of their life unfolds before them, and they're aware of that as a unit, are they capable of instrumental behaviors, and they're therefore non-attached or enlightened or whatever?*

**Peter:** You wouldn't want to say their life was play. At most, you'd want to say that for that person, the distinction between play, work, etc., was inapplicable.

**Wynn:** *That's why it becomes interesting, though, to see that within—say—the Hindu cosmology, the actions of these people are described as play. They're described as lila. So without working through this sort of conceptualization, within their ordinary usage of their language, they come to that conclusion for that perspective.*

**Joe J:** *To a great extent, it's ###.*

**Wynn:** *It sounds like it comes off from the intrinsic/instrumental business, because the person whose decisions are on that level, the level of the full schema, none of those behaviors could be instrumental.*

**Peter:** Remember, “instrumental” is not the same as “problematic”.

**Joe J:** *It can be instrumental within the game.*

**Peter:** Of the two, I picked “problematic” as what play isn't, rather than instrumental.

**Jane:** *Could you draw the distinction between “instrumental” and having*

*something at stake?*

**Peter:** Yeah, look: Suppose that I'm doing something for its own sake—I'm playing chess or I'm painting a picture, or whatever. However, it happens that my reputation will suffer grievously if I botch the job. There I have something at stake, but I am not painting that picture in order to maintain my reputation. I'm painting it to be painting it. But my reputation *is* at stake, and so I get twitchy. I do have something at stake; it is serious, then.

**Steve A:** *But then part of the task is not to botch up. Part of the task is in terms of the instrumental nature.*

**Peter:** No, if I do that, then it is instrumental. But if I'm merely drawing a picture, I still have that concern.

**Steve A:** *What I'm saying is, having the concern would—it is the case that if you draw the picture, your reputation is at stake; and in that sense, it's problematic. But if you have it in mind that—*

**Peter:** It's not problematic because I'm not working at that problem. I'm not doing something directed toward the solution of that problem.

**Steve A:** *I'm saying that if you have it in mind, it can count.*

**Peter:** Yeah, if you have it in mind. You see, I'm stipulating a case which, by hypothesis, is not that, and as long as that's not self-contradictory, that's the case I want to point to.

**Bob:** *How, within the context of playing tag, of being It, is there any way to consider that as problematic?*

**Peter:** You can, but you also can not make it problematic.

**Bob:** *It's not problematic for playing?*

**Peter:** Think of putting it in terms of the difference between the job and the task. The task of the guy who's It is to catch somebody else if he can. That's putting it in the form of a problem to be solved. Now if you say, "The job of the guy who's It is to chase after people until he tags one," that doesn't sound like a job. It doesn't sound like something you work at. That's simply what you're doing, that's your function in the game. So you can approach it in either a problematic or a non-problematic way because it's instrumental. As soon as it's instrumental, you can make it a problem and work it, or you can simply do the same kind of thing as part of participating in the game, because that's what being in that position calls for. Then it's still intrinsic rather than problematical.

**Theresa:** *Don't we say that a lot, when we say, "I wasn't really trying—I was just playing," like it was a poor shot, and "I wasn't really trying, I was just playing"?*

**Peter:** Yeah. As a matter of fact, the usual motivation is to not have your reputation suffer. "Since I wasn't trying, it doesn't reflect on me that I didn't succeed."

**Steve P:** *With children—I'm thinking about the specific case: when they're playing tag and someone's It, at some point they will frequently decide that it is no longer play, it is work, and they're not going to be It anymore, and that's it.*

**Peter:** Yeah, and the classic phrase is, "This ain't no fun, I'm being victimized," etc.

**Wynn:** *I keep thinking, are you playing or working right now [change tape] [laughter, general conversation] It strikes me that that could be ### for all of us: Is this play or work? It's fun, but there's instrumental and intrinsic aspects to it.*

**Peter:** Let's postpone that question. [laughter and a hiss]

**Steve A:** *He wants to keep playing.*

**?:** *He's really being victimized. [laughter, general conversation]*

**Peter:** Is play enjoyable?

**Wynn:** *If you do it right.*

**Steve P:** *It's not so much that it's pleasurable or enjoyable, as when it's not, it's not play.*

**Daniel:** *When it's fun.*

**Peter:** Can we separate those two?

**Terry:** *We keep vacillating between performance descriptions and accounts of possible experiences you can have when there's something that nominally would be called "play". Playing tag, if he's playing, he's enjoying it; but at a certain point, you can conceive easily of an example where the kid is feeling miserable and strung out and tired out because he can't catch anybody, and he's feeling horrible. Then you have the performance description of play, which is "he's playing tag"; so therefore, you get an apparent contradiction that he's having a miserable time.*

**Jane:** *Then it's stopped being play.*



**Terry:** *That's my point: we keep generating case after case, when the formal problem is this tension between a performance description of an instance of play, and different ways you could have experience engaging in that type of behavior.*

**Peter:** We haven't been dealing with performance descriptions at all. Nothing in what we've said is in a performance—

**Terry:** *It seems so—playing tag can be a performance description.*

**Peter:** I know, but it isn't.

**Terry:** *Then why are these cases coming up, where people say, "Here's an instance of play, but on the other hand—"*

**Peter:** You can contrast two cases here, both of which would be called "playing tag", but which contrast at various points. That's why you can have arguments about different cases of play or different cases of tag. You don't have to be giving performance descriptions; you're simply contrasting two complete behavior descriptions.

**Terry:** *But I'm saying that the confusion arises from the fact that there's no necessary link between a certain kind of performance and the kind of—*

**Peter:** No, we ruled out at the outset that there was any performance criterion at all, so there's no issue there. It was: where else can you find a distinction? But saying it's instrumental versus intrinsic, there's nothing about performance there. Saying optional/non-optional, or any of these [Fig. 8, p. 206], there's nothing here about performance. All of these are non-performance things. And when we say, "Is it pleasurable?", part of saying "it's pleasurable" is to be able to not have to agonize over the fact that, on given occasions, it may not be pleasant. To say, "It's pleasurable" is not to say that it's always enjoyed.

**Terry:** *What is it to say?*

**Peter:** It is the kind of thing that is normally enjoyed, and that non-enjoyment calls for an explanation. And that's exactly what we would require if we saw a kid playing tag, and he wasn't enjoying it. Then we might come up with an example like yours, that he's strung out, etc., and that's why. But we would need an explanation, because playing is enjoyable, pleasurable.

**Steve A:** *Are these distinctions enough, then?*

**Peter:** Well, problematic includes instrumental. If you're working at something, whatever you're doing is instrumental toward what you're working at.

**Wynn:** *I think an example would be like when you have people playing tag, again, you've got a little peer group going, which is three kids playing tag, and there's this one kid who's a little smaller than the rest, who can't run quite as fast, what he's trying to do is become eligible to play that game. He isn't having any fun at all.*

**Peter:** Then he's got an ulterior motive.

**Wynn:** *The problem for him is whether he's going to be accepted by this group of boys, whether he'll get into the game or not, and—*

**Peter:** So you've described it as problematic: that's his problem, and that's how he's working it out. For him, it's instrumental. For him, it's a problematic situation.

**Wynn:** *You think of certain kinds of games, certain very developed sports, for instance, before you can play those games, you have to develop all sorts of skills.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Who brought in optional/ non-optional?

**Terry:** *Joe Jeffrey did. There's a necessity for whether you think you could do otherwise.*

**Joe J:** *If you don't really, in your self concept, in the technical use here, have the option of playing or not playing, it isn't play.*

**Terry:** *Except that applies to work, too, though, because I saw a guy one day filling in a hole in the street, and he was clearly working, and I got very depressed by the fact that this guy was having to fill a hole in the street, and then suddenly I thought, "Well, maybe he's just passing through town, and he's just filling the holes in the street—" [laughter]*

**Joe J:** *It's the whole responsibility issue.*

**Peter:** Think of filling in the holes in your education. [laughter] Okay, what was the optional/non-optional business? Say it again. I get lost in the whole.

**Joe J:** *If, for me, it was not really an option, following the self concept, then it seems like it's not play.*

**Peter:** You mean, if you're forced to do it or something?

**Joe J:** *Yeah. If you don't like chess, then it's not ordinary play as I think of play.*

**Wynn:** —an overlap with intrinsic and instrumental, there.

**Terry:** *There's an overlap with work, too, that if you do a particular job because you have to, then it's drudgery. But if you have the sense constantly that you could do otherwise, that you're choosing to do this, you're free to do otherwise,*

*then you feel okay about yourself, and—*

**Wynn:** *Are you claiming that that would be work or play?*

**Terry:** *That's where I would say that would still be an instance of work. I wouldn't say it transforms it into play.*

**Joe J:** *I would say the performances were those of work, but then it's play. The criterion is exactly what you said: if I'm experiencing myself as having chosen it, then it's play.*

**Sherry:** *Even if it's instrumental? If it's work, it has to be instrumental. But if you're enjoying it, and you chose it, is it then play?*

**Terry:** *Yeah, or is it just non-impressive work?* [general conversation]

**Wynn:** *If we're not careful, then any work—and this may be our goal—but anything that's not instrumental and appears to be work, we'll use our category for work, for that. Certain characters, because of the way they choose their lives, the category would be—*

### FIGURE 9



**Peter:** Look at this diagram for possible explication of the issue of do you have an option. Think of a set of circumstances that give you an overwhelmingly powerful reason of this sort, against doing something, and a couple of minor positive reasons for. It's a kind of situation where you would normally say, "I have no choice. I've got to not do it." Would that come under the heading of non-optional, where the decision is clearly indicated—it's not a borderline thing of equally balanced—it's the clear preponderance, and where you'd say, "It's clear I've got to do this."? Because that, I think, almost any task will do. As you go through the task, you'll have reasons for doing it this way and that way, and doing this first and that second. And so there, you would say, most of what goes on there is non-optional in this sense: that when you're at a task, it's not the case that a particular thing you did, you could just as well have done something else. You picked it as the best, or one



**Diagram]**. But since problematic includes instrumental, we've taken care of all of them.

**Wynn:** *It sounds like what you're saying is that problematic versus non-problematic are the distinctions, but you want to refine which of those kinds of distinctions we're talking about.*

**Peter:** Because all of these can be thought of as ways of elaborating the notion of this distinction here [**problematic/non-problematic**].

**Steve A:** *Pete, would you say you could have lots of reasons to play? Does that make sense? That seems to be an issue about that.*

**Peter:** You could say that, and be talking in the normal way, but it would be misleading once you get to this type of distinction. You could have all kinds of reasons for doing the kind of things that one does in play, reasons for either engaging in the performances, or exercising the knowledge, or engaging in the activities, or whatever. You could have reasons for doing those. But if you had those reasons, that would be instrumental, and then it wouldn't be play. So that's why I don't see that you could have reasons for playing. What you can have is: not have any reasons not to play or not have any good reasons not to play.

**Steve P:** *Is optional/ non-optional getting at the notion of coerced or non-coerced?*

**Peter:** Yeah, except in a weaker sense of a situational constraint rather than something as strong as coercion.

**Steve P:** *"Coercion" as running the whole gamut. If it's coerced, I can't conceive of its being play.*

**Peter:** Yeah, because if it's coerced, it has to be instrumental to avoid the consequences, the alternative implicit in the coercion.

**Steve P:** Yeah, where it's optional, I can see—

**Joe J:** *It seems to me that one of the things that we didn't have on our little diagram of things that people deal with, there, is sex, and I'm having a tough time ### that with play, and yet it seems that there's a difference somewhere.*

**Wynn:** *If a person's sexual attitude is one of making babies, it isn't play.*

**Joe J:** *Yeah, sure, but that's not ordinary sex. [laughter, general conversation]*

**Peter:** Notice the suggestiveness of the phraseology of "not having any reasons not to". Actors [**Fig. 1, p. 179**] as such don't have reasons for or against

doing. Reasons for or against come from Critics. Again, remember I said that as long as things are going okay, you don't need to have Observer or Critic, but since you never know when [**things might go wrong**], you always have them. "As long as things are going okay" we'll translate as "non-problematic".

**Wynn:** *I wonder if there could be any strong case we could make of problematic actions that we'd also want to describe as play, though. It seems that now the attention is going to be on that phrase.*

**Peter:** That's why we settled that you can have elements that are—

**Wynn:** *### problem-solving behavior could be play.*

**Peter:** Yeah. In the course of play, you can do any of these things. In principle. If there was too much, you might start revising and questioning whether it really was; but, in principle, you can have all of these things within the episode that is play, as long as the whole episode is non-problematic.

**Jim:** *It's determined at the beginning that it's play activity, as to whether it's play or not.*

**Peter:** Well, no. You can enter into it as play or not, but as was pointed out, it may change in the course of the activity from play to non-play, or from non-play to play. So you can start playing because the situation is non-problematic, and you feel like it; but then, in the course of that, you may run into a problem; in which case, you start getting instrumental and problematic.

**Jim:** *Yeah, I can see that, but once you start play, no matter what happens in sequence, until you make some choice that involves to change it to non-play, then it's play, no matter what you do.*

**Peter:** No, not quite. Again, think of this diagram [**Fig. 6, p. 194**], that up here you have the non-problematic, which leaves room for play among other options, so you start playing here. Now, in the course of that play, you can do things that themselves are instrumental, etc. This doesn't mean that *anything* you might do by way of instrumentality, etc., would be compatible. Some wouldn't be. But you can't say in advance. What you can say is that if you are playing here [C], then in that play, you may be able to do something instrumental, something problematic. On the other hand, some of the problematic things you might do would be incompatible with that game. But as long as you have the non-problem up here, you're free to play or not play.

**Joe S:** *A clear case of that is your paradigm case for the behavior of playing golf, and certainly that's problematic in the sense of—*

**Peter:** How to get that thing in.

**Joe S:** *Exactly.*

**Terry:** *It gets very murky when you get to experience, and you think of the sort of fluctuations of experiences as opposed to sort of an external behavior description from the standpoint of an Observer. Because, indeed, during that playing of golf, there are times when you're really enjoying it, there are moments; but then, indeed, there are moments when it just seems overwhelming, and you're hating it, and you're constantly going through that kind of—*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's why experience is not a very good notion to work with, in order to understand things. Because it's hard to work with it.

**Terry:** *And yet—and yet it's the ground for all these kinds of concepts that we examine, because, after all, if we talk about the self, or we talk about things of that sort, what the "self" designates, we do have an intermediate experience of it, and—*

**Peter:** Of what? [laughter]

**Terry:** *Of the self, or what have you. And we have an experience of what we're expressing in the concept, and we don't simply examine the linguistic usage of concepts. We have a primordial kind of experience of what the concept is about. And so, in some sense, we have to come back to experience—*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *—when we're ascertaining the truth, or—*

**Peter:** What I've said about "experience": it's a very protean term, and you have to do a careful analysis on it before anybody, including you, knows what you're saying on any given occasion, by it.

**Terry:** *I just used it in a way that I think it was intelligible.*

**Peter:** In so far as it was, it was wrong. You said that we have to come back to experience. We don't, if by "experience" you're meaning what I think you mean. But as I say, there's so many meanings to it, that's why it seems like such a handy-dandy tool, because you can use it for almost anything you want, because it has all of those uses.

**Terry:** *Well, "behavior" has been—the concept of behavior has been subject to the same fate.*

**Peter:** That's right. That's why we need something to take it out of that category, and we don't have the equivalent for "experience".



**Terry:** *A parametric analysis of “experience”?*

**Peter:** Just compare the fact that if you’re playing over a given period of time, there is *a* thing that you’re doing, and it has certain characteristics; versus the fact that your experience during that time may be almost anything conceivable. The regularity there, the coherence, is not given by the experience as such. It’s given by your playing the game, if you’re playing tag or whatever. That’s why I say that in order to understand things, “experience” is one of the least useful terms we can have.

**Terry:** *I guess that tension between the behavioral account and the lived experience that makes people like Dewey or Merleau-Ponty emphasize the lived experience as being the foundation from which these accounts are made.*

**Peter:** If you emphasize the lived *life*, then “experience” is simply a way of talking, and not a very good way of talking, about living life. It’s a life that things begin from, not experience. And that we can deal with in these terms. You have to be alive to have the experiences, and “life” connects to what we’re dealing with, namely, a way of living—not a way of “experiencing”, but a way of living. “Experience” kind of takes care of itself, unless we need it for something special. So we don’t need to always be bringing in “experience” in one of its many forms. We can, we always can, just like we can always bring in “history”, but for understanding play, you do not ask what is being experienced. Just like for understanding fixing a carburetor, you don’t ask, “What’s the experience?” You ask, “How do you do it?” or “What is it?”

**Wynn:** *And as I guess we’ve found out, to ask what you know, you don’t have to ask what you’ve experienced.*

**Peter:** Right.

Okay, now remember we talked in terms of “freeing” a set of possibilities here [Fig. 1, p. 179: C-A], as the general kind of corrective that people have tried to make in people’s ways of living. Now, as we look at play, if we anchor it on this term, and given that we can elaborate it in all of those ways, it looks an awful lot like saying the same thing: that to the extent that a person is playing, he is operating with a maximum freedom up here, because one plays in just those circumstances where there are not constraints that prevent one from having as options one’s full range of behavior potential. The major constraint there is which game you’re playing or what you’re playing—like if you’re playing here or here, then you’re not doing these. But part of the notion of not having constraints is that you can switch what you’re playing, too. So you’re about as free, there, to tap your

behavior potential in play as you ever are. And people are sometimes in that condition and we call it “play”. You can also see some of the traps involved if you start playing for an instrumental purpose, for the sake of increasing your behavior potential, what you will not be doing is playing. So you see a different line on the slogan that You Can’t Get There from Here. The logic of some of these is such that if you do it on purpose, it isn’t that any more, and it won’t work in the way that you thought.

**Joe S:** *Like trying to be spontaneous?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *Doesn’t that ### superstition, though, about how you have to approach engaging in certain kinds of behavior, sort of like you can go out to the tennis court and you have to, like, remember that you’re not doing this to improve, or something like that, or else you’ll bungle it? It seems like that kind of formulation leads to all kinds of superstitions about how you have to go about doing what you’re doing, in order for it not to go wrong by turning it into non-play.*

**Peter:** It could work that way, and if it does, it’s unfortunate, but that’s a reality constraint.

**Wynn:** *If you push that further, it gets kind of funny, because you can see a character trying real hard to keep in mind that he’s not here to improve. Any excess baggage gets in the way.*

**Peter:** Notice how easy it is to put the thing into an instrumental framework—that you’ve got to keep it in mind in order to do it right. But then you’re already working at it. It begins to have some of the same dimensions as trying not to think of a rhinoceros. How do you accomplish that? Well, you first have to think about it in order to think of and work at *not* thinking about it—there you are. Here, the way it works out is, you only have you to work with, and it’s kind of hard to do anything that isn’t you, and then how do you change in the direction of somebody else? If you want to do something naturally, how can you try doing that, how can you work toward that, if even trying is going to ruin it? Do you then just sit back and hope, or what?

**Steve A:** *How can you do it if you don’t try it?*

**Peter:** Again, as I say, you see some of the dimensions of the problem that when it comes to this kind of deficit in people, it can’t be solved by taking a technical approach and an instrument, means/ends approach in the usual way. And that gives you a little more empathy and sympathy with what these people have done and what they do do, since there isn’t a straightforward

technology for doing that.—Okay, for next time, let's do try to hit Buddhism in some of its systematic aspects. Keep it in mind that some of the practices in Buddhism are designed to do just this kind of thing. So if you can get hold of *What the Buddha Taught*, do by all means. If not, at least review the chapter in Tart.

**Steve A:** *Pete, do you have any sense of which other ways we're going to be talking about?*

**Peter:** No, except for the Sufism stories.

## SEMINAR 6

### 29 July 1976

**Peter:** [blackboard] J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Here's some carry-over from last time. Here's a book, *Homo Ludens*, originally published in 1944, and it's a fairly famous book. You see it cited in a fair variety of places.

Let me read you a summary of what he says about the formal characteristics of play. He says, "Summing up the formal characteristics of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it."

It corresponds pretty closely with the items that we had on Intrinsic [Fig. 8, p. 206]—not serious, not problematic. "It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner." This is one, I think, that you get some disagreement on. I think many people would say that's too limited a notion for play, but certainly it gets at a broad range of cases that we would call play. Then, "It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means." At this point, you're away from the formal characteristics of play and into its cultural relevance. Later in that chapter [I], he makes a strong connection between play and religious ritual and sacrament. You can see already that thrust—as soon as he introduces this notion of "at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly", and also "according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner", that already tends in the direction of ritual and sacrament. So if you don't put that restriction on it formally, you won't see it that directly, while at the same time recognizing the resemblances between ritual and play, and being intrinsic and being serious and being absorbed, etc.

**Wynn:** Are you sure that by "fixed rules", he's pushing it in the direction of ritual? I was just wondering—

**Peter:** Yeah, because to have a ritual, you have to have fixed rules.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but what I'm wondering about is when—*

**Peter:** ### you have to have it for play.

**Wynn:** *By “fixed rules”, could he mean that you can identify a case as such?*

**Peter:** I don't think so. My recollection is that when he says “fixed rules”, he means “fixed rules”, not merely that to be play it has to be play and not something else.

**Mary:** *He points out that a couple of puppies, playing, will have certain rules that they follow. For instance, one puppy can bite another's ear but not too hard, and that even such animal behavior as that, in play, will have its rules, and proceeds according to an order.*

**Steve P:** *And children frequently will say, “That's not fair, you've broken some rule somewhere.”*

**Peter:** We're back to that annoying little issue that I raised, namely, criticism in the absence of—how did I say it?—or you can make that criticism “it's not fair” without having written out what the rules are that got violated there, which leaves it kind of up in the air. How rule-governed is it? Is there somewhere a set of rules which, if we only knew them, would get at exactly what it is? Or are those just implicit and more or less formulatable but not exhaustively, not rigorously?

**Wynn:** *I think you could build an argument that, as with every case of human behavior, you can set up a set of rules that are descriptive of that particular case, and then show the family overlaps, the way you would with games in general. But I don't think you could specifically define a class of rules that would have very definite meaning, that we get up a whole class of things we label “play”.*

**Peter:** I'm inclined to agree. I don't think you can write a set of rules for it. And part of the point of saying that is that our paradigm cases of games and rules are where the rules are constitutive and not merely descriptive. For example, the rules of chess are not merely descriptive of what goes on in chess. They constitute what it is to *be* chess. So we can write rules for what is descriptive of puppies playing, but we don't have a set of rules that are constitutive of it.

**Terry:** *That would differentiate it from ritual also, wouldn't it?*

**Peter:** In ritual, the rules are explicit partly because they are also constitutive.

**Wynn:** *There is a peculiar class of rituals that you see, in which the rules define what you have to accomplish in a certain period and provide you certain tools to accomplish that, but don't explicitly demand how it is you go about doing it. You see these in certain rites of passage.*

**Peter:** Again, that's always the case. If you specify an action, you don't specify the performance of how it's to be done. As long as it's doable, you can specify it by specifying the action.

Okay, now, today I said we wanted to get into some of the transcendental theories. I said we wanted to look at at least Buddhism, and probably one other, and for the other, I think that Sufism is a good second choice—a good second choice because it represents one of the extremes, namely, in which there is no system whatever. And Buddhism can be codified at great length and has been, systematically. You have something very systematic, very detailed, and very extensive in Buddhism, and on the other hand you have zero. So for next time, review the chapter on Sufism. Pick any of the stories that you think would be of particular interest to discuss, because what we want to do is to look at those stories and ask, “What can they be used for?” How come they appear in the Sufi literature in a meaningful way? Why this story rather than just any old story?

By way of preamble, I couldn't find my copy of the book that I recommended, *What the Buddha Taught*, and the bookstore apparently doesn't have any, either

**Wynn:** *They've got a whole—there's evidently a class that's using the book this summer, because when I went in there after class, they had a stack of them about this high.*

**Peter:** Where was it? Have other people been able to get it?

?: Yes.

**Peter:** Oh, hell, I guess I looked in the wrong place, then.

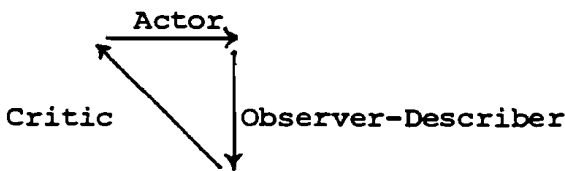
**Steve A:** *It's in the Religious Studies section. Why do you want to use that instead of ###'s book on the psychology of religion?*

**Peter:** Well, number one, I've read it already. That's a great plus. The other is, it was one of two that was recommended by Joe Parent, who's into teaching religions, and it seemed to me that this one, *What the Buddha Taught*, is far superior in its presentation to anything else I've seen, and by now I've looked at about six books on Buddhism. It's superior in the sense that it's systematic,

orderly, and clear. You're seldom in doubt about what he's saying, and that's a tremendous asset when you're dealing with subject-matter like this.

Of the various places to begin with Buddhism, I think that the Four Noble Truths are probably our best entree. And one reason is that this part of Buddhism makes explicit what you might call the therapeutic push, that the thrust of it is not a system of truths, but, in effect, a system of therapy, and you can put it in exactly the form that we had put the role of the Critic [blackboard].

**FIGURE 1**



- Diagnosis:** (1) life is suffering  
 (2) suffering is caused by desire for  
 the wrong things  
**Therapy:** (3) the way to stop suffering is  
 to remove desire  
 (4) pursuing the Eight-Fold Path

The first two have to do with the diagnosis: (1) here is what's wrong: life is suffering, it's unsatisfactory; (2) suffering is caused by the desire for the wrong things. There's your general diagnosis. What can be done about it is to stop the suffering by removing the desire—the desire for the wrong things. And you do that by pursuing the Eight-Fold Path. So the central teachings, then, fit the framework that we've already set up, and we can put the Four Noble Truths, which summarize the whole of the teachings, into this form.

Now we look at some elaborations of this summary sort of statement. What does it mean to say, "Life is suffering"? This is one of the places where, if I had copy that I have notes in—here's the elaboration, here—this is on page 167 [of Tart, *Transpersonal Psychologies*]*—that suffering is caused mainly by "(1) death; (2) sickness and old age; (3) sorrow, despair, and pain; (4) birth; (5) the failure to obtain desires."*

**Wynn:** *Rahula classifies these in three ways, which are—page 19 [of **What the Buddha Taught**]: "(1) dukkha as ordinary suffering, (2) dukkha as produced by change, and (3) dukkha as conditioned states."*



**Peter:** Suffering, as it's elaborated here, you can see is what in that three-fold classification is ordinary suffering. That is, these things are what we would recognize as suffering in the ordinary sense: pain, sickness, old age, not getting what one desires. Rahula proposes that the notion of suffering is more fundamental, and that it includes even what we would normally call pleasure, and other things that we wouldn't call either pleasure or suffering. He points out that when you achieve something that you desire, and you get pleasure thereby, the pleasure is transitory. It ends, and then you're unhappy, so that even pleasure is a source of unhappiness or pain or something like that; that achievement of desires is defective because it's temporary rather than permanent, so that whatever you get, you're going to lose. Whatever the pleasure you get from getting it, you're going to have to go through the pain of losing it. And that's because it isn't permanent.

Secondly, even more fundamentally, he says that suffering doesn't really mean that. What suffering refers to is what you might call the "stuff" of human life, and the stuff of human life is consciousness and thought, so that's divided into six elements, five of them corresponding to the five senses, and the sixth is "ideas", corresponding to thought. So the stuff of human life, you'll recognize, is the content of consciousness. What is the content of your consciousness? It's sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and ideas.

So this notion of suffering ties back to a classic one [**blackboard: "Action—Passion"**] in Western philosophy, namely, Action and Passion. Passion is something you undergo, Action is something you do. Passion is something you suffer, Action is something you do. So the notion of suffering here goes beyond the usual notion of pain and pleasure. It is this kind of notion: that people undergo experience, they suffer it, and that it is bad, because it's painful, it's impermanent, it's simply not satisfactory. So that's the diagnosis of what's wrong.

**Wynn:** *Trungpa goes as far, in his works, to equate dukkha with neurosis in general—with the general kind of—even in situations in which you would identify somebody as neurotic, not because he feels any pain, but because his life is so limited, due to attachment.*

**Peter:** That falls under here [**Fig. 1, p. 236, (2)**], right?

How does this work? Suffering is caused by desire for the wrong things. In Tart, [**p. 167**], "Buddha observed that ordinary man's strongest desires were *not* to be subject to death, sickness, and old age, sorrow and pain; *not* to be subject to failure in obtaining desires or obtaining happiness,

even after such wishes are fulfilled.” In effect, he’s saying, “What people suffer from is the lack of guarantee.” They want not to fail, not to lose, not to be subject to pain, and even if they’re in a condition in which they have no pain, they’re still suffering from the fact that they want not to enter pain, that they’re always operating under this limitation, if not actual pain.

**Cory:** *Is there anything about—in terms of that, a reason why you could ever really achieve pleasure, ever achieve a state of not having pain?*

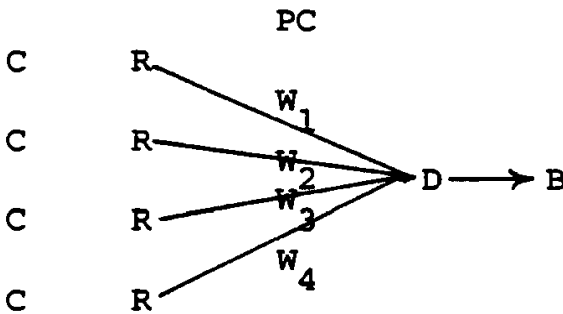
**Peter:** Achieving a state of pleasure is simply garden-variety—you can do that. But it has pain that follows it, the pain of losing the pleasure, the pain of the fact that the pleasure doesn’t last.

**Cory:** *Do you ever achieve a state of not having pain?*

**Peter:** Yeah, ###.

**Wynn:** *It seems that the concept of attachment is probably—the Hindu-Buddhist concept here is probably very central, because if pleasure isn’t ruled out of the system, the problem in the system, I guess, is attachment to pleasure. The aspirant can achieve pleasure—pleasure isn’t the problem—the problem is that pleasure is a reminder of the loss of pleasure, and I take it that it has been a concept of that sort, in which it’s not that you simply feel pleasure, but somehow you’re attached to that feeling, in a manner in which the loss of that feeling would be a problem.*

**FIGURE 2**



**Peter:** [blackboard] Think of how desire restricts your behavior potential. Number one: every desire, at least in the proper circumstances, will give you reasons for and against doing some particular thing. So given a desire, circumstances will act as constraints on what you do and don’t do. So for

example, if my desire is to not suffer from the heat, and I enter into this room, and it's too hot, either I will do something to cool it down, or I'll get out. In that sense, my desire for that kind of comfort is constraining my possible behaviors, because did I not have that desire, I would simply come in, stay, and do whatever I came for, rather than either turn down the thermostat or get out.

So every desire operates that way as a constraint on what I can do. And the constraint is really a dilemma: either I satisfy the desire, in which case that's a limitation on what I can do, or I don't and then suffer the pain of not having satisfied the desire.

We've already gone through this reasoning, in talking about how reasons in general operate. Remember, I said it's like solving simultaneous equations. Every reason is a constraint on what behaviors will fit. The more reasons you have, the more constraints there are on what behaviors will fit, and very often, there are so many constraints that no behavior will fit all of them simultaneously, in which case you make use of the priorities, and you give up some in order to fit the others. But ideally, you're looking for behaviors that will fit all of the reasons you have and not frustrate any of your motivations.

**Steve A:** *So is desire the same as existential guilt?*

**Peter:** No. Desire is simply desire, and a desire will have the effect of giving you reasons, and thereby introducing constraints—

**Steve A:** *Is suffering the same as existential guilt? Then you are always doing things—you're always not doing things that you would like to do.*

**Peter:** No. It's related, but it's not really identical. Because existential guilt doesn't involve the fact that even when you get what you want, you're going to lose it because it's impermanent. Existential guilt hinges on whatever you choose, you're giving up something else that you could have chosen and would have wanted, and that's included in this Buddhist notion, too, but it goes beyond.

**Daniel:** *Pete, what behavior would—a person's behavior that will do two things?*

**Peter:** In general, you're looking for behavior that will fit all of your reasons simultaneously, and it's only when you haven't got one available that you have to give up some of your reasons in order to satisfy ones with higher priority.

Now this is what you might call a “center of the domain argument”. You remember in talking about ultimates, totalities, and boundary conditions, I said: in normal ways of operating, we’re operating with things within a domain, and when we pursue them to the limits, we get funny things. Well, try pursuing this to some limits and see what kind of funny things we come up with. For example, what would happen if you had no “you”. So far, we’ve said that every reason acts as a constraint on your behavior, and the more constraints there are, the more likely it is that you won’t find any behavior that fits them all, so the more you’re likely to be frustrated in at least some of those desires. Therefore, the more you’re going to fit this notion [**Life is suffering**]. That suggests that you’d be better off without desires, and, indeed, that’s what they’re saying here. But now try it. Try pushing this notion of being without desires to the limit, and what do you get?

**Terry:** *You have a paradox, what the metaphysical poets talk about—John Donne especially—which is your desire to be rid of desire itself, which is still nonetheless a desire.*

**Peter:** Let’s not put it in that form, then. Let’s just suppose that you have no desire.

**Joe S:** *The absence of desire—then no behavior.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Then you’d have no reason to do anything.

**Wynn:** *I’m wondering if what we’ve got going is somehow mistranslation of the notion of desire, because I have a feeling that the Buddha does not mean to equate reasons with desire.*

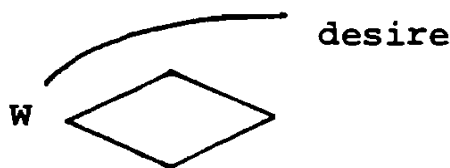
**Peter:** No, I didn’t either. I said, if you have a desire and given circumstances, the consequence will be that you have reasons. I didn’t say that desires are reasons.

**Steve P:** *Desire gives you a reason, but you can have a reason without a desire.*

**Wynn:** *Right, but then, without desire, the logical result isn’t a lack of behavior, because a person still has reasons and situations. That’s the reason I’m trying to tease those two apart. Desire seems attached to the concept of attachment. Reason seems to be a different, a wider class of rationale for action.*

**Peter:** Are you suggesting, then—[blackboard]

**Wynn:** People are attached to desires; they’re not necessarily attached to reasons.

**FIGURE 4**

**Peter:** Then “desire” refers to wants rather than reasons?

**Wynn:** *I think so. I’m sure. But in a way in which there’s more—the concept needs some unpacking, because desires are things that, when not fulfilled, create problems. Whereas having a reason to do something, if that reason isn’t fulfilled, it doesn’t follow that that produces a problem in quite the same way.*

**Peter:** Okay, that does require some unpacking, because that’s not implied by knowing. Knowing is simply an aspect of the behavior; whereas, as you talk about desire, it sounds like a state—a state in which one is likely to find things to motivate one to achieve certain states of affairs, states of affairs in which, in the interests of achieving that state of affairs, one is going to have reasons for doing it one way rather than another. So it looks like desires will implicate both wants and reasons, if you think of having a desire as a motivational state.

**Steve P:** *Those are the two I can’t see separating—desire and want. How can you have the desire without want?*

**Peter:** What I said was that it looks as though you would have both a want *and* reasons, not just—. You couldn’t equate desire with want—you could always have both.

**Wynn:** *Because the concept seems to imply that the lack of fulfillment of the desire, or the longing, leads to a problem; whereas the simple notion of a lack of fulfillment of a want doesn’t contain that.*

**Peter:** Again, remember this is a transcendental problem.

**Steve P:** *But even colloquially, we have the situation of, “Yeah, I want that. I don’t know why, I just want it. I don’t have any reason.”*

**Peter:** If you want it, you’ve got reasons to do those things that will get you it. That’s how you’ve got reasons. If I want to be comfortable, then I have reasons to turn the thermostat down. If I don’t want to be comfortable, I don’t have *that* reason to do *that* thing.

**Wynn:** *I guess the difference is, partially, you wanted to be cool, and you came to this room and it was hot, and you were desirous, longing for coolness, and you fooled with the thermostat, and it didn't work, and you still were hot, you'd be pissed off, irritated, and suffer. However, you could also come in and want it to be cool, prefer it that way in some way, turn the thermostat, and it did not change, and just shrug your shoulders, that you'll live in the room as hot without suffering.*

**Peter:** Well, I can shrug my shoulders, but if I really wanted it, I'd still be suffering.

**Wynn:** *Okay, it's that really want that's somehow—[laughter]*

**Peter:** Watch that transcendental move.

**Wynn:** *What makes it a desire is that it makes somehow a big difference. It's a significant difference—*

**Peter:** The difference is whether I insist on it or not, rather than whether I'm unhappy about not getting. Insistence connects to attachment, I think.

**Wynn:** *So we have desire, longing, insistence, and attachment as language to work with for those concerns.*

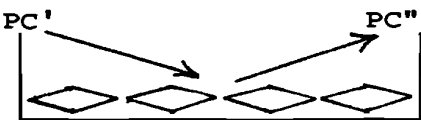
**Peter:** Language to work with directly, here, but notice that as we use them, we're able to turn them back into the language we've already developed, which I think is an asset.

**Terry:** *Doesn't the motivational parameter make you draw the distinctions between the want that's not fulfilled and it's no big deal, and a—*

**Peter:** No, that kind of a fact is not a motivational fact. The fact that if you get frustrated at not achieving what you want is a statement about you, not about your want. So you wouldn't expect to find that codified here. You'd expect it to be codified in an ID description, or in a history of how you in fact reacted.

**Wynn:** *You could probably find it in the K parameter, but it would be in the specific unpacking of concepts that would contain "unless" clauses— "Unless it's cool, I will be miserable."*

**FIGURE 5**



**Peter:** Look: remember you have the developmental schema in which you have personal characteristics [PC], so your behavior reflects your personal characteristics. But the later characteristics reflect the causal consequences of your behavior. If this behavior is the behavior of trying to get the room cool and failing, and then it has consequences on my state, you can formulate that this way: that my characteristics here [PC'] are such that given this [**diamonds—intervening history**], I would acquire that characteristic [PC'']. So that kind of fact, we deal with ID concepts.

So you can see formally how desire can have some objectionable consequences. Desires constrain your possibilities, put you into dilemmas of either constraining your behavior, or you undergo pain, frustration, dissatisfaction, whatever. Now what's the force of talking about "the wrong things"? Here [Fig 2, p. 238], we said this goes with desire in general. Any desire will operate this way. But here [Fig. 1, p. 236, (2)] we're told it's the desire for wrong things.

**Wynn:** *Is it the desire for wrong things, or is it simply desire?*

**Peter:** That's the issue I'm raising.

**Wynn:** *The reason I asked that is that Terry raised the issue of desire for desire, and it seems to me that the Buddha is very clear about that. It's not that enlightenment is a goal that is lacking in the aspirant, it's that it's not a goal he's attached to, that he desires. It's something that he has reason to—*

**Peter:** I think we can prune away the redundant adjective and simply say that it isn't a goal for him, rather than saying it's not a goal that he's attached to. I think "attachment" is simply a reified way of saying it really is a goal.

**FIGURE 6**



Let's introduce another heuristic here. Recall in talking about that peculiar form of behavior description known as a Course of Action Description [**blackboard**], a Course of Action Description is a Social Practice Description with two modifications: namely, there's an end-goal [G], which is a state of affairs; and somewhere along the line, there is a deletion in the KH parameter; which means somewhere along the line, doing the whole thing successfully is not something you know how to do. You have to



count on not being unlucky. You have to count on things going your way, even though you don't know how to make them go your way. And that's the difference between you engaging in a course of action, and you engaging in the corresponding social practice. If you're engaging in a social practice, there isn't that uncertainty. It is something you know how to do. You have the practical guarantee that if you try, you're going to succeed. And, ultimately, there's no goal because you've got an intrinsic practice.

So the presence of a goal, and the absence of a KH somewhere, are the difference between a Course of Action Description and a Social Practice Description, and they are the difference, then, between your behavior being engaging in a course of action versus participating in a social practice.

What we said was that the relation between the two is that you can only have courses of action within social practices. The heuristic example was playing chess, which is the social practice, and winning at chess, which is the course of action. So anybody who learns how to play chess can play with the confidence that if he sets out to play a game of chess, he will play a game of chess. There isn't, practically, any uncertainty about that.

On the other hand, somebody who sets out to win a game of chess, generally doesn't have any practical guarantee that he's going to win. He can hope for it, it's doable, it's done approximately 50% of the time, but *he* has no guarantee of being able to do it. So it's a course of action.

And one of the connections is: the goal of winning, of checkmating the other person's king, is a goal which only exists within chess. If you weren't playing chess, there would be no sense in your trying to checkmate somebody else's king. In fact, there'd be no such thing. It's the practice itself, the playing of chess, within which this *is* a goal, within which checkmating the king is a desirable state of affairs. *Only* within chess is that a desirable state of affairs. So that unless you were participating in that social practice, you couldn't possibly be engaging in that course of action. It takes the practice to give the value to the goal that makes it a goal, which then makes it make sense for you to try to achieve it.

A course of action is always instrumental, whereas social practices ultimately are intrinsic. And chess is an example of a practice that already is intrinsic.

Now think of the kind of satisfaction that you can get, (1) from winning at chess, and (2) from playing chess. One of the things you can say is that the satisfaction from playing chess is pretty well guaranteed, whereas

the satisfaction from winning at chess is very contingent on whether you win or not. And that, in turn, is quite contingent. So that the one, practically speaking, is certain; the other is uncertain. So if the one is always there, the other is sometimes there and sometimes not, and even when it is there, it's uncertain until you do have it.

Contrast the case of the person whose *only* satisfaction is in winning, versus the one whose satisfaction is in playing. The first person, if he doesn't win, the whole thing has been a waste of time; it's been a loss, because the only satisfaction would have been there [G], and it's not there. So he's lost that. Whereas the person who gets satisfaction from playing, whether he wins or loses, he's satisfied. Furthermore, he's getting satisfaction all the way through the game, not just at the end. The other person, even if he does get the satisfaction, he only gets it here [G]; he doesn't have it here [**throughout**]. So it's not only uncertain; it's also limited in its scope, and it's gone when he then rearranges the board and starts the next game. Then it's up for grabs all over again.

**Steve P:** *It sounds like the essence, then, of Buddhism is in it's not whether you win or lose, but how you played the game. [laughter]*

**Peter:** That would be the Etonian version.

From the point of view of somebody who appreciates chess and plays it for its own sake and enjoys that kind of satisfaction, one might say of this guy here who is only out to win, he's suffering from the desire for wrong things. Desiring that [G] rather than this [**social practice**] limits his behavior. It limits the kind of satisfactions he gets, it leaves him open to a whole lot of dissatisfaction, frustration, pain, unhappiness that's quite unnecessary.

Now, this is a different argument from the general one that says that *any* desire will have a limiting effect. That's an in-principle argument. This one is a factual and practical argument that says, here, this one [**course of action**] is unnecessary.

Now, how do you express the limitation as between here and here [**course of action and social practice**]? There are various ways you could put it.

**Steve P:** *It seems to me an immediate performance/achievement—*

**Peter:** Here's the achievement [G].

**Steve P:** *And everything is tied into that achievement. Nothing counts, up to that point.*

**Peter:** But also, nothing counts unless—[G].

**Steve P:** *Incidentally, that is an either/or, and that's always problematic.*

**Peter:** And then it ends, in addition.

**Steve P:** *But then you've got to get ready for the next one.*

**Terry:** *On the one hand, the enjoyment of the performance is contingent on the achievement, and on the other hand, the enjoyment of the performance is—*

**Peter:** You can't enjoy the performance any more because it's all over by the time you get to here [G].

**Terry:** *I guess your attitude, retrospectively, toward the performance is contingent upon the achievement.*

**Peter:** Even so, what you're enjoying is not the doing of it, but looking back on the doing of it—then it's something going on here [beyond G]. And that's what I mean, "when you set up the next game".

**Terry:** *Except if you take pro football, though, you have sort of a converse of that. Take Vince Lombardi, who's a prime example of someone who thinks that way. It generated a certain amount of benefit for his people ~—*

**Peter:** Sure, if you're after money, then you turn pro, then you're not in it like the ideal Olympic athlete.

**Terry:** *The Russians lose at boxing, and they get these really white faces, because they know they're going to Siberia as soon as they get back.*

**Peter:** We need a certain kind of phraseology, and I'm trying to get it jelled. It's something like this: here's a person whose highest aspiration is to be a chess winner, when all the time he could be a chess player. That's one way of summarizing the criticism of what's wrong with this one [course of action]. Here's somebody who's satisfied to live the life of a chess winner, when all the time he could be living as a chess player.

**Terry:** *I think again that's relative to ID characteristics.*

**Peter:** That is an ID characterization. There is a guy who—: the rest of it is simply characterization.

**Terry:** *But there's other ID characteristics that really make the—are criteria, like, say in terms of whether that criticism applies to a particular individual. In other words, if you're Bobby Fischer, and you're someone who's being a chess winner, who wants to be a chess winner as opposed to just player, it doesn't*

*have the same kind of aversive consequences if you're medium and you want to be a chess—*

**Peter:** It doesn't have the same kind of aversive consequences—some of them, but the same criticism would apply. It doesn't matter how good you are. The general limitation's still a fact. It's just that the better you are, the less *some* of that limitation is going to be there, because the more often you're going to win. You're still subject to the limitation that—

**Terry:** *I guess I'm coming at it from still a different angle, in talking about when someone doesn't really have the capacity, or the eligibility, to win as frequently as it would take to make that even in any way a reasonable thing to do—he's the guy that's really set up by that. It's like my playing tennis—since I'm mediocre, if I really expected myself to be a winner, I'd be buying into a lot of pain, whereas for Jimmy Connors, he could do that and get away with it.*

**Peter:** Well, you'll get away with it if you can stand having that much of your life wasted with those satisfactions.

**Daniel:** *Those terms aren't mutually exclusive, then, winning and playing. Because Fischer and Connors probably are both players and winners.*

**Wynn:** *That's already in the second paradigm.*

**Peter:** That's why the nature of the criticism is: it's so unnecessary, because if you were doing it this way [**social practice**], you'd still be getting the satisfaction, so what you've got is a net loss up here [**course of action**], because everything you have here, you could be getting this way, and more.

**Wynn:** *It sounds like excess baggage, in the sense that if I see myself as—if it's necessary that I see myself as a winner, then I could degrade the quality of the play, whereas if I see myself primarily as a player, such that the quality of the play becomes the issue, then intrinsic to the quality of the play is that I'm moving in the direction towards winning. And so that's part and parcel—*

**Peter:** We need the connectives back to the general argument, that desires limit behavior, because indeed, how come—within chess—there is this goal? Because it is set up in such a way that normally, you're trying to win. If you saw two guys playing a game, and one guy clearly was not trying to checkmate the other guy's king, you'd say, "This guy isn't really playing chess." This really is a goal in chess. If you're playing chess the way it's played, you do try. And that does set limits, and by watching somebody you can pretty well tell whether he's operating with that limit, or whether he's just moving pieces around. So there's a clear restriction on your behavior, from this, even

when you're playing it for the sake of playing. Because that's how it's done, is by trying to win. [**change tape**] The relation between these two is part to whole, or lesser and greater. This [**course of action**] is included in some sense in this [**social practice**]. That is, all of the possibilities here [**course of action**] are in here [**social practice**]. In a game like chess, you'd have to have that kind of restriction in order to give the game some structure. If you don't, you're back to the limiting case here, where you have no reason to make one move rather than another. So within any form of social practice, there will be reasons for behaving one way rather than another, and those reasons will stem from the necessity for doing that practice the way it's done and not some other way.

**Terry:** *Does that translate into having an end goal?*

**Peter:** No. Not all social practices have an end goal. Not all games have a criterion for winning, losing, or stopping—for example, playing tag. But even for playing tag, you see, you have to do it certain ways rather than others or you're not playing tag. But playing tag gives you reasons for behaving in certain ways rather than others.

**Wynn:** *So that the goal, if you use the word "goal"; becomes less winning in those games, than—say—words like "elegance" and "play", or being a fast and dodgy runner.*

**Peter:** Those aren't goals the way that winning is a goal in chess.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but there's more than a subtle resemblance between—just take the situation in which if you have to choose between two players, and you're a good chess player, you want to play against somebody who plays well, who—because that makes it a game for you. If you want to play tag, you don't want to play tag with people who are in some way lame, for that game. You want to play with people that can do it, and the better they do it, the more—assuming that that quality is already built into some of the players in the game—the more game-like it becomes.*

**Peter:** I think what we need here is one of the images that we didn't ever get to, and that's Chroming Your Bolts.

**?:** *What?*

**Peter:** Chroming Your Bolts. Think of a sixteen-year-old kid who's a hot-rodder. Here's this hot-rodder, and there is the motor, and most motors have the head bolted on with ordinary bolts. This kid has everything chromed. Now the chroming is not functional. In fact, it may be anti-functional. But it

looks better. Well, Chroming Your Bolts is the image for getting at the difference between doing it better and doing it prettier, and when you talk about “elegance” in playing tag, I get the sense that you’re Chroming Your Bolts. It’s elegant, but functionally, and in the game of tag, you can be too finicky.

**Wynn:** *But both distinctions apply, in that sometimes what you get in a game—you work at, say, elegance of play. You can see that in dance and lots of things, whereas at other times, the issue is one of building in skills, that the more skillful you become—it isn’t an issue of “prettier”, it’s an issue of more eligibilities.*

**Peter:** The moral is that doing it better, whatever practice “it” is, doesn’t generally reduce to something else, like being more elegant, being more parsimonious, etc. Those will be Critic’s comments on doing it better, but the criterion is doing *it* better.

**Wynn:** *I think in your competitive sports—say, like your martial arts—your eligibility is determined by skill, in terms of even what kind of game you could play.*

**Steve P:** *You have a social practice—? No.*

**Peter:** Practice is only an ingredient.

**Steve P:** *But the whole might be the sum of all of those parts, those social practices.*

**Peter:** You can analyze that. Remember, it will also be the choices that you didn’t make and not merely the ones that you can plug into your history.

**Steve A:** *—really suffering. Does that make suffering a social practice?*

**Peter:** It’s a condition. Suffering is a condition. It’s a consequence of the kinds of things that you do do.

**Steve A:** *It’s a consequence of the number of social practices that you suffer.*

**Peter:** No. Suffering is a consequence of your participating in the practices that you do in the ways that you do. But suffering is not itself a practice. It’s a result; it’s a condition. Remember, in this diagram [Fig. 5, p. 243], you have a state up here [PC]. It’s a result of what you do, determined by your personal characteristics. But it also reflects the practices that there are available to be engaged in.

**Terry:** *So the treatment would be getting beyond that, even action itself, and as long as you’re acting in the world, you’re still in a fallen state. Your ### is beyond action.*

**Peter:** That's what we're working towards, something of that sort. We're going to get a formulation of the limitations and then apply that formulation on a new scale, and we'll get a result something like that. That's why we're working hard at something within the domain, to see how it works, what the logic of that limitation or that criticism is, in order to see and compare how it works when we apply it, in some sense, transcendently. And for this purpose, actual words count for a lot. That's why I'm looking for a proper way of stating this contrast and putting it in the form of: here's a guy who is satisfied to be living a life of a chess-winner or a chess-contestant, when all the time he could be a chess-player.

**Wynn:** *The way you're going about that distinction, with your talk of play the other day in terms of intrinsic and instrumental, he makes the game instrumental in the top case, and in the bottom case, winning is intrinsic to the play.*

**Terry:** *From the standpoint of Buddhism, it seems like making the distinction is almost incidental, because ultimately, Buddhism has made an a priori religious distinction about what really counts, and finally, any action in the world—which would be the world of impermanence—is part of suffering. And so whether you're a chess player or a chess winner, you're still caught in the world—*

**Peter:** I know, but again, I'm saying that what we're looking for is a form of criticism.

The content is irrelevant here. What we want to do is to generate a form that we can then apply in the right place, and drop this content.

**Wynn:** *The Buddhists even have a loophole for that kind of criteria, because in terms like the goal pretty much follows from the Hindu goal, dropping out of the birth-death cycle of Karma—Karma being an issue of attachment, the result of attachment to action—but the Buddha, the enlightened one, always seems to have the choice of coming back into the world as usually a teacher of some sort, in which his actions are Karma-free. He's not attached to his actions, but he still acts. He still acts in the world, but the significance of his actions is different.*

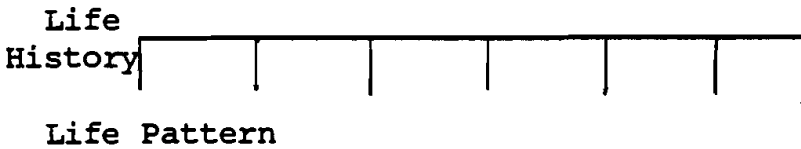
**Jane:** *What did you say we were looking for, again?*

**Peter:** We're looking for a form of criticism—a form of criticism that we can use to elaborate or clarify something about Buddhism, and we're developing it in a familiar context where we can see how it works, and we don't have the complications of dealing with transcendental material. Chess is a very



commonplace sort of thing, so if we can understand how the criticism works here, we can develop it in good form, then we can apply that form of criticism to life histories and get some notion of what's this notion a life history, because over here we had the notion of transcending this in favor of this. So we're dealing with the transcendence relation here, that we're now going to use over here, in transcending life histories [Fig. 7].

**FIGURE 7**



**Jane:** *Does that have to do with participation?*

**Peter:** “Participation” is a bad word; that’s why I used “living as”—living as a chess contestant versus living as a chess player. Because we want that form over here: “living as” rather than “participate”. As soon as you say “participating”, you’re going to need to specify what one participates in, whereas if you say “living as”, all you have to do is get some characterization of how, and that’s a lot easier.

Maybe we can use this for one of the things to get back to this notion of attachment. Somebody who’s playing chess in order to win, I think you can sense how the notion of attachment is going to apply here, in a way that it doesn’t apply to somebody who is playing chess because he enjoys it and is trying to win, but winning doesn’t count for him the way it counts for the other. Somebody who’s in there only to win, nothing else counts. Winning is going to count with him in a way that it doesn’t when he’s appreciating the game and is trying to win because that’s playing the game. I think that difference is a good way, at least for the time being, of explicating the notion of attachment versus non-attachment. You can see why attachment could be redescribed as greed, which it has been in a number of places. This notion of attachment is one for which the word “greed” is a fair paraphrase, and why we might describe this guy as greedy for this [**Goal**], where as the other one, you wouldn’t describe him as greedy for that, even when he’s trying to get it.

**Walter:** *The trouble with it is that any time that you would have a goal, a sort of achievement that you’d want to get done, it’d be up for grabs if you call it greedy.*

**Peter:** No. That's the point I'm making, that down here, you have the same goal, but if you have it because trying to win is part of playing, and what you're into is playing, then your relation to that goal is not that of greed. Whereas up here, if the only reason you're playing is because you want to win, then your relation to it is that of attachment, greed, or something similar. It isn't that any time you have a goal, you're greedy.

**Walter:** *I think one of the ways that this has been interpreted, though, that any time that you are in a situation that may end up in winning or losing, that you're automatically going to be seen as being out there for winning.*

**Peter:** That's a way of going wrong with this kind of criticism. Because keep in mind that when you get further along in the chapter, and you read a description of the ways of living as somebody who's enlightened, it isn't somebody who has no goals, it isn't somebody who isn't trying to do anything. It's a picture of somebody who does have goals, operates in certain characteristic ways, but isn't attached to them, isn't doing it because he needs to get that done. He's simply operating in a way in which those things fit. So the chess example does preserve that kind of contrast.

**Terry:** *Walter's example, though, would fit like Horney's descriptions of modern neurotics—one brand of them, who recoil from competition and any kind of structure where there's winning or losing and won't participate because it always carries that connotation.*

**Walter:** *It's one of the ways that counterculturists—*

**Wynn:** *You might think that for that kind of neurotic, winning is a really important issue, and the person often sees himself as ineligible for that, and so doesn't want the suffering of playing the game with that reminder. A certain inadequacy of character. Look: in terms of the word "attachment", it seems like the psychoanalytic—I guess in the mid-50's, psychoanalysts and Zen Buddhists got together a lot for a series of papers—Suzuki's series, I think it's pretty well known—and what they seemed to conclude was that in general, both goals—the psychotherapeutic and Zen Buddhist goals—could be described in terms of taking rigid characters and making them less rigid, expanding their behavior potential. Both groups talked about making a wider range of choices possible. But it seemed like rigidity was the key to the therapeutic attack in both cases.*

**Peter:** Yeah. When you see limitations of this sort, you don't really count them as limitations if they're easily changed. If they're not easily changed, you talk about rigidity.

**Wynn:** *But you can see how an instrumental character is a character who is more likely to be rigid than a character whose practices are intrinsic.*

**Peter:** I'm not sure. What you can say is that if he's rigid, he'll be rigid in a different way. Classically, the early cultural anthropologists classified as "rigid" just those societies in which the preponderance of behavior was intrinsic, and they called it "ritualistic", which it was, but they also called it "rigid", whereas the technological societies, the goal-oriented ones, were the ones that were inventive, innovative, changeable, etc.

**Wynn:** *I'm just wondering if we can get an ID characteristic that somehow falls between what you're capturing with "greedy", and what I'm not speaking well of, in terms of using the word "rigid", but somehow that character has less choice—not less choice, but—*

**Peter:** No, but that's what we've been doing in terms of how desire constrains behavior. That's the rigidity. Somebody who's really greedy is very constrained in what he does because he's always aiming, and he's always having to constrain his behaviors to those that look like they will get him that.

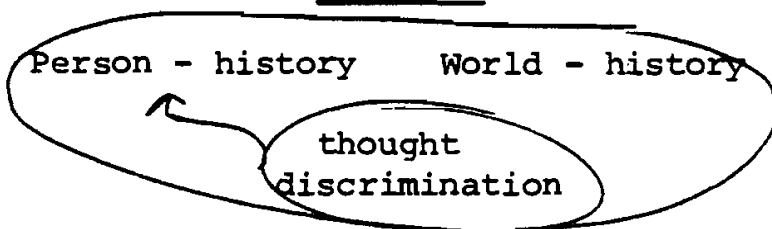
**Wynn:** *Isn't there something different in terms of just the character—the ordinary conversation of the character whose life is built on intrinsic goals, intrinsic practices, versus the person whose life is built on explicit goals that everything is an action towards?*

**Peter:** Well, generally. But if you had living that way as your goal, it might be very hard to tell you from somebody who just was living that way. The same way, in a narrower context, think of spontaneity. If you've been through a bunch of encounter groups and have being spontaneous as your goal, you will often be hard to distinguish from somebody who is spontaneous.

**Wynn:** *That's because ### serve as our criteria for these decisions.*

**Peter:** But it is possible to make that the critical judgment.

### FIGURE 8



Okay, now. If you come back to our starting-point of: a person as simply the stuff of which he's made, the experiences of each of the five kinds, and the ideas, and then think of that being organized as a personal history, and then think of world history, of which this person is simply a part, and then think of world history being in the thoughts and discriminations that operate within a given person's personal history, you get a kind of conglomerate which in one of the diagrams in the book are organized: past, present, and future, causes and effects. And that's what generates the wheel of Karma.

Now, let's not deal with the organization, but just with the mass of stuff that's there. Let's say: if a person has this view [Fig. 8] of the totality of things, rather than this view [Fig. 7, p. 251]—namely, a life-history—then we can say he's in much the same position as a person who is playing chess for the sake of playing chess, versus the person who is playing to win. Because in the life history, you have a tremendous number of choices, you have a lot of selectivity, a lot of structure, guided by your personal values. Your behaviors are behaviors designed to achieve *your* values. So you have a kind of selectivity in a life history that you have here in playing the game of chess and trying to win—trying to achieve that value.

Now suppose you enlarge your conceptual sphere to include the rest of the world, world history, and possibilities that are not actualized, so that you approach the whole business not particularly involved in which of those possibilities is going to eventuate, and certainly not in terms of which of those would preserve *your* values, but rather, with the more general pattern notion of how this whole thing operates. Then you could say: look at all these people who are satisfied, or whose highest aspiration is to live the life of a self, when all the time they could be living as a world.

**Terry:** *But world and persons are both part of—*

**Peter:** Hold on, hold on, you're jumping the gun. I just want the contrast, not the content. You do have the same kind of contrast between a life history and the considerations that guide the choices and constrain the choices, versus over here something more general, that includes all of that and is missing the constraints that guide the choices. So you have more possibilities here. You have all of the possibilities that are ruled out when you are trying to achieve your desires. So in effect, this [Fig. 8] is a representation of the world not constrained by human desire. So you've enlarged it both ways: to include all other people and all other things, past, present, and future, and all of the undesirable states of affairs as well as the desirable ones.

**Steve P:** *If I conceive of myself not as a part of the whole, but as the whole itself, there's nothing to desire.*

**Peter:** Right. Your desires are not of this sort [Fig. 7, p. 251], just like over here, your desires are not of that sort. Instead, you're free to respond to the internal patterning of this [Fig. 8], in a way that here you're free to respond to the internal structure of this. So that you can wind up with desires here [Fig. 8], but the point is that by having this be your frame of reference, you've ipso facto transcended the limitations that go with simply a life history, and are free, then, if there is any structure, to operate in accordance with it. And then that will probably show up as a different set of desires.

**Steve P:** *We don't talk about inanimate objects desiring to get closer to the earth, and that's why they fall down.*

**Peter:** No. The ### gravitationalists say it's motivational.

**Wynn:** *But is—there's nothing particularly mysterious about a change from the perspective of person as person in the world, versus person as being-in-the-world, hyphenated, the person as world, in that logically each subject matter is equivalent.*

**Peter:** But being-in-the-world is different from person as world, because being-in-the-world simply gives you the logical correlation between the two, whereas this one [Fig. 8] is more an identity.

**Wynn:** *Yeah that one creates the reminder that action—that what you identify as action here isn't—in terms of self-boundaries of skin—isn't the limit of action that you can identify in relation to being, to your being.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but that's the point of not talking about organisms at all, but talking about life patterns. By that there, you've already transcended any shape, any bodily structure, etc. By simply the choice of actions, this whole pattern is transcended by the one who—the larger pattern.

**Wynn:** *That's the point of this, that the existentialists, when they talk about being-in-the-world, they focus on the reminder of the identity, in the sense that the person is a member of that class, that the concept of "world" and the concept of "person" overlap entirely. But the Buddhists' emphasis seems to be on the fact that if that is the case, that you don't have to constrain yourself to owning action as relating to what you identify as the being—being the specific person—the action is anything within the sphere of "world", and all that relates to the person as part of it.*

**Peter:** Say that again. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *It's an issue of significance, the significance of action. A person who sees himself in the full existentialist sense, as a being-in-the-world, might still be jealous of others' actions, whereas a person from this perspective, from the same position as a being-in-the-world, has no need to be jealous of someone else's action. Because that other person's action was an aspect of himself.*

**Peter:** I would prefer to say that he's not a being-in-the-world any more. He's simply the world.

**Wynn:** *Okay.*

**Peter:** In the same way, here, you can say that this person is identifying with chess. He's not identifying with being one of two opponents; he's identifying with chess.

**Terry:** *But again, I think that would fit for a cult, where there's an attempt to reconcile the isolated subject with the absolute meaning, and the individual tries to transcend his separation to again become one with the absolute totality, with that unity. But with Buddhism and that whole ### with Nirvana, it would make no sense to use any phenomenal concepts to characterize the individual in Nirvana. You couldn't say that he's self, and you couldn't say that he's world, or that he's self as world. Because again, that's still part of the cycle of Karma.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but we're not dealing with the phenomenology of it. We're still dealing with process, and one of the critical problems is: what is there that transcends a life pattern? The answer is: something of this sort [**Fig. 8**], in this sense, transcends it. And I think that some of the things that Buddhists say are a way of formulating this and reminding us that this transcends that *in that sense*.

Now recall that when it comes to experience, we had a problem of: can you experience your own way of living, your own life history? And we came up with a peculiar answer, namely, maybe. Or, conversely, yes and no. That is, that it makes sense to talk that way. You can't be shown to be incorrect, but it doesn't have just the full-fledged features of straightforwardly experiencing a table. It's more like experiencing your competence at riding a bike. You can certainly experience riding a bike, and you experience your competence at riding a bike. Again, there's something non-paradigmatic even when you say you do. Well, if we have that problem with experiencing a life history, and we've got something that transcends a life history, guess

what kind of problem we're going to have talking about experiencing this [Fig. 8]?

**Wynn:** *I wonder if you could tease out some of it in terms of recognition of relationship. It's like a person can see his father, and in seeing his father and recognizing his father, recognizes a whole pattern, a whole world of trust and things—positions he could put himself in, and it seems to me that the initial step is a recognition, different, of course, from recognizing a table, but recognizing the commitments to the concept.*

**Peter:** You don't have commitments to concepts. You may have commitments to your father, but not to the concept of father.

**Wynn:** *Okay, I'm being very sloppy in my speech. What I'm trying to tease out, though, is that when I recognize my father as my father, it's different from recognizing a person as any particular person. That recognition carries with it all those other aspects of the world. Recognizing myself as the world, as Toynbee walks down the streets of London and recognizes the circle of history that he's part of—he doesn't see anything that comes before his eyes, but suddenly he's aware of a relational change, or of a relational possibility—in his case, a relational change, in the case of recognizing your father, a relational possibility or range of possibilities.*

**Peter:** What's the relational change?

**Wynn:** *Toynbee seeing history as a linear progression to seeing history as this spiral. His relation to history, his change when he made that recognition. There'll be a relational change, in the same sense in which going from one state to another may carry with it a—*

**Peter:** It looks like a change in his concept of history, which carries with it a change in his relation to it, but then, also of everybody else's relation to it. Here, the change would be a recognition of what was already there, rather than the achievement of a synthesis of transcendence, etc. The essence of this approach is that it *is* that way, but many people don't recognize it. They think it's this way [Fig. 7, p. 251], and to go from here [Fig. 7] to here [Fig. 8, p. 254] is not to accomplish a difficult task of transcendence or synthesis. It's to give up your distortion and errors. So it's not an extraordinary achievement. It's simply getting back to normal.

**Terry:** *That's a sociologically normative pattern among the people identified with the life pattern, and—*



**Peter:** Keep in mind that even in the routine analysis of the notion of psychopathology, you cannot identify “normal” as the most frequent statistical norm, which is what you’re doing here.

**Terry:** *No, I’m just saying that there’s a kind of peculiar twist there. I’m not willing to say that because a lot of people feel the other way, that it’s normal; but I’m saying that it’s the most frequent, and so saying “getting back to normal”—it’s—*

**Peter:** It’s complicated by the difficulty—

**Terry:** *I guess because of the irony, because it is throwing everyone into—maybe not everyone, but the majority of people—into the bag of being abnormal or defective or something. And it’s probably why the language of synthesis and transcendence and all that has been applied, so that the individuals that can do that are the special, accomplished, as opposed to—considering them adequate and everyone else defective.*

**Peter:** We’re getting back into a rehash of what we started with, namely, a normal baseline and deficiencies, versus a perfection baseline, below which—as deficiencies—are those things which we commonly call “good”. [Cf. Fig. 2, p. 25] There it is. Speaking of “good”—what we commonly call “good” is a ten-minute break.

**Peter:** Let’s enter in this time with a different notion, a different way, a different sense of transcending oneself. How can you transcend you? Let’s start with a commonplace example which I think most of you have heard of, namely, think of looking at any visible object, think of how it looks to me, and how it looks to each of you. Just think of how it looks, and then think of the ambiguity of the phrase “how it looks”. Take the two senses, one in which to all of us it looks like a chair. In that sense, it looks the same for all of us. The other sense: if you took a photograph of it where I am, and where you are and where you are, the photographs would be different. You couldn’t superimpose them on one another and have them match. In that sense, we’re seeing differently, or we’re seeing something different.

So you can distinguish the thing we’re seeing, namely, the chair, and our view of it. Our view of it corresponds to the different photographs, and those are different. When we see a real chair, we do not operate merely with our view of the chair. We see a three-dimensional chair, and we see it as something that we see from a given viewpoint. Therefore we don’t mistake how it looks to us—we don’t confuse that with how it is. So we see it directly

as a three-dimensional real object, via how it looks to us, and we can use that relation to translate: if it looks this way to me, and you're over there and I'm over here, then I know how it would have to look to you. That is, it's not chaos. It's very, very orderly. For the same chair, there have to be certain kinds of difference and certain kinds of resemblance between how it looks to me here, and how it looks to you from over there. And what that is up to, is that it is a chair that we are seeing from different places.

And that's how the unit looks, and that's how chairs, tables, etc., look. We've mastered that thoroughly, and since we've mastered it thoroughly, we don't have to do any cogitation. We simply see a three-dimensional chair. You might say, any normal perception of real things is a way of transcending oneself. It is a way of transcending one's place and position in the world. Because we understand it not simply as "what I see this way", but rather as *the same thing* that I see this way, that you see that way, that you see that way, and that you see that way. So we have a whole list, here, of the view that one has, and the viewpoint from which one is looking [Fig. 9, p. 260].

The view is different. In general, every view will be different. The viewpoints differ. The pairs [1+1, etc.] are where you get the identity. The object that looks this way [1'] from here [1] is the same as the object that looks this way [2'] from here [2], and that's the same as the object that looks this way [3'] from here [3]. So that the pairs are what give you the identity of the object—not the views, *not* the viewpoints, but the pairs.

**FIGURE 9**

[A]				[B]		
Viewpoint (place)	+	View (looks)	=	PC	+	Description (experience)
1	+	1'	=	1	+	1"
2	+	2'	=	2	+	2"
3	+	3'	=	3	+	3"
'	+	'	=	'	+	'
'	+	'	=	'	+	'
'	+	'	=	'	+	'
<b>V + V' = X</b>				<b>PC + E = Z</b>		

Now, the actual chair is not any of these. The actual chair corresponds to the whole set, because it is *the same thing* in each line of this interminable list. It's the same thing for each of these across here. So the real chair corresponds to the entire list of correspondences between views and viewpoints.

Now, we handle that routinely. We don't do a lot of thinking, we don't operate with a complex theory, we simply see a real chair. But our seeing a real chair can be reconstructed this way, into what is subjective here [ $V'$ ], what is limited to oneself, and what transcends any particular view and viewpoint, namely, the actual chair. So our notion of objectivity, then, of reality, is a notion of transcendence of subjectivity, of getting beyond just yourself.

Now we can make the next move, which is to say, "That's starting at the wrong end. You don't start with the notion of subjectivity and transcendence to achieve a notion of reality. You start with the notion of reality and analyze it into subjectivity."

**Terry:** *Why? What a priori makes you want to proceed methodologically that way, as opposed to the other way?*

**Peter:** Because that's the only way you can. Part of the history of these things is that people tried to build it up synthetically from views to a real object, and they never could, and you can't. It's easy to start with a real object and relativize its appearance to viewpoints. It's not possible to start with something that has *only* the logical characteristics of viewpoints, for example, sense data, and from that construct a real object. So that's why. You can only do it the one way.

**Terry:** *Could it be put in ontological language and see if it's the same issue? Merleau-Ponty would say that there are sensory profiles, each of us has profiles which would correspond to what he calls the view point of the viewer.*

**Peter:** The viewpoint is simply the place in relation to that.

**Terry:** *Okay, the place in relation—the profiles are coming off. And he would say the key problem is, is to explicate the relationship between the profile and the signification under which those profiles are subsumed, that that relationship has to be explained. The signification is "chair", and yet we all—as you said—always have access to the profile of the object.*

**Peter:** You should know better than that, because that is exactly the problem of raising—of rendering stimuli functionally equivalent—

**Terry:** *Okay, that's the indictment, but I'm not—*

**Peter:** That is the indictment, that there is no such thing as "rendering stimuli functionally equivalent". You force yourself to talk that way if you start with stimuli. And you force yourself to talk that way if you start with profiles.

**Terry:** *But “profiles” he’s using metaphorically, and he’s not saying that there’s literally—it’s not stimuli. It’s a metaphor—*

**Peter:** Metaphors can’t be subject to processes. Metaphors are ways of talking. So that just leads to all kinds of confusion there.

**Terry:** *Since Kant, the problem is this question, “What is the relationship between the object and the concept?” Or “How is it—how can we explicate that relationship so that we can all have the viewpoints on this object?” None of us sees, literally the same—or has literally the same sensory impression, but we all subsume it under the same concept.*

**Peter:** But remember, we’re not doing philosophy here. We are not stuck with their notions that they first introduce and then have to try to solve. And that’s fortunate, because those tend to be insoluble, and it’s for exactly that kind of thing that I’ve used the—raised the issue of rendering stimuli functionally equivalent, as a general paradigm. That if you introduce certain ways of talking, and certain analyses, and certain starting-points, then you’re stuck with them. If you introduce the wrong ones, you’re stuck with an insoluble problem that you created. Philosophers do that routinely.

What I said here is: look, we see chairs. Any conclusion, any way of approaching it that makes that an extraordinary achievement is going to be just plain wrong. Any way of approaching it that makes it impossible is going to be wrong.

**Terry:** *Nothing I’ve said so far makes it impossible. It’s just indicating the point—you did say that you could reconstruct, and when you reconstruct you get something like this diagram you have on the board.*

**Peter:** I said this is a reconstruction, and from the reconstruction, you have to work this way. When you reconstruct, you can do it in a phenomenological way, and then you’ll get different things here. The problem is that you raise the problem of how you actually get from here [Fig. 9, p. 260, [A]] to the real thing, and that’s why I emphasize that this is a reconstruction. It is *not* a story of the process of perceiving a chair, so there is no achievement there of uniting these two, of synthesizing, of accounting for the signification, etc.

**Terry:** *That’s Husserl’s critique of Kant, so they’re not saying that either, but like—I guess I’m wondering about the reconstruction.*

**Peter:** Well, there it is.

**Terry:** *And bearing on the issue of—you're saying that there's no way we can account for how it is that we all manage to see—*

**Peter:** No. I'm saying it's not problematic. There's nothing to be accounted for.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but there might be a question that—*

**Peter:** Remember that I'm not here discussing perception. I'm using known facts about perception to illustrate something else. So I don't want to examine the whole topic of perception. That's irrelevant. What I'm using is the fact that we can manage this kind of relativity to illustrate a notion of transcending oneself. I think those facts are reasonably clear, and it's not an issue where we're raising questions about perception.

In ordinary perception of real objects, in this sense, you have transcended yourself because you've got something that isn't just yours. You've got something that's public, that can be seen from different points of view, that connects points of view and views to one another because they're all views of the same thing. And that is part of our ordinary experience of the world. Now the commentary, that you can start with "real" and get the views, etc., is a commentary. But the illustration was: here's an example of transcending oneself, of not being stuck with one's own view. Because we have the concept of something that transcends views, namely, chairs, tables, the room.

**Steve A:** *What is the distinction between viewpoint and views, again?*

**Peter:** This [**viewpoint**] is the place, and this [**view**] is how it looks. It looks this way from this place. It looks this other way from that other place. So those are the correspondences, how it looks and what place you're looking from.

**Daniel:** *It seems to be tautological, in that everybody does have a view, and you're saying no one's stuck with one's exclusive—*

**Peter:** You've got more than your view of it. You also have the notion of "it", and when you see it, you see *it*, you don't just have your view.

**Wynn:** *But your view is meaningless without it being a view of something particular, and that being your view, that particular thing. I don't see why the notion of transcendence comes in even as a useful example. I get the sense of a kind of a—the issue that I see as an issue here is the issue that Terry brings up, in terms of how you get from, say, a view to a concept, if you had to take that way of talking, if that's a question.*

**Peter:** No. The point is that if you take that way of talking, it's an insoluble problem.

**Wynn:** *Okay, I'm not arguing that point. The question I'm asking is: is this really a useful example if the main thing you're talking about is transcendence? Because I carry the concept of chair—I'm not transcending myself because part of my IDs concern that kind of concept, which I bring—I don't bring to bear on the example. I see a chair.*

**Peter:** Well, all you've got to do to recognize the force of saying it's a good example of transcendence is to listen to the kind of questions that somebody might raise, namely, "How do you really know, after all? All you have is your view of things." And there you are. Then your answer is, "No, I'm not stuck with just my view of things. That's a chair, and I'm seeing it."

**Wynn:** *I can see that argument not being started. The counter-claim might be, "It's not that I have my view—that that's the important issue. It's that I see a chair there from here, that I can see a chair from here."*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's why I say there's no problem. There is a problem of transcendence if you start from one end. There's not a problem of transcendence if you start with the other end.

This corresponds to the Buddhist view that there is not a problem, that people create their problem by how they approach the thing, that they put themselves into insoluble binds by the approach, but that the reality is otherwise, and it's simply a matter of getting you to realize it. And there it is. Well, this is a paradigm for that, that if you approach the matter that all you have is what you can see, and you really don't know that that's a chair because all you have is your view, and a chair is something beyond that, then you're going to regard a real chair as a transcendent object, a very mysterious one, and an in-principle inaccessible one, and you'll be into all kinds of confusion and problems. Whereas, in fact, what you ought to do is see the chair and be able to sit in it or use it the ways that people do use it, and not create those difficulties for yourself. This is the Buddhist approach to this kind of thing. So you've got both ends of it, you see. In this ordinary context, you can see that one can indeed just treat it as a real chair, and that one does, and that that's proper, and that to raise questions of this sort that make it a transcendent object is just making trouble for yourself from the normal viewpoint of how one treats chairs. To be sure, you can make a living as a philosopher by raising that kind of question, but that's a very special sort of thing. When it comes to chair, you've got to treat a chair as a chair. That's the thrust of a

lot of what goes on in Buddhism, as I interpret it. You create the problems for yourself because of your wrong notions of things, which generate wrong desires. In this case, your wrong desire is the desire to show how one goes from one's limited viewpoint to a real chair. It's the philosophical desire.

**Terry:** *I think what that leaves out, though, would be the idea of a professional philosopher doing it, that you satirize or suggest to me someone who's doing this arbitrarily, in terms of a historical condition, and has no sense for what's the real problem. But then it seems to me that the whole thrust of the phenomenologist's task—why do people bother their heads about such things? Why do they generate those questions as real questions?*

**Peter:** Again, we're not doing abnormal psychology here. We're not inquiring into why do these people do these strange things, or these apparently strange things. We're looking at an example in which it makes sense to call it "transcendence of self". What I've said is that if you set it up in a certain way, which is a fairly common way, you will see it as a transcendence of self. If you set it up in a different way, you won't see it as transcendence; you'll see it as simply seeing real chairs. And it's the contrast between those two ways of setting it up, and how it looks depending on which way you set it up—that's what I'm interested in calling your attention to. From one approach, it's a transcendence of self; from another approach, it's a commonplace, ordinary sort of thing: that you see a chair, and you treat it as a chair. You might say that transcendence is itself an illusion. It's an illusion if you take a reconstruction to be a real thing, if you take these analytic notions as corresponding to things about the chair.

That's only the first heuristic example. I want to strengthen this notion of transcendence of self with other examples.

**Daniel:** *Pete, could you repeat this transcendence part of the heuristic? You say that you're giving us an example of that being also—it can be transcendence—*

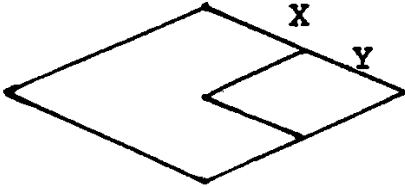
**Peter:** Transcendence of self. The real chair is something more than just your experience or your view. It is also the thing which *I* have an experience of, and I have a view of, and that is different from yours. So the chair is something other than your experience, something other than my experience. It is something that we share, namely, what it is we each have the experience of—which is the chair. So in seeing it as a real chair, we have transcended simply what each of us has, namely, a view.



**Steve A:** *But then you're saying it's not a transcendence—we don't do that, we do the other one.*

**Peter:** What I'm saying is that the relation between the two, it's like this relation here [blackboard], where you're doing X by doing Y.

**FIGURE 10**



If you start with Y, you'd have to say that X is the symbolic significance of Y. If you start with X, you say that Y is the way you do X. Likewise, if you start at the subjective end, then you talk about transcending yourself to achieve the real object. If you start with the perception of the real object and work the other way, you simply say that we have different views of it.

**Steve A:** *Weren't you also saying that it just doesn't make sense to start with the beyond?*

**Peter:** I'm saying that if you take those formulations to be a story of what you do, of what you go through, namely, that you start—that in seeing the chair, you start with a real chair and then arrive at a viewpoint, or if you have a viewpoint and then from that arrive at the chair, that starting from a viewpoint you never will arrive at a chair.

**Bob:** *I read a book by a guy named Sommerhoff who starts very much like this, and says that what you see when you see a chair somehow is an activation of a series of pairs of viewpoints and views, just like that, and what they are is how the view changes, anticipating the viewpoint, so that if you walk around that chair, you have a series of expectations that are either matched or not matched by what you see. And if they're matched, then you become more and more confident that in fact, what you're seeing is the chair. If, for some reason, when you got around this side, it looked like a door or something completely different, you'd wonder after a while whether or not you were really seeing a chair, or what, in fact, you were seeing, because the views that you have don't match what you anticipate they would be as your viewpoint changes. For him, there is no transcendence of self when you see a real chair. What you're seeing,*

*somehow—that one viewpoint/view triggers—that is an element in a set of matched or ordered pairs, all of which revolve around viewpoint/view matches, and even if you just take one step or you move your head, if it doesn't match, then all of a sudden something's very weird, and you wonder. It isn't that you're transcending something—*

**Peter:** No. That illustrates why you end with the real chair. As soon as you say that the chair corresponds to the whole set, that's what I've said here: that the real chair corresponds to the whole set. And from that point of view, there is no transcendence. It's if you start with a view as the given and from that have to construct not only the chair, but other views.

**Bob:** *I guess he's not even concerned about real chairs. For him, the real chair isn't an object somehow separate, out there. It's the somehow neurally—*

**Peter:** Okay, but that's another way of going on. But that chair—it's a real chair—had better be there and not in my head.

**Wynn:** *This notion of the chair, of consciousness as somehow a neo-platonic hologram—that extra way of talking doesn't really buy you anything, because if you examine the same set of statements, what you could also say is, "I see that as a chair, and that's a chair." But if I get up and walk around to the other side and see that in fact, it looks like a door, then I'm confused about whether it's a chair, and that didn't require any matching, just that it doesn't match the concept of chair. Chairs and doors aren't the same thing, and should it from some angle appear no longer to be a chair—*

**Bob:** Or even if it still appears a chair, but if I walk around it and my view of it doesn't change, somehow it rotates with me or something like that, I'm still going to wonder whether that was a chair.

**Wynn:** *Right, because chairs, in fact, unless you have some reason to expect it to rotate, don't rotate in and of themselves. It's like your concept of chair is of a certain sort of object, and if the object doesn't match that concept, then you have a question.*

**Bob:** *I guess the reason I brought it up is that somehow it seems like you could start from that viewpoint/view match, the pair kind of thing, and still, because it's always your view and your viewpoint, as you anticipate the view will change as the viewpoint changes—I don't see how by making it all yours, you are able to transcend yourself.*

**Peter:** No. As I say, that isn't the transcendence formulation. That is the objective one. Because you have to have the notion of a thing there. Whether

you call it the “set” or the “real chair”, you still have to have something beyond the notion of your view, because you can only have one view at any given time.

**Bob:** *But you also have a whole set activated—*

**Peter:** I know, but the notion of “the whole set” is the notion of a ### whole.

**Jim:** *What if you’re operating not with a chair but with electrons that you can’t see?*

**Peter:** The same thing.

**Jim:** *You have to construct several different viewpoints, and still they see it. Are you saying that the set that you’ve acquired through those different perspectives is the real object, or—*

**Peter:** No. Again, remember that this is an account by a physiologically-oriented guy working in perception, and that will immediately introduce certain biases. What I said was that this whole set represents your concept of the chair, that that chair is something that would be seen that way if you were over there or if you were over there, not that something in my head really reproduces all of those whenever I see it. That’s the physiological bias.

**Jim:** *But it seems like Tart, and the point of the icon—*

**Peter:** No. I also did not imply that you actually had to go around the chair and see it from different viewpoints. I’m saying that if it’s the concept of a real chair, it will be the concept of something that *would* look differently from different places, whether I ever, in fact, see it from a different place. So an electron would be that kind of thing even though I never actually see it from any place. It is the concept of something that would be seen, that would look different from different places. That’s why we need another example, because this one has certain specific characteristics that are just accidental, and so by going to other examples, we can weed away the features that are simply accidentally related to perception, and the fact that you can move around an object is one of those accidental features. Because our next example will be one in which you can’t do the equivalent of moving around the object.

**Joe S:** *You can never take all possible viewpoints, anyway.*

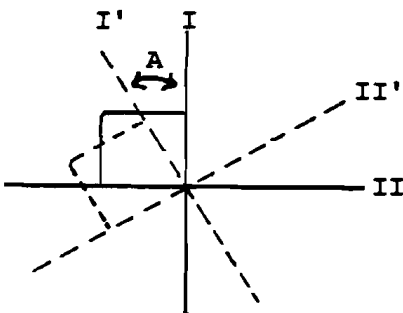
**Peter:** Yeah, this is an infinite list, and we’d need an infinite set of ### to activate every single one of them.

**Bob:** *In principle. Practically, you settle for what you can get by with.*

**Peter:** You see, a concept isn't restricted that way, but the concept really is—###—like a number is, which is why saying this could probably clear this from “what's going on in your head”.

Okay. The second example is behavior description, where we're here, and we watch Dan sitting there. That's *my* description of what he's doing. If you're looking over there, you might well give him a different description, and if she looks over there, she might give him still a third description. Now what's Dan really doing? Well, the same thing as “what's the real shape of the chair”? What Dan is doing is something which would be described this way by somebody like me, would be described that way by somebody like you, would be described this way by somebody like her, etc., down through this list. So it's the personal characteristic, the kind of person, and the description or experience—those pairs line up [Fig. 9, p. 259, [B]]. What's going on there, by way of his behavior, is what I would describe or experience this way [1'], what you would describe or experience that was [2'], what she would describe or experience that way [3'], and in the end, you have the endless list. But now, you see, I can't *be* like you and actually experience his behavior the way you do. I can walk around the chair and see it from where you're sitting, if I can reach there, but when it comes to this other sort of thing, I can't become you, so as to experience this; I can't become her so as to experience or really give the same description. *But*, my concept of Dan as a person and of behavior is such that I can say, “If his behavior is what I see it as, me being me, and if you're different from me in the way that I think, then here's how I would expect you to describe him.” We would perform the same kind of transformation when it comes to descriptions of behavior, that we can with the laws of perspective when it comes to perception of the chair. And in this case, the main job is accomplished by the ID description of what kind of person it is who is seeing what I see.

**FIGURE 11**



And this can be explicated in this way: [blackboard] that how you see it, your viewpoint or what is contributed by your characteristics, can be diagrammed as a frame of references, a coordinate axis, and somebody who is seeing—who is a different kind of person, is simply somebody who has a different set of coordinates. And so anything that I see in one way, somebody else will see in a different way. But if we know what the relation between these two is, we can calculate from how I see it to how the other one will see it. And that's exactly the kind of thing that an ID description is. An ID description, you remember, carries with it the notion of what kind of allowances I have to make for your being the kind of person you are. That notion of making allowances is just the notion of this kind of shift [A]. It enables me conceptually to adopt your frame-of-reference, even though I can't explain it. But I can now see Dan's behavior not merely under *my* description, which is this [I, II], but as the thing that you would describe in this other way [I', II'], that she would describe in this other way, etc. And seeing it that way is different from just seeing it the way I describe it. At the same time, I don't give up my description in favor of yours, because I *am* me. In the same way, when we look at the chair, I don't say, "Well, it really is the way you see it." I *am* standing over here, and I really *do* see it this way.

So person descriptions and behavior descriptions have the same kind of thing—that we're dealing with a real person behaving, and you take account of the personal characteristics of different observers and how those enter into how they would describe the same thing.

**Terry:** *It seems to me you just collapsed two crucial things. In the case of perception of objects, you give an account of there's a chair, or "I see a chair", and somebody on the other side of the room says, "There is a chair", and so the issue never really arises of you giving up your account of that being a chair. However, in the case of "There's Dan sitting," or someone else says, "There's Dan day-dreaming," or something like, you have different verbal accounts, which goes beyond really the fact that you have access to different viewpoints in terms of sensory impressions, so there's something different at stake, and you've collapsed the two as though they were the same.*

**Peter:** No, what I said was: if you took photographs from there and from here, you couldn't superimpose them and have them match. That's what corresponds to the two different descriptions. Those are visibly different. So are the two photographs visibly different. But they are related in a certain way, and that's all that I required there. Likewise, his description and mine have

to be related in a certain way, and that's all I required. If they're not related in that way, then that calls for an explanation. For example, if his photograph of that chair looked like this [**a square**], I'd say there's something wrong here. Likewise, if his description says, "He's standing on his head whistling Dixie," I'd say there's something wrong here. So in both cases, there is the issue of the kind of match that's non-problematical—a kind of match, not identity—and the kind of mismatch that is problematical.

**Terry:** *I guess I'm talking about a perceptual experience and a verbal account, and there seems to be a symmetry that you're drawing that seems to me not to exist, which is: that if I see this chair and you see this chair, and we have different sensory impressions, that becomes sort of beside the point in our verbal account, which is "There is a chair" and you say "There is a chair." However, in a similar situation, if I say, "Dan's day-dreaming" and you say, "There Dan is sitting," we have different accounts. In a similar way, we have different sensory profiles, we have different points of view when you move around him, and yet that isn't going to change our descriptions, and so there's something else at issue.*

**Peter:** That's why I said this is a different example, and it's not offering the description of Dan's behavior as a perceptual example. That's exactly why I used this second example, to get you away from the perceptual issues of the chair problem and into a different set of issues, namely, behavior description, which is different; and it is still an example of transcendence much along the same line, namely, different viewpoints of the same thing, different descriptions of the same thing. In both cases, you're *not* stuck with just yours.

**Steve A:** *If you have a policeman and a psychologist describing a certain—you're going to get different descriptions.*

**Peter:** Right.

**Steve A:** *And what you end up with—you're saying the sum total—are you doing that—*

**Peter:** Not a sum total. Not a sum total. Not that you're adding up the views to get a chair.

**Terry:** *Can you explain why there's more variability of descriptions of behavior as opposed to contents?*

**Peter:** No, that probably isn't even true. But in any case, it wouldn't require explanation for our purposes.

**Terry:** *Take Steve's example if you bring the policeman into the room, and a psychologist, and they all look at the chair, and you ask them to give an account of what they see. Okay, they're going to give you probably the same account—"There's a chair." You have someone come into the room and behave, and you say, "Give us an account of what you see," you're going to get a high—there's going to be a higher range of variability. Now that's only a hypothetical experiment, but I think it would probably—*

**Steve A:** *You have a painter, a carpenter, and somebody else looking at the chair, you might have different accounts.*

**Peter:** Again, forget it, because that's not what we're up to. We're not interested in pursuing the particulars of these examples and exploring what goes with the example. I'm interested in using these examples as examples of something, namely, a certain kind of contrast which you can call "transcendence". The other features of the examples, we are *not* interested in.

**Daniel:** *Pete, does transcendence include an extension of one's view?*

**Peter:** For example, I'm saying that in each case, you could be said to have something—in this case [Fig. 9, p. 259, [A]], a view; in this case [B], a description; and that in both cases, you're not stuck with that. You've got, or can have, something more than that. Because it's something more than that, you can be said to have transcended just this [1' or 1'']

**Daniel:** *"More than that"—an example would be knowing that someone else sees things—has a different view—*

**Peter:** Of the same thing. It's not just that he sees something different. He sees *the same thing* that you do, differently.

**Daniel:** *And you're claiming that as transcendence.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Daniel:** *Because you're going beyond one's own view?*

**Peter:** Yeah. You're going beyond what you have that is specifically yours and not mine. I'm going beyond what is specifically mine and not everybody else's. These things [1' and 1''] are specifically mine and not somebody else's, but the *real* chair, the behavior of Dan, is something that we all have access to. So in each of us having access to Dan's behavior or the real chair, each of us has gone beyond what merely pertains to him. In that sense, it is transcendence. In that sense, you've transcended yourself.



**Steve A:** *When we look at Dan—or we can look at the chair and just like we don't “render stimuli functionally equivalent”, but when we look at Dan, what we see doesn't seem to take into account the other views. There seems to be a different kind of limit.*

**Peter:** Exactly. For example, look how easy it is to get stuck with your description of Dan, in a way that it isn't easy to get stuck with your photograph of the chair. With perception, we automatically make those allowances, and don't make the mistake of thinking that the chair is something real that is simply like my photograph of it. Whereas it's very common, when I give that description of Dan, and somebody gives another one, to say, “You're wrong, because *here's* what he's doing.” There, it's very easy to be stuck with one's own.

**Terry:** *Precisely because you use two—the instance of perception of object, where there's one account that people can usually get agreement on, that's correct.*

**Peter:** I wouldn't worry about the diagnosis of why. I'm just clinging to what.

**Terry:** *Except that's why I thought it was significant to pursue the difference between the two cases.*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *Because that is why. People make that mistake—*

**Peter:** I'm not bringing two cases for the sake of differences. I'm bringing two cases for the sake of the similarities, so let's *not* pursue the differences.

**Terry:** *Okay, I'll do what you want. [laughter, general conversation]*

**Peter:** As I said, I did bring that second example precisely because it is so easy with this one [B] both to connect it to this [A], in terms of seeing the similarity, and indeed a different kind of person would describe Dan's behavior differently, but also, that routinely we are stuck with our description because we do take it that the other person is disagreeing if he has a different description. If we can't make this kind of allowance, we are stuck with our own viewpoint. Therefore, it's much more illuminating or plausible or to the point, here, to talk about transcending yourself. In the other case, of perception, you normally transcend, and, so it seems funny to talk about it as transcending; whereas in this case, in the behavioral case, since it's sort of 50-50 whether you normally are stuck with your own or not, it's much more to the point to talk about transcending your own viewpoint.

**Steve A:** *But it makes sense also to almost talk about “rendering stimuli functionally equivalent” when you’re talking about these other descriptions. You don’t—like, we see a chair, and we don’t see this gestalted Dan. We have our own viewpoint, and when we are able to relativize, when we are able to make that move, we are going from the particular to this holistic view, and—*

**Peter:** Just try the example where you don’t see Dan, but where I tell you a story, with enough detail that so that you draw a conclusion, and he draws a conclusion, and I draw a conclusion. Simply, there’s a set of facts about Dan. There’s no perceptual issues there at all. It’s a pure case of kind of person and description [**Fig. 11, p. 268**], not anything to do with perceiving him differently. We organize those facts differently as facts about him. And the way we organize them differently will reflect our differences, and we can manage that just as easily, if not easier than the case where we perceive Dan differently.

**Wynn:** *I suppose from the example of Dan, you could say that you can tease out two kinds of examples that seem to create some of our confusion. One would be the example of—say, I and a policeman watching Dan smoke a joint, and I say, “Dan’s smoking a joint,” and the cop says, “Dan’s breaking the law.” And I can agree with that—I can see that there’s the issue of transcendence there, I can also see that. However, if the policeman says, instead of “Dan’s smoking a joint,” “Dan’s standing on his head”—then we get into the confusion—that would be the sort of thing—*

**Peter:** Then you’d have a genuine disagreement. The whole thing is orderly: it’s not that just anything that anybody could say is okay. That is subjectivity. The notion of Dan’s actual behavior does exercise a constraint on what else I will accept as a description, in the same way that my notion of the chair as I see it does exercise a constraint on what I will accept as how it looks from somewhere else.

**Wynn:** *But it’s that phrase, “what I will accept as something else”, when that occurs, that’s where the issue of transcendence comes in?*

**Peter:** No, that’s simply a reflection of what the real thing is.

**Wynn:** *I know, but if you want to work from that transcendent viewpoint, you want to build it up analytically, that’s where you would talk that way. Whereas in the other case, there’d be no point in talking about transcendence. You’d talk about errors.*

**Peter:** Yeah, or you’d talk about differences—mere differences.

**Daniel:** *Was that example of the businessman and the father—the different views—would that be another example of not transcending? Two people arguing about whether a person is a father or a businessman?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

There is a place now for a diagnosis. One of the reasons it's so easy for us to manage the relativity about the chair indeed is that we can, and routinely do, move around, and so we actually get different views, and those differences are part of our experience, part of our knowledge. In contrast, with different people, you can't become some other kind of person so as to experience directly what kind of description that other kind of person would give. Diagnostically, I would say, it's because of *that* difference that when it comes to a behavior description, it's much easier to be stuck with your own, because you don't have the experience routinely of becoming somebody else and giving different descriptions of the same thing. Whereas you routinely do have the experience of moving somewhere else and seeing the same thing differently. That is relevant here, because some of the Buddhist exercises are exercises of exactly that sort. They say, "Become the table. Become Steven: how does he experience the world? Become Dan: how does he experience sitting there?" In effect, it is practice at exactly the kind of thing that you routinely get by walking around the chair, namely, becoming some other kind of person and what's it like from there, from being that kind of person? And by going through that kind of exercise, then, you acquire the kind of facility for transcending your subjective viewpoint that we routinely have perceptually with chairs.

**Suzanne:** *Who is to say—if I were to say that I was experiencing Dan—who is to say that I'm actually—there's no one to say that I'm experiencing Dan's—*

**Peter:** Sure. Number one, you know whether you're really trying; and number two, if you're doing this as a Buddhist, you're into a community of people whose judgments you trust and you will accept—if not absolutely, at least as giving you reasons to re-examine.

**Suzanne:** *I can trust that I'm trying real hard, and all that. I'm just trying—there's still no way of saying or reason for inferring—*

**Peter:** No, but look: you come to me as the Zen Master, and you tell me what it's like, and I say, "NO," and then you go back to the drawing board.

[change tape]

**Wynn:**—*what's going on is that simply the issue wants to be raised, the issue of can you see that there are other perspectives.*

**Peter:** Essentially what happened—if we ask you about the chair and you said it's round, and all of us in unison would say, “No,” the reason you can't get away with it is because there is a community of people who see it differently, can talk to each other about it, can talk to you about the difference and thereby correct what they take to be a mistake. Well, you have that in a Buddhist community. You have other people who can look at Dan, interact with him, and then say to you, “No, you missed something,” or “No, you're just flat wrong.”

**Suzanne:** *And then they're maintaining that they know—that their experience of Dan is closer?*

**Peter:** Yeah, in the same way that we would be quite confident, if you drew a circle, that we were right and you weren't because we could see it. And so there's something that is not right if you draw a circle. If you're a beginner at this business of perception, and we're not, the burden of proof would be on you, because we're the community within which making those distinctions and acting on them has a place. And ultimately, nothing is more real than that. So it's not as though that was second best because you have to take our word for it. If we're who does that distinguishing, then we are the real thing. But in any case, whether right or wrong, unless you were grossly wrong, just the practice at putting yourself in his place and experiencing it differently would probably do something for you in this direction. It's not the kind of exercise where if you're not right to the last detail, it's useless. You can be very wrong and still get something out of it. If it's something that can be done at all, since it's going to do something for you, you can get better at it and the next time through, you won't be as wrong, because it's a kind of a self-correcting ###.

**Terry:** *To me, the diagnosis of why it makes more sense to talk about transcendence in the case of behavior description as opposed to objects, does come back to some discrete features about the two cases, because in the case of description of objects, frequently the point of view from which the object is described doesn't have any real significance or relevance, because regardless of the point of view, the typical and frequent intersubjective agreement on a description is “a chair”. However, in the case of behavior description, it's precisely the instances where there is in fact a point of talking about point of view, because there are different accounts, and that's where—*

**Peter:** And the people are insisting on theirs. Among the people who have transcended that, there probably isn't that much of an issue.

**Terry:** *In this culture, I think it's particularly relevant, though, because the attitude of not-agreeing-ism is prevalent, and most people's thinking about behavior is parasitic on their thinking about objects, and they typically transport that attitude about—you know, that there's intersubjective agreement of a high degree in the case of objects, there should be with behavior, and consequently construe different descriptions as disagreements, as opposed to another crank account, or a different point of view, and so forth.*

**Peter:** That's exactly what a Buddhist would describe as “There you see the ###,” and you can see that they're stuck with their subjective thing and mistaking it for reality and truth. But that's why transcendence ###. Since it is a common thing, it does make sense to call this one “transcendence,” more so than this.

**Steve A:** *Pete, I'm still unclear on how in this account it seems ridiculous or fallacious to say ###. It seems that if you take it this is a chair, if you view this conceptually, whereas it seems an unnecessary notion if you look at it and say, “Yeah, you just see a chair,” you don't have to get into these notions of transcendence. How—when you're talking about people, if you draw the parallel to the example of the chair, how you don't need this notion of transcendence.*

**Peter:** You don't need this notion of transcendence if you recognize that what Dan is doing is not equivalent or identical to any description of it. You see, the difference is that we have a name for the real object, namely, “chair”. We do not have a word for what Dan is really doing, but we are all merely giving descriptions of it. That would be the equivalent of having a photograph of the chair that showed what the shape of the chair really was. Well, you can't have that, because any photograph is going to be from somewhere. Likewise, you can't have a description of what Dan is really doing, that all of us are merely giving other descriptions of, because any description *is* merely a description *from* someplace.

**Terry:** *That's why, for Descriptive Psychology, it's worth the digression to talk about the difference in subject matter of objects and behavior, because of that difference in logical characteristics, that you are dealing with names, with objects, and as a result you get high intersubjective agreement in descriptions, as opposed to behavior where you don't.*

**Peter:** No. It's not a difference in the logic of it. It's the practical difference that, in fact, we have names for a lot of objects; and, in fact, you *couldn't* have a description of the behavior. Because what's at issue there *is* the description, and the parallel problem is having a picture of the true shape; and we don't have that, either. But the logic is quite parallel. Practically, there's a difference. But it's parallel cases.

**Terry:** *Maybe in terms of the nature of the subject matter—maybe you'd want to say that behavior is a different sort of state of affairs than—*

**Peter:** Behavior isn't chairs.

**Terry:** Behavior is not an object, not a thing; it's a process.

**Peter:** But again, the differences are so obvious that where we need illumination is on the similarities.

**Terry:** *But you can take other processes where there is also not a problem. Take a stream flowing down a river bed, and there's not a great deal of disagreement about intersubjective—*

**Peter:** A stream is an object, and if you try to describe the process, you'd have problems because you don't have a name for that.

**?:** *What about cars? Somebody might say there's a red car, somebody else might say there's a Ford, ### there's an automobile. You don't have three totally different kinds of ###.*

**Peter:** Let's get at it the other way. Let's suppose that you just took a hit of LSD, and now your experience of this real chair vanishes, and instead, you have what corresponds to what we described over here, namely, what you see is visual imagery. As you sit here and you turn your head, all you have is not the perception of real people, etc., but a whole set of images. And that can happen—in fact, it's more or less routinely done.

Now, what's the difference between experiencing the world as a set of images, that way, and the way you experience it now, namely, you look around and see a bunch of real people in relationships, sitting at real tables on a real floor? What's the difference between a whole set of images, visual images that kind of pass across your field of vision, or come and go, versus seeing this real assembly? One thing: with images it's kind of hard to think of acting on them, isn't it? Because your actions in relation depend on there being real people that you're acting toward. But how do you act toward an image? It's kind of hard, particularly if you don't know whether it's going to stay or go away, and there's no such thing as reaching toward the image. You

can't reach, you can't talk to an image, you simply have it. It's experiential. So just ponder the vast difference between your experience of operating in a real world with real people and real relations to you and to each other, versus a stream or a sequence or a set of images which visually would be exactly the same as when you look around, up and down, close your eyes, etc. You have exactly the same visual content, and in the one case it's a set of images, and in the other case it's seeing real people. Clearly, the difference does not lie in the visual content. We stipulated that it's the same, and there's no reason why it couldn't be. Where does the difference lie?

**Bob:** *What you've done is broken the pairs, the related pairs that have that unifying function, and you just experience each one of them separately or individually, and they've lost their place in that—that function that gives them some sort of unity.*

**Peter:** That's the difference between the real people and the images, the series of images. Now keep in mind the vast difference between those two, and then think over here [Fig. 9, p. 259, [B]], that most people are in that kind of condition when it comes to how they see people behaving—that since they are stuck with their own description of those people and aren't automatically taking account of the other descriptions that would be given by other people, they are in a condition that is much like the visual images as against perception of real things. Therefore, if the change takes place from that way of experiencing or knowing about people, to this way [PC + E = Z], it can be just as dramatic experientially as shifting from a series of images to seeing real people. If you think of how fundamental that difference is, and how experientially different it is, you will not be surprised that one would use terms like “enlightenment” for marking that kind of difference, when you've made the transition.

**Cory:** *In children sometimes you can see that occurring—when a child finds out that there are actually other viewpoints on the world, and the world doesn't revolve around them.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Cory:** [tape unintelligible]

**Joe S:** *The difference she's talking about is—*

**Peter:** Piaget calls that “egocentric”, but it's the same kind of difference, here.

**Joe S:** *But what you're talking about is the shift from your person description to counting other people's descriptions as—?*



**Peter:** No, from an egocentric description to an objective description. The difference isn't in the words I use, in the same way that the difference between seeing real people versus images, the difference is not visual. The difference in an objective description and a subjective one is not a difference in words, not a verbal difference. You'd say the same things.

**Terry:** *There's a difference in attitude and knowledge, that you know that your account isn't coextensive with the behavior, that there are other equally plausible accounts that could be given from other points of view, and that's sort of something that you're reminding yourself of—*

**Peter:** No, it's more than that. Once you see it that way, there's no issue about your description being coextensive. You don't have to remind yourself of it, that's simply not an issue any more, any more than it's an issue with me whether what's there really is shaped the way that my photograph of it is. It really isn't. It's that much of a shift. You don't need a reminder.

**Daniel:** *But only after it becomes the way of life of the person doing it.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Jim:** *You're calling that "objective", then?*

**Peter:** Well, the difference between my idea of the chair and the real chair is the difference between objective—the chair—versus subjective—my view.

**Jim:** *And you're saying that you can reach that with the personal characteristics—*

**Terry:** *It seems more like a relative stage.*

**Peter:** Well, I'm not sure, because it is relative.

**Daniel:** *Pete, how did you choose the term "objective" for this?*

**Peter:** You use objective language to talk about real things, when I talk about the real chair versus my view of chairs. Subjective language deals with what pertains to a human person, distinctively. So my view of it pertains to me only, and has to. It can't pertain to you. But the real chair connects us both. So that's the difference between objective and subjective language, and objective and subjective concepts. The objective concept is the chair; the subjective concept is my view of it, my experience of it.

**Wynn:** *Could you be objective about the chair?*

**Peter:** Yeah, I can see a real chair.

**Daniel:** *That's my question.*

**Peter:** When I say “a real chair”, I’m dealing objectively with a real thing.

**Wynn:** *Then where does the word “subjective” come in?*

**Peter:** When I talk to you and say, “I experience the chair in a certain way,” then I’m now not talking about the chair, I’m talking about me. I’m now using subjective language.

**Daniel:** *But aren’t you also talking about your view of the chair?*

**Peter:** No.

**Daniel:** *I mean, in objective terms?*

**Peter:** No. My view of the chair is different from the chair, and when I want to talk about the chair, I’ll say “chair”. When I want to talk about my experience, I’ll say “my experience”.

**Terry:** *All you’re asserting is that he has to in fact exist, as part of it, presupposed, to make a statement like “There is a chair”.*

**Daniel:** *When you call a chair “brown”, then it’s also your view of the chair, as being brown.*

**Peter:** I see the chair, not me. How else would I know other than seeing it there?

**Wynn:** *There have to be transformations possible between the objective and subjective statements. Let me see if this is what you mean. If I say, “That’s the chair over there,” then that’s an objective statement, there’s no particular difficulty with that. If I say also that that’s an inviting chair, or if I make an appraisal of the chair, something other than a mere description, something that gives me reason to treat the chair in a particular way, then it becomes subjective.*

**Peter:** No. It’s still objective. That can really be an inviting chair.

**Wynn:** *That’s my experience.*

**Peter:** In the same way that when that lion walks into the room, he really is dangerous. What happens is that there you’re talking about a relationship, but it’s an objective relation. That lion *is* a danger to me. It’s not just my belief or experience or thought that he’s dangerous. He *is* a danger. And it’s because he is a danger that I can have a belief, thought, experience of it. When you say, “He thinks or believes that the lion is dangerous,” now you’re not committing yourself about the lion; you’re just talking about me. That’s subjective. But the relation of danger is there, and that’s what you have to

be noncommittal about. When you say he believes the lion is dangerous, he experiences the lion as dangerous, you're being noncommittal exactly about that potentially objective relation.

**Wynn:** *Any statement I make about myself, or I make about what I see you doing, are objective statements, then.*

**Peter:** If they're statements, probably. Most of what looks like statements are disclaimers, not statements. If I say, "I see that chair as brown," I'm not generally making a statement about me that is objective, although I could be. What I'm doing is disclaiming about the chair.

**Terry:** *What are you disclaiming?*

**Peter:** Whether it really is brown. If I wanted to say it was brown, I'd say, "It's brown." When I say, "I see the chair as brown," what I'm disclaiming is that it may not even be brown.

**Terry:** *Or "I think I see this chair as brown," those locutions indicate doubt.*

**Peter:** Yeah. There's a whole lot of ways of talking that if you take them as statements, they are statements about me, but more straightforwardly, they're simply disclaimers about what I'm talking about.

**Terry:** *Do you want to do a digression on psychologists who always transform clients' statements into, "So you believe that that's what you're doing!"*

**Peter:** Only to comment that generally, clients get mad at that because they know they're getting put down. Okay, don't forget to go over the Sufi material and see which story looks interesting.

**[Immediately following seminar 6, the discussion was continued informally. Most of it was recorded, and the transcription will be found in Appendix II.]**

**SEMINAR 7**  
**3 August 1976**

**Peter:** Where did we leave off last time? Toward the end of the hour, we were developing the idea of a certain sense of objectivity and using some heuristic examples, notably the chair, and moving to descriptions of people and working a parallel there. What we wound up with [**blackboard**] is the notion of a list of corresponding pairs of the person, i.e., specifying by person characteristics and the descriptions.

**FIGURE 1**

<u>PC</u>	<u>Description</u>
A	A'
B	B'
C	C'
-	-'
-	-'

And it's the pairs that give you the correspondence. And what they all correspond to is what Dan was doing. And none of the particular descriptions of what Dan was doing is the same as what Dan was doing, any more than anyone of the views of that chair is the same as the chair. And we said: think of this now in a perceptual way, not merely cognitive. Think of the difference between knowing that there are all of these descriptions and somehow seeing there in terms of a whole set of descriptions. Again, you have to anchor back on the chair to get a sense of how that would work. When you see a chair, you're not literally seeing it from all of these points of view. You are seeing it from the view that you have, and you're not somehow superimposing the way it would look from every other angle. And yet, there's a difference between seeing that chair as a three-dimensional real object that would look different other ways and just seeing a flat image of a photographic sort. Then try the same notion on Dan's behavior, that you can see it with a degree of solidity that carries with it how other people would describe it, without literally running any of those other descriptions through

your head—just a difference in how you see it, in the same way that the chair looks different when you see it in three dimensions.

I said that’s a fairly dramatic kind of difference, and it would certainly not be surprising if a strange term was used to mark that difference, a term like enlightenment or some comparable term. Because it would make that much difference to you. Now you might raise a question, “But is it really possible?” We all do it with chairs, but doing it with Dan’s behavior, I don’t know. And there, I guess, experience counts, just like your experience with the chair counts. And maybe we can imagine it easily, and maybe not.

**Bob:** *If someone was enlightened in the same way that we could somehow describe or draw a picture of what a chair would look like from a different point of view—do enlightened people have that kind of capacity, to be able to describe something from another point of view? Is this what they’re referring to when they say ###?*

**Peter:** No. I’ve been trying to speak very carefully, and not to imply that this *is* what is called “enlightenment”, but rather to point to certain kinds of phenomena and the kind of difference they make in the kind of language that is used, because there is more to enlightenment than this, but this is one of the places where you can connect it to familiar things in order to get a handle on it.

**Bob:** *Do you think they could do this kind of—?*

**Peter:** Okay, the next step is to recognize that you can’t do that with the chair. You really can’t give all of the descriptions or draw all of the pictures. What you have is a rough sense of it, and you would do much better at recognizing photographs than you would in drawing them. But that in fact, the differences between seeing a real chair in three dimensions and seeing an image that is photographically like—from that, then, you can reconstruct how it would look other ways. From it, you can recognize a photograph taken from here. But it’s not as though you could simply sit down and write out this list [Fig. 1, above]. If that’s as far as you get with the chair, imagine how it would work with an even more difficult case, namely, Dan’s behavior. What would that experience be like? Well, it is something like seeing it concretely instead of as an image, but notice that seeing that as a three-dimensional, concrete thing makes a difference over here. When I see that as a real chair, I see it as being in the same room. It’s not just the chair that then is in three dimensions; it’s the whole room. And in that room, I have a place. I’m seeing it from here. So you don’t get just the chair being real or three-dimensional.

You get, in effect, a three-dimensional view of things that includes a three-dimensional chair.

Think of that, now, as a total outlook on people, in which you have this kind of view of them from where you are, keeping in mind that “from where you are” amounts to “being who you are”.

**Laura:** *Is that different from respect for other people's beliefs?*

**Peter:** Yeah. You have to understand them before you can respect them, and if you only respect them in the abstract, without really seeing how they hang together and make sense, you haven't gone very far in—what kind of respect is that? And if you do understand the way it makes sense, respect is almost automatic, because it does make sense.

**Wynn:** *It sounds like it makes sense to talk about an enlightened person perhaps having a perspective, but I think it would be difficult to describe him as having a point of view. And I think that marks one of the differences.*

**Peter:** What hinges on that?

**Wynn:** *The enlightened character, the enlightened Buddhist character, seems to be described in terms in which he's not attached to any particular desire. There's no necessary outcome of events for him. And the kind of information that he has to bear on any issue is complete. It's like he has the view that includes all views that are possible views for a character. And from that, the issue of point of view being looking from here to there—looking from point X to point Y—seems not to account for at least metaphorically what they try to get at when they describe his vision of the world.*

**Peter:** Well, I'd be inclined to say that you have a point of view anyhow, because you need something of the sort to account for the fact that he does something rather than something else that he could have done. The selectivity is still there in his behavior, and that has to depend on something; and what, if not a point of view?

**Wynn:** *That sounds more like thrown-ness [Ed. Note: cf Heidegger's description of people as being “thrown” into the world, into a particular family and culture at a particular point in time] than point of view, in that his perspective may be—he's standing there, he's in this situation, but—*

**Peter:** Remember, I said that “point of view” here amounts to you being you. And you might say that that *is* thrown-ness.



**Wynn:** *I guess the only reason I was raising the issue was the phrase “point of view”, which is to get at the fact that his position isn’t simply more information that he can use from his spot, so to speak.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that’s why you talk about transcendence, is that you don’t just have more information when you have this list [Fig. 1, p. 283]. But at the same time, when you have what corresponds to this, you’re not stuck with yours. Likewise, when you can understand other people, you’re not stuck with just being you. But also, you don’t lose being you, any more than when you see the chair, you lose your view of it. You still have it, but you transcend it.

**Daniel:** *What you’re talking about so far does fit into “perspective”, it’s just having the proper perspective, meaning your own view or the other person’s view, or the total view.*

**Peter:** Okay, but keep in mind that the total view isn’t a view. That’s the thing, that a real chair isn’t the same as any view of it, not even something you might call a total view. That’s the difference between real chairs and views or appearances.

**Daniel:** *It seems that the perspective connects what we’ve been talking about so far, and the proper perspective is that of enlightenment. And having that continuously.*

**Peter:** No. If you keep the terms straight, there are simply possible perspectives on the chair or on the world. There’s no such thing as a proper one. There simply are different possible ones. But what you see from any of those will imply all of the others. If I move around that chair, there is no proper view of it, but any view of it—if I see it as a chair—will imply all of the other views.

**Daniel:** *I’m thinking about—*

**Peter:** You might say, to be able to operate that way is the proper way to operate, but it’s not that there’s a proper perspective. Likewise, to be able to understand how other people would operate—that might be called a proper way to operate. That’s not, then, restraint.

**Daniel:** *When we’re thinking about behavior, one perspective is the individual, and then, depending on what we’re talking about, the proper perspective would include—depending on what the main characteristics of the situation were—would include an individual or many different views of it. In your heuristic about “What is this person doing? What is his behavior?”—*

**Peter:** Okay, but remember what I said, that you don't just have a three-dimensional view of the chair. You're going to have a three-dimensional view of the world, and then there's a place for a three-dimensional chair. Likewise, you don't just have this three-dimensional view of a person's behavior. You're operating in that kind of world, which includes you. It's a totality difference, not just a pinpoint difference, and so you're operating differently, and that's why one tends to describe it as a state—a state of enlightenment, a condition, rather than putting it in terms of the thing that you're responding to.

**Steve P:** *That strikes me as being backwards. Not operating that way is a state of endarkenment—that kind of a—it makes no sense not to operate that way. If you're operating that way, something has gone wrong somewhere.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Well, the Buddhists have that, too. What they say is that somebody who is enlightened merely recognizes that he's ordinary. And that's exactly that kind of argument. That what you're talking about from that point of view, normal waking states are deficit states. And when you recover from them, you're not in some extraordinary state, you're simply back to normal.

**Steve P:** *Where you should be.*

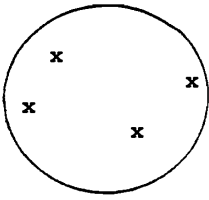
**Peter:** Yeah. But again, remember what we went through in developing the logic of the baselines—perfection versus norms [Fig. 2, p. 25], and how you can shift that baseline, and move this kind of thing up to perfection, and then operate the same logic. That's what's going on here.

**Jim:** *I'm wondering what the Buddhists would say about Western philosophy? Would they say that we're training in unenlightenment, or darkedness, or whatever?*

**Peter:** I suspect they would, and certainly a number of them have. I'm not sure to what extent it's inherent in that position.

**Jim:** *What do you mean by that?*

**Peter:** I'm not sure that there is an inherent incompatibility between a Buddhist approach to the world and anything that goes on routinely in this country or in Western civilization. On the other hand, it's clear that, in fact, many times you hear the kind of judgment that says, "You people are being trained to be discrete, to be partial, to be molecular, and what you're losing out on is the whole, the transcendental."

**FIGURE 2**

In terms of our diagram [**blackboard.**], you're being trained just to deal with things in here [**x's**], and you've lost your grasp of the whole. You've lost your grasp of the ultimates, the fundamentals.

**Wynn:** *The Buddhists are guilty of ###, too, and in this sort of example, usually what's indicated is that you're not familiar with the issues in Western philosophy.*

**Peter:** Maybe not. It's hard to find somebody who really has good familiarity with both traditions.

**Daniel:** *Alan Watts would be a person who—*

**Mary:** *Even more, Rahula.*

**Peter:** I suspect Rahula would be a better candidate for that. Rahula's the guy who wrote that book that I wrote on the board, *What The Buddha Taught*. Because he is a Buddhist, has studied Buddhism, but also got a Ph.D. at Oxford or Cambridge.

**Mary:** *And has been teaching both in France and in this country—Northwestern.*

**Peter:** So he has credentials both ways, and Alan Watts doesn't.

**Wynn:** *And they seem to have arguments with the Cartesians—sensible arguments with the Cartesians. But a lot of the Buddhists' arguments seem to fall into the same structure as analytic and linguistic philosophers' arguments.*

**Peter:** Well, you have a problem with notions of totality, namely, that any particular way of conceptualizing a totality is going to face the relativity problem all over again, because you have different ways of conceptualizing the totality. That's why you have, historically, a bunch of competing positions. You have Christianity, you have Buddhism, you have Sufism, you have Hinduism, you have all kinds of total viewpoints, and being total, they all look like they exclude or conflict with any other total viewpoint. They also present us with the difficulty that there's no way out, that you can't stand outside of some total viewpoint to survey them all, to see which is the real

thing. Or to choose one. It's the same difficulty as with a way of life. You can only even raise questions about ways of life within some way of life. You can only raise questions about totality theories within some totality. So you're never in a simple observation/examination/criticism situation. You're never in a situation where they're all laid out on a counter, and you examine them critically and pick one. So any kind of model that fits that situation is going to leave you at a loss when it comes to dealing with these things.

**Terry:** *Someone like Carnap, though, would say that in his language, if you're asking questions external to the framework, that you can be eclectic in the critical approach and simply unearth difficulties internal to the framework.*

**Peter:** He can say it, but saying it doesn't make it so. You have to have some framework for being critical about the internal problems, and if you're eclectic, the odds are good you're also incoherent. The only practical guarantee against incoherence is a system, but then, once more, you've to deal with system problems.

**Terry:** *Don't you feel, though, that critics asking questions external to the framework can unearth problems without themselves having an alternative system of any better coherence?*

**Peter:** Yeah. As a matter of fact, that's what's happening. Every one of these systems can be shown to have fundamental difficulties, because critics have pointed it out. They have difficulties as systematic statements, bodies of statements, and one of the major difficulties they have is the foundation problem, that ultimately, they're all arbitrary because they have no foundation. But we worked through that to see that you can't require foundations, or you've set it up as a hopeless task. The alternative, I said, is to have something that includes everything, but now you've got a different problem—not a problem of foundations, but a problem of relativity.

The thing that distinguishes this relativity problem is that the doctrine in question, the theory in question, is a body of statements. The statements correspond to the description or viewpoint: "Here is how it is." I presume that you can get around that with exactly the kind of thing that I mentioned here: namely, all of these [**A**, **A'**, etc.], totality or not, are simply either characteristics of the person, or they correspond to his descriptions. But you can put all of that together in this kind of framework, because here, the pairs—you're not dealing with truths any more, you're not dealing with descriptions, you're dealing with a concept which, since it has no truth value, is not a description; therefore, it allows room for individuals and their

descriptions. This is simply an extension of the ordinary way that we deal with individual differences. We have the concept of individual differences, and, given that, that gives us, in effect, a coordinate system within which to plug in a particular person's particular characteristics, including his beliefs, including his theories, including his totality theory. The key move there is to get away from descriptions, to get away from anything that has truth value, that represents a commitment to what is real, and you do that by moving to concepts.

Now, it's that kind of framework from which you can then start examining various theories in as objective a way as possible. You still have your own personal characteristics, which are open to criticism as being biased, but then that criticism is a no more guaranteed foundation than your own, so that's always up for grabs. But also, you have the potential of seeing these not as conflicting, which you would if you just took them as bodies of statements. This description [ $A'$ ] will conflict with this one [ $B'$ ], and that one will conflict with this one [ $C'$ ], just as our photographs of the chair will not match. When you look at the pairs [ $A-A'$ ], though, these stop being necessarily in conflict.

And as a matter of fact, a good many of these theories have a principle of that sort, and it's commonly known as "there are many paths"—there are many paths to the truth, there are many roads to God. The message there is recognizably similar to what I've said, that the fact that there are different bodies of statements, different bodies of beliefs, doesn't imply that at least one of them has to be wrong. There are many paths to that real chair. But again, you need the notion of transcending any one of these in order to make sense of that. If there's something that there are many paths to, that something can't just be identical to any of these [ $A'$   $B'$ , etc.]. These are merely the paths.

**Steve P:** *But positing a thing sets up notions that there's a better way to get there than other ways, it's more—there are a lot of paths, but this is the high road, actually here, through this. What happens if you don't posit a thing, but just a dynamic, something that is going on and can go on in many ways?*

**Peter:** In effect, that's what you're doing in moving to a transcendental thing. A transcendental thing isn't like a chair. Remember, I said that the real chair is not equivalent to any view of it. It's categorically different, and couldn't be substituted for by any view of it.

**Steve P:** *A view is a view, a chair is a chair.*

**Peter:** Yeah. So if these are paths—“these” being Buddhism, Christianity, and anything comparable—then what is there for them to be views of? Certainly nothing comparable to Christianity, Buddhism, etc.

**Steve P:** *They are views of that which they are viewing.*

**Peter:** That’s right. They have to be views of something transcendental. Because what they are views of has to be categorically different from anything that appears in the view. Since it is categorically different, it’s not going to have any normal thing-like character. It’s not going to be some thing you encounter as you turn the corner some day, in that it serves the feature of holding all of this [Fig. 1, p. 283] together, in the same way that when we see the real chair, that’s what holds all these things together. So you can’t dismiss it as “the non-existent”, and yet it’s not a thing.

**Steve P:** *And one of the characteristics seems to be that people universally seem to recognize it when they get it, even though they have great trouble sharing it or describing it.*

**Peter:** Part of the reason is, language for totality is poor, language for experience is poor. Language for reporting your experience of a totality is triply poor.

**Wynn:** *You would expect communities that have a vested interest in developing those sorts of paths, and having members achieve those sorts of things, would at least have a theoretic possibility of developing an elaborate language between members of those sorts of practices, if they could be described as social practices.*

**Peter:** Theoretically, yeah, but I don’t know of any such community. Because the communities you find are not communities of that sort, but rather communities of like-minded people who are living the same kind of life.

**Wynn:** *Well, rumor has it that ordinary language-speakers of Sanskrit are able to do it—are able to understand those sorts of reports, and I don’t know about Hindi, but Sanskrit allegedly carries with it all of those distinctions. You’ve got Sapir’s comment that he doesn’t know of any culture, anywhere in the world, where people can adequately talk about anything that goes on with them, and with the sort of developed interest that the people who spoke Sanskrit had in these sorts of things, it would be kind of unusual if in fact they didn’t have the requisite set of distinctions in the language.*

**Peter:** Can you give us an example of some of the distinctions that are carried in the language itself?

**Wynn:** *I don't speak Sanskrit. But what I've noticed in several—*

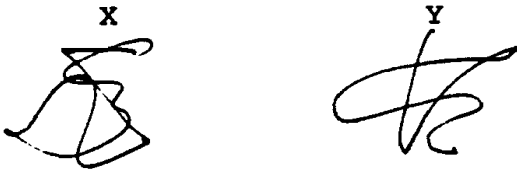
**Daniel:** *It makes sense, though, like snow—like the Eskimos with snow. They really have a language for snow.*

**Peter:** I'm suspicious of that, though.

**Daniel:** *Of what? Of the Eskimos?* [Laughter]

**Peter:** No, that is the solution. Because there's some reason to believe that what we're missing is not something that *could* be solved that way. Remember the example of shapes—shapes or smells [blackboard].

**FIGURE 3**



What shape is that [X]? What shape is this [Y]? [laughter]

**Wynn:** *You keep doing the same thing. That's interesting.* [laughter]

**Peter:** You see, you're dealing with something that has so many possibilities, infinite variability along a number of dimensions, that just having more distinctions in the language is not going to do that at all. Now, the same goes for experiences, the same goes for relationships. There are so many possibilities, basically infinite in number, that no amount of having more distinctions in the language is going to do the job.

**Steve P:** *But the point's still valid, like we have a way of describing very specifically this material, in a very complex—right down to every single little molecule, because that brush is very, very important.*

**Steve A:** *Things like feelings aren't—*

**Steve P:** *—In Sanskrit, maybe they don't have good words to discriminate this plastic from that plastic from that plastic from that plastic, but they may have a very complex vocabulary, a way of going about describing various states of being, which to them are critically important.*

**Peter:** I would raise the issue whether a state of being can be described at all.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but let me just—*

**Steve P:** *—can describe this?*



**Peter:** Any object is describable.

**Daniel:** *How about thirty varieties of snow?*

**Wynn:** *But you can use language to enjoin, and that seems to enjoin and to evoke, and that seems to be some of the principal uses, other than description—my feeling is that people who use Sanskrit in this way, what they do with it, because what I noticed, at least last summer among people who were working in very developed meditation groups, was that they were also currently studying Sanskrit, and members who claimed that this helped them in their meditation, it also helped create a sense of group solidity, but I think I could argue that it's not simply distinctions in a descriptive sense, but distinctions in an evocative or enjoining sense—descriptions, statements about how to do something, or how to notice something.*

**Peter:** That sounds more doable.

**Steve P:** *It's an entree into being able to think about what's now unthinkable.*

**Peter:** Yeah, and again, it's not via description. The other example I was going to mention, of something that looks impossible in principle, is describing your thoughts. I don't care what kind of language you have for describing your thoughts, you're not going to do it except by specifying what it's the thought of, and there's a very bare-bones language for describing the thought itself, like a "sudden" thought, etc., except that isn't really a description of a thought; it's a description of you and where the thought fit into your history. To call it "sudden", to call it a "strange" thought, etc., is really talking about you and not about the thought. So thoughts are the kind of thing that you can't really describe, per se. You have to describe something else. And then what you've done is, you've identified the thought. Now a state of consciousness and a state of being look to have exactly those features, that you can't directly describe it; you've got to identify a state of mind, a state of consciousness, a state of being by talking about something else, and maybe describing something else, but only identifying and distinguishing the state of being, the state of mind. So that's why I said that when I hear about a language that has more distinctions, I'm suspicious, because it's not a matter of not having distinctions. If we had a use for distinctions of that sort, we could make them up right now.

**Wynn:** *But the question means that not having those practices, we don't have those issues before us.*

**Peter:** Now the practices, you don't pick up in learning the language. So there again, I'm dubious about why just studying the language will suddenly give you—

**Wynn:** *No, that wasn't the claim they're making. The claim they're making is that people that are involved in—in this case, it was a Hindu community—that are involved in such a community and are trying to develop the practices that have a traditional place in those communities, were also being instructed in the language of that community, and it makes sense that in doing that—*

**Peter:** Yeah. As a matter of fact, I have a live example of that, and it has a bearing on the question you raise: how do you know that you're really experiencing like he does? And I said, "There's a community." I think I may already have been thinking of an example that was reported to me by Larry Brittain, who went around studying communes. One of the ones he studied was right outside of Carson City, Nevada, and he said that what they had there was a group that was heavy on states of mind and experiences, and they put you through a very strict regimen to try to get you to become aware of these things, and it was hard, and they succeeded sort of moderately, and half of the people dropped out because they never could catch on to it. He said that as soon as they introduced the terminology for talking about states of mind and those experiences, their success ratio went up to 90%, and people learned it twice as fast. But that was embedded in that community, and the way that the people who already had it used the language, then they could use the language to check on the people who were learning, and one of their best thermometers as to whether somebody was learning, was how he talked. And that way, they were able to give them better feedback as to what he was doing wrong or what he might do now in order to get him to move.

What I was thinking is that you'd find exactly the same thing if you were just somebody off the street and wandered into a behavior genetics lab, and looked around you, and then started talking about genes. Somebody there would probably correct you about your third sentence, and say, "No," and then you would interact more and pretty soon you would be talking more like them, and you would be talking like them on the right occasions, because they would also check you *when* you said particular things.

**Suzanne:** *That wouldn't mean anything, though. I mean, that's assuming a lot—it's assuming that what they're saying is the same as what they're experiencing, which may not be the case. It could be easy for someone to walk into the behavior genetics class and use the words right.*

**Peter:** No, I'm talking about being there where they're doing experiments. They're not just talking; they're also acting, and they're making measurements, they're looking through microscopes, they're predicting population characteristics, they're doing all of the things that involve the concept of a gene. You'd get socialized into that way of talking, and you'd call it a gene in certain circumstances and not others. You'd be acting like them. And after a while, you would be one of them. And then suppose I came around and said, "Well, how do you know there really are such things as genes?" And what you would point to me is all of the uses that you have for that word, all of the ways that one can act on it, the fact that it isn't just you because other people can make the same discrimination, that you can make predictions with it, etc.

**Suzanne:** *Okay, but you mean that—that may be something you can see, or whatever, but we've been talking in sort of a philosophical sense—I think it would be easier for me to do a lot of studying of something like—say, EST or something—talk to a lot of people, I could go into trances, I could close my eyes and sit there with my feet crossed and things like that, and yet I'd never get it. I may never get it, but I can sound like I got it.*

**Peter:** Not everybody can become a behavior geneticist, either. Not everybody picks it up. But somebody who doesn't pick it up, usually somebody who has it can tell.

At that point, we may be into the classic Art-Critic problem. You remember, I presented this way back. Do you remember what it was? Look: here we are, a bunch of laymen and we know nothing about art. And here is this small group of people who are the Art-Critics, and who tell us that this one is tremendous, that that one is a masterpiece, that this one is not so good, etc., and we look at them and say, "How do we know that they're not all just putting us on? After all, there's only fifty of them, and there's three million of us. Maybe they're just back-scratching mutually. Maybe it's just a Mutual Admiration Society, and they're making it all up. What assurance do we have, if we can't see what they see, if we can't follow and reproduce their judgments, what protection do we have from just being taken in?"

**Daniel:** *Culture.*

**Peter:** Well, the answer to that one is that there's some kind of continuity, that it's unlikely that you can see *nothing* of an artistic sort. You will have some sensitivity, and are willing to say, "This one *is* better than that one," something of the sort. Then you encounter somebody who can see every-

thing you can see, but can see more, and sometimes can get you to see it. That's how you decide that there's somebody who's better at it than you, and that's how we normally decide.

**Suzanne:** *You may not be seeing something that is actually there; what you're doing is, someone's teaching you what they saw.*

**Peter:** No, but then you see it, or you don't. And that's the point: that when you see it, you don't raise questions, "Is it actually there?" The only question you raise is, "Can somebody else see it, too?" And if they do enable you to see something you never saw before, that's how you decide that he's better at it than me. And then when he tells you, "There's somebody who's still better than me," and you get this kind of linkage, that's your assurance that those guys aren't just making it up. Now if, down here, even after you see, you say, "But I'm not sure it's real," then you've simply talked yourself into a hole, because nothing that you see can be proved to be real. So tables and chairs are no better off than these esoteric states of consciousness, if you're going to do that. But that's the kind of protection or assurance you have, that somebody who simply, straightforwardly sees what you can, and talks as though he can, and that there are other people, that's how you know that they're not making it up. You can have *that* kind of assurance.

Now with groups like this, we don't have this kind of continuity to them, by and large. They're just out there doing their thing, and we're out here doing our thing, and there is no such intermediate linkage. So we are inclined to ask, and legitimately, "Maybe they're making it all up." But then we also have some notion as to what it would take, on our part or on their part, to bridge the gap. Because maybe they're not making it all up. And there are ways of deciding or finding out, short of becoming one of them. But obviously, trying to become one of them is one of the ways. But again, you can't become one of everybody. There has to be something beyond that.

**Wynn:** *Once they teach it at the university, it's got to be real.*

**Peter:** Once it's taught at a university, it's gotten out of the realm of the real [laughter], and into the ivory tower where moves are made for their own sake and not for the contact with reality. Which is not to say that they can't have practical value, but that's no longer what's being done.

**Steve P:** *There seems to be a bind between carrying to this ### that arrival at a transcendental awareness—you continue to operate in the same way, and need words to talk about that with other people who had or hadn't, and there's some indication—as I remember—that that's no longer relevant at that point.*

*Talking about what you are now in awareness of is a poor choice, is a step back.*

**Peter:** Yes and no. Again, think of a real chair and the fact that I see you come in and sit in that chair, and you don't bump into things, and—you know, you come in and sit in that chair. I don't have to see much of that to take it for granted that you can see what I see, and so I don't have to talk to you about its being real rather than image. Just the fact that you can see me operating this way, and I can see you—we don't need to talk about that. On the other hand, it would be strange if we *never* needed to talk about anything of the sort. It's hard to imagine they could all be non-verbal. But that might help explain why the kind of language that's available, again, is very sparse when we think of systematic description. Because that's one thing that nobody goes around doing—giving systematic descriptions. But again, in that way of living, there may not be the important place for systematic description that there is in our ways of living. For us, systematic description is important. For a Buddhist, I doubt it.

**Steve A:** *Don't the Buddhists have a systematic description of all the different paths of insight, and—*

**Peter:** They have a lot of things, a lot of taxonomies, a lot of categories, etc.

**Steve A:** *How's that different from what you're saying they don't have?*

**Peter:** Categories and taxonomies are not the same as "system", and when I say "system", I mean something on the order of a coordinate system or a calculational system. Because you can multiply taxonomies endlessly, and as I read some of that stuff, I get that impression. That may just be my Western bias, that they've got five categories of mind and eight paths and seven this and four that and thirty-five other this-kind-of-thing. And nothing ties it all together. There isn't a whole system within which all of these subthings fit. It's like Jung's psychology. He has this typology and that one and that one and that one, and there's no single framework for the whole thing.

**?:** *But isn't Jung's psychology a framework? Isn't that unified by it?*

**Peter:** No. There's just a bunch of things that Jung said. They don't logically all connect together. A lot of them do connect, somehow, to one another, but you don't get the sense that the whole thing is a functioning system. [tape change]

**Jim:** *—in terms of a totality rather than a descriptive unity. Seems like that's kind of a paradox.*

**Peter:** No. Just think of the difference between an instructional manual and a systematic description. If you're worrying about getting people to do it, you generate what amounts to an instructional manual, and that doesn't have to be systematic and coherent, that way. It just has to give you the ingredients that you—if you know where and when to use them—can use them effectively. So you're back to the issue of being able to criticize without having the corresponding systematic description. Now the corresponding one is: can you teach, can you instruct, without the corresponding systematic description? And of course you can. Because, in teaching, what you're latching onto is the skills and knowledge that the person already has. Somebody who's teaching you tennis or football or golf is making use of what skills you have, and so he only needs to tell you certain things. And what he tells you only has to be relevant to what you're doing now; it doesn't have to be part of a systematic exposition. It just has to be the kind of thing that gets you to do the right thing instead of the wrong thing. So both criticism and instruction can take place with a set of notions that are insufficient and inadequate, considered as systematic description or theory.

**Cory:** *If I remember correctly, from one of your papers, Mary, you talked about the mystic as being able to communicate using—you know, just by certain parameters, not being able to really communicate the experience, exactly, to an outsider, but you have the inside experience, and being able to communicate to the outsider using certain parameters that they both share. I was just wondering about the difference between the inside and the outside thing, how—*

**Peter:** It's the difference between the bare framework [Fig. 1, p. 283], and the language of any particular ###.

**Cory:** *I'm just wondering—it seems kind of—almost as if the outsider has a ###.*

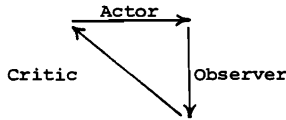
**Peter:** No. Remember, an outside view is simply within one of these totalities. You can't have outside views, if you're dealing with this kind of thing.

**Cory:** *So an outsider has always the inside view of something.*

**Peter:** An outside view is formally an outside view, but that takes place inside some body of concepts and thought. Think of this kind of matchup [blackboard].

**FIGURE 4**

X	Y	Z
Ultimate	Sacred	Enlightenment
Totality	Holy	Nirvana
Boundary Condition	God	Four Noble Truths



The match-up is not this way [**across**]; it's just between this set [**X**], this set [**Y**], and this set [**Z**]. Also [**he adds the AOC diagram**]. This difference is the difference between Actor-language and Observer-language. Think of playing football, and the kind of language that you use if you're one of the players. You call signals, etc. Think of the language that the sports-caster uses in commenting on what those people are doing. There's some overlap, but by and large, the language here [**Observer**] is different from the language here [**Actor**]. This is language used in the course of doing it; this is language used in commenting upon it. These two sets [**Y, Z**] are language used in the course of doing it, namely, living this kind of life [**Christian, Buddhist**]. To some extent, they can be used, if you have implicit disclaimers, as commentary languages. If you have no other terminology for commentary, you'll make do with the language you have. In contrast, this one [**X**] is commentary language. This is not language used in the course of living a way of life. This is not technical way-of-life language. This is technical commentary on way-of-life language. Which means that as an Observer, then, you can use this kind of notion [**X**] to give you access to some other way of life, and you can use this as a perspective on your own, to see your way of life as a way of life, as providing you answers to ultimates, totalities, and boundary conditions, without stepping outside of it. But also, it enables you to grasp in some sense what's going on here [**Y, Z**] without having to adopt Christianity, or without having to adopt Buddhism.

**Cory:** *It just seems like some things would be impossible to make a choice of being an insider, like there's no way you could really choose to be a mystic, it just happens. There's no way to you could choose—well, there might be—there doesn't seem to be really a way you could choose to be a man or a woman, that that just happens, too. So you have to have access to something else.*



**Peter:** That's why I say that even the use of this language [X] appears within some way of living. But formally, it is a language for being noncommittal about just such systems of thought as these [Y, Z].

**Terry:** *When you ask about the truth-value of these other—these various ways of doing it: Christianity, Buddhism, whatever—the answer you'll get is that the truth is in the living of it. That was what ### was saying when I said, "What ontological guarantee can you give me that this is the way, because ..." and he just laughed at me, and he said, "You know I can't give you that. You just have to do it. You have to go meditate for 20 years, then you have to go and do this and—"*

**Peter:** I would go stronger, and say there's nothing of that sort to be given, that we're not missing anything in missing that guarantee.

**Terry:** *But then it becomes a matter—I guess it becomes a matter not of arbitrary choice, but certainly nothing speaks out from any system to suggest it should be used—*

**Peter:** But you never have that choice. That's why I said that if you're using the model of having them all laid out on a counter and having a salesman give you a pitch for each one, and that one of them had better be convincing—that's the wrong model. Because you're never in that position.

**Terry:** *You're never in that position as far as your own already-possessed perspective; however, if you're thinking in terms of—like a ladder that you're considering entering a kind of systematic spiritual practice for the purpose of stair-stepping yourself to something, to this Godhead or whatever—*

**Peter:** It's the selfsame issue. There's got to be a place for that in your way of life, and then that answer is already given that way. You don't have a free choice about that. Whatever place in your way of life there is for there being this ladder and your climbing it, from that will come your answers. You're not standing outside there. You're still operating from within. There's no external framework from which you could ask, "But is that the real ladder? Does it really have that value? Is that really a possibility?"

**Terry:** *Then if that's not the way it works, what is the relationship of someone with their already-possessed perspective coming out of childhood or wherever, looking at these various systematic theories or philosophies, trying to ascertain what significance they have for you as an individual?*

**Peter:** You don't ascertain it; you decide it, you create it, and one of the values it can have is this [Fig. 1, p. 283]: it gives you a sense of something

beyond just your outlook, something beyond just your mode of being.

**Terry:** *So then, in a way it's—if it's a decision, then that's in a way an answer to the foundation question.*

**Peter:** It's not an answer to a foundation question. It's a way of seeing that there is no foundation.

**Terry:** *In other words, you could do something if you were making a religious assertion to become a Christian or to become a Buddhist, within which, then, the world takes on a particular accent, a particular significance of certain domains—*

**Peter:** You don't do that, any more than you decide what person you will be. The most you can do is decide—the most you can decide is to try. But you don't become a Buddhist or a Christian just by deciding to become one. It remains to be done, and you might decide to become one and be unable to become one.

**Terry:** *So that comes back to “the truth-value is in the living of it”.*

**Peter:** But that's not truth-value. That's life-value, or something like that.

**Terry:** *But you make it real—*

**Peter:** But making it real is different from its already being true.

**Daniel:** *In terms of the truth, he's not living—*

**Peter:** I know. That's why I keep saying that there isn't a truth-problem here; therefore, there isn't a truth-quandary, and there isn't a truth solution. Truth is entirely beside the point.

**Daniel:** *That's his—that's what he's looking for.*

**Peter:** That's what most people look for—the truth—and for the same reason that Terry has suggested. He's looking for a guarantee. **[laughter, general conversation]**

**Daniel:** *I was just saying that Terry is going to the wrong people. If he's looking for the truth, he should go to ###.*

**Terry:** *Dan's onto something in so far as if you are a twentieth-century man, and even if you don't want to be here [laughter]—there's a certain kind of relativity here that generates—I think I'm coming from an experience of this relativity you're speaking of, which then generates the question about—in a burlesque of the super-market where they're all laid out—which one to pick. If I wasn't agonizing over the relativity, I don't think I would come—I think*

*I would just be a Christian, or I would just be a Buddhist. It's the fact that I know the relativity that makes it so that I'm somewhere in limbo.*

**Steve P:** *No, that's backwards. By focusing on the relativity in that dilemma, you are not in limbo. You can't be in limbo, because you're just looking at something else. You're looking at the terrible, hard choice you have to make. You're devoting your life to making that choice.*

**Terry:** *Well, no, not necessarily, but I am saying that you're tautologically correct in that when I'm focusing on the relativity, I'm doing that and not something else. But I'm saying that the continued fact of our condition now, these days, makes those kinds of questions arise. That's part of the modern dilemma, that we're ill-equipped to make those kinds of decisions, and yet they're decisions—*

**Peter:** *But again, let me emphasize that it's not a decision in the way that having them laid out on the counter and deciding which one you're going to buy, is a decision.*

**Terry:** *Precisely, that gets at the logic of it, but—*

**Peter:** *You set it up that way, and then it's hopeless.*

**Terry:** *But that's a kind of empirical situation that many of us find ourselves in, in terms of that's what the conditions are generating.*

**Steve P:** *It's not a "find ourselves in". It's a "put yourself in". It's a place to be, not of where you find yourself.*

**Daniel:** *Terry, what decisions are you talking about?*

**Terry:** *I'm talking about the dilemma of having these various things as options, as opportunities—systematic ways of knowing, what have you—and yet focusing, being acutely aware of the relativity of the various systems.*

**Wynn:** *It seems that the option issue, though, has a funny place. At least as I gather, traditional Hindu and Buddhist practice—the issue, of course, is practice, which practices you can actually do, what you can get away with—and it seems that one of the traditional ways these kinds of questions are handled is in the kind of parable that you don't find the guru; the guru finds you. And that's always been pretty mysterious to me, until right now, when it seems that what the issue there is, is when there is already a place in your life, a place where you can act in that fashion, then you're eligible. But before that place occurs, you're not eligible even to make a choice, because those choices aren't—you can't really want to make—you can't make those choices because you couldn't want to*

*be a Buddhist, you couldn't want to be a Christian.*

**Peter:** No, you can want that. It's not just a matter of decision.

**Jim:** *It seems like a question of intrinsic versus instrumental, that's part of the issue, because it seems like we Western people tend to think along the lines of instrumental, and you can't make an instrumental choice of a way of life. It has to be intrinsic, and that's kind of a—*

**Peter:** That's right. Again, remember that instrumental is a within [blackboard].

## FIGURE 5



Within, you can have goals that are worth pursuing and then look for means. But for the totality, it doesn't have that structure. Totality is going to be intrinsic, and if all of your training is in an instrumental paradigm of how do you do it, how do you get it, how do you bring it about, the totality questions are exactly what you're going to be least equipped to handle. And you will set them up as though they were this kind of question [dots], and that will make them hopeless. And that's the super-market approach.

**Terry:** *Yeah, and if you take something like Peirce's logic of inquiry, which is really an elaboration of scientific method in terms of an instrumental-behavioral system, and you transpose that into culture at large, as those ideas are disseminated and infused into the culture, that's the perspective that we are ready for best, if I can speak for all of us for the moment, and finding that, with this consciousness of relativity, you generate, I think, some of the sociological conflicts you could talk about. But that it leads you—I mean, that in acting, the way in which concrete individuals do think about these questions, and in asking how that goes wrong—but nevertheless, that's where we are.*

**Peter:** That's where a lot of people are.

**Steve P:** *It sounds as if that could go right, somehow.*

**Terry:** *I'm talking about heritage, see.*

**Wynn:** *It strikes me that at this particular point, though, you find yourself with two kinds of questions. One rests on the ontology issue, and the other rests on a pragmatic issue. You can ask the question which is the true way, and when I know that, then I'll pursue that way, and that leads you to—I think—the quandary that we're into, as opposed to a question, "What could I do?" or "Which practices are potentially available to me?"—and from that perspective, truth is—*

**Terry:** *—involved in an ability-assessment or something like that, but then that sounds a little specious. It sounds like begging the question: "Well, I'll assess my ability to—"*

**Wynn:** *No, that's not the point I'm trying to make. The point isn't primarily the issue of ability. The point is the issue is that if the practice works, for whatever purpose the practice is done for, then the question of the truth is beside the point. Or instead of having to deal with that issue, you find something that takes the place of it, you substitute ontologies with actions.*

**Daniel:** *If you look at the question as being one of "fit", then the truth has secondary importance.*

**Terry:** *Yeah, that's what I'm saying. It sounds like you're talking about you sort of make a self-diagnosis as to who you are, and then you sort of gather up these things and say according to how well they suit your PCs.*

**Daniel:** *What's wrong with that?*

**Terry:** *If you want to have Philistine pragmatism, that's it. [laughter, general conversation]*

**Peter:** *Now look: we've already been through that, and that's not the way it works. Remember, we said that your knowledge of yourself and of your way of living is not that you have this list, but that you have a sense of it, and that's the most you could have of it, and so there's no issue of that Philistine pragmatism. [laughter].*

**Wynn:** *Terry, is it your ontology that's called into question, or your use, here? That's part of the issue. If you can use these concepts, if they have a use, a place in your world, then the issue of ontology is sometimes—*

**Terry:** *Let me give you a burlesque, a caricature of this. There's the stand-off character who goes and learns out of the newspapers what the prevalent political and literary views are, and then goes to cocktail parties, and he can use*

*those words, and he can use them in just the right ways, and he can make the right kinds of judgments, uses of language, and make all sorts of impressions on people, and so on, and now he's done that—he's pragmatically gathered up things—concepts and ways of talking that he can use in certain contexts—that are to his advantage. And yet—who wants to be him?*

**Wynn:** *That doesn't have anything to do with the issue, because—*

**Daniel:** *That's the very same issue of five minutes ago.*

**Wynn:** *I'm not sure what's being talked about now, but the issue that this guy at the cocktail party is somehow irrelevant if he's effective at cocktail parties says nothing about the sorts of effectiveness he's going to have on any of these particular quests, and what we're talking about is his action in these, not the simple being able to use the cultural norms—*

**Daniel:** *Superficially.*

**Terry:** *But what I'm saying is that he has the capacity to pick up certain concepts that fit him, and to use them in certain ways of talking, and it seems to—*

**Daniel:** *And it works at cocktail parties, right?*

**Terry:** *It would work in a number of places. I mean you're being too concrete about these things. But if you extrapolate it to doing something like this, and it's saying simply using the ones that fit, and being able to talk that way, and—**[general conversation]**.*

**Daniel:** *You deal with art critics, then all of a sudden, just reading what's involved doesn't have as much value as ###.*

**Peter:** *Let's come back to the issue of: if things can go wrong that way, is there such a thing as their going right? Well, possibly there isn't such a thing as their going right, but clearly there is such a thing as their not going wrong, because we've just been through it. Because the resolution of the relativity dilemma is that there is no dilemma, because look—**[Fig. 1, p. 283]**: there's nothing out of place there. It all hangs together. And the relativity is essential to it. It's not an unfortunate problem that we have to work with, and if we can't, we're in a sorry mess. It's essential to the way things do cohere. Now of course, you could fail to see that, and just see that there are a whole bunch of different descriptions. Then you would have that problem.*

**Terry:** *I think you're flying in the face, though, of historical facts. Because certainly medieval man did not have the sense of this relativity.*

**Peter:** So what? It just means that they were thoroughly encapsulated in theirs, and they were not exposed to others, and you can get away with that. If you're living up in the mountain, you don't have this relativity problem because you never encounter anybody else.

**Terry:** *And it doesn't generate the conflicts.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Terry:** *And you seem to be resolving conceptual and logical problems as though you were also at the same time resolving existential problems of people with these real conflicts.*

**Peter:** I didn't say that. I said: there is such a thing as this not-going-wrong, and here it is.

**Jim:** *It appears that the dilemma that they find themselves in is kind of a Christian assumption that there is perfection, that we must strive in this linear path—the linear versus the circular path to knowledge, something along that line.*

**Cory:** *I think another example of resolution of the knowledge of the dilemma is the theory of androgyny. The relativity of men and women is being questioned, and the best theory people have come up with is androgyny, and it seems to be that kind of dilemma, which is best, which should I choose, and ### conglomeration, and you really don't have to, and you can't.*

**Peter:** That's one of the dangers of eclecticism: you wind up with a conglomeration instead of something that hangs together.

**Wynn:** *There's a point, though, in looking very carefully at things that appear to be eclecticism, because—for instance, if you look at the variance of forms of life and the variance in forms of expression, the different types of language games, and if you're stuck for some reason, having to have a root metaphor to describe any particular form of life, then when you assembled your roots, so to speak, it would look like what you had before you was an eclectic system, when what you'd really have is some peculiar notion of deep structure. And so what often appears to be eclectic is merely the fact that statements A, B, and C don't in any uniform way merge with statements D, E, and F. And so sometimes—eclecticism, I guess, traditionally in metaphysics was shouted down for good reasons, but in the light of linguistic philosophy, sometimes it's important to reexamine whether it's really eclecticism.*

**Peter:** It's important to re-examine, but the test is the same, namely, can



you *show* that it hangs together? Because if you just have different starting-points, and you put them all together, it looks as though they don't hang together, and the burden of proof is on somebody who says that they really do.

**Wynn:** *But to identify something as, say, a form of life is to hang it together in a particular way.*

**Peter:** No, to *show* it to be a form of life, yeah. Just to say that it is, no.

**Wynn:** *I guess that's part of the problem we're having here, because on one level we're talking about talking, and on the other level we're talking about doing, and when those two things—like we can talk about truths, we can talk about ontology all day, but can you do ontology in any meaningful sense?*

**Peter:** If you're a Western philosopher, yes. If you're almost anybody else, no. But then the same thing holds for baseball.

**Wynn:** *I don't know that I quite buy that argument.*

**Terry:** *Those analogies all seem to collapse the significance of the one activity versus the other, and it seems that there is no difference, there's no differential significance to engaging in different kinds of behavior.*

**Peter:** Do I sound like there's no difference between playing football and playing baseball?

**Terry:** *It's sort of like there's a difference in that one is baseball and one is football, but that's about as far as it goes.*

**Peter:** That's right. One is ontology, and the other is football, and that's about as far as it goes.

**Jim:** *Would you apply that to the art critics versus the Buddhists—football versus baseball?*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's a good model. It's a good model for simple relativity, non-pernicious relativity.

**Terry:** *Do you think it's in the sense of something like spiritual stratification of behavior, or value stratification of behavior, and so forth, that certain kinds of behavior would be of greater significance or greater value?*

**Peter:** Only from a certain point of view. Value differences don't have any ultimate standing, because any value difference is going to be a value difference within a domain, and ultimately, you'll simply have that domain with its value differences. The value differences won't adhere to the whole approach, as against other approaches. There you will have simple difference.

**Wynn:** *Could you do that on anthropology, in which basically what you did was identify the sorts of practices or ### that would be useful to people in a dilemma like our own? Assuming that you could identify a dilemma like our own. And I think that's one of the issues that's occurred here, that in many ways, although there's disagreement, we can at least identify that within the culture, we expect are certain basic kinds of confusions or kinds of dilemmas, and you might wonder if there are any instrumental means of unraveling those particular knots.*

**Peter:** Here, I think I would go with Terry's diagnosis, that what he described is a current modern dilemma, that all kinds of people are bothered by the relativity of viewpoints that they are exposed to, and that they have no means of choosing among in terms of validity, in terms of being fundamental, etc., that they can use them for their instrumental value within limited contexts, but they can't evaluate them within a total context, because they have no means to do it.

**Wynn:** *But you can see why it's not a historical accident that in the mid-60's, when lots of kids started doing LSD, the type of religious description was—*

**Peter:** No, it had nothing to do with that. It goes back to the early 1900's. You can trace it very definitely—

**Wynn:** *No, that's not the point I'm making. The point I'm making is one that you can see how kids have found themselves for a variety of social reasons, but for certain logically coherent reasons, being interested in, say, Eastern philosophy or interested in Hinduism or Buddhism to talk about what was happening to them, rather than to go to Judaism, for example, as a way of describing their experiences. Because somehow they found people were already talking about things that had something to do with the practices they were approaching, and I guess that's the kind of question I'm asking here, in terms of the kind of either spiritual or intellectual or whatever sort of dilemma you wanted to label it—if there were any particular bodies of practice that see those dilemmas as the dilemmas you work with first. And if you could make that kind of anthropological identification, you would at least be in a position to do spiritual counseling, so to speak.*

**Peter:** You don't need that to do spiritual counseling. All you need is to be able to see what's wrong *here* and do something about *it*. There don't have to be any regularities of that sort.

**Wynn:** *No, there wouldn't have to be, but in terms of—say, if you were*

*somebody who had a concern to communities for these kinds of issues, you'd want to identify—you know, effective, so to speak—paths for the bulk of your community, if you want to provide practitioners for the teaching.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but then you're a technician again, rather than a theoretician.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, well, that's the tension—I'm obviously into the technical question rather than the theoretical question.*

**Peter:** This particular question, I think, may give us a good lead-in to the Sufi approach, which—you might say—like analytic philosophy, has no system, explicitly has no system, explicitly denies that systems are possible, because problems change, and your answers to today's problems will be your failures with tomorrow's problems. By the way, some of those stories have survived for a long time, but not because they had them.

**Wynn:** *This pulls me back to the same kind of argument I tried to provide, at the first meeting, when I was arguing that I'm not sure those ways of life could actually be ways of life. I'm not actually sure that we can talk about the modern dilemma in any accurate sense that would give us any handle on individual dilemmas, in terms of these sorts of practices.*

**Peter:** I think it's the other way around. You can get a handle on individual dilemmas; you can survey them and get a handle on way-of-life dilemmas, or social dilemmas or cultural ones.

**Wynn:** *I'm just not so sure, though, that we'd come out into any sort of neat package that would—*

**Peter:** That's why I said that in fact, I agree with Terry that this is one. I've seen too many clinic cases, too many clients who show evidence of having exactly that problem for exactly that reason. Furthermore, there's beginning to be a fair amount of agreement on it—

**Daniel:** *Are we on truth, now? Which is real? Which is—*

**Peter:** That you have a whole lot of viewpoints, theories, bodies of doctrine, etc., that are made available to you—not merely made available, but some of them you *have* to learn—and they don't connect to one another, and whereas, you can use each of them for some technical aim or some instrumental purpose, you have no way of evaluating all of them, you have no way of using any of them in your total life context, except arbitrarily. And you have nothing else to use for your total life context, because everything you've learned is simply one of these [Fig. 1, p. 283: A', B', etc.].

**Daniel:** *It seems like that's just a stalling on decision-making, of deciding. It's just a way—*

**Peter:** No. As a matter of fact, some of what they learn is that there is no answer to that dilemma, and you learn that in philosophy.

**Daniel:** *But if you—if there's a problem, you decide, and you go ahead with it, then you don't have to worry about the truth, since—[general conversation]—*

**?:** *How are you going to find out? If it doesn't work, you can retract.*

**Peter:** No. What you're going to find is that you can use them perfectly well in the ways that you learn to, and you do, and then your life doesn't hang together. And you're hurting, and you have no way of even formulating why you're hurting.

**Daniel:** *### over which way to decide. ### at least there's some activity there. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Yeah, but that's part of the problem, that you go ahead and act, using what you have, and you can use it effectively for limited purposes. It's your whole life that then doesn't hang together. And when you—at some point in your series of actions, you start reflecting on that, reflecting on your life being not that meaningful, and then you turn to the East for a solution, and you find that there is not one, about that time you start getting bothered.

**Steve P:** *Yeah, that sounds like Little White Balls, being really troubled by that and so learning a lot about Little White Balls, more and more and more, and more and more and more and more and more.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's right.

**Steve P:** *But it still doesn't make it golf.*

**Peter:** That's right, and that's what you've lost with all of these viewpoints, is that there's nothing real, because all you ever have is treating something *as if* it were this, etc., and all you have is the “as if's”, and nothing is real any more.

**Terry:** *And the psychoanalysts have added a new defense mechanism to character disorders, which is the “as-if” defense. [laughter]*

**Peter:** Have they really?

**Terry:** *A lot of people live “as if” things were so. [laughter] That's the only way to describe it—it's not isolation, it's not protection, it's “as if”.*

**Peter:** Now the historical continuity is such that we can now trace this

kind of pathogenic influence [Fig. 1, p. 283] directly to university education. [laughter] This is what going through college and university does to people. And there is coming to be a fair consensus on that. I'm not just being iconoclastic here—our Chancellor's Committee for the Arts and Sciences Departments is based on just that notion that, visibly, what is happening at university level education is that people are being fragmented by being exposed to all kinds of theories, all kinds of disciplines, etc., and no way to put it together. And as I say, part of what they're told is that there's no way to put it together, and that, too, is one of the many viewpoints here. Well, that's a pretty pathogenic package.

**Wynn:** *But they take that at the university, and you're a freshman, and you're staying up all night trying to figure out how it makes it a lot easier.*

**Peter:** We're not just making it up. As I say, you look at clients who come into the clinic, and you see a lot of those effects.

**Wynn:** *Would you then make the claim that fragmentation isn't the natural case, or the normal case, that there is in fact a cure for fragmentation? That it isn't inherent in the material and subject matter?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Wynn:** *Once you make that claim, then it's like—then the issue becomes similar to Terry's original question.*

**Peter:** The secret is not to make that claim, simply to show the person who is fragmented how he does hang together, because as soon as you make the claim, all you've done is added one to the list.

**Wynn:** *Okay, what you do is, you tell them that you're really not fragmented, and show them that—*

**Peter:** You show them that; you don't have to tell them that. You show them.

**Daniel:** *### it doesn't all fit together. That's why a person isn't getting along in his life, because he's worried about fitting it together, in the colleges or any other place.*

**Peter:** No. By and large, people don't enter into college that way. They enter into college wanting to find out the truth about the world, and the university is the repository of the truth about the world. And they're eager to have that. And they come, and they learn. And then what they learn—when they're not skiing—is a bunch of these [Fig. 1, p. 283, A' B', etc.], and then they find out that having those truths has somehow done them in.

**Daniel:** *They find out they don't have the truths, they don't have any truths.*

**Peter:** Well, that's one conclusion, that they don't have any. Another is that they have them all, and they're hurt.

**Wynn:** *There seems to be an issue, though, of whether or not it's fragmented—it's clearly fragmented in terms of the differences in the ways of talking about the subject matters in different theories, but I guess the question becomes one of how you describe the phrase, "hangs together", because the traditional approach to hanging together has been reductionism—that we can find some simple set of datums that we can generate all—*

**Peter:** That's just reducing it to another theory.

**Wynn:** *But that there will be one theory that these would all be derivatives from. What I'm wondering about is that we have alternative logics for the ### "hangs together", so that you don't go in the direction of reductionism, yet you have a unified sense of—*

**Peter:** Yes, that's what this is [Fig. 1, p. 283]. This hangs together, with no reductions. Take relativity—

**Wynn:** *—a life that hangs together. So forms of life become your basic issue again.*

**Jim:** *I wonder if you'd go through that again, in terms of how that hangs together in the sense of the ###.*

**Peter:** That what you have is a coherence based not on descriptions, but on pairs, namely, a kind of person [A] and the description [A'] he would give of a given thing, a different kind of person [B] and the different description [B'] he would give of the same thing, and then a third kind of person [C], and the description [C'] he would give of the same thing. Now when you have these correspondences [A-A', etc.], you don't have to here specify what that thing is, because that would just be another one of these. So this whole list of correspondences hangs together—that's the real thing.

**Jim:** *You made a distinction earlier about concepts and descriptions. How would concepts fit in that?*

**Peter:** Think of the notion of perspective—visual perspective—and let's suppose that you had learned that explicitly, where, in fact, you don't. And then you look at the chair. Now the notion of visual perspective is simply a concept of things working in a certain way. You don't have to use it as a statement that things do; you simply use it and when you look at the chair, you

find an instance, that this is something that fits the notion of perspective, that it is something that would be seen different ways from different places. So you're using the concept of perspective to identify an instance. You don't ever have to make a statement that this is how the world is. And with respect to your own view, you don't have to say, "That's the way the chair is," because the notion of perspective tells you there are other views of it. At the same time, you don't lose the fact that this is the way it looks to you because you are where you are.

Likewise, when it comes to philosophies or ways of living, different people will be fit by different philosophies and ways of living. And if you have that whole set of correspondences, you're not going to see the world just in the terms of your own way of living and your own philosophy. Instead, you're going to have a sense of it as *the* thing, and *the* things, that would be seen this way by these people, this way by those people, and this way by those people. And that's the thing that you are seeing in the way you do, in your terms. The concept of the list is not a concept within this particular viewpoint [A-A'] or this one [B-B'], or that one [C-C'].

**Wynn:** *There's a parallel issue with this, because one way of looking at these is to see them as different perspectives, different people holding different theories, different ways of talking about the world. A similar sort of fragmentation appears in the clinic when the client is bothered by the different things that he does, and his different ways of seeing the world, and claims that he's fragmented because he has these different viewpoints and different practices, and that's where I guess forms of life have to be shown to hang together by a way of living. Or in any case, the mere fact that they are forms of his life.*

**Peter:** I guess it's not so much that you show it as that you get the person to see it.

**Wynn:** *Or you get him so he's not bothered by the issue, because you show him that it's an issue inherent in the different treatments in different subject matters with different significances.*

**Peter:** For example, take this common example that arises in talking about the prudential, hedonic, ethical, and esthetic perspectives. You say, well, on different occasions, different ones of those are going to assume priority. When it comes to taking my medicine, it's going to be the prudential perspective, primarily, on which I decide. When it comes to choosing which movie I go to, it's going to be the hedonic one. That will take priority over any of the others. So on different occasions, different of those perspectives



will take priority. Now the question is: how can you do that not arbitrarily? Is it simply an arbitrary thing that one occasion it's the hedonic one that takes priority; and on another occasion, it's the prudential? The answer is no. In our way of living, choosing a movie on the basis of "would I enjoy it?" is the way to make that decision. In contrast, in our way of living, "will it do me any good?" is the way to make the choice about the medicine.

**Steve A:** *Yeah, but to make the choice, you have to have a certain perspective again, and it seems like—regressive.*

**Peter:** No.

**Wynn:** *Because you have a perspective.*

**Peter:** You have to have mastered the perspective in order to raise the question at all.

**Wynn:** *Clinically, there was a case where—I had a client who was confused by a very simple issue: he would work, and there were sort of subtle irritations—behaviors of some of the people he worked with—and he'd explode, he'd get really angry, and finally he just broke off relations with these people. But he'd go home, and his girl friend would do about the same thing, behaviorally, and he'd be sort of irritated but—what he was confused about was why he was so much more violent with the workers than he was with his girl friend. And the answer was very simple: that he loves his girl friend. The significance of that relationship is different, so those things don't count in the same way.*

**Peter:** And yet, you can't prove it. But you can tell him that and hope that he sees it, and there's a good chance that he will. [**change tape**]*—choosing the movie on the basis of "would I enjoy it?", and choosing the medicine on the basis of "would it be good for me?"* I take it that you can see that. I haven't shown it in any stronger sense than that I've gotten you to recognize that, but I take it you could already see that. I might have reminded you, but I didn't teach you that. You already have it. You already have the same sense of our way of living within which, indeed, that's the way to do it. Now, when you recognize that, you stop being bothered by the notion that to be coherent, you have to be consistent in the sense of giving priority to the same thing every time. That problem vanishes with an example like that. Because then, in effect, you see what's wrong with requiring *that* kind of consistency: that you already have hold of a different kind of consistency that works perfectly well. And so you're out of the dilemma, not because there is a proof with a foundation, not because there are proof methods, but because you were able

to see, and that was the right reminder. And that's what I mean by doing it ad hoc, with a person, on an occasion. Then if you look at a lot of that, then you can start talking about groups, structures, etc.

**Steve P:** *That's kind of a pragmatic approach. As I remember, when you were introducing those four perspectives, you kind of did a quick little detour and said, "It can be argued that these are all the same thing, that what you talk about in terms of being hedonistic, in those terms, can also be thought of in terms of being any of the others."*

**Peter:** Yeah, but I also said that that's a vacuous argument, and you might as well ignore it.

**Steve P:** *It's the same sort of argument that goes on there, between those, which is the best—that kind of dilemma is a vacuous dilemma, and you might as well avoid it and get on living your life.*

**Peter:** Let's think about that one. Let's take a break right now.

**Peter:** What was the issue that we had on the table when we left? Steve raised a question, and I said let's think it over.

**Daniel:** *Oh, the same question I raised about "let's get on with life", and you don't have to disseverate on [general conversation]*

**Peter:** You may recall that one of the ways of introducing the person concept, from scratch, is to raise the question of what enables us to disagree with each other in the ways that we do. I think raising that question throws these things in a somewhat different light, namely, that you don't and can't start with disagreement. Disagreement isn't fundamental, because to disagree with somebody is a high level of achievement already. So when you ask, "What enables us to disagree with each other?" you're pointing to something more fundamental than the statements and the disagreement, namely, that there has to be something shared. There has to be some framework within which the disagreement is a possibility, so that when, in fact, it occurs, you can recognize it as a possibility.

**Wynn:** *Could you say more than that you have agree on just the subject matter?*

**Peter:** You have to share certain concepts in order to disagree. Otherwise, you can only be confused and fail to understand each other. So that to the extent that we have a problem of disagreeing, to that extent, we know that

there is some framework that we already have, that enables us to formulate it as a disagreement problem. The same thing holds for a relativity problem, which is just a variation on a disagreement problem: that as soon as you have the problem, you know that you've got a framework which enables you to formulate that as the problem. And in that framework, these things are not incoherent. That framework has to include in it the possibility of just such disagreement. So disagreement in points of view is not somewhere that you can begin from, it's not fundamental; behind that is something more fundamental, namely, what is shared, and what is shared will turn out to be concepts.

So the solution, the way out, here, is already inherent in the problem. You couldn't have the problem were there not such a solution. Which is to say, it's a non-existent problem. The problem isn't really there—you have to make it a problem for yourself. And that's why it's so easy to say, "Well, when you surmount that problem, all you've done is come back to normal," because you should never have had it to begin with.

**Terry:** *But that's from a conceptual point of view. I think the sociological fact of the matter is that it is a problem.*

**Peter:** Sure.

**Terry:** *I mean—when Michael Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, says that after Nietzsche proclaiming God is dead, there's the return—*

**Peter:** You have to have that point of view in order to deal with pathology at all. You have to be able to say, "This pathology is not an inevitable something that we're stuck with. It can be cured. And it didn't have to be there. It was not a historical inevitability." And that's all I'm saying. That one doesn't, in fact, have to have that problem. It's not inherent in the nature of the material or the topic or the human condition or anything else.

**Terry:** *Okay, but now what happens, in fact, is that with the return of god—with a little g—you have these people who are spiritually organizing the world in terms of concepts and values, and as soon as they start talking to each other, they realize that they don't talk the same way, and then they refuse to go to that point of negotiation where they do get to what's shared, so the disagreement ends with not talking, like the tension between the Naropa people and other people. I doubt that a psychoanalyst and a Buddhist from Naropa would really end up getting down to that shared point. They'd probably both walk away thinking the other one was wrong, period. And as an exemplification of the problem, the problem as it exists, I think that's where it is. It's that the gods*

*have returned, in the sense that there are all these different ways of organizing reality and ways of talking involved in that way of organizing reality, but none of these people can talk to one another. And so that's—*

**Peter:** I think you put your finger on it when you said, “It's gods with a small g.” That's a big difference. Because that's what carries the divisiveness, that all you have are different ones, all arbitrary.

**Daniel:** *Pete, you addressed this issue some other time, about why people who—like Werner Erhardt, Rinpoche, etc.—they don't share things, you say, or something like that. Terry's implying that they don't exchange, where you can see where they're alike and where they're different.*

**Peter:** By and large, they don't.

**Terry:** *You have to step inside their circle, that's it*

**Daniel:** *But you said they had different domains.*

**Peter:** Yeah. A—B. Werner Erhardt is here, ### is here, somebody else is here.

**Steve A:** *And you will get sometimes an Alan Watts or Thomas Merton, and then they will take a road, a kind of viewpoint, and not get hung up with that. But it doesn't happen so often.*

**Peter:** The relativity viewpoint is just another viewpoint.

**Wynn:** *One of the things you can see is, when the guru is out of the lime-light, sometimes these issues don't create quite so much pain. Recently there's been some interest in American shamans, Plains Indian shamans meeting with some African tribesmen who were also designated—had that kind of role—and I have a very vague understanding of what went on, except for the fact that they agreed that they were concerned with pretty much the same issues, and they could identify those issues as such.*

**Peter:** Well, similarities of that sort are possible when, in fact, they're there, but that's not a fundamental solution here, because you know that there are other persons who are so dissimilar that you're not going to have that kind of thing, so that kind of sharing is not a road to a fundamental solution. You have to be able to deal with differences as real.

**Wynn:** *You see that like when Suzuki and Fromm got together to do their studies on psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism. What they found was that the subject matter they were concerned about was essentially the same, some of the goals were the same, the methods were different, and the concepts that were*

*behind the choice of methods were different. So they were talking about different worlds, but they still had a sense that a person who had gone through both processes would somehow be in similar places.*

**Daniel:** *You mentioned, the last time we talked about this, that the language, the system is what kept them—they'd have to learn each other's language and system in order for them to exchange, and that was one of the barriers.*

**Peter:** It's not so much that it's a barrier, it's a way of calling attention to the nature of the difficulty, that they don't, in fact, share language and systems of thought. What they share is something else, namely, the bare notion of people in the world and the fact that people have outlooks on things, and that different people have different ones—that's the common framework. The common framework will not be gotten at from the technical vocabulary of any of these systems.

**Daniel:** *Terry's point rings true in that there's so much waste. Instead of people sharing what they—the state of the art, they sort of build up little realms with domains within, and what one has learned, they don't share with the other, so it doesn't get—*

**Peter:** What one has learned, they can't share with the other, because the other has a different total outlook [**A'**, **B'**, **C'**, etc.]

**Wynn:** *It wouldn't be sharing as the grounds of transaction.*

**Jim:** *There's a basic difference in Eastern and Western epistemology that's ###. It seems like the Eastern epistemology is kind of—like Confucianism and Buddhism and Shintoism exist side by side—*

**Peter:** If you examine these and do an analysis about similarities and differences, that's the kind of conclusion you come to. You look at some of the Eastern viewpoints, and there are some commonalities there. And you look at Western ones, and there are commonalities of various sorts there. You do the comparison, and that's the kind of statement you come out with: that these have certain general characteristics, and these have certain general characteristics—where they differ. And one of them is the issue of the self. Generally, in Western outlooks, there is a real self, whereas generally in the Eastern outlooks, the self is an illusion.

**Jim:** *Would that account for the fact that it's easier to integrate in an Eastern context than it is in a Western—the concept of self? That was my basic question. I was wondering if there's any differences in epistemology that could account for the fact that it's easier to integrate in Eastern—that they appear to be*

*able to handle that problem better, of integrating various viewpoints.*

**Peter:** They don't.

**Terry:** *There is a key difference of presupposition, in the Judeo-Christian tradition there is the notion of salvation and redemption, but it's a salvation and redemption of the individual, whereas for Buddhism, it's a salvation from the individual. And that they're in the basic presuppositions of the two systems makes it irreconcilable, it seems to me.*

**Peter:** They're reconcilable this way.

**Steve P:** *It seems to me to be more a Western notion that that's a difference that makes a difference.*

**Peter:** I said we're more interested in systematic description and theorizing.

**Wynn:** *There's certain Buddhist texts—for instance—which I think is in the process of being translated, that ### to be a Buddhist systematization of psychology, but those texts that possibly are of that sort haven't been translated, although there seems to be—they've been translated into French, I guess, and there's a lot of concern with translating them into English, but I don't think the projects are complete yet. But there may be those sorts of documents.*

**Peter:** Let's look at a different question now. How do you get somebody to change?

**Daniel:** *We'll have to get to Sufism for that.*

**Peter:** That's what we're getting at. If the Sufis have nothing systematic, where do they have their existence, you might say? And the answer is: in getting people to change, and getting people to not go wrong is what those stories are all about. But they don't have a system that tells you how things are. That's why I picked it as a pure case of nonstatement-making, non-system-building that contrasts with Buddhism that has a whole lot of system, even though I don't see that it all goes together, but there are a whole lot of systematic parts of it. Whereas there is no exposition for Sufism, there is no set of tenets for Sufism. Instead, what you have is a historical tradition of teachers, and of the use of certain general methods, the most celebrated of which is the teaching story. What I said last time was, look at that chapter and see if any of those stories are of more interest than others, and then let's look at that story and see what you can make of it, but with the general outlook that the way that these stories are used is to get somebody to not go wrong in the way he's going wrong. Now by way of continuity, recall the

presentation of images, and their use in psychotherapy, and then my mention of Al Farber saying that Milton Erickson does almost nothing but tell stories, and why: that the telling of the story gets an idea across in a non-truth context. If you're telling somebody a story, he's interested in getting the story. You're not laying truths on him, and he's not defending against them, and he's probably working at understanding the story and getting it. So in effect, you've got him on your side instead of arguing. So there are technical virtues in getting an idea across via a story. If you're interested in getting an idea across rather than a truth, you can do it with an image, a picture, a story, or other ways.

**Terry:** *Isn't that just the inversion of, say, psychoanalysis, where if you take someone who's been exposed to literature, and they've read a million stories, and they're still as fucked up as ever, and now they go into analysis because now it is in a truth context, and we're not just telling stories; we're talking about you, and we're going to see what you do when you're getting talked about, so that there's—I'm not saying that the other thing can't work, but just that there is that you're speaking of, where on the one hand you have a therapeutic context in which you emphasize the truth context, and the other way you de-emphasize it.*

**Peter:** The context in which you emphasize truth, remember, you're putting the therapist in the position of the guy who always has to know the truth. It may not be a comfortable position to be in.

**Wynn:** *The Sufi master seems to be a pragmatist, and his concern with his teaching stories is as individual as the psychoanalyst's concern with his specific patient, because the story is specific—out of his repertoire of stories, or out of his invention of stories specific to that particular problem. Truth isn't the issue in this relation.*

**Peter:** Again, a truth approach will run into trouble with this [Fig. 1, p. 283], that once you've seen this, you're not going to buy any truths easily, because anything that somebody else may lay on you is just something somebody else is laying on you, and so you've been inoculated against truth by seeing the relativity of points of view and theories. And that may be why a non-truth approach is more effective—if indeed it is—today than it might have been 30 years ago, or 40 or 50 when Freud was laying the truth on his clients. Okay, now did anybody find a good story?

**Bob:** *A good story for what?*



**Peter:** For our purposes. [laughter, general conversation.]

**Wynn:** *There's a story on page 29 [Tart, *Transpersonal Psychologies*] that's a paraphrase of some of the concerns that you've been going through about perspectives.*

**Peter:** Is it short enough for you to read it?

**Wynn:** *It's just a few short lines.*

**Peter:** Why don't you read it?

"A Sufi mystic stopped Nasrudin in the street. In order to test whether the Mulla was sensitive to inner knowledge, he made a sign, pointing at the sky.

"The Sufi meant, 'There is only one truth, which covers all.'

"Nasrudin's companion, an ordinary man, thought: 'The Sufi is mad, I wonder what precautions Nasrudin will take?'

"Nasrudin looked in a knapsack and took out a coil of rope. This he handed to his companion.

"'Excellent,' thought the companion, 'we will bind him up if he becomes violent.'

"The Sufi saw that Nasrudin meant: 'Ordinary humanity tries to find truth by methods as unsuitable as attempting to climb into the sky with a rope.'"

**Peter:** What about that one? Is that getting at something like what we've been talking about?

**Wynn:** *He's talking about differences in perspectives from—if you're only able to see in a certain way, then you're going to interpret what's provided, or you're going to see what's provided in that way. But the mystic—in this case, the person who already has some knowledge, isn't limited to that pedestrian view. I don't think it's a very good story.*

**Peter:** One of the things that you commonly hear about these stories is that you can understand them at different levels, that there is more than one possible message, more than one possible use. Can we look at that particular story and see a different quality, a qualitatively different sort of message?

**Wynn:** *Yeah, that's where this story is sort of a hard one to use for this kind of point, because this story is a story about just that, about the fact that two people are going to see something different.*

**Peter:** That's the relativity message. Is there a different message?

**Wynn:** *What we've got here is about two Sufis and an ordinary fellow, and the ordinary fellow figures the other Sufi is mad, and worries about violence, and takes the rope as an indication that we should tie him, up, and the two Sufis are actually talking about a mystical subject, and know perfectly well what the other means. But everybody goes away satisfied.*

**Peter:** Can we look, or at least read anything else out of that?

**Jim:** *The question of communication—people at one level of enlightenment, it's saying that they can communicate with each other in ways that are meaningless to average people.*

**Peter:** Does that sound familiar? Have you ever seen anything of that sort before?

**Cory:** *The Art-Critic?*

**Terry:** *It has to do with that stuff you were just talking about, about disagreement. It's just with a different baseline, that the conditions that make possible disagreement are certain shared knowledge, and in this case you've got two people talking who share a certain kind of knowledge, a certain kind of framework that makes possible an agreement where there's an apparent disagreement to someone who doesn't share that same knowledge. So they start with a presupposition of more in common than people typically do.*

**Peter:** It isn't just "more in common". If you had two of the laymen and only one Sufi, that wouldn't work, so it isn't just that two of them had something more in common than the third. It's that they have the *right* thing in common. That's critical.

**Terry:** *That's why I said "knowledge". They have this mystical knowledge in common.*

**Peter:** Remember, the mystery picture and what I use it to illustrate: that it can be right there in front of your face and you won't see it *if* you don't have the concept, if you don't know what to look for, etc. You can read that out of this story. Is there anything else we could read out of it? In fact, it's made explicit at the end. Read the punch line.

**Wynn:** *"Ordinary humanity tries to find truths by methods as unsuitable as attempting to climb into the sky with a rope."*

**Peter:** Okay, how many times have you heard me say, "There is no such question"?

**Terry:** *Except that that's not what he's saying. He's saying that the ordinary*

*routes to truth are inadequate, but he's not really rejecting the truth-question itself. It doesn't sound to me like he's saying that.*

**Peter:** I don't reject truth-questions generally. I say, "Here, there is no such question."

**Wynn:** *Yeah, I wouldn't argue with Terry on that point, because it sounds like ordinary humanity tries to find truth by methods as unsuitable—so you're saying the methods are unsuitable, he's making no comment on the issue of truth. It's attempting to climb into the sky with a rope.*

**Daniel:** *That's what Pete just said.*

**Terry:** *No, Pete's saying that searching for truth in certain contexts is inappropriate, and I think that's true, too. But I don't think that's the message of this story.*

**Peter:** I say again, look at what you're saying. "The message of the story"—where I'm asking, "What can we read out of that?"

**Terry:** *No, I'm saying, in terms of the text, there are certain things the words say and certain things they don't say. There's a certain number of permissible interpretations, and then some that are not permissible.*

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but the Sufi is saying—in the second lines, the Sufi meant, "There is only one truth that covers all," so it sounds like they're not concerned at this time with the issue of truth. They're not bothering with that.*

**Peter:** That's a separate thing. You see, you can read different things out of it. One of them is the issue of the unsuitability of the method, you're going about it wrong. Now depending on your description and redescription, you can say that sometimes a person is looking for truth, and he's going about it wrong. Or you can say, "Sometimes somebody has a perplexity and tries to resolve it, and he goes about it wrong by looking for a truth." Under that description, it fits the issue of looking for truth where there is none to be found, or looking for the answer to a certain question which—there is no such question. So again, it depends on how you read that. Or think again of just the simple difference between "you can go wrong" and "you can go right". That, too, is something that is there: the difference between reading it right and reading it wrong. The layman got it wrong, the Sufi got it right. The conditions under which he got it right—he had the relevant concepts.

**Steve P:** *The layman didn't get it wrong. The layman didn't get it right. The layman wasn't wrong—he just wasn't right.*

**Peter:** He got it wrong, even though he wasn't wrong. He missed it.

**Steve P:** *He wasn't right.*

**Peter:** Okay ###. Again, think of the distinction that's being made, rather than the message. The distinction between right and wrong is clearly affirmed there, that there is such a difference—that not just any viewpoint is equally good as any other..

**Daniel:** *In a specific situation.*

**Steve P:** *But in one way, it sounds like an either/or, and the other way, it sounds like there are at least two anchor-points, and then there's a whole lot in the middle that's not even—it's not a line that divides, it's just two anchor-points—*

**Peter:** No, it's just that there is a difference. Think of that against the background of this [Fig. 1, p. 283]. Here you have relativity, and from the relativity point of view, anything is equally arbitrary as anything else. Here you get the affirmation that there is a difference: some ways are better than others, some are right, some are not, some are failures, some are successes.

**Terry:** *There are right points of view or successful points of view or wrong points of view.*

**Peter:** No, there are some successes, there are some failures, but not that the point of view is right. It's that *he* has failed.

**Wynn:** *I suspect that in Sufi practice, what would happen would be that this story would be read, this story would be given, and the first point would be made, and then the student will ask a further question about, "What's the commitment here to the issue of truth," and then there'll be another story read. Except that they're dealing with different issues. One story isn't meant to generate all the—*

**Peter:** What happens is that that story could be used with any one of these things that we've talked about that you can read in it. It could be used with somebody who's raising the truth question where there isn't any. It could be used with somebody who was raising a truth question where there is one, but he's going about it wrong, he's asking the wrong question. It can be used with somebody who thinks that everything is equally good. It can be used with somebody who thinks that if it's there, you ought to be able to see it with no preparation whatever. It can be used for any of those things. And that's why the same person can come back and read it again, and get

something different out of it, because, indeed, it does touch on a number of different things, and so it can be used for any of those purposes.

**Wynn:** *We already know, for instance, that the Sufi isn't committed to any particular, specific notion of "truth" as anything but an historical particular, because at one time in history, the Sufi may have had a system within—may have had an elaborate system within, say, Islamic thought, or may have had an elaborate system within certain other thoughts, the way of reaching the people, and in that situation may talk specifically about truths or about anything else. But it seems the only notion of truth, here, is an historically particular one, and Sufis seemed quite self-conscious that "what we're saying is useful now, and might not be useful in thirty years." The current Sufi critique of Gurdjieff is that Gurdjieff was coherent at that time, but now isn't useful for students on the way. And so you would suspect that even though the story talks about truth, and the Sufi means that there is only truth, that you know that the Sufis themselves are not committed to that as anything but an historical way of providing a certain kind of action in the participant.*

**Cory:** *It doesn't make sense, though, in saying that there's one truth at that particular time.*

**Wynn:** *By "truth", I suspect it also could be paraphrased as "there's a method that's applicable now".*

**Cory:** *But then you can't talk about "truth".*

**Wynn:** *No.*

**Peter:** *No, if anything I would say there's one historical truth: this is what is true for here now, but it needn't be true somewhere else, some other time.*

**Wynn:** *It's a different sort of concern with truth, and the kind of concern you get it that—*

**Peter:** *Remember the slogan that yesterday's truth is today's error. That alone tells you that there's some kind of historical of relativity involved, and indeed, that's right. What was true yesterday needn't be true today.*

**Cory:** *But you said ###.*

**Peter:** *That's why we tell stories instead of laying it out. As I said, any formulation of relativity would simply be another one of the points of view about things. It would have only that status and not the status of the real truth. It would just be another view of things. So it doesn't do you any good to formulate relativity if all it is, is another theory.*

**Terry:** *Unless the meta-principles aren't set for the qualification.*

**Peter:** Well, but any reference to meta-principles is again just another way of talking.

**Terry:** *If saying that yesterday's truth is today's folly, if that's correct, if it's generally correct—*

**Peter:** If it's true? [laughter]

**Terry:** *Then it's a meta-truth, in a sense.*

**Peter:** Meta-truths are just another point of view.

**Terry:** *But it may just happen to be it's a correct point of view.*

**Peter:** But that notion is just another point of view. You can't get out of that, buying that one.

**Wynn:** *Is the issue "just another", being something of a co-equal status—or is it a different type?*

**Peter:** As "just another point of view", it is just another point of view. There's no way of surmounting *that* kind of relative status. It's only once you get into it that then it has other statuses. Let's look at another story. Anybody else find other ones? Oh—it's three-thirty. Let's stop now. For next time, we want to do a little more on Buddhism and Sufism, but we also want to start in taking seriously the issue of how you change somebody. How do you change his world? How do you change his way of living? And for that, review the self concept and the first two sections of *What Actually Happens*.

## SEMINAR 8

### 5 August 1976

**Peter:** Did anybody find any of the Sufi stories that were of special interest?

**Wynn:** *There are some interesting stories about literature, about using literature and teaching stories.*

**Peter:** Oh, before we continue from last time, be prepared for a take-home exam in which the question essentially is: What is personal growth? I expect anywhere from three to ten pages on that. Make it due by the end of next week. Any hardships, let me know.

I said we want to do some things with Sufism, but mainly go on now to Castaneda, and the theme now is the problem of change, actual change, as contrasted with what we've been doing in terms of asking what is it, what kinds of changes are possible, what differences can we designate. This is also the aspect of Buddhism that we have remaining, namely, how does one achieve enlightenment, how can one achieve this change of state.

**Daniel:** *Pete, I don't have closure on—my preference would be for you to tell me what all this stuff is—that's my preference, but I know it's not possible. So my second thing is, I'd like a springboard so that I can carry these starts and come to some conclusions, but somehow I don't feel that—*

**Peter:** What would qualify as closure? What kind of topics, what kind of answers?

**Daniel:** *I feel like we've touched on several different areas, and we've talked about parts of what some people mean by personal progress or what they advocate, but somehow I don't have the framework—the closest thing I have are those big issues—domain, totality, etc., connecting—identity, perspectives. But that's as far as I've gotten so far.*

**Peter: (blackboard)** You also have this, and I think basically that's the answer to your question. What we're missing is the simple description of it.



**FIGURE 1**

<u>PC</u>	<u>Description</u>
A	A'
B	B'
C	C'
-	-'
-	-'

**Daniel:** *The description of it.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Daniel:** *And there is no such thing.*

**Peter:** No, the answer is, your description is going to be different from somebody else's. And your description and somebody else's will not be *it*. So you're back to the same kind of understanding that we've said about having a sense of your own way of living: it has to be a sense of it rather than a description. Then from that, you have an easy springboard to personal growth, namely, that that consists of getting a better sense of it. At least that's one aspect of personal growth.

**Daniel:** *And it'll be an individual view of it?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Daniel:** *Then that's okay.*

**Peter:** What we've done is touch on some of the ins and outs of this, some of the safeguards against arbitrary relativity, trying to see why relativity is essential, how relativity isn't destructive—or needn't be. And all of that is background for you managing a relativity situation. As far as answers go, that's what you have samples of in those eight chapters. Those are sample answers. Those are answers that can be shared by a lot of people—the general answer can be shared by a lot of people. That's comparable to my looking at the chair, and then you lining ten people behind me who all see it pretty much the same way.

**Steve A:** *Pete, the Sufi way then is just a kind of recognition of this formulation, and that you're not dealing with—or that each of these descriptions will be possibly historical particulars, but it shouldn't be tied to any of these things, and just sort of recognizing this schema—*

**Peter:** No. Keep in mind that what you have here is a version of unity and diversity, that it isn't that you shouldn't be tied to your description. Your description is what you have. It's like saying, "I shouldn't be tied to my view of the chair", but after all, it [A'] is what I have, and it is my access to the chair. So what I have to do is not deny it or reject it, but transcend it. Likewise, with these [B , C , etc.] you don't deny them or reject them; you transcend them.

**Steve A:** *Comes then that problem that some of us weren't able to see last session, of this relativity. It's not a matter of just being able to see the relativity.*

**Peter:** Right. If you only see that, that's destructive, because then all of the various things that are relative also look arbitrary. And that's destructive, because if they are, then you are.

**Steve A:** *That sounds like a Buddhist answer—in that then you are, and you just drop the whole shit, and it's not even a matter—even though when you say your description is all you have, it sounds like a Buddhist is saying, "We'll drop that, too."*

**Peter:** Well, they do and they don't. In the process of achieving a state of enlightenment, if you do it through meditation, there will be episodes in your life when you are wiping out all distinctions. On the other hand, that's not how you're going to live your life as a Buddhist. That is, you're not going to live your life in a state in which all distinctions are wiped out. So you have to separate the special states from a Buddhist sort of life.

**Steve A:** *Just this idea of transcendence is a different notion than the relativity notion?*

**Peter:** Yeah. But again, use the simple example of the chair to see the connection.

**Steve A:** *Just a matter of taking in—you're seeing that as a chair, and it's not a matter of—I'm seeing that in terms of relativity, this is my hang-up, because I'm just seeing it as, "Okay, I see the chair and yeah, but that is just relative to these other viewpoints".*

**Peter:** No, the chair isn't. The way it looks is. The chair is the unity—the chair is the thing that gives unity to the diversity of viewpoints. They're all views of the chair.

**Steve A:** *So in terms of a way of living, what you would do is live your life the way—analogously to seeing the chair, or like your personal growth, getting a better sense of this totality.*

**Peter:** Not being limited to just that.

**Steve A:** *So the problem is how do you get a better sense of the totality. Okay.*

**Peter:** A lot of the issue of getting a better sense of the totality is to stop talking yourself into blind alleys. That's why so much of the stuff has such a therapeutic air about it, is that the nature of the improvement is to get people to stop making the mistakes that they make.

**Steve A:** *That destructive aspect of just seeing things as relative would be one of those ways?*

**Peter:** Yeah. You see, that's where the Sufist comes in, because that is what he is essentially engaged in doing, is getting the people to not be as parochial, not be limited, not be making the mistakes that they are making, to not be limited in the ways that they are in how they see things and how they live. It's a case of removing limitations or correcting errors. And the stories, as we say with the one that Wynn picked last time, a given story could be used with reference to some number of different errors, deficits, failures, parochialisms. It's simply a matter of where it's applicable. You might say, in the Sufi tradition, there isn't a positive way of arriving. It's a matter of removing errors. In the Buddhist tradition, there is something more like a positive thing, namely, the Eight-Fold Path, including meditation.

**Bob:** *But even then, it's all in double negatives.*

**Peter:** Yeah. The one thing that isn't double negative is meditation, except that that almost is, too, because in meditation you fail to make the distinctions that you normally make. You fail to pay attention, to things in the way that you normally do. So that crucial aspects of that, too, are essentially double negatives. But at the same time, if you're sitting there meditating, you're not just not doing something. You are doing something. But you might say: methodologically, it's still a double negative, because what you are doing has the effect of not doing what you usually do, and that seems to be the crucial thing.

Except again—take the issue of human nature or the nature of reality, because how do you explain that when you stop doing the usual things, you enter into these special states? The answer is that you tap something more fundamental than what you normally tap, and that's what you accomplish positively when you stop doing the usual things. Then if you ask, "What sort of thing did you tap?" —that's where you get all of this transcendent non-language. Again, it's characterized primarily by disclaimers that it isn't any of

the kind of things that you know about. Part of what we went through with the business of ultimates, totalities, and boundary conditions, especially the long discussions that we had on boundary conditions, is to get a sense of why we're going to find people talking in these strange ways, why you're going to get people talking about voids, about pure being, about nothingness—all of these are strange notions, and they're strange because they're ultimates, they're boundary conditions. And one of the things that you have to do with strange talk is to pay attention to how the talk is used, rather than to try to imagine the thing that is being talked *about*. For example, when you have passages that talk about "the void", instead of trying to imagine what the void is that they're talking about, you pay careful attention to how references to the void appear in this discourse, and empathize with what somebody does who talks this way.

I think we have a very minor example of this kind of thing—remember, I made reference to the fact that we can talk about learning something by rote, and if you understood that the wrong way, you would be out looking for something called "rote", when in fact there is no such thing. That's a way of talking that makes perfectly good sense, gives us access to something of interest, but you have access to it not by wondering what is this word the name of, but rather by seeing when I say that you learn by rote, and when I say that you learn in some other way. Then you get some notion as to what this word "rote" is doing in the picture. So I would say in general, the same thing is true with the strange language that you get in transcendental theories: that they're not going to have referents in the way that referring terms normally have. Instead, they're ways of making distinctions within a way of behaving, and so you have to think in terms of "here is the way that someone talks in the course of participating in a bunch of practices that involve, among other things, talking that way, but also involve a lot of other things that are not verbal". Of course, one reason why some of these are hard to understand is that we don't have a good sense of a Buddhist way of life or a Hindu way of life. We're just not that familiar, and so we've lost a valuable asset in understanding what they say.

Let's start, now, raising the question: you have an individual, you have the notion of being-in-the-world—that is, of the correspondence to person and world—and how can that change? You can take that question, or the related one that's directly relevant to Don Juan: how can you change a person from living in one real world to living in another real world?

**Daniel:** *Why do you have the word "real" in there?*

**Peter:** Well, because we do. We contrast *the real* world with imaginary worlds, with fictitious worlds, with other worlds; with possible worlds.

**Daniel:** *When we talk about “the world”, it’s usually when you want to make a distinction—when you want to talk about a fantasy world or something other than the “real world”, and I’m puzzled now, because that’s the kind of distinction that’s usually made, like you say, “talking about the world”, when you talk about an imaginary world, you put “imaginary” in there.*

**Peter:** That’s right. Ordinarily, if you talk about “the real world”. you just say, “the world”, and when I here, now, say “the real world”, I’m doing it for just such a reason as you mention: I want to remind you that we do make that contrast between real, fictitious, and imaginary. And then I want to suggest the same kind of relativity goes for “real world” as goes for fictitious or possible worlds.

**Wynn:** *I’m wondering if you’d explicate the overlap and the distinction between what you’re talking about now, and what traditional therapists talk about when they talk about making the unconscious conscious, or taking the attributed status and pointing out the aspects that are actually descriptive of the person, such that the self status assignment now includes aspects which were earlier attributed.*

**Peter:** I don’t know if that would be any easier than just jumping directly to a different world.

**Wynn:** *But there is a conceptual distinction between things that are possible facts already in your world, although blocked for whatever reasons, versus—*

**Peter:** Okay, let’s try that.

Remember the derivation of unconscious motivation as involving something being unthinkable; therefore you won’t think that things are that way, you’ll think things are some other way. Suppose, in the course of therapy, what was unthinkable becomes now thinkable, and your view of things changes, so that what before you weren’t really admitting even as a possibility, now you’re seeing as an actuality. Sometimes, that sort of change is expressed by saying, “Your world has changed,” or, “You’re living in a different world.” Clients sometimes say that sort of thing. When the change, as they experience it, is fundamental and dramatic, they’ll say, “My world has changed,” whereas for lesser changes, they say things on the order of, “Now I understand myself better,” or “Now I can understand X better.”

One of the keys to the difference is the notion of unthinkable, something that isn't even possible. Something that isn't even possible, you won't think in terms of it. In contrast, the real world always deals with things that are possible, because what's actual is merely a selection from what's possible. There's actually a chair there, but there might have been another one. And so I can just as easily handle that there is a chair there, or that there isn't an elephant there. On the other hand, I can't handle that there is or isn't the number 17 there. That's not something that's part of my real world, that there is or isn't the number 17 there, because that's unthinkable.

**Daniel:** *Because it's an abstraction?*

**Peter:** No, because 17 isn't located anywhere, so it makes no sense to assert that it is, or to deny that it is.

**Daniel:** *Well, it is in the same sense that there's 17 on the blackboard, that you could say there's a chair in the middle of this room and there's a 17 on the blackboard.*

**Peter:** No. Seventeen here is a representation, a numeral. That's not the number 17.

**Daniel:** *I know. A lot of philosophers would say that's not a chair*

**Wynn:** *I take it you're drawing out the distinction here between something that's a result of a category confusion, if you don't bring up the question, versus something that's imaginary.*

**Peter:** Yeah, category confusions are the easiest thing to think of that really is impossible.

**Wynn:** *Because that's not only unthinkable; it's nonsensical. However, there are unthinkable things that are other than nonsensical, that just—*

**Peter:** It's hard to tell. If you face somebody for whom something is unthinkable that for us is thinkable, if you face somebody with that possibility, what you often see is confusion or lack of comprehension, and it's not easy to get a handle on what the phenomenology is. Is it experienced as confusion? Is it experienced as impossibility? Or what?

**Wynn:** *I imagine if you took a beginning graduate student in philosophy, you could tie him up with these sorts of question—who was in therapy because of some absurdly repressed oedipal conflict, and if you posed him two questions, one question, “I want you to imagine the number 17—sitting here, imagine 17 where that chair is,” or “Imagine your sexual desire for your mother.” If*

*either of those thoughts is unthinkable, as both of them may be for him, being a repressed person, phenomenally he may feel confused and bewildered, but conceptually there's a big difference between the sorts of facts that are presented to him. One isn't even a possible fact, because it would be resulting from conceptual confusion, a category error, whereas the other would be a fact possibly descriptive of him that he simply can't see because of the way he sees himself.*

**Peter:** But that's what I'm getting at. *For him*, it's not just—there isn't that difference. If it really is unthinkable for him, presumably he would experience it in much the same way as—

**Wynn:** *For him*, it is a sort of category confusion, because it doesn't fit into the categories of-accepted facts, the difference being that as a therapist, or as a philosopher, it would be hard to see how you could wish to have him reach a place where he could see nonsense as real, in the sense of—

**Peter:** But that's because we can't see it as real, either.

**Wynn:** *Is there a possible universe in which the number 17 does, in fact, occupy positions, like chairs?*

**Peter:** We can't think of any, but that's what we mean by saying that it's unthinkable.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but I'm wondering if there's a difference between unthinkable because we can't think of it via our forms of logic, and unthinkable because it violates some basic tenet of logic. What you're suggesting is that there aren't those basic tenets, that what there are is logics in particular worlds.*

**Peter:** I didn't have anything that specific in mind.

**Wynn:** *But that would be a possible commitment to the notion that there is a possible world other than—say, the notion of a mathematical world in which 17 occupies space the way chairs occupy space.*

**Peter:** No, that's why it doesn't pay to get too detailed with this, because if we use the word 17 as we mean it, then that can't be, and as soon as you cut loose from the way we actually mean the number 17, then anything goes, but then you're no longer talking about 17.

**Wynn:** *But that's why there is a logical distinction—*

**Peter:** So for us it's unthinkable, but that's why I picked it: that category mistakes of that sort are the closest thing to a guaranteed-unthinkable example.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but then here's the difference: if we cure this neurotic philosopher, when he's cured, so to speak, he's going to be eligible to consider those*



*facts about his life that included the oedipal conflict. He's not, however, going to—he still may be philosophically.. confused by the question of the number 17, but that will never be an awakened fact in his world that occupies space as such. And so there's a logical distinction between unthinkable as nonsense, and unthinkable as problematic.*

**Peter:** I just want to add: for *us*, there is a logical distinction, with whatever mischief that may carry with it, but with no commitments. [laughter]

**Jane:** *Do you mean to say that nonsense is not real?*

**Peter:** If you talk nonsensically, you're not talking about something. You're just talking nonsensically. But the talk is real. If I say there's a number 17 just directly under that chair, either I mean a cardboard thing, a shape of the numeral, or I'm talking nonsense. And if I'm talking nonsense, there isn't something there that I'm talking about. I'm just talking strangely. Or—remember Lewis Carroll, “Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.” He wasn't talking about something called “wabe”. He was just talking in a certain way. So nonsense doesn't refer to anything. Again, it's characteristic of transcendental theories that since the kind of talk that you have there doesn't refer to anything, it's easy to assimilate it to nonsense. And very possibly sometimes it is.

**Daniel:** *Besides the number 17, would you give another realm of things that wouldn't be applicable to the chair? I mean—there's a chair there, and you're saying it would be nonsense if we said the number was there. What else would—*

**Peter:** Give it any kind of person-characteristics, and I'd vote for that as nonsense, although it's a little more questionable. For example, if you say, “The chair is sitting there solemnly,” that's maybe not so much nonsense as idle talk.

**Daniel:** *Any non-physical kinds of things.*

**Terry:** *How can you call it “idle talk”? Or do you call poetry “idle talk”?*

**Peter:** No, but that's not poetry. I know it because—

**Terry:** —### *knowledge principles, though. Or take what don Juan's doing in terms of personifying death, personifying the wind.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but that's not what I would be doing in saying that the chair is sitting there solemnly. That's why I can testify that when I say it, it *is* nonsense. [laughter]

**Terry:** *Humpty-Dumpty—words mean what you want them to mean. Who’s to be master here, you or ###.*

**Peter:** That’s right. When I say that, I am talking nonsense. I don’t mean that anybody who says that, under any circumstance whatever, is talking nonsense. I’m just giving an example of talking nonsense.

**Terry:** *That’s a source of confusion for me, because it seems like personifying objects, in a number of instances—poetry being one, mythology being another—is far from nonsense. It has a definite function—*

**Peter:** That’s right, and like I said: I wasn’t mythologizing, and I wasn’t giving a poem. I was giving you simply nonsense.

**Daniel:** *You intended to do that.*

**Peter:** I also said that that’s not as clear-cut as the number 17.

**Terry:** *It would take something like what the positivists—the species of nonsense that the positivists point out, like “The absolute is perfect”—that’s a nice sentence which has no referent, there’s no thing—and yet we want to say that’s meaningless nonsense.*

**Peter:** [pointing to Fig. 1, p. 328, A’ and B’] Well, one man’s nonsense is another man’s transcendence. One man’s sense is another man’s nonsense.

**Terry:** *Is that a matter that there’s no performative kinds of descriptions of—*

**Peter:** Yeah. There are no criteria for nonsense, any more than there are criteria for chairs.

**Wynn:** *I guess it boils down in some ways, to whether or not the person can act on those sorts of statements. When language ### running idle, you say that there’s no use, if any of those things were taken and taken out, then that put you in the social practice that was ongoing, or any possible social practice for those participants, that wouldn’t have anything except filler. But if I can say, “The absolute is perfect,” and if somehow I can act on that sort of concept—which I can’t see easily how it would—then I suppose we could point to it as having a place in the practice.*

**Peter:** Keep in mind that calling something nonsense is a status-assignment, and to make a status assignment is to give something a place within some larger domain, and that’s why you can’t just from examining the thing itself tell whether it’s nonsense or not. It all depends on what other domain you put it in and where it fits. That’s why you can take any sentence you want, and you can’t tell from that sentence whether it’s nonsense or not. You can

look at any behavior you want, and you can't tell just from that behavior whether it makes sense or not. That judgment is a relative one of placing it in a context, and then making a judgment there. That's also why different people who bring different contexts to bear on the same thing will give different judgments, different status assignments. Don't look for those answers in those places, or in the relation to the context, in the status assignment.

**Steve A:** *So nonsense will be something without a referent—without referents in our real world, like that “17 is under the chair”.*

**Peter:** The key word is “our”. When I merely say, “It's nonsense,” I'm presupposing us and our world. If I didn't, who would I be talking to? And what could I possibly be saying? I'm not talking in the abstract about what somebody else is doing, or what they might have said, or what I could be saying. I'm presupposing us, here, now, what we know, what we have, and what I'm doing.

**Steve A:** *You said that someone like don Juan would be presenting things that would seem nonsense in, say, Castaneda's real world, in order to get—what he's trying to do is to get him to construct a world and have Castaneda have a real world where it isn't nonsense.*

**Peter:** Yeah. And that is very much like the therapeutic task of making the unthinkable, thinkable.

**Joe S:** *I'm not sure if you recall that in the last chapter, the concluding 50 pages of Tales of Power, there's a review of what don Juan was doing from Day One, a really nice review of just exactly why he was doing what he was doing, an explication. I don't know if that would be helpful in terms of—*

**Peter:** I don't know either, because he's done that in practically every book—he has a recap, and the recap is different in every book.

**Daniel:** *Whose is it—is it don Juan's?*

**Joe S:** *Don Juan's explicating why he's done what he's done, going all the way back to the very first meeting.*

**Wynn:** *It gets real suspicious, though, because that chapter—Carlos is allegedly recording directly what don Juan is saying, in those chapters—right?*

**Joe S:** *He's writing it all down.*

**Wynn:** *Yeah. But those chapters and that book in general—I don't know, there's an air of Carlos' having read the right analytic philosophers in the last ten years. I don't know if he's really trying to make don Juan's statements*

*coherent, but a lot of them look like steals from—all those quotes, almost self-joking quotes from various places in the Tractatus and the Investigations. It's probably nonsense, but—*

**Daniel:** *Maybe he's an analytic—he found some way to get analysis credence through don Juan.*

**Wynn:** *His doctoral dissertation—that first book—he's supposedly going around talking to somebody—it appears in his second book, he starts doing it.*

**Peter:** Any recap that don Juan gives Carlos is still done at a time and a place and for a purpose. It is not guaranteed to be the real thing. It's kind of like EST, where each new exercise, they say, "Forget all that crap we've been telling you. That was just to get you to the position where you are now."

**Daniel:** *And as soon as you get to that position, they try to knock you off it.*

**Peter:** Yeah. So as I say, keep in mind the historicity of that, and don't figure that anyone of those recaps is just straightforwardly the real thing.

**Wynn:** *For one thing, it fits into the teaching—there's an anthropologist at Columbia who I guess sort of got upset about how much money Carlos was making, and so he wrote his book about shamans, magic, and culture, and sold a lot of undergraduates (like anthro students) these texts. But one of the things that he discovers is that Carlos was lying to the Time reporters and to all of his biographers, when he was telling them about his father and about where he was from, how old he is, and all those sorts of things. So we know the man is slippery. [general conversation] But being slippery is part of the program.*

**Steve P:** *He gets away with it rather successfully.*

**Peter:** Okay, back to "real world". The first hump that we have to get over is just the bare possibility of more than one real world. If you're going to switch somebody from one real world to another, there's got to be at least two. If there's at least two, that does strange things to the ordinary notion of "real world", because in the ordinary notion of the real world, there can only be one. That's why we call it *the* real world. It's for this purpose that I've had you read the first two sections of *What Actually Happens*, because there you find the technical development of a conceptual system which generates real worlds as possibilities, and in which there is something more fundamental than a "real world", namely, reality.

**Steve A:** *Do you think reality is a boundary condition, then?*

**Peter:** Reality is a very different sort of thing than "real world". It's as different

as the real chair and the views of it. It's because of that difference that from the notion of reality, you can generate the notion of any number of different real worlds.

**Terry:** *Doesn't that become something like a noumenon, though, that's sort of the thing of which—the thing which unifies various real worlds, real-world descriptions?*

**Peter:** No. It's more like the notion of the English language as that which unifies a bunch of English sentences or English descriptions. The language is not something on the same order as the sentences, it's not something that lies behind ###, it doesn't fit a philosophical paradigm.

**Terry:** *It's sort of a methodological reformulation of the noumenon—*

**Peter:** No, it isn't. It's again just somebody's way of talking. It's not *our* way of talking. And since it's not ours, remember that here, we're presupposing us, not them. That's why I keep insisting on talking our ways and not their ways.

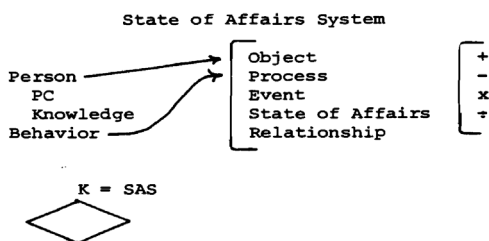
**Steve A:** *Pete, how's this notion of "real world" different from saying "this case of being-in-the-world", and the notions of different ways of being?*

**Peter:** I think it isn't, that you could take this either as an analysis or as an explication in Carnap's sense of the notion of being-in-the-world. That is, the derivation of "real world" from "reality"—what you have, when you have a real world, is an explication—at least—of the notion of being-in-the-world. Because it includes the notion that every world is somebody's world, which is the essential thing about being-in-the-world. It includes the logical equivalence and the correlative character of *a* person and *a* world. That's what's accomplished by the hyphenating of the being-in-the-world.

**Steve A:** *Okay, so you have "real world" as possibilities within this fundamental concept of reality? Could you say something more about—is it this boundary condition you've talked about?*

**Peter:** The real world isn't; reality is.

**FIGURE 2**



Let me go through some of the material that's in the book, just to highlight how it works. This won't substitute for reading it in detail.

What you have, basically, is a State of Affairs System [**blackboard**] and that's a calculational system that involves these concepts [**Object, Process, etc.**]. These are reality concepts. And what the system does is to interrelate these logically, so that the meanings and the use of each of these is interdependent with the meanings and use of the others; and that is comparable to a system in which addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division are interrelated, and they are mutually defined, and they're not defined by reference to something else; they're defined in terms of the system in which all of them appear. Or it's like in the rules of chess, you have knights, pawns, bishops, kings, moves, etc., and all of those are mutually defining within the system; they're not defined by reference to something outside of chess.

So what this gives you is a conceptual system in which the reality concepts are mutually defined. Now one of the things that this gets you away from is the notion that reality concepts are names of something or other. If the meanings of these are gotten from a system, they are not names of anything.

Secondly, one of the consequences is that anything you could describe in one of these ways, you can describe in each of the others. In fact, the system itself is simply a set of rules for taking something that's described in one way, and describing it in these other ways. For example, Rule 1 is that a state of affairs is a totality of related objects, and/or processes, and/or events, and/or states of affairs. You can see that that kind of definition is recursive. You've defined a state of affairs in terms of a state of affairs, and because of that, you can generate these things indefinitely. You start out with one state of affairs, and redescribe that one as some totality of objects, processes, events, and some other states of affairs. You can then take this state of affairs and redescribe that in some combination of objects, processes, events, and states of affairs, and redescribe this by the same rule, and on and on.

**Daniel:** *That's the calculational part of it.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Now the same goes for objects. You have a rule that says in effect that objects divide into objects. You start with a state of affairs as a totality of something that includes objects. You can take this object and redescribe it as a state of affairs, and then redescribe that as another object, or as a number of objects, each of which can be redescribed as a state of affairs and then a bunch of other objects. So you can work these things ad hoc and

ad infinitum in all kinds of ways, to generate any kind of portrayal of some set of objects, processes, events, and states of affairs, and relationships.

**Wynn:** *How does the concept of a concept fit into this? Is this already at too abstract a level?*

**Peter:** No. Now one of the key facts about all of this is that everything else can be put in terms of state of affairs. If you have an object, that can be re-represented as a state of affairs. If you have a process, that can be re-represented as a state of affairs. If you have an event, that can be re-represented as a state of affairs. So everything can be represented, if you choose to, as state of affairs. And state of affairs corresponds, for most purposes, to our common notion of a fact. Right now, I would say, the chair is on the floor and that's a fact. I would say, there being a chair on the floor is a state of affairs. So the differences between fact and state of affairs are mainly grammatical. [change tape] [blackboard, adding Person, Behavior, and diamond to Fig. 2] You have this kind of relationship, and that's the answer to the question about concepts. It's that within this general notion of objects, processes, events, and states of affairs, you can specify kinds of objects, processes, events, states of affairs, and a certain kind of object is a person, and a certain kind of process is behavior—that is, intentional action or deliberate action. And behavior involves a number of parameters or aspects, including the cognitive parameter, and person involves aspects, personal characteristics including knowledge.

**Terry:** *Is knowledge an object, process, event, or state of affairs?*

**Peter:** It's a parameter of persons.

**Terry:** *Then that seems to fall outside the reality system of concepts.*

**Peter:** No. Remember the definition of knowledge: a person's knowledge is the repertoire of facts or concepts that he has the ability to act on. So it's simply an ID characteristic peculiar to this kind of object [Person], and that's why it's strange to say of a chair that it has those characteristics.

**Terry:** *How about the knowledge that a person can't act on?*

**Peter:** That's not one of his Characteristics.

**Terry:** *Wouldn't it be like, for example, somebody who's gotten all sorts of insight in analytic therapy, and hasn't changed his behavior at all? And you want to say that he has the insight, but just can't act on it.*



**Peter:** No. You remember, you have to anchor somewhere, and with this definition of knowledge, you would say he doesn't know it. You would say that he can talk about it, but he doesn't know that fact. The same way that when somebody says, "I know it isn't dangerous but I feel that it is, and so I run from it," your answer is, "You don't know that it isn't dangerous."

**Terry:** *What do you call that stuff, though, that's in a person's cognitive parameter that they can talk about but they don't know? What do you call that stuff?*

**Peter:** You don't need a special name for it. You've just said it. "He can talk this way, but he can't act on it."

**Jane:** *Is that a standard thing?*

**Peter:** Yeah. His being unable to act on it is a state of affairs.

**Terry:** *—the stuff you can act on, which is knowledge—it seems like we'd have a corresponding name for the stuff that you have in your head that you can't act on.*

**Peter:** No, any more than the fact that you have names for my behavior would require that you have names for all of the things that I'm not doing. You don't need that, and it would be very unhandy to saddle the description of positive things with a taxonomy for what those things are not.

**Wynn:** *It's just that the case that Terry's bringing up is a case that's treated with some centrality in psychoanalytic literature, because they're quite concerned about, for instance, making interpretations in which the person can accept the interpretation, or can claim an understanding, yet that understanding doesn't affect his behavior. Sometimes that occurs because the person decides not to change the behavior, with the understanding that often he has the interpretation but can't act on it. Would we claim that it's an incorrect interpretation, or—because there is that issue. That issue does have a central place in therapy, in that the person allegedly has the information although he can't use it as such. And it seems there will be some use in having some way of teasing out what we want to classify that information as.*

**Peter:** Don't worry about judgment problems. In particular cases, you may have some question as to what to say there. In this case, you may have some difficulty deciding whether to say he knows or he doesn't. We're not dealing with that kind of problem. In terms of the definition, the definition just gives you something like a coordinate on which to plot those facts. Given this definition of knowledge, that it's something he has the ability to act on,

if you decide he doesn't have the ability to act on a given statement, you say he doesn't know it.

**Wynn:** *Okay, he doesn't have that knowledge. He may have words that some people—*

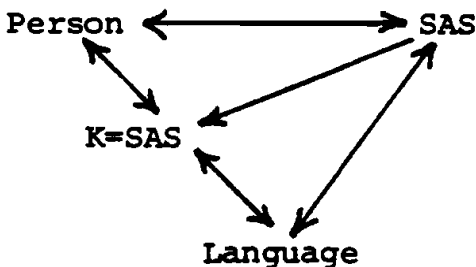
**Peter:** Yeah. Now that leaves you with the problem of saying, "Well, what else is true about him? What does he have?" but that's a separate question. So what this definition simply does is to determine that you won't say this, but you'll have to say something else.

Now, the critical thing is that what appears here [Fig. 2, p. 339, K] are concepts, and those are state of affairs concepts [SAS], and those concepts are simply the products of this system. So the power that a person has is simply his having the State of Affairs System. The power that a person has to distinguish states of affairs stems from his mastery of that concept, and in behavior, that's what it is, a concept, a discrimination that the person is acting on. The discrimination is always the discrimination of one state of affairs from another. Or rather, one state of affairs concept from another.

**Steve A:** *At one point, I think you made the statement that the State of Affairs System is analogous to ### reality, not a real world. And here, the way you're talking about it, it sounds like your concept of the system is really more the real world, the concept of the real world, not the concept of reality.*

**Peter:** No, we haven't yet dealt with the difference between reality and real world. So far, we haven't needed to. I'm just saying that the State of Affairs System—remember, knowledge is defined in terms of power or ability—that power stems from the person having mastered the State of Affairs System. That is what generates possible facts; that is what generates the discriminations, the State of Affairs discriminations that the person acts on.

**FIGURE 3**



So from the viewpoint of behavior, this whole thing is simply a conceptual system. From the point of view of this system, behavior is simply a particular process, and persons are simply a particular object. So you now have these three things in a mutually supportive and implicative relationship. But State of Affairs Systems do not appear in the abstract or the concrete. They appear—their place in reality is as an aspect of behavior and as a power of persons. This is why you don't have worlds without persons. The State of Affairs System is not an object, it's not a process, it's not an event, and it's not a state of affairs. So it's not something that has a location that you're going to encounter somewhere. It's not part of the real world that way. It's part of the real world because there are real persons and real behavior, so the conceptual system has a place there [**Person and Knowledge**].

**Daniel:** *Why do you insist that—why wouldn't it be part of the real world?*

**Peter:** The system is not a state of affairs, any more than the English language is an English sentence. Any state of affairs is something generated by the system. It's like saying that arithmetic is not a number. It's a system that generates numbers from numbers, but *it's* not a number. The reality system is one that generates state of affairs notions from state of affairs notions, but it is not a state of affairs.

**Daniel:** *But it has a domain—it has that domain.*

**Peter:** It doesn't have a domain except here [asterisk????]. These three things are just as much mutually implicated as these are, within the State of Affairs System.

**Wynn:** *Could you make a distinction in which reality is sort of your parameters, and the real world is the items that appear on those parameters?—the historical particulars like—*

**Peter:** You might, but I'd hate to try it that way.

**Wynn:** *Because it would come down to sort of like as an analogy, in Euclidean geometry, the X-Y coordinates are the reality of that geometry. The real world would be squares or circles or lines that had a location there.*

**Peter:** It's attractive, but I'd be leery of that. I think it would be as misleading as it was illuminating.

Any questions about the relation between these three?

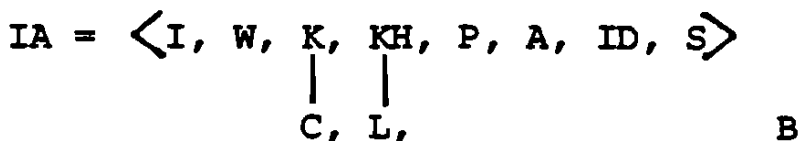
**Terry:** *What was your analogy, again, when you said “arithmetic was not a number, it's a system that generates the numbers”—*

**Peter:** A system that generates numbers from numbers. That's analogous to saying, "The State of Affairs System is not in itself a state of affairs, etc. It's a system that generates one of these [**Object, Process, etc.**] from another one. You can start with one and arrive at another one, but the system that enables you to do it is not one of those things that you're working with.

**Terry:** *But then what about the reflexivity problem, again? In some ways, it's got to be represent ### to itself, or you have the domain problem.*

**Peter:** [adding "Language" to Fig. 3, p. 343] None of this would go without language, so that, too, is mutually implicated in the whole thing. It's with language that we have access to concepts, including, primarily and importantly, state of affairs concepts. You remember the formula for verbal behavior [**blackboard**] is C, L, B.

#### FIGURE 4



And the C corresponds to the cognitive parameter, the L corresponds to the performative parameter, and the B corresponds to a set of behaviors. [*looks like L is pointing at the wrong parameter (KH instead of P)—cjs*] What you have with verbal behavior is a locution which is a verbal performance. It's the performance aspect of intentional action. You have a concept, which is a distinction you make, and there is a one-to-one correspondence between these two. That's why it takes language to have access to concepts. And you have a set of behaviors that consist of acting on that concept—a set of behaviors for which that concept is down here. For this, you need to read—that's right, that's not in *What Actually Happens*, is it?

**Wynn:** *No, not even in an appendix.*

**Peter:** No, it's in *Meaning and Symbolism*, and I don't have any copies of that right now. There is a copy in the library, on reserve.

**Wynn:** *There's mention of it in the clinical outline, isn't there?*

**Peter:** There's some mention of it, but the only exposition is in *Meaning and Symbolism*. And since we're not going to do much with language, let's just

leave it at this, and if you're particularly interested, go check it out and read it. It's in Volume I of *Meaning and Symbolism*.

**Bob:** *In terms of the analogy between arithmetic and numbers, and State of Affairs System and this—is it possible to say that the State of Affairs System is dialectical to the relationship between all those objects, processes, events, and states of affairs? Somehow it slipped in that it is.*

**Peter:** No, because it's not—you'd have a problem specifying what relationship that was, and considering that you have a system with an infinite variety and not merely an infinite number of products, it would be pretty hard to make sense of the notion of *the* relation among them.

**Wynn:** *You see ecologists, though, doing the same sort of thing.*

**Bob:** *Isn't that, in principle, possible—at least, practically impossible, but in principle—in the same way that you can't count every number?*

**Peter:** That's why I say “an infinite variety”, and not just an infinite number of things. The numbers, at least, you can order, and you have a single principle for getting access to them. I guess it would be like saying, “The rules of chess are simply the relationships among the chess pieces, and/or the chess moves, for a game of chess.” But then, what's a game of chess? It's anything that fits that set of rules. So you might work it in a correspondence sense, but not—I think—as something that would replace that and enable you just to talk about these [**Objects, Processes, etc.**] It's not clear one way or the other, but it looks like you can't.

You might also compare this to a language, which simply enables you to generate sentences. It doesn't at all determine which sentences you might want to generate. It will generate, “There's a chair there,” but it will also generate “twas brillig and the slithy toves”.

**Terry:** *Does the language generate the sentences, or does a person generate sentences?*

**Peter:** Considered as a system, you can say that the system generates, but again, saying that the person generates is already given, and that's exactly what I'm pointing to over here [**SAS**]. It does not have an independent reality; it is an aspect of someone's behavior.

**Steve A:** *So isn't that a ### way of talking, then?*

**Peter:** No, it is the way we do talk.

**Daniel:** *What's an aspect—language?*

**Peter:** No. The cognitive parameter is an aspect of a person's behavior. That's what parameters are—aspects.

**Terry:** *What is an aspect of a process? Is there a name for that?*

**Peter:** The process format gives you the aspects of process. It is, in effect, a parametric analysis, in that it tells you what you have to specify about a given process to distinguish that process from other processes.

**Terry:** *One of the ways is, you can break down a process into sub-processes.*

**Peter:** No. You need a recursive rule that says that a process divides into processes. All that a parametric analysis will do is to enable you to compare processes, to specify and identify one. But it takes a rule that says, “A process divides into processes.” Then you can generate processes indefinitely.

**Terry:** *And we get that from the State of Affairs System.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *So linking that back up with behavior, we could end up saying that knowledge is a process.*

**Peter:** No. The behavior is a process, and the particular knowledge that's involved is one of the things that distinguishes this process from other processes. It's perfectly straightforward.

**Terry:** *But since processes divide into other processes, you should be able to take the elements of a process and transform them into subprocesses.*

**Peter:** Only the *process* aspects of processes can be done.

**Terry:** *Okay, now this gets me to an interesting point which I've always wondered about. When I look at a process, how do I distinguish between the process aspects and the other kinds of aspects of a process?*

**Peter:** Forget it. There is no question of that sort.

**Steve A:** *Were you saying it could be just any descriptive form would be equally—*

**Terry:** *No, that's what he's not saying. You're not saying that these are all equally transformable, because otherwise you wouldn't have qualms about—*

**Peter:** What you're talking about is an outcome, and the outcome in no way can be connected logically to any kind of process. Therefore it makes no sense to ask how, in principle, do I do it. You do it in any of the ways it can

be done. It has whatever history it may have. It's like saying, "How does one get to a given place?" In whatever ways, in fact, it can happen. There isn't a way of getting there.

In general, asking, "How do we do X?" is going to be an idle question.

**Terry:** *You mean it's an abstraction. I'm asking—*

**Peter:** No, it's an idle question.

**Terry:** *—how to do something in general that you can only do in the concrete.*

**Peter:** Yeah, and nothing hinges on the answer to that question. Nothing we do depends on having that answer, and so that's an idle question.

**Terry:** *How about taking behavior for a moment, though, and sort of running through like a concrete way of doing that.*

**Peter:** Doing what?

**Terry:** *Well, looking at a behavioral process—*

**Peter:** No, that's not what we're into here. All we're into is that behavior has already, ad nauseum, been given this parametric analysis [**Fig. 4, p. 345**], that these are parameters of the behavior, and it has process aspects—that is, behavior *is* a process, and that's what connects it here. Beyond that, right now, we are not interested in behavior.

**Terry:** *Okay, then I'll drop it. The logic that's confusing me is that on the one hand you're saying behavior is a process, in the sense I get that the two are co-extensive logically, and then you're saying that there are process aspects of behavior; and then I get the sense that you're saying that the two are not co-extensive logically. So I'm hearing two contradictory things.*

**Peter:** The chair is brown. Those are not co-extensive logically. Behavior has a process aspect. Process features are ways that one behavior can differ from another, but there are other ways that behaviors can differ from one another.

**Terry:** *So that would be a good analogy, that the chair is brown, for behavior is a process, in terms of the sense in which it is a process.*

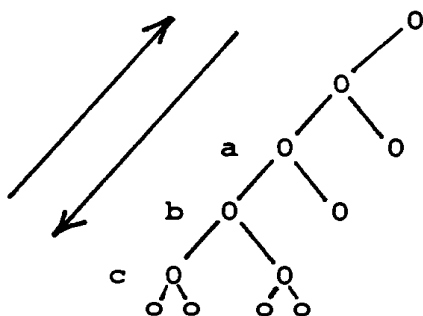
**Peter:** Yeah. The color aspects of the chair, the process aspects of behavior—that would be a parallel.

Okay, now this is just a general set of connections, that you have to read the exposition to see the detail of those connections. But by diagramming them, I can at least indicate that these four things [**Object, process, etc.**] are logically related; they're defined in terms of one another. That's why



you do not have worlds without people, because worlds appear here [Fig. 3, p. 343, K=SAS] as aspects of people's behavior. Conversely, if you ask what is a person, a person is an object in a world, and a person's behavior is a process in a world. A person is one object among others, and person's behavior is one process among others. And the "among others" brings us back to a state of affairs as a totality of related objects, processes, events, and states of affairs. There is some such totality within which there are objects of this sort [persons] and processes of that sort [behaviors], and here the concept of just such a totality. And it's because they are mutually implicated that you don't have a foundation problem, that they don't need anything to hold them up because they hold each other up.

**FIGURE 5**



The distinction between reality and real world depends on a technicality of this system [SAS]. The technicality is that all these things have recursive rules, that objects divide into objects, processes divide into processes, and states of affairs divide into states of affairs. And that means that you can start with an object and divide it into further objects, and then divide each of these into further objects, and so on indefinitely. You can also start with an object and combine it with other objects to generate a bigger object, and then combine that one with other objects to get bigger objects, and you can do that indefinitely, considered as purely formal moves. And that's like saying you can start with a number 1, you can add 1 and get 2, and you can add 1 and get 3, and you can add 1 and get 4, and you can do that indefinitely. Now going down this way [a-b-c], I introduced the technical term for it, and that's decomposition. You can decompose an object into other, related objects, and those—being objects—can be decomposed into still other related objects, and those—being objects—can be decomposed, etc. So decomposition is a way of going to smaller and smaller things, indefinitely.

**Terry:** *Without remainder?*

**Peter:** Just indefinitely.

**Terry:** *But can an object always be decomposed into a set of smaller objects without remainder?*

**Peter:** It's always without remainder.

**Terry:** *Okay, but that to me seems to imply—and I know you're going to cringe—an ontological assertion about the nature of objects.*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *Because you're saying that objects don't decompose into some sub-objects and some sub-processes, for example. Could you posit a limiting case?*

**Peter:** No. That's the point, that you can go on indefinitely, and unless you introduce some limiting cases, the whole system isn't usable in certain ways. If you introduce limiting cases, then it is usable in certain ways. And it's in the introduction of limiting cases that you generate real worlds. That's exactly how you generate a real world, is to introduce some limiting cases, and then everything else follows.

**Daniel:** *Pete, you talk about formal moves. What would you consider an informal move? What's the distinction—*

**Peter:** Something like Terry's commentary. It's informal, it's not part of the system, it brings in concepts that are not systematic. Whereas here, you see, you have a rule that is part of the system, that says that an object divides into smaller related objects, and you're making use of exactly that rule in going from here [a] to here [b], and you are using exactly the same rule to go from here [b] to here [c], and you're using exactly that rule to go—each time you're using exactly that rule, and that rule is part of the system. So this is a systematic procedure. In contrast, introducing other notions like ontology or assumptions or things of that sort are commentary, and they are informal.

**Daniel:** *I have one question: you use a term like "decompose"—what's the foundation—*

**Peter:** It's simply a descriptive word. If somebody talks to you in an ordinary conversational context and says, "You can decompose that chair into parts," that's quite understandable. If you divide something into parts, you've decomposed it. That's descriptive of what goes on here [Fig. 5, p. 349]. You can take any object and decompose it into smaller objects.

**Daniel:** *Yeah, but “divide” seems to be more appropriate, but yet “decompose” is your choice of words.*

**Peter:** Yeah—remember, you can divide numbers, too. You can’t decompose numbers. “Decompose” carries the material-object connotation, and that one is preferable than something that doesn’t, because where we want to use it in general is in connection with material objects. We don’t want to just say “division”.

Okay, now with processes you have the same story. You have a rule that says, “Any process divides into processes, and since it divides into processes, those processes divide into processes, and since those are processes, those divide into processes, and so you can continue that division indefinitely, and that, too, is decomposition.” Now going in this direction [Fig. 5, p. 349, c-b-a] of starting with more than one object, introducing the relation between them, and then composing those into a bigger object—that procedure is composition. And that procedure stems from one of the other rules in the system.

**Wynn:** *Is there any limit? I can’t see a logical limit to breaking down processes—*

**Peter:** No, there’s no limit.

**Wynn:** *But at a certain point, it’s sort of asymptotic on the notion of event, in that you could probably argue that in terms of objects, there are probably certain limiting cases to historically particular objects, in terms of what is the actual process.*

**Peter:** Again, you don’t want to worry about those things.

**Wynn:** *That’s just living in the world, I guess.*

**Bob:** *Do you have that same recursive sort of relationship?*

**Peter:** Yeah. Remember the recursiveness here, with states of affairs: you can divide a state of affairs into states of affairs, and so on. You can compose two states of affairs into a third state of affairs. So state of affairs, object, and process all can be composed and decomposed.

**Wynn:** *Yet there’s no reductionism. With relationship there would be, I suppose.*

**Peter:** And events, since they’re parasitic on state of affairs, can also be composed. They can’t be decomposed, but they can be composed. You can take two events, make them equivalent to a state of affairs, introduce another

state of affairs, and make the dividing line a new event. So you can do some of the things with events that you can do with object, process, and state of affairs, but not everything. Specifically, you can't take a single event and decompose it into two events.

This gives you a notion of the kind of moves you can make, and what you can generate using the formal system. You can introduce any object, process, event, state of affairs, start composing, decomposing, paraphrasing objects into states of affairs into processes, paraphrasing processes into states of affairs into objects, you can make all those kinds of moves. Now the essential characteristic, or the crucial characteristic for us now is that there's no place to stop. There is not a specific number of moves or a specific set of moves that you can or have to make. There is an indefinite set, there is a limitless set. There are several limitless sets. There's an unlimited set of limitless sets. [laughter].

Okay, there really is. That means that just taken as a calculus, that system is hard to get a handle on, because it just has too many possibilities; it's not constrained in any way. Now, you can constrain it by introducing limiting cases. For example, you can start with—

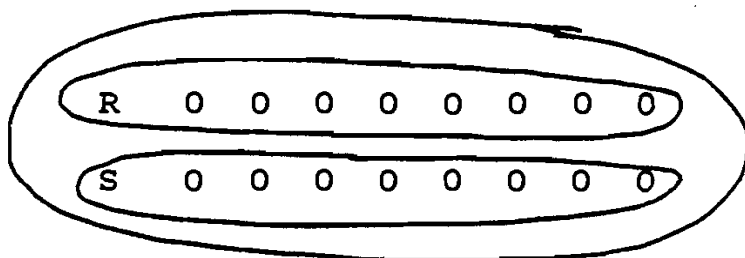
Before we go into that, because of the equivalences, you can take an ordinary world like ours and describe it as a single large object simply by taking everything in it and combining them in a compositional way, and it's one big object. So you can represent everything there is in the form of an object description. You can also represent everything there is in the form of a process simply by translating objects into processes and then processes composing the processes. You can paraphrase everything as a state of affairs: the entire world as just one big fact. Indeed, you can do that. And you can represent everything as a sequence of events. And those four descriptions will be equivalent, and you can start with anyone of them and paraphrase it in each of the other ways.

**Bob:** *Why not a series of interrelationships?*

**Peter:** Because relationships don't exist in the abstract, and they don't exist by themselves. There has to be something that *is* related. Its being related is a state of affairs. You see, a relation like "above" does not occur. There have to be things such that one is above the other; then the fact that one is above the other is a state of affairs. So "relation" is the odd term here. It doesn't operate the way that these do. It's implicated in all of them, but it's not another one just alongside all these others.

The same with concepts. A concept gives you the connection between the whole system and behavior, where it has a place. When you're talking about behavior, you say "The State of Affairs System is a concept, a conceptual system." That's why "concept" is the other reality concept. It doesn't have a place in the system; it gives the system a place in reality.

**FIGURE 6**



Now imagine that you go through this kind of procedure of decomposition, and down here you have a bunch of objects; and because you do it from decomposition, you know ahead of time that everything is composed of these objects. Because the way you got these objects is to take everything and decompose that, and this is what you wind up with, so that's what everything is made up of.

These objects are related in whatever ways they are. Remember: a state of affairs is a set of related objects, processes, etc. Suppose that you say, "Okay, but formally we could decompose each of these [O's] into smaller ones, but we're not going to. We're going to set a limit here and say that these are the end-points of our decomposition; these are our fundamental, ultimate objects." Having stopped, you can say straightforwardly that everything else is built up out of these and their relationships.

So, you next specify: what kind of objects are these? Whatever kind you specify carries with it, implicitly, what relations an object of that kind could have with some other one. So if you say that these are material objects, then you know that the relations that they can have are spatial and temporal and any variations thereof. So by specifying the type of object, the logical type, you also specify what relations objects of that kind could have.

And the reason those two go together is that it's a tautology. What distinguishes one type of object from another is precisely what relations an object of one type can have. So by specifying the type of object that you have as the ultimate object, you also specify what relations they could have

with one another. Therefore, you specify all of the possibilities for that set of objects. Therefore, what you've defined is a world: a world consisting of these objects and their possibilities of relationships and change of relations. But the changes will be from one possible relation to another, from one possible configuration to another one. So what you've done is, you've generated a world, a totality of a certain kind of object, and there's no other kind, so that's all the objects there are, that's the only kind there is, and therefore, there can only be certain things happening, and there can only be certain things be the case. And the totality of that is a world.

**Wynn:** *Pete, would you bring in the notion of different worlds? Can you still align both World A and World B via some world that is both worlds?*

**Peter:** Sometimes, sometimes not.

**Wynn:** *So you could perhaps have—the connecting frame, I guess, would be “person”. I don’t know how to do it, but let’s say you had a case where you had worlds that you couldn’t connect in terms of a greater object. Then won’t you have a possibility of two totalities?*

**Peter:** Yeah. What you define is one totality, by specifying a type of object.

**Wynn:** *Now a person—let’s assume that the only connecting feature in terms of having a point in talking about this would be persons—so presumably “person”—I’m afraid of the “person” label because I don’t know if the person would have the same label in both worlds—but the connecting link between the two worlds, if it is that person, would he be described then as the totality that includes both? Or would they have to be like state-specific, memory-specific worlds?*

**Peter:** I think state-specific, and the problem you raise is the inside/outside. Remember, last time we said that if you're operating within Christianity, you use words like “sacred” and “holy” and “God”, but you don't use them, except in a special sense, if you're not operating within it. Likewise, when you talk about possible worlds, you're going to have to talk differently depending on whether you're operating in one or not in one. So it's hard to raise questions about what would be the case in this purely hypothetical world, if by that you mean, “How would one talk if one were in that?” If you only mean, “How would one talk from the outside?” you've already done that in specifying it as a possible world.

**Wynn:** *Any time I talk about another world, I’m talking about it here, I’m doing that—*

**Peter:** You're doing it from here.

**Wynn:** *Now presumably, if I'm such a person—and I don't know—such a person that has access to two worlds, and these are worlds that are somehow exclusive in that one can't compose the relations between the two—I'm wondering how you could describe relations except by that person, and then the question would be, "Who is that person?"*

**Peter:** The question is, "Who's asking?" You see, if that were a fundamental question, there would be nobody to ask, and then there couldn't be that kind of question to raise with anybody.

**Wynn:** *That's why I was raising the question whether you could have two exclusive worlds.*

**Peter:** Yeah, you can. Formally, you can.

**Wynn:** *Formally, we talk also about the concept of person, and worlds have to be worlds for people, in terms at least of this commitment here, so for any person to claim that there are exclusive worlds*

**Peter:** As a matter of fact, I can give you commonplace examples of exclusive worlds, but we need to be clear about the way you generate a world by going to an ultimate set of objects, and then specifying the type of object, to see that that immediately specifies all of the possibilities—the total set of possibilities, and that that set of possibilities is a world. The only thing that remains is to say which of those possibilities is the actuality. If you have a world of material objects, defined by their being material objects, you still have the problem of what do these particular objects—how do they actually relate to one another.

Now, to generate a different world, all you have to do is to specify a different kind of object [Fig. 6, p. 353, S ff.]; then the possible relations among those will be different from the possible relations among these [R ff.]. None of these [R] objects will be one of these [S] objects. The total set of possible facts involving these [R] objects will have no overlap to this one [S].

**Jane:** *So then any one world will have just one kind of object in it? Is that what you're saying?*

**Peter:** No, this is the simplest case. Then that is complicated by saying that you can have a world that involves two basic kinds of objects and their relationships, as long as you specify those two, and the possible relations between an object of this [R] kind and an object of that [S] kind. Again you've got a distinctive world.



**Wynn:** *You might argue that that's the case for us, in terms of people who hold a spiritual world as a concept that they work on, in which there are spiritual objects as opposed to material objects.*

**Peter:** You don't need to go that far, because at this point we can take some of the commonplace examples of talking about the baseball world, and the world of economics, and the world of art, and the world of chess, the world of nature, the world of biology, the world of physics, and then—the real world. Any theory—a theory in physics, a theory in biology, a theory in psychology, a theory in economics, or anything governed by a set of rules like chess, baseball, etc., will generate a set of fundamental objects and the possible relations among them, so it will generate a world.

**Terry:** *Are you saying it depends on the subject matter? What do you mean by the phrase, "generates its own set of objects"?*

**Peter:** What did I say?

**Jane:** *You said it generates a world—*

**Peter:** What is it that generates a world? I said that any theory, any set of rules, will generate its own set of objects—yeah. What's problematic about that? Is there something mysterious about saying that chess generates its own set of objects, namely, pawns, kings, bishops, etc.? That baseball generates its own set of objects, namely, batters, bats, balls, bases, base lines?

**Terry:** *I thought I knew what you were saying, but then I paraphrased that as—*

**Peter:** Or that psychoanalytic theory generates organisms, egos, ids, super-egos, drives, cathexis, etc.?

**Terry:** *So then wouldn't you say that it's inventing a subject matter, which is to study instances of its own concepts?*

**Peter:** Well, you might. I just said, "You generate a world."

**Terry:** *Is that an acceptable paraphrase?*

**Peter:** Any world, you can take as the subject matter for investigation, and so you can say you've generated a subject matter.

**Steve P:** *It seems to be a funny kind of use for the term "world".*

**Peter:** But we do. Notice that we do, in ordinary conversation, use exactly that kind of locution: the art world, the baseball world, the chess world, the world of nature, the physical world.

**Steve P:** *We don't get ### "universe" that way.*

**Peter:** Why it makes sense is that what you've got is an encapsulated set of facts. You can take the same object, the chess piece, and talk about it in other terms, but the *facts* about a chess piece don't connect to facts about non-chess pieces. You can take that chair and describe it in economic terms, but you can also describe the same object in physics terms, but the facts of economics don't connect to the facts of physics. The objects—you have an intersection, but not the facts.

**Wynn:** *The locus of study as opposed to the subject matter.*

**Peter:** That's right. In *What Actually Happens*, that comes under Section 5, in the discussion of "where you look" versus "what it is or what you study".

**Steve:** *But those worlds are all connected, and we recognize the connections.*

**Peter:** How are they connected?

**Steve P:** *We recognize that any one of those is not adequate, and it is in its connections with the other ones that the adequacies are—*

**Peter:** Adequate for what? Do you need physics to play chess?

**Steve P:** *Yeah. It helps hold the pieces on the board, it helps gets the—*

**Peter:** No, no. Physics didn't exist before a hundred years ago, but chess has been with us for many thousands.

**Terry:** *Do you think before the invention of physics—*

**Steve P:** *Okay, then you're not talking about our representation of something as the world.*

**Peter:** What does that contrast with?

**Steve:** *There's no such thing as mass, there's only our concept of it.*

**Peter:** No, no, there is such a thing as mass, just like there is such a thing as a pawn. But mass is involved in one set of objects, namely, physical objects, and pawns are involved with another set of objects, namely, chess objects, and there is no connection.

**Steve A:** *You can play chess without actually having them. You can just sit across from each other and say what moves you're making.*

**Daniel:** *Pete, when you opened the discussion, you said, "How can you change a person from living in one real world to another real world?" It seems different, now that we're this far, than talking about the object—the chair. It seems*

*like we're talking more about the view, we're talking about the person's view of the world, rather than—*

**Peter:** No, because a world is a totality that includes all of these views. The real world of the chair includes all of the views of the chair. You're not getting into a different world by getting a different view of the chair. That's the kind of totality that a real world is, is the totality of everything. It's inherent in that notion—

**Daniel:** *The chair doesn't change. Our views change.*

**Peter:** I know, but those views are part of the same world, the world that includes you, places, and chairs.

**Daniel:** *Okay, there is—I'm equating the chair to the world that everybody shares, that everybody has a view of. Is that a legitimate—*

**Peter:** No, because it's essential to the chair that you see it from someplace.

**Daniel:** *But there is some—there is a place where we're living, that we're getting views—and I think that's comparable to the chair, that where we're deriving all this information—there is a planet Earth, and that's—[laughter]*

**Peter:** If you wanted to talk about seeing the chair from someplace on the chair, that would be comparable.

**Wynn:** *It's like for a Flatlander, that chair would be perhaps four points, and the Flatlander could have those terms. [change tape]*

**Peter:** —it's probably misleading to think in terms of "views of the real world".

**Terry:** *But you've already demonstrated to us that—*

**Peter:** And we don't usually. We do talk about views of the chair, but we talk about knowledge of the real world. The difference is that you can look at a chair; you can't look at the world in any interesting sense. The way you look at the world is to look at some part of it, while the way you look at the chair is to not look at some part of it, you look at the chair. So there are certain kinds of comparisons that you can't effectively carry over when it comes to the logic of seeing something from some place. So you're going to lose that if you start talking about the world as though it was a thing that we had an outside view of, when we're *in* the world.

**Terry:** *You only see part of the chair from where you're standing. You don't see the whole chair.*

**Peter:** I see the whole chair.

**Terry:** *No, there are parts of it that are cut off from view.*

**Peter:** That's right, but I still see the whole chair, or rather, I don't see the whole chair; I see the chair.

**Steve P:** *I don't see the whole world, but I see the world.*

**Terry:** *Yeah, so the logic is symmetrical.*

**Peter:** What I'm pointing out is that you're going to have trouble assimilating views of the world to views of the chair. Because you're in the world; you're not outside looking at it.

**Terry:** *The general thrust of this argument, though, seems to be like, are you giving us a sense for "the real world" as we experience it, or are you just giving us a sense for the concepts of "the real world" as we use them in discourse? Or is that ### locus of study?*

**Peter:** Neither. What I said is: you can generate a world in this way, by specifying a single type of object. Then I said, you're not restricted to a single type; you can have two types, you can have three types, you can have some number of types. But you do specify those ultimates explicitly. Then that will generate a world. Then I said, worlds that are specified by reference to different objects will have no connection with one another. Then I gave you examples of worlds of that sort, common examples. I said, the *facts* of those worlds don't connect. We, people, connect the physical world to the material object world to the art world to the economic world, but that's because we stand outside all of these worlds, because we are standing in the real world. But these worlds, considered as worlds, are simply worlds, and we do talk that way, and we do have these worlds.

**Jim:** *I'm having trouble seeing how physics is generated from the specification of a specific single type of object.*

**Peter:** If you think of those ultimate particles that physicists are so fond of, those are your ultimate objects. As time goes on, they change their minds and introduce more and more, but there is always a finite set of objects of a certain type—a finite set of different types of objects, that are ultimate in physics, and everything is composed of those objects in the relations that those objects could have to one another. From that, the whole universe, the whole physical universe, is constructed—or reconstructed, better.

**Jim:** *How about baseball?*

**Peter:** The same thing. What kind of facts can you have? What kind of objects do you have? What kind of processes and events? You have batters, you have pitchers, you have a first-baseman, you have a second-baseman, third-baseman. You have events like pitching or striking out or getting a base hit. You have processes like running the bases.

**Jim:** *But I don't see the specific object that's—*

**Peter:** The specific object is the batter, the pitcher, the plate, the fence, the base line, the ground.

**Jim:** *What type would that be, though?*

**Peter:** A baseball object.

**Jim:** *So it's exclusive rather than ultimate—*

**Peter:** But in the baseball world, those are ultimates. They don't reduce to something else, and if you try to substitute something else, you're out of that world entirely.

**Cory:** *Pete, is there some difference between different realities in the real world?*

**Peter:** There aren't different realities.

**Cory:** *Then is the name "separate reality" a misnomer?*

**Peter:** It's not a misnomer. It's that it doesn't correspond to this analysis. What Carlos calls "a separate reality" is what I'm calling "different real worlds".

**Cory:** *But then it seems like most people living in a real world could ###—say, baseball*

**Peter:** You have the same issue there as "baseball world is different from football world", but also, within the real world—which is where we live—all of those are part of that. So in that sense, they're not different worlds. They're different worlds per se, but since they're all in a real world, they are not after all, or ultimately, totally separate.

**Steve A:** *When you're talking about the real world, then we don't live in different real worlds.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Steve A:** *Okay, let's clear that up, because I think we all do live in different real worlds.*

**Peter:** We couldn't. Look: if we all really did live in different worlds, you couldn't say what you said. In your real world, there is the fact of all of us, and the fact that we have our different outlooks on things, but that's part of the limiting of your world.

**Steve A:** *You're limiting "real world", then, to having different ultimate objects.*

**Peter:** No. If you've read the thing, remember that introducing ultimate objects is only one way of establishing a limiting case, and that's not the way you get a real world. The ultimate objects are the way you get baseball worlds, physics worlds, biology worlds, etc. They are not the way you get the real world.

**Steve A:** *You're talking about the real world, then, as a state of affairs that includes all other states of affairs.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's the real world.

**Steve A:** *Okay, now in that sense, we all perceive or experience different states of affairs.*

**Peter:** I know, but *that* we do is a state of affairs also, and that is one thing that we share.

**Daniel:** *How about these individual real worlds and the real world?*

**Peter:** When I say "the totality of states of affairs", I mean literally the totality, not just a whole bunch of them, but *all*, and you have to have that one available to say that we live in different worlds. And we do in this sense of "different worlds" [Fig. 6, p. 353]—

**Steve A:** *In the sense of possibilities, we live in the same real world, as this set of possibilities. But in terms of actual worlds—*

**Terry:** *Here's a line that gets uninteresting, because it no longer becomes interesting where—what you want to do is then specify the degree to which we are in the same room and different worlds.*

**Peter:** But you already have a way of getting at that cleanly. There's nothing fuzzy about it. Saying that we all have our peculiar outlook is no different, in principle, from saying, "In this world there are baseball players and there are football players," and football has nothing to do with baseball, in the sense that it's a totally different system. On the other hand, both of those appear within a larger context which includes them both, and within that larger context you can draw comparisons, similarities, they are both ball games, etc., etc. So you have a way of specifying the sense in which they are

different, separate, even the sense in which they're totally separate. You also have a way of specifying the ways in which they are not separate, and the ways in which they are comparable, the ways in which they are similar or different. So there's nothing fuzzy about the facts that we know of that eludes our grasp. It's simply a matter of proper bookkeeping here.

**Terry:** *I think you're equating real world, then, with reality, which is what you—*

**Peter:** No. No.

**Terry:** *It's sort of like categorical thinking only goes so far, and then you sort of like get the books straight, and then you have to go to specific cases to get some texture, some richness, to make it interesting.*

**Peter:** Well, some do, some don't.

**Sherry:** *Is the world of baseball, then, a real world?*

**Peter:** No. You could say that, but there's problems.

**Wynn:** *In a way, substituting the word "subject matter" for "world" clarifies some of that.*

**Peter:** Think of a "world" as consisting of a set of facts, and then you'll see that saying that the baseball world is a real world is equivalent simply to saying that there is such a thing as baseball, and that's relatively innocuous. But other ways of saying it's real are pernicious, because then you might suppose that there was such a thing as baseball independently of actual people, or something like that.

**Daniel:** *Would it clarify it to say that each person has their individual real world, in the real world?*

**Peter:** You could do it, but again, you're inviting trouble to use the same word, namely, "real world", in ways that are clearly not identical.

**Daniel:** *But that seems to be what you're doing. You're talking about the real world, and then the real world. [laughter]*

**Peter:** No. I'm calling these [R, S] "worlds", and I keep contrasting "worlds" to "the real world".

**Daniel:** *But we started with "the real world", that every individual has—*

**Sherry:** *You said there was more than one real world.*

**Peter:** Formally, there is more than one real world. At least, systematically you can generate different real worlds. In that sense there's more than one



real world. It's like saying, "Look, there is more than one number system." You can operate with a base 10, you can operate with a base 2, you can operate with a base 8. However, when it comes to operating, you're going to be operating with one or the other, so once you're in operation, you have only one. Likewise, with real worlds, you can generate alternative real worlds, but if you're in one of them, that's the one you're in and for you there is only that one.

**Sherry:** *So we all have to be in the same one.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Either we're in the same one, or we don't exist for one another. So since we do—we are.

[general conversation]

**Daniel:** *Hey, it seems like a good time to take a break, and we can come back to it.*

**Peter:** Shall we break with reality?

**Steve A:** —*the problem of "the real world" being different from "the world" being formally possible for persons—when you said it's that kind of thing, when you're dealing with don Juan, that's where you're doing it.*

**Peter:** No, you're not dealing with—

**Steve A:** *Is that what you're trying to say, that you're not dealing with different worlds?*

**Peter:** I said that the sense in which you could say of us that we had a different real world, is not the sense in which, in don Juan, you're dealing with different real worlds. One of the reasons why I don't want to say that *we* have different real worlds is because there is another possibility, exemplified by that, which would qualify it. But us, *we* don't. We have our different knowledge, different other characteristics, of A [Fig. 1, p. 328], and that world includes all of us, and our characteristics and our knowledge; and the way that we use these personal characteristic descriptions is exactly to translate from yours to mine, so that yours is not totally just different and separate from mine—I can translate. If I know your characteristics, I know what allowances to make. So that's like saying, "If I know your position in relation to the chair, I know what allowances to make." So we have that kind of connection to one another, and we're in the same world. We did that, not only for the chair, but for Dan's behavior. We all have our views of Dan's behavior.

**Steve A:** *Okay—I'm wondering how much of a difference is enough to say that—*

**Peter:** It's not a matter of difference. It's a matter of connectedness. If you had somebody exactly like you, but wasn't connected to you in space and time, no way could you communicate with him. That would be enough. He could be identical with you, and you would still be in different worlds. And we could be as different from you as you wish, as long as we're connected to you in this way, we're in the same world.

**Steve A:** *And if you and I did not share these concepts connected in terms of knowledge concepts, powers, then we would say that we were ###.*

**Peter:** No, then you would stop saying "we". Because probably what you would say is quite different from what I would say. For example, you would say, "That chair is in my world, but I'm not in its world, because it doesn't have a world." There's an asymmetry there. But with you and me, we're the same kind of individual, we're historically related, we communicate, we have viewpoints of the same thing, and that's why we're tempted to say, "We each have our world." And indeed we do. We each have our world, and the world of Steve is like the world of baseball, and the world of Pete is like the world of football. We have our worlds in that sense. But there is also a larger world within which each of those two sets of facts has a place and a set of relations.

**Steve A:** *Okay, there's a differentiation here with don Juan saying, "I have a different world in which I—"—don Juan's able to communicate to Castaneda, understand what Castaneda's talking even though he might call it nonsense. He'd say, "That's nonsense to me." And it sounds like he's talking about—not that, like you said, it wouldn't make sense to talk about "we" with don Juan and Castaneda—it wouldn't make sense to talk about "we" in that sense, either.*

**Bob:** *Don Juan lives in this world, doesn't he? I mean, he can go to—*

**Steve A:** *He has access to both, sometimes.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Daniel:** *How do you distinguish between worlds? What factors—*

**Peter:** It's the kind of connectedness that distinguishes between worlds.  
[general conversation]

**Steve A:** *—dealing with a different real world. It's not a matter of a separate reality, he's using different concepts and powers and abilities.*

**Peter:** Look. Remember, I told you early on that we weren't going to get into problems of space and time, but that there was a literature in which there was a number of interesting articles on that, and one of them, I said, is the problem: could you have disconnected spaces? And the kind of exposition you have is—suppose that people have a peculiar power to snap their fingers in a certain way, and suddenly appear in a different surrounding, unconnected to the one they left, so that you couldn't trace a path from one to the other, that the dates did not correspond, that you couldn't say that something happening in that world was simultaneous with something happening here. You could simply say, "Sometimes I'm there, sometimes I'm here." And the heuristic example is dreams. When you have a dream, you're into—phenomenologically, at least—another world that has no connection, that does not appear on the same calendar. Events in your dreams do not have dates. It's simply a different totality. Now if you could snap your fingers and somehow appear in something like a dream world, and then snap your other hand and appear back here, then you could say, "People live in one or another of two distinct worlds."

**Steve A:** *Or you would say that person lives in one real world which includes—*

**Peter:** Now you could also say, "There is one world that includes two parts that have only this most tenuous sort of connection, namely, that a person can be in one or the other, and can get from one to the other, even though there's no path."

**Wynn:** *Since probably the middle nineteen-teens, this has been probably the hotbed in physics, in terms of quantum mechanics. Do particles really have to somehow—what form do they take between the electron rings?*

**Peter:** You can see that this is a limiting case of connectedness. If that's the only connection between these two worlds, that a person can be in one or the other and get from one to the other, that's as little—

**Steve A:** . *For the person who does that, his real world is both worlds.*

**Peter:** That's why you *can* say there is one world. But at the same time, you certainly wouldn't say that somebody was being misleading in saying there's two real worlds.

**Steve A:** *So for don Juan, you would say there's one real world. I can't see it—my real world does not include the same things as his real world.*

**Peter:** You could say that, but apparently don Juan doesn't. He has a tendency to talk as if they were two distinct ones, and we, in looking at those

facts, say, “Well, you could just as easily say there’s one world that includes both ordinary and sorcery.”

**Steve A:** *For him, it’s just one real world..*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Daniel:** *Pete, not using the don Juan example, but using the example you’ve given before of different real worlds—*

**Peter:** The dream world?

**Daniel:** *Is there anything that would illuminate in distinguishing them? Could you give us some heuristic of two different real worlds?*

**Steve A:** *Are you pointing to something like space and time dimensions*

**Daniel:** *That’s clear. But you weren’t talking about Castaneda before. You were talking about changing one person’s real world to another real world. And it didn’t sound like you were talking about ###.*

**Peter:** It’s not just a space and time division. It’s also the nature of the objects that are there.

**Steve A:** *But the way to do it would be teaching someone how to snap their fingers and be there.*

**Daniel:** *But I’m thinking—when you started off saying, “How do you change one person’s real world to another real world?”, now I would like to be able to distinguish what we mean by “one person’s real world”, the difference between the real worlds that you alluded to, and you gave one example that didn’t sound as if it was analogous to what you originally started.*

**Peter:** Actually, we haven’t come to that yet. We haven’t yet developed the notion of “real world”. All we’ve done so far is develop the notion of “worlds”. We’re anticipating, in bringing in “real worlds”.

**Steve A:** *That’s where the problem is—okay.*

**Peter:** You remember, I said that objects, ultimate objects, was only one kind of limiting case, so it’s only one way of generating a real world. Well, maybe let’s move on, because the comparable one is processes.

You can consider the world as one big process, divided down into smaller and smaller processes, and at some point stop and say, “There’s nothing beyond this. These processes are the ultimate process; everything else that happens is built out of this kind of happening. Every other kind of goings-on consists of these kinds of goings-on.” So then you have a very

comparable situation. You have a type of process, or more than one type, and you say, “Everything that happens is some combination of these. Whatever goes on is these goings-on—in certain relationships, including sequence, parallel, etc.” Now keep in mind that processes can have object constituents, so you’re not dealing with abstract processes, necessarily. So all of the discussion we’ve had with objects, you can carry over to the notion of an ultimate process, and then a world built up out of those. In point of fact, we don’t have any good examples of that that I know of. Most of what we have by way of different worlds come from there being particular ultimate objects, but you could certainly do it in terms of ultimate processes. Both of these, you see, are a matter of decomposing, and then putting a limit to the decomposition. The third sort of limiting case is where you compose, and you compose states of affairs, and the limiting case is the state of affairs that includes all states of affairs. If you’re bothered by that, then it’s the one that includes all other states of affairs.

That’s one that has a precedence in the literature, in Wittgenstein’s TRACTATUS. He began the TRACTATUS, saying, “The world is everything that is the case. The world divides into facts, not things.” Well, this is in effect a technical implementation of that notion—that if you compose, in terms of states of affairs, you can have a limiting case, namely, the state of affairs that includes all other states of affairs.

**Steve A:** *Was Wittgenstein’s formulation of “real world” as—*

**Peter:** No, he didn’t say “real world”. He said, “The world is everything that is the case. The world divides into facts, not things.” This resembles that, but it by no means is the same thing. Because here [SAS] you can say, “The world does divide into things.” It also divides into processes. It also divides into events. It also divides into kinds. And you might add, “And the fact that it does is not reducible to an object, process, or event, but is a state of affairs.”

**Wynn:** *But that’s what Wittgenstein seemed to have meant by “facts”, in that first statement. It’s just a broader category.*

**Peter:** He also had a destructive third line, which says, “The world is determined by the facts, and by these being all of the facts.” And that’s the notion of a finite totality. With facts in the real world, there is no finite totality. It’s an infinite totality. There is no end to facts.

**Terry:** *Doesn’t that depend on your point of view with regard to temporality?*

**Peter:** No. Nothing whatever. You can generate an infinite set of facts from all kinds of trivial facts. If it's a fact that there's a chair there, then it's a fact that it's a fact that there's a chair there, and it's a fact that it's a fact that it's a fact that there's a chair there. So you can generate an infinite number of different facts in very trivial ways, that way. So there's no end to facts.

**Wynn:** *Do you think that's the sort of thing that Wittgenstein was talking about? Because you could also say, "It's a fact that there's a number 1, and it's a fact that there's number 2," and generate an infinity that way, and that doesn't seem to be the sort of case that—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but he wouldn't have called that—I don't think that what he was working would have enabled him to deal with exactly that statement.

**Wynn:** *Because I think that maybe what he meant by "The world is determined by the facts, and by these being all of the facts," is that the world is a totality.*

**Peter:** He didn't work it that way, because he had ultimate simples, and it was a totality of those that determined all of the facts. That's what got him into trouble is exactly that, that ultimately he had a set of objects, or what amounted to objects. Anyhow, the point is that this is not a take-off on Wittgenstein. This is simply something that happens to have some strong parallels, but also some fundamental differences. It did not stem, historically, from Wittgenstein.

Now what's the force of this business of the totality of states of affairs? And that's a very different notion, because the totality of states of affairs will include such states of affairs as there being different worlds, as there being individuals of the kind who can use concepts of different worlds, as there being individuals who can operate in different worlds or with different worlds. So within a totality of states of affairs, you can encompass the state of affairs of there being a whole lot of discrete, unconnected worlds. And that's, in fact, how we manage it.

**Steve A:** *When you include this notion of the totality of states of affairs, that notion includes the fact that there are many possible real worlds?*

**Peter:** No. "Many different worlds", and that there are individuals who operate in those worlds. And those individuals are of a certain kind, so you're still involved in specifying the kind of individuals that there are. But now there's no limit. You don't have to have a finite set, because for example, the fact that there is not a finite set is simply another state of affairs. So that the

possibilities inherent in this way of constructing a real world, with a limiting case, are broader than the possibilities of starting with ultimate objects and composing them.

**Terry:** *When we talk about our world based on ###, etc., could we sort of paraphrase that into different milieus? Is that the same sort of thing you're talking about?*

**Peter:** I doubt it. Unless I have a different idea of milieu, but a milieu is simply a surrounding, but here we are in the same surrounding, and that same surrounding can be operated on in any of these ways. We can operate on it physically, esthetically, theologically, behaviorally. The milieu is simply a locus.

**Terry:** *I guess I'm talking, maybe, about a metaphorical extension of that concept, then, because we talk about also a certain social milieu, things of that sort.*

**Peter:** I don't think that's profitable.

**Terry:** *Again, it's just making the word "world" do so many different things. It's sort of like—*

**Peter:** No. A world is a totality of facts, here. This world [Fig. 6, p. 353, R] is a totality of facts of a special kind. This world [S] is a totality of facts of a special kind. The real world is a totality of facts of a still different kind. In all of these cases, the world is a totality of facts. So it's not using it in different senses.

**Terry:** *And in each of these cases, we're not—*

**Peter:** What we're generating is different cases, but we're not using the word in a different sense.

**Terry:** *And in each case we're characterizing what that world's about, and we're not really concerned with its origin.*

**Peter:** There's no origin question here.

**Terry:** *When you say there's no origin question, it's—*

**Peter:** An origin question has to come from within a world, within which there are objects that can have temporal relations, and within which there are other objects that can raise temporal questions. Otherwise there is no temporal question, and no question of origins.

**Daniel:** *Pete, we're using "world" as we would use "universe" or "domain"?*



**Peter:** Yeah. A world is a domain of facts. A subject matter is a domain of facts, or a domain of possible facts. A world is a domain of possible facts. A given world is a domain of a special kind of possible facts. That's what distinguishes this world from other worlds, is the kind of facts that are involved.

**Steve A:** *And the real world includes all these—*

**Peter:** The real world is everything that is the case. Now that allows, as a possibility, that these [R, S] are the case, that there are distinct worlds that people operate with. It's not necessary; it allows that as a possibility—the formal notion of “real world”. It allows as a possibility that there are people, that there are objects of this kind [Persons]. It happens that this kind of object is the only kind that could know that there was such a world, so it would be pointless to introduce the concept of a world in which there was no such object to know about it, except as a limited—except as a world rather than as a real world. A real world could only be known by an object in it, namely, a person.

**Wynn:** *So it would depend on your evolutionary view, you could describe worlds as not only historical particulars, but also historical accidents. If you assume the fact of persons is an historical accident.*

**Peter:** You don't. Only within particular theories held by persons are persons a historical accident. But they're not per se historical accidents.

**Steve A:** *So it makes no sense to talk of “real worlds” [emphasis on the plural].*

**Peter:** It does.

**Steve A:** *If the real world is that which includes all worlds as the case—as the possibility.*

**Peter:** No, I didn't say that. I said that the formal specification of the real world includes, as a possibility, that there are worlds that are distinct from one another, and have a place within the real world. I didn't say *all* worlds. I said that there *are* worlds distinct from one another. What this means is, you can take all of that and simply multiply that. You can have a different totality of facts of that sort [R] that's entirely distinct from this [S] totality of facts.

**Terry:** Entirely *distinct*?

**Peter:** Entirely.

**Terry:** *The real world is everything that is the case, and if you can get two exclusive real worlds that don't overlap each other, at least in possibility—*

**Peter:** Why not?

**Terry:** *Because everything is the case in each of those worlds, and everything is—everything.*

**Peter:** No. If you specify the totality of possibilities, that specification will be a real world.

**Terry:** *Which will have to overlap with any other real world.*

**Peter:** No. A different specification of possibilities will be another real world.

**Wynn:** *Can you have separate real worlds without a conceptual overlap? Because if that would be the case, it seems to me those other real worlds—*

**Peter:** It's the conceptual overlap—it's the non-overlap conceptually that makes them distinct real worlds.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but they can have a conceptual overlap in that from World A, we can talk about World B, or talk about that there—*

**Peter:** Only as an imaginary world, only as a hypothetical world, not as a real world.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but that's the problem we're introducing, it comes from two places: one, the claim that all real worlds are somebody's real world, and two, what seems to be the claim—although I suspect isn't—that you could have real worlds that are exclusive, in the sense that Real World A would have no way or reference to the facts of Real World B.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Wynn:** *Now most of us or all of us are in World A, and there are no people, so to speak, in World B. Then World B couldn't be described as a real world.*

**Peter:** But I'm not describing anything as a second real world. I'm pointing to the formality, here, and saying that the formalism will generate representations of distinct real worlds.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but formally, I think, there's an error here, because it strikes me that formally, if the criteria of "real world" is that it be someone's real world, and if there are in fact exclusive real worlds—*

**Peter:** No, that's not the criterion.

**Wynn:** *Okay, if the fact of a world being a world is that it is somebody's real world—*

**Peter:** No, it isn't. That's still making it a criterion. The real world is generated formally by this limiting case, namely, a totality of states of affairs. There's no problem in having distinct totalities of states of affairs, because you have those here [**R and S**]. These two totalities are distinct, and if that's all there was, these two worlds would be distinct. What happens is that there is a larger totality, but these, as totalities, are entirely distinct. Now that being the case, there's no reason why a larger totality shouldn't be completely distinct from another comparable one.

**Wynn:** *Is there always, logically, a formal possibility of relationship between separate real worlds?*

**Peter:** Say that again.

**Wynn:** *There have to be relationship between—let's say we have two exclusive worlds. You know they're exclusive worlds—I'm not too sure I know that that means, yet—but even if there were exclusive worlds, wouldn't we have to posit at least some set of relationships that we could describe them as exclusive real worlds, such that we can relate the two together?*

**Peter:** No.

**Wynn:** *Well, how would you go from one world to another, then? How can it be a conceptual possibility, period?*

**Peter:** Because it's a formal possibility.

**Wynn:** *How can it be a formal possibility?*

**Peter:** Because there it is.

**Wynn:** *That doesn't buy it, because—*

**Peter:** Yeah, it does. That's exactly what I mean by it. I'm not doing ontology.

**Wynn:** *Right here, standing here, you conceptually can deal with both of those cases because you can show the relationship. There is a relationship.*

**Peter:** No. The relation is that they are both formal possibilities that fit the calculus, that fit that limiting case.

**Wynn:** *I guess what I'm asking—are there formal possibilities that don't fit the calculus? But first I want to know what an exclusive real world is. An exclusive real world—not an exclusive world.*

**Peter:** It's an exclusive totality of facts.

**Wynn:** *But does that exclude me from it, if I exist in this world?*

**Peter:** There's no mention of you in this! This is pure formality. [laughter]

**Wynn:** *Except in the formality of assigning a real world the status of real world.*

**Peter:** We're not status-assigning. We're dealing in a purely formal way with a representation of a world.

**Wynn:** *But our formal representation contains the concept of person.*

**Peter:** No.

**Wynn:** *Okay, that's where I'm confused, is on that line.*

**Peter:** One of the possibilities for a real world is that it should contain a certain kind of object, namely, this kind [**Person**]. I said a few minutes ago that only this kind of person could know that there was a world; therefore it would be pointless to represent a world without such an object, because who would be in a position to do that?

**Wynn:** *So conceptually, we could speak about totally separate real worlds for persons of that world, even if there is no overlap, no communication, no whatever.*

**Peter:** I prefer to keep it one hundred percent formal, because as soon as you introduce any kind of reality, you're into unknown problems.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but real worlds are historical particulars, that we could in fact talk about two historical particular worlds with no overlap.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Like the dream world. But again, just focus on the formalism, not on that kind of reconstruction. I think perhaps a good heuristic for this is to imagine English grammar, and then imagine that she and I both have the same grammar, but the vocabulary is entirely distinct, that nothing I say in English, or using that grammar, overlaps at all with anything that she says. All of our words are different, but the grammar is the same. So you can say, if you had a formal representation of the grammar, both of our languages would fit as possibilities, but there isn't in either language some way of talking about or representing the other language. That simply is a possibility within the grammar, but since the actual language is not the grammar—it's a grammar plus a particular vocabulary—you could easily have this kind of distinctness.

**Wynn:** *So it makes sense in terms of cultures, if you had a culture in which the social practices were completely different from the social practices of an*

*other culture, you could—in fact, you would be dealing with two separate real worlds.*

**Peter:** As a matter of fact, remember the business of “If a lion could speak, we wouldn’t understand him.” That’s an indication of the same kind of distinction.

**Theresa:** *On the subject of—if the real world is everything that’s the case, then wouldn’t that include all possible totalities—*

**Terry:** *You have to think of it like as a limited everything—that’s where I got screwed up. [general conversation].*

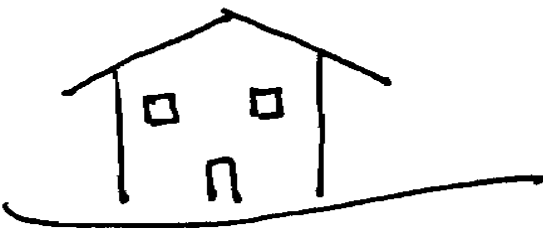
**Peter:** You’ve got to distinguish between description and representation. Saying “The world is everything that is the case” is a description, and that description could only be given by somebody who had something in mind. Over here [Fig. 5, p. 349], we’re merely talking about the ingredients that could be used for giving just such a description. But the ingredients aren’t the description.

Now there’s something. It can be used to tell somebody that there’s a cat on the mat. But it can also be used in any number of other ways—for example, to ask, “Did he say that there’s a cat on the mat?” So this alone will not tell you what it’s going to be used for. But it can indeed be used to give a description of a cat on the mat.

But all this is is a set of representational ingredients. What I’m saying is: here you have a set of representational ingredients that could be used by somebody to say, “Here’s what the real world is like.” But this does not consist of somebody saying, “Here’s what the real world is like.” This is only what could be used by somebody to say that.

In the same way, remember, I could draw a picture [blackboard], and I could use that picture to say, “This is what my house is like.”

## FIGURE 8



But just what's there is not a description of my house. It's not till I use it that way, does it become a description, does it have a truth value.

Now, when it comes to everything that is the case, when it's used as a description, it has to be used by a person, that is, a form of behavior by a person, and then the "everything" will be what *he* understands as everything. It will not be the formal notion of everything, over here. In the same way, if I talk about what's in this room, if *I* say it, it will be a question of what *I* distinguish as being in this room. If somebody else says it, it'll be a matter of what *he* distinguishes. But formally, the notion of "everything in this room" is not one of those or the other. It's what we each could use in specifying, but what we could use in specifying is not itself a specification.

**Theresa:** *So then each of those descriptions is not quite reality, is it? It's analogous to the viewpoint, then?*

**Peter:** Here we're dealing not yet with real worlds, but with concepts of real worlds. Because for a real world, you have to have these; whereas, the concept of the real world is simply this. Now what is that difference between an actual person and *his* totality of things, facts, versus the formal concept of just such a totality? Well, the difference is exactly what our issue is, namely, that you can have more than one. Given the formal specification [Fig. 5, p. 349], you can have more than one individual, each with a separate totality of that sort.

**Bob:** *But isn't the real world formally—isn't it the high circle which includes the fact that we have all these middle circles under it?*

**Peter:** No.

**Bob:** *I can see that we're all carrying around our own little worlds and everything, and then somehow that the real world is that state of affairs that includes the fact that we all do that, but it's not—*

**Peter:** It includes every other state of affairs, too, not just the fact that we all do that, but everything else that we find out about, or could. All of that is included.

**Bob:** *So we can't really—we don't usually perceive the real world. We only perceive our—something—of it.*

**Terry:** *Or is it like the concept of substance? You don't perceive a substance, you perceive tables and chairs.*

**Peter:** It's like the concept of touching a chair. You can only touch a chair by touching it somewhere. It's nonsensical to suppose that every single part of the chair, I would have to touch, in order to truly be said to touch the chair. If I see a building, it's enough that I see some parts of it. That's enough to say, "I see the building." That's the only way you *could* see a building, just as the only way you could touch a chair is to touch some part of it.

**Steve A:** *In general, you perceive it in the way you perceive the totality.*

**Peter:** Yeah, and the way that you would perceive the world is to perceive some part of it. You look out there and you see the Flatirons—that's a part of it. And that's the only way that you could perceive the world.

**Terry:** *I'm thinking of your use of the notion of substance by numerous thinkers—*

**Peter:** Never mind the notion of substance. There's no way that we're going to talk about substance. There are some terms that are just so absolutely pernicious that it's like the Tar Baby: once you introduce it at all, you've had it, and that's one of them.

**Terry:** *Well, I wasn't going to introduce it for systematic purposes, but—*

**Peter:** Never mind.

**Terry:** *-but it has—*

**Peter:** No way.

**Terry:** *—to the notion of world, in terms of its logical status.*

**Wynn:** *To reality, or to a world?*

**Terry:** *To a world.*

**Wynn:** *That sort of confusion—it seems that we're getting into the "reality" and "real world" distinction again.*

**Peter:** We haven't talked about "reality" at all yet. We haven't got the distinction clear—we haven't made it yet. [**change tape**] You guys keep anticipating. This traces from the formal system and the operations that are possible within it, to the notion of setting limiting cases and what the result of setting limiting cases is, namely, a form of representation that's suitable for representing a real world. I haven't said anything about reality yet.

**Theresa:** *If there's formally more than one real world, but that depends on a person knowing it—that person's own totality, then for any one person, at least*



*at any one point in time, there can only be one real world—right? Because they ### be outside of it.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Theresa:** *But over time, they can change? Is that what we're driving at?*

**Peter:** I think you would have to say that if that change took place, he wouldn't know it.

**Theresa:** *He wouldn't know it?*

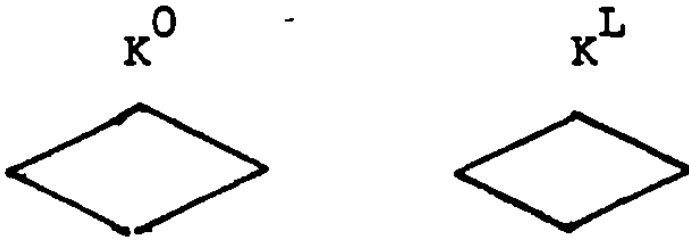
**Peter:** Yeah. You remember we had the same issue, if you change your way of life, what you now have is a new description of your whole life. It just happens that when that happens, you remember under your new description what you were like before. But if you were to change real worlds, in that sense, I think you'd almost have to say that since we have that non-overlap feature, that you would have lost touch. You would not remember, you would not be able to think of what it was like before, because in this world, those are no longer possibilities.

And in fact, I think that Wynn pointed out something like that as an explanation in psychoanalytic theory, for childhood amnesia, that the kind of distinctions that a child makes are so different from those that an adult makes, that that's why you can't remember what it was like as a child. You're now using your adult concepts, distinctions, and none of those were there, back then, so it doesn't exist for you.

**Theresa:** *Then what happens to—like, Castaneda?*

**Peter:** Like I said, with Castaneda, we have an in-between case, that it would equally well make sense to say that he has a single world composed of two sub-parts, as it does to say that he has two different ones. There's just enough connection so that he remembers, and that's why you can say it's one world, and he goes from one part to the other.

Okay, now, let's deal only with real worlds that have people in them, so that some of the objects that are part of the totality are person-objects, and with persons who know about the world or parts of it, so that you can say that what appears up here in their behavior is state of affairs notions, including the notion of the real world versus imaginary worlds, fictitious worlds, etc. Then we ask, "What is the range of behaviors that person can engage in?" and one of the things we can say is, "That range of behaviors is limited by these possibilities, by the possible facts that he can discriminate."

**FIGURE 9**

And now imagine somebody in a different real world, with a different set of possible facts [see Fig. 9], and say, “His range of behaviors will be limited by those possible facts.” And since there’s no overlap between those possible facts, none of these behaviors will be identical to any of these behaviors. They will differ in at least—at this place. In each world there will be a whole range of possible behaviors, delimited, among other things, by what’s here [ $K$ ]. But since there’s no overlap between what’s here [ $K^0$ ] and what’s here [ $K^L$ ], there is also no overlap between the behaviors. No two behaviors in those worlds are identical. They have to be different in at least this aspect [ $K$ ].

Now consider a very different notion of reality. “Real world”, as it works out here, is what you see when you look around you. It includes the objects, including human objects, that you see when you look around you. And it includes the relations among them and their histories and everything else about them. In that sense, it is simply a totality of related objects, processes, events, and states of affairs. Now consider this very different notion of reality, and the definition of reality is: the boundary condition on possible behaviors. Now we’re talking explicitly about what behaviors are possible.

**Daniel:** *Why are you introducing this?*

**Peter:** It’s a different notion—it’s the notion of reality.

**Terry:** *The boundary conditions upon possible—?*

**Peter:** Behaviors. And now let’s focus on exactly the same aspect of behavior, namely, the cognitive aspect. Again, a person is limited in what he can do; and he’s limited, in part, by the concepts he has, including concepts of the real world, including concepts of part of it. And were those to change, his behavioral possibilities would change. Except that what they would change into is a matter of brute fact. That’s the reality component. It’s a matter of

brute fact that there's a chair in this room right now. That does not come from the concept of reality. It does not come from the concept of real world. It comes from the historical particularity of *the real world* as contrasted to merely possible worlds. In the real world, there is a chair there now. Likewise, in reality, a given person is limited in some ways and not others.

**Daniel:** *Could "brute" be substituted for "physical"?*

**Joe S:** *Could you use "brute facts" as equivalent to "physical facts"?*

**Peter:** No. Physics is just one of these worlds.

**Daniel:** *The word "brute"—?*

**Peter:** It's one of those ultimate terms, that there's nothing beyond it. That's where you end.

You might say: the world is what simply is the case, not that had to be the case, but what is the case, and there's nothing lying beyond the "is". Particularly, there is nothing by way of transcendental necessity beyond it, and there's nothing called "substance" under it. It's simply what is the case. Now notice that in the real world, your behavioral possibilities are given by the objects and processes and your place in relation to them, that those do operate as constraining, and as providing, possibilities. And using those notions is status dynamics. Here, we have a different notion of explicitly talking about the constraints on possible behaviors, rather than talking about objects which provide the constraints. We're talking about the possibilities of behavior, of some form of behavior, rather than talking about objects that provide opportunities for those forms of behavior.

**Steve A:** *Wouldn't the descriptions of objects, processes, events in that person's world be determined by those concepts, anyway? Now we're talking about positive constraints on a world because of the concepts in that parameter—the concepts of that person, the concepts that person has. Where you're talking about the K parameter, you're really talking still about those objects and processes that give him opportunity. Those are all still part of it.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's what you're carrying around up here [Fig. 9, K]. But now I'm introducing a way of talking directly about limitations and possibilities of behavior, rather than doing it indirectly via reference to the objects in your environment and your relation to them.

**Steve A:** *Aren't you saying the same thing?*

**Peter:** Nope.

**Steve A:** *Because the limitations by those objects, processes, are those same limitations because they're the concepts that you have?*

**Peter:** No. Think of the limitation on my behavior from the fact that there's a wall here. What's the limitation on my behavior? Well, mainly that I can't push my hand through it, and I can't walk through it, and if I run against it, I'm going to feel some pain. So there are certain things I can and can't do by virtue of there being a wall there, you would say.

**Steve A:** *Given your real world.*

**Peter:** Right. Now suppose that I now startle you by just walking through that wall. **[laughter]** Just suppose that I could do that little thing.

**Wynn:** *We could start with chairs floating and disappearing.*

**Peter:** Even in our world, that's a possible fact. You might regard it as unlikely, and indeed, I would hope you would, but if I did it, you wouldn't say it's a logical impossibility, it couldn't possibly happen, You would say, (1) "Did it really happen?"—which shows that you are considering it a logical possibility, and then (2) "How did he do it? How come he could do it, and we can't?" Now that kind of fact is not allowed for by considering this a wall, and a wall being something that you can't push your hand through. If you put the constraints in terms of the object, that behavior would be impossible. But if the constraints are simply on what am I able to do, then there is no such constraint except as a matter of brute fact.

That means that if you're dealing with the simple constraint upon possible behaviors, you're also allowing the possibility that I can switch from operating with these concepts [Fig. 9, p. 378,  $K^0$ ] to operating with those concepts [ $K^L$ ].

**Terry:** *How's that different from solipsism?*

**Peter:** There's no connection whatever to solipsism. It's more like saying, "I can play baseball, and I can play chess, and even though there's no connection among them, I can engage in that form of behavior, and I can engage in that form of behavior. So even though there's no connection, the limitation on my behavior is not that I can't do either one. There is no such limitation on *my* behavior. I can do one and then I can do the other. Even though, within baseball, there's nothing of a chess-like nature; and, within chess, there's nothing of a baseball-nature, I can go from one to the other. So the constraints on my behavior are not the same as the constraints of either world."

At this point, you have another relativistic formulation, namely, that

what's so is what I can treat as being so and get away with it. And my getting away with it is anything that can be treated as my getting away with it, and be gotten away with, ad infinitum.

**Wynn:** *So science is a systematic set of statements you can get away with?*

**Peter:** Yeah. As a matter of fact, if you remember the diagram in the Outline, exactly why science is closely connected to other realities is that we invent other worlds and can get away with it, because we can act on those new distinctions, those new sets of distinctions that we then introduce. And that's like having invented chess. You introduce a whole set of concepts, a way of acting on those distinctions, a set of practices that involve making those distinctions and acting on them, and you've generated a new world. But not a new *real* world. So talking about the constraints on possible behaviors and calling that "reality"—in many ways it sounds like just a minor switch, but notice now that reality is in no way what you see when you look around you. When you look around you, you do not see anything that consists of a constraint on possible behaviors—that's not the kind of thing you could see, not the way you see tables, chairs, and people.

**Cory:** *You've said there's only one reality, but maybe you might go into the fact that somebody who believes in miracles would have a different reality than somebody who didn't.*

**Peter:** A different real world.

**Cory:** *But I thought you said reality is the constraints on behavior.*

**Peter:** Possible behavior.

**Cory:** *Yeah, but for somebody who didn't believe in miracles, there'd be things which superseded the laws would not be possible behavior.*

**Peter:** For him, it wouldn't be possible.

**Cory:** *But wouldn't that be a different reality for him, then, than for the other person?*

**Peter:** No, it would confuse him some. His beliefs about possibilities are not the same as those possibilities.

And his beliefs about the possibilities might be artificially constrained because he has this notion of the real world. And so he would then have possibilities that he didn't know of, precisely because he's operating with a too-narrow set of notions about his behavioral possibilities. Because he's funneling them through the notion of a real world.

**Cory:** *But then reality is not formally connected to a person?*

**Peter:** It has to be, since it's the boundary condition on possible behaviors, and we're talking about the behaviors of persons. So it's essentially connected to persons.

**Cory:** *Okay, but reality is there in the behavior of persons.*

**Peter:** Not "there". A boundary condition isn't "there". It's not anywhere. It's simply a fact, the fact of there being such a constraint.

**Steve A:** *So reality is a fact in that sense.*

**Peter:** No. Stay with the terminology: the boundary condition on possible behaviors. It's the limit of possibility for behaviors.

**Terry:** *Wouldn't that limit for different people, though, be a fact about them?—where it's set—be a fact about each of them?*

**Peter:** The limit is the limit. You can describe it, you can formulate it, but you can be wrong. Your description of it, your formulation, is not *it*. It's not the limit.

**Terry:** *That sounds to me like you're really saying that a concept is not an instance of it. An instance is not the concept. It's like your saying that you can drive a wedge between a limit and—*

**Peter:** No, it's more like saying that your description of the chair isn't the chair. Your description of the limit isn't the limit. And specifically, your description may be inaccurate. Your formulation of the limit may be inaccurate.

**Terry:** *Why does that concern us, for this question?*

**Peter:** Because I'm talking about the limit, and not about anybody's description. The limit is not subject to the same constraints as somebody's description of it. The limit can't be wrong. Your and my description of it can be wrong. And that's one of our constraints.

**Terry:** *Tables and chairs aren't wrong and right.*

**Peter:** Right.

**Terry:** *Descriptions of tables and chairs are wrong and right.*

**Peter:** Right.

**Terry:** *Yeah.*

**Bob:** *Does that mean that we all have the same reality, although we may not*

*know it?*

**Peter:** At this point, I would say it doesn't make sense to talk about "the same reality", because it doesn't make sense to talk about "different realities". Reality is the kind of thing that genuinely is a boundary condition; there's nothing beyond it; so there's not multiple realities. There's multiple real worlds.

**Bob:** *We all have the same limits, although we may not perceive them.*

**Peter:** No, no. In general, we have different limits. I might be able to walk through the wall and you not, or vice versa, so what I can do and what you can do are generally not the same.

**Bob:** *We all have the same palpable limit, then?*

**Peter:** Who would be in a position to say that?

**Bob:** *But we have to say that, if we're all in the same reality.*

**Peter:** No. We're all in the same real world.

**Wynn:** *We're not in reality, that's—reality is a methodological construct.*

**?:** *It's like saying we all have abilities, but the difference is between saying we all have the same degree of ability. We can't go wrong in saying we all have abilities, because we're all people, but we can go wrong in saying that we all have the same degree of ability.*

**Peter:** One of our constraints is that we operate with one another in the ways that we do, and there are other ways that we can; that we know about each other "what we know about each other" and not something else; that we have the practices to choose from in dealing with one another; we have the practices we have and not something else. Those are the reality constraints: that things are as they are and not something else.

**Terry:** *What are appropriate questions to ask about limits on behavior?*

**Peter:** What they are.

**Terry:** *Are there any other appropriate questions about what they are?*

**Peter:** Well, start thinking. What else could you ask about them except what they are?

**Terry:** *You could ask a question that you don't like, which is, like, how to figure out what they are.*

**Peter:** Any way you can, is the way you figure out what they are.



**Terry:** *I somehow think it would be interesting to know how people have historically figured out their limits. It seems like a useful thing for someone to know, in concrete detail.*

**Daniel:** *Those are the kinds of things that you don't figure out. It just happens.*

**Peter:** No, it's just that you have to keep in mind that there are reality constraints on your possible behaviors, including your behavior of giving such a description of how people have formulated their limits. That your possibilities of giving that description depend, among other things, on the concepts you have available and the kind of social practices within which you could give such a specification anyhow. And that takes, I think, most of the interest out of that, because most of the interest in the kind of idea that you just had, I think—and this is only an impression diagnosis—stems from a kind of a connotation that's kind of a direct pipeline to what's really going on. You lose that when you recognize that this description, too, is just as relative as any of the other ones. That's why I emphasize that formulations of limitations are not the same as limitations.

**Terry:** *You're saying there's a great deal of uncertainty in making those formulations?*

**Peter:** No. That's like the joke about one guy's saying this is half empty, and the other guy says, "No, it's half full." The guy who says it's half full *isn't* saying it's half empty. And I'm not *saying* that there is all this uncertainty. I'm saying that things are as they are, and somebody who is looking at things against the baseline of certainty, *he* will say there's all this uncertainty. Somebody who is not measuring things against a norm of certainty won't say anything except "The world is the way it is." And he might comment, "Nothing is sure," but that's a trivial comment—for him.

**Terry:** *I guess I just drew that as a conclusion, when you kept emphasizing that the formulations can be wrong.*

**Peter:** But all formulations can be wrong.

**Terry:** *Why bring it up in the specific connection with this, then?*

**Peter:** Because in this case, as I said, the diagnosis was that part of the appeal was to some kind of certainty, some kind of getting beyond the normal to something more fundamental, and that's why I said a reminder that this one, too, can be just as wrong as any other description, has a sobering effect and takes a lot of the charm out of it. That was a specific diagnosis.

To provide a little continuity for next time: think about this totality and this totality [ $\mathbf{K}^0$  and  $\mathbf{K}^1$ ] and think of somebody who has these distinctions [ $\mathbf{K}^0$ ] and not these [ $\mathbf{K}^1$ ], who has these ways of behaving within that totality, and not these. Now think of the problem of changing him to somebody who has these behaviors available because he acts and conceptualizes these things [ $\mathbf{K}^1$ ], makes these distinctions, has these behaviors available, and therefore can engage in that sort of behavior. And if you approach that as a technical problem, one of the kind of moves you will make is, “Well, then the problem divides into cutting him loose from this one [ $\mathbf{K}^0$ ], and then getting him established in this one [ $\mathbf{K}^1$ ].” Then the first problem, of cutting him loose from the one he has, is to ask, “Well, what *is* his hold on the one he has? How is a person anchored in his world?” Because if you don’t know that, you don’t know where to try to break the hold. So if there are strategic places where a person is anchored in his world, then those are the places that you would work on to detach the person from his world. Then you would make use of the same formal notions and say, “Gee, then you’ve to provide the equivalent something to attach him, or give him a place in his other world.” So by approaching it that way, we can set up the problem in a certain way that, since we’ve solved comparable problems of how you do this, how you change from here to there, we have some guidelines as to how to proceed. And that’s its major value, that we can approach it as a kind of a technical problem whose major structure is fairly well known.

**Steve A:** *If these are different concepts, then this other person would operate with different concepts, and you are able—### this is the world the person has, and you dislodge him, you are able to find important key concepts for that central system, you’re able to dislodge those. Given that you can’t talk about the other one in this language, there’s a real problem there. How can you ever introduce something without—*

**Peter:** You’re anticipating something, but what you said just leads directly to one of the major conclusions: it can only be done by somebody who knows both.



## SEMINAR 9

### 10 August 1976

**Peter:** Last time, we ended up with a question, namely, what or where are persons' connections with the real world? We laid it out in the sense of: if you were faced with the task of changing somebody from one real world to another, it would make sense that you would loosen his hold on one and then do things to attach him to the other. It might not work out in just such a simple sequence, but that would be the logic of the operation, that you would have to do a detaching job and an attaching job. And since the detailed connections are so many, you couldn't possibly do those one by one. You would have to look for some fundamental level of description and look at that level. That reduces it to a finite task: you only have to do certain things and then the rest follows. So that raises a question for us. What or where are a person's fundamental connections that you could then hope to weaken and substitute? What are one's fundamental connections to one's real world?

**Suzanne:** *A thing that's partly out of what it's like, from don Juan, would be when he's talking about making yourself inaccessible: other people's perceptions of him would be one major adjunct to whatever world one lives in.*

**Peter:** How does that work? Why is that a major factor?

**Suzanne:** *Because generally people try to live up to, or be, what is expected of them, or what they're socialized to be, or whatever you call it, and become so intertwined, and so webbed in this kind of thing, but that's more like an entrapment than attachment, I think.*

**Peter:** It's stronger than just expectation. People put you in that position, and they won't let you out. And so the only way you can be, with them, roughly speaking, is to be in that position, and that's part of your tie to them. And since they're part of the real world, that's part of your tie to the real world: that in the world as you know it, you have a place, and they give you that place, and since they give it to you, you can't just invent a different one, and so you're stuck or attached, etc.

**Wynn:** *I'm not sure this is the direction that you want to go in, but would action serve as the sort of starting point, in that it's one's actions that are one's primary connections to the real world, that's what renders it real? Because that seems to be an important issue for don Juan.*

**Peter:** Let's save that for the time being.

**Wynn:** *Can I ask you another question about this? Would what you are looking for be related to the final-order appraisals that go last, that would be the hardest to give up?*

**Peter:** I don't think so. Because for example, saying that it's your relations to other people—from the point of view of final-order appraisal, that's no different from saying, "That's a brick building over there." Both involve final-order appraisals, but the fact that you have a place in a social matrix seems more fundamental than the fact that you go around perceiving objects—particular objects.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, I guess I was talking about specific appraisals, which specific ones would be the last to go.*

**Peter:** That's a problem I was thinking of raising afterwards. That is, if you think in terms of what your attachments are, one of the questions you could ask is: in what order would you give them up? We have a current problem being formulated right now: if you put a person in a deeper and deeper hypnotic trance, and if the effect of that was to wipe out final-order appraisals, in what order would the final-order appraisals drop out—that is, appraisals of what?

That's not a question, I think, that you can readily see your way clear to the answer, but presumably there is an answer of some sort—that you wouldn't expect everything to be given up at once; you would expect some kind of sequence. And you wouldn't expect that sequence to be all that idiosyncratic. You would expect a fair degree of commonality across people.

And in a sense, that poses us the same question: if there's commonality across people, it means that some connections are more fundamental, in some sense, than others, and those are the ones that are given up last. So it's a different route or a different version of the same question, namely, what are your fundamental connections? But because it's different enough, I don't think that we can answer ours by going that route.

**Wynn:** *I guess a kindred question, or kindred area of research, would be in relation to tolerance, in that what sorts of things in a relationship—in a*

*particular, defined relationship—how much change will you tolerate and still call it a relationship of that sort?*

**Peter:** That, I think, is a little more questionable. Just talking at the level of relation doesn't seem fundamental to get at issues of reality.

Let's break down the ones that we have.

**FIGURE 1**

- |                                   |                 |                |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| (1) Status given by others        | (a) Individuals | Belief System? |
|                                   | (b) Groups      | Behavior       |
| (2) Self Concept                  |                 |                |
| (3) Beliefs, concepts             |                 |                |
| (4) Habit, Mechanism, Sensitivity |                 |                |

**Daniel:** *Persons' beliefs, the whole system seems to connect individuals to their worlds. One of the seminars that we did at EST, they asked us questions, and that seemed to be what most people hung onto, what connected them to the world.*

**Peter:** Let me put that aside for the time being, because this may be just another way of talking about the world, and that still leaves you with the question of what about your attachments to it. That is, this may be just a way of paraphrasing the problem of what are your fundamental attachments to your belief system? So let's hold off on that and see what else we get.

**Suzanne:** *Something related to that but not quite the same thing is who you're ### to be—I mean, it's your family, your predecessors. It's not the same as a status that people give you as an individual, but you're born with, which is slightly different. Because you are born a certain person.*

**Peter:** [adding "Groups" to Fig. 1] That should do it.

**Steve A:** *It seems to me that even more fundamental would be the status you assign to yourself.*

**Peter:** Okay, that's not quite the same thing. [He adds "Self Concept.]"

**Suzanne:** *I'm trying to figure out if there's such a thing.*

**Peter:** As what?

**Suzanne:** *Without the other.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's why we don't have to worry about that; we can put them both down. Remember that formulation of the self concept as "the summary

formulation of your behavior potential". Certainly your behavior potential represents an attachment to the world, represents your place in the world, or corresponds to your place in the world. Remember, we went through the being-in-the-world notion that you can only have behavior potential within some world that provides those possibilities. Therefore, the particular possibilities that you have connect you to the world. So it's a fairly much of a logical connection.

**Steve A:** *Isn't (1) subsumed under (2)?*

**Peter:** It may be. You can raise that question, but since we don't have to worry about getting to an absolute minimum set, just a finite set, it's probably not worth trying to work that problem over; we might as well just keep two and see.

**Wynn:** *It is thinkable that a person could reject the status given by specific others, and in doing that, assume a status.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Suzanne:** *I think part of that is communicated by the status, of rejecting somebody else's status. I mean, that's part of what people look at you to be—a rejecter of status—*

**Wynn:** *But this is a different issue, of the rebel.*

**Peter:** On the other hand, if you think of a person as essentially a social individual, you can't just reject the status everybody else gives you.

**Wynn:** *But you can reject specific statuses. You can assume that some are more accurate than others, and that has to fit into some notion of what he is.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but you're still stuck with this [a, b] as something separate from just that.

**Wynn:** *But I see them as two separate things. That's the point I'm trying to make.*

**Steve A:** *I'm wondering, in terms of don Juan, whether these are things that are to be fundamental connections which are to be changed, or would it be some fundamental connections which are to be dropped? Certainly (1) [status given by others], the concept of being inaccessible and erasing personal history, seems to be aimed at all those situational statuses which you are assigning yourself at the moment.*

**Peter:** Let's not worry about that problem yet. We have to operate within the world we know, so it's primarily about that world that we're raising the



question of attachments. Then by extension, we can worry about what he says and does in regard to change.

**Steve A:** *It seems that ### might subsume everything. In one way or another, you can put everything in those terms.*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *Concepts are distinguished from status, aren't they?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *Then we can talk about one's ideas of the world.*

**Peter:** That's this one here [(3)]. I'm still not clear that that's—

**Terry:** *Because you change more—what counts, what's of value. That's what don Juan does when he's stopping the world. The concept of stopping the world involves changing one's ideas about the world.*

**Joe S:** *Isn't that pretty much following that behavior is the major connection with the world, and it's through your behavior, anyway—your behavior and your place in the world—you change your view of your behavior, and you've changed essentially your world. So you could follow it here—beliefs and concepts on the K parameter, and then your knowledge of the world would be the KH parameter, and there's your essential dimensions.*

**Peter:** But your belief system is going to be your K. What about those things, though? Self concept is K, but it's also sort of KH.

**Terry:** *It's also sort of performance in terms of performance linking to a context, because the performances take place in a world.*

**Peter:** There's a category difference between these things and—

**Joe S:** *These are non-episodic—the parameters.*

**Peter:** Performances are historical particulars. A self concept can't be a historical particular.

**Terry:** *I guess I'm talking about framing the relationship between historical particulars and also the parameters, because in don Juan—his techniques are all aimed at—they're all taking place through historical particulars. And that change occurs in history, even though it may be a transportation to a historical time.*

**Peter:** Okay, but in intentional action, the performance reflects what's here [K, W, KH], not in a causal way, but in a logical way: that you wouldn't engage in that performance if you weren't making these here/now discriminations,

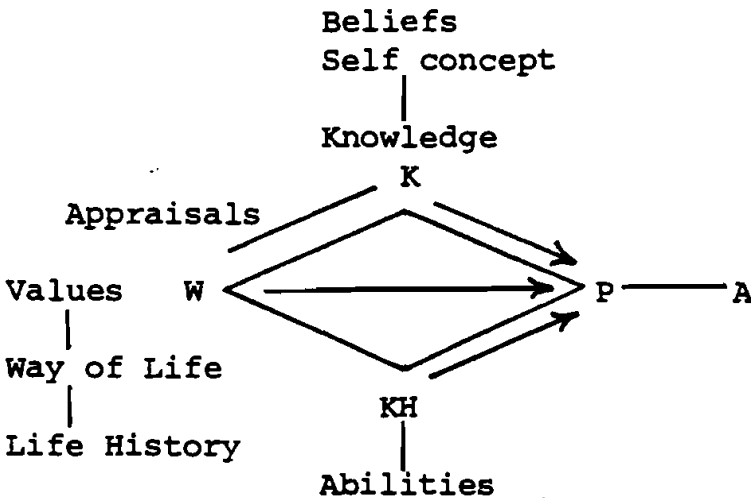
if you didn't have this know-how, and if you weren't operating with that motivation.

**Terry:** *That's one of the riddles of changes, isn't it? I mean, that's circular.*

**Joe S:** *Another thing in the W parameter, in terms of values and priorities, is that you have the ability to act on, then your boundaries become a major connection with your world, the priorities that you have the ability to act on.*

**Wynn:** *It seems that you might want to separate out values from the belief system, because that would give you some notion of particular ###.*

**FIGURE 2**



**Peter:** Okay, now let's see. Here we have the beliefs [**blackboard**]. Remember the sheets of ways of life that I handed out? Those were essentially value policies. In effect, you can specify a way of life, in part, by specifying a set of values which, in turn, operate as decision rules or principles governing your choices. And your way of life can be formulated in terms of the choices that one would make, and the kind of choices that one would make. So we can introduce a Way of Life notion here as a way of getting at the values or the motivational aspects. And a way of life ties much more directly—at least conceptually—to an attachment to the world than just the notion of values. The notion of “values” is kind of unstructured, whereas “way of life” clearly directs your attention to the real things that you are dealing with in living that kind of life.

**Terry:** *I think you have to—in order to flesh out values or give them structure—you have to elaborate their connections to—*

**Peter:** This [**Way of Life**] is what gives them the structure.

**Terry:** *But I was moving in the other direction, in terms of a spatial and temporal organization of reality.*

**Peter:** That is what's here: that's a pattern notion, of a life history in which there is a patterning of action. Not a program-type pattern, just a selectivity-type pattern.

**Terry:** *But also, it seems to me, it involves perception, and changing perceptual matrices. At least for don Juan, with Carlos, that—*

**Peter:** Okay, but we've got that up here [**K**], in the kind of knowledge, the kind of beliefs, and discriminations that you make.

**Terry:** *I guess I'm talking about the connection between perceptual determination and value, because there seems to be kind of a reciprocity of influence between those.*

**Peter:** Better put it in a non-influence way.

**Terry:** *There's a reciprocal connection.*

**Peter:** What kind of connection?

**Terry:** *A reciprocal one.*

**Peter:** A reciprocal *what* connection?

**Terry:** *Well, when are these questions allowable, and when not? The connection between beliefs and values. I'm thinking of don Juan again, and he—*

**Peter:** Forget about don Juan. We want to do this independently of don Juan.

**Joe S:** *Since the action has multiple achievements, it seems to me that one of your connections is also the achievement that you choose, or that you're viewing your behavior—*

**Peter:** It's going to come out over here [**Way of Life**].

**Joe S:** *Which counts as an achievement.*

**Peter:** What you count as a successful behavior depends on its being what you want. Any other kind of achievement, you might as well just come up here [**K**]: your knowledge of some achievement is simply some of the facts that you have knowledge of.

What about here [KH]? We're missing something down there.

**Steve A:** *Some of the things you have in the K parameter are also in terms—### self concept, and that's where you're changing the ways someone views the world, the distinctions they make, and that's also part of that KH parameter.*

**Terry:** *It's what you're able to see as a distinction, for example.*

**Peter:** Keep going. It still sounds too cognitive, rather than know-how.

**Terry:** *KH is sort of like sedimented history.*

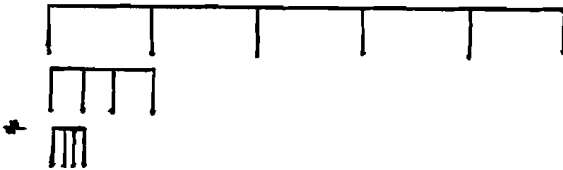
**Steve A:** *The competency notion has to do with eligibility to engage in—*

**Peter:** Eligibility and competence are different. Eligibility would come under the heading of self concept.

**Daniel:** *Also the concept of reality constraints of the real world.*

**Peter:** This [ability] is primarily where the reality constraints are. Eligibility, in that sense, had to do with opportunity, situational. Think of being a member of the club, as one of the paradigms for eligibility. I may have all of the competence it takes, but if the situation is such that I'm not a member, then I'm not eligible. I don't have the opportunity, but I do have the ability. [blackboard]

**FIGURE 3**



We haven't talked much about things like that. One of the places we came close – remember this way of life diagram, and we get down to finer and finer levels and I said: there is a lower bound to decision-making here [\*], that you can describe things going on at more and more molecular things, all the way down to those zilch particles, but you don't make decisions down there. You make them no further down than a certain point. You choose things like reaching, but you don't choose which muscles move in which ways. That's the next step below. If you ask how come you can get by with that, the answer is that you can count on whatever goes on down here [below the \* line]. It's because I can count on not having trouble from my muscles when I decide and do move my arm, that I don't have to make any decisions about how my muscles move. That's why one is tempted to

talk about the “mechanisms” that are involved in my muscle movements, as against the decisions and choices of my reaching for something. The things that are going on down here—I have to be able to count on something, or I would have to then see to everything. So it’s the existence of things that I can count on, that work anyhow without my having to see to them, is why I don’t have to make an infinite series of decisions.

You can do this in several ways. One is, if I look over and see a rack and a wall, I don’t have to decide to do that. My seeing that involves, again, something like the mechanism. I’m sensitive to those kinds of things, and therefore when you expose me to them, that’s what I’ll see without trying. My seeing it happens automatically; it’s not a matter of decision. So that aspect of how I operate, sensitivity, has the mechanism character. This other aspect is the habit aspect. Think of “mechanism” as the general term, and behavior—when you’re talking about know-how, it would be habit; when you’re talking about perception (not thought, but perception), then it’s sensitivity.

**Steve A:** *Would you elaborate on that sensitivity as part of the K parameter?*

**Peter:** It’s not that sensitivity is part of the K parameter. Sensitivity is an ability-type of thing. But when we talk about sensitivity, is when you’re dealing with perception. When it comes to my arm movement, you don’t say I’m sensitive; you say my muscle movements are habitual. When it comes to my being able to see the wall or the rack or the color brown, you say, “He’s sensitive to the color brown, he’s sensitive to walls, he’s responsive.” Sensitive, responsive, discriminates, etc., all those terms indicate that when I’m faced with one, I will see it. And that operates automatically, and for the same reason: that otherwise you would have an infinite regress. So you have both perceptual habits and performance habits. Or perceptual competence and performative competence. So at the lower bound of decision-making, you can talk about either a habit or a mechanism.

**Joe S:** *I’m not sure where that upper limit is on choices.*

**Peter:** I said the lower limit.

**Joe S:** *I know, but in terms of the upper limit, you’re not choosing your way of life, but—and I realize that different individuals are going to have different baselines—but I’m not sure where—like you say, the lower baseline is a physiological level, on the level of independent muscle movements, and the upper—I’m not sure where that upper limit—*

**Peter:** Well, you’d probably say it’s below this, it’s below the top line.

**Joe S:** *Is that the most you can say?*

**Peter:** Well, notice the connection here. If the top line is out of reach of decision making, then it, too, in some sense, is automatic. It's not something you just choose. That's what we have over here [**connection between that upper line and Way of Life**].

**Wynn:** *Would this question of Joe's be the same question as what are the range of a person's powers, dispositions?*

**Peter:** No. Because here it's in a particular context of what sorts of things do you have a choice about, what sorts of things can you simply decide on and do?

**Joe S:** *The reason I asked it is because that's the level, it seems, that you have to work with if you're going to change a person's world. And so it's important to have some notion of where that's ###.*

**Peter:** Now notice that now we've got each of these parameters [**K, W, KH**] bracketed with some kind of unchooseable that is there automatically, and that you're using in your normal behaviors and interactions with things, and in your choices that you make and the decision-making you do. But you don't choose those things. Those are your givens, that's what you have to work with.

**Terry:** *So formally, you have conditions which are the occasions of your choices, and it's a challenge to those conditions, sort of loosening up those conditions which you want to deal with to detach someone from their hold on the world.*

**Peter:** Say that again.

**Terry:** *What you have is, you have conditions such as perceptual habits, motor habits, and so forth, which are the occasion for choices—in the sense of an occasional cause—but in the sense that I have eyes, which are a condition of the occasion for me to see things, but it's certainly not because of my eyes that I see things. It's conceivable I could have an analogous structure that would do the same job. And so these conditions are the things that have to be challenged. You have to challenge the assumptions or the perceptual habits or whatever that one constantly sort of limiting the range in which choice can take place.*

**Peter:** But you can only do that by appealing to something else of the same sort. I can only challenge your belief by raising before you the prospect or the possibility of a contrary belief, and the set that includes both the belief and its contrary is part of what you already have. So I can't do this job by

challenging you—not that way.

**Wynn:** *I don't understand that, because it seems to me that you can critique without providing an alternative, that you can critique the structure of a belief without providing a counter-belief, except the belief that that belief's not true.*

**Peter:** Not ultimately. Because ultimately you get a reversal, and it becomes a *reductio ad absurdum*. If you can't show me an alternate possibility, in the end I will say, "You're obviously wrong because the world *couldn't* be any other way than the way I see it, and so the fact that you've proved to me that it can't, just shows me that you've got a bad argument."

**Wynn:** *That's not exactly what I'm trying—ultimately, I guess, you could make that point, but in terms of therapeutics, or in terms of an initial encounter—*

**Peter:** We are talking about ultimate. That's why I said that anything that I can argue with you about, or challenge you with, will be in the interior range here [Fig. 3, p. 394, between the upper line and the \* line]. And that's not going to be your ultimate attachment.

**Terry:** *What I'm talking about is what ### talks about as the "existential a priori", which he says is an all-encompassing meaning structure which organizes all meanings within it. So, like, in the case of ###, separation and the anxiety concern in separation is the meaning-structure though which everything is organized, so that the world is sort of a semiotic system inside of that, constantly signifying either the possibility of separation, separation itself, or something of that sort, or reunion.*

**Peter:** That's here [Fig. 2, p. 392, beliefs, self-concept].

**Terry:** *Except that it has a different status, because it's more like a condition.*

**Peter:** That's what this is. Your set of beliefs represents the condition that you're in. Your set of perceptions represents the condition that you're in.

**Terry:** *Her beliefs, though, are sort of all founded on or organized by this existential a priori, but—*

**Peter:** Okay, that's something else. That's simply a critical analysis and interpretation of a given ### system. You're out of the range of what we're dealing with. You're simply pointing out that a person will have whatever particular belief system he has, and that sometimes it's important to know that. But we take that for granted when we talk about beliefs, here, that a person does have the ones he has, and not something else. Here we're dealing with them *as beliefs*, not the contents. The fact that a person has beliefs, the fact that



they organize, the fact that the total set of beliefs is what he has, and he doesn't choose to have the total set of beliefs he has. That's the feature that we're dealing with.

**Terry:** *The fact of that system.*

**Peter:** And the fact that it operates that way—that is, it's not subject to choice. It's what you have to work with in whatever choices you do make.

[**Blackboard, adding Way of Life and Life History to Fig. 2, p. 392**]. Remember, a way of life is a life history construct. Also, remember that some of your competence and sensitivity comes in under Appraisals. That is, you're capable not merely of responding to brown and chairs and walls; you're also capable of responding to dangers and to needs and to rights and wrongs.

**Steve A:** *You're drawing this connection of appraisals between wants and knowledge?*

**Peter:** That's the nature of appraisals, that they're descriptions that have a motivational significance necessarily. Since we've got something in all three places, then it seems intuitive that that's what you would need. Let's take it for the time being, at least, that this list [**Fig. 1, p. 389**] will do the job. And then what do we do? How does it work?

The obvious thing, and it may work out that way, is to say that what you have to do is to remove the particulars of each of these sorts, and substitute other particulars.

**Wynn:** *In terms of the word "substitute", could the person find out for himself? If you simply show what was wrong with the set of basic beliefs that I have, in doing that could you provide an analytic, or a tool, such that I could then correct those beliefs without you giving them to me as a teaching? Because that's the one—*

**Peter:** Yeah, but only for the most trivial cases. For example, if you look over there and say, "That's round," and I give you a hard look and I say, "Is that really round?" and you look at it and say, "Well, no, it's not really round," etc., that's a trivial sort of example where I merely challenge your belief, and you're able to correct it. And that's because you have the ingredients for doing that.

**Wynn:** *But that sounds like belief ultimately rests on some revealed word or some revealed system.*

**Peter:** No, it's that beliefs have to be formulated by sentences.

**Wynn:** *But a person could have a language, and the language can form the range of distinctions that you can go out and make, and you could perhaps invent some new distinctions when you introduce some new practices that haven't been done before. But now let's say I'm describing a world in a particular way—and this is one we see in don Juan and Carlos, is that Carlos is describing the world in a particular way, and don Juan's providing alternatives. What I'm wondering about is whether there's a situation in which you can effectively destroy, so to speak, without providing the alternative, such that the person himself then produces, as a creative act, a new alternative. Because without the possibility of that occurring, then your belief systems have a certain biblical, revealed sense about them.*

**Peter:** Why?

**Wynn:** *Somewhere, the belief system had to be handed down intact.*

**Peter:** Why?

**Wynn:** *Why? Well, I may be mistaken, but I take it that what you're arguing is that belief systems, when they're destroyed, are replaced—have to be replaced. An alternative has to be offered. And I guess—*

**Peter:** You could have made it stronger, that a belief system is destroyed by being replaced. And that's the *only* way you destroy it.

**Wynn:** *I guess I'm sort of wondering about the issue of the creation of belief systems, in that what makes me suspicious of the historical belief systems that have been offered is that they usually come from cultures so far away.*

**Peter:** I wouldn't take it for granted that one creates belief systems. One has them. But who creates one?

**Wynn:** *But can one expand one? On the nucleus, say, of his language and his action, by new actions?*

**Peter:** No, by acquiring new concepts. By acquiring new concepts, you can then acquire new belief.

**Wynn:** *I was just wondering if there was a case in which I could do something that I've never done before, and no one else has ever done before, and at the same time I could recognize it as such.*

**Peter:** Again, the examples are trivial. I can write you down a number that I can guarantee that nobody has ever written down before, and we can certainly recognize it.

**Wynn:** *But numbers are within the possibilities of the number system.*

**Peter:** The same goes for belief systems. Anything new that I can do, that I can recognize, must be within my belief system.

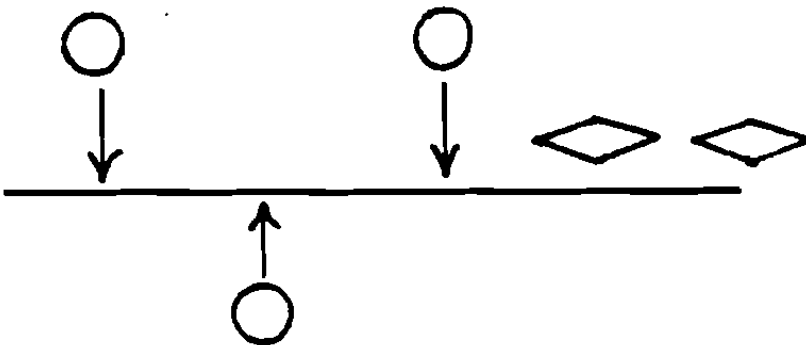
**Wynn:** *It has to have a possible place. I guess I'm only wondering about the limits of that one, in terms of culture creations.*

**Peter:** Who creates cultures? Or do you mean—

**Wynn:** *The Trickster.*

**Peter:** I think the most you have is the degenerate case argument. Remember in the developmental scheme when you start with original capacity, and from some kind of history you acquire something. And then what you acquire there gets used in your behavior.

**FIGURE 4**



Now suppose that you have this [arrows], simultaneously, so that by virtue of the very thing that you're puzzled by and come up with a novel reaction to, that *is* the history that gives you the understanding that you then immediately express by saying that's a chair. You can't collapse the historical aspect of this and get them all together, and then you have the circumstance where you could say, "He didn't already have it before he was exposed to this, but neither did it come out of nowhere, neither was it revelation." It's just that now you have these things simultaneous rather than—. And you can see that here, there has to be a condition where you don't already have a belief system, but you can acquire one, and that's non-problematical when you stretch it out. Then, seeing it as non-problematical there helps you make it non-problematical if you collapse it back. It's still not mysterious; it's still not revelation.

There's a—I think, entirely parallel—example to “do you learn the description first or do you learn the concept first?” When I first learned to make a discrimination between brown and something else, which do I get first—the belief that something is brown, and from that I then derive the distinction of brown as such? Or do I first acquire the concept of brown, and then from that I may go to make the observation that something is brown? Logically, the concept has the priority. Logically, you have to have the concept in order to have the belief. However, you could say that, in rare cases, you might acquire both at the same time. The very occasion on which I jelled my distinction between brown and not-brown might be the same occasion on which I see that the chair is brown. And so one doesn't literally have to come first, but you can bet your boots that 99.99 times out of 100, it does come first. So you have a kind of a limiting case argument.

Again, partly because of time, let's push ahead with admittedly crude formulations and figure if they're too crude, we'll get into trouble somewhere, and that will tip us off that we'd better go back and do something better. So the crude formulation here is that the task is to eliminate the particulars of these sorts, and substitute other particulars, and then to the extent that the two sets are not overlapping, it will be a genuinely different world, as against a garden-variety change. To the extent that all of your concepts and beliefs are different from what they were, to the extent that your way of life is different, that your values are quite different, to the extent that your sensitivities and habits are quite different, to that extent it's simply that you're in a different world.

**Cory:** *It sounds like kind of what—the intent that we have of what the Chinese were doing during their Revolution in their consciousness-raising groups, they were having people see what they were doing in a different light, changing values, and—*

**Peter:** They were, I think, operating at this level, not trying to get you in a different world, but trying to get you in a different way of life.

**Cory:** *But wouldn't that almost make it in a different world?*

**Peter:** No, because our world already includes those different ways of living.

**Cory:** *But their old world may not have—I mean, the old world of the Chinese certainly didn't include women doing anything in particular.*

**Steve A:** *It certainly didn't include appraising certain actions and certain people—*

**Peter:** But those are changes, they're detail changes, not world changes.

**Wynn:** *But it does raise the question as to whether, if you invite a portion of your population into a practice, that has never had that practice before, for that portion you'd, in fact, change the world. For that portion of the population.*

**Peter:** No. You've got to worry about that when you talk about changing the world. In a trivial sense, changing the world is like changing a building. You change it when you change any part of it.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but it's more than like changing light bulbs, because it's more of an issue here of now there comes a whole range of action that was forbidden before, wasn't thinkable before, and that you'd expect to change consciousness.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but it would be more—I think more usual to talk about changing their lives than changing their worlds.

**Wynn:** *There's no accident that consciousness-raising is an expression that gets attached to that sort of activity.*

**Peter:** Why “raising” rather than “lowering”? [laughter]

**Wynn:** *What side are you on?*

**Joe S:** *What's the level of contrast?*

**Daniel:** *What distinctions are you making between way of life and this world.*

**Peter:** Again, different categories. A way of life is a life-history notion. A world, we discussed last time. It's either a tremendously big object or eternal process or a great succession of events or a totality of facts. That's different from a life history.

**Daniel:** *But I'm talking about a person's world.*

**Peter:** Still, a person's world has the general characteristics of a world. It's something that can be formulated in any of those four ways. A person's world is what his life history is a part of. In my world, my history is a part of that world, it's a part of the history of that world. You remember we said, “A person is an object within a world that contains objects. A person's behavior is a process within that world that contains processes. So a person is within the world, and his history is a process that is a process, within world process. He is an object within the large object, or among other objects.”

**Daniel:** *So a person's world will contain his life history?*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Steve A:** *I have trouble with the distinction we had last week between “real world” and changing a world. In one sense, you’re saying that to the extent those particulars are different, that person will be in a different world. And I’m wondering, here, when you’re saying “different world”, are you referring to the person’s real world, and in what sense?*

**Peter:** Take it that “world” is the same as “real world”, in the same way that “chair” in ordinary conversation is the same as “real chair”. You only start using the adjective “real” when you’ve got some contrast like “fictitious”, etc.

**Steve A:** *Okay, now when—*

**Peter:** I said that the problem is to change the particulars, and to the extent that the one set of particulars is entirely distinct from the other, *then* you could talk about being in a different world. Whereas to the extent that there’s overlap, or there’s just variations, different species of the same genus, to that extent you’re simply making normal kinds of changes in the person’s world as it is.

**Terry:** *Are we taking it for granted that that’s what change amounts to? I’m troubled, because I’ve been thinking of an analogue in psychoanalytic theory, where you can bring about changes in a particular representation, but often-times, what’s the objective of change is the structural change, and this doesn’t strike me as structural change. It strikes me as change in content.*

**Peter:** Where do you get a structural change without a change in content?

**Terry:** *Well, I think that there always is a change in content along with structural change. On the other hand, I don’t think that every change in content implies structural change.*

**Peter:** Remember, we’ve got a lot of things to change here. For example, changes in the content of appraisals will amount to a structural change up here, because it’ll amount to a change of this sort. We have a lot of apparatus here for talking about sorts of changes. That’s why they’re in different places in the diagram. They have different logical characteristics, and we’re not stuck with just talking about one kind of change since we have all of these kinds. When I say that the problem is to replace the particulars with other particulars, I mean particulars of all of these different kinds, including the ones that get at structural aspects.

**Terry:** *Okay, so you take in the whole [change tape]—because I’m thinking again of don Juan, where he says that the model personality is one that does away with routines in their entirety. He doesn’t replace one set of routines with*

*a better set. He gets rid of routines altogether. So you get that sense of a structural shift, where you're exploding the category altogether.*

**Peter:** Remember that all of that is relative to descriptions, because you can say, "Yeah, when it comes to routines, he's replacing routines by non-routines," but if you describe it as strategies, he's simply replacing one strategy with another. So you can't make absolute statements of this kind. It's always relative to the description, and under that description, it's a species/genus change. Under the other, it's a non-replacement of something that got removed.

**Terry:** *In other words, just a ### will give us a way to get at something that would be described in don Juan.*

**Peter:** Yeah, it gives us access to something that you could describe either way, either as a replacement of routines by non-routines, or as a switch from one strategy to another, as a shift from one style to another.

**Bob:** *Pete, is there any way to account for the—the kind of thing that people talk about when they say, "My world changed," usually is a quick change. It isn't usually talked about in the same way that I would say, "My world has changed since I was three," in terms of gradual belief changes, ability changes, value changes, that kind of thing. Then when people—don Juan says it happens all of a sudden, the Buddhists assert that enlightenment is all of a sudden—is there any way to distinguish the two?*

**Peter:** I'm not sure we need to. Certainly you would say that your world has changed since age two. You wouldn't normally comment on that, because the change is going to go on, so you'd have no occasion to comment. But if somebody asked you to find out, has your world changed since you were two years old, you'd say, "Hell, yes." So it's mainly that when it's sudden, one has occasion to comment. That is the difference.

**Bob:** *I guess my world is continually changing.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's why I said that depending upon the degree to which the new things are simply variants on the old, that's just a garden-variety change. It's where there's non-overlap, they're not just variations—different species of the same genus—then you're inclined to say, "That's a new world."

**Bob:** *So the distinction is not in terms of speed, because my beliefs change instantaneously when they change at all. It's whether or not the new one that I changed to has to be completely different from my old one.*



**Peter:** Yeah. Now there is some issue about the suddenness, and that is this: if you think now how all of these things go together, that in fact these do not appear as separate phenomena, all of these that we're talking about are simply aspects of behavior. Then you can say, "Well, what typically happens is that you acquire repertoires here [K, W, KH]. But since you need a whole package to start operating differently, in the wholesale way that we talk about, like with a religious or political conversion, it mainly will happen suddenly (1) because there isn't anything in between for you to make those gradual shifts; (2) because you accumulated all of what you need except for that last final thing, so that the final thing then gives you a complete new package, which then swings into action. You're already building up the capability, and when you make that last addition is when you're then able to actually do it. And usually that last addition is motivational. You've already acquired the cognitive and ability aspects, and the main thing that happens is that you acquire new motivations, and that gives you a whole new package."

You have a comparable phenomenon—have you ever seen these demonstrations with wire frames that you dip into soap solutions? Any closed wire frame that you dip into a soap solution will come out with a film. If you put in a square frame with a handle, and you dip it in, you'll get a film here. And depending on the shape of this frame, the film will be in different places. Now if you imagine a wire frame shaped the way that the seams of a baseball are shaped, if you dip something like that into a soap solution, you'll find a film either here or here, but not both. There's two very nearly identical shapes there, that correspond to your two hands if you went this way [**cupping them together**], and the film will be on one or the other, but not both. In that kind of thing, one of the most dramatic demonstrations is to just move that thing a tiny bit, and all of a sudden, that film switches to the other. You can take that wire frame and just spread these apart a little, and all of a sudden the film is out here, where before it was here. That's visually very dramatic. And the explanation is relatively simple, namely, that the film operates according to a certain principle: it occupies the space that is minimum. It will occupy whichever space it has that is the smallest space. When you have this kind of arrangement, normally one will be smaller than the other, and that's why it will be on one rather than the other. But you can also change the relative size of the two with a very small movement that way. The small movement that way makes this one bigger and the other smaller. So if you get it just right, just a very tiny movement will switch the inequality relation, and then the film will switch.

You can see that things are very finely balanced in that situation, and it only takes a small change of the right kind. This is the kind of reconstruction one usually gives to when a person's life changes suddenly and dramatically, that things were finely balanced, that there was the potential there that wasn't showing in any obvious way, and that all you needed was one last change, and then that changes the entire balance. One of the things that alerts you to that is: the overall structure of the task may not be a simple progression. Visibly, you might say, at this point, you would expect the person to behave very similarly until some point where he suddenly starts showing substantial change. In the extreme case, he looks pretty much the same until he finally makes the entire change all at once. It doesn't have to work that way, but at this point, given what we know about some of these other phenomena, you more or less start expecting that, and you certainly wouldn't be surprised to find it work that way.

**Terry:** *Would it have the dramatic changes such as someone getting in a trance and speaking in a language that they've never learned, where there's no conceivable acquisition history? When you've got a conversion of that sort? Jung cited a case when he was a young man and sort of got interested in psychology, where he was over with some friends that he grew up with, over at their house, and they were fiddling around with a Ouija board and the table and lifting it up and stuff like that, and there was a sixteen-year-old girl in the neighborhood, they all knew her history and they know where she had gone to school and what she'd been exposed to and what not, and she went into a sort of a hypnogogic trance and started speaking Greek, and some of the people who had been to school in the classics knew Greek, and it was good Greek and she had never learned Greek, and it sort of fascinated him. This was one of the very influencing experiences for him postulating a racial memory.*

**Peter:** Remember, I gave that kind of example of seeing a face suddenly come out of the wall, and then go back in. A world in which that can happen is a different world from the one that we take for granted. A world in which somebody can suddenly speak a language they never learned is a different world, in an important way, than the one that we normally take for granted. However, notice that that description, namely, that she's speaking a language she never learned, is not forced on one. You could say that she must have learned it somewhere; we just don't know where. And then people would—

**Terry:** *That's where he got the archetypes.*

**Peter:** Sure. So you have to be ready to see something as a case of speaking a language you never learned, and then seeing that case may switch you to a different world. But if you're not ready, you've got all kinds of ways of dismissing it and incorporating it into your old world. That's what I mean by "developing the capability".

**Terry:** *That description presupposes certain baselines, and by saying, "She never learned," the standard baseline is where it starts—the learning process. And Jung manages to push that baseline back by talking about formation structures of the archetype, in memory. But there's another instance that just came out from Stanford, which is remote viewing, which is also an example of this—these two physicists who just published in a very conservative scientific journal, where they go out, the two of them, and they have someone in a room, and they have three types of subjects, skeptical scientists included, and they were all significantly able to do this task in which they could draw a picture of what they were doing—that corresponded to what they were doing 15 minutes after they left. And one day they were playing tennis, another day they were in a quad, and so on, and they've had statistically significant results with what they call "remote viewing", again where appears to be no way in which they could acquire that knowledge.*

**Peter:** We can't say there's no way.

**Terry:** *There's no apparent way.*

**Peter:** You have a choice of descriptions in that. Like any observer, you have a lot of options, and saying there's no way is just one of those options.

**Terry:** *Okay, it's one possible description.*

**Peter:** Right.

**Terry:** *I'm sort of working from a standardized format of reality.*

**Peter:** Okay, think there of the difference between the two formulations of the real world, as what you see around you. It's in that context that you would say that there's no way that they could find out. Think of the other one, of reality as the boundary conditions on possible behaviors, you just look at that and say, "Gee, I guess people's behavior—at least those people's behavior—isn't constrained in the way we thought. They have abilities that we didn't know we had," and there's no strain whatever.

**Terry:** *But then when you want to explain the mechanisms, those people—*

**Peter:** *What mechanisms?*

**Terry:** *Of the ability.*

**Peter:** You already have to have a world with mechanisms before that even arises.

**Terry:** *Well, figuratively speaking, if you want to explain how, or by what—if you want to distinguish how they got those abilities from people who don't have them, or how those abilities work, or however you want to—*

**Peter:** If you introduce that kind of distinction, then you've got to fill in answers in that form. If you don't introduce those kinds of distinctions, you don't have those problems.

**Terry:** *Well, I could decide that there were no questions worth asking at all, and certainly I could dismiss all questions by that legislative move, but I don't find that entirely appropriate, and I don't find individual differences between finding the last criteria for making a decision, either.*

**Peter:** If you could get away with it, why not? The reality constraint is that you probably can't get away with it, and couldn't. [**silence, laughter**] Okay. How would you change a person's perceptual habits?

**Wynn:** *Put him into a new environment. For instance, you take a New Yorker, you take somebody used to an urban environment where—and you stick him into the desert. His perceptual habits aren't going to buy much, and you can raise at least that issue.*

**Peter:** Okay, let me come back to this notion again [**Fig. 1, p. 389**], that all of these are simply aspects of behavior, they're not separate phenomena but just aspects of behavior. Remember the Maxim that says, "You acquire concepts and skills by practice and experience," which is a participation in practices that call for those things. And there, just like "chair" means "real chair" "participation" means "successful participation".

Now, one way to undercut a person's prior learning is to put him in a situation where what he has will not get him successful participation. So you take a New Yorker or a Los Angeleno into the desert, where a lot of the things that come naturally to him aren't going to do him any good, this is known as "removing situational supports". You then maybe give him acid or something that does a further job of creating a mishmash of his prior supports—in the new situation, he can no longer count on the things that he has been able to count on. That's what you would do for detachment. That's what you would do to remove habits, is to put a person in a situation where operating with those habits isn't successful. And then you can expect those

to drop out *if* there is something else that qualifies as being successful, that involves something other than those habits. So you put a person in a situation where what he has, that comes naturally, doesn't work, and then in which it is, in fact, possible for him to do something else successfully. And that last condition may or may not be a troublesome one, depending on what you know how to do, and remembering the Move 2 type of strategy, in which, in many common contexts, you can guarantee that the other person will be successful by how you describe, how you treat it.

**Suzanne:** *It sounds like Carlos, and like lots of clients, you could show them how, or they can see themselves how they are now not successful, and you can show them how to be more successful—and if they're from the desert, and what he knows from Los Angeles isn't successful at all, and that doesn't mean he'll change or believe you.*

**Terry:** *It's a way of presenting it, though. If you're presenting it—"Things don't work," and they say yes, "And here are better things," they'll always say "Yes, but—"*

**Suzanne:** *That's what I mean.*

**Terry:** *—and then give you all sorts of reasons. That means the mode of presentation—*

**Suzanne:** *I'm not sure if that's—*

**Peter:** No, the issue is whether you're trying to talk him into something or whether you've changed the reality. And the thing about Move 2's is that you change the reality. You don't argue with him that he's successful. You make him successful whether he realizes it or not. Then you have a chance of pointing it out to him, convincingly, because he really was successful in the way that you want to point out. So you first see to the reality, *then* the description.

**Terry:** *Would you elaborate on that, because I fall into that a lot, trying to talk him into other things. I think it works much more effectively just to try to change their reality, than trying them into—*

**Peter:** Not their reality—the reality.

**Terry:** *Okay, the reality—why not?*

**Peter:** You do it by giving a description.

**Steve A:** *When you say "correct", you mean "fitting", the redescription is fitting?*

**Peter:** Remember one here [Fig. 1, p. 389, (1): Status given by others]. This is one of the ways that you use Move 2's. For example, here is somebody who counts on other people to initiate or make decisions, a passive-dependent person. You sit down and start talking, and you find that he's doing this, and then you sit back and wait for him to do something. At that point, you've started the Move 2 strategy. Whatever he does, whether talk or not talk, (1) you can describe to him as his choice. Clearly he had a choice of talking or not talking, and whichever one he did, he chose. (2) Secondly, by approving it, or legitimizing it, you make that a successful choice on his part, you give him the status of somebody who has done this successfully with you. You've taken up the rest of the slack and made him successful. And then you turn around and point out to him that he has been successful in that. The trick is to either find or create examples of the kind of success that will move him in the direction you want him to move.

**Wynn:** *This is sort of the import of the Outward Bound programs, in that they take kids—sort of mealy kids from an urban setting and you put them in a very rigorous outdoor setting, in a group where they're interdependent, and then you jury-rig it, you assure their success at a very rigorous undertaking—things that they wouldn't see themselves as successful at before, and that seems to produce some rather nice changes in some cases.*

**Peter:** And you could use that kind of experience to point out, (1) that the kid can survive on himself—he didn't realize that he was that capable. Now he does, because he has done it. (2) You can point out that he has done something different than he ever did before, so he's capable of change. (3) You can point out the specific achievements that he has done without specific training, and show him that he has been creative. Therefore, he has creative potential and has exercised it. There are a lot of different descriptions that are correct, that you could give, that the person doesn't have already. And by setting up the right situation, you can pretty well guarantee those kinds of successes.

**Terry:** *What if the person's hip to your doing that, though?*

**Peter:** It doesn't matter. That's the point of saying that you're not just arguing him into it—you are *making* it so. And I have told clients that I'm making it so.

**Terry:** *But what if they say, "Oh, but you have a way of making me successful at everything"? It's not the passive-dependent clients—"It's really not me, it's*

*just the way you can describe what I do, that makes me successful. I know it's not really me."*

**Peter:** It's obviously not true, because in the particular instances, he recognizes that it *is* true.

**Terry:** *But what if he resists that way? What do you do with that?*

**Wynn:** *You let him win the argument and point that out to him. [laughter]*

**Peter:** You can go either way you want. You can, at that point, argue with him, and insist, and then wind up with, "As far as I'm concerned—", or you can do the kind of thing Wynn said, and just switch your ground and say, "Now look what you're doing successfully."

**Terry:** *Which he could mount with a similar, "Now you're making me successful," then you begin the assumption argument.*

**Peter:** No, because my clients are real people and not logical burlesques. They have common sense, and they can recognize when they're doing strange things. And if they can't, you don't reason with them in this way at all.

**Cory:** *Do you remember the incident when Al Farber was playing a tape, and the client said something like, "Can't I do anything wrong?"—and I don't remember what happened then.*

**Peter:** Do you remember what Al said?

**Terry:** *"Isn't there any way I can do anything wrong? Am I a success at everything? I'm trying so hard to fail."*

**Peter:** I had a case almost like that yesterday, and my reaction there was—in this context, I would say, "You just did. That's the wrong question to ask."

**Terry:** *You're good at telling people they're wrong, though. [laughter]*

**Peter:** I almost never tell anybody that! Show me. [laughter] You can see that that's simply another variation. Saying, "You just did," is once more a case of pointing to the reality rather than arguing about something, and making it so because if I count it as the wrong question, it *is* the wrong question.

**?:** *Nooooo.*

**Terry:** *It's suspicious when you say that. It sounds like it's getting into deep subjectivity or something.*

**Peter:** No, it's no more than saying that when the umpire calls it a ball, it is a ball, because that's what he says it is.



**Terry:** *You see, you're the umpire.*

**Peter:** That's right. Of course. Now if I can challenge that role, if I said that, I could get a comeback, but then that opens up new possibilities, and you deal with those as they come. I'm not offering a single prescription of what you do time after time with everybody. I'm giving an example of doing something of that sort. But it calls for clinical judgments when, how, and who.

**Daniel:** *The neurotic paradigm doesn't seem to fit this case—the formulation you just made.*

**Terry:** *Learning how not to learn, you mean?*

**Daniel:** *It seems like that would be one—*

**Peter:** Now remember, I said that the key thing is that you have a situation not merely where the old habits don't work, but where something does work.

**Daniel:** *Yeah, and that's why I say—*

**Peter:** In the neurotic paradox, you don't have something else that does work, which is why he keeps doing the same thing. In the sense that he survives to do the same things over again, it does work. Remember Maxim 5: you do what you can do. So the neurotic, going through his motions, does what he can do, and in that sense he is successful, because he does survive even though it's painful, unhappy, or something.

But that's not the kind of success we're talking about. We're talking about developing new perceptual habits. I said: what you do is you put the person in a situation where his old perceptual habits don't work, and where there is a kind of success that he gets not from those old ones, but from something that you can get him to do. The success is one that you can get him to succeed at, however you do it, whether by arguing, whether just by the conditions that you set up, or whatever. The point is to get that success. Because without the success, you don't have the conditions for developing new habits. You can have preliminaries that don't involve success, but at some point, if he's ever going to get that habit, he's got to start succeeding. And he's never going to do that if the circumstances that he's in are such that he in fact doesn't succeed.

**Daniel:** *I'm thinking that this seems to apply more to growth-oriented people than to obsessive-compulsive, neurotics, and—*

**Peter:** No, we're talking about perceptual habits.

Look: think of that classic experiment of giving you a pair of glasses

where things are reversed left to right. Then your old visual habits don't do you any good, because what you see, when you see the chair there, the chair's over there. So you've got to adjust and move in the opposite direction from how things look. And the finding is, it takes you a few weeks, but you do it. That's the same principle that's involved. Put somebody in a situation where the old habits don't work, and where there's something he can and does do, it does work. The key is that he's using it in some form of behavior that he succeeds in.

What would you bet that it would help if you give the person a description of the success, of what it is he's seeing and what it is he's doing, rather than just tossing him into a new situation? Remember that your perceptual habits are habits of seeing things that you know about, so you're reproducing that total pattern by giving the person descriptions of the things he's going to see at some point, giving those to him ahead of time, giving him a rationale for there being those things, connecting those things to other things, describing the experience that he's going to have when he finally does, or maintaining faith by describing to him ahead of time the sequence of experiences he's going to have as he gets closer and closer to being able to do it. All of those kinds of things will facilitate.

**Terry:** *That's very close to——'s analysis of marijuana intoxication. He said, since there's no cultural examples on how people behave under intoxication with marijuana, that when there was even minimal kind of peer suggestion or cues or so on, for this altered state, that there was a profound influencibility on their behavior and construal of the experience, on the basis of that prior suggestion.*

**Peter:** Try reversing that: that as soon as you introduce an intelligible concept of the behavior that you would be engaging in, you will then enact that behavior and experience it accordingly.

**Terry:** *Okay, but one of his key connections was the absence of previous conceptualizations for that state.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's common to both what you said and what I said. What I wanted to do was to reverse putting experience in the fundamental position instead of having it be the behavior pattern. You described the understanding as a formulation of the experience. I would say, think of the experience as the experience of enacting something that you conceptualized. Because, indeed, you do experience that way.

When I sit in the chair, I experience it as sitting in the chair. I don't somehow have an abstract experience and then formulate that as having sat in the chair. So introducing the conceptualization of what behavior it is that I will be engaging, will in general get me to (1) do that, and (2) experience my doing *that*, rather than doing something else. In effect, the experience will follow the description and not the other way around.

So if you describe that as sitting in a chair, I'll experience it one way. If you describe it as getting closer to the floor, that's true, too, but if that's what I'm enacting, I will experience it differently. I will experience it as getting closer to the floor. And yet, you would say, the sensory aspects of it wouldn't be any different. But the knowledge of what it is I'm doing will change my experience into the experience of doing that. So you're going to influence the experience by your description of what the person is doing.

**Terry:** *But it seems like again that works ###, because you have someone who's engaging in a course of action like playing golf, and he's preoccupied with a business deal or something like that, and his experience goes through very many fluctuations during his playing golf, and you would—certain normative experiences that people would have playing golf aren't the ones that he has. He's not thinking about gauging his shots and everything, he's sort of listlessly walking up to the ball and getting it in the general direction of the green.*

**Peter:** Are there normative experiences?

**Terry:** *I guess hypothetically there could be. I mean, there would be hypothetical kinds of things that would be capturing your attention like gauging shots and estimating putts and this kind of stuff.*

**Peter:** Those sound like descriptions of behaviors, not of experiences. You say that's what he'd be doing, and then his experience would be the experience of that. That's exactly what I'm talking about here, is that the access, both subjectively and externally, is via the behavior, and then the experience is the experience of doing that. It's not the other way around, that you have access to the experience and then you label it or formulate it as what you're doing.

**Terry:** *I have the sense of experience being contingent and the behavior being essential, so that you could have many different varieties of experience while engaging in the same kind of behavior.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Terry:** *I guess that's what I'm trying to point to.*

**Peter:** But not the same historical behavior.

What else would you do to change the perceptual habits? We just said, the general conditions of old habits unsuccessful, something you can do that is successful, and it helps to describe what's going on. Again, it has to fit. If I gave you a description that you didn't recognize as what's going on with you, it would have the contrary effect—it would make it harder for you to learn. So the description has to fit.

**Jane:** *When he's engaged in it?*

**Peter:** Either he's engaged in it, or he's engaged in a course of action that will end up there. Either he is literally engaged in it, or he's engaged in a course of action that will wind up with his being able to see. Either way, you want to describe what it is—something that fits what goes on with him, so that he can recognize that description as applying. Since he can recognize it, what he finds out is that you know what's going on, and therefore he's more easily able—as well as willing—to take your word for what's going to happen later.

The next obvious thing is that you give him practice. Remember: you acquire concepts and skills by practice and experience. So you don't expect it to happen in one shot.

**Terry:** *How about teaching him concepts? Is that entailed in practice, or would they be separate practices?*

**Peter:** That's part of giving the description of what it is that he's going to be seeing. You introduce the terminology for the concepts of what it is he'll be seeing. So you're teaching him the seeing and the concepts more or less simultaneously. It's not until he can see it that he then says, "Oh, now I understand what an X is."

**Terry:** *I'm thinking of a reverse procedure, and I think psychotherapy is an instance of this, where you have a rite that emerges in various cultures, which is essentially a social practice—such as two people sitting in a room, one on a couch and one behind him—and it's only later, after a significant period of time has passed when this rite has been engaged in, that a mythic narrative follows, which is an account of that practice, of that set of actions. And in that instance, it seems to work in the reverse direction. And that's very often the case.*

**Peter:** You don't think that the therapist already has a description of what's going on when he seats the client on the couch?

**Terry:** *I think he has some theoretical and pre-scientific ideas mixed together.*

**Peter:** You're damn right. And if he hadn't, he wouldn't have done that. The fact that he changes his story about what happened doesn't mean that he didn't have a story to begin with about what was going to happen.

**Terry:** *Well, but I think that gets back to what you think about the logical priority of concepts, so the narrator's concepts always are prior. On the other hand, that comes from a ### point of view, and there's a significant sense in which the action preceded the mythic narrative what followed.*

**Peter:** That's simply a different kind of example, and it's not the kind we're interested in. The kind we're interested in is how do you change perceptual habits. And I said that one of the things you want to do is give the person practice. And if you don't do that in that kind of psychotherapy setting, it's simply irrelevant.

**Steve A:** *When you say "give practice", do you mean setting up similar situations where you ###?*

**Peter:** Yeah, having a repetition of the basic paradigm of getting the person to see something that he hadn't seen before.

**Bob:** *You could also give him motivation, by making it dangerous for him not to practice?*

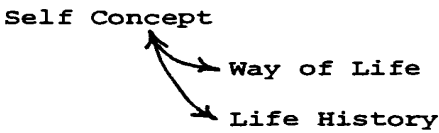
**Peter:** Yeah, except that's subject to the same limitation that he's got to be successful, because if he isn't, he's going to learn to do whatever he did do under those conditions of motivation. Because whatever he did do, if he survives, that was successful. It just wasn't the kind of success you wanted. You can see that that puts a premium on whoever's doing the teaching there: having some empirical knowledge of what things work, and when he is going to succeed and when he isn't. Because without that, all of these procedures—in general, they wouldn't work. It's like giving an image in psychotherapy: it has to fit, otherwise it doesn't have a chance of working. Well, how do you tell when it fits? You don't. If you're a good therapist, you won't do it at the wrong time often. So likewise, when you're teaching somebody, how do you know that he's right now able to do this, when yesterday you didn't think he was? There isn't any way that you know, but if you're a good teacher of that sort of thing, you won't often be mistaken.

Okay, what translates to self concept? How do you change somebody's self concept?—Let's take ten and be thinking about that...

Let's start in with self concept, and first thing, to review in what way the self concept represents a basic attachment to the world. Remember, what

we said was that this was a formulation of your behavior potential; and in a sense, your behavior potential is, literally, your attachment to the world, and it's a very strong connection. In contrast, this one [**mechanisms**] is—you might say—an indirect connection, because the connection is through the particulars that fall under here. Your self concept, insofar as that has any content at all, you might say, is the ###. Now, self concept, or self, also ties in to these two notions [Fig. 5].

**FIGURE 5**



Remember, the definition of a person is, “A person is an individual whose life history is a history of intentional action, at least paradigmatically.” Secondly, we talked earlier about the connection between knowledge of one’s self and knowledge of one’s way of life.

Given that as a starting point, how would you change a person’s self concept in a permanent way? At this point, I think we can start following the book, and go back and forth and ask of what don Juan did, how does it fit here? We can work with this and say, “Do we find anything of that sort in don Juan’s procedure?” We can work it either way. It’s tempting at this point, because there’s a clear application here [**Life History**] to something in don Juan, namely, losing your personal history. One of the essentials of selves as we know them is this historical aspect, and it would be a fundamental undercutting to get somebody to not see himself in terms of a history. And you might even wonder whether this could, in fact, be accomplished. What we see is a dialogue between Carlos and don Juan. It’s not clear that don Juan doesn’t remember what he’s done and where he’s been. He says something on that order, but it simply isn’t clear. Part of why it’s not clear is it’s hard for us to imagine. Unless you have amnesia, which he clearly doesn’t, how can you *not* remember?

**Joe S:** *Is it not remembering, or is it that you don’t have a description of it?*

**Peter:** What other description would do the job?

**Joe S:** *I was thinking of where you look at an experience that you have had in your past, and describe it one way, and then undergo a change, and then look at that same experience and describe it in a different way. In that sense, you now have a different life experience.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's the kind of thing that Terry was talking about, that after you've been on the couch for three years, you have a new story about what was going on.

**Joe S:** *So then it's not that you don't have any life history, it's that you have a new one.*

**Peter:** You have a different one.

**Steve A:** *It's not grounded in any specific life history—it could be anything, and it doesn't matter, but a life history is just one thing relative to another, and it doesn't really matter. You could say anything about it that you wanted, redescribe it in any way you wanted.*

**Joe S:** *Within the reality constraints, because it was ### the life history that it was.*

**Jane:** *How about a single description of your history as being your identity?*

**Peter:** What do you have instead?

**Jane:** ###.

**Terry:** *It's a different view, I think, to a cognitive function, because you're looking at the nature of memories being fundamentally different. On the one hand, you're sort of carrying around a naive notion of memory as being sort of like having photographs that you can look back at. On the other hand, you're looking at memory as being a fundamental form of intentionality, in which the way in which you go to recover the memory—the intentional act of recovering that memory, in a way shapes, or is a point of view on it, and we get back to something analogous to the chair being the unity of which—that which unifies all these various perspectives on it. You have sort of an intentional object of memory.*

**Peter:** You'd say, then, that there's no ultimate difference between not remembering and just ignoring it? It sounds like what you were saying, Joe, is that you ignore it, and that you don't give it the same kind of importance that it has normally—that you do remember, but you don't remember it as you; you remember it sort of just that's what happened in those places.

**Steve A:** *It's as relative to anything else as everything else in the world? It has the same status as everything else?*

**Terry:** *What's don Juan talking about, though, when he says that?*

**Daniel:** *When he looks at his life history, it seems when we go through the*



*developmental schema, that doesn't play as important a part as it does in those people's current life behavior. Like we say we've got these ID characteristics from our life history and experiences. Then don Juan rejects that notion, or rejects it in part.*

**Peter:** No, he accepts it. Because what he really wants to be free of is those ID characteristics, and he does it by being free of the history, but he accepts the connection between the history and the ID characteristics. That's why he gets rid of one by getting rid of the other.

**Daniel:** *That's exactly what I'm saying—it doesn't fit him as it does ordinary people.*

**Wynn:** *It seems like there's a heuristic in how he's treating his own history, in that when he tells Carlos to "give up your history", the equivalent statement would be to "give up your world". But to give up your history is a way of opening into that subject matter. Once you've in fact changed your world, you can embrace—you can re-embrace—your history, but it has a different import. Part of the thing that seems to be the case for don Juan is that he doesn't take his history seriously, as a determinant.*

**Daniel:** *For don Juan.*

**Wynn:** *But he has to make it apparent as a determinant for Carlos, before he can get Carlos to that position. Carlos has to feel in a knowledgeable sense the tug of his history, the limits of his history on his present being, before he can even loosen those ties. So the attack is on the concept of history.*

**Peter:** Is it? That wasn't my impression, that he had to do that. Is there some place in the book where that's described? Because my recollection is that there wasn't any experiential episode where he experienced the pull and then pulled loose from that. It's just that the message got across, but I don't remember it in that much detail.

**Steve A:** *### the way Carlos in his history, don Juan points to that and says, "Try and remember this important thing, try and remember, try and remember," and all of a sudden, kaboom, and he sees it the way—*

**Peter:** But does he make the use of it that Wynn said, namely, that he first experiences the tug and that enables him to break loose from it?

**Wynn:** *What I was suggesting was that he just wanted it to be very apparent to Carlos how, in fact, he's an infant, a shaped object of his history; and how, in his case, the child was the father of the man.*

**Peter:** Yeah, I think that would sensitize Carlos that he's still living, in some sense, what happened before, that he has characteristics that do reflect his history.

**Wynn:** *But the subject matter, primarily, is the identity between his history and his world, and it makes sense that in the same—that when he reaches the point in which he's no longer concerned primarily with his history, he's also no longer concerned with his world in quite the same way. Where he'd have a linguistic connection.*

**Peter:** What's the difference? How is he concerned differently with his world if he drops his personal history?

**Steve A:** *The freedom to create the world just by losing habits?*

**Wynn:** *He isn't caught by the status and the behavior potential that his world has—as he sees it—has provided by other people's—his history is also an issue of his availability, his habits—*

**Steve A:** *His self-importance.*

**Terry:** *If my personal history is that of being a lawyer, if I suddenly decide I want another personal history, suddenly I'm not obligated to go to the office the next day.*

**Peter:** One of the things you're losing, then, when you lose your personal history, is the constraints that we've talked about before, that could be formulated as, "I couldn't do that and still be me."

**Sherry:** *Others wouldn't see me as being me—you don't have that constraint—*

**Peter:** Yeah, that ties this in now to this one also. If being me is being what other people see me as, then there's a lot of constraints of the form, "I couldn't do X, Y, or Z and still be me." So dropping history would give you a loosening of that kind of constraint.

**Steve A:** *Also as an emphasis in terms of figure/ground, with the importance of constructing this new world, and your idea of changing the self concept for don Juan. For Carlos, it means losing his self-importance, and that self-importance is tied into his life history, and he is at the center of life history, and when you lose that self-importance, you—*

**Peter:** What kind of constraint comes from self-importance?

**Daniel:** *What you can do and what you can't do.*

**Wynn:** *Issues of face are issues of self-importance, often.*

**Laura:** *Is it convincing yourself and others who you are and with what kind of respect you'll be treated?*

**Daniel:** *You have to live up to something.*

**Peter:** That sounds like the self concept, not self-importance.

**Steve A:** *Not being able to talk to—it's tied in with "I couldn't do that and still be me." I couldn't talk to those bushes, and—*

**Terry:** *Narcissism has to do—it's a kind of—narcissism really does away with the constraint on interpersonal relationships. For one thing, you're not really taking intrinsic interest in other people if you're narcissistic. They're instruments that you're using to build a certain story about yourself, or something like that. But you don't really see those people as a legitimate focus of interest in and of themselves. Or things outside in general.*

**Laura:** *You see yourself as separate. You don't see yourself as part of the world, and you have a perspective on it ###.*

**Wynn:** *Yeah, to be important is to be important in a specific relation, and that specific relation is an historical relation, how he got to have that sense of importance in that world.*

**Terry:** *So it's like I can be interesting, and people can be interested in "I", but the "I" isn't interested in others.*

**Wynn:** *But there's several different issues that we seem to be teasing out here. By focusing on the issue of self-importance, you focus both on the issue of narcissism and on how your particular position connects you to your world.*

**Peter:** Forget about narcissism and do talk about self-importance. Can we come up with a parallel constraint, that's parallel to "I couldn't do that and still be me"?—based on this [Fig. 5, p. 417].

**Wynn:** *I couldn't do that—it wouldn't be worth my time. I couldn't do that, it wouldn't be worthy of me.*

**Joe S:** *I couldn't do that and still maintain my status.*

**Sherry:** *I couldn't do that, and still be important—it's taking yourself away with being one with everything. In other words, you're only important—*

**Peter:** Keep in mind that somebody who has self-importance doesn't usually think of himself as having self-importance.

**Terry:** *This is really odd, because it's not reflecting the phenomenology of experience of that person at all.*

**Wynn:** *That's where the issue of history and world come in, because a person who has a sense of self-importance, whether he's phenomenally aware of it or not, is a person who's likely to go back to those aspects of his world that grant him that and make very strong connections.*

**Peter:** Let's make this transition, at least provisionally. I think something about self-importance comes out more clearly when you put it in terms of "selfish". What kind of constraint comes from this kind of thing [**selfish**]?

**Wynn:** *You want to keep having it.*

**Peter:** Again, somebody who's selfish doesn't generally think of himself as selfish. But his being selfish provides some fairly strong constraints.

**Wynn:** *That's the point I'm trying to make, though, is that whether you're aware of having those attributes or not, to have those attributes is likely also behaviorally to tie you back into the world, into those aspects of the world that grant you those goodies, that grant you that sense of self-importance. And so you have to keep being a member of that world that's already given you that status, in order to maintain that status.*

**Peter:** What's the nature of the constraint?

**Wynn:** *The constraint is that to maintain your selfishness is to maintain a specific kind of relationship to the object, to the ultimate.*

**Terry:** *If you think in terms of what you're missing out on, it's like you're missing out on engaging in reciprocal relationships.*

**Daniel:** *You ignore others.*

**Terry:** *There's a constraint on the kind of relationships that can be engaged in, or the ones that you can—*

**Peter:** But that's an outsider's view of it. Take it from the person's own view, him being a selfish person. What's his version of "I couldn't do that and still be me"?

**Wynn:** *I couldn't do without that.*

**Jane:** *He's looking for a particular perfection.*

**Joe S:** *He can't let get anything go.*

**Sherry:** *He needs those things that ###.*

**Peter:** Okay, but that's not from his point of view. It's from our point of view. Because he doesn't see himself as selfish.

**Sherry:** *He knows he has the needs—*

**Jane:** *He doesn't see himself as constrained at all.*

**Peter:** He might not see himself as constrained, but he would be able to formulate constraints.

**Joe H:** *One of the questions would be, What will that do for me?*

**Peter:** I think that's on the right track. How would you formulate that parallel to "I couldn't do that and still be me"?

**Joe H:** *"Why should I do that if it won't do something for me?"*

**Peter:** I was thinking of, "I couldn't do that and still get what I need." "I couldn't do that and guarantee my safety." Notice how that reflects selfishness: only somebody who is selfish is *that* concerned, gives that kind of priority to getting what he needs or wants, or guaranteeing his safety. And it's from that that comes the ignoring other people, treating them as objects, etc. Because what you're up to is guaranteeing *your* safety; what you're up to is meeting *your* needs. And so your formulation of the constraint is, "I can't do that and still meet my needs." And what's back of that is—what's self-evident to you is that the important thing is to meet your needs, that the important thing is to guarantee your safety. And so for you, that's the way you formulate the constraint.

**Terry:** *Here it seems like genetic models are really needed in order to make something like that intelligible.*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *At least they helped me a lot.*

**Peter:** No.

Is there any other way that self-concept notions provide constraints? We have the life-history constraint; we have "I couldn't do that and still be me"; we have "I couldn't do that and guarantee my needs or safety".

If you think in terms of the four perspectives, the prudential and aesthetic are going to implicate these [**Status given by others**]. And they will fall under the heading of "I couldn't do that and still be me". I couldn't do that and still discharge my obligations to others. I couldn't do that and still do the socially appropriate thing that I have to do to be me.

Recall, I said that one of the themes in those eight chapters: apparently the most common way that people ### to be selfish, in that almost all

of these systems contain some kind of injunction against being selfish and warnings about the bad consequences of being too selfish.

Don Juan doesn't seem to be any exception. For him, too, there is such a thing as too much self-importance. In fact, you get the feeling that any amount is too much for him. Except that when you look at his description of the life of a Warrior, you get some of this [**self-importance**] back. When he talks about a Warrior being "impeccable", it's not garden-variety selfishness, but neither is it neglect of oneself or disdain for oneself or anything of that sort.

**Steve A:** *Without a guarantee in the sense of selfishness as meaning a guarantee of safety, your world is one where you could die and where one ###.*

**Peter:** Okay, now that raises the question of what do you have left, if you remove personal history, you remove your personal characteristics, and you remove your own importance in the scheme of things, you remove your own identity?

**Joe S:** *Existential nothingness.*

**Peter:** You can see that indeed that doesn't leave much.

**Wynn:** *There one thing to consider, though, in relation to this, and that's the kind of thing that the Buddha talks about when he makes the comments that his teachings are a like a raft that you use to cross over, but that you don't cling to the raft, in the sense that you see contradictions in various places in—say—like what don Juan says. If you assume that the Warrior is self-important where—another point is that you shouldn't be self-important. I think the point there is that at different stages in the development of the individual, these have different heuristic places.*

**Peter:** Yeah, except that it isn't self-importance. The impeccable Warrior isn't really self-important. It's just something sort of like it.

**Wynn:** *Yes, but you do choose a path, because that path is the path of heart, and that's the path that will meet your esthetic needs, so to speak? And you can make—*

**Peter:** Notice that they're esthetic, that they're not prudential in the way that is implicated in "selfish".

Again, think of the coherence that a person gets from life-history and way of life, and say, "What's left if you take that away? What kind of coherence, what kind of intelligibility is possible?" Because this is the kind that we know and are familiar with. It's a pattern-type coherence. All our

understandings, all our explanations are by reference to patterns. Or at least they can be put in that form of reference to patterns, if not literally, ###. So what's left? What kind of intelligibility could you have?

**Wynn:** *There's an issue teased out of that, though, because on the one hand, don Juan tells Carlos to ignore Carlos's history, independent of his history with don Juan, and to pay attention to that history. So what he's left with, at the end, is history*

**Peter:** Does he say to pay attention to that history?

**Wynn:** *No, but in effect that's what happens. Because he's to pay attention to the teachings.*

**Daniel:** *Not the past, but the present.*

**Peter:** Yeah. You see, if somebody is right now paying attention to what you're teaching him right now, you don't have to tell him to remember what you taught him yesterday, because he'll have the effect of it today if he was paying attention then to the—

**Wynn:** *But that's development history. Those could be presented as—if you wished—as a history.*

**Peter:** Notice, though, that what you're building up is a new set of ID characteristics. You don't have to carry the history. ID characteristics come back into their own as a way of freeing you from history—that is, it's the ID characteristics that you have *now* that count. And for that, all you have to have is the history, not the recollection of it.

**Wynn:** *But it's kind of Karma-free this way, though. It's like you don't owe anything for those particular ID characteristics, whereas you do owe something to the ID characteristics you acquired in the normal ways.*

**Peter:** Well, in fact you don't. Once you have an ID characteristic, it doesn't matter how you got it. They have the same function in our world, which is to free you from your history.

**Wynn:** *Except that there's an issue, though, for instance like gratitude, in which like you see, for instance, don Juan trying—in the second book, in *Separate Reality*—trying to get Carlos to realize that don Juan doesn't really care about Carlos, that he doesn't have any affection for Carlos and all those sorts of things, which may or may not be true, but part of the issue seems to be that what you do acquire is simply and presently yours: it's not something that you have an obligation or a tie to.*



**Peter:** What's left?

**Daniel:** *A person in time. A person alone in time. The "as it is" at any particular moment.*

**Peter:** What possible value could that have?

**Jane:** *You'd have values left, and potential ###.*

**Peter:** Any potential comes due at some other moment. If you don't tie those moments in with the temporal history, of what possible value is the present moment?

**Daniel:** *Choice.*

**Peter:** What choice? What value is that? The value of choices in a pattern is (1) that they are the right choices in some sense, and (2) what they lead to.

**Daniel:** *Actualization, for example.*

**Peter:** But actualization takes place in the life history. Is there such a thing as actualization in the moment?

**Daniel:** *That's where actualization is, is in the moment, not the history.*

**Peter:** The history is the actualization.

**Wynn:** *Would there be anxiety in that moment, without the history?*

**Peter:** No.

**Wynn:** *There'd be no anxiety and there'd be no guilt. There would be no continuous—*

**Peter:** There wouldn't be anything: that's the point. What would there be? What could there be?

**Daniel:** *You'd be free of existential guilt.*

**Peter:** But how? The intrinsic significance that we know of comes from intrinsic practices which are temporal patterns. If we gave those up, where is there any value of any kind?

**Bob:** *There is no pattern—the life of a Warrior isn't life, that is, a temporal pattern.*

**Peter:** But remember, with no routines, no structure, no nothing, what then?

**Bob:** *Well, he's got strategy.*

**Peter:** But the strategy is not to have any strategy.

**Bob:** *The strategy is to have no routines, and to be accessible and inaccessible according to how it suits you, and there is structure to that.*

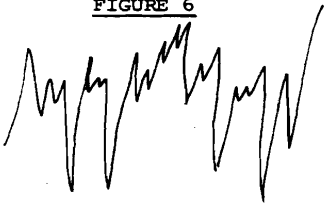
**Peter:** What kind of structure is this?

**Wynn:** *An esthetic structure of sorts.*

**Terry:** *The function of obliterating all that past structure is to get the person in the here-and now, free of ID constraints that might have limited them from adopting the life pattern of the Warrior.*

**Peter:** Okay, look: here's an example that's a paraphrase from something in Wittgenstein. Suppose that I go like this [**blackboard**].

**FIGURE 6**



Suppose you see me doing something like that, and you can't figure out any way how come I did the particular things I did. You see me looking at my watch, and you think that maybe that has something to do with it, but there's no obvious connection—the numbers, the time, but nothing connects to anything you see about this. And you ask me, and say, “Well, I'm following the rule here.” And then I keep going [**adding more to the line**], and you ask me, “What rule?” and I can't tell you, but I'm following a rule. About this time, you say, “What he describes as following a rule is what we describe as not following a rule. Because when we talk about following a rule, we mean something that you can say what it is, and for which the example of it is recognizable as an example. So if he had told us that he goes up on the odd minutes and down on the even minutes, that would be intelligible, and then we could check it. But what we see here is exactly what we would see if he wasn't following any rules at all, if he was just doing what he felt like doing at any given moment.”

Now, this thing [**Fig.6**] will not give you any kind of intelligible pattern. And the question I'm raising is: if you're living in the moment and doing simply what suits you then, what do you have that has any value? It will not have this kind of coherence—it will have that kind of incoherence [**Fig. 6**], and no matter how much you say that it makes sense here and now, our way of asking “Does it make sense here, now?” has reference to other points in time.

**Wynn:** *I'm wondering, though, if it could be argued in these cases that you, in fact, haven't lost anything, but what's happened is that you've gained a perspective through those exercises of attempting to lose those things.*

**Peter:** How would that work?

**Wynn:** *Well, you go through the perspective of—for instance—the game of, “Can you imagine what John think about when John sees the situation, when you treat John that way?” and you go through a series of exercises in which you empathize with somebody else's situation—that won't be a good example to get into this. You simply go to the issue of, like, you're not bound by your history, your history is not important; be unavailable; all those sorts of things. At the end of that, if he's accomplished it, he's accomplished a sense of freedom from the particular constraints that he's established as part and parcel with that history. But he can still remember that history. He can still use it and have it, so to speak, in ways that are appropriate, that are esthetically feasible. That's why I think the issue is sort of like the Buddhist teachings about the belief as the raft.*

**Peter:** But then you have a personal history in the normal way. You've just cleaned it up some.

**Wynn:** *You've cleaned up your obligation to it. You've changed your relationship to it. Like I see it strictly as a trick, the trick being to—that you don't—it seems to me absurd to talk about losing your personal history, as if I put a magnet to a tape cartridge and erased the cartridge. That's not what happens. What happens is that he isn't obligated by the constraints of that history.*

**Peter:** What constraints?

**Wynn:** *That becomes the question. He begins to recognize that as a question. But he didn't recognize that as a question before, in the same way that a child in a family of doctors probably doesn't recognize that he doesn't have to be a doctor when he grows up.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

Is this just a ploy on his part, then? Is the reference to losing your history not legitimate, in the sense he really doesn't think you will, but that he's telling you that so that you'll do something predictably that will have an effect that he wants?

**Wynn:** *Kind of yes and no, because he loses his history in a way, in that he loses the kind of linear sort of progression from what you would expect from such a history. He loses that—*

**Peter:** History is a linear progression.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but he loses the kind of expected progression. He gets the opportunity of calling his whole history into question.*

**Peter:** What good does that do him?

**Wynn:** *He might, at that point, recognize—somewhat like the psychoanalyst hopes his patient recognizes—how he can give up trying to right some of those wrongs, or whatever.*

**Peter:** Let me try a parallel thing. Suppose that you said, “When you lose your history, what you give up is operating according to any of the rules that you’ve learned, including the tendency to operate—the motivation to operate—by those rules. So that at that point, you are neither motivated nor constrained to operate by any rules.” The difficulty comes in that if something is that free of constraints of that kind, then it’s impossible to say *what* it is, or that it has any value whatever.

**Jane:** *You’re talking about the whole relativity thing.*

**Peter:** Yeah. To be something at all, there’s got to be a difference between being that and being something else, and that can be formulated as following a rule. To have any value, it has to be of one sort rather than another, and that can be thought of as a constraint or following a rule. So if you wipe out all constraints and all rules, you’re also going to wipe out identities and values. At least in principle. And that’s why at this point, you might—as Wynn suggests—think that maybe he didn’t really mean it, or maybe he didn’t mean to go that far with it, that he just wants to push Carlos in that direction and free up some of this stuff, but without going to this extreme.

**Terry:** *What about the distinction you’d want to make between an impulsive person and a Warrior? An impulsive person would have a presumably chaotic history—*

**Peter:** What’s the difference between an impulsive person and a Warrior?

**Terry:** *I guess presumably you could formulate some rule to describe the chaotic patterns of behavior of the impulsive, whereas there would be no—*

**Peter:** You can’t. A chaotic pattern is precisely one with no—

**Wynn:** *A Warrior certainly— [general conversation]*

**Peter:** Okay, what kind of word is “impeccable”?

**Wynn:** *It’s an esthetic term.*

**Mary:** *A double negative.*

**Peter:** You sure? In terms of what type of ID description you're giving, what type of ID description would you naturally take that I was giving, if I said that he was impeccable?

**Steve A:** *Something like meticulous, scrupulous*

**Mary:** *Perfection.*

**Peter:** What kind of description would that be?

**Terry:** *Vague. [laughter]*

**Wynn:** *Well, it doesn't define a particular performance, or even a particular set of behaviors as being part of that, but it says something about the style, perhaps, of those.*

**Peter:** That's right. If you weren't in this class, and somebody said that, I think you'd normally take it to be style word. Talking about somebody's style, they'd say, "He's impeccable, meticulous, awkward, clumsy"—it belongs to that class of words. In that sense, it probably is a double negative. But it's a style word.

**Steve A:** *In the sense of saying "with heart"?*

**Peter:** "With heart" is a little different, but that gives us a clue. When we ask, "What's the alternative to pattern, to give intelligibility or pattern to something?" one of the alternatives is style. If you operate according to a certain style, if that style is intelligible, then your behavior is intelligible even though it's not intelligible in a pattern sense.

**Terry:** *It occurs to me that the same logical problem is present here that is sort of involved in the Dadaist manifesto in painting, which was that the Dadaists sought to destroy form through form, and so there was constantly a limitation—the impossibility of their task, in that even if Marcel Duchamp puts a fur-lined toilet seat in the New York Museum of Modern Art, it's still form, even though it doesn't resemble a painting on a canvas or anything like that. And it seems like we're talking about getting beyond routine, beyond pattern, but yet there's no way that even a non-pattern is not that kind of pattern. There's a sense in which pattern is a fundamental ontological category which can't be escaped, that there's nothing—it's like communicating: you can't not communicate. Or behavior—you cannot not behave. There's always behavior and there's always communication, and there's no way that you can not do*

*those things. There's no negative in that sense. And it just seems like pattern is the same sort of notion.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's why we have problems with it.

**Wynn:** *You know, the Dadaists are a nice example for this sort of thing, because the Dadaists were historically replaced by the Surrealists, who recognized that what they were doing instead of destroying patterns was developing alternative patterns and patterns that were more encompassing, and likewise here, it seems to me that the recognition isn't that you destroy your history, but that you provide more alternatives.*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's not the solution, because you're not undercutting pattern by introducing quasi-patterns, or paradoxical patterns. You're introducing something other than pattern, namely, style.

**Wynn:** *You never undercut pattern, because there's no pattern in the abstract, only particular patterns, and what you do would be to provide alternative or different patterns.*

**Peter:** No. That's like saying there's no numbers in the abstract – there are only particular numbers. Numbers *are* abstract, and patterns *are*. You can have particular exemplifications——

**Wynn:** *When we're talking about the course of anybody's life, we're talking about a particular pattern.*

**Peter:** No. That's a history. When we're talking about patterns, we're talking about what the form of that history is, what pattern is enacted. Any pattern is repeatable, has possible multiple instances, so it can't be identified with the historically particular history.

**Wynn:** *Okay, so you don't link that with patterns. So then you could have a history that proceeded from that but didn't have multiple instances.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but that's simply a history. And that's why I can draw you a line on the board, and in some sense you can say it's a pattern, because it has a shape.

**FIGURE 7**



You can't say it's a pattern in that you can't say what pattern it is. And that's like my writing down this, here, and telling you that it's a number, except that I can't tell you what number it is.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but is don Juan like the Dadaists? Or is he like the Surrealists? Is he providing—*

**Peter:** He's providing an alternative, namely, style.

**Terry:** *Style through pattern?*

**Peter:** Style in place of pattern, as the central locus of value, the central source of intelligibility.

**Terry:** *I guess what I was questioning was whether or not someone who apparently has a non-pattern, who's guiding your life by the central determining value "style", whether, in fact, you can't formulate something that is the pattern out of that.*

**Peter:** Who cares? As an Observer, you can invent all of these things, you can say that there's a pattern, you might find a pattern—it doesn't matter, because that wasn't what was going on.

**Wynn:** *Okay, would you distinguish pattern and style for us, because that's—*

**Joe S:** *Style's not tied to any particular behavior.*

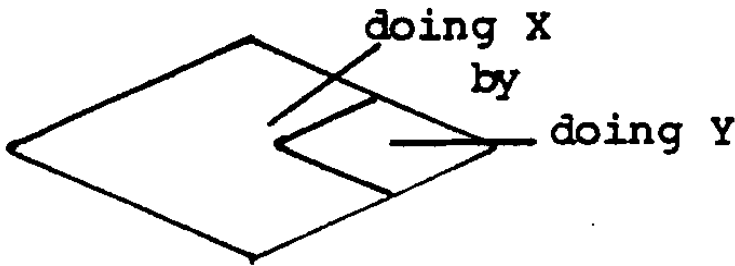
**Peter:** Remember: style is defined in terms of a *kind* of performance, and any way that you can characterize a performance, you can generate the corresponding style. But it's not tied to particular performances. It's a *kind* of performance.

**Joe S:** *In principle, isn't that the doctrine of the sixties, where it was "Do your own thing"?*

**Peter:** Yeah. That's why you talk these days primarily about "life style" rather than "way of life", because the "life style" notion has gotten tied into the "live for the moment" notion. And what you can do in a moment is only style, not pattern.

**Terry:** *The phenomenologists talk about this, too, and they talk about people who are leading certain—that have certain behavior patterns. Merleau-Ponty, in talking about love and distinguishing it from illusory love, talks about genuine love being that case where one appreciates a manner of being or a manner of existing—the style of existing, you might say—of another individual.*



**FIGURE 8**

**Peter:** [blackboard]: This, you might say, is the primitive notion of style, namely, that you define it in terms of performance. Once you have this form of description, you now have an extended notion of style, namely, anything that characterizes this in relation to that, and it's here [Y], doing Y, that you talk about the clinical-type styles—for example, you speak of somebody having a deceitful style. You talk about “the fine Italian hand of so-and-so”, or the devious style, etc. There you're talking about the kind of choices that they make.

But remember that the kind of choices that they make are the way that they do what they do, just as over here, the kind of performance that one engages in is the way that one does what one does. So, in both cases, you're talking about the performative aspect of some intentional action, and the difference is that when the performative aspect is itself an action, that you're talking about choices as the way that you do it. Whereas over here, you're talking about a performance as the way you do it. So style characteristics, then, and style terms, are another way of getting at the kind of choices that one makes.

**Terry:** *When the performative aspect and the action are co-extensive, then you'd have style—an extended notion of style?*

**Peter:** Yeah. In the case of symbolic behavior, here [Fig. 8], then you have an extended notion of style in which the way you do it is simply the doing of a certain kind of thing, the making of a certain kind of choice.

**Terry:** *What's another example of that? Like where the performance is co-extensive or is the same as the action which is an exemplification of ###?*

**Peter:** Well, I said a devious style, a friendly style, a sincere style.

**Terry:** *Like if you're lying to someone, and that's not only that you're lying on a particular instance, but that's your typical way of—*

**Peter:** Yeah, in general, when you have that kind of choice, you'll choose to lie rather than not lie. In general, if you have a choice between doing things directly and indirectly, you'll choose the indirection, and then you've got a devious guy.

**Daniel:** *It begins to sound like personal characteristics, then.*

**Peter:** Well, style is a personal Characteristic. It's one of the Dispositions. Remember—Trait, Attitude, Interest, and Style.

Okay, let's pick up from here next time. Oh—wait a moment. Also let me write down this question for your take-home exam. [**blackboard**] Discuss the issues of (a) intelligibility, and (b) implementation, in personal growth. The issue is: how do we understand the notion of personal growth, and what are the issues concerning how you either grow yourself or get somebody to grow.

**Steve A:** *When we go back to this on Thursday, you'll go back to—you started out, how do you change self concepts, what would it look like when it changed in such a way—we'll go back to that?*

**Peter:** Remind me of that.

## SEMINAR 10

### 12 August 1976

FIGURE 1

I	II	III	IV
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Status assignments by others</li> <li>2. Self concept</li> <li>3. Beliefs, concepts</li> <li>4. Perceptual and performative habits, mechanisms</li> </ol>	<p>Losing history Being inaccessible Self-importance Real world Control of dreams Visual exercises Drugs</p>	<p>Responsibility Doing  Visual exercises</p>	<p>Description World construction reconstruction Acting in the world</p>

**Peter:** I think this is more or less what we wound up at the end of last time, right? Because we had four things that represented the primary attachments of somebody to his real world [I], and then over here [II], we're looking at the kinds of things that don Juan did with Carlos. Most of these are the negative ones of loosening the attachments, and we'll need another list of positive ones for generating the new world. We talked about the ingredients of this, and we talked some about the suddenness of the shift. And by way of review, the things that we have there [I] all represent something that a person normally has no choice about. You don't choose any of those things. Instead, they are what you have to work with, they are what you count on in your behavior that involves making your choices.

**Daniel:** *Pete, wouldn't there be some choice involved in acquiring any of those? I agree that it isn't you just go out and choose, but I see a lot of choice involved.*

**Peter:** No, they're consequences of behavior, which itself does involve choices, but that's not what you choose. You choose your behaviors.

**Daniel:** *I'm thinking—I think I can make a case, carrying the Deliberate Action paradigm over to include these, etc., just being a manifestation of choices. Being partly manifestations of choices. I think all these things are partly manifestations of what we choose to do. They're derivative of what we choose.*

**Peter:** Say some more about that.

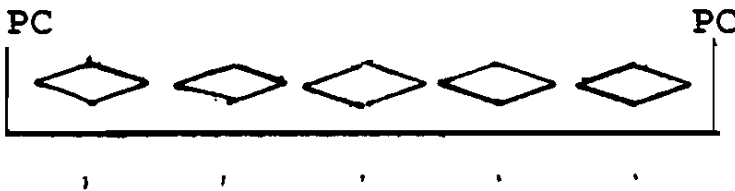
**Daniel:** *The behaviors that we choose are partly what other people do to assign us status. Our concept is the ideas we choose about what we think about ourselves, how we see ourselves. Beliefs—the same thing. We actually choose to believe in those.*

**Peter:** No. Try choosing to believe something you don't in fact believe, and see how easy it is.

**Daniel:** *But that's not how it's done. There's a sequence of steps.*

**Peter:** But then it's not a choice. Then it's a consequence of your doing something. Look: if I walk out the building, and I do that voluntarily, knowing what I'm doing, and then a rock falls on me as I step out, you wouldn't say that I chose to have a rock fall on me. And yet it is a consequence of my choices.

## FIGURE 2



So likewise, if I choose behaviors and as a result, I acquire concepts, beliefs, status, self concept, etc., you would say not that I'm choosing those, but that I'm choosing these [**diamonds**], and those [**PC**] are consequences. The connection is that it's not certain what changes will result from my behavior, and mostly I don't even know what changes are the consequences. I don't know, for example, which behaviors I engaged in, some time in the past, that now enable me to recognize lamps or light bulbs. And yet there must have been some such behaviors.

**Daniel:** *But you do know the behaviors you engaged in that allowed you—you know some of the behaviors that allowed you to be a professor at the University of Colorado.*

**Peter:** Only very vaguely. What I can do is reconstruct a sequence of achievements, but then, anybody else could do the same reconstruction, because those are public. But certainly, when I was doing those behaviors back then, I wasn't choosing to become a professor. I was just doing my thing.

**Daniel:** *One was applying for the job.*

**Peter:** That was one, yeah. I chose to apply.

**Daniel:** *You chose to say certain kinds of things to the people who interviewed you.*

**Peter:** Yeah. What I didn't do was choose to be a professor. That was a consequence. Remember, we said before about trying and doing, that you only say that you're doing something when it's under your control, when it's simply an exercise of your competence, and therefore you have the assurance that if you try, you'll succeed. But if it's something that essentially lies outside your control because it requires somebody else's permission, agreement; or it requires that you be lucky; or something like that, then you say you're trying. That's what you can choose, is to try, but you can't just do it. I think that holds for all of these things, that you have some idea of the consequences, and you can try to change, and you can try to acquire certain beliefs and self concepts, but you can't *do* it. You can at most try. Also, recall that You Can't Get There from Here. It's not merely a matter that you don't know enough. It's that even if you did, you might not be able to do it.

Have we discussed all of these [Fig. 1]? I don't think we have.

**Steve A:** *We discussed ### not in the sense of the specifics other than the drugs, and we went—with self concept, we never really got to how do you change it, but we did talk about losing one's self-importance.*

**Peter:** Let's raise a question: How did Carlos's self concept change? What was it like before? What was it like after? And how did it change?

**Joe S:** *One of the most pervasive changes was that he stopped seeing himself as a victim. He had a lot of self-pity, had seen himself as having been victimized by his father, who always failed on his promises, and various other things that happened. And he begins to take responsibility for his own part in what was going on with him, lose that self and ###.*

**Peter:** How was he able to do that?

**Joe S:** *I'm not sure there's a "how".*

**Peter:** Maybe not, but there's an answer that does it.

**Steve A:** *If you think of self concept as status assignment, with don Juan treating him as a success, he can see himself as a success, or—*

**Peter:** Success at what?

**Steve A:** *As an Actor. He saw himself as an Actor, don Juan redescribing him as himself as a locus of control, and him doing things, and then he saw himself as the Actor.*

**Peter:** [blackboard] Notice that this is a case of that [Losing history]. That is, in fair part, it was don Juan's status assignments of Carlos that gave him

not only this potential, but that reality. Since they were the only two people involved, and since as far as don Juan was concerned, Carlos was responsible, and he was doing these things, it became the case. You might say that within that two-person community, it was the case that Carlos was responsible and was doing those things. But also, there were certain things that he was doing—you recall that he succeeded at the visual exercises, and he succeeded here [**Gait of power**]*—*there were a number of things that specifically don Juan described as successful, and then he incorporated all of those into Carlos's role as the apprentice. And being an apprentice, he was an apprentice to a sorcerer, and the sorcerer was a sorcerer in a sorcerer's world. So this was one of the new anchors connecting him to the new world.

**Terry:** *I was going to sort of put an addendum on Steve's comment, which is that another key factor is that since he's an apprentice and becoming a certain kind of person, which is a Hunter and then a Warrior and then a Man of Knowledge, there's a key division between Actor and Observer and Critic, in that Carlos not really knowing what it is to be a Warrior, and having only a rudimentary grasp of the concepts Hunter, Warrior, and Man of Knowledge, is not really in a position to be a Critic. And therefore, if he can't appraise when he is succeeding and not succeeding, so he can't—in the typical ways people do—discount or disqualify what he's doing as being a non-success or a success, he's really dependent on don Juan for that. He engages in these kinds of actions through the use of the techniques, like the visual exercises and so on, and then don Juan can act as a Critic because he has that knowledge, but Carlos cannot in a symmetrical fashion do the same for his own actions. So he's pretty much at the mercy, then—in one respect, he's at the mercy of don Juan's status assignment. On the other hand, he's also allowing himself to be guided in a way which is the usual sort of critical mode, and there are sort of implications of that in terms of his being a Westerner who's very critical and all that. Those kinds of functions are suspended.*

**Peter:** Notice how similar that is to the position of any child in relation to his parents. The child doesn't have the competence, the knowledge, etc., to negotiate and criticize in a symmetrical fashion, and doesn't generally have that much reason to, and therefore is unprompted to.

**Daniel:** *Pete, what is this list [II]?*

**Peter:** These are detachment moves, you might say, and I'm trying to get a new list [III], and some items appear on both lists, like this one [**visual exercises**], and I think this one [**gait of power**].

**Terry:** *The concepts of the different types of sorcerer would be in the attachment list: the Warrior, Man of Knowledge, and all of that is part of what makes possible the transition to a new world.*

**Steve A:** *And Hunter would sort of be in both of them.*

**Terry:** *Because there's a real neat transition between Hunter and Warrior and Man of Knowledge, because the Hunter finds animals or objects, and early on he introduces the notion of Power, in another context having to do with the wind, and the wind at night becomes Power and not wind any longer, and he says that the wind is Power, and you have to find it hidden there. And then later he introduces the notion of a Warrior as a special case of a Hunter, and the Warrior doesn't hunt the usual things that hunters hunt—he hunts Power. And so he's bridging him into a new real world.*

**Peter:** [blackboard] Behavior potential = power.

What about the dreams? How did that work? And how come dreams?

**Steve A:** *Dreams are the closest thing in Carlos's phenomenology to the sorcerer's world, in that he can—you are the Actor, and you are creating them. So he can help Carlos gain power in that world and that be kind of—well, a taste of what it is for the other, or seeing himself as powerful.*

**Terry:** *It's a paradigm case of being the victim. I mean, people usually conceive of their dreams as being something that happens to them, and so by giving him exercises to—sort of, in greater and greater increments, realize that he can be an intentional source of his dreams, and guide his dreams, he's making the bridge from the world in which he is a victim to the world in which he can take responsibility for things and intentionally carry out actions.*

**Peter:** That's a special case, then, of being active rather than passive. There's something else in the picture, though.

**Wynn:** *There's two things. One seems to be the fact that Carlos already does have dreams, that the dreams already are peculiar and bizarre experiences that he could master, he could develop a sense of mastery. The other is the fact that for the American Indians, and especially plains Indians, the dream is a traditional form of life that the person either is receiving information from or gathers some control in, so it's traditional to the culture of don Juan—the “vision quest” being the usual term for that activity.*

**Terry:** *There's another feature, which is that Carlos many times points out that he wants don Juan to tell him what to do, in some straightforward way, or what to see, and he keeps saying, “No, we're all different, and when you have*



*your vision, you're going to see what you see," implying that he's again context-dependent, he's always looking to an external reference, he's other-directed and all of that. And with his dreams, it's also a nice exercise to get him away from being dependent on external references. There's no one he can refer to in order to see his own dreams. He has to see them.*

**Peter:** And yet don Juan interprets them for him.

**Terry:** *Right, but in the role of Critic and not really at the level of description. And oftentimes, when he was just trying to take him through visual exercises, Carlos was constantly trying to say, "Okay, tell me ahead of time what I'm supposed to see, and then I'll go out and see it." And he would frustrate that effort on Carlos's part, and in this case, too, he's working much more status-assignments on the dreams, in the interpretations, and again he has to come up with descriptions of the dreams, that no one can tell him what to see. So in that way he's getting loosened out of that real world that he was dwelling in, where he was constantly looking to other people to know when to laugh or when to be happy or when to be sad, or whatever. He was again having to move to making those determinations on his own.*

**Steve A:** *It was a situation where there was no way he could see don Juan or anybody else doing it to him? It was a situation where this is a task which don Juan knows is possible and yet is very difficult to do or will take some mastery, but he knows it's possible for Carlos to do it, and when he's successful, there's no way he could see it as anything other than himself being successful.*

**Wynn:** *There's one thing that needs to be considered: that the dreams—especially in his initial moves—is probably a trick, in that throughout the apprenticeship, Carlos is going to be required to enter domains in which he's going to see and encounter very, very strange things which require—if we look at it as a trick—a developed skill at imagery, a developed skill at seeing and encountering things that normally one doesn't encounter in the walk-about world. And when don Juan introduces Carlos to a world of dream as a world in which he's an active participant, he's developing in Carlos the skills and sensitivities needed to continue to see the kinds of things that he could see in the dream world. He's developing skill, he's developing skill at encountering in that domain. Because later on, especially in *Tales of Power* when it looks quite blatantly that don Genaro and don Juan are using confusion techniques, induction techniques, on Carlos, it appears that the dream, the as-if world, the dream will be the world in which he's going to develop a good deal of his sense of mastery, and so he has to develop skill in that world quite early, and that that skill comes right at the*

*beginning—“Look at your hands”—gather control of your dream. Because the dream is where he is going to be active.*

**Peter:** Is it in the active control or the imagery? Because look: think of how many of us here would have any trouble at all recognizing a unicorn if we walked out the building and saw one? We’ve seen pictures, we’ve seen something that looks like a unicorn, and because of that we would be able to recognize visually—we would see a unicorn if we saw one. We wouldn’t have to see one some number of times before we were able to form a new gestalt and see it as a unicorn. We’ve had practice at seeing fictitious, unreal unicorns; therefore, we have the visual experience necessary for straightforwardly seeing the unicorn under the right conditions. So that would be the imagery practice.

**Wynn:** *It’s like the issue is that for some reason, in a relationship between the sorcerer and the apprentice, it’s important that that apprentice encounter unicorns. Now it’s not likely that under ordinary circumstances, the sorcerer is going to tell his apprentice, “Go out in the field and eventually you’re going to encounter a unicorn,” without something to assure him that that’s going to happen. Now via trance states and via the dream, he can create a situation in which he will encounter that element, the same way that I can hypnotize a patient, tell the patient that when he walks out the door, he’s going to encounter a unicorn, and when he encounters the unicorn, he’s going to have to deal with a significant issue of some sort that we’ve described before. I can set the stage that way. It seems to me, and I suspect for don Juan, unimportant in terms of the reality of the elements of the state. What’s important are the changes in character that occur as a result of mastering whatever those elements are. And so mastery of the dream assures for don Juan that he can readily produce whatever elements he needs for Carlos to encounter.*

**Steve A:** *If you look at the similarity between what happens in dreams, the actual—the trip when Genaro talks about finding his ally, and tackling him and spinning around and going from one place to another, it’s very similar to the directions when don Juan said, “Okay, now try being in a certain place, and then going from one place to another,” and similar mechanisms—*

**Terry:** *Except that like he was saying, a lot of times he wasn’t really playing with the sort of physiognomy of things that he perceived—like when he talked about the special spots on the ground. It wasn’t that he was seeing special spots in a different way than he saw spots in his old real world. What happened was that suddenly patches of ground had a different meaning for him than they*

*had before. Suddenly there were special spots and not special spots, and certain things accrued if you were on one as opposed to not being on one. So in terms of like the texture of perception, things really weren't changing all that radically, as far as that went. It just meant that when he saw things he ordinarily saw, they meant something different. So it seems to me that in a large majority of instances, he's working that way, reorganizing the meaning of what's seen, and not really trying to change—*

**Jim:** *That ### on the dreams, too, because I think he was trying to impart some kind of a change of meaning by the ### process. It wasn't just stage props that he could move around at will.*

**Wynn:** *Okay, but here we could use a better understanding of the dreams. The dream doesn't simply give us stage props. If you consider your own dreams, you'll recognize that there's many instances in which an element that simply appeared in the middle of the room would have very little charge, very little significance attached to it, but because of the conditions of the dream, a particular element may be associated with any of a variety of meanings. This was the phenomenon that Freud described as "displacement" in the dream. Dreams are a state in which the significance of the element can vary other than its normal sense, and so by mastering the dream, don Juan masters—by mastering entree into the dream, don Juan has access to Carlos's sense of significance, and the element that he particularly encounters. So these are stage props, but he can also assign the stage props their value.*

**Jim:** *It seems like that kind of view of dreams would disagree with Jung, and I think that Jung would probably agree with Carlos more, that there's some kind of—of racial meaning, for lack of better way of putting it, with dreams. There's some kind of cosmic significance of sorts. And it seems like don Juan would try to be bringing him more in contact with that, as well as making him realize that he is in control, that he has to assume responsibility for those kinds of situations. But it seems like there's got to be a balance of the two.*

**Wynn:** *Well, the elements that he encounters are often significant in and of themselves, whether they have archetypal significance or they have program significance in terms of the encounter. I don't think that's particularly the issue. The issue is that don Juan is a pragmatist. He's concerned with action as the matrix for meaning, and I don't think it's particularly—he doesn't want Carlos to go into a trance state and spend his life encountering the unicorns of the dream. What he wants him to do, it seems, is to encounter the unicorns of the dream, and from that experience, when he's come back into the world with*

*a new sense of mastery and responsibility, but the particular or genetic mechanism, or the particular background for the dream, I think is unimportant. What's important is the structure of the experience for him—for the action.*

**Jim:** *I say it would be both, that the meaning is also important, as well as the mastery.*

**Wynn:** *But meaning is tied into mastery—those aren't separate.*

**Jim:** *Yeah, they go together. There's a kind of synergetic.*

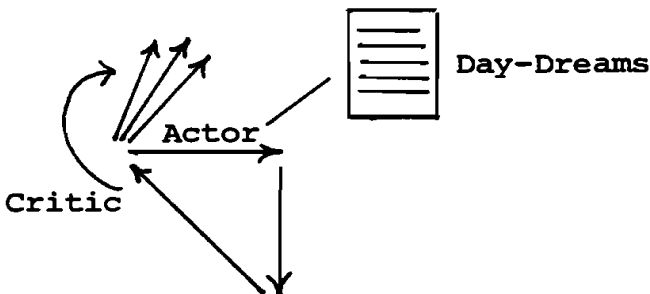
**Cory:** *Wouldn't the hand ### produce one thing that's a direct connection between two worlds? Like a hand is in the real world, and the hand is in the dream?*

**Peter:** *Yeah, except that don Juan said there was nothing special about the hand, that he picked the hand because it was something that Carlos was almost sure to see in the dream, that it would be an easy one to work on.*

**Cory:** *Yeah, it would be an easy connection, a symbol.*

**Peter:** Let me toss in something else about dreams. One of the major general theories about dreams is that they represent problem-solving. If you think about problem-solving in the usual sense, that is, you identify a problem and then you set out and work out possible solutions. Think of the reality constraints that operate on that. Every part of the way, you might say, has heavy reality constraints. You want to be sure that you've got the correct problem; your solution has to be a real solution, which means that it has to not involve anything fictitious, anything unrealistic, anything impractical, anything undoable. Or anything untrue. So when you're working out a problem in a straightforward sense, you're working within some strong reality constraints, both in terms of formulating the problem, and in terms of formulating possible solutions.

**FIGURE 3**



Now [**blackboard**] think of those reality constraints as represented here: the Critic. You say, what's happening is that certain possible solutions are being inhibited as being unrealistic in one form or another. And what gets through is something that is totally realistic and can therefore serve as an actual solution. This is for normal problem-solving.

Now suppose you loosen that up and say, "Now think of what goes on in day-dreaming. You relax some of those, and instead, what you do is you spend a lot of time portraying something which, if it were so, would be a solution, except that what you neglect is: can you get there from here? You neglect the means." But what you *do* produce is potentially an element of a solution. Once you've portrayed a final state of affairs that would be a solution, then the remaining problem is: can you get there from here? So that's a partial working out of the problem. And as you can see, it's subject to fewer reality constraints.

On the other hand, day-dreams tend to be very much like real life. That is, you're still constrained in terms of movements, in terms of things being located in places, in terms of time-order, etc.

Think of dreams as being further down the line on that same dimension. Think of a dream as a reconstruction either of the whole world, or of the problematic part or aspects of it, so that the dream, as such, represents a possible solution to how the world could be. Except that, in this possible solution, you have minimum reality constraints. You let go all kinds of things that you normally would require, and you have a much freer form. But that's why dreams need to be interpreted, because they're not directly in realistic terms. They represent some kind of re-working, relatively free of reality constraints, which means that you maximize the possible solutions. And then at a later time, you get critical, you start interpreting, and you see what it amounts to; and you decide whether that really was a solution, or whether it wasn't.

The important additional element is that as problem-solving, it's a reconstruction of the world. And as far as I can tell, clinically, it's more often a re-working of one's whole world than just a very sharply delimited portion of it. And I think the reason for that, if indeed that's the case, is that that's the only kind of problem that is that important, so that you work it out this way. Problems that are more limited in scope, you simply work out in the usual practical ways. But issues that have to do with your over-all place in the world are hard to work out in a simply practical way. They do require some more global reconstruction. And the more global the reconstruction, the

fewer reality constraints you're going to have to work within, because those are exactly what you want to reconstrue. So you might say that in dreams, then, one is working at something on the order of a world construction or reconstruction, with minimal reality constraints.

If you think of the basic problem of detaching and attaching, then the notion of having Carlos dream, which gives him still an anchor in the old world but with minimum constraints, then giving him control over what goes on there, in effect is giving him control over his own apparatus for world-construction. It's unknown how much control one can achieve, but qualitatively, to give Carlos some control over what goes on his dreams is to give him some control over this process—which normally you don't think of as controlled at all, and isn't. It's controlled in that it reflects you. It's controlled in that it reflects your personal resources and your position and your powers and your place in the world, but that's not control as we usually think of it.

So the kind of control it is, is not all that deliberate. It's more intuitive control. It's more a different way of bringing the Actor's resources to bear, independently of criticism.

**Wynn:** *There's a way, though, that's kind of interesting in terms of this actual construction as a part of the apprenticeship into a particular domain, because although it's Carlos's dream, don Juan—throughout the apprenticeship—suggests what he will encounter, and it's no accident that when Carlos finally reaches the point of stopping the world, of leaving the support of his normal sense of being, he enters into a domain that fits the description that he's already been led to expect should be there, from don Juan. So by a long series of exercises, in which first he visits one part of the dream world and then he visits another part of the dream world, he gets to have a fabric or map of what could be that world, which is relatively complete, such that—almost as if by acting in a variety of forms of life in the dream, he ends up with a complete world, a complete, coherent world.*

**Peter:** I think it's important that, in the dream, he isn't just there; he's doing something, he's acting. And that's also a basic kind of practice. It's like the image practice that it's one thing to look at pictures of unicorns and be able to recognize one, or to have a dream in which you see a unicorn and then you can recognize one. It's something else to—in your dream—say, chase the unicorn or be chased by one or get up and ride him or touch his horn, because there you're getting the experience of acting in that world. You're



getting the experience of acting with respect to the very kind of thing that you encounter in the dream.

**Wynn:** *Through action, that world becomes coherent, and it ends up being a real world in that it becomes one that he can enter into and have coherent experiences in.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Which means that if you have a normal perceptual experience of it, you also have built in how to treat it, because that you've practiced, too, in the dream, and you've practiced them together. You've practiced not only seeing it, but also treating it as being what you saw. And that gives you pretty much all the ingredients you need for then, suddenly, actually seeing one, and then you already have a repertoire to call upon by way of dealing with it.

**Wynn:** *This is really suggestive about a method of psychotherapy, if in fact you could train a very unsuccessful patient or a very depressed patient, or a patient with very, very few behavioral options, to dream, or especially in a hypnotic trance, and could provide a stage with the various charged elements—you could develop an alternative mastery, an alternative world.*

**Daniel:** *There is a therapy done like that, with people just suggesting images and states like ###. He gets them to imagine the way things are, and then imagine the way they'd like them. And it gives the person more power to come out of wherever they're blocked, to go beyond that.*

**Wynn:** *One thing is the sort of situations in which you've recognized that your client lacks a certain kind of skill, or lacks a certain kind of sense of himself, and yet in his day-to-day world he's not going to encounter the sort of experiences that are going to change his opinion of those things. If that person did have skill, in a dream, you could create the situations there where he could develop those practices. There's no guarantee that it will work there, but you could at least create the circumstances.*

**Daniel:** *And then it looks like it's a possibility to him.*

**Peter:** You might say that something that you can imagine in concrete visual detail is something you can dream, is also something you can think of as potentially real. I remember, one of my first experiences with that was talking with a patient in a hospital who was going to get discharged after about two years. He was one of these people who, as soon as he got close to discharge, would get worse, and he'd done this about four or five times. After that many times, the staff got suspicious about what was going on. So I had him do a couple of imagination exercises of doing this and that, and then the final



one was, I had him imagine that a friend of his drives a car up to the front door, picks him up, and they drive out, and he goes home. And he was able to imagine all of that up to the time when the car is approaching the front gate, and then he blanked out. For him it was unthinkable.

**Wynn:** *### has a formula, that you have the person fantasize—I think three times, three or more times—a situation that he feels he can't master, and you have him imagine it in great detail, and you challenge him as to the detail until what he presents to you is a complete, coherent story with all the needed details, and his claim is that after that occurs, the client is much more likely to be successful in the actual encounter. For simple phobias, he finds it very successful.*

**Daniel:** *There's a whole literature that supports that. It in fact goes so far as like taking the disadvantaged peoples' armies—they practice shooting rifles without bullets, and in marksmanship, in controlled studies in the United States Army, there's hardly any difference in using bullets—the confidence goes with seeing oneself do that, and the results are that the people are able to.*

**Wynn:** *So there you begin to see that the therapist's task—the skilled therapist begins to look somewhat like the skilled novelist, in that for him to successfully help his client do that, he has to have a sense of what would be at least a verbal representation of a coherent picture of the experience, so he can judge when the client has in fact encountered the requisite quantity or quality of elements, in order to have a sense of that scene.*

**Peter:** [blackboard].

#### **FIGURE 4**

**Not-Doing**  
**Stopping**  
**Seeing**  
**Heart**

**Steve A:** *Are you putting those in any particular category, or are you just writing them down?*

**Peter:** These are the kind of global terms that get at the net, I think, of most of these. The net effect of all of these changes is to be these changes [Fig. 1, p. 435, II]. What do we understand by these things [Fig. 4]? You see, the descriptions that are given, they're all interesting, but they're not like having it laid out like a blueprint.

**Wynn:** *You could argue that there is almost a formal equivalence here—Not Doing and Stopping the World—in that actions support the sense of the world, the sense of realness of the world, in that actions provide you the sense of distinctions that are realistic, that you can actually make and actually get away with. When a person stops doing, stops acting on distinctions, stops making distinctions, then in fact he has stopped his world. But there’s a certain logical paradox involved in not doing anything, in that a person simply can’t “not do”. He must do something—something has to happen. So when his world isn’t supported, that seems to be like the soap-bubble flipping from one side of the wire to the other. In this case, when his actions stop supporting the sense of the world he’s normally in, he goes into the other world.*

**Steve A:** *It’s very much like the gestalts—there’s a moment there it switches, like looking at the tree and looking at all the shadows and the bushes.*

**Peter:** *Yeah, that duck and rabbit picture occurred to me in this transition. Remember, last time I was saying that you build up a lot of capability, and then it shifts. You can also put it that a lot of what don Juan is doing is to make the world ambiguous, make it like the rabbit and duck picture, and he can work on that at his leisure, because so long as Carlos is still seeing the rabbit, he’s in good shape, he doesn’t need any special care, and don Juan is doing all of these things to make it all thoroughly ambiguous, so that when the time comes, then the ground will have been prepared for that sudden shift. And that a lot of these things—the attachment/detachment, you can say—have the net effect of making everything ambiguous. It could be this, it could be that.*

**Terry:** *It seems like even more than ambiguous, it’s very close to the example you went through in class, between a person who thinks that his description of someone else’s behavior is coextensive with that behavior, to come to the point of realizing that it’s one of a relative number of descriptions that could be given, that could be accurate, of that behavior. Because he starts out by asserting to Carlos that he’s got a description of the world, and that what he takes to be reality is merely one description of the world. And at one point he says that stopping the world is to change someone’s ideas of the world, which seems insufficient if you don’t realize that along with that, he’s also working on it in terms of getting him to acknowledge that there are all these different points of view on the world, and that he only has access through descriptions to the world. And in a way, he’s trying to dislodge him from his dogmatic attitude, that his description—*

**Peter:** Here we're only dealing with two descriptions, though.

**Terry:** *Right—they are only dealing with two, logically you could deal with more, but the—*

**Steve A:** *### world is this, this description—*

**Terry:** *Yeah, so he asserts that, and then what happens is that once he gets him to achieve that as an experiential insight, not merely as an abstraction, that he only has access to the world in terms of one sort of description and other people have access to it in terms of different descriptions, and so on, then he's in a position to realize that through changing his ideas of the world, he's literally changing the world, because there's no access to the world except through concepts. So it's sort of a two-fold process.*

**Peter:** Remember an earlier discussion we had, when we said that atoms and buildings and trees and mountains have the same kind of reality as a pawn, namely, that they have reality because of the reality of a form of behavior which involves making those distinctions and acting on them, but they don't have any more fundamental reality. It's very similar to the notion that you've got an internal dialogue going that's keeping the world what it is, and what you need to do is stop giving those descriptions.

**Steve A:** *He says that if he doesn't want the rock to be a rock, all he has to do is not take it—*

**Peter:** Not make a rock out of it.

**Wynn:** *Is there a possibility of Not Doing and Stopping the World in such a manner that you don't automatically flip into an alternative one?*

**Peter:** Yeah—think of the Buddhists.

**Wynn:** *To a lesser extent, the Buddhists. The Hindus very definitely have a notion of concept-free seeing. It's very unclear what they mean by that—their goal to that seems to be this notion of Not Doing and Stopping the World. From that, they have—I'm just curious where this intermediary state isn't simply the flip-flop phenomenon, but that there can be a large space between the flip and the flop. There can be a space—*

**Peter:** A third world? [laughter]

**Wynn:** *It wouldn't be a world. It would be an existence, but it would be atemporal, context-free, and element-free. [change tape]*

**Peter:** That's the problem: how would this differ from a non-world?

**Wynn:** *It would in fact be a non-world, but what I'm wondering if a person as an organism would be simply be as an organism surviving through that duration, without any experience of that.*

**Peter:** Well, that's how it's described, more or less, isn't it, that you lose all distinctions?

**Wynn:** *It's just that in the same time that they talk about this, they also talk about things like Karma yoga, so you begin to wonder what they really mean by "context-free". They talk about the fact that the person can in fact go and practice, can act, but he doesn't act through his concepts. So there you figure they just aren't being linguistically very careful.*

**Peter:** No, I think there's enough literature and enough different people saying the same thing that I'm willing to take it that the claim is made and is made explicitly that you achieve a state in which you have experience and no distinctions whatever.

**Wynn:** *I pushed a Hindu scholar once, for a while, on this question, because what he was claiming was that—the claim that all is Maya, that all is illusion, and that leaves the question—then illusion drops out as a distinction. So you couldn't simply mean that, because then you couldn't point to anything as being particularly illusory, you couldn't make the distinction of illusion if all was illusion. And what seemed to boil down to the concept of Maya, which is connected to this notion of concept, is that there's an arbitrary sense of a concept—of a specific action on a concept of being the case, that you didn't have to only have that particular perspective or that particular way of viewing. And from this, the Hindus especially seem to degrade any particular status as being real, by pointing to the relativity of all statuses. What they don't seem to recognize is that doesn't negate the fact that any particular status is a status a person can act on. But I think they're just sloppy concepts.—*

**Peter:** The business about dropping out, because it's universal, that only holds for dropping out as an empirical something. But as a status assignment, it's easy. You assign everything around you the status of illusion and leave open there being anything else. Or you can invent something else to be the reality. And I think that when you're dealing with that kind of experience—that is, what amounts to non-experience—it's probably that you're dealing with a status assignment rather than a description.

**Wynn:** *It looks like a heuristic assignment, especially in Maya, because there the reminder is that in fact you don't have to cling to this particular distinction*

or this particular—

**Peter:** It also looks like one of those boundary condition things, where you talk strangely because that's the only way you have of talking—saying that all is illusion.

**Terry:** *But it's not really any different in terms of the logical problems with the concept—it's not really any different than the concept of cause or the concept of effect. They're the very same kind of concepts. I mean, they're schematized and they're content-free, as Kant would say, and as a result, nothing has a causish appearance, whereas red things have a reddish appearance, and consequently, there's a visible aspect that's tied to certain concepts, and there are certain concepts that have no visible aspects tied to them. Consequently—*

**Peter:** Nothing but an illusory appearance, huh?

**Terry:** *Consequently, anything can be an instance of a cause or treated as an instance of a cause, and anything can be treated as an instance of an effect. The same way, if you develop a concept like Maya, it has the same logical status as a concept like "cause", in that anything can be treated like that.*

**Cory:** *You can't get away with everything, treating everything as cause.*

**Terry:** *Many people do. Determinists do all the time.*

**Wynn:** *But they do it at the expense of logical errors and logical ###.*

**Terry:** *They may make conceptual mistakes, but the fact is that in terms of—as an ongoing activity, you can treat things that way all the time. Anything can be a cause—anything can be seen as a cause, because causes don't have any visible features tied to them. That's why such concepts create such problems.*

**Peter:** Let's move from that statement to the connection between these two [Not-Doing and Stopping the World].

Remember we said about the whole world that you can't watch it the way you can watch a chair or an object, that you're in it, you have a sense of it; in some sense, it's a logical construction because you're never going to see all of it, so your knowledge of it as a whole world doesn't consist of having inspected all of its parts. You have to have the concept of it first. You're carrying that around with you. That's how you orient that you're in this building, that you're in Boulder, that you're in a four-year track, etc. That's what orients you to the here-now, and that's not something that's visible.

In ordinary behavior, you need that kind of anchor to give significance and reality to the particulars that you encounter. So ordinarily,

this—the world—is relatively independent of the doing, because the doing only deals with here-now, whereas the world extends backward, forward, and outward. So it raises a question of interest: how can you change this whole construction by operating on the doing aspect of it?

**Wynn:** *Probably it would help if at a certain point one of the things that you were doing is in the back of your mind, so to speak, supplying the bricks for another one, if you had a place to move into it. Having had lots of experience going into that dream world, when he stops acting on this world, he does have a domain that he has some successful sense and some competent expectations about moving into.*

**Peter:** That's the replacement problem, isn't it? What do you have when you give up the old one? You'd better have something else available. But here we're talking about how you displace the old world by stopping doing anything whatever.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but that's the question I'm raising, is that I simply—if for some reason right now—let's say I'm writing and I'm thinking about what I have to pack before I can move out of town, and I stop doing those things for this moment. stop—and that's the central activities, writing and thinking about that—and I stop doing those things completely, and in five minutes you tap me on the shoulder and I wake up. Well, I'm probably going to be back here still, and I resume thinking about those things. Nothing fundamentally is going to change by not doing that. So not doing seems to me has to be more extensive than simply an orientation in the presence of my action. It has to be a position in which one isn't acting at all on any of the possibilities—it's almost like not acting on behavior potential, but within a domain.*

**Daniel:** *Not focusing particularly.*

**Peter:** You mean not acting at all?

**Wynn:** *I'd say that somehow we can talk about my behavior potential within this world, and my behavior potential within that world. Now if my not doing, so to speak, is somehow fundamentally—disorients or disrupts my relationship to my behavior potential within this world, then that action of not doing will separate me from my world, will stop the world.*

**Peter:** Say that again.

**Wynn:** *When don Juan—somewhat like Wittgenstein—makes the claim that it's your descriptions of the world that give it its quality, that support it as a world, if I stop making any particular description, I'm not going to lose my*



*world. You have to do something that stops the fact of descriptions of that sort, of that order. Do you see what I'm trying to tease out? Now that's as far as I can take it, because I don't know what kind of activities would be activities of that sort.*

**Peter:** Okay, but you're going beyond what we would normally take to be the case, because we don't normally think of ourselves as simultaneously, at any given time, giving descriptions of the whole world and everything in it.

**Wynn:** *That's the point I'm trying to make. It's because we don't. Then simply not making any particular description, which we could make at a time, wouldn't disrupt the whole realm of descriptions. And yet we don't have a systematic sense of having a billion bits of descriptions that we're going to destroy one by one. So it's almost as if there were certain key descriptions, or something generative of descriptions, that we undermine.*

**Peter:** Generative sounds more like it. But from the point of view of descriptions, I don't think that there's been any identification of key descriptions.

**Terry:** *It's not key descriptions so much as it's sort of reordering the status of all Carlos's concepts through certain maneuvers. For example, when he personifies death for don Juan as a sort of quasi being to the left of him, and when he suddenly puts crows and deer and so on into the category of omens, he's suddenly doing something to his whole world, his whole conceptual order, in that if he accepts those things as so, if he accepts that there can be omens, that these things are not only deer and so on, but that they signify some other meanings, that they have these special powers, that the wind has volition and can act in a relation to him, and so on—if he accepts that as being a being, then fundamentally his whole world is starting to undergo transformation. Because parts of his world construction in the old real world—if he accepts any part of those things, since that world construction is coherent, interconnected, if he accepts that personification, it's starting to shift that entire matrix, the entire conceptual system. The entire world construction is starting to undergo transformation.*

**Peter:** Okay, but then you're talking about this [**Not-Doing**] not as a negative, but as a replacement—that the way you do this is to have some other world available.

**Terry:** *Yes, but it's like you were saying the other day, that the replacement process is simultaneous with the dissolving of the old world. I think that's somehow true.*



**Peter:** Yeah, except that that's not how he describes it when he talks about this. He doesn't describe not-doing as a replacement of doing by some other doing. He talks about it as a *not* doing.

**Wynn:** *There's probably a trick.*

**Terry:** *We've already talked about how that's impossible. Behavior always is, and you cannot not behave. So in terms of logic, there's no way that that could be so.*

**Peter:** Well, again, think of the Buddhists. According to how they tell it, you can indeed do that, and the way you do it is, you sit down and meditate.

**Terry:** *But that's doing that?*

**Daniel:** *Yeah, but it's just how you're going to look at it, what description you want to give. Buddhists choose "not-doing"—they define "not-doing"—*

**Terry:** *I'm sure that many people could say that sleeping is not behaving, and other things of that sort. But I think the way in which we're using the concept of intentional action, it's clear that there's no such thing as not behaving.*

**Peter:** There is, namely, sleeping. If I hit you over the head with a club and you're stretched out there unconscious, your lying on the floor is not a behavior on your part. It's a condition on your part.

**Terry:** *I guess it's "cannot not be".*

**Peter:** Yeah, you can't not *be*, but you can not-be-behaving. The whole thing about that definition of a person as an individual whose history is a history of intentional action—it has to be a paradigm case formulation, because you have to allow for those periods of time during which indeed he's not engaging in intentional action. And you get that through the notion of special states. But—one such state is meditation...

**Terry:** *I'm thinking about Binswanger talking about schizoid personalities, and he's working towards this formulation about how you cannot not be, but he says that schizoids, since they're presenting a false self to the world—he's sort of extending the notion of the unconscious being timeless to a person's being—and he's saying that the schizoid isn't living in historical time, he's living in a historical time because he's constantly negating others and the world and himself, and that it's not till the sort of false self is dissolved, or what have you, and you get a genuine expression of the true self, that the person starts once again resuming his place in the historical world.*

**Peter:** Okay, but that's not something that's going to help us here.

**Terry:** *It seems like an analogous case.*

**Wynn:** *Perhaps if we have a description of what don Juan was—*

**Peter:** Will somebody locate the description of not-doing?

**Wynn:** *Because my feeling would be that the not-doing is a trick on the order of the confusion techniques later on, that if he can get Carlos into that state, like the meditative state, then from that state, the flip-flop will occur, that what the not-doing is, is an induction, that it's primarily a means by which—*

**Peter:** Even so, it has to be a possible means. There has to be such a thing as not-doing, even though—

**Wynn:** *Well, I think it's a very suggestive sort of phrase. For instance, if you begin with the notion that action is what supports the world, then you might also see that minimal action will support a minimal world. That acting less and less, having responsibility for less and less, will make less and less of the extended world real. And so it's almost as if there's a point that you can asymptotically approach, but as you approach that, the supports of your world become less and less stable, until you have to fall back on this other world. And that's why I think I would see it like a Judo trick, in which I can only see—you know, a tremendous amount of Aikido and Judo is described in terms of giving weight to action, of not particularly using your action as making choice for key junctures, and from that—*

**Peter:** The thing we have to separate out is that with don Juan, there is an alternate world, and there is a flip. Even though he talks in a negative way here, the way it in fact works is a flip. But we also have from the Buddhist tradition things that correspond to the purely negative formulation, and that ought to make us leery of jumping to the conclusion that when don Juan puts it in the negative, that it is just a device.

**Wynn:** *It's curious, because when the Buddhists build their argument about not-doing and about Nirvana, presumably that state is a state in which there is no action per se, no dependent action, that once you reach that state, you're out of the birth-death cycle. But all the historical examples of the enlightened ones, from the Buddha to Trungpa, are examples of people who have gotten—not back into the birth-death cycle, because that would mess with their mythology, then they couldn't be enlightened—but beings who have made the choice to come back into the world and act as teachers, and so our historical examples of people who have actually encountered this domain, and haven't died and left the world altogether, left the cycle altogether, are cases of people who are acting,*

*who are acting with a different perspective, a different sense of attachment, and that's why I think even in Buddhist literature, those sorts of terms have a nice loophole, and that anybody who is really experienced at that, who has really gone there, either is gone from us for good, or comes back into the world as a teacher who is acting, who is making distinctions.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but the description is a description of the time in between.

**Wynn:** *But no one ever is in that time. Once they're in that time, then they're either gone, or they come back and act.*

**Terry:** *We're talking about two categories, it seems, whether it's merely refraining from action, which you could describe as a certain kind of action—namely, refraining from action—or whether there's another category, which is this really not-doing. And that's what we're asking.*

**Peter:** That's what you're asking.

**Daniel:** *How about taking games as the heuristic, and think of not-doing as the time out from the game, like all of a sudden you stop the game and look at the world as the game, any specific game-living in the world, doing things—*

**Peter:** What's the time out like?

**Daniel:** *You stop. Like it's a break and you call the time out.*

**Peter:** In any actual game, the time out is simply somewhere else.

**Daniel:** *But the key here is that you're not doing the game any more.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but you're doing something else instead. That's what a time out is.

**Steve A:** *We're not talking about the issues here.*

**Terry:** *And don Juan—you're doing something else when you're not-doing. You're just not doing in an ultimate sense.*

**Steve A:** *He says that not-doing is a technique to stop the world so that you can see, and—*

**Daniel:** *That's what you do in time-outs—*

**Terry:** *So you're doing something else, and you're doing something by doing that. Not-doing is a—*

**Peter:** But look: meditation is a technique, too, a technique for achieving the state.

**Steve A:** *It's another orientation.*

**Wynn:** *So let's drop don Juan for just a few moments, because the not-doing seems to me to fall into the category of trick, but that's not going to answer for us the issue of the Buddhist sense of not-doing, because there we have the true conceptual problem of is there in fact a real not-doing, a seeing without concepts, a consciousness of distance without—*

**Peter:** No, that's not the conceptual problem. The conceptual problem is what would it *be* to really not-do?

**?:** *Be dead.*

**Terry:** *For example, he says that dreaming is the not-doing of dreams. So for example there don Juan's concept of dreaming is the intentional taking control of your dreams. So obviously there's a species of action which falls under the—*

**Peter:** Wait a moment. "Not-doing is the intentional taking of control"?

**Terry:** *He says, "You see, dreaming is the not-doing of dreams," so dreaming falls as a species under the genus of not-doing. So that then—*

**Peter:** Is "dreaming" capitalized, there?

**Terry:** *"Dreaming" is italicized, and it's the technique of getting control of the dreams, so at least as far as the textual question, we have resolved that in don Juan, not-doing is doing something else. Now as to the Buddhists, I don't know.*  
[general conversation]

**Peter:** Yeah, that sounds like that. The trouble is, you have the same question about dreaming with italics

**Joe H:** *But then he makes the additional proviso that what's really important is to see that there's a space in between the world you're in and the world you've changed into.*

**Wynn:** *Yeah, that is that space that we're trying to get some sense of. Has anybody been there? [laughter]*

**Peter:** Everybody look at your hands.

**Joe H:** *In one way, the ### doing is to make Carlos aware that he's doing the particular things, i.e., when he's sitting on a rock, that he's doing something. But also, there is that additional—*

**Peter:** What is dreaming—with italics?

**Terry:** *Dreaming is that technique of finding your hand and guiding the dream, intentionally.*

**Jane:** *You know, it's the spontaneous—I hear the not-doing as being not deliberate in a trying-to-achieve sense, a spontaneous—*

**Peter:** Just letting it come?

**Jane:** *Yeah.*

**Terry:** *But the way he uses the concept in the book, it's a bridge to his alternative real world.*

**Jane:** *But that is the first step, because if you're going to be seeing, then you're just going to be seeing. You're not going to be trying or somehow constructing it. It's just going to be there.*

**Terry:** *Yeah, but in the world of the sorcerer, you're doing things like—you know, you're hunting power and you're doing these sorts of things, and you're dreaming and you're seeing. Okay? And these are all species of action. And not-doing is the rubric that all these species fall under. These are all species of action.*

**Steve A:** *Not-doing is a way to get to seeing?*

**Terry:** *It's also a way to get there, but I'm talking in terms of the way don Juan uses the concept of not-doing, in relation to Carlos. And it's a way of reorganizing behavioral space for Carlos, so that he then can move into the world of the Warrior.*

**Jane:** *Does don Juan ever talk about himself as not doing? I would think that he would have to talk about Carlos that way, but that he wouldn't—*

**Peter:** He talks about himself as seeing.

**Jane:** *And that's the distinction, it's that if you're—no, I don't want to say it that way—*

**Peter:** You mean that these two are the vehicle for getting to the state where you are there.

**Steve A:** *He says, "Not-doing is the technique by which you stop the world so that you can see."*

**Joe H:** *And I think the thing is that you have to remember that Carlos is always doing what Carlos always does, which is taking a piece of cloth and turning it into a piece of cloth, rather than part of the backdrop. That's what don Juan is using the term "not-doing" to point out—that Carlos is always doing that.*

**Terry:** *[reading]: He says, "They were only disguises, because everything we do is in some way merely a disguise. Everything we do, as I have told you, is*

*a matter of doing. In other words, our rings of power are hooked to doing of the world in order to make the world.” So then that would fit with this other sense of not-doing, which is really not-doing. But he says, then, “With that ring, therefore, he can spin another world”—the ring of not-doing—because it’s hooked to not-doing—with that ring, the ring of not-doing, therefore he can spin another world.*

**Steve A.:** *When he says “ring”, he’s just talking about the relationship between any elements in that particular world?*

**Peter:** That’s what it sounds like.

One thing occurs to me: remember the discussion of final-order appraisals and their relation to reality. Think of the whole world as being made up primarily of appraisals rather than descriptions. And remember what an appraisal is, namely, it’s a description that carries motivational significance. I think in those terms, then, a table isn’t a thing. A table is something that is to be treated in that range of ways that one does treat a table. And with that kind of formulation, it becomes much clearer how you can create a table by doing or thinking of doing, or thinking in terms of doing, because a table is merely something which is to be treated in a certain way. And you can carry that back to the comparison with pawns. A pawn *is* simply something that is to be moved in a certain way, and you don’t even have to have an actual object, to move it in that way. You can play chess just by talking about it. Likewise, if all of the objects that we see are simply things that are to be treated in a certain way, then one way of talking about not-doing is to talk about not appraising, to not operate in terms of what is to be done with these things. Now that is something that you might do wholesale. You can’t cut out the elements of your world one by one because there’s too many, but something that spreads across all of the elements of your world, like that, maybe you could have access to it, and thereby change the character of the whole world.

**Wynn:** *One of the three major classes of Hindu meditation is Karma-yoga, and in Karma-yoga—it’s a waking meditation with the eyes open, in which the main point is to go about working, go about engaging in the day-to-day tasks, although the tasks presumably are tasks that are non-violent and that are constructive, but the point there is that one acts but one isn’t attached to the action, so you would suspect that appraisal is of a different order for the Karma-yogi, and that is a meditation. It’s one of the three major classes of meditation. There’s one class of meditation that simply focuses on the mantra*

*or on nothing, and the person attempts to reach that state, and there's one in which the meditation is simply to sit back and try to solve extremely difficult problems, presumably to intellectually bust your head through the world. And all three of those are described in the Bhagavad-Gita as the three classes—the devotional, the intellectual, and the working.*

**Peter:** There's also the one where you simply let thoughts come to your head but don't appraise them, which sounds more like what I'm talking about.

**Joe S:** *What Freud called "free association".*

**Daniel:** *Pete, could you explicate "appraisals" a little more, and "final-order appraisals" specifically?*

**Peter:** The definition of "appraisal" is that it's a description that carries tautologous motivational significance.

**Daniel:** *What does that mean?*

**Peter:** Just that. Think of the example—

**Steve A:** *Motivational significance as just a way to treat that particular element.*

**Peter:** Think of the example: to see something as dangerous *is* to see it as something to be avoided. There's not a gap between seeing it as dangerous and seeing it as to be avoided. Likewise, you could say that there's not a gap between seeing something as a table, and seeing it as something to be treated as a table.

**Wynn:** *You might argue that the Karma yogi, for instance, continues to make appraisals. He just doesn't make final-order appraisals, in that given a screwdriver and a screw, he's likely not—I mean, if he's going to make any appraisals at all, he might take that screwdriver and hit the screw or throw it into the water—there will be nothing to tie the relation between the screwdriver and the screw together. But making the appraisal of the relation of the two, he can. He can screw things into the wall and take care of whatever it is he has to take care of. But if he was making final-order appraisals about that, he might be limited to a particular context in which that would be the appropriate thing to do, and not being limited that way, he's likely to come upon novel practices.—*

**Peter:** One way of describing this general transition is to increase or change Carlos's behavior potential, particularly potential for some new things, which only by accident involves reducing his potential for old things. In the end, he has the potential for both, which is why I say "by accident".



**Terry:** *But the thing is, that he devalues his world. He talks about time and he talks about the way that temporality is organized, for Carlos, and he says, “You think that you can go back and redo things that you’ve screwed up and all of this, and you don’t realize that your acts are irrevocable. And furthermore, you spend a lot of time having crappy thoughts and doing crappy things, and if you realized that there was no time to waste, you wouldn’t waste your time doing those things.” So reorganizing temporality for Carlos, he at one and the same time is giving him a different way to construe time and its relation to his world. He’s also devaluing his way of conceiving of time. And then—*

**Wynn:** *Is that a temporal issue, or a significance issue?*

**Terry:** *It’s the structure of time and how he’s conceiving—*

**Wynn:** *It’s the structure of the content of time, but time still flows.*

**Terry:** *There’s still a concept of time, but the concept undergoes transformation under don Juan’s redescription.*

**Wynn:** *Does time undergo transformation in the sense of what to do in time?*

**Terry:** *There’s a sense of what to do in time, nevertheless the way in which what to do in time is changed is through reconstruing what time is.*

**Wynn:** *Especially the issue of death, like you don’t have forever to unravel all these things.*

**Terry:** *Right.*

**Peter:** Even so, it’s clear that you can operate in both worlds, and don Juan says so. That’s what I’m pointing to. You have them both simultaneously; you have them both available; therefore it’s an accident that you had to go through a stage of giving up one in order to get the other, because since you can have them both available, they are not per se incompatible.

**Terry:** *Except that the appraisal, the key appraisal is that—at one point he says to Carlos, “You are a pimp.” He calls him a pimp because his whole instrumental way of behaving—*

**Peter:** But he’s not a pimp because he’s living in our world. He’s a pimp because he’s a pimp.

**Terry:** *Yeah, because he uses everything—*

**Peter:** But that’s not simply a function of his living in the ordinary reality. That is my point.

**Terry:** *But my point is that the connection is to appraisals, and that what gives him the motivational significance, or what the motivational significance is for him to flip from his real world to the other real world, is that he devalues his real world by talking about reorganizing time for him, instructing him in how much he wastes time, and also by calling him a pimp and showing him that he hasn't got much status, and at the same time he's devaluing him in his real world, he offers him the promise of a higher status and a better way of life by becoming a Warrior. So those two things are going on at the same time. He's dissolving and devaluing the one world and that devaluing is what gives the motivation to make the move.*

**Peter:** That's right. That's why I said it's accidental.

**Wynn:** *That's in some ways no different than trying to teach somebody to swim, in which you—for instance, if you had a person, and you wanted to get the person into water, and he'd never been into water, I imagine that there are two tasks you could perform other than simply telling the person how great the water is. one would be to devalue the land, and say, "The land is crappy, it limits your movement, it's dirty"—whatever, to give the person reasons not to want to be there. Now that would be a trick, on the same order as throwing the person into the water and saying, "Sink or swim. There you are, you'd better—you've got to learn that practice."*

**Steve A:** *In that way, it sounds essential. It sounds like an essential part of the—*

**Wynn:** *It sounds like a heuristic, but—*

**Steve A:** *I guess you don't have to devalue it, but often in this kind of transition process, that's what is the case.*

**Peter:** That's what I mean in saying it's accidental. They're not essentially incompatible, but that in fact, you might have to do it that way.

**Wynn:** *But then the issue of time becomes quite important, in that if you did have forever, then there might not be any reason to devalue—it might be easier just to provide new motivations that are intrinsic to the other world.*

**Peter:** I think the main reason for devaluing is that the original version comes with the claim of exclusivity. If somebody comes in and says, "This is how things are, and there ain't no other way," then you've got to devalue and undermine him. But if he doesn't insist that this is the only way, then you can probably approach him without undervaluing that, and just say, "Look, here's another way, too." Obviously, Carlos comes in with, "This is *the* way,

this is what the world *is* like,” and so we see the undercutting.

**Terry:** *How can you go back and forth between two real worlds in which the two structurings of temporality are incompatible, wholly?*

**Peter:** They're not. That's just a way of talking, and you can talk that way, but they're not incompatible.

**Terry:** *That sounds like an ad hominem abusive—to say that's just a way of talking.*

**Peter:** No, because it is.

**Steve A:** *Because the world he's talking about, the world that Carlos is coming from when don Juan says, “Carlos, you think you're immortal,”—that's an appraisal that will change, and does change when he goes in the other, and when he learns—when he takes responsibility for his own actions and him being mortal, and he can go back and forth. But that view isn't going to change when he steps back—when he goes to market, it's not all of a sudden he's going to start seeing himself as a mortal.*

**Terry:** *But isn't he going to go—I mean, isn't he somewhat going to go, “Now which is it?” Am I immortal or am I mortal? Have I got all the time in the world or do I not have all the time in the world?” I mean, there's a point in asking and—[general conversation]*

**Peter:** Now look: one of the points of saying that that's just a way of talking is that wasn't inherent in the system. That was don Juan's personal diagnosis of Carlos. He's talking about Carlos, not about ordinary reality, when he says, “You think you're immortal.”

**Wynn:** *Well, he's degrading the world. He's not in fact degrading the world of deserts and Los Angeles; he's degrading Carlos. And it's less than accidental, in the sense that Carlos, in fact, acting as Carlos normally acted, couldn't be a Warrior and couldn't survive in those domains. So when he was degrading the world, he wasn't degrading the scenery of the world. He was degrading Carlos's actions in the world, and I think that's a necessary step, in the same way—almost like a drill instructor changing the behavior potential of his recruits.*

**Terry:** *But his actions are tied to his concepts, and finally which way do you have it—this way or that?*

**Daniel:** *But he talks differently—*

**Steve A:** *But Carlos does go through fundamental changes. You can't deny that.*

**Peter:** I think a better comparison is, if you learn Sanskrit, I think you'd see the world differently. Even though you'd have your choice of talking in English and using an English vocabulary, or talking Sanskrit and using Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary depending on which you were doing, you'd be operating fairly differently. And when you were speaking English, it wouldn't be the same for you any more, as it was before you learned Sanskrit. That is, learning the other one would make that kind of difference. But still, when you were speaking English, you'd really be speaking English, and when you were speaking Sanskrit, you'd be speaking Sanskrit. The fact that the learning of one makes a difference to you, and that you then operate differently in the other, is not a direct bridge between the two. So likewise, if you have the second reality, it's almost certain, predictable, that you would operate differently in the ordinary reality. That doesn't mean that they're incompatible or that there's necessary connections between those two realities. It just that if you've been through this, you are different, and why wouldn't you act differently back in the ordinary reality?

**Cory:** *Aren't you using "reality" in a different way, now?*

**Peter:** Yeah—real world.

**Jim:** *I'm wondering if this not-doing was an exercise to train Carlos to detach himself from the world, kind of a means of getting detachment, of acquiring that ability.*

**Peter:** Yeah. If you think of appraisal, I think that's the easiest way to see how it's a detachment-type thing. And partly because you have a type of meditation that is explicitly a detachment exercise, and it works pretty much the same way. If you let thoughts come to you without appraising them as good, bad, dangerous, etc., you just let them come, your frame of mind changes and very often your outlook on things changes. Likewise, if you stop seeing the world in terms of tables which are to be treated as tables are, then you're no longer limited to those sets of behaviors that go with tables, that go with shoes, that go with people, that go with microphones and cups and wastebaskets. Every one of those objects in the world has a set of behaviors that are the ways that one would treat them, and in ordinary reality, our behaviors are limited to those. So that if we give up these packages, we also give up those constraints on our range of possible behaviors. To be sure, we lose those opportunities, but we also lose those constraints, and for somebody who's prepared to offer a new set of opportunities, what he's after is giving up the old restraints and he's not worrying about giving up the old

opportunities.

**Terry:** *That sounds very much like someone who—a psychoanalyst would say—does a lot of compartmentalization, like an obsessional neurotic who goes to the shoe salesman for shoes and to the grocery for groceries, and to the psychiatrist to talk to somebody, and he's got everything in a separate domain, and you sort of want to get him to give up those packages, and sort of—*

**Peter:** That's just how I presented it. Remember, we've talked about Way of Life, which brings them all together. We talked about real worlds, so that the ways that you treat a table connect to the ways you treat a cup and the ways you treat a floor, because you can have a table on the floor, and you can put a cup on the table. All of those are interrelated. Those behavioral packages are interrelated. And the final structure of that interrelation is a way of life. It's something we had on the board last time [Fig. 2, p. 392] but not this time.

**Terry:** *I think that's just the problem with some people, though, is that they're not connected up.*

**Peter:** Okay, but in principle they *are* connected up, and that lack of connection is a certain kind of pathology which we dealt with earlier in talking about the normal sense of growth—personal growth. We're now into a transcendental sense.

**Jim:** *It seems like you'd have to this not-doing as kind of intrinsic—you could do it in a motivated sense, and that seems like that's not logical, it—*

**Peter:** Again, that's a function of the fact that you're dealing with changes in boundary conditions: that for us the boundary condition is the objects that we can deal with, and it's because we have them available, and we have these packages available, that standing in this relation to a table makes available opportunities for behaving—namely, just those ways that one treats tables. And since that's the way I choose my behaviors, it's pretty hard for me to choose not to have any tables, chairs, etc., because, within what context, would I have *that* opportunity for behaving? Which is why it has to be non-voluntary.

**Jim:** *I was wondering if there was any way to do that without having a teacher?—coming from this kind of a cultural environment. It seems like you almost have to have some kind of teacher.*

**Peter:** Well, a teacher in the sense of somebody who lays out what you do, so that you do it because you're following instructions and not because you know and have decided. For example, once you read about that technique of

meditation, you could probably do it on your own without having literally a teacher present. You could do some of that. But it does take a teacher in the sense that it would be highly accidental for anybody to stumble across that kind of thing.

**Terry:** *I want to point out one other thing in connection with the book, which is don Juan comes back, after having this series of experiences among which he talks to the coyote—Carlos talks to the coyote—and he comes back and he says [reading], “I immediately began to narrate to him the extraordinary experiences I had. He listened with obvious interest.” Then, ““You have simply stopped the world,’ he commented after I had finished my account.” Okay, now there again, we have—it doesn’t really look like an account of not-doing. Now, at this point, he’s doing something else, which is—*

**Peter:** Stopping the world *isn’t* the same as not-doing.

**Terry:** *Okay. And he’s now having a different experience in a different world, and other things are possible which weren’t possible, like talking to coyotes. So then species of action are possible in stopping the world, in an alternative real world.*

**Jim:** *I’m wondering if stopping the world is an event, and not-doing is a process. Can you make that kind of distinction?*

**Peter:** Yes. I was just about to suggest that. Not only an event, but an achievement.

**Steve A:** *Not-doing is an achievement also.*

**Peter:** If it’s a process, it’s going to be an achievement ###.

**Terry:** *If it’s a process, then you’re back to saying that it’s some kind of doing.*

**Daniel:** *And seeing is a combination of process and—*

**Terry:** *A non-doing process.*

**Wynn:** *The word “doing” as a gerund suggests that it’s something that might have some temporal period in which the person accomplishes that particular aim.*

**Daniel:** *But seeing is also an event.*

**Peter:** Sleeping is a process but it’s not a doing.

**Jim:** *So could you say that stopping the world is an event that separates not-doing and seeing?*

**Peter:** It might well be. In the long run, when you’re making the transition,

I think you would wind up saying that.

**Wynn:** *You say that seeing isn't a form of doing. Is there a form of doing, though, that is like seeing? What I'm wondering about is—*

**Peter:** Well, no. It's not a form of doing in that it's not a form of behavior. It is a form of doing in that in ordinary language, you say that sleeping is one of the things that people do. But then, bleeding is something and dying is something that people do.

**Wynn:** *Let me pull out a kind of a different case. When I go home and sit in a chair—and when I was a little kid, I could always decide to do it and be successful; now it's rare, but I can still get it sometimes—in which I'll sit down and decide that I want to fantasize or dream a certain kind of dream, and I'll relax, and if I'm lucky, that will happen. Or sometimes I will dream and then know I'm dreaming, and be able to be responsible in that framework, to decide what I want to happen and to do those things. There's a tremendous amount of freedom when you know that it's your dream. Now I'm sleeping while that's happening, in that any electrical measure of sleep—the basic criteria for sleep, I fall into. Yet I'm active, in a way, also, in that I'm encountering what I wish to encounter, aware of these distinctions that I'm acting on, and doing certain things. Like this morning, I had this long and very strange dream about some kind of psychic murder—*

**Peter:** [laughing]: You're thinking about tomorrow [Wynn's orals—laughter].

**Wynn:** *It was occurring on this train, and I was pretty sure that I was the next victim, only—*

**Peter:** You're thinking about tomorrow!

**Wynn:** *—only the task was to find the murderer. Now my cat jumped on my head and woke me up, and I woke up for a little while, and I didn't know who the murderer was. And I decided to go back to sleep and to—and I got back to sleep and I got back on the train, and that lasted a little longer, and then the phone rang, and by then it was hopeless.*

**Peter:** You never found out who done it, eh?

**Jane:** *You'll find out tomorrow.*

**Peter:** As you described it, you've got several choices. You could talk about it almost any way you want. You can talk about his behavior, because you have that much control. You can talk about it as non-behavior, because you don't



have as much control as paradigmatically one would have to. You can talk about it as doing, because the product fits your specification, and it's like an artist drawing a picture. You can talk about it as an achievement, that having decided here, that's enough to ensure that the thing fits the specification without your doing it over here. So you have all kinds of choices about how to talk about that case. I would say that the more control you have over it, the more you could claim that's something you're doing. The more it's like an ordinary dream, then it's something you're having.

**Wynn:** —*a clinical case, a client who in his dreams had a dream girl, and he'd visit her from time to time, and she was a stable element of his dream. One morning his alarm clock went off and he decided not to go to school that day but to stay with her, and went back to sleep and slept until very late that day, and reported that for most of that period he was with her. Now, he was doing something then.*

**Peter:** He was dreaming.

**Wynn:** *But that dreaming—there's a richness to the experience, there, and to the choice—*

**Peter:** The richness doesn't have a bearing on whether he was doing it or having it.

**Wynn:** *But what if he comes out from that with a new knowledge or a new product or a new experience?*

**Peter:** It doesn't matter. That's irrelevant, too. What's relevant is how much control he has over what is going on at the time that it's going on.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but he decided that he didn't want to go school that day but that he was going back to sleep and meet her, and then in fact did that—*

**Peter:** That's like my having six martinis and getting drunk and having hallucinations. [**change tape**]*—decide to get drunk, but I'm not controlling the hallucinations at the time when they're occurring.*

**Wynn:** *But here he is controlling his access to her. He doesn't know what she's going to do, but he knows what he's going to do when he meets her.*

**Peter:** Again, you can talk about knowing it, but—

**Wynn:** *Okay, but the point I'm making is that his meeting her would have been no different than had he got up instead and met her on the campus. He met her in the dream on campus.*

**Terry:** *Except for the fact that he was in bed.*

**Steve A:** *There's a difference between not-doing, stopping the world, and seeing, and stopping the world and seeing—that when Carlos came back, don Juan said, "You succeeded in stopping the world. You might have succeeded at seeing, but you didn't." And it seems to be a similar state, when you're able to maintain it, or something, because I see no changes—no differences in descriptions of when you're seeing or when you're stopping the world.*

**Peter:** Do you recall some of the descriptions of the world, under the condition of seeing? Remember, a person looks like a luminous egg with all kinds of lines coming out of it—

**Steve A:** *That's in Tales of Power.*

**Peter:** I think that was already in some of the other ones. That's quite different from talking to coyotes, because coyotes are still the kind of thing that you encounter in ordinary reality; it's just that the behavior is different, but the objects are the same.

**Wynn:** *In Separate Reality, he claims that when—don Juan was claiming that he both sees and not sees it, it depends on something about conditions of humor, and how he wants to relate to his world at the time, that when he sees, he doesn't care about who he sees in quite the same way that when in other—*

**Peter:** You're jumping in on that, Jane. Because one of the central formulations of humor is that the reason it's enjoyable is, it frees you from something you've been taking too seriously, and that sounds like it fits right in.

**Terry:** *What are you going to say about when you have things coming out of your stomach that you don't ordinarily find around—*

**Peter:** That under conditions of seeing, you're not just dealing with cases like talking to the coyote. You're dealing with a world that basically has a different set of objects, whereas talking to a coyote seems like an intermediate stage, where you've loosened up the behaviors but you've got the same furniture there.

**Terry:** *Because he doesn't even really say that the coyote talked. He said he had the feeling that he talked, and it's sort of like maybe the coyote's presence was evoking certain feelings which he could put words to, which he then appraised as the coyote talking.*

**Peter:** Come back to this equation, here, and think about that. Compare those two [B]. In ordinary reality, it's objects and our relations to them that give us behavior potential. Think of substituting some notion like this [A].

**FIGURE 5****A. Behavior Potential = Power****B. Behavior Potential = Objects****C. Behavior Potential = Concepts****Terry:** *Substitute “Behavior Potential = Concepts”?***Peter:** No, equals Power.**Terry:** *I mean, I was just giving you another one that could be relevant. Because stopping the world, and changing one’s idea of the world, and obviously what object it is, is dependent on your register of concepts.***Peter:** [adding C] This [A] is the one I wanted to call your attention to. What’s different if you operate with this notion [A], as against when you operate with that one [B]? I’ve gone through, saying how this [B] operates, that objects are simply what you treat in a certain package of ways, and that’s how you have behavior potential. So that’s the explanation for this equation [B].**Terry:** *An internal-external locus might be one dimension that’s relevant. You’re not dependent on the external context.***Peter:** Well, that’s one. Power, you have as an individual, whereas here [B] you have potential via the object and your relation to it. So for this [A], at least explicitly, you only need one term, whereas up here [B], you need two terms, namely, you and the object. Here [A], you only need you and your power. Now remember, this is familiar because we have the ID plus circumstance formulation, and we have the relationship formulation, and power is simply your ID characteristic. Nevertheless, I think it’s significant—the difference between formulating and operating in these two ways is significant.**Terry:** *The analogue in psychoanalytic theory about ego-autonomy—that’s getting individuated from objects, and really, it paraphrases basically into—***Peter:** That’s this [B].**Terry:** *No, but it’s getting free of objects.***Peter:** No. Individuating is what you have to do to have two, namely, yourself and the object, in order to have the relation to it. You have to separate in order to have the relation, and that’s not this [A].

**Terry:** *But you also get autonomy to make decisions free of the object's consideration, and so in that regard it's approaching being power, separate from others.*

**Daniel:** *It's including the first example, isn't it? The power is part of your behavior potential.*

**Peter:** Think of the ambiguity of this notion [A] as against dealing with objects. This is almost a pure quantitative notion: you can have more and less power, you can introduce taxonomies and kinds of power, but you don't have to. In fact, this is almost a tautology, that says "Behavior potential is behavior potential." Behavior potential equals possibility.

**Terry:** *How about "Knowledge is power?"*

**Peter:** Comparable to this [B]. If knowledge is power, it has to be knowledge about something or other, and that's what it's going to be knowledge about.

**Terry:** *It could be knowledge about concepts, how to use them. We have meant knowledge in that sense.*

**Peter:** Unless you have the power to act on that knowledge, the knowledge doesn't do you any good.

**Terry:** *Look at verbal discourse. We act on our knowledge of concepts very often without acting on knowledge of objects—objects such as are floating around in this room, and there's a lot going on there.*

**Peter:** Think of the ambiguity of this thing [A], and what it allows by way of new possibilities, as against being tied down to a set of old ones, and then think of the new possibilities being recodified into a set of new objects at some later time.

**Terry:** *But are they real objects?*

**Peter:** Think of this form as representing the limiting case of unconstrained potential. Because it is just the bare notion of potential, rather than potential given by anything whatever. So it's unconstrained by any formulation of objects, it's unconstrained by any particular set of concepts, it's just the bare notion of possibility, of behavioral possibilities. So that doing the teaching in terms of the acquisition of power, rather than in terms of relations to objects, in effect is pushing Carlos toward the furthest extension of his behavior potentiality.

Secondly, and I think—I'm not sure that it's in this book; maybe it's in one of the others—there is something else in the picture, namely, that

in the sorcerer's world, it doesn't run on knowledge. It runs on will. In our world, it's knowledge of objects, knowledge of relations, etc., that's the key thing. In the sorcerer's world, it's will.

**Terry:** *How do you distinguish that from a neurotic case like—*

**Peter:** You don't need to, because that's not in question at all.

**Terry:** *But you're talking about will, about people with "will is where it's at", and there are a lot of people with will that it isn't where it's at.*

**Peter:** Never mind. The word is used in all kinds of ways. It's not there being used to talk about what we're talking about here.

**Daniel:** *You just said, knowledge—of what?*

**Peter:** Of objects and relationships.

**Daniel:** *And I'm thinking, power would be a similar ###—power to do what? When you talk about power, it seems like—*

**Peter:** There's no limitation on the "what". That's my point. Power is the power to do something, but the "something" is unspecified.

**Terry:** *Would "will" be paraphrased as "choice"?*

**Peter:** Whereas objects give you potential to treat those objects in the way that they're treated, and that's a limit.

**Wynn:** *### by the notion of will, because I'm curious as to whether it's in the same domain with responsibility and action.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

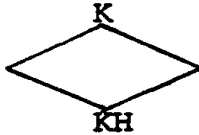
**Wynn:** *Okay, now that being the case, it sounds like that we're back to something we began with, in that the person who sees is in the normal state, is the paradigm case human, whereas the other isn't. In a way, it's reminiscent of what you see in Greek mythology, where the gods are paradigm case people in that they act, and they take responsibility, whereas the people are mere puppets who act at the whims of the gods, so that your gods become your paradigm case people, and people become deficit cases. And that seems to be somewhat the approach here.*

**Peter:** Instead of doing that, you can look at the—not so much symmetry as complementarity. These are two strange forms of behavior description that you can certainly see how you can generate them by deletion operations, and the names for these are Sentience and Conation. These are old-fashioned philosophical terms, and these seem to me to represent systematically what

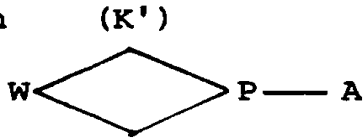
is involved in these two notions. Sentience is an individual who's aware; a sentient individual is one who knows, who's aware, who experiences. Conation—the usual translation of that is “striving”: somebody who tries, who wants, who has motivation, who does things and achieves things.

**FIGURE 6**

**Sentience**



**Conation**



Now, it's a rough equation, but I would offer these two as comparable to these two [Fig. 5, p. 470, B and A]. In the one case, the crucial thing is the distinction of what's around you and what that enables you to do, but the prime consideration is that; that's what sets your limits. Whereas in this one [A, Conation], the prime consideration is what it is you're able to will to do, or decide to do, or intend to do, and then secondarily whether you are in fact able to carry that off, and in our terms, your being able to carry that off might reduce to the question of did you have the right objects around you, but it might not. The basic question is, simply: can you carry it off in any way whatever? And so the emphasis there, again, is on the motivation, on the resolution, the will, the decision, the intention, the purpose, etc. Since it is, it leaves you maximally free to construct any set of objects, or any reality that will help you carry out your purpose. In effect, you're like the playwright, writing a play. He can introduce any set of people, objects, circumstances that will give him an embodiment of the theme he has for that play. But the theme comes first. If he didn't have that, he wouldn't know what to put in. He wouldn't know which characters to have there, or what settings, etc.

This formulation also we call—the contrast between these two is very close to the contrast between real world and reality, the real world being what you see when you look around you, it's generated by limiting cases in that calculational system. Reality means simply the boundary condition on possible behaviors.

**Steve A:** *I don't see the reality one—*

**Peter:** Reality is whatever you can do and what's involved in that. If I can play chess, then there are pawns. If I can put a cup on a table, then there are cups and tables. The primary limit is on what I can do.

**Steve A:** *How you treat those.*

**Peter:** No, what I can do. And other things have reality insofar as they fit into that. In presenting that, I said that's what allows for multiple real worlds, because the multiple real worlds are simply going to be the global contents of  $K'$ —in whatever behaviors you have, and you can have one set of behaviors involving one set of contents, and another set of behaviors involving another set of contents, and that will give you someone like don Juan who goes from one of those worlds to the other. Because the constraints on his possible behaviors are different from somebody who just has behaviors that involve the one set of objects.

Now introducing the worlds as simply the set of objects that you create in the course of some forms of behavior, I think leaves room for the space between the worlds. Because you don't have to have any given set. You don't have to have this set or that set. You may have behaviors that involve objects that don't belong to either set, objects that are unconnected to what coheres as ordinary reality or what coheres as the sorcerer's world. Since in effect you create them, subject to reality constraints, they don't have to belong to either set. So you have the potential for behaviors that are neither behaviors in ordinary reality nor behaviors in the sorcerer's world, but somewhere in between.

**Wynn:** *It strikes me that you're using the word "cohere", now, with an exclusive connotation, as if there was this Jell-O—this gel excludes this particular Jell-O here—and that's why they have to be special worlds.*

**Peter:** It's the other way around. If there is no connection, then that is one glob and this is one glob.

**Wynn:** *Yeah, but I was just wondering if we could ever point—I'm trying to think of a specific example of a behavior that would exclude other behaviors, such that the—*

**Peter:** No, I'm talking about worlds, not behaviors.

**Wynn:** *—such that the coherence of actions in a domain would exclude others from being a member of that domain.*



**Peter:** Yeah—any game. Remember, every game is a logically encapsulated domain, and game-behavior, as such, logically excludes any other form of behavior.

**Wynn:** *I don't want to get back into the initial argument about that, but it strikes me that the logic of "world" is one that includes the fact of many games following different logics. So I'm just wondering if there's ever a necessity to introduce another world.*

**Peter:** Yeah. Remember, I said, "Another set of objects unconnected in space and time would simply be another world."

**Steve A:** *I'm unclear as to what you're saying here about—given this formulation, reality would correspond to those objects which you're creating in the course of enacting those particular events, in the course of doing—what you're doing.*

**Peter:** Yeah, those objects would be real.

**Steve A:** *Okay, does that mean you're putting it back into sort of a formulation of behavior potential equals objects?*

**Peter:** No, because you have to have the behavior potential first, to create those objects that fit the behavior. The behavior comes first. That's why I used the notion of a playwright. He has to have the idea of the play first. He doesn't assemble a cast of characters by accident, then watch how they behave. He fits them into something he already has in mind.

Likewise, if I have a form of behavior in mind, I can just fit in whatever objects it takes to carry off that form of behavior. And the only limitation is: can I in fact do it? For most of us, we're quite limited in which objects we can create and have be real. That's the nature of our reality. But what we see described fits this other description, namely, that the basic limitation is, simply: what can you get away with by way of behavior? That reality is not a thing, but a constraint on what you can actually do; as against what you might possibly have been able to do, but, in fact, can't. There's where the issue of brute fact comes in. Just like in our world, it's a brute fact that there's a table here today. There didn't have to be. It's not a logical necessity; it's a fact. It's also a fact that I can't pound my hand through the wall. But it might have been that I could.

**Steve A:** *Like don Juan and don Genaro running around the car.*

**Peter:** Yeah. So the issue of what I can and can't do can be given priority—there's the reality constraint: what can you do, what can't you do? The

interesting thing is that in that kind of system, you can see why the will would be primary, rather than knowledge. Because the will connects to choosing behaviors; if behavior is primary, then mode of choice is going to be primary.

**Joe H:** *That also explains what we were discussing last time, the difference between self concepts based on pattern versus self concept based on style. Because will can be his style, whereas objects make up a pattern.*

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Joe H:** *Seeing yourself in terms of the goals you achieve or the specific action you decide to undertake.*

**Peter:** Right.

Now think of the notion of impeccability. Remember, that was the ideal, at least for the Warrior, and probably for everybody else, too. Think of that as a Critic's term for criticizing choices. Literally, "impeccable" would mean "without sin".

**Wynn:** *Would it also mean "without Karma"?*

**Peter:** No. Karma would be irrelevant.

**Wynn:** *But a person who's Karma-free would also be impeccable. His actions wouldn't acquire any reaction.*

**Peter:** Well, I'm not sure.

**Terry:** *Does being impeccable involve renouncing things in the world?*

**Peter:** I'm not sure of that, either. What I want to raise is the question of whether impeccability has any content. It sounds like it has content, because "impeccable" is just one among a set of Critic terms—

**Wynn:** *Content as a description of style, as a specific description—*

**Peter:** No, as a Critic's term for "style".

**Wynn:** *How would you notice? If you were noticing the difference between a person described as impeccable, or somebody who did approximately the same kind of professions, the same kind of thing, but wasn't impeccable, what would you notice differently?*

**Daniel:** *No error.*

**Peter:** You'd notice the impeccability or absence thereof.

**Wynn:** *What would give you reason to give that description?*

**Peter:** Just that.

**Terry:** *I don't think that'll work, because I think that it's so relative to the critical matrix, the coordinate system that the Critic is using to map the behavior. What is one man's impeccability is another man's drivenness, or something like that, and—*

**Daniel:** *That doesn't seem to be the case, because "impeccable" implies no error.*

**Terry:** *I'm saying that from one point of view, making certain assumptions of certain standards and baselines, that impeccability would be so, there would be no error and so on, but from a different set of critical standards, the same thing might be sort of an impeccability in an unimportant activity, thereby a meticulousness or something at something that is not worth doing, and so on, so that from different points of view it could be attacked, and I don't think—*

**Steve A:** *Then you'd say, "Impeccable but trivial," or you'd give another—*

**Wynn:** *The person who's impeccable, the impeccable Warrior, there's a difference between the significance of his actions and somebody who's simply meticulous and trivial. The kind of significance seems to be important.*

**Daniel:** *All Terry's saying is that another view sometimes ###.*

**Wynn:** *That's right. The word "impeccable" seems to have the smell of a word like "beauty". [laughter]*

**Peter:** What?!

**Terry:** *No. I want to know if there's any behavior that's beyond criticism. I don't think that there is. I think any behavior is susceptible to criticism from some point of view.*

**Peter:** Well, but look: all kinds of ordinary ### are content-free, like the notion of danger is content-free. What about "impeccable"? The fact that different people may disagree as to what is impeccable—is that any more important a difference than saying that different people will disagree about what's dangerous?

**Terry:** *It sort of amounts to a supreme fiction, because if you think you can become an impeccable man, you're mistaking an ideal for something you could never achieve in reality.*

**Peter:** You're suggesting then that if I decide to avoid dangers, that's an illusion because I will never succeed in avoiding all dangers?

**Jim:** *Is it that impeccability could refer to a state of affairs or a relationship, as opposed to objects or processes or events? It seems like you couldn't try to define that term in terms of specifics. You'd have to define it in terms of relationships or specific relationships. Do you see it that way, or not?*

**Peter:** For one thing, using the example of danger reminds us that “relativistic” is itself relativistic. “Content-free” is relative. Relative to a relationship formula, an emotion formula is content. But relative to objects and events, the emotion formula—like danger—is content-free. So you can say that there's no behavior that you can describe in such a way that it follows from the description that it's impeccable. That doesn't mean that there's no behavior that's impeccable, any more than—there is no description of an object that you can give, from which it follows that it's dangerous, doesn't mean that there are no objects that are dangerous.

The question I'm raising, though, is not whether “impeccable” has that kind of content, but whether it's not being used as a general term for the Critic, the general term that says there's a difference between better and worse behaviors.

**Terry:** *Of course, yeah.*

**Peter:** Whether it doesn't have the same kind of generality as the words “good” and “bad”, which can be used on any content whatever, in any enterprise whatever, and they have that level of generality, and below that level they are content-free.

**Wynn:** *Maybe it would be of some use to make a linguistic table of the word “impeccable”, other sorts of concepts that come close and that—*

**Peter:** Think of being without sin, and then think of the double negative for “perfection”. If a performance is without sin, it's a perfect performance. But “perfect” is also just as content-free as the word “good”.

**Terry:** *You're isolating it from so many things. You're formalizing it to the point where it's really being torn loose from facts altogether.*

**Peter:** No, it's just that kind of term, that you can use it across any range of facts. You can use words like “good”, “bad”, “right”, “wrong”, etc., across all kinds of different worlds.

**Terry:** *Like “cause” and “effect”.*

**Peter:** Or “cause” and “effect”. So we do have concepts that have that kind of generality, and I'm raising that question now about “impeccable”.

**Wynn:** *Could you teach somebody who at one time didn't know the difference between an impeccable and a non-impeccable behavior, to notice an impeccable performance?*

**Peter:** Probably not.

**Wynn:** *But that in a way is what Carlos is having to do. He's having to learn how to recognize and behave impeccably—he has to learn how to make that distinction.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's the point: he has to learn how to make—*how to make the distinction, not how to recognize cases. That is, he's mastering a competence rather than learning a discrimination.*

**Terry:** *Why couldn't he do that also, though?*

**Peter:** Because the mastering of the concept enables him to make the discriminations on the occasion. He doesn't learn the discrimination as such. He learns the mastery of the concept.

**Terry:** *If you take someone out to the tennis court and you watch carefully professional players and amateurs, they can go out and recognize cases of impeccable tennis and cases of crappy tennis.*

**Peter:** Yeah. In the sorcerer's world, he'd be dead. A spectator will be dead in no time flat. Because at a minimum, you have to be a Warrior and a Hunter to survive.

**Terry:** *I thought we were talking generally, not limited to the text of don Juan.*

**Peter:** No, I said I'm raising the question of whether "impeccable", here, has content or whether it's a general cover-term for criticism, for there being a difference between "better" and "worse", for there being some principle for selecting some behaviors over others. Remember, you still have the problem: if you have all kinds of behavior potential, on what basis does one select one behavior over another? On what basis is any behavior better than any other?

**Wynn:** *The impeccable Warrior follows the path of heart.*

**Peter:** Okay, that's the other one, isn't it? [He adds "heart" to Fig. 4, p. 447]

**Terry:** *The point I'm making, I think, is most assuredly that's true, I mean, the fact that there are words in the language like "impeccable" and "flawless" and so forth—these words would indicate that it is in fact a case that there are judgments made about different qualities of behavior. There are ### those behaviors.*

**Peter:** It's not a business about qualities of behaviors; it's a business about behaviors.

Notice that this one [**heart**] seems a lot less empty than "impeccable". When you talk about a path with heart, it doesn't sound like you're just talking about a flawless performance of some kind, or something that is without error. It suggests some more positive principle.

**Wynn:** *Perhaps the distinction between "trivial" and "non-trivial" paths, so to speak, which is something we tried to pull into the concept of "impeccable" before.*

**Terry:** *Or negative and positive terms, too. As you were saying earlier, the Critic's terms tend to be negatives, you talk about the absence of a certain deficit.*

**Peter:** Yeah, that's why it's important that this one has a sort of a positive flavor about it.

**Terry:** *It suggests a certain way of living.*

**Wynn:** *So any flawless performance won't do—you have to choose particular performances to try to make as flawless, for that to be worthy. You have to keep your eye on the significance of the activity.*

**Joe H:** *I'm not sure that you would, since that seems to be leading back toward objects ###.*

**Peter:** Significance stems from larger content, and that sort of suggests pattern, whereas style—it's right there.

**Joe H:** *Because it doesn't matter whether Carlos learns to make distinctions about plants and talks to plants or becomes a planter—it amounts to the same thing as long as he does them impeccably.*

**Wynn:** *But there's a notion of choice in terms of which particular—in terms of a finite number of actions he could choose in a situation, a finite number of recognitions of the things to do, he is to choose a certain class of things to do, and the significance, I imagine, of that class of things makes a difference—*

**Steve A:** *Yeah, the significance is important, but it's in terms of whatever will give you power. You do choose between paths, and just doing certain things impeccably won't be enough. Your choices will be impeccable in terms of the significance, which will be gaining power.*

**Peter:** It sounds like Kelly's "elaborative corollary". You remember, we had that one that Kelly says, "A person will choose that end of a dichotomous

construct that will increase—” what was it? Something equivalent to “the behavioral possibility”. We put it in terms that a person will not choose less behavior potential over more. And here, in terms of power, the Warrior acts in such a way as to increase his power.

**Wynn:** *To be impeccable is to—for instance, both “meticulous” and “impeccable” have a certain overlap. “Meticulous” doesn’t have with it that commitment to an increased behavior potential, whereas “impeccable” might.*

**Peter:** Might.

**Steve A:** *If you do things impeccably—if you do all things impeccably, do you automatically increase power? Or are there particular choices, roads, for power beyond the distinction of impeccable or not?*

**Peter:** What are the similarities and differences, now, in the problems of criticizing behavior in don Juan’s world, and the problems that we encountered earlier in criticizing behaviors? We encountered that problem before, in dealing in the ordinary way with self-actualization and personal growth. You recall, we said that you’re always criticizing behavior, you’re always making judgments about some kind of deficit, and you can shift your baseline from norms, which gives you ordinary pathology, to perfection or something of that sort, which gives you the positive health type things, but still you’re judging deficits. Now here [Fig. 4, p. 447] we’ve got criticism of choices, and you might say, of choices as such. You don’t criticize the behavior in terms of a pattern and the values in the pattern; you criticize the kind of choice that was made.

**Joe H:** *I was just thinking of one situation where Carlos does—when he goes to the party, and doesn’t enjoy himself. He doesn’t act with heart. And that is the criticism from don Juan—not that he shouldn’t go to parties. So it doesn’t—again, what he does doesn’t matter, but how he does it. Sometimes going to the party would be the right thing.*

**Peter:** Or having decided to go to the party, he is already committed because he is responsible for having done that, committed to the rest of it.

**Terry:** *That also connects, too, with the thing about conation versus sentience, because if he criticizes him going to the party, then it’s a rule that he has set up, a prohibition of certain kinds of things and permission to do other kinds of things, and “rules” translates into the K parameter, much more than into the W parameter.*



**Peter:** If he's free to introduce any kind of party-goers that he wants, he can't thereby complain that the reason he didn't enjoy himself was that they were not there.

The last time [**in a class two years earlier**] we considered the whole set of procedures that are ascribed to don Juan and how they were good. We came to the conclusion that, in a sense, it fits too neatly, that a reconstruction of this sort fits lock, stock, and barrel the procedures that are described, and that leads you to wonder whether they weren't constructed from just such a notion. I think I commented that if anybody here were to write that kind of book, I would be very suspicious, because I could see how you could construct a book just from knowing these kinds of considerations.

**Terry:** *My impression from the book was that don Juan is in no way a real person. This was a very deliberate artistic act on the part of somebody.*

**Wynn:** *That being the case, there'd be some problems in that the first book is a dissertation.*

**Terry:** *### in making up his cases studies for ###, but imagination triumphed.*

**Jane:** *I think that second time, you said that could you get—*  
[**general conversation**]

**Peter:** Remember, our approach has been from the general case: if you wanted to change a person from one world to another, how would it make sense to go about it? And from that approach, we generated fairly clearly all of the procedures that don Juan is described as having done. Which means that if I had assigned you the task of writing this in the form of fiction, in dramatic form, of the story of a person changing another person from one world to another, you would wind up doing a comparable job, depending on how good a novelist you were. But you would have all of the ingredients for what to describe, the kind of things to describe, the range of things to describe, with some leeway as to what you do here, here, in different places.

**Wynn:** *But would a novelist cure himself in the process? The claim is that Carlos has, in effect, cured himself in the process. That being the case, it presents a really interesting notion for therapy.*

**Steve A:** *The exercises generally are very parallel to certain exercises in a lot of therapy.*

**Terry:** *It's just so engineered, though. It's just putting in one thing after another, it's like building bricks in a building.* [**general conversation**]

**Peter:** Yeah, but look: think of the other side of that argument, though. If we can derive from general considerations what sorts of moves you would have to make to switch a person from one world to another, why would it be surprising to find that in an account supposedly of somebody who really did it, that the procedures would fit?

**Terry:** *Okay, I guess because I'd sort of ad hoc say that I'd expect a bit of imprecision, and I'd sort of go, "Impeccability is nice and formal—"*

**Peter:** No, because if it worked, it would have to be complete in all of the essential ways.

**Terry:** *But with some slop in there! And there's not, it's—*[general conversation]

**Sherry:** *But he left that out. He went at a terrific pace.*

**Terry:** *I thought it was supposed to be an accurate representation.*

**Sherry:** *When newspaper writers write the facts, but they only write the facts they—*

**Terry:** *Yeah, but I—*

**Peter:** Remember, he's redone this four times, now. This is the third time. Apparently he took voluminous notes and selectively used some of those, and overlapped—

**Wynn:** *The first book is supposedly his dissertation, in which he writes that book, he stops the apprenticeship because he's terrified, he's terrified of going on, and then some years later, two or three years later—and this is after that first book has been published, and he's made quite a bit of money, he—every introductory anthropology class in the country used that damn book. He's made a fortune—he's gone back to find don Juan to continue the apprenticeship. And that second book is a continuation, and it stops, and then when he writes that second book, it may be that all the other things had gone on, but if there's truth to the copyright dates and to the experience as he said it, then there is a period in which he—it may in fact be that that first book is the relationship that he had to a Yaqui shaman and that certain things came from that—he made a lot of money and saw that he could now write a coherent book in a Wittgensteinian style, which he's very much done in the second book, and just set together principles. And as he's made more and more money, his neurosis may have become less and less. In terms of personal power, being a rich neurotic, he has more options than—*[laughter]

**Steve A:** *I could use some of that.*

**Wynn:** *I don't know, but there are enough characters running around, like you read the stuff that Chief Rolling Thunder, for instance, who we have good reason to believe is a historical particular because he shows up everywhere and gives lectures, and people who get to know him well claim that they see some very extraordinary things happening. There is reason to believe that even if don Juan isn't a real person, that there are some real people who make these claims about their lives and are capable of producing in other people experiences of that sort, who are ### well capable of producing any or all of these experiences.*

**Peter:** The interest is not “can you produce experiences?,” because those don't raise the same kind of question that is raised by talking about another real world.

**Wynn:** *Well, except that we see with—say—Rolling Thunder, there's a misty story about he and this kid—there's a guy in the penitentiary, an Indian in the penitentiary that wasn't there for any good reason, so he went to the penitentiary and demanded that they release him. They wouldn't do it, so he had a tornado come to the gate of the penitentiary and they got frightened and let the guy out. [laughter] You know—this is claimed in Menninger publications, and whether or not the stuff is true, I don't know, but there's been a history of these sorts of claims. It goes back to the early anthropologists.*

**Peter:** Yeah, but think of the difference between somebody merely having exceptional abilities in this world, versus the whole idea of there being another world, and somebody who can move back and forth between them.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but the notion of the other world, though, becomes kind of important, because my feeling is that most of what's gone on is—the issue isn't other worlds, but is other states, that what he's done is, he's in fact produced dreams, he's used confusion techniques to produce a set in which he can then take Carlos as a client and have him acquire certain practices in those domains, and come out from those with certain experiences. The apology, so to speak, of whether or not there is this place where gnats are a hundred feet high, I think, is beside the point, because we don't have access to that as an historical particular.*

**Peter:** No. That's why it raises questions for us that the other kind of thing doesn't raise.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but what I'm saying is that as far as we can take it as observers, not having easy access to this sort of training, we can look at it as a coherent*

*set of principles for behavior change. We can look at it as—for instance—as whether the action the person has gone through to acquire those changes are hallucinatory or solid like this—we don't know, and we don't have access to making that decision. But in any case, a person who has gone through those experiences, either as a person in a dream or as a person in the desert, comes out of it with a certain power. And short of entering an apprenticeship ourselves, in which case we're likely to be as mysteriously led as Carlos, we probably wouldn't know. If don Juan is as successful as we have reason to believe he is, Carlos doesn't know whether he was really there or whether he was tricked, and up until the final book, he still asks that question, he still doesn't know whether don Genaro really can jump a hundred feet, or they can hypnotize him and then he sees him jump a hundred feet. He still doesn't know that. And he makes his lack of knowledge about that reasonably clear.*

**Peter:** It sounds like the Art-Critic problem, doesn't it?

**Wynn:** Well, Boulder Travel, when they set up a guided tour—

**Peter:** Did they set up a tour of the Sonora Desert?

**Wynn:** *Then we'll know. How would you describe that domain? Would you describe it in terms of physical properties in which you could do a physics there?*  
[change tape]

**Peter:** Remember that relativity diagram. There are a lot of descriptions that one could give.

**Wynn:** *But is there a question of the sort, "Is that a real world, a real domain in which you have social practices with other parties?"*

**Peter:** Yeah. Again, remember the business of all of us looking at a chair, and I said, "If somebody drew a picture like that [a square], I'd challenge whether he was seeing the same thing I was." Likewise, the fact that there are a lot of descriptions possible doesn't mean that just any old description is acceptable. So you might say that one of the questions is whether the set of acceptable descriptions includes the other-world descriptions.

**Wynn:** *There's a lack of convergence in the data we have here, because we don't have the story of—for instance—don Juan putting in a sealed envelope the things that he will encounter in World X, and then as a blind experiment or keeping Carlos entirely in the dark as to what he will find there, and then Carlos going there and writing down what he has, and opening both envelopes and finding that they correspond.*

**Terry:** *He already covers that by saying that he's going to find what he finds, being the person he is. He methodologically introduces that that's impossible.*

**Wynn:** *We've got something else going—what we've got going is primarily, don Juan says, “What you're going to encounter is X, Y, and Z,” and then Carlos goes and encounters X, Y, and Z. So we don't have anything free of demand-characteristics. But I guess that would be sort of the question: if two separate explorers could go through these trainings without the particular labels—*

**Peter:** Well, you might question whether we, in our normal reality, have anything free of demand-characteristics. The table is simply something that is to be treated as a table; it's got demand-characteristics.

**Wynn:** *What's the difference, though? If you assemble various objects from oscilloscope to things that I have no reason ever to expect to find in this building, and I walk into that room and see those things—I can assume that I have a knowledge of what those things could be, I can write them down, including if there's a hundred-foot gnat in that room, because I have some knowledge of insects and some knowledge of measures, and I can say “a hundred-foot gnat”. So that we have independent access. You can walk in there and see a hundred-foot gnat, and Jane can go in there and see it, we all could go in there and view it and write it down in our envelopes, and then open them up, and we'd have that kind of—*

**Peter:** You're talking about this kind of world, a world that is an object.

**Joe H:** *You're positing a certain kind of world where objects have a place—*

**Wynn:** *But ### that kind of convergent data—*

**Joe H:** *You might have some other kind of—*

**Wynn:** *But there's no reason to believe—for instance—that there are worlds that aren't that kind of world.*

**Peter:** Well, but that's—

**Terry:** *Take where the car disappears. Now would it be reasonable to assume that if you were in another real world, with a set of concepts that doesn't include the concept of a car, that you wouldn't see anything? Does that sound like a reasonable—*

**Wynn:** *So he was looking for his car in that world.*

**Steve A:** *Yeah, the three of them got in this thing and drove off, and he says they were laughing because he wasn't going to drive in any real car in the*

*ordinary world.*

**Terry:** *Is that a reasonable proposition? Do you think that could happen just by having an alternative set of concepts?*

**Peter:** What could happen?

**Terry:** *That you wouldn't see a car, or you wouldn't see anything at all.*

**Peter:** *Who wouldn't see a car? Remember, every description is going to be somebody's description.*

**Terry:** *Okay, Carlos is being introduced into the sorcerer's world, and he's acquiring all these new concepts. Suddenly don Genaro starts fiddling around, and he can't find his car, and he can identify geographical landmarks to know that this is where he left his car, yet he can't see it. Now could just having different—I mean, in other words, if like I had different concept, and suddenly didn't have the concept of a table, it doesn't seem to me like I would not be able to see something there.*

**Jane:** *It does sound like an incompatibility of worlds.*

**Wynn:** *Except there the issue of simple concepts becomes problematic, because it has to be a world that's very, very tightly constructed. Is Terry introducing the problem of—if a world doesn't have the concept "car", and Carlos is looking for a car in that world, will he find it? And that creates an interesting dilemma, because Carlos still has—he has the concept. The question becomes one of—*

**Terry:** *The question becomes one of in what sense is he in this other world.*

**Wynn:** *In what sense is this a world?*

**Peter:** Remember, a car as an object connects to other objects, etc., and you might be setting up a fictitious problem comparable to, "How do you say this Sanskrit word in English?"

**Terry:** *I might be, but the fact is that's the example in the book. I mean, he's looking for a car, but presumably he's now held into the alternative reality to the point where he can't find it. And I guess I'm saying, how—not "what would be the mechanisms by which"—but give some description of that holding power, whatever it is.*

**Peter:** Yeah, well, his being unable to find the car or see it is, on that occasion, a criterion of his being in the other world and not the old one.

**Terry:** *Then it's just definitional strategy, you're using definitions to—*

**Peter:** No. Remember I said, “At the boundary, you say, ‘That’s what we call “black””’

**Terry:** *This is what we call “being in the other world” is when you can’t see cars.*

**Wynn:** *Except that you could see how you could hypnotize somebody and do the classic negative hallucination trick, where you tell the person that—for instance—you’re here in the desert; you won’t see cars.*

**Peter:** Now look: try it, “This is what we call ‘being out of contact with a car.’” Not being able to see it, touch it, feel it, when it’s there, you’re out of contact with it.

**Terry:** *Could he walk over the ground where the car was?*

**Peter:** Well, no. You see, this is what I mean by coherence. It’s not simply can he walk through the car. It’s can he treat, successfully treat, what he has done as having walked through the car, or as there not having been a car there and he simply walked over the cactus?

**Wynn:** *And there he can still have the concept “car”.*

**Peter:** You have the same problem with somebody who has a delusion. He says, “That’s an elephant.” Well, you’re not stuck with just, “Is that an elephant or not?” You say, “Okay, go pet it,” and he walks over and goes like this—“You see!” So the question extends to almost any other aspect of the world, if you want to implicate it. You say, “What are you feeding it?” “I’m feeding it alfalfa.” “Where’s the alfalfa?” “Well, it’s right here.” How much—how far can I keep going that way? You would bet that I would run out, because human ingenuity is limited. But suppose that I just kept on doing that? About that time, you’d say, “This guy is living in a different world.”

**Terry:** *But you’d say that that world is parasitic on the—*

**Peter:** No.

**Terry:** *Yes! You see—*

**Peter:** Well, *you* would, sure. [laughter] But *he* wouldn’t.

**Terry:** *Yeah, he wouldn’t, for sure. But it’s like—it’s analogous to the private language arguments, in that if he’s formulating new concepts with new referents and all of that, he’s doing that bridging over from and borrowing from the language he already has.*



**Peter:** Yeah. He may invent new objects, but clearly in the scenario I described, he's using usual objects in a different way. And that's like talking to the coyote.

**Wynn:** *Is there a difference—when we as observers come to the point where we will accept a different status to that delusionary world, once you successfully—you're crazy as hell but for you it's coherent, as opposed to a place where you're not crazy as hell and it's coherent in the same fashion, in which case although we can't see the elephant sitting right here, there is in fact an elephant here, that under certain circumstances we would have access to. The difference is between access to and projection.*

**Peter:** You're back to the Art-Critic problem. If you can see it sometime, then you can—

**Wynn:**—*teach me to see the elephant and those things?*

**Peter:** And the answer is, "Well, if you spend half your life learning, yes." That leaves you right where you were before.

**Terry:** —*someone crazy in an asylum who claims to—like someone who has a private language—be able to teach you how to use the concepts. If he claims, "I can teach you how to see all the things that I see," instead of just giving him a clump of alfalfa and saying, "Now look, this is real alfalfa, and this is your imaginary alfalfa, get it straight, dummy,"—[laughter]—is this some kind of a—"Oh, no, I can teach you how to see my alfalfa." It's just—you know. Then you really wonder what grounds you have for keeping him in the hospital, unless you're willing to go through the whole apprenticeship. Of course, if he is crazy, you've wasted a lot of time. On the other hand, he might give you a marvelous experience.*

**Wynn:** —*the revival preachers in our asylums are people that they would describe as God-intoxicants.*

**Peter:** Let me make a final connection here. Let me suggest that we are quite familiar with other worlds, and these are the scientific-theory other worlds. That psychoanalysis is another world, that physics is another world, that biology is another world, that all of these are creations of that sort. And what saves them, and what saves us from the kind of conflict that we've encountered here, is that they're limited real worlds, that they're limited worlds, and therefore we can incorporate them into a single world. But now suppose that you were going to do a kind of a surrealist movie, in which you allow yourself only the facts of psychoanalysis, but you're going to present these

visually, so you have visualizations of ids, egos, super-egos, cathexes, processes of displacement, psychic economies—all of these things are somehow visually—

**Wynn:** *But you might argue that that was the historical practice of the Surrealists.*

**Peter:** Then you say, okay, that would be comparable to don Juan's description of this other reality: that you've got a totally new set of objects, a totally different set of relations that hold among those objects, a totally different set of processes that go on in that world, and as such, it's totally unconnected to ours. However, being the way we are, *we* can bridge the gap. *We* can operate in both worlds, and therefore take advantage of that fact. And we can on one occasion treat this table as a mass of particles moving around and vibrating, and thereby do certain things with it, or we can treat it as a table and put a coffee cup on it. So we have kind of free movement from one of these worlds to the other. And one of them is more fundamental and inclusive than the others.

**Terry:** *That's the real world dependent on ordinary language.*

**Peter:** Not dependent on.

**Terry:** *Or constituted by?*

**Peter:** Corresponding to.

**Terry:** *And what we call these limited worlds, would that be what traditionally have been called "myths"?*

**Peter:** Quite possibly. Except that myths tend to be—well, they tend to be formally more like accounts of the real world.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but what about a non-limited real world? Are alternates non-limited in the same sense in which our world is non-limited?*

**Terry:** *A convening totality.*

**Peter:** But that's what we're dealing with here. That's why I offer scientific worlds as a kind of half-way point between our real world and don Juan's—the world of physics, the world of psychoanalysis, the world of Skinner, etc.

**Wynn:** *There's a traditional question among anthropologists about, when you have grounds to discriminate a paranoid schizophrenic who's got a very elaborate delusional system, from someone who has actually undergone a religious experience, from a person who is in fact revealing a world? What they always use—they're always psychoanalysts—they always look to the child, the*

*development of the person. If this looks like a compensation, they describe it as psychosis. If they can't see it as a compensation, then they throw up their hands and say, "Well, maybe he is Mohammed." But there is that issue, in terms of when you're dealing with psychosis, and when you're dealing with vision that it would violate the sense of what's going on to call it psychosis. You see the distinction I'm trying to make? Between like, when I'm not in fact hallucinating Martians standing here, but when I've developed a sensitivity to see the Martian that's standing there and taking very careful notes.*

**Peter:** Then what?

**Wynn:** *What grounds, as an observer, you can have for deciding whether or not I'm deluded, whether I'm psychotic, whether I've been tricked.*

**Peter:** Well, the main one is whether as an observer you can see that Martian. Because if you can't, you're going to be dubious in one form or another.

**Wynn:** *Okay, but now what if I tell you, "You could see that, but for you to see that—in fact you can't: it's too late for you—but I can take your children and take them through the same process I've been through, and they'll see it." But now you've got psychotic kids, so—*

**Peter:** Well, how about that?

**Steve A:** *So it's the issue to make a differentiation between a restriction in the world as we see it to call someone—say an ### person to call someone psychotic, versus someone who's able to see hallucinations or whatever, just going around acting in this other world and treating things as such, and yet is able to do all the things that people do and become, and you wouldn't call them psychotic?*

**Terry:** *Right.*

**Wynn:** *Although you still might. [general conversation]*

**Terry:** *If a man couldn't only dwell within the world of his own creation, if he could have equal facility with the ordinary world, you then would have to take him more seriously.*

**Peter:** You'd probably call him eccentric. If he managed to stay out of trouble, you'd figure that he's got to have at least an ordinary degree of contact with our reality, so he's not psychotic. The fact that he has all these other things in addition makes him eccentric. On the other hand, if he walks out in front of cars and gets himself smashed, or goes out and sticks knives into people, you say, "Ha, psychotic."

**Wynn:** *Of course, if he gets run over by cars and doesn't get smashed—[laughter]*

**Peter:** You might call him psychotic anyhow, if you couldn't think of a better story to tell about him.

**Wynn:** *Bernie Bloom's got a really nice videotape of a paranoid who says he's Mohammed, and as an exercise, he asked the class, "What would give you grounds for seeing the guy as not," and in his tape, what you see are—you can see his Mohammedanism, his Islamic claim as being a sensible, almost a logical progression from the kind of childhood treatment he received, none of which looked like a training, but instead looked like a treatment, like a restriction rather than an entree, and those would be the only grounds that I could suggest, to look at the history.*

**Peter:** One trap to avoid—I just mentioned it a few minutes ago, about the class of acceptable descriptions—is, by virtue of our background generally, we're constantly tempted at every step of the way to ask, "But what's the truth about this man?" Even when we get relativistic, every time we turn around we're saying, "But what's the *real* story here?" If we don't fall into that trap, we go into the other one: that any story is equally good, and there is no truth. So you have to keep both ends in mind, namely, that there are other stories that are equally good, but not every story is equally good—not if it's what you see it as. Secondly, you do see it the way you see it. You are operating in the world you are operating in, and not in any of these others, and so the decisions you make, about whether to lock somebody up or not, reflect that. The fact that somebody is living in a different world, or may be, which for him is just as good as ours is for us, is not a reason not to lock him up if we see him—in terms of our standards—as dangerous to himself or others. When it comes to action, you're back to the world you have, and you have to act within it because you have no other one to act within. Your knowledge of these other possibilities does things for your understanding and does things for the way you interact with people. It frees you from many limitations. But it isn't a substitute for your own viewpoint on things, your own answers, and the checks that you have on that.

One of the constraints on ordinary behavior is: no guaranteed answers about anything. In that sense, we are like this [**Fig. 6, p. 473, Sentience**]. Since there's no guaranteed answer about what is so, our behaviors are not essentially or finally limited there [**Conation**]. We have this kind of freedom. On the other hand, in the world we live in, we do have a lot of

knowledge, etc., and we use it for both opportunity, but it is also a constraint. So when it comes to self-actualization or personal growth, you're left at that level of concepts, with many of the same problems: that you don't have a definitive answer as to what kind of development is good development, what kind is bad development—you no more have answers to that than you have answers to "What objects are dangerous?" Instead, in both cases, if you have the relevant concepts and experience, you can make judgments in that domain, subject to the limitation that you have no final answers and you're not guaranteed to be right, but also subject to the "whatever you can carry off, who's to say it's not so?"

In effect, dealing with this whole area of transcendental theories, of personal growth, positive health, self-actualization, gives you a new resource relative to the ordinary judgments of pathology, because now you're dealing with the limiting cases for those judgments. But it raises a parallel set of problems, issues, and uncertainties of its own. And for those, there is not someplace else that you can go to, the way you can go from normal health to positive health—there's not somewhere else you can go to, so these are the end-points. They're the end-points where you need to have the concepts, you need to have the experience, you need to make the choices—[**he circles "Responsibility" on the blackboard**]. Or [**he circles "Impeccable"**]. And I guess that's it—a good place to stop.



# Appendix 1

## Ways To Live

Instructions: Below are described thirteen ways to live which various persons, at various times, have advocated and followed.

You are to write numbers in the margin to indicate how much you yourself like or dislike each of these ways to live. Do them in order, one after the other.

Remember that it is not a question of what kind of life you now lead, or the kind of life you think it prudent to live in our society, or the kind of life you think would be good for other persons, but simply the kind of life you personally would like to live.

Use the following scale, and write one of these numbers in the margin alongside each of the ways to live:

- 7 I like it very much
- 6 I like it quite a lot
- 5 I like it slightly
- 4 I am indifferent to it
- 3 I dislike it slightly
- 2 I dislike it quite a lot
- 1 I dislike it very much

**Way 1:** In this design for living the individual actively participates in the social life of his community, not primarily to change it but to understand, appreciate, and preserve the best that man has attained. In this life style, excessive desires are avoided and moderation is sought. One wants the good things of life, but in an orderly way. Life is to have clarity, balance, refinement, control. Vulgarity, great enthusiasm, irrational behavior, impatience, indulgence are to be avoided. Friendship is to be esteemed, but not easy intimacy with many people. Life is marked by discipline, intelligibility, good manners, predictability. Social changes are to be made slowly and carefully, so that what has been achieved in human culture is not lost. The individual is active physically and socially, but not in a hectic or radical way. Restraint and intelligence should give order to an active life.

**Way 2:** In this way of life, the individual for the most part goes it alone, assuring himself of privacy in living quarters, having much time to himself, attempting to control his own life. Emphasis is on self-sufficiency, reflection and meditation, knowledge of oneself. Intimate associations and relationships with social groups



are to be avoided, as are the physical manipulation of objects and attempts at control of the physical environment. One should aim to simplify one's external life, to moderate desires which depend upon physical and social forces outside of oneself. One concentrates on refinement, clarification, and self-direction. Not much is to be gained by living outwardly. One must avoid dependence upon persons or things; the center of life should be found within oneself.

**Way 3:** This way of life makes central the sympathetic concern for other persons. Affection is the main thing in life, affection that is free from all traces of the imposition of oneself upon others, or of using others for one's own purposes. Greed in possessions, emphasis on sexual passion, striving for power over persons and things, excessive emphasis upon intellect, and undue concern for oneself are to be avoided. These things hinder the sympathetic love among persons which alone gives significance to life. Aggressiveness blocks receptivity to the forces which foster genuine personal growth. One should purify oneself, restrain one's self-assertiveness, and become receptive, appreciative, and helpful in relating to other persons.

**Way 4:** Life is something to be enjoyed--sensuously enjoyed, enjoyed with relish and abandonment. The aim in life should not be to control the course of the world or to change society or the lives of others, but to be open and receptive to things and persons, and to delight in them. Life is a festival, not a workshop or a school for moral discipline. To let oneself go, to let things and persons affect oneself, is more important than to do--or to do good. Such enjoyment requires that one be self-centered enough to be keenly aware of what is happening within in order to be free for new happiness. One should avoid entanglements, should not be too dependent on particular people or things, should not be self-sacrificing; one should be alone a lot, should have time for meditation and awareness of oneself. Both solitude and sociability are necessary for the good life.

**Way 5:** This way of life stresses the social group rather than the individual. A person should not focus on himself, withdraw from people, be aloof and self-centered. Rather he should merge himself with a social group, enjoy cooperation and companionship, join with others in resolute activity for the realization of common goals. Persons are social, and persons are active; life should merge energetic group activity and cooperative group enjoyment. Meditation, restraint, concern for one's self-sufficiency, abstract

intellectuality, solitude, stress on one's possessions all cut the roots which bind persons together. One should live outwardly with gusto, enjoying the good things of life, working with others to secure the things which make possible a pleasant and energetic social life. Those who oppose this ideal are not to be dealt with too tenderly. Life can't be too fastidious.

**Way 6:** This philosophy sees life as dynamic and the individual as an active participant. Life continuously tends to stagnate, to become comfortable, to become sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. Against these tendencies, a person must stress the need for constant activity--physical action, adventure, the realistic solution of specific problems as they appear, the improvement of techniques for controlling the world and society. Man's future depends primarily on what he does, not on what he feels or on his speculations. New problems constantly arise and always will arise. Improvements must always be made if man is to progress. We can't just follow the past or dream of what the future might be. We have to work resolutely and continually if control is to be gained over the forces which threaten us. Man should rely on technical advances made possible by scientific knowledge. He should find his goal in the solution of his problems. The good is the enemy of the better.

**Way 7:** This philosophy says that we should at various times and in various ways accept something from all other paths of life, but give no one our exclusive allegiance. At one moment one way may be more appropriate; at another moment another is the most appropriate. Life should contain enjoyment and action and contemplation in about equal amounts. When any one way is carried to extremes, we lose something important for our life. So we must cultivate flexibility; admit diversity in ourselves; accept the tension which this diversity produces; find a place for detachment in the midst of enjoyment and activity. The goal of life is found in the dynamic integration of enjoyment, action, and contemplation, and in the dynamic interaction of the various paths of life. One should use all of them in building a life, and not one alone.

**Way 8:** Enjoyment should be the keynote of life. Not the hectic search for intense and exciting pleasures, but the enjoyment of the simple and easily obtainable pleasures; the pleasures of just existing, of savoring food, of comfortable surroundings, of talking with friends, of rest and relaxation. A home that is warm and comfortable, chairs and a bed that are soft, a kitchen well stocked with food, a door open to friends--this is the place to live. Body at ease, relaxed, calm in its movements, not hurried, breath slow and easy, a willingness to nod and to rest, gratitude to the world, that feeds the body--so should it be. Driving ambition and the fanaticism of

ascetic ideals are the signs of discontented people who have lost the capacity to float in the stream of simple, carefree, wholesome enjoyment.

**Way 9:** Receptivity should be the keynote of life. The good things of life come of their own accord, and come unsought. They cannot be found by resolute action. They cannot be found in the indulgence of the sensuous desires of the body. They cannot be gathered by participation in the turmoil of social life. They cannot be given to others by attempts to be helpful. They cannot be garnered by hard thinking. Rather do they come unsought when the bars of the self are down. When the self has ceased to make demands and waits in quiet receptivity, it becomes open to the powers which nourish it and work through it; sustained by these powers, it knows joy and peace. Sitting alone under the trees and the sky, open to nature's voices, calm and receptive, then can wisdom from without enter within.

**Way 10:** Self-control should be the keynote of life. Not the easy self-control which retreats from the world, but the vigilant, stern, manly control of a self which lives in the world, and knows the strength of the world and the limits of human power. The good life is rationally directed and firmly pursues high ideals. It is not bent by the seductive voices of comfort and desire. It does not expect social utopias. It is distrustful of final victories. Too much should not be expected. Yet one can with vigilance hold firm the reins of self, control unruly impulses, understand one's place in the world, guide one's actions by reason, maintain self-reliant independence. And in this way, though he finally perish, man can keep his human dignity and respect, and die with cosmic good manners.

**Way 11:** The contemplative life is the good life. The external world is no fit habitat for man. It is too big, too cold, too pressing. It is the life turned inward that is rewarding. The rich internal world of ideals, of sensitive feelings, of reverie, of self-knowledge is man's true home. By the cultivation of the self within, man becomes human. Only then does there arise deep sympathy with all that lives, an understanding of the suffering inherent in life, a realization of the futility of aggressive action, the attainment of contemplative joy. Conceit then falls away and austerity is dissolved. In giving up the world, one finds the larger and finer sea of the inner self.

**Way 12:** The use of the body's energy is the secret of a rewarding life. The hands need material to make into something; lumber and stone for building, food to harvest, clay to mold. The muscles are alive to joy only in action: in climbing, running, skiing and the like. Life finds its zest in overcoming, dominating, conquering some obstacle. It is the active deed which is satisfying; the deed that meets the challenge of

the present, the daring and the adventuresome deed. Not in cautious foresight, not in relaxed ease does life attain completion. Outward energetic action, the excitement of power in the tangible present--this is the way to live.

**Way 13:** A person should let himself be used. Used by other persons in their growth, used by the great objective purposes in the universe which silently and irresistibly achieve their goal. For persons' and the world's purposes are basically dependable and can be trusted. One should be humble, constant, faithful, uninsistent. Grateful for affection and protection, but undemanding. Close to persons and to nature, and willing to be second. Nourishing the good by devotion. One should be a serene, confident, quiet vessel and instrument of the great dependable powers which move to fulfill themselves.

Questionnaire from *Varieties of Human Value* by Charles Morris, University of Chicago Press, 1956. pp. 15-19.



## APPENDIX II

[After Seminar 6, 27 July 76, the discussion was continued by a small group of students, following up certain points with Peter. Taping was started very soon after the discussion began.]

**Wynn:** *I am aware of an issue of doubt, but that's all I'm able to get out of this.*

**Terry:** *Then you haven't found that I'm actually here.*

**Wynn:** *If my statement is self-aware of its own value—that's sloppy construction but you know what I mean—if I don't feel any need for adding that part of the construction, there is no me.*

**Terry:** *It's redundant, if you don't feel any need for it.*

**Wynn:** *If it would be a redundant feature, then it's an objective statement.*

**Terry:** *Yeah, if it's a redundant feature—*

**Peter:** It doesn't matter what the need is, or how redundant, neither would say it objectively. What you're doing is worrying about the possible motives as if that were the central issue, and it isn't. It's a matter of performance. It's the way I talk. If I say there's a chair there, or the chair is brown, or the lion is dangerous, that is an objective statement, and it doesn't matter what my motivation is. If I say, "It seems to me," then I probably will have some motivation. I'm in doubt, or I want to be non-committal. But it's saying "It seems to me" that makes it subjective.

**Wynn:** *Okay, you've handled this issue before, when we talked about objective language versus subjective language, and it seems to me that that's what we're getting at, but because we haven't added the word "language" to "subjective" and "objective", we're getting into some issues that there's a "real truth" or there's only "subjective truth". But what you're saying instead is that sometimes our language is objective language and sometimes it's subjective language. Subjective language expresses a doubt or something of that sort. No?*

**Peter:** No, it's just a way of being non-committal. The reservation for being non-committal may be that I doubt, but it may be just that I—

**Wynn:** *Objective statements are statements that are represented in a language form in which there's a commitment to that being actually the case, and in subjective language, there isn't a commitment to its being actually the case.*

**Terry:** *Are you saying that you can have variable content for the motivation? Doubt is a frequent one but it's not necessarily the one.*

**Jane:** *What happened to the point Wynn said about the chair being inviting, using objective language?*

**Peter:** That's like the lion being dangerous. You're referring to a relationship that it either is or it isn't.

**Jane:** *But that lion would probably have been equally dangerous to anyone who happened to walk in front of it, but I could look at that chair and say, "Oh—oh, I sat in one of those and it was not—"*

**Wynn:** *Let's look at the lion—*

**Peter:** —the size of a lion for the size of a wildcat, and then the biggest guy in the room probably wouldn't be in danger but the rest of us would.

**Wynn:** *It's objective danger to you, but to King Kong that would just [gesture of wiping out].*

**Jane:** *So that makes that statement objective?*

**Wynn:** *It's objectively the case that the lion is no danger to King Kong; it's objectively the case that the lion is a danger to you.*

**Peter:** What happens is that saying "it's objective" is elliptical. To remove the ellipsis, you have to say, "It's dangerous to me here and now," or "It's dangerous to him here and now." "It's inviting to me here and now, it's inviting to him here and now." "It's the kind of chair that would be inviting to him if he were here."

**Jane:** *And those are all objective things to say—*

**Peter:** Yeah. You say, "It's the kind of chair that he, she, and he, but not him, would describe as inviting." So if I say, "It would be inviting,—"

**Terry:** *But there are performative definitions, in terms of certain kinds of locutions that would make the boundary line between subjective and objective—*

**Peter:** The line is very distinctive—they're different ways of talking, a whole different set of values.

**Terry:** *Now Cassirer says in mythical thought, the inner world, so to speak, in order to talk about it, it has to be codified in images like the images of a god, things of that sort, so he's saying there that you have to go beyond merely using subjective locutions like "I think" or "it seems to me" in order to map the territories in a world, metaphorically speaking.*



**Peter:** ...If I have a ### notion about the world, what I have to do is formulate it in terms of a picture of what the world would be like if that notion was a correct one, and then ###, if you don't believe it.

**Wynn:** *And I could be wrong about that.*

**Terry:** *The narrative of a myth is something that he would say that you find your self-consciousness in, in that it's the only way that the primitive can make manifest his subjective viewpoint. In mythic narrative, you have the ### of objective language. It's the story of the hero and what the hero goes through and what the world is like that the hero's in, but then it's as critics that we evaluate the mythic narrative, and we say that what this is is the reflection of the inner life of a community or a race or whatever. So there you're having the sense of objective language being used in a subjective way, and there the categories begin to break down because you're not using the locutions, "It seems to me," "I think"—*

**Peter:** No. What happens is that the subjective language itself is a status assignment—you say, "I believe...it seems to me...I think". As a Critic, you're making exactly the same status assignments as "They believe", and from there on out...

**Terry:** *So the ascription "myth" becomes that kind of status assignment.*

**Peter:** Otherwise you'd have to preface every sentence in the myth with "They believe that..."

**Terry:** *What I was trying to get at was, it seems to me that there is a different subject matter involved in objects and behavior, and that you seem to again to be confounding...the perceptual viewpoint you have on the object, as though that was similar to the linguistic point of view that I have on behaviors. What I'm interested in pointing out is some discontinuity—in other words, typically in my verbal account of a chair, there's a restricted number of descriptions I can give of a chair.*

**Peter:** The picture corresponds to the description.

**Terry:** *That was the sort of transition we're making that I wanted to highlight, in terms of if you take it the other direction, I think it highlights something about normal life that's significant, which is that typically we don't draw pictures of chairs or other objects in our ordinary discourse from day to day. We give verbal accounts. And those verbal accounts of the chair have a high degree of intersubjective agreement. And there's something lacking in our descriptive accounts of objects that seems to be involved in our accounts of behavior, and*

*in that area, it's much more—there's more of a problem of subjectivity or lack of truth and so on, and it seems reflecting that, because like the variability you would get in drawings of the object. At a verbal level, we get that kind of variability with behavior, and we don't get it with objects....Is it also because of the nature of the subject matter?*

**Peter:** This is the kind of thing you have when you're dealing with behavior, and that you don't have when you're dealing with chairs. It is a difference in subject matter.

**Terry:** *Okay, then my question is sort of like—could we make an ontological description of behavior and objects that would separate them out on that level? Because that would be talking about the nature of the subject matter.*

**Peter:** You can do anything you want ontologically and it won't matter, ### because ontology is not the question.

**Terry:** *Except that you went so far with me as to say that it is the nature of the subject matter that is involved—*

**Peter:** I didn't say it was the nature of the subject matter. I said it's a different subject matter. I didn't say anything about "natures".

**Terry:** *And so it seems that you're willing to acknowledge that there is a significant difference between the two subject matters. If you take the additional step of talking about the natures of those two subject matters, and what about those two natures that makes them different?*

**Peter:** Again, that's not what we're in.

**Terry:** *Is there ever a time for that?*

**Peter:** No. That's the kind of thing you make a living at as a philosopher, and then you do that, just like you make a living throwing passes if you're a pro football player; but in our lives, there's not a place for that. It's a specialized occupation, but philosophers are no more dealing with fundamentals than pro football players. Look, there's a fast explanation that says, since there's a whole host of philosophical problems that has never been solved, it's clear that having the solutions to those problems has no place in how people live their lives.

**Wynn:** *That's the Buddha's answer to—when his disciples wanted him to explain the origins of the earth, etc. I take it that part of the confusion here is that one of the things that you're showing is that neither ontology nor transcendence are the issue in descriptions of subjectivity and objectivity. Subjectivity*

*and objectivity are issues of language games.*

**Peter:** Yeah. In ontology, you're simply adopting a particular description. For a certain kind of person, namely, a philosopher, he will give that description, but it's simply that's where it is. There are other descriptions that other kinds of people will give. And so, sure, you can talk about it that way, but that's not what it is.

**Terry:** *You're doing what amounts to an ontological description., but you don't want to call it that.*

**Peter:** No. There's as much difference as between having images and seeing the real thing. You use the same language—[blackboard]...seeing real people and dealing with them, rather than dealing with a bunch of images.

**Joe J:** *I don't want to change the subject, but a couple of times back you were talking about knowledge of facts being—*

**Peter:** Not knowledge of facts, of fact. Knowledge is something you acquire at a certain time and you have for a certain time until you forget it, but the fact that you have knowledge of it is not located in time. The fact that this building was built in 1971—that's a fact. And the fact that it was built in 1971 is not located here, and it's not located in 1971...

**Terry:** *What recording system can you use to map that location, metaphorically speaking?*

**Peter:** In the notion of reality, you have a place for facts that are not located. They would be represented by states of affairs, like the fact that there's a table there and not a chair.

**Joe J:** *So there's only one state of affairs that is a fact; all the other states of affairs are possible and not facts.*

**Peter:** But it is a fact that they are *not* there. It's a fact that there's no elephant there. But neither the elephant nor that fact are located there. That's a very different sort of thing from "things". Not every fact can be put in the form of some "thing"...Also, the concept of a thing is not enough. The concept of a table is not what the table is. It's the actual table that's there. So concepts and facts are in a kind of realm of their own. They're certainly not in the place where their examples are. But that's how you can have different instances of the same fact or of the same concept—precisely because the concept isn't located where their instances can be located.

**Terry:** *Are you saying that if you're speaking ontologically, if you're saying anything except talking about things, that you're reifying? Because—*

**Peter:** No, it's simply a peculiar way of talking that has a historical place of some significance for philosophers, and there's nothing special about it. It's a naive, narrow-minded way of approaching certain facts.

**Terry:** *The nature of being? You're talking about the nature of being? For example, you might want to say, as the phenomenologists put it, that facts have a mode of being of logical necessity, and that—*

**Peter:** It all depends on ###. There being a chair there is not a logical necessity.

**Terry:** *I guess what you'd want to say is that facts have a mode of signification as opposed to a mode of being, and that we must distinguish between meaning or signification and being, and that—*

**Peter:** If ontology is the study of being, then signification lies outside of ontology.

**Terry:** But these are criticisms of scientific materialism, and why psychology can never be reduced to the truth model of physics, is because of the fact that in the presuppositions of physics, at least in the nineteenth century, the ontological description of phenomena consists only of there being things, ultimately micro-entities which were molecules, and he said what's wrong with that is that you need an ontology which includes other domains, since everything is not reducible to facts, and that the other domains were domains of meaning.

**Peter:** You can also take other routes, namely, you can introduce the notion of a thing which has other characteristics—of a person. Then you've got a perfectly straightforward thing, but it's of a different kind. And you can take that route, too.

**Terry:** *A thing of a different kind than what? That you can reduce everything to?*

**Peter:** Yeah. And it's straightforwardly a thing: a person is an object. But it's an object of a particular kind. It's different from the chair—that's a different kind of object. So once you introduce this new kind of object, you bypass the argument that since objects are of that first kind, a person is not really an object. You just introduce the notion of an object that has the correct logical characteristics of a person, and you can concentrate on working with that.

You don't have to go to a mode of being.

**Terry:** *Except physics could say that you could end up reducing—*

**Peter:** It doesn't matter what physics says. We're talking about us, and what you can say if you want to deal with the facts. You can do it by saying that a person is not an object. You can also do it by saying that a person is a paradigmatic object. So approaching it in one of those ways is simply adopting one way of talking, and there are other ways that will accomplish the same job as far as far as just that goes. But there's no way of talking that simply says that's what it is. Any more than you can have a photograph of a ### rather than a ### shape of something.

**Terry:** *So that's why you're attacking ontology, because of the presupposition—*

**Peter:** I'm not attacking it. I'm attacking those who want to foist it on us.

**Terry:** *Because—you're saying that one of the presuppositions of trying to generate ontological descriptions is that—*

**Peter:** No. Again you're foisting off ontological talk on us.

**Terry:** *But I'm trying to get clear what their presuppositions are—something along the lines of having that photograph of the actual objects.*

**Peter:** Something like that.

**Terry:** *So you wouldn't disagree with the ontological description if the ontology didn't make that kind of presupposition.*

**Peter:** It's one thing to say in principle the thing is parochial, but even allowing for that, some of the things that they say are wrong... Again, I say, since it's a parochial thing, why bother with it?

**Terry:** *According to you, you're providing a task-oriented approach which makes which models and paradigms are worth coming to grips with, so ultimately, all of our disagreements come back to that. You're sort of saying, "This is the task at hand, and these other models"—you're not really saying they're invalid, but I'm not sure that—*

**Peter:** No. I'm saying that's irrelevant.

**Terry:** *Yeah. Here's our course of action, here's what we want to do. And I guess there's no way of arguing with that.*

**Peter:** That's right.

**Terry:** *You're ultimately the authority, you're ultimately legislating what is the task at hand.*

**Peter:** No—

**Terry:** *There's no way to challenge you—*

**Peter:** I'm the authoritative Critic, and you can bring up something that I deem to be irrelevant, but if I was simply laying down the law, I wouldn't let you talk about any of this, because I would have it already in the can myself and would just lay it out. As it is, I've thrown it open for contributions and discussion, but I'm also policing it so it doesn't get out of hand, and in that sense I've got an authoritative role.

**Terry:** *Right, as far as keeping it to the task. Because, for example, with Husserl, I almost was tempted to make the sort of Scholastic point that Husserl is moving against the very kind of analysis that you were talking about, that you thought I was talking about from the phenomenological viewpoint. Husserl's whole battle-cry is "Back to the Things Themselves," and by that he means that what's wrong with the content-notion of transcendental synthesis is that it implies that the reconstruction is instead a causal process involving a number of factors which ### results mechanistically in a synthesis which is our seeing of the object. And phenomenology instead starts from really the very same platform that you're starting from, which is the objective description, which is—*

**Peter:** It isn't. If you start with an a priori status assignment, that's the way it ends. And that's what I *don't* start with. I just start talking in the ways that we do, namely, talking about real chairs. But I don't insist methodologically that this is correct, that this is more fundamental, etc. I simply am engaging in our social practices, and I talk about chairs. There's no methodology there. Whereas a phenomenologist is committed a priori to a methodology that says, "When you say 'a real chair' or when you say 'chair', that is ground-level methodology."

**Terry:** *You would say that the primordial level is my perceptual experience of the chair, and that any verbal account or any theoretical account that comes up following that, has to come from that—has to have that base—*

**Peter:** That's the commitment that vitiates the whole enterprise, the first commitment, the—[Ellie brings Peter a note, and he leaves]

### APPENDIX III

[From shorthand notes of a conversation on the transcendental concepts, 2 April 1974]

Suppose someone says, "Christianity deals with what is ultimate." That is a good way for a non-Christian to talk to a non-Christian: an external view which contrasts between this and other sorts of things. Try substituting, "Christianity deals with what is sacred." It's no longer intelligible to a non-Christian or non-religious person. And it's too narrow: Christianity deals with more than that. It's told from the inside, but implies a perspective of the domain. Words like "sacred" are too technical, rather than descriptive, because of their history.

When a Christian talks about sacred things, he is talking about things which are ultimate. He does not *mean* ultimate, but for somebody who talks this way, what he calls sacred *is* ultimate. What is sacred about it *is* what is ultimate.

Model: someone says, "I see a cup." I say, "When he says that, he is dealing with things that are ultimate because there is nothing beyond it." It is something he sees: that is his ultimate test. Seeing is his ultimate ground of knowing, the ultimate check. Not that he means "ultimate" by "see".

The model for boundary condition is the notion that knowledge begins somewhere, and where it begins is observation: to find out something without having to find out something else first. The mark of the boundary condition is that you cannot locate it. What one person sees, another doesn't. You can't give the content, say what it consists of. Start with that paradigm. Where will "ultimate" come in?

If knowledge begins somewhere, wherever it begins, there is no appeal beyond it. Therefore, the knowledge you get that way is ultimate. For other knowledge, you can ask, "Where did you get it?" and "What's your evidence?"

Another variety of ultimacy is ultimate significance. One of the things we know is that people do things and do things by doing other things. We also know that this is not an infinite series, in the sense that it ends somewhere. Where it ends will differ, and that is the boundary condition. Because of that, there is no appeal beyond it. What a person does depends on what else he does. Therefore, you cannot make a complete or ultimate judgment of what he does without considering everything he does. There



is a completeness condition attaching to the boundary condition and ultimates. When you have taken everything into account—that is totality.

You can then empiricize that. When you try to take everything into account and deal with its significance, and get into ultimacy, you will run out of things to take into account, out of information, and that is the boundary condition. When you start using up information, you do it according to a systematic procedure, e.g., “What is he doing by doing that?”, bringing in more and more context. You approach all of these simultaneously: the end of the series is the boundary condition. When you have used up all the information, you have totality. What you have at the end is ultimate significance. Therefore, what you have in the end is *what it is*.

One of the connections is between behavior and ID Characteristics. One of the things that comes out is the mismatch between these: one does not always act in character, and for the full understanding of behavior, you have to take that into account. Put those together: what you have is that the ultimate description of the behavior is also an ultimate judgment of his character, and that is Judgment with a capital J.

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