

Interrogating The Peninsular Individual:  
The Dialectical Relationship Constituting  
Individual Minds and Group Mind

By  
Gerald M. Swatez, Ph.D.  
Faculty, University of Phoenix Online

## **Biography of Gerald M. Swatez**

Gerald M. Swatez holds an M.A. in Sociology and Psychology from Penn State and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. He is faculty member of the University Phoenix Online and Upper Iowa University.

## Introduction

The goal of this essay is to explicate and add consideration to Jeffrey Rubinoff's statement that "Art is the map of the human soul; each original piece is proof of the journey. As the artist navigates the unknown, the art adds to the collective memory."<sup>1</sup>

The essay starts with the premise that the Jungian term "collective unconscious" is a good entry point for understanding Rubinoff's concept of human soul. Rubinoff also uses the term "collective memory" which has a great deal of overlap with the concept of the "collective unconscious". This conceptual agreement between Jung and Rubinoff lends support to the idea that the term "human soul" denotes not a series of singular souls inhabiting bodies, but a collective soul, embodied in a collective memory.

The essay explores in some detail, and from the perspective of various disciplines, how our perception of isolated "individual-ness" is in fact a fantasy. A body of literature in multiple disciplines supports the idea that even what we consider to be individual consciousness is itself dependant upon, embedded in, and stores collective consciousness.

Lastly, it investigates and applies the work of other thinkers to Rubinoff's proposition that art is method for mapping the collective memory of the human soul. For Rubinoff art is truth by metaphor, and this essay utilizes prior thinking on the subject of metaphor to provide a finer gradation and understanding of Rubinoff's mapping mechanism.

Jeffrey Rubinoff asserts: "Art is the map of the human soul; each original piece is proof of the journey. As the artist navigates the unknown, the art adds to the collective memory."<sup>2</sup>

Beethoven wrote: "I do not create this music; I only try, as best I can, to write down what I hear."

Phillip Glass has said: "The hardest thing is just to hear, and then to get it down right."

I consider that the space thus being mapped by art and by music corresponds to what Jung called "the collective unconscious".

Do painters and sculptors and composers realize an internal vision of the collective unconscious in their works? And the poets, the writers? Is that which is expressed in all the arts of mankind *both* unique to the artist and universal to all of us? Is the unique merely a singular window on the universal human soul from which a particular region of our shared internal landscape is expressed?

The conventional attitude and belief in modern western culture is that we are all "individuals," essentially separate in our bodies, our minds, our hearts (emotions), and our souls. ("Born alone, we die alone, yearning ever for connection.")

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Rubinoff, "The Importance of Art History." See <http://www.rubinoffsculpturepark.org/coi.php>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*,

There is evidence that this attitude of individual isolation, this belief, is not characteristic of all human societies, but is an element of certain types of culture, most notably the rational/technological culture which developed in industrial society. However, this paper will not discuss either the origins of individualism nor alternatives to it that may exist in other cultures. Rather, it shall present a view of an alternative to this insular individualism, an alternative derived from various thinkers and scientific researchers within Western industrial society. I call this alternative perspective on the self “the Peninsular Individual,” following John Donne.

“No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”<sup>3</sup>

Donne’s geographical metaphor guides my interrogation, my exploration of this alternative perspective. Maps and navigation are key elements of this guidance, which is reinforced by Rubinoff’s statement, above.

Donne’s continent is the human soul. As a metaphor this implies numerous exemplifications: the human spirit; the collective unconscious; the human mind; the human body; the human genome; human experience; human behavior; social structure; culture; and, the works of humankind, which include art, technology, patterns of residence, subsistence strategies, types of economies, political systems, etc.

Metaphor itself is a means of mapping and of navigation. I will offer here several maps, which I think indicate overlapping regions.

## **The Dialectical Relationship**

What is the dialectical relationship constituting individual minds and group mind? A dialectical relationship is one of opposition and interdependence. Kind of like inside-outside...they’re opposites, and yet you can’t have one without the other; they depend upon each other for their very existence. Inside-outside is a pretty good metaphor for the relationship between individual minds and group mind, in a variety of ways and with a bit of paradox thrown in for good measure. Individual minds are within, are contained by, group mind and group mind is composed of individual minds. And yet, group mind is an

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<sup>3</sup> John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), No. XVII.

idea contained within individual minds—a dialectical relationship.

You see, in the simplest (most simple-minded) sense, individual mind and group mind are opposites and are in opposition. The individual mind is sometimes conceived of as threatened by the existence of group mind. In such cases of mass psychology, the so-called “mindless mind of a crowd”, the individual may become submerged, de-individualized, deprived of his individuality, of his identity, later claiming, “I was out of control, caught up in mass hysteria, the devil made me do it.”

Or, “I had to distinguish myself from the rest of the group, show I was different, my own person, not like everybody else, a real individual.”<sup>4</sup> (And then you hear *everyone* saying that same thing...strange. “I am a distinct autonomous individual!” chanted in unison by a mass of such “individuals”. Everyone agrees, has the same thought. But everyone having the same thought is one definition of group mind.) This is an aspect, a dimension, of the dialectical relationship.

Now, a common culture, a shared language, a system of beliefs and values and esthetic forms or preferences, is a kind of group mind. It is a container, a substrate, a body of resources without which no individual mind could possibly exist. And it is the medium through which, with which, by means of which, a diversity of individual minds is capable of communicating with each other. In fact, we might be able to say in fairness that it is only in the communication between individual minds via the group mind that any individual mind can exist. (That’s one meaning of how a dialectical relationship constitutes individual minds and group mind. “Constitutes” in this case means “makes up,” or “composes,” or “is.”)

But, to look at it yet another way, here we are right now, several individual minds, thinking about group mind. That idea of “group mind” is in each of our individual minds. And, if we posit a group mind for this particular group, then that mind of which we individually are parts, has its existence in each of its parts. Is this a kind of hologram, or a kind of fractal? Group mind/individual mind, on this reading, is a holographic entity.

And another way: can an individual mind exist without a culture, without a language? Does a culture-free, a language-free, animal have a mind? Or does the language--which is, of necessity, shared among a group--instantiated in the distinct body-based perspective of a single body, thus actually *constitute* the mind of that body, that perspective, that individual? (Another meaning of how a dialectical relationship constitutes individual minds and group mind.) “I *am* the conversation I am having with myself about how things seem to be from where I stand.” (Aside: The discipline of meditation is directed toward engaging the individual perspective-as-actor in silencing individual self-as-running-narrative in order to allow that perspective to be aware only of its ground in the universal “self”. Language can only speak of such things by means of paradox, circularity, and silence.)

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<sup>4</sup> W.R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups*. London: Tavistock Publications (1961). Bion discusses the individual in his groups.

Biologically, humans are pack animals, herd animals, like wolves or like buffalo. Not solitaires like bears. We are each born into a family, upon which we are utterly dependent for our survival for at least the first years of life. We are born immature, incomplete, only partly human; *extra-uterine embryos*. We only become fully human through years of socialization, of acculturation. The self of the human being emerges slowly in the first two to five years of life, at a minimum. Only with the development of sufficient communicative skill including language can it be said that the human child starts to have a self, to become a psychological individual. (Evidence can be found to support the proposition that “psychological individual” is an attribution less fairly made to a member of “primitive,” illiterate, band- or tribal-based cultures than to a modern, rational, industrial-urban society member, a citizen and a consumer. The initiation, for example, of a tribal youth into his totem-clan individualizes him only as one more instantiation of the clan’s totem animal spirit, “individualized” as one among many who are identical emanations of that spirit.)

Jung’s idea of archetypes resonates with this point. The individuated self is an extruded instantiation of the collective unconscious. We are all avatars.

### **The Long Birth of the Self**

Freud claimed that the infant child only psychologically separates from the primordial mother-child unity, and only begins to be born psychologically, by means of a complex process of appetite and attraction and frustration and hostility. This metaphorical gestalt of biting and chewing and swallowing includes the crucial step of “getting the idea” of a possible separate-from-mother existence by observation of the father-as-“another mother” and thus as an *introjected* seed-crystal of the infant’s “separated” self. Freud saw this process as psycho-mythically revealed in the narrative of Oedipus. Melanie Klein reconfigured this model in more “objective,” less overtly mythical, detail via her object-relations narrative. (She saw the mother, the initial caretaker, as the initial seed-crystal. More on that later.) Following Klein, Wilfrid Bion read the object-relations narrative as a containment metaphor.<sup>5</sup>

Proposing an “interpersonal neurobiology,” the psychiatrist, Daniel Siegel reviewed findings from a wide range of scientific disciplines to explore the idea that the mind develops at the interface between human relationships and the unfolding structure and function of the brain.

The relationship between individual and collective is one of reentry, or reentrancy.<sup>6</sup> One is in the other, and the other is in the one.

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<sup>5</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson, who analyzed the container schema as a primary metaphor. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy of the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Philosophy*. New York: Basic Books (1999).

<sup>6</sup> G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*. Crown Publishers (1972), p. 56.

## Metaphor

Metaphor bears two types of meaning. One is *rhetorical metaphor*, a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not *literally* applicable. A rhetorical metaphor is a play on words, a relatively superficial trick of language. The other meaning is *conceptual metaphor*, which refers to the understanding of one idea, in one conceptual domain, in terms of another idea in another domain. Conceptual metaphor is a means of thinking, perhaps the most basic of such means, revealing the constitutive structure of the target domain as informed by, or dependent upon, the structure of the source domain.

From Rubinoff's quote, I take "map," "navigate," "collective," and "soul" to be conceptual metaphors, not rhetorical ones. I also take "truth by metaphor" to be "truth by conceptual metaphor".

Art is the **map** of the human **soul**; each original piece is proof of the journey. As the artist **navigates** the unknown, the art adds to the collective memory.

Art has been liberated to address the internal, intuitive reality of the **collective** human memory.

Art is **truth by metaphor**.<sup>7</sup>

Metaphor is a means of mapping and thus of navigation. Metaphor helps us find our way around in the previously unmapped spaces.

It is my presumption in this paper that all metaphors, even in the sense of rhetorical metaphors, are *essentially* cognitive metaphors. Thus, the mapping of elements from a source domain onto a target domain is the core characteristic, the central dynamic or process, of metaphoric words, metaphoric thoughts, metaphoric images and other such constructions into the physical world. (I consider this insight into the deep nature of metaphor to be a paradigm-creating insight for the understanding of *how art works*, for how art communicates and perhaps for how, following another of Rubinoff's insights, metaphor is active in history.) My focus, however, shall primarily and initially be on words and thoughts, rather than on artworks or on metaphors as active in history.

The major source of my ruminations on metaphor and thus of my attempt to describe the emergence, construction, growth, development, and use in daily life of individual selfhood is a book written by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, called *Philosophy in The*

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<sup>7</sup> Call for Papers for the Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park May 2009 Forum, which focused on the Value of Art at the End of the Age of Agriculture.

*Flesh: The Embodied Mind And Its Challenge to Western Thought*. At the core of their undertaking is the intention to engage in *empirically responsible philosophy*, which is "a philosophy consistent with empirical discoveries about the nature of mind."

The story might be seen to begin with two neurological systems in the brain--the sensorimotor subsystem and the abstract/subjective experience subsystem. The infant human does not initially need much, if any, abstract or subjective experience for its survival. It does, however, need to coordinate its sensorimotor system with its body-in-the-physical-world. The sensorimotor subsystem begins functioning quickly and develops rapidly, extending its range for and complexity with which it coordinates incoming information and outgoing control--the brain's management of the afferent<sup>8</sup> and efferent<sup>9</sup> nervous systems. The sensorimotor system has an immediate need for effective structure; some of this structure seems to be provided genetically and instinctively (i.e., evolved with this kind of body in this kind of world).

Both systems begin to develop immediately. Evidence indicates that they share information as they develop, with signals passing between them. But, the development and data-structuring needs of the sensorimotor system predominate.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the structure of the sensorimotor mental domain is effectively biased toward the organism's need to form a particular body shape within the particularly structured physical environment in which it finds itself. That need, and the the physical and environmental conditions, constrain the structures of the sensorimotor mental domains.<sup>11</sup>

Now, as the abstract/subjective experience neuro-system develops, and its neurons extend and make new connections, it does so in dynamic interaction with the sensorimotor system. Consequently, the cognitive structure of the abstract/subjective experience neuro-system is established most easily in congruence with the cognitive structure of the sensorimotor system. The abstract/subjective self experience develops as a set of metaphors mapped from the sensorimotor system.<sup>12</sup>

## Self as I

The "I" is not the simple unitary entity we normally understand it to be. It is a landscape we pass through over time, experiencing each moment as singular, even though a diversity of influences and conditions and states characterize the course of that

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<sup>8</sup> **Afferent:** used to describe nerves that carry impulses from the outer body toward the brain or spinal cord, or blood vessels that carry blood to an organ

<sup>9</sup> **Efferent:** conducting outward or directing away from an organ, especially the brain or spinal cord.

<sup>10</sup> See: Fauconnier and Turner (1998); Grady (1997); Johnson (1999); Lakoff & Johnson (1999), p. 46 ff.; and, Narayanan (1997).

<sup>11</sup> (Support for this theory is found in Johnson's theory of conflation, Grady's theory of primary metaphor, Narayanan's neural theory of metaphor, and Fauconnier's and Turner's theory of conceptual blending. Confirmation of this theory is, of course, pending empirical research and testing.

<sup>12</sup> Details of this process are set out in the NTL [Neural Theory of Language] paradigm. See Lakoff and Johnson (1999).



experience. (Post-modern and feminist philosophers refer to an “intersectional self”; that idea is similar to, but not identical with, the present view.)

Each moment we perceive and identify and act out of the state and condition and influence of that moment, quickly passing on to another, forgetting--or eliding or denying the difference between--the momentary “Is”. Past “Is” leave a residue, which supports the illusion of the unitary “I”. Influences and conditions and states fade in and out, creating the illusion of the unitary “I”.

I am motivated to act and to perceive, to think and to believe and consciously to value, by the confluence with external events of three kinds of internal motives. These are: needs, cognitions, and emotions. Needs include the physiological needs for food, water, air, etc., as well as organismic psychological developmental needs for self-determination, competence, and relationship with others.<sup>13</sup> Needs and emotions may cause us to act independently from our conscious awareness. On the other hand, cognitions--goals, beliefs, self-concept, values, decision processes (ways of making choices)--usually produce their effect via conscious awareness, and only occasionally condition our unconscious choices.

Our behavioral and perceptual response to the convergence of internal needs and emotions with external events is largely, though not completely, conditioned by past experience; behavior and perception are largely learned. Cognitions as well, perhaps even more so, are aggregated and patterned by learning. Most human learning occurs in the presence of and with the active participation of other humans. The influence of other humans on why, what, and how we do what we do, perceive what we perceive, believe the world to be as we believe it to be, is immense. The influence of others, from infancy through adolescence and into adulthood, is primarily, if not absolutely, determinative of what and whom we are. Both through time--through the course of our daily lives--and in the depths of our identities--our souls--we are each, thereby, a multitude.

No human is an island, single, whole, and separate from all others. Each of us is a promontory, a peninsula, a piece of the main.

In this paper I discuss some of the ways in which we are inherently united with others, ways in which we are formed out of the gifts of self that are presented to us over the course of our lives, and ways in which we reveal--to ourselves and to others--the lineaments of multiplicity that compose each unitary face. I offer evidence from psychoanalytic theory, from psychology, from neurobiology, and from linguistics.

My core thesis is that our individual identities are constructed, or grown, out of three basic elements:

1. Our shared mental structure based on our shared evolved genome;

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<sup>13</sup>J. Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*. Hoboken: Wiley (2005).

2. The bits and pieces of self-concept, of self-definition, that are provided to us by our infantile and childhood caretakers and by the others with whom we interact as we proceed through the course of our lives; and,
3. The cultural norms--rules--for self-and group-identity/identification in the societies, communities and groups in which we conduct our lives.

Especially in this latter regard, and partly involved in #2, individuality as we normally conceive it today is a consensual fiction provided for us--or imposed on us--by the "rational" culture of Western industrial society. In truth, we are each no more separate from our communities, our groups, our societies, from each other, than is a peninsula from the mainland of which it is an apparently protruding appendage.

Part of this "consensual fiction" involves the early learning--or inventing, or imagining, or realizing--of the idea of self-as-separate-from-other.

### **The Individual is a Fantasy**

Individual and group, in a sense, are both "fantasies," mental constructs made up of linguistic/symbolic materials. The "privileged reality" of the individual is an element of current western culture. We have a "habit of attention" that focuses our "normal," usual consciousness on the subject/self/referent of "I". Some evidence suggests that the usual consciousness of mankind throughout most of its history and prehistory focused/focuses instead on the "we" of group fantasy. This implies that the normal prehistorical consciousness was/is the Basic Assumption states.<sup>14</sup>

This is a notion I have. (First of all, I do find myself unable to imagine any human mind that is not emergent from a single biological brain, at least within current scientific knowledge. A group mind based on, say, radio-like connections between individual brains is science-fiction. I'm trying to think within science, not within science-fiction.) Okay. So, we can't point to a group mind and we can't imagine, in current science, a physical basis for such a thing. Nor can we point to an individual mind. In current science, we can, however, imagine a physical basis for one. Also, we are *accustomed* to talking about individual minds. We are accustomed to talking about ourselves *as* individual minds; it is the normal, proper, conventional way to talk about ourselves and each other. It is what we usually do, and doing it accords with the current rules on how to properly refer to the experiences and phenomenon summarized by the concept "individual mind". Since we cannot point to any individual mind, I propose that "individual mind" functions in common discourse in exactly the same way that any "theoretical construct" functions in scientific discourse--as electrons, quasars, light waves, etc. The phrase, "individual mind" summarizes a coherent set of empirical observations, unifying them with each other on the basis of a coherent set of theoretical (explanatory--[cross-]level-binding") assertions -- laws, hypotheses

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<sup>14</sup>These states were introduced by Bion in *Experiences in Groups* (1961).

"Theoretical construct" is thus a sub-category of "fantasy," an imagined thing.

Additionally, I am taken with Freud's idea that, psychologically, a "group" is always a fantasy, an image held in an individual mind(!), in a set of individual minds. This is a different concept (with a different "sense", and possibly a different "referent")<sup>15</sup> than a "sociological group," which can be *operationalized* in terms of number and kind of interactions among individuals, and that sort of thing.

Furthermore, individual minds always consist both of individual body-based experience and of cultural constructs. Individual minds cohere around some cultural (often language-based--always language-based?) seed-crystal. Such seed-crystals, it seems to me, are ALWAYS shared among a community/band of *Homo sapiens*. (I find support in this notion from object-relations theory, specifically from the process by which an infant constructs a self-object IN INTERACTION WITH parents. I see the mother-child object slowly being differentiated into mother and self objects--on a model, perhaps, of father as separate from mother. Conversely, Klein and Merleau-Ponty would argue that the mother-object provides the first model for the distinct self-object.)<sup>16</sup>

Here is the notion that I wish to clarify: that the mother-child object is the initial basic assumption group. (This long story was related by Wilfrid Bion but I won't be addressing it here.) Psychologically, it is a fantasy, an imaginary thing in the mind of the infant. An imaginary thing in the mind of the mother. (Minds made up of sensations, feelings, ideas, symbols--very primitive and undifferentiated in both individual minds, especially the infant's.) Infant and mother are in unconscious confluence. Together, in each of the two "individual" minds, there is initially only a single mother-child object.

My second point of clarification: that cultural elements are crucial, constitutive components of minds. No individual mind can exist without a framework consisting of cultural components. Isolated human minds (isolated from birth) cannot, on this interpretation, exist. There is no such thing in reality. No non-social--totally without culture--human mind can possibly exist. Isolated at birth from any human caregiver, no infant *Homo sapiens* can become a mind, a human being. Without interaction with others, there is no soul. (This idea is presumably contrary to Judeo-Christian theological beliefs.) Furthermore, the potential for mindedness deteriorates if unused. The first years are critical for the formation of a mind and a self.

My third point of modification: the assertion that cultures are relative. Cultures change over time and across space. "A" culture only exists within the confines of a sufficiently and intensely interacting population of human beings. It is probably helpful to our understanding to say that, at some point in time, one culture has evolved into a different culture. Different cultures are quite likely (yes?) to contain different "individual mind seed-

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<sup>15</sup> J.F. Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1988).

<sup>16</sup> B.D. Robbins and J. Goicoechea, "The Psychogenesis of the Self and the Emergence of Ethical Relatedness: Klein in Light of Merleau-Ponty," in *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* Vol. 25 (2005), p. 2.

crystals". Consequently, the individual bearers of different cultures are likely to have "different kinds" of individual minds and thus different kinds of souls.

My fourth concern: that the concept of "Individual" is highly-valued, highly-elaborated, thoroughly grounded in individual bodies in the culture of modern industrial society. It is a current cultural convention, a rule, that we think of action as originated from individual minds located in individual bodies. ("Intention" in ethics, and "intension" in linguistics focuses on/stems from this convention. Individual "agency" has cultural priority over societal "agency.")

My fifth and final point: Perhaps(!) earlier human cultures placed less emphasis (importance, value, etc.) on individual origination of action, on "the individual". Perhaps the Basic Assumption States were more pervasive in previous societies, especially in pre-historical times. (Some works, e.g., Julian Jaynes' *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, present evidence to the effect that the members of ancient societies were in a trance for much of their lives.<sup>17</sup> Some current commentators, as do the mystics of Eastern religions, claim that the present-day normal state of consciousness is a trance state.) The survival value that "allow[ed] us to at least act in some sort of harmony" (i.e., co-ordination of the primitive human band on a non-instinctive basis) brought about the emergence of the basic assumption-state group mind. After many millennia, the "individual mind" is still evolving from this stage. (I, as an individual member of groups, keep my fingers crossed that individual mind has at least as much survival value in the present and future planetary eco-system as group mind apparently has had over the vast and continuing past of our species.) Jung's conception of *individuation* may be pertinent at this point.<sup>18</sup>

## The Soul

This is a dispatch from the "DreamTime". The place the Australian Aborigine believes is a Reality in some manner superior to objective waking reality.<sup>19</sup>

This is an exploration of the notion that all humans share a single Soul.

"The human soul" is a phrase that oscillates in meaning between the singular inflection and the collective: "my soul," "our soul," "the soul". This paper is a study of that oscillation. The human individual (each human individual) is both a particle and wave. A wave in the (genetic and mental) body of the collectivity, the species, the culture.

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<sup>17</sup>J. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin (1976).

<sup>18</sup> C.G. Jung and R.F.C. Hull, *Symbols of Transformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1970). And, C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Vintage Books (1989).

<sup>19</sup> The Dreaming, the EveryWhen. Jung's Pleroma, Heidegger's Womb of Mnemosyne.

All humans share a single soul, the “Soul of Mankind”. But what can this be? In common discourse, each person has his own soul. In metaphysical or inspirational discourse, a People may have a Soul, just as a nation or a religion or an ethnicity may have a soul. Tracy Kidder wrote a book called *The Soul of A New Machine*, about the team effort to invent a new kind of computer. The semantics of the word is ambiguous. Does it have an empirical, a literal, meaning or only an abstract meaning, a metaphorical meaning? What does “soul” denote? Or is there no denotation, only connotative meaning? Is there a referent? What is its sense? Or does the use of “soul” in this context have primarily a performative meaning? Is its meaning essentially pragmatic, indicative of a relationship claim by its addressor on its addressee?<sup>20</sup> Is it less a marker than a move?

The stance I take in these ruminations is that the biophysical medium, the human body, which is the necessary condition of all our life and of all our experience, constitutes a structuring basis for all experience. Thus, the genetic universality of that body/brain system in its relation to the biophysical world within which and in adaptation with which –with, not to--results in a *single potential-experience base for all human beings*. (That experience base is the collective unconscious--the cognitive unconscious.)

“Art is the map of the human soul”<sup>21</sup>; the internal, intuitive reality of the collective human memory.

The stance I take, in addition, is that the experience of being an individual is a cultural experience bonded to both an infantile mother-child group membership and emergent peer- and adult-group memberships. What it means to each of us to *be an individual* depends upon the particular culture of which we partake and the groups of which we are members. (Even Freud believed that the relationships we experience with others form the very basis of individual psychology.)

That neurologically constrained potential-experience base is the human soul. It is what we can share, cognitively and emotionally. It’s what we do share, in spite of any current cultural rules denying such sharing.

### **The Insular Individual & The Peninsular Individual**

The isolated autonomous individual is a fiction that has nourished materialistic egoism, starved the human need for community, and artificially invigorated religious fanaticism as a means of assuaging the pains caused by that fiction. This image is beloved by free-market ideologues, hell-fearing evangelists, apologists of pirate capitalism, and many successful “self-made” people who nonetheless, all unawares, depend utterly upon the society and community and other people for their success.

“Increasingly in the twentieth century, the modernist notion of the self as unitary, stable, and transparent has come under criticism.”<sup>22</sup> Among the major critiques of that culturally

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<sup>20</sup> J.F. Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1988).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Jeffrey Rubinoff

privileged conception are the postmodernist and the feminist. While the Peninsular Individual conception shares some features with them, in this paper I do not treat those positions at all systematically. Furthermore, the view explored here differs from most of the others in its explicit commitment to being empirically responsible.<sup>23</sup> The critique in this paper is transgressive by method and thus it exists in a *different register* than the others.

Among philosophers, Martin Heidegger had the insight that the Enlightenment vision of the self as a free, autonomous, unique individual that develops as the result of spontaneous encounter with the world, is a superficial illusion perpetrated on us by Descartes and the thinkers he influenced. As Diprose suggested, "Nietzsche insists that the unity of Descartes' subject, as the cause of mental and other acts, cannot be presupposed. The will, ego or I is a unity 'only in a word'."<sup>24</sup>

To date, no alternative narrative exists, although it has been recognized, envisioned, and articulated often in recent cultural history. But it is not as clear-cut, as the icon of isolated individualism; we might call it *grounded individuation*. (It is not, strictly, communalism, though some flavors of it may be called that.) I am sketching out this image here as the Peninsular Individual, put together roughly out of several parts. The parts themselves are not separate from each other; some of them are inclusive of others.

### **Psychoanalysis, Interpersonal Neurobiology, & Embodied Metaphor: Initial Extrusion of the Peninsular Individual from the Biology-based Human Collectivity**

The interplay between Lakoff-Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphor and Bion's theories of containment and linking provides the story-line for the efficacy of using metaphor to understand the collective nature of the human self. The core structure of this narrative is the reciprocal mapping between the universally shared sensorimotor neural system, the abstract/individual experience neurosystem, and the *other*. The *other* is a domain that exists "jointly", both intra-psychically and externally, externally as both the multiplicity of human embodiments (er, . . . other people) and as the culture shared among the members of a societal system. The *other* exists both inside each of us and outside of us in the socio-cultural space we share and which we together constitute.

The Freudian story of psychogenesis, which charts the emergence of the self in the experience of the infant and his mother, is recounted slightly differently by Freud, Klein and Bion. All of their versions are utterly reliant on metaphor, which merges spatial, temporal, and direct body-function elements. We must acknowledge here that the discourses being described exist initially in the imaginations of the authors. The structures of these discourses, which are hypothetically projected as descriptive of the experience of

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<sup>22</sup>J.A. Powell, "Multiple Self: Exploring Between and Beyond Modernity and Postmodernity," in *Minnesota Law Review* 81 (1996), p. 1481.

<sup>23</sup>G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenges to Western Philosophy*. New York: Basic Books (1999).

<sup>24</sup>R. Diprose, "Nietzsche, Ethics and Sexual Difference," in *Radical Philosophy* 52 (1989), pp. 27-32.

the infant (and para-empathetically of his mother), are defined by the components of these metaphors. These authors drew on metaphors in their attempts to reproduce and represent the infant's experience.

For all three of these authors, perhaps most explicitly for Bion, the essential character of the experience in question is that it is a *feeling* experience. (It is uncertain whether *emotion* is an addition or an integral component of the feeling experience. Clarity is probably best served by considering emotion to be an additional interpretive layer "on top of" the bare feelings. Although an effort to name the feelings can perhaps not avoid emotion-labels.) Feeling is potentially a functionally coherent set of sensations of internal body-states, muscular tension/relaxation, chemical composition of the blood, heart-rate, blood-pressure, etc. Damasio wrote, "I conceptualize the essence of feelings as something you and I can see through a window that opens directly onto a continuously updated image of the structure and state of our body."<sup>25</sup>

Language is incapable of precisely or objectively describing that which lies beyond the border. Speech stumbles into the lands of the Abyss, dances into the darkness feebly—or heroically—trying, by means of the sparks striking from its feet, to illuminate, to reveal, to create a picture of what is there.

On the other hand, Art, as Rubinoff asserts, "is the map of the human soul; it is truth by metaphor".

What I have tried to do here is piece together in your minds a mosaic made up of the ideas, the words, of several thinkers, several other explorers of this particular region of the Unknown. I see an Image in that mosaic and I hope to assist you to see it, too, in the aggregation of these fragments of various maps.

I didn't know where to start. Or, I could have started almost anywhere. This is not a linear narrative, not yet a coherent argument. Rather, it is an image built up in the imagination using a variety of distinct yet deeply connected narratives. In coming to understand this view of the self, I've collected the work of several authors. This method corresponds approximately to the scientific process called "confirmation by convergent evidence".

In *Philosophy in The Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson describe it this way:

"Interesting scientific theories have inferences about multiple subject matters . . . Each subject matter is thus a test bed for such a theory. We speak of evidence for a scientific theory as being 'convergent' when the results of all support the same explanatory hypothesis.

Such convergent evidence tests inferences that are different for different subject matters and yet confirm the same theory. What makes converging evidence convincing is that the

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<sup>25</sup> A. Damasio, *Descartes's Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*. New York: Grosset/Putnam (1994), p. xiv.

theory cannot follow from any *one* set of methodological assumptions. Rather, our confidence in it increases as converging evidence from various methodologies mounts up. The degree of confirmation of a theory thus goes up exponentially with the number of distinct subject matters having distinct methodologies for testing inferences of the theory."<sup>26</sup>

In a broader sense, this convergence is also called *consilience*.

The entity that I've termed "the Peninsular Individual" is often called "the Socially Constructed Self". Both concepts encompass the hypothesis that *deep in the mind, in the soul of every individual, the others with whom we live are component parts*.

Each of us is the multitude. . . The bell tolls for you.

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<sup>26</sup>Lakoff and Johnson, p. 91.



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