A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE IMAGINING BODY:
TOWARD A CONCEPTION OF IMAGINATION
AS A MODE OF BEING IN THE BODY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with a conception of imagination as a mode of being in the body. In Western philosophical traditions, imagination is conceived as a mental faculty, and thus it has a tendency to leave us at the abyss between what is and what could be. In this thesis, I explore the possibility of an imagination that can actually yield gentle changes in life patterns. Exploring 'the imagining body,' which is the subtle sensibility that arises in the bodily engaged process of imagination, and examining it form a major part of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE offers my biographical background from which this study had taken off. I was at an impasse in my attempt to create a more harmonious way of living. CHAPTER ONE clarifies the theoretical assumptions that underlay my conventional attitude toward change. From CHAPTER TWO on, I explore an alternative concept of imagination. CHAPTER TWO focuses on the aspect of descending in the imagining process, in which the body begins to loosen and we notice what was not noticed before. CHAPTER THREE is an attempt to define 'the imagining body.' It presents the pilot research that I conducted on bodily experiences during painting, where I first encountered this sensibility. CHAPTER FOUR deals with the ascending aspect of the imagination. It is the aspect in which we integrate what has unfolded with our selves and our relations to the world. CHAPTER FIVE focuses on understanding the open nature of 'the imagining body.' The issue of time and space is also delved into, since the boundaries in time and space are observed to dissolve in the imagination. In CHAPTER
Six, I gather conceptual insights generated in this inquiry. I then reflect upon some shifts in my own awareness and attitudes toward change and imagination.

My words in this work reflect the various logical spaces that I move through in the process of inquiring. The phenomenological, metaphorical, analytical, and conceptual modes of writing follow one another. This criss-crossing happens because I am exploring within the presence of the body.
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INTRODUCTION

How does something new begin in life? How do we release the aspect of life that is becoming inadequate and begin to move toward the visions that we glimpse? These are the questions that have guided me into this inquiry. There are certain times in life, even before we know it, when we are on a new path. The atmosphere that surrounds us is already freshly charged. The events that happen around us, as well as memories, suddenly show different tones and meanings. Clarity is upon us. We perceive who we are and how we connect to the world under a different, brighter light. Other times, we are aware that we need to change and be changed, but have difficulty incarnating the kind of change that we hope for.

The entry of this inquiry was such a time when I was desperately seeking for a change. Even though I felt that the life I had known was becoming inappropriate, I was unable to invite the kind of change that I envisioned. My earnest effort to change seemed to push me further in the old direction, which made me feel stuck in the pattern of life that I wanted to leave behind. I felt very much shaped by the course of life that I had taken, and by cultural and historical conditionings. The gap between what I was and what I might have been felt insurmountable. How can one begin to create a new life path when one is aware that the present way has stopped making sense but when one does not seem able to materialize her vision? This study attempts to examine how an imagination that takes our embodied nature seriously can open up a possibility for a transformation from the mundane.
TOWARDS THE IMAGINATION AS A MODE OF BEING IN THE BODY

Conceptually, my thoughts will be addressed within the framework of imagination. The dissertation explores the possibility that an idea of imagination can be a basis for a transformation of life when it is conceived as a mode of being in the body.

In modern Western philosophies, the faculty of imagination was considered as the mind's capacity to bring forth mental (mainly visual) images of what is not yet before us.¹ It does explain the fact that we envision what might be possible to enrich our life, but not the ways in which visions are materialized. Since it does not bridge what is and what is considered possible, there is a tendency to dichotomize the problematic now and the envisioned future.

This tendency to dichotomize what is and what might be possible is an even more serious issue when we wish to make our society and personal life more harmonious, as we do at this beginning of the 21st century. We have long known that our ways of life exploit other traditions, species, nature, and our bodies. While we seek for a way of life that is harmonious, the way we imagine for the future is often at odds with what we seek. The critical mind, which we are so used to relying on when thinking about how society and our lives could be better, posits itself against the world including our own bodies, and makes us become aware of problems. It gives us distance from the situation to see in a bird's-eye perspective. It imbues us with a feeling of necessity for changes and provides us ideas for alternatives. Traditionally, "the will" is given as a human faculty to bridge the vision and the problematic now. This thread of thought, however, assumes that our physical presence and the environment adapt to the mental envisioning.
I understand that good implementation of plans has always kept some room for adjustments. Such implementers and planners were mindful about the embodied nature of all that is. But, considering the conflicts that do not subside and the environmental and health issues that increase, we can be even more mindful when we imagine our future. What I would like to propose in this dissertation is an alternative way of imagining so that we are more embodied and part of nature, as imagining.

A PHENOMENOLOGY

This work takes the form of a contemplative phenomenological essay based on interpretive phenomenology. Phenomenology is a certain manner of approaching whatever is studied.² It is a methodology that acknowledges a process of interpretation, contextualization, and appropriation in all knowledge-making. Interpretation, contextualization, and appropriation happen when we form and re-form understandings of who we are and how we relate to the world. An interpretive phenomenology, suspending this “pervasive yet unnoticed habit of taking [our interpretive practices] for granted,”³ reflectively provides an account for our own interpretive practices as part of the study.⁴ This means that the researcher’s learning process is part of what is studied. Thus, this study is existentially based. The researcher’s biography sets the background of this study and later is interjected in between the theorization. This essay is a phenomenology of the researcher’s process of becoming able to experience imagination differently, differently than mental imagination, which assumes the physical plain to adopt preconceived images.

Retrospectively speaking, what I call ‘the imagining body’ becomes the main focus of the study. The whole thesis is an attempt to show the imagining body, which is a kind of
embodiment of what we are at the moment of the imagining process, and to show the process of integrating it in my attitude for change. As a phenomenologist, I attend to something that claims me with a feeling of importance. My attention is placed tentatively, softly, and kindly upon and around “the something,” that which is not clearly defined. I dwell with the phenomenon until finding a way to come to terms with the lived experience of it. The imagining body is the wholeness of us merged into the movement of the universe or Tao; as the noticing “I,” I can only trace the footprints of it. The first trace of the imagining body was witnessed in the phenomenological notes that I took after painting. The painting experience became the primary source of the phenomenological investigation into the imagining body. Other sources include various daily life experiences such as walking, yoga, and meditation.

**BODY**

Body is a pivot of this study. Since thoughts on the imagination in this thesis incorporate the embodied nature of our existence and aspire to contribute to the reconciliation of the body/mind dichotomy, the idea of the body also needs reformulation. From the beginning, ‘the body’ in this study extends beyond the objectified physical body.

Following thinkers, such as Darroch-Lozowski, Merleau-Ponty, Hanna, Mindell, and Yuasa, I would like to explore alternative conceptualization of the body and of the felt experience of a body that is beginning to open to gentle change. In the Eastern traditions, knowledge is thought to be obtained only through the passage of personal cultivation which involves bodily disciplines. As this study deepens, I find myself discovering the part of myself which has been nurtured in such traditions of the East. I believe that the gap we
experience between the future vision and the now derives from the separation of the body and the mind in our attitude. Thus, the dissertation can also be seen as a study that aims at the unification of the body and the mind, theoretical and practical, by means of seeking an alternative way to imagine what might be possible.

**CRISS-CROSSING WORDS**

When my thoughts on the imagination were just beginning, the image of the body that loosens in the water came to me.

*Diving into the ocean. The water is warm. The green light flittering and fluttering through the waves. Descend. The gentle current. Water's ambiguous flow. Weightless. I sway with the grasses and fish.*

Metaphors are elastic words. They can catch subtle surges of meanings. They are formed at the verge of the imagination, bringing the upsurge of the imagining body into forms. Inspired by the works of Darroch-Lozowski, who allows such metaphors out of the threshold guide her in her inquiries, I let these metaphors communicate the dynamic quality of the thesis.

Therefore, my words in this study are sometimes metaphorical so as to catch moving images. Other times, my words phenomenologically trace a bodily image as it arises and dissolves. Still other times, my words are expressed to give an account to the movements of those images, to make sense and interpret my experience, to relate my speculations to the thoughts of other thinkers, and to relate their thoughts to mine. These various modes of
utterance follow one another as I criss-cross the logical spaces of the different modes. And, this criss-crossing happens because I am exploring within the presence of my body.

THE LITERATURE

In this dissertation, the literature is used in a non-conventional manner. There is no separate chapter designated to the literature review. It is spread in and among the words in the chapters. The wisdom and knowledge of the precedent thinkers are re-contextualized in the framework of this study so as to inform different phenomenological unfoldings at each stage. I do not intend to critique the literature that I relate to. My hope is to thicken the collective thoughts and reflections, in appreciation of the nature of our embodied imagination.

The domains from which I draw the preceding works are varied. The literature is drawn from phenomenological, philosophical, anthropological, psychological, and Eastern and Western mystic traditions. The commonality in the literature drawn is the capacity to help me attend to felt but unarticulated experience, to help me reconcile myself as embodied with the phenomena unfolding, and to deepen my thoughts on bodily experience, awareness of it, the imagination, and incarnated change.

DOING A PHENOMENOLOGY AS A WAY TO LEARN

Before closing the introduction, I would like to briefly return to the phenomenological aspect of the study. This work specifically follows the tradition of existential phenomenology. As much as acknowledging the biographical influence on our interpretations and thoughts, existential phenomenology considers consciousness "mutable and ceaselessly moving."
A marked quality of this kind of inquiry is the sense of movement, shifts, and openings that take place during the course of the study. When I look back, there are shifts in my awareness and understandings of what I am and how I relate to the world. My stance changes as the study progresses. For instance, in Chapter 1, I ask whether or not I am a teacher, and in Chapter 6, I am certain that my concern is wider than schooling. Earlier in the Introduction, I wrote that I did not assume any realm beyond perception, and at the end there is a growing awareness of something beyond that which we perceive, that which is felt unknowable but undeniable. In Chapter 2, I am impatient to know what form is appropriate to take, and in Chapter 6, I am relaxed not knowing what form my coming life would take. These shifts were not planned. They happened spontaneously in the inquiry process. To put it in another way, I am doing a phenomenology as a way to learn. By paying attention to what there is to notice, an existential phenomenological study yields us to experience what we may become.

By presenting the unfolding of my imagining body, I do not mean that this is what every imagining body is like. This essay keeps an open attitude toward each single imagining body that possibly comes to be and yields a new pattern when desired. Every imagining body would have similar qualities, but would also be different in many ways from what is presented here. I am hoping with this dissertation to contribute to the theme of imagination and transformation of life in a dialogical manner. The readers are called upon to reflect upon a possibility of their own imagining body and add to this study.
OVERVIEWING THE CHAPTERS

With Chapter One, I set up the atmospheric background for the reader. I provide memories and reflections upon those memories, as well as conceptual assumptions that I had, so that the reader would know from what ground this inquiry began. In Chapter Two, I begin to explore the imagination as a mode of being in the body as an alternative way to yield change. It presents the descending facet of the imagining process. Chapter Three is dedicated to the pilot study that I conducted on the subtle sensibility that arises in the painting process. My hope is that if I know more about the sensibility, I would incorporate that gentle way of forging into new terrain in the rest of my life in order to change and to be changed. Chapter Four presents the ascending facet of the imagining as a mode of being in the body. While Chapter Three discusses the voices of the imagining body (the subtle sensibility), this chapter deals with the images that begin to form in the imagining process. It also discusses the relation of the images and voices. Chapter Five focuses on understanding the open nature of the imagining body. The challenge was to gather conceptual insights so as to rationally grasp this openness of the body. The imagining body's appearance is dependent on this boundary dissolution. In Chapter Six, I gather insights that have been yielded in this inquiry. I also discuss the issue of how we can belong more peacefully in the world, being informed by the gathered insights on the imagining process. I then reflect upon shifts that are noticed in my own attitude and awareness. Lastly, I summarize principles that are important in the path of the imagining body, which nurtures the gentle unfolding of a new pattern in life.
CHAPTER ONE: SETTING UP THE BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

My purpose in this chapter is to provide the reader some understanding of how the questions of imagination and emergence of the new gained significance in my own biography. It is to reflect upon how the theme had been unknowingly making claims in my life history. I will start with juxtaposing memories to invite the readers into the atmospheric context in which I was at the entrance of this study. In the last section of this chapter, I also provide a brief description of the thread of thoughts on imagination that theoretically represents the kind of paradigm I was in at the time when this inquiry began. It indicates the way of imagining that I wished to depart.

CRACKS IN THE PERCEPTUAL COCOON

I approach perception from a human vantage point. By that I mean this is not a metaphysical study. Viewing from within, I notice that perception seems to be creating a cocoon-like enclosure that envelops us. The world seems organized as we perceive. At the entry of the inquiry, I do not assume any realm beyond the perceptual world. I do not hold a strong belief as to whether there exists any other realm beyond perception or what it might be. The grounding of my inquiry is that I perceive, and that I notice perceptual phenomena as they unfold.

Specifically what motivates the inquiry is my awareness that, as much as perception seems to create a cocoon-like enclosure, there seem to be moments in which the perceptual cocoon cracks open and falls away. Normally, perception does not give us an impression that it is setting up a cocoon around us. We identify with it in totality. It is only when the
perceptual world has collapsed that we notice the cocoon had been there. Its loss makes us aware of its existence.

My fascination about perceptual disruption is particularly fueled by memories from 1981. The memories start with a peculiar sound. The sound was of huge brick walls falling down. It may not be correct to say that I heard the sound, since it was not audible in the normal sense. But, neither is it a metaphor to say that I heard the sound. I sensed the sound, which was not explicable in physical cause and effect terms. It was rather a bodily sensation that was comparable to hearing the sound. It persisted and followed me. And, I recall it was accompanied by a visual image of bricks falling. The experience involved tactile qualities as well. The image was that the space above my chest-level was already emptied and the air circulated freely, while I saw the lower space blocked by bricks which were still falling. The oddity of the feeling made me remember the event.

Strangely, however, there was no doubt that the sound was that of my old structure of understanding collapsing. The structure that had been solid and unquestionable was no longer there to provide my daily sense-making, while the world itself was still there, suddenly raw and fresh. A feeling of openness surged. Clarity was there. I noticed I had been indulging in unhappiness and blaming circumstances, and now all the undivided energy I could afford from my guts was demanded to re-connect anew to the world. I was elated. A gift was given. Below the mask of habitual behaviors and emotions, I found an authentic self that was dozing off.

Psychologically, the perceptual cocoon can be explained as webs of systems through which we make sense out of phenomena, and its disruption occurs through some sort of mental breakdown, perhaps caused by distress. But, as soon as I say so, the perceptual
cocoon and its fall cease to be phenomena of the material domain. They become a description of something mental, thus not physical existence. Then, I notice myself favouring materialistic interpretations. The perceptual cocoon exists materially, and the breakdown, too, occurs in the material level however subtle it may be. Their existence is not abstraction. It is lived experience. It is real and has subtle substantiality. By the same token, however, neither am I interested in reducing the perceptual cocoon and cracks to biochemical movements of the body and the brain. The chemical re-arrangement must coincide, but the primary shift is elsewhere.

I am facing difficulty at the beginning of the inquiry to describe what I intend to study. Perhaps the difficulty comes from the way in which we understand perception. We say that there are five senses; vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. There are other senses that are commonly acknowledged, such as the kinesthetic and the empathic. The fact that we interpret that which we perceive into these categories and assume no other possibilities may be casting a shadow when we want to reconcile matter and psyche. Perhaps the distinction that we feel between material appearances and inner experience coexists with the way we hold on to the sensory categories. Traditionally, the senses were understood to be the media through which we know the external world. In this scheme of conceptualization, the external and internal are set separate from the beginning.

I say this temporarily. The perceptual cocoon and cracks come into being and disappear as real as the physical body does, but the way these phenomena take place is so peculiar that we normally fail to grasp them. It is as if the space in which these phenomena take place is not the space that we measure by meters. Or, it may be that the way we grasp space by meter and objects by grams is limiting us from understanding the subtlety of matter.
In order to understand or at least accept the phenomena of the perceptual cocoon and its cracks, the concept of space and time needs re-examination. The issue of time and space will also be pondered upon later in the essay.

Throughout this study, my intent is to stay open to the best of my ability to cracks of perception that claim me. Often my understanding fails in the face of obscure phenomena. They are usually very subtle. Moreover, the webs of perception are not static; dynamic movement swallows cracks the next moment they appear. That we do not know what they are also contributes to the difficulty to hold attention to them, compared to how easy it is to focus our attention to familiar phenomena and emotions. Nonetheless, I try to hold attention to them, for they seem to be gateways to the imagining body, which can yield an alternation of life patterns from the mundane. With the fall of the perceptual cocoon in 1981, familiar circumstances were illuminated under a new light. It was followed by several years of rebuilding multi-layered relationships with the world for the new self that I suddenly noticed underneath the habitual emotions and reactions. A lot of my complaints, resentments, and arrogance were gradually replaced by compassionate care toward myself and fellow beings, patient action, and a feeling of open vulnerability. The outcome of action did not weigh as much. Lightness was the prevailing quality.

FACING AN IMPASSE

I was one of those people who had wanted education to be different since childhood. Several years of teaching made me realize the difficulty of change. I felt the weight of society and people's lives. School was not a separate entity that did unreasonable things to people. It was shaped by (as much as shaping) the community's implicit and sometimes explicit
expectations, social demands, and, most of all, by the children's, the parents', and the teachers' hopes to live well and fears not to be able to live well. When I wanted to let the students notice, for example, that English was another language with which we communicated and that it was enough if they understood what the text meant, they insisted to hear the right translation for the up-coming exams. Living in a competitive hierarchical system, it was a reality that failing the exams would affect their lives directly.

I had been thinking about the possibility of initiating an alternative school for over a decade. I had read about some alternative schools, visited other schools, and spent a few months as an intern at another. Still, I felt the possibility of an alternative school far away; far from my existence, from my body, from what I was.

My journal reads: "A way of life stopped making sense. It had served me well in the past. I used to ask myself what I want, set a goal, and work hard to achieve it. What I thought I wanted was usually accomplished. There was a sense of satisfaction. But, I came to notice that the feeling of satisfaction was not deep enough to touch my heart and that achieving the goals that I set would not take me to the place where my heart longs to be."

What is the place where my heart longs to be? The present vision is a vague feeling. If you ask me to list some words to describe its quality, they would be: light and warm, accepting, humble, and more than personal connections. These words do not explain much. In the journal, I also wrote, "an environment where natural growth of life is valued and uniqueness of each life is nourished." Sometimes I call it "a gentle life." While going deeper into this inquiry, I hope those words will be clarified.

For long, my symbol for such a place had been 'alternative school.' I thought I wanted to be part of an alternative school. I wanted to start one with the like-minded.
However, while hovering around this symbol, I never landed onto the ground to make it a reality. The closest I ever came to that symbol was 1996. The experience of working at a small community-like alternative school, Clonrala, at Ann Arbor, shocked me. What shocked me was not the way Clonrala School operated, nor that they didn't look like they were 'studying.' What shocked me was my own bodily reaction to the situation. Being a member of the school was totally different than visiting for a day or two to observe. My body froze. The frozen body, so rigid, was isolated from the circulation of the warm breeze in the community. My heart was shut. I was cold. The warm air circulated avoiding the ice, which was emanating the cold air. What was I here for? I felt useless. I needed to feel useful. As an adult member in a school setting, I needed to 'teach.' I was upset. I wanted to banish myself. I felt so shaped by the traditional schooling that I had gone through as a student and a teacher. I thought I wanted to be part of alternative school. I thought I would be happy and comfortable. It was a fantasy.

The entry of this inquiry was an impasse. Earlier, I said that the inquiry did not assume any realm beyond perception. Indeed, what is real and what is imaginal (or non-real) were distinctively separate to me. I dwelled, and was locked up, in the world of what I bounded as the real, the realm of what I knew. However, I admit that there was a longing of my heart, a longing for something unknown. Something that would shake the solidity of the enclosure that enveloped my perceptual world. The memory said that perception could fall apart; by falling apart, it could serve as a catalyst for realignment with the world and with a new self that is closer to the heart. Having such memory might have been a pitfall as well as an encouragement. I looked for a similar transformative experience, while each transformation is unique.
Nevertheless, one thing was certain. I was looking for an alternative way of life that is gently generative and yielding. The way I connected to the rest of the world needed change. And, part of me resisted changing. Perhaps it was the remnant of what I used to be and how I used to relate. I tried to change the remnant. The body froze. How can I begin to seek for a way of being that is more gently yielding when my body feels so shaped by the pattern that I want to leave? How do we begin to create what we do not yet know but want to know?

THE RESISTANT REACTION

One day, I noticed. My ideas and passion about the alternative school were my resistant reaction to society. Yes, I knew I was playing against the social structure. But, I didn't know it was my intense resistant reaction itself that constrained me when I tried to incarnate what I imagined. I was so preoccupied with the vice of the rigid social structure which distorted people's lives that my resistant reaction against it had become my identity. My identity was formed in such a way that it depended upon what I was reacting against. I wanted the society to be different. A resistant reaction against it developed. I envisioned otherwise. But, because of the resistant reaction, which was part of my identity, I was unable to leave the old patterns of thinking, feeling, and living with others. Whereas, to embody what is envisioned is to live differently.

The kind of educational practice that I had been thinking about was radically different from the ones I experienced as a student and a teacher. With those images of possible practice, I had many ‘shoulds.’ It should facilitate learning that is intrinsic to each individual. It should help those who are suffering in the regular school system. It should not
exclude the economically disadvantaged. The parents should be involved. The teachers should be able to enjoy learning as well. These 'shoulds' were what Sartre calls 'the unreal.' They were the ideal. They lighted the top of the mountain where I 'should' reach. Between me and the mountaintop was an abyss, and where I was was so dark. I did not see how I could get to the mountain. The imagination that I explore in Chapter 2 and on is the imagination that starts where we are: attending to what is before us, interacting with it, sensing what comes up, adding more of ourselves into it.

When I noticed this blockage that my resistant reaction to the society was creating, I was searching for an appropriate language with which I could talk about the imagination. The analytic style of writing alone did not seem able to convey what I wanted to say about the imagination. The style seemed contradictory to what the content was saying. So, I was looking for a new language that would suit the subject matter. What gradually emerged was the metaphorical style that we will see in Chapter 2. In that search for an appropriate language, memories and the body came together. A depth of my body which had never been touched was touched. There, I found a feeling of guilt about the fact that I had left school. It was a feeling of someone who had betrayed beloved students, colleagues, and herself as a child. A petal fell off from the heart. I felt I was beginning to be embodied, imagining a new form of expression.

A FUTURE VOICE?

Am I a teacher in retreat? I ask. If it were a retreat, it is a long one. It has been at least four years since I stopped teaching. I hear two voices. One voice says, “Why do you study education if it were not for teaching?” The voice is pressing and demanding. It is the voice
that commands from the past. That is the teacher's voice. Tension creeps up my spine. I am feeling how I felt at school. Those who are engaged in school education feel frustrated with the arguments and comments about education from outsiders. "Get involved before you talk about education. People are struggling here." I breathe with the shoulders. My back takes a stance to fight.

The other voice, however, is soft and warm. *Life is education. Whatever you do, you are engaged in education of yourself and others.* The shoulders melt down. Sometimes, I feel this is the direction to follow. It might be the future voice of mine. But more than often, doubt is overriding. The former voice cuts off to say that the soft voice is the voice that indulges. So, I am in limbo, between the two voices, undecided whether or not I am a teacher in retreat. The length of retreat may be the breadth of the gap between the old and the new, as well as the number of 'shoulds' my body silently carries.

The voice from the past stays with me. But, that voice does not light a path before me. It produces more and more 'shoulds.' How do I reconcile with those 'shoulds' that I carry? Can the other voice be the guide in the dark? The one that seems sometimes the voice of the future? It is like a prayer when I ask: Help me listen to the future voice, if it is really the future voice of mine. Imagination is at work when we pay close attention to what is not yet known.

This study takes the topic of imagination as the framework, within which I address thoughts on the possibility of transformation that begins in the mundane. How do we begin to imagine what we do not yet see but want to see? It is, for me, to seek to incarnate what the voice of future might be saying. What do you do when you know the familiar form no longer serves to express that which you seem to be experiencing and are seeking a new form so that
you experience it fully? Do I have courage to step forward to the direction that the future
voice may be suggesting, in spite of doubt and fear that is sometimes overwhelming?

**RELEASE THE MENTAL IMAGINING**

Looking into theories of imagination within the tradition of Western modern philosophy, I
found a thread of thoughts which corresponds to the way I used to approach change. In order
to theoretically clarify what were the inherent assumptions in my attitude in seeking an
alternative, which ironically brought me to the impasse, I outline major components of the
thoughts in the next paragraphs. I am aware that drawing fragments of thoughts from the
complex arguments does not do justice to their philosophies. My intent here is to identify the
basic assumptions that I had behind my habitual attitude toward change, and to release them.

If over-simplification were temporarily permitted, the thread of thoughts treats
imagination as a mental capacity of the human being which produces and reproduces (often
visual) images of things that are absent, including things that no longer exist or do not yet
exist. In this scheme, imagination plays the role of the mediator between sensation, which
the mind receives as something fragmentary and disappearing, and its capacity to reason. In
other words, the imagination bridges the inner and outer worlds, which are separated.\(^\text{17}\)

Imagination plays roughly four roles in our ability to know and understand. One is as
the reproductive faculty.\(^\text{18}\) Imagination reproduces images of objects that we have perceived
but are no longer present to us. Because of the reproductive faculty of imagination, we can
compare images from the past with those of the present, and form ideas of what is, for
example, 'dog.' When I am tempted to say that dogs have short legs on the ground that Fido,
my dog, has short legs, my imagination brings forth the images of other dogs whose legs are not short.

Another role attributed to imagination contributes to our belief in the continuity of the external world. Imagination not only reproduces but also produces images of the object. When Fido is absent to me, my imagination produces images of Fido in the next room, for example, or in the back yard. Because of this productive faculty of imagination, I believe in Fido's continuous existence independent of my existence. It completes the uniformity of our ideas by filling in the gaps of sensation. Unlike sensation, which is the first and ever-fleeting appearance of objects to our consciousness, we can control and modify the images that imagination reproduces and produces at will.

Besides the reproductive and productive faculties, there are two more functions to imagination. The third function of imagination is to create abstract categories we can schematize the figure of a four-footed animal of a certain kind in a general manner. It is a synthesizing process of our mind, which mediates between the representations of particular dogs and the abstract concept of 'dog.' The fourth function of imagination is the creative activity of our mind that reflects on images in search of novel orderings of them. This is the 'free play' of imagination, which generates new meaning to our experience.

Sartre begins his discussion by saying that imagination as part of human consciousness must be directed toward some object. He refuses the traditional premise that images are in consciousness. He says the image cannot be in consciousness, whether the image is of a chair that is perceived or one that is imagined. The object of perception is the thing that is present to us. It is the chair that we see. What is the object of imagination then?
We cannot say it is the imagined image in consciousness. What is, then, the object toward which consciousness is directed when we imagine?

Sartre says that the object of imaginative consciousness is 'nothingness.' When I imagine Peter, for example, “as he might be at the moment in Berlin, I grasp an object which is not at all given to me... There I grasp nothing, that is, I posit nothingness”⁴⁴ Anticipating what might happen when Peter returns from Berlin, my imaginative consciousness is directed toward possible futures of our relationship as something that is not yet or may never be. To Sartre, imagination is this capacity of human consciousness to grasp nothingness, that is, things that are not yet there or that may never be. Imagination is the freedom of human consciousness that produces “the possibility of the unreal”⁵² based on the real. And, it is, not just part of, but “an essential and transcendental condition”⁵⁶ of human consciousness. Imagination is “the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom”⁵⁷ It is the freedom of the autonomous human mind. Unlike the object of perception, the object of imaginative consciousness does not surprise us. No matter how long I look at the images of Peter in Berlin or the images of things that might happen to us on his return, “I shall never find anything in them but what I put there.”⁵⁸ In imaginative consciousness, Sartre says, the object of consciousness “never precedes the intention”⁵⁹

In these thoughts on imagination, I recognize my old attitude in seeking change. Imagination in these conceptions is predominantly mental with not much consideration for our embodied nature, and the imagined images are at our disposal for our intentional manipulation.
THE PROBLEM

Let me return to my experience. My imagination, by presenting reproduced and produced images and by synthesizing them, discerned what were current educational practices.

Considered as freedom of consciousness in Sartrean terms, it had been claiming 'the possibility of the unreal,' alternative schools. My 'imaginative consciousness' had been producing images of an alternative school for a long time. However, my body froze, preventing me from plunging in what I had imagined. The problem was how to incarnate what I had imagined.

The common way to mediate this gap, in modern philosophy, is to bring about the notion of the will, which ensures the mind's command over the body. The lack of engagement in the kind of practice that I envisioned would be interpreted as the weakness of the will on my part. I knew that I could, if I wanted, force myself to plunge in to work in an alternative school setting with my 'free will.' However, such an act seemed violent to my whole being, and to the people who might work with me. My act of 'free will' would expect others to have the same unyielding will, whether I was aware of it or not. The atmosphere of the place would become forceful, which is contradictory to what I was looking for. The incongruity between the content of what I imagined and the way I imagined was apparent. I needed another way of imagining which is more engendering and allowed the imagined to take form.
IMAGINATION OTHERWISE
With this chapter, I begin to introduce the idea of the imagination as a mode of being in the body. This chapter presents the entry into the imagination’s world. The narratives trace phenomena as I am being guided into the imagination. Interjected is the voice of my self, trying to give a reflective account of what I was going through. As I am immersed into the imagination’s world, the imagining body begins to appear here and there. Without clear awareness, I respond to the imagining body’s sensibility. The presence of the imagining body’s surge at this early stage of the imagining process was located retrospectively. Then, the writing gradually moves into articulation of some factors that are significant in the entry into the imagination’s world.

Metaphorically, the imagination as a mode of being in the body is described as descending into the waterworld and ascending to the land. Descending represents the experience of entering into the mode of imagining, the body loosening, and noticing what wasn’t noticed before. This chapter is designated to aspects of descending. Ascending in the imagination will be discussed in Chapter 4.

THE IMAGINATION IS TO DESCEND TO BE IMMERSED
The topic of imagination suits metaphors. Especially the metaphor of water. It conveys the roundness of the imagination’s world.
Diving into the ocean. The water is warm. The green light fluttering through the waves. Descend. Feel the gentle current, the water’s ambiguous flow. The body is weightless. It sways. The sea grasses and fish sway with you. Silence of the slow rhythms. Underwater is the imagination’s world. It is the realm in which the logic of the land does not rule. It is the world of polyvalence. It embraces adversaries and non-adversaries. Water loosens the frameworks the body carried from the land. It releases the body’s structures. As the body becomes looser, things that had been invisible begin to manifest themselves. You see what you didn’t see on land. You hear voices that had been silenced. No hierarchies or standards to sort out this against that. It is this and that, and everything else that is welcomed under the water.

MY HEART IS CROSS

It was a winter evening. There was no speech coming out of my throat. My heart was cross. It did not permit words. A genuine smile was inviting me to speak more. My heart withheld the breath. I looked away and told my friend not to ask about my study any more. I was writing that imagination is to be immersed. And, in front of me, listening, was a person who was venturing into the imagination’s world daily. He writes novels. I was talking about the imagination; he was living it. My heart sank below my feet. The fireplace was burning orange.

IT MAY PICK US

I was looking for a gateway to the imagination’s world. I was at a loss not knowing how.
Hermeneutics encourages us to be open to the unfamiliar. It is a way of imagination. It shows how to expand the horizon of the possible by being encountering the otherness and trying to get hold of a way of being that is seemingly alien to us. It invites us to risk our familiar convictions and beliefs in the face of otherness.\(^\text{32}\)

But, a characteristic of postmodern cultures is that there are too many othernesses around us. There were many things that seem valuable and useful. How do we know which unfamiliarity to work with? Postmodern experiences deceptively offer us thousands of options. TV, newspapers, books, films, and internet constantly offer floating images, news, and information. These media tell us what other activity we could be engaging in, how our collective and personal life could be better if we start this or that. I could be in an alternative school. I could be meditating in a Himalayan cave. I could take on a humanist action to participate in the Peace Brigade and fly to Colombia. I admit that these images are the ones that intrigue me. However, not much interweaving imagining has been developed within my day to day life around them. In postmodern cultures, “images precede reality.”\(^\text{33}\) The list of what is seemingly possible is endless. However, we cannot just abruptly pick one out of those thousands of possibilities and make ourselves engage in it for the sake of broadening our horizon. When we imagine, we are not just looking for any object of imagination to broaden our future. Each of us is looking to make sense out of what we do. Each of us is looking for a form through which she can recover a sense of integrity and balance in her way of being and feel comfort living with others.

I stretch out my sensor. I feel something. I hope. I am not sure. This might not be it. This might be it. I pick it up. Examine it. Feel it. And drop it. Look for another. I ask
my body. I feel I am going nowhere. Maybe I am wrong. But maybe I am on the right track. I feel I have touched something. Water expands to that direction. One stroke farther.

A voice murmurs.

... but it may pick us. It may pick us.

THROUGH THE GATEWAY

One day in April 1997. My friend taught me drawing. The next day, I was at Chicago O'Hare Airport, waiting for a flight. A drawing pad was on my lap. My eyes were tracing the contours of things...and I looked up. A different flight number sign shown at the gate. Disoriented, I walked over to the counter and found that my flight was gone and that they had been calling my name.

Instead of the airport gate, I went through a gateway to the imagination's world. But, this awareness that drawing had guided me through the gateway to the imagination came much later.³⁴

PAYING ATTENTION

"[E]very understanding begins with the fact that something calls out to us."³⁵

Beginning is to accept the thought that something may be claiming you. Something that is not known to you may be calling out to you. The beginning of imagining is to wonder what it might be. It is to be stopped by a small voice that falls lightly on your consciousness, like a feather, and to notice how it feels. It is to be stopped by the breeze that rubs your cheek, and
to listen to it. Those tiny halts are the initial act of the imagination. They lead us to a gateway to the imagination’s world. They court us to an unpredictable breakthrough that is found among mundane routines.

Beginning is always paying attention. Next comes a little more attention. And then, a little more care-full and gentle attention. Receptivity and playfulness.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE IMAGINING BODY

Summer 1997. The whole summer was dedicated to drawing. Drawing was the only affair that mattered. It was as if the survival of my soul depended on it. There was no articulated reason as to why it was so important. Nonetheless, I declared: *this summer, I do not read. I do not write. I do nothing but drawing.* With a pen running on my sketchbook, I stood at every corner of the neighborhood and gazed into wrinkles of petals.

Retrospectively speaking, I was responding to ‘the imagining body.’ Later in the inquiry it will be defined as a kind of sensibility that arises in the imagining process. At this stage, since I was not accustomed to it, the act of following the imagining body was frightening. It is the fear of surrendering to the unknown. I had no familiar logic to support my action, which was spending four months doing nothing but drawing when enrolled in a graduate programme. As much as I could find no reason for my own action, doubtful thoughts surmounted. *What are those childish drawings? Do you think you are going to be an artist? No way! You are just wasting your time. Get back to your books to write the thesis.* At another level, however, I sensed that what I was doing was exactly what was needed. A strong faith was required in order to keep on drawing every day. Descending into the imagination’s world requires the courage to believe in spite of doubt.
DETAILS UNFOLDING

Details amazed me. The act of drawing revealed so many details. Contours of trees, of stones. Of the petals of orange, fussy, and white pansies. Lilies of the valley. Roots of the bushes. A leaf that is eaten by worms, the shapes of shadows on the leaf... Here, ideas do not guide. Details guide me through the senses.

In fact, what my friend initiated me into was not so much how to draw, but a way of seeing, attentive seeing. It is how to be open to what we see, to be with that which we perceive. Not to hastily decide, "Okay, these are pansies. I know what they look like." Drawing was a process of learning to slow down my eyeballs and trust what they find. It may sound strange, but it was as if I hadn't been looking. I felt I'd been looking at, more or less, the ideas of things.

A tree, for instance, had trunks, blanches, and routes. Because it was summer, leaves were green. There were some kinds I recognized; maples, pine trees, white birches, cypresses. And others whose names I did not know. There were young ones and old ones. Short and tall ones. Christmas trees and Halloween trees. Trees all stood, turned red and yellow in autumn, swung in the wind, cleaned the atmosphere, and comforted us. These are my idea of trees. It was as if seeing is so habitual that I had been forgetting what it was to see. So, I kept drawing that summer, to remember.

I draw the brick wall of a house on Sussex Street. The cracks, shades and colors, and weeds that grow between them. The wall is unique. The way I see is also unique. Let someone draw the same wall from the same direction. What he draws would be quite different from what I draw. Even if I come back to the place and drew it again, it wouldn't be
the same. It depends on the weather, light, my mood and curiosity, how I happen to choose a line instead of another, how fast or slow my psyche moves with the details of the wall. The uniqueness of what I draw meets the uniqueness of who I am at that moment. Drawing shows me that I always underestimate the quality of what I see and who I am.

WITH THE SENSIBLE

Open your body to the other body. That is the beginning of your imagining. Take your time and let your body feel unnamable details that grow between you and the other body. The water surges, and swells, between the sentient and the sensible. The more you let your body sense, the more the water swells in the imagination.

Instead of saying that imagination is a mental faculty, let me begin by saying that it is a mode of being in the body. The notion of imagination as a mode of being, first of all, acknowledges our body as the basis of imagining. The boundaries of the body are not enclosed. To say the least, it has eyes to see in front of us, the ears to hear birds singing, the nose to breathe the air in and out, and the skin to feel the texture and warmth of a touch. It has the arms to reach and to be reached. The soles of the feet meet the ground. The body is the place where the other and we become encountered and unified. "The living body is ... the very possibility of contact, not just with others but with oneself... This body is the very possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge." Without this body, there is nothing to reflect upon and think about. The body is also the very possibility of the imagination. Without this body, there is nothing to imagine and, moreover, there is no incarnated vision.
When we imagine, we imagine through our body. The water surge of imagination begins when our body meets the sensible, that is, another body. Without the sensible that continues to anchor the imagining process, we build a fantastic castle in the air and tend to think that this fantasy can be some day transported to reality. 'Alternative school', to me, was an airy castle that my fantastic thinking created. Now I can tell that it became an airy castle because the bodily engagement was suspended until long after all the thinking out was done. While the information I collected on alternative education piled up, my ideas became grandeur and there was no way to match them with whatever I would do in reality. Contrary to that, the imagination as a mode of being in the body invites us to bodily respond to something sensible that attracts us at each and every moment of imagining, from the very early stage, before the vision becomes fixed by thoughts and information that is external to the imagining process.

PLUNGING DEEPER

Merleau-Ponty says that to perceive is to plunge in and inhabit what we perceive.38 Perception is "the identification of the external and the internal."39 In our daily perception, I believe, there are habitual patterns and degrees of inhabiting what we perceive. Walking to the streetcar on the sunny side of the street, I am perceiving the shade, the width of the sidewalk, the neighbors’ houses, someone walking passed me, and the gray dog with blue eyes in the last front yard. It is a usual scene. There are familiar ways in which I take in certain aspects of it. Memory is intertwined with perception. My body has accustomed to it. The imagination as a mode of being in the body, however, invites us to plunge deeper into perception and dwell on the scene, the sensible, longer.
When I draw, I do not see everything from the beginning. Drawing what attracts me invites me to more details, and more texture. Drawing the first few lines, I notice shapes and details that in relation constitute the quality of what I have just drawn. It may be light, volume, texture, or small wrinkles that are part of it. I add strokes. Adding the strokes makes me notice even more qualities. I attend to what is before me, open myself to it, feel my body's response, and slowly act accordingly. Acting on it, I feel the interplay of the sensible with my senses, emotion, thought, and intuition, and give more of myself to it. Through such attentive interweaving with the sensible, the water of the imagination's world surges further. Unforeseen details are revealed. I plunge deeper into the imagination's world.

If perception is to plunge into the sensible and inhabit it, the imagination as the mode of being in the body is the conscious exploration of such inhabitation in perception. It is to plunge into what is before us and attend to what arises in such a merge. By paying closer attention to what is arising and by responding to it, we plunge deeper.

NO ARTICULATED COHERENCE

This phase of the imagination is one of no coherent articulation. Right after I began drawing, what I felt about what appeared on the paper was, "...oh...," or "wow," "...?" or "hum..."

Basically, I did not know what to think, besides noticing a feeling of pleasing confusion that was pouring into my life and a feeling of fun that derived from the playfulness of the activity. As Reherick and Taylor point out, at the early stage of entering a new domain, there is a certain period in which we cannot articulate anything coherent. They argue, and I agree
with them that, in such period, silence is very important when we venture into something new.

Despite the infinitely growing details which the imagination introduces to us, despite the lack of articulated coherence, there is no sense of absurdity. "Absurdity is normally a concept of the intellect; how can we reconstitute it in the very realm of the imagination?\(^{12}\) The logic of the imagination is the playfulness of *poiesis*, which "allows the rose … to exist without why."\(^{13}\) The logic is "one of *both* and rather than *either/or*. It is inclusive and … tolerant; it allows opposites to stand, irreconcilables to co-exist."\(^{14}\) Things are woven into each other, and into a whole as the waves of the ocean. Descending into the waterworld, we let our body be part of the interweaving and swirling.

**QUICKENING OF RECIPROCITY**

The reciprocity of perception is relevant when we discuss the developmental nature of the attentive interweaving in the imagination as a mode of being in the body. To perceive is to live the sensible, which is "a certain way of being in the world suggested to us from some point in space, and seized and acted upon by our body, provided that it is capable of doing so."\(^{15}\) It implies that I am a sensible from that suggested perspective. Seeing a lamp implies the vision of the lamp which 'sees' me. Through perception, we belong to the world of beings which display themselves. The reciprocity and the interwoven matrix of perception explain my experience of drawing in which if I see more, I feel the reverse vision of what I see.

It was a magical event. The moment I looked up from the sketchbook, it was as if the world revealed its secret nature. It was as if the veil had dropped. Every contour was shining
Each tree revealed its unique character. They looked at me and talked to each other.

At the next corner, I glanced at the road on the left. There, too, the trees were suddenly animated. *Come this way. Well, I must leave for my friend's.* I hurried to the subway station. The next day, I was a little anxious. What if they don't talk to me any more. I walked to a small street and looked up. There they were! They still talked to me! I greeted the trees one by one. Some are shy, other are straightforward. Some are open to the sky, stretching their branches, other trees are leaning down. Little pansies looked at me. I could barely walk forward. I walked a few steps and another flower or tree would call out to me. *Draw me. Draw me.* Everyone wanted to be drawn. *Yes, yes. You are all beautiful.* The atmosphere was thickened. Suddenly, I was surrounded by their presence, by the incredible shimmering of life.

Normally, we are not conscious of this reciprocal nature of perception. I noticed, when I hurried to a grocery store and did not take time to pay attention to the trees, they returned to the conventional idea of what they are, inanimate. The imagination as a mode of being in the body quickens the reciprocal nature of perception. In his later writings, Merleau-Ponty discusses the idea of the flesh, which is the tissue or matrix that expands between the sensible and the sentient.46 In perception, we are unaware of this flesh. In the imagination, the flesh is consciously explored by the one who is imagining. The imagining process unrolls the shimmering tissue between us and the sensible through responsive attention.
THE PARTICULAR

Diving into the imagination is to feel the water surge through the bodily interweaving between us and another body. Each time we imagine, we imagine a particular water surge. Each water is different. For it depends on the specificity of each interweaving. The imagination as a mode of being in the body has affinity to the particularity rather than to generalized ideas.

If we can conceive the emergence of something new in life, it is in the realm of particular. For instance, after typing this paragraph, there are several things I can do. I can shut down the computer and go shopping, brew coffee, make a phone call, take a bath, read a book, visit my friend, turn on the radio, or I can go on writing. We all know it is not an option for me to invent an engineering device (the lack of basic knowledge and preparation), be in my country (I have no airplane tickets to Japan, and I need to spend 14 hours on the plane before landing), or give a birth (I am not pregnant). Therefore, we tend to think what we will be doing next is one of many possibilities which exist in the present. However, those ‘possibilities’ which are conceived beforehand are general categories of activities. Even if I started making coffee, which was one of the pre-conceived ‘possibilities,’ the general category of making coffee and my total activity of it in a particular duration, with a particular pace, mood, and the scent as well as my body gradually relaxing are two different things. The latter is in the realm of the particular, where unforeseen details unfold. These unforeseen details are the ideography of the imagination. That is where we can hope to live something new in life.

There is no genuine possibility prior to actuality to discuss the particular. Hamlet is a great play on this topic. In generalized terms, the same story can be said to be ‘possible
before it was written. But, that particular play, with all the qualities it has, and with all the beauty of the words, was never imagined, thus not possible before Shakespeare wrote it. At the moment Shakespeare has written Hamlet, the actuality throws its shadow back into the past and creates its own possibility. The poet, sculptor, and painter, Takamura Kotaro writes: “Before me, no road. Behind me, a road.”*48 Seeing the world with the perspective of the particularity, reality is “unceasing creation, the up-surge of novelty.”*49

BODY

“The body’ in the imagination as a mode of being in the body is not the body that is anatomized in biology, nor the body whose behaviors are analyzed in psychology. It is not the body that is objectified. The body that this dissertation aspires to discuss is the body that we experience from within. My body for me is “not an assemblage of organs juxtaposed in space.”*50 I know where each of my limbs is and where my ears are. As I hear the phone ring, my hand begins to reach the phone on the desk. I don’t consciously check the positions of the phone, my stretching left arm, the straightening upper part of my body, my legs, and my left ear. Parts of my body are as if “enveloped in each other”*51 and work as a whole toward the task, which is answering the phone. I may have an image of my friend, memories of what happened the last time we met, and images of the anticipated conversation. A certain emotional tone may override. What is happening at my body is one and not divided into sensation, thoughts, emotion, feelings, memories, intuition, and so on. In other words, the body we are dealing with is the body that is us. It is the body that is “a nexus of living meanings.”*52
Thomas Hanna's 'soma' is even closer to the body I am wishing to capture. It is "me, the bodily being." Soma is living; it is expanding and contracting, accommodating and assimilating, drawing in energy and expelling energy. Soma is pulsing, flowing, squeezing, and relaxing - flowing and alternating with fear and anger, hunger, and sensuality... Soma is the kind of living, organic being that you are at this moment, in this place where you are." Unlike the body objectively defined, the living body that is us does not have a complete enclosure. It's opening and closing, constantly. As Darroch-Lozowski says, "the literal body encased in skin, but also the subtle body which is our interior 'self,' knows our latencies, and whose boundaries blur with what is 'outside' of us." When we engage in an attentive interweaving in the imagination, our body opens wider and becomes looser than usual. That which had been shut away begins to penetrate into the body, the body begins to penetrate out.

As I draw, I am drawn into what I am drawing. It's as if the boundary of my body and the boundary of the tree were dissolving. There is no I that is drawing and no tree that is being drawn. After drawing a few lines, I say to myself, "It's going well," or "Whoops, I'm messing it up." When I say so, I am my self that is distinctive from the tree and the rest of the world. It seems this movement of to and fro occurs with a high frequency. When we engage in attentive interaction, our body becomes softened and opens wider or longer than usual, and things that have been suppressed reveal themselves to us.

**SUMMARY**

With this notion of imagination as a mode of being in the body, we notice that our everyday experience is already categorized and structured, by our traditions, cultures, place, and personal history to make sense out of experience. There are moments in which our
experience is totally direct and immediate. For example, when we touched a burning pan by mistake, there is only an immediate shock and pain, and no subject and object exist there. However, such experience is rare in everyday life. Our daily sense-making has built systems of understanding. The systems enable us to understand our experience. At the same time, they keep us from noticing what is filtered out by their logic. The descending in the imagination reveals what was filtered out and enables us to be with the revealed.

I do not say that the world of imagination, where there is less linear categorization, is the authentic place for us to dwell and thus we should live in the mode of the imagination. Structures are necessary and inevitable. They are problematic only when they are too static and hold up potential positive change. To imagine is to visit the place where we can sense things that have eluded us, so as to learn something that is new to us and to bring forth a more livable world around us.

To summarize, I would like to list what has been articulated in the above pages, concerning the imagination as a mode of being in the body, particularly in respect to the facet of descending into the imagination’s world.

1) The beginning is to wonder if something that we do not know may be calling out to us. To accept the thought that, rather than our voluntary choice, there may be a moment in which something unexpectedly picks us. The gateway to the imagination pops up and claims us with a feeling of significance.

2) We descend into the imagination by following the imagining body, which is the sensibility that arises in the imagining process. (The concept of the imagining body will be elaborated in the next chapter.)
3) Descending requires courage in spite of doubt.

4) In descending into the imagination, we will encounter numerous details.

5) The imagination as a mode of being in the body takes the body as the basis of the imagining. The details unfold in a bodily engaged interweaving with the sensible.

6) The imagination as a mode of being in the body is the conscious exploration of the inhabitation in perception. The more attention we pay to the interweaving process with the sensible, the more unforeseen details are revealed.

7) The logic of the imagination is one of polyvalence. All that unfolds is interwoven into a whole.

8) The imagination quickens the reciprocity of perception through its attentive responsiveness. It renders us the awareness of the unrolling flesh in perception.

9) The imagination operates in the domain of the particular.

10) The body in the imagination as a mode of being in the body is the living body that is us, ‘Soma.’ It is expanding and contracting without a definite enclosure. In descending, the body softens itself and what has been filtered out penetrates into us.

The imagination as a mode of being in the body is the desire for what is not apparent. It is the willingness to explore what is not seen, the invisible. The invisible here does not mean "impossible to be seen." It means "not yet seen." The invisible gradually discloses itself as we descend into the imagination’s world. We begin to swim in a small space of water. As we swim, the water expands. As the water expands, we swim a little further toward the depth. Bodily engagement, a sense of wonder, and trust in the process are crucial.
Also, taking time in descending is important, otherwise our lungs will collapse from the pressure of the water. We need attentiveness and patience.
Before I started writing, I did contour drawing. It is a way to bring myself back to the present moment from thoughts of the past and the future. It is a way to slow my motion into a calm place so that the imagining body can reveal itself when it’s ready. Starting at a corner of the window frame, my pen moves down the edge of the frame on the sketchbook. The movement of my eyes meets the shadow cast on the window frame. The shape of shadow invites. My eyes move over to shadow and trace it. A slow movement.... Eventually, the eyes come back to a line of the window frame where it meets again with shadow. As I let my eyes be guided by the lines and the pen move slowly on the sketchbook, a quiet space arises. Gradually, it expands. I am lost in the expansion.

SUSPENSION OF JUDGEMENT?

In the previous chapter, we talked about the willingness to see the invisible and how unforeseen details arise as we descend in the imagination as a mode of being in the body. Is the willingness to see the invisible the suspension of judgment, then? Is the imagination arbitrary? No. If it were so, how would we know when we are touched by something precious during the imagining? The imagination as a mode of being in the body is not the suspension of judgement. The guiding question in this chapter is: What is the logic with which the imagination moves? In fact, the imagining body has its own sense of valuation, which is different in modes from mental judgement. The sense of the imagining body is not as sharp as a finger that points to a destination. It is rather the body that is drawn to a certain
movement. When we are in the mode of the imagination, our body senses respond subtly to the sensible with which we work. Our body moves, as an attitude toward the situation.

Someone asked: Do you choose lines when you draw? Definitely I do. But, I do not know exactly which line I choose until I finish drawing it. I have an idea of what quality of line I want. But until it is embodied on the paper, I do not know in the exact sense. Embodiment involves discursive-ness. Part of the line, for example, may turn out to be thicker than the rest, or curvy and dry. The unexpected always happens in drawing, as in any other action.

This does not disregard the role of myself as the agent. I do not stop observing what is happening on the paper. I do not stop having an intent to draw a line of certain quality. I feel pleased or upset by what comes about on the paper. I do not stop evaluating the lines which I made, the relations of the lines and shapes and spaces, how I emphasized shadow and not light, how much details I let myself get involved or how abstracted. What I do next, at each step, is a response to how I feel, that is, how I evaluate the situation. Such evaluation and a sense of surprise work together in drawing and painting. It is a weaving of what is intentional and what is unintentional.

Do I erase? No. I do not erase. If I do not like the line I've just drawn, I prefer adding more lines to it to make the whole picture more comfortable. It is a matter of modifying the situation a little more comfortable, as you do in life. In life, erasing what you have done is just not an option. A line does not exist by itself, but in relation to other lines. Because of the 'wrong' line, I add other lines that I'd never thought of adding otherwise. And, it leads the drawing to the direction I'd have never ventured into if I had had perfect lines all the time. Judgment that is applied here is not the absolute kind. It does not decide
the line is right or wrong according to some universal standards. It accepts the line that has come to be, examines the effect of it in relation to the whole including how I feel about it, and explores a way that would make a greater balance between myself and the work in process. It accepts the tension and moves us to recover a balance. The subtle judgement in the imagination requires more kindness, patience, and commitment to what has come about in the interweaving with other bodies.

THE IMAGINING BODY

This chapter is mainly to illustrate the phenomenological pilot research whose focus was my felt experience in the painting processes. I looked into the painting process because there was something different in the way I moved through the experience, compared to the way I did in other parts of life. In other parts of living, I usually set a goal and worked on what needed to be done to reach the goal. In painting, there was more flexibility in the process of making.

I noticed there was a subtle sensibility that arises in the course of painting. It is a kind of sensibility that makes me responsive to what is present at the moment and what may be appearing in the interaction, rather than what I want to achieve in the engagement. Probably I had this sensibility all along and have repressed it. My hope was that, by re-discovering this sensibility, I might begin to live in the way I paint, and that this would help me imagine ‘a gentle life.’ I called this sensibility ‘the imagining body,’ since it was felt by means of the body and was as if the whole body instead of the thinking mind guided the imagining process.
The pilot research was an investigation into how the sensibility of the imagining body reveals itself and how I notice it while creating. I wanted to know how I would move forward without knowing where it leads, and how I would know that it is in fact the sensibility that I think valuable, and not something else. In other words, what I was seeking to know was a soft way of making evaluations while participating in a bodily engagement.

THE PROJECT STRUCTURE UNFOLDING

The structure of the pilot research unfolded with my experience. I could not begin with a set plan though I desperately wanted to. Because what I sought to know was the sensibility that guides me to proceed without setting the end at the beginning, the research structure also had to be formed within the guidance of such sensibility. The structure developed along the way. What I describe here about the project structure is my retrospective account of what I did, and how and why I did so.

Before starting the pilot research, I wondered what the structure of the painting project should be. Should I paint every day for two weeks? Or twice a week for one month? How much time can I devote myself to painting? Should I have a theme for the series of painting, such as my bodily feeling of the day? Should I be open about it and work on the theme that comes to me each day? What material should I use? Acrylic or watercolor? What kind of paper? What size? How many paintings do I have to have to make the project successful? Before starting the series, I did not know how to answer any of these questions. Questions piled up. I had no answers.

One day, I painted, not knowing that I was starting the project. A couple of days later, I wrote, "I just have to start the project soon." I did not yet know the project had been
started. The beginning was located much later. I painted on that day because I felt
something was trying to come out at the chest. It cried: Let me out, let me out! The strong
bodily feeling made me work with paint and paper. I was not aware at that time that I had
sensed the imagining body and responded to it. I might have been suppressing its voice. It
had been telling me to paint. I was thinking about the structure of the project and not being
able to begin painting. On that day, it claimed me so strongly that I had to jump into action.
Since then, I made one painting a day usually. Sometimes two. Other times, one painting
took me a few days. Still other days, I painted none. After each session, I wrote what I had
just gone through and attached the note to the back of the painting.

At the early stage of the series, I longed to have a set structure for the project. I
bought a book on spontaneous painting. I thought it would provide me some structure for my project. It contained instructions on which media to use, what kind of paper to prepare for, and what brushes to buy. When I was reading the book, an urge was felt: I want to paint! It was a stir of enthusiasm. I felt its surge several times. But, I was telling myself: Read it through, get appropriate materials, and I will start painting. I wanted to know the structure in advance. I was looking for someone or something that would give me a structure for my own painting project.

The next thing I recall is that I was in the shower. Something clicked, and a voice
was shouting: The structure of your painting will come from within the project, from your practice of painting itself. Be patient, and try what you feel. Feel, do not be afraid to feel, whether it is right for you. Why did I trust this voice, not the other one that told me to get a structure first? It is hard to explain. The two voices had different tones. The one that said, "Get a structure first," kept me fused with anxiety and frustration. The voice that said, "It
will come from my own practice,” energized my whole being. It released me from the place where I was stuck and let me move forward. Action came easier after this insight.

The media I used is watercolor. I remember, as I began to paint one day, I walked over to the art supply box. My intention was to pick up acrylic paints. I wanted thick quality in my painting. Bending down at the box, I gravitated toward watercolor. Without understanding the feeling, I took watercolor. I was amazed by my own action, with the feeling that I did the right thing. Here, I was aware of the imagining body that revealed itself suddenly and myself following the sensibility. My thinking said I wanted acrylic and provided the logical reason for it. At the box, I was pulled by watercolor and picked it up. I did not demand reasons for choosing watercolor. If I had asked for reasons, I would not have found any ‘good’ reason and might have ignored the feeling of the bodily gravitation towards watercolor.

I used newsprint paper that I had at home. It was large enough and easy to approach. Each time, I tore off a sheet of newsprint paper and held it before me horizontally, and then vertically. I placed the paper the way it felt more inviting that day. I let myself feel the empty paper, and my body, and then the paper again. It was hard to feel my body in front of the empty paper, even for five seconds. My consciousness slipped away from the emptiness and my body. I pulled myself back to the blank paper and my body. Sometimes, an image approached. Then, I followed the image. Feeling the image with my body, I looked at brushes and picked the one that felt right. Usually it was not difficult. But, sometimes I had to touch the brushes. I took one, felt that was not it, and chose another one. I did the same with pigment. Each time at the pallet, I asked colors. I listened to my body: Which one are you responding to? The brush went to the pigment that attracted it. Taking a brush and
choosing color were part of my learning to welcome latent voices of the imagining body. In fact, preparation for each session including putting up the paper and filling the water pot was also a ritual passage into painting which invited the imagining body to appear.

**RECOVERING THE MOMENTS OF PAINTING**

At the time I was ready to reflect back on the series, I had thirty-five paintings. My attempt to interpret the painting experience turned out to be three layered. It was a progression of my returning deeper and deeper into the experience itself.

At first, as I reflected over the paintings and the notes that I took after painting, I looked for some patterns to discuss. My stance as the researcher was objective. I was looking at the painting experience from outside. My mind was skimming the surface of the experience to abstract some patterns. I categorized what interested me about the experience into three themes. One was emotional change at each painting. I was curious how I was scared at one point and became joyful and peaceful at later stages of the same painting. The emotional changes might tell me, I thought, some patterns about the emergence of the imagining body. I made a chart of the changes in chronological order. Another theme that I picked up was a story of a particular bodily feeling. It started with the feeling of encagement, which I mentioned before. I felt something that had been encaged was trying to come out at the chest. It screamed, wanting to come out. The body hardened. Towards the end of the series, while I was meditating, my chest opened. It was an exciting reconciliation with the earlier feeling of encagement. I thought it would make an interesting story to tell. The last theme was on the sensibility of the imagining body, which eventually becomes the sole focus of the research.
The second layer of my attempt to interpret the painting experience began when I was asked in class: What do I wish to know the most in this research? I found myself answering that it was the imagining body. It was neither the way emotion changes during painting nor the story of the chest opening. I wanted to know how my body pointed and how I learned to respond to the body imagining. It is, to me, where the possibility of beginning an alternative way of life lies. At the second return to the painting experience, I chose three paintings out of the thirty-five in order to spend more time on each. The particular three paintings were chosen because they seemed to teach me more about the imagining body than the rest. My search became focused. However, I later noticed, my perspective as the researcher was still from the outside. I was objectifying the paintings and notes as data and separated myself as the researcher from them. I was reluctant. I did not know why.

Then, a sudden No! came. No, I do not want my writing to explain the painting experience away. I do not want my writing to pin down what it is all about. My paintings are not the material for writing. I want my writing to be a partner of my painting. When I reflect back on the painting experience, each painting must lead, not the writing. With the No!, I felt a shift. My attitude in front of each painting changed. The way I wrote changed. I began to talk to each painting. My writing began to be a conversation with it. I had to go much deeper into the moment of painting. I posted each painting, sat before it, and entered into conversation. Looking at it, I asked the painting: What was it like? How did I begin? How did the air of the night feel? I wrote the conversation down. I looked up at the painting again and asked some more questions: How did it feel as we move forward? This time, at last, I was feeling the imagining body again from within. I remembered more. More details
were retrieved. My writing began to celebrate each painting moment. I felt uplifted. The paintings were happy.

CONVERSATION WITH PAINTING #1

I sit before the painting. It is a flat object on the wall. The way I felt while painting was totally different. I started with geometrical circles that connect each other. I noticed I was bored. A faint call from a fine brush. Taking the fine brush in my hand, I felt a small person on a circle. The shoes came first. The shoes were walking. Then, the pants, the sweater, the hair, and the blue face. It was me. Something monstrous was awaiting me. The hair and the sweater were furiously blown by its energy. Fire! It was the fire from a cave. At this stage, it started to scare me.

What was scary? I can't really tell. The fear attacked me when I painted the fire. But, the fire does not seem to be the source of the fear. Nor was the fact that I felt the figure
walking into the fire was myself. Strangely, I was very certain that she was walking into the fire. For no apparent reason. The feeling that she had no choice other than going into the fire was immediate and a matter-of-fact. It was not a thought. It was there before I knew if. Between the brushes, I took a breath. I told myself how scared I was. That was the time when the association of the painting and my life came as well as many other thoughts. The association made sense. I was beginning to explore a new way of living, going into an unknown. Nonetheless, the feeling that I had at that particular time about my life did not seem to be the source of the fear either. It came from a much deeper place.

I told myself that I needed the support of my friends to go through this fear. Let's paint another figure. That might make me feel less scared. When I took the brush again, however, I knew that was not what I was going to paint. It did not suit. It did not feel right. Then, at least, I thought, I wanted inside of the cave to be somewhat calm and peaceful. Once the figure passes the fire, she will be okay. That was my hope and not what was going to happen on the paper. I tried to make the inside of the cave peaceful. Soon, I had to cover it with acrylic red.

I painted a black bird and a tentacle from the cliff. They were symbolic images, not felt images. I made them represent my feeling that the figure cannot go back and escape the fire. The creatures look frightening and harmful. In fact, they were not scary at all to me. They were signs and were peripheral to the dynamics of the painting. I knew less and less what else to add though I did not feel the painting came to a consummation.

A strong doubt arose. Do I really need to go through this? Am I tormenting myself? A few days before, I met a fellow student, who also had been exploring painting. She had showed me some of her paintings and explained her approach. I recalled what she was doing
as releasing her creative energy in a smooth way. Why do I have to torture myself like this? It sounded like a reasonable question. I might want to be more kind to myself. Why don’t I paint something more comfortable? Isn’t creating things supposed to make you feel good? But, at the same time, I felt that was what I had to go through.

I went for a walk. I needed to. The sun was still high. The bouncing repetitive movement of walking and the sunlight on the skin soothed me. As I walked, the tone of my emotion changed completely. I was again full of energy. I walked fast. I felt a strong desire to return to the painting. At home, I felt the fire became embracing and nourishing. So, I made the red fire wrap the figure. A warm feeling of trust.

CONVERSATION WITH PAINTING #2

I was following the contour of my leg in the mirror. The bare feet, which cross each other before the torso. The lines that my shirt made at my side. The space of the air made by the side of the torso, the arm, and the thigh. The brush was tracing the lines I saw. My fingers that lie on the knee. The right shoulder line, the chin, and the front buttons of the shirt. I was doing a contour drawing, with brush and ink. My perception admired what I was drawing. My heart lightened.

The letters above the figure say, “Without question, it's fun. It's fun.” It was a celebration of perception as well as what I perceived. Visual perception, yes. But, it was more than visual. What was it? I pick up a pen and sketchbook, and go over to the glass. A short contour drawing. No, it's not only visual. What is it that I'm searching for when I follow the lines? Silence... A few more minutes of contour drawing. Oh yes! Tactile. Of course, it's tactile quality that I enjoy so much when I draw. To draw is as if to slide down
my hand gently along the surface of the object, admiring the way it feels. It makes my chest warm.

To the self-portrait with ink, color was added. I ask the painting: What was it like to see color on my cheek, on my shirt, on my legs? No answer. I go over to the glass again and attend to color and tones. Reddish on the top of the nose. Orangeish on my right cheek. Pale, the left cheek. What am I looking for while trying to see color for a particular part of the skin? Warmth and coolness? Smoothness, roughness? Dryness? They are also tactile,
aren't they? Drawing and painting, to me, is like touching a precious object and admiring with my hands, in fact, with my whole body.

When I finished the piece, I was grateful for my own action. It was right after I had done painting for the day. As I walked pass the glass, the image of myself stopped me. I felt like painting it. Instantly, the urge was denied. It came back again and again. Again and again, it was turned down. "You've done today's painting," I told myself. "Your paintings have been from inside out. Making a portrait is representational, and that's something different." What is this strong voice that denies my urge to paint? Where does it come from? Painting one more piece does not harm anything, anybody. Why was I so restrictive about what I paint?

The call for a self-portrait with ink was not loud, but certainly persistent. I was very skeptical. Nevertheless, I tore off a sheet of paper and placed it before the glass. I was not sure if I was going to do it. I placed the ink and the color pallet next to the blank sheet of paper. I felt dizzy. I ate four cookies. Finally I decided to give it a try anyway. For the feeling of anxiety and suspension did not seem to leave me alone. Besides, I knew, at another level, that I would enjoy doing it. So why not have fun. With ink, I started with legs that were crossed. The tiptop of a large brush carefully moved on the paper.

In spite of the strong doubt, I was open enough to take one little action at a time. I sensed the call again and took another small action. That's how I reached the point where I finally started to paint. Attention to the call in spite of doubt. One small action at a time. I was learning to believe what I call the imagining body. As soon as I began painting, it was so easy. I was trying to stop the river that wanted to flow. It was hard work as well as frustrating. In contrast, how easy it was once I let myself follow it!
CONVERSATION WITH PAINTING #3

The night was moist. We were under the sky. I felt good. Three of us, friends who supported each other's personal growth, were there breathing the night. It makes a difference. It's not so much of what we talk. It's more that we are supporting each other by our presence. I had no worries. Trust. That was the tone for the night. We admired the night and the air by gesture. One by one entered each painting process. Each had its own path, very different. But, I knew that each path is similar in many ways.

I had no expectation of what I was going to make. I had no obvious urge to paint this or that. I was led by the other two women who had already started their journeys into painting. Slowly, I got myself ready. I went to fill my pots with water. I opened my paint pallets. The brushes were sunk into the water. Ready, they said. I let myself have enough space to move around while painting. Plenty of water with the largest brush. I wet the paper. I felt my whole body move. My arm was bold.

Having that done, I turned away from the wet paper and greeted the night again. I asked how my body felt. I breathed the night in, and out. Where am I at now? What are the things that are working through themselves in me? No specific answer... I did not know what I was going to paint. No image. No particular feeling that I wanted to bring to life, as far as I was conscious of. But, there was a feeling of trust. I was not nervous before the void. The brush moved very slowly. I enjoyed the sensation.

With little light, I could not see well. So, I cared less about color. I told myself it was like my life. I'm walking forward without knowing where I'm going. I enjoyed the darkness. The brush went to one of the darker colors. I guessed according to the location
that it was either dark blue or dark green. The brush made a line with knots. As soon as it appeared on the paper, it blurred and spread thin legs. I moved the brush, enjoying the blurring.

I made a thick earthy green horizontal line in the middle. I became a little uncertain, not having any sense of where it was going. I felt no urge, no excitement. A worry approached: I might not bring any sense of fulfillment to this painting. I did not like the feeling. A small bright square. It cheered me up. I let myself make one more, another, and many more bright squares. Heart-lightening.

Some squares were clear, others blurry. Some were bright and reddish, others were darker. I was seeking balance. What was the balance that I was after? Definitely, it was not arbitrary. It's a felt balance. It may be the amount of light. Maybe rhythms. Or, the three-dimensional felt space. I would make one square and immediately felt a need to make
another. I looked at the pallet and took the color that I felt was calling my brush. Turning to the paper, I found a spot which was suitable for it. I knew approximately how large it was going to be. Usually there comes a certain time when I become satisfied with what I'm painting. In this case, too, I was finding less and less calls from the painting and finally felt there were no more.

When I moved to work on the background, suddenly I noticed the darkness again. When I was making little squares, the darkness did not matter. Strange. I thought I wanted the background to be a yellowish earthy color. But, the feeling was not strong enough. I was not sure. I felt I was filling gaps. Not energizing.

During the session, I changed the water twice. After the second water changing break, I walked slowly around the painting, looking at it. Once, twice, and three times. I liked what I saw. It required more work from me. I did not know which part or how. Meanwhile, I went over to the other women and watched them painting. Coming back, I stood at the other side of my painting and felt a fine brush. A very small call. I took the brush. It reached the darkest dark brown after wandering over the pallet. I began a line slowly, feeling it. I had no idea where it would lead me. The feeling of trust came back. The brush with the darkest brown traced the orange and blue lines that were already there and moved further. I came to feel I wanted to make a bowl like shape, to embrace the bright squares. I felt the darkest brown lines making a bowl. The bright little squares gradually fell into a bowl. The painting was done.
SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAGINING BODY

Once I had retrieved the moment of each painting by having a conversation with it, once I had recovered the felt experience that was once mine, my act of abstracting characteristics of the imagining body did not conflict with my feeling for the paintings. In the Conversations, I located the parts where the imagining body was at work and where I was responding to its voice. I summarize them as follows. By doing so, I hope that when I am tempted to deny a small call of the imagining body, I will notice it, suspend the denial, and ask myself if I can trust the voice. I hope that I will welcome those voices more often in every part of my life as well as in painting.

The first characteristic of the imagining body is about its beginning. The beginning of the imagining body is a small voice. A faint call. This research has made me realize how often I automatically deny those small voices. In Painting #1, after making the circles, I sensed a call that pointed to a fine brush. I did not have to know what I was going to paint in order to respond to it. I just had to take the brush and bring myself to the position with which I could paint something small. As I took the brush, I felt a small figure walking on the circle. I did not know what the figure looked like but began with the shoes. As the shoes were done, the pants followed. Then, the sweater, the hair, and finally the blue face. Taking one little voice seriously and acting accordingly made way for the next small voice. If I had demanded more details or the whole structure in which the figure existed in the painting before picking up the brush, the small voice would have been silenced. When I respond to the small murmur that I hear at each moment, I invite more voices. It seems voices grow confident as I positively respond each time. The imagining body steals closer to me.
In Painting #3, in spite of the worry that approached me, I tried to be responsive to the smallest possible sign I might feel at each stroke. After I felt a bright square and painted it, the voice grew confident and flowed naturally. It said: Do this, do that, now this color, a little smaller, now make a large square here. I was at one with the imagining body. The imagining body was my body. I felt joy and peace as the voice of the imagining body was being fulfilled.

When I am feeling the imagining body very closely, it decides what the brush does. Feeling dreary from the fear in Painting #1, I wanted to paint another figure that would follow the one that was already there. I thought that might make me less scared. However, reaching the paper, I knew that was not what the brush was going to do. There followed another example of the imagining body deciding what to paint. I wanted the inside of the cave to be peaceful. I painted with cool colors. But, soon, I had to cover it with acrylic red. It couldn't be peaceful. As I break off from the brush, I think I want to paint something. With the brush, as I reach the paper, the imagining body does what it needs to do, bypassing my wants and thoughts.

Sometimes, two voices conflicted each other. How did I know which was the imagining body to listen to? In Painting #2, one voice said: Paint a self-portrait with ink and brush. The other voice said: No, that's not what you want to do. In Painting #1, one voice said: You are just tormenting yourself. The other voice said: You have to go through it. Eventually, I responded to one of the two voices. How did I know which voice to follow?

In both cases, one voice spoke to me from nearby. It was loud and persuasive. It wanted itself supported by other people's opinions. The emotional tone was doubt. It was skeptical. It spoke about rules. In Painting #2, it was concerned with the consistency of my
painting project, that is, what my paintings were supposed to be. In Painting #1, it showed a strong doubt by comparing what I was doing to what my friend was doing. The other voice, on the other hand, was simple. It was soft and came from somewhere deep. It was as if I was sensing echoes of the voice from underground. There was no support argument. It gave me no reason to believe itself. It simply said: This must be done or paint this. The latter voice is the imagining body. It is subtle but persistent. Ignoring it is like trying to stop the river that flows. I used considerable energy to stop its flow. Once I let myself respond to the voice, I noticed how easy it was to be guided by it. The voice of the imagining body leads me to action. Action released lightly.

The next feature of the imagining body is related to synaesthesia. Synaesthesia is, as David Abram says, “the overlap and blending of the senses.” According to him, it is our “primordial pre-conceptual experience.” He describes how our experience of the wind surging through the branches of an aspen tree is an intermesh of all senses: the sight of the trembling leaves, the delicate whispering, the muscles feeling the slight torsion of those branches.

In Painting #3, I was painting at night outside, with little light. At the beginning, I was aware that I couldn't see well. I was trying to see. However, during the time I became absorbed in making the little squares, the darkness ceased to be a problem. I totally forgot how dark it was. Being satisfied with the little squares, I began to work on the background and I noticed the darkness again. When I am guided by the imagining body, visual perception seems to stop playing the dominant role in painting. Making little squares, I was searching for some kind of balance. The words I used to describe the balance were “the amount of light,” “rhythms,” and “three dimensional felt space.” They indicate my
experience was auditory and kinesthetic, as well as visual. In Painting #2, when I enjoyed
the self-portrait with ink, my experience of it was also more than visual. It was tactile as
well. When I work in consonance with the imagining body, my experience of painting is
synaesthetic. In such a moment, I become the imagining body. I feel as if I am a whole.

When I started to write but was not describing the painting moments deeply enough,
my writing largely depended on the visual sense. My familiar style of writing probably tends
to depend on sight and emphasize the visual quality of what I describe. However, as it had to
deal with painting in which my vision was enmeshed with other senses, the way I write had
to change in order to retrieve the moments of painting. David Howes and Constance Classen
discuss how the ways the senses interact with each other before giving us access to the world
are different in cultures and among groups of people in the same society. I would add that,
in each activity of the same individual, a different set of senses is entangled or a different
sense is emphasized in its particular way.

The next characteristic of the imagining body is about the space where it arises. For
the imagining body to arise, calming down the mental and physical movement seems to be
valuable. In Painting #1, when the fire, the cave, and the creatures had been painted, I did
not know what else to add even though I did not feel the painting came to an ending. My
body was filled with fear. There was no space for the imagining body to appear. I had to
quiet down the storm as if to empty my body. As I walked, I found a quiet space within
myself and then could sense the imagining body again. The same thing can be said in regard
to writings. I wanted to be guided by the imagining body in writing as well as in painting.
Before starting to write each day, I did a contour drawing to welcome the imagining body.
Lastly, I would like to note that the imagining body moves discursively. It does not stay and point to the same direction through out each painting. It often disappears. When it's back, it points to another direction. It eludes the question of why. Most dramatically, in Painting #1, it pointed to almost the opposite after a walk. The fire became affirming and embracing. The imagining body arises in an interaction between my act of painting and the consequence of the act. The imagining body moves in response to the line I have just made. The direction it is drawn to is a response to the indefinable consequence of each action. It is always in flux.

POSTSCRIPT FOR THE PILOT RESEARCH

Throughout this pilot research, I learned to be more sensitive to the voice that came from what I call the imagining body. The more I was responsive to its voice, the more it revealed itself to me. To be responsive means not only to listen to it but also to act according to what it suggests. Where there is no action, there is no imagining body. It emerges in an interaction. Even when I did not sense a hint of the imagining body, courage to slowly move forward in spite of doubt was important. In such moments, I moved slowly, letting myself feel my own body and what was happening on the paper. I'm learning to trust that the imagining body will arise when it is ready and keep making a small action while trying to notice the smallest possible hint of it that may come at any time.

As the research reached toward its end, I noticed that the same imagining body was at work in forming the research project itself, as in each painting. To start the project, I had to, first of all, respond to the imagining body that said: Paint now. I couldn't determine the structure of the project beforehand. To develop the structure, what I had to do was to keep
moving along the project while trying to be in touch with the imagining body. The research gradually came to show its form, as I painted piece by piece, as I retrieved the moments of painting experience, and as I wrote what I learned from them. Since what I sought to know was the subtle sensibility that guides me to proceed without setting the end at the beginning, the project structure also was formed within the guidance of such sensibility.

Writing, also, turned out to be an important part of the research. As Marie Francoise Guedon, the anthropologist, found herself encultured by Dene mentors and telling stories of Dene ways rather than presenting the information in a schematized manner, I as the writer had to be changed in order to deal with the painting experience.\(^6^1\) It was a re-forming of my writing in its interaction with my painting experience.

POST-PRESCRIPT

I notice now the same sensibility is at work in everyday living,

[one]

A voice is felt at a distance. Ever so briefly, it touches me: stop and wait until July 17. But then, quickly, heated arguments demand my attention, and the voice is no longer there. The background feeling was that the voice was right, that I needed to stop. I was pressing myself too hard to the point of extreme frustration in search of an apartment. The jet lag from the 14-hour flight was being pushed aside. It wasn’t ‘important.’ With such an attitude, the apartment search, or any project that seeks quality, would not be fruitful. But, the foreground of my emotion and thoughts was heated. The next one might be a beautiful apartment that is affordable, and if you did not press on, the opportunity is missed. So, this day again, I read
through the columns of the classified ads. And, on the phone, making an appointment, I
resented that I had to drag myself to what would most likely be an inadequate building, and
into further exhaustion. But, what if this is the one and I missed it? The vicious spiral fueled
itself and drained me to tears. That harshly heated furnace kept my consciousness from the
soft voice that was suggesting to stop.

After a few more weeks of wrestling, the self-feeding furnace began to cool down. In
those brief moments in which the voice touches my awareness, I would consciously attend to
it. The voice was saying: look at this beautiful garden, sit on the deck, hear the wind going
through the tree leaves above you. Although temporarily, you are staying at a house with this
gorgeous garden that is in the full bloom, the sun is warm, the bees appreciate the cosmos,
the cat chases the bees. Invite friends to this garden, serve lunch. Responding to the voice
helped me to open a space in which I rested.

Meanwhile, with that restful atmosphere, other business was tended to smoothly.
Around July 17, I received a series of phone calls regarding accommodation. Within a short
period of time, without trouble, I moved into a new apartment.

[two]

Two voices were debating in my head. One said: Let's try a different route to get your
morning coffee. I was walking to the center of the market, a few steps from my door. And,
this voice was telling me to turn around to walk the opposite direction.

Why? That route is not as cozy as this one. I do not want to walk on the main street
with honking cars and rushing people. I prefer side streets, and moreover it is a roundabout
way to the café if I took the opposite direction.
The voice that urges me to go the opposite direction was compelling. I was resisting it, but at some moment, I found myself turning around to head in the other direction. There, half a block before me was my friend walking toward me.

The reason why I felt like taking the other route was not as important in the end, as the consequence of the action that I did not see beforehand, that is, in this case, meeting my friend. I ponder; the reason why I think an action should be taken might not be as significant as it may seem. These events challenge me not to fix my intention with the reason previously thought and to be open to the unfolding phenomena that my action leads to.
This chapter is on the ascending facet of the imagination. All that which has been revealed and unfolded in this study and my life is now giving me a feeling that something may be forming.

In our time, it is difficult to talk about ascending. Many of us are skeptical in regard to forms. Postmodern cultures are good at deconstructing forms. We are no longer sure whether a new form of knowledge, expression, or life is any better than previous ones. Richard Rorty, for example, sounds as if he rejects the possibility of evaluating one form against another. “I have no deep premises to draw on from which to infer that it is, in fact, better -- nor to demonstrate our own superiority over the past, or the nonwestern present.”

But, forming and the formulated are two different things. The formulated is, as Rorty describes, the boundaries of a logical space in which we infer answers from premises. On the other hand, forming is our act of incarnating newly unfolding meanings, bringing about a new atmosphere to the place where we live. Forming happens in the mode of the imagination, criss-crossing the boundaries of logical spaces. As Rollo May says, “it is not form itself that is being accused [in our cultures], but ... the conformist, dead kinds, which actually do lack an inner, organic vitality.” The imagination as a mode of being in the body nourishes forming the new as well as deconstructing familiar things that are limiting our organic growth. We as imagining bodies slowly release the forms that lack organic vitality and embody a new form that which invigorates and rejuvenates us.
Ascending occurs in varied scales. For example, the previous chapter presented the experience of a forming in a small scale. It showed the process of descending and ascending as I imagine through the pilot research until it comes to completion. Indeed, as we have seen, those two facets of the imagination are inseparably intermeshed in the actual imagining. This division into two facets is only for the sake of discussion, so that this inquiry can demonstrate some kind of insight that is organized and easier to grasp.

Ascending is equally as important as descending. It’s unhealthy and unethical to descend into the realm of the imagination and not come back to create a provisional framework on which ground we live with other humans and non-humans. It is drowning in the imagination’s world. Ascending is the ethos of the imagination, as Kearney puts it, to meet the face of the other to live together, while descending is the poiesis of the imagination that allows us to accept that which has not be seen and that which has not be heard. Without descending, the imagination becomes coercive self-righteousness with fixed premises. Without ascending, it becomes an escape from daily life and a failure to create a grounding on which we live with others in the world. Descending and ascending are complementary aspects of the imagination as a mode of being in the body.

In this chapter, my hope is to phenomenologically trace the ascending aspect in respect to what is unfolding in my life. Ascending represents the process of incarnating a form to come to terms with that which is unfolded. Through forming, we become integrated with that which is glimpsed in the imagination’s world, newly unfolding meanings. Ascending is creation and re-creation of the sense of who we are and how we belong to the world.
A CONSTELLATION OF IMAGES

In previous chapters, voices have been discussed. The voices guide me into and through the imagining process. They are the sensibility of the imagining body.

Now, besides those voices, I notice images that claim my attention at this stage of imagining. Currently, a couple of images are swirling around my consciousness to claim attention. The first half of this chapter will present these images. Three images will lead the way in the discussion of the ascending aspects in the imagination as a mode of being in the body. I am aware that the three images presented here are uneven. Two are from my memory, images that once lived. The other one is not. Its details await until the moment of manifestation. But, I treat them equally, on the basis that they are images that swirl around my consciousness as the imagination approaches the phase of ascending. The latter half of this chapter reflects on the relations of the images with the voices.

This is done by tracing the footprints of the imagining body in stored written pages and painted images. A certain correlation between the images and voices will be found.

IMAGE [ONE]

*Her hair is tacked at the back like a small white onion. The traditionally structured forest house is rural Japan. She lives there, and gardens. She paints, cooks, and practices yoga. Everyday is meditation. At the front of the house are vehicles among the thickly hanging tree branches. The ground is bare. The narrow road before the house is not paved, either. The vehicles parked by the house are an olive green van and a white sedan. In the house, some figures move lively through the open space, and in the kitchen, prepare meals for themselves. The wooden pillars and beams are black. Adults, some are younger than others. All are*
younger than this old woman, who is around 85. She is tiny and has gravity. They cook, sit around, eat, chat, and laugh. And, the old woman, who is me, tells them to keep on and disappear to retire for the day. These are people who come and join her in painting, yoga, and gardening.

Images are scenes that are whole. They are complete in themselves and do not point to anything else. Each image is fragmental, as much as whole, for it is not yet interpreted in the continuity of events and meanings. It is felt with significance. But, I do not see how it signifies. I do not yet know how the image relates to my life as the way I know, or what I know as reality. And yet, they are, apparently, already part of myself at some level.

My response to this kind of images used to be literal. I looked for a way to put myself in a situation that the images indicated. Then, when the method did not succeed, I turned down those images as false visions, or 'the ideals' that would take you to the insurmountable gap between what is and what ought to be. Now, my attitude is neither taking it literally nor turning it down. A new attitude is being cultivated.

FORM COMES ABOUT FROM WITHIN

An inexperienced former like me tends to hurry to find a form for what is unfolding in her activity. She thinks: What would be an appropriate form for these images? Should I move to rural Japan? Should I start teaching yoga and painting? When she thinks in such a way, her forming is divorced from the unfolding images. Ascending in the mode of imagination is not giving a form or adopting one to mold the imagining process. A form gradually emerges from within her practice of the imagination.
Ben Shahn had a young friend who wrote poetry in his high school years. When he was entering his junior year in university, he told Shahn that he'd stopped writing poetry. The young friend explained, “There’s so much that you have to know before you can write poetry. There are so many forms that you have to master first.” Shahn wondered whether at university it was made clear that all poetic forms have derived from practice. “[] In the very act of writing poetry he was, however crudely, beginning to create form... whatever measures, rhythms, rhymes, or groupings of sounds best suited his own expressive purpose could be turned to form - possibly just his own personal form, but form... it too might in time take its place in the awesome hierarchy of poetic devices.”

Forming requires patience. As we feel unsettled and confused without structure, we tend to hurry. Maria Harris says that good advice was given to her when she was learning pottery. The teacher said: “A form exists within ... and you are to find the form. But, you are to find it in the interchange with the clay; you are not to impose some prior vision of what is already there. So, take the time, concentrate, work with the clay and let it work with you, and in time you will discover that a form is taking shape. You will be able to feel it, to sense it, to intuit it.” Ascending, that is, forming requires our “capacity for living in uncertainties, mystery, and doubt,” without hurrying to impose a form that is external to that particular interweaving. Trusting the process, we learn to sense a “force that moves within ... a situation that is distinctly ‘other’ and not subject to control.”

AS IF EFFORT IS CRUDE

Images elude effort. It is as if the effort to make them manifest is too crude. Effort is too systematic to bear the ambience that is growing with the images. Perhaps the problem was
the way that I used to focus effort. The images are not to be taken as premises from which we infer what is needed to be done. An image does not imply an enclosed logical space. They are the essences of being, metaphors; they are open. Once the analytical consciousness infers how to make the images happen and effort pushes forward with the intention set, our palms are down. What follows will be within the framework of our current understanding, which is what we want to grow out of.

The images are to be treated tenderly, with the attitude of the palms up. In the gesture of acceptance and reverence, we say we do not understand all but will accept. Then, the images continue to hold roundness. The magical roundness that is bearing the ambience. The eyes that see those images need be soft. The gaze needs to have the breadth that allows the roundness. The roundness is the quality that cradles that which is gathering with fragmental images. Perhaps, my eyes can learn from the round eyes that I never forget. The eyes were not focusing upon my face. They were looking through me, and swam about a few feet behind my head. More absorbing than looking, as if letting themselves absorb.

A GAZE

Her gaze was penetrating me. It was the most definite one. It showed her knowledge, which I did not possess. The wide brown eyes were as if fallen love. They seemed to meet around one or two feet behind my head. Do I have something very sweet there?

The hall was filled with rows of cribs after cribs, and in each crib was a precious manifestation of life that somehow came to live in this building. A girl was screaming with her tiny fist tight, gasping in air, breathing out tears. A little body was expending energy. I walked between the cribs to her. My hand went over to her crunched tiny-ness and smoothed
the rough atmosphere around it. Ten minutes, maybe less. The crying face has no more screams. And the last drops of tears, and then no more tears. She wonders a moment. Then, the body loosens. Her head, and chest and limb muscles coordinate themselves purposefully, her arms push the thin mattress and hold two crib bars to achieve a standing position. Our eye levels are about the same. We are standing closer than arm’s length. She is looking into me and through my face. I am being taken back.

I ask what it was that she was so intensively looking at. I ask if that part of myself, which I do not yet know, can be brought forth to the surface of my consciousness. But, it may not be the location of focus that is significant. It may be that she was sensing with her whole body in a synaesthetic manner. Perhaps, her body was opening to absorb.

ANALYTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS & PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

This work is a phenomenology. Unless otherwise noted, the term ‘consciousness’ in this paper refers to phenomenological consciousness.

In the discussion of Merleau-Ponty, Thomas Hanna distinguishes phenomenological consciousness from analytical consciousness. Analytical consciousness, what we have always called consciousness, is in fact only one way of being conscious and thus perceptive. It seeks out to identify something. It is the consciousness that made Sartre say that consciousness is always consciousness of something. Also, it locates that something by finding it in the field. It is the consciousness that necessitates the concepts of time and space. Analytical consciousness is ready to pick up something out of the whole of that which is perceived. Or, it is more correct to say that it is picking up something all the time. The rest of the field is out of focus and faded into the background.
On the other hand, phenomenological consciousness takes in the whole field of sensation. It does not readily break up that which is perceived into the focused and the background. It does not try to understand. Phenomenological consciousness lets itself bask by the flowing undifferentiated and unidentified. And yet, I notice, even though phenomenological consciousness does not look for anything or not try to understand, there are times in which a shape, voice, smell, or an indefinable feeling hints at it. Phenomenological consciousness is the consciousness of the palms up. It receives. What beckons phenomenological consciousness, however non-sensical or unrealistic it may be, gives us a persistent feeling of significance and wonder.

Phenomenological consciousness releases the head area from the dominant task of figuring out what is important and what is trivial, and opens access to the increasingly larger part of the body for such discernment. It is as if the whole body, which was made open and thus available by releasing the tension of the head area, attracts what is most adequate and needed for itself at that precise moment. It is the experience of disclosing the honest totality of being and being experienced by the world that attracts what is simply most needed. To perceive is to throw oneself into the matrix of perception, in which one assumes perception of what presents itself. You disclose yourself to the infinite sensory modes of the sentient world and open the wholeness of your being.

I remember a conversation with my friend. The conversation was on our experience of painting. What I usually do, after putting up a sheet of paper, is to feel my whole body before the blank paper. It’s letting my body feel the emptiness, until something comes up. My mind quickly slips away from the blankness and ponders over other things. So, I gently pull my self back to the empty paper again and again to be with this body. I gradually settle
down and begin to feel attraction to a certain pigment, brush, and movement. My friend was curious and asked: Do you mean to scan your body before the paper? No, I said. But, I didn’t know how else to explain. It was just different from letting the mind scan the body like a scanner.

Reflecting back, what I was beginning to articulate was phenomenological consciousness. The 16th century Zen monk Takuan explains well what I was trying to articulate about this consciousness. It is “not to try to localize the mind anywhere but to let it fill up the whole body, let it flow throughout the totality of your being... When the mind fills up the body entirely, it is said to be right; when it is located in any special part of the body, it is partial or one-sided.” I wonder, when the mind fills up the totality of our being, if there is a feeling of “the identification of the external and internal.” And, I wonder if that is the kind of space in which the imagining body appears.

The soft gaze of the Indian girl returns to me. Her gaze was an embodiment of what the Zen monk Takuan describes.

MATCHING THE NOW MOMENT

Elizabeth A. Behnke discusses a principle in somatic education called ‘matching,’ which relies on phenomenological consciousness in creating a somatic shift. Matching is the way in which one can recover the dynamic ongoing nature of the bodily experience by consciously inhabiting some feature or feeling of one’s own body from within. Through paying full attention to what is there to feel without making mental comments about it, the I-it relationship with the body melts into a wholistic experience of being the body. Then, there often comes a spontaneous shift or release in the way I am as the body, and I become the
body of a slightly different feeling. The shift takes place generally toward the direction of
greater openness and ease.

Now, I pay attention to the tension at my right abdomen, the place where I had two
surgeries at age 5 and 6. There is no “me-ness” under the skin. It is static and withdrawn.
My hand, touching the left side of the abdomen, lightly penetrates the skin and explore what
is beyond the boundary. The left hand, in my imagining consciousness, goes inside the
pelvis and holds its content, gently. The right hand, however, doesn't. It stays outside of the
skin, being unable to penetrate. I feel a sheet between the hand and the right abdomen. The
energy field of the hand and the energy below the right abdomen do not merge. But, as I
match the tightness, the tightness becomes an ongoing phenomenon. It becomes something
that is constantly manifesting. This attitude leaves the door open for other possibilities to
emerge as well as the tightness. The body begins to remember its dynamic nature.

In matching, the key is to have no expectation of what will happen next. It opens
doors to new possibilities. “[N]ot knowing what will happen next ... keeps me from limiting
myself in advance to my repertoire of known possibilities.” Known possibilities are usually
some versions of the same old pattern that I want to change. Matching is simply being with
the feeling or situation without aversion, rather than trying to fix it. It allows the wholeness
itself to lead the way.

I remember, in the summer when I did nothing but drawing, I kept telling myself: I
don't know what I'm doing. Those were the words my friends had dropped in a conversation.
I adopted it. It became my mantra. I needed it; for otherwise I would have worried too
much what producing child-like drawings might and might not lead me to, overwhelmed by
anxiety and frustration, and it may have given up drawing all together. I needed to stay on the cutting edge of the not-knowing.

Matching is to pay attention to peripheral experiences that we normally ignore. They are cracks of perceptions, bodily feelings that we tend to push aside. Mindell calls the attention that notices these peripheral experiences, ‘the second attention.’ It is the same kind of attention that we discussed in Chapter 2, which guided me into the imagination’s world of unfolding details, and the attention that was used to follow the imagining body in Chapter 3. The Indian girl’s soft but intense gaze, as well as phenomenological consciousness discussed earlier in this chapter, is also the second attention. Using the second attention, we follow the sensations whose existences have not been honoured, and feel them as they move and change.

MORE IMAGES

I would like now to present two more images that stay with me these days. Tracing these images is as if to ‘match’ the imagining body that I am, which is emerging to shape and re-shape daily life.

Image [two]

*Upbeat rhythm of a band was rendering a festive atmosphere at the market. When I arrived at 8 a.m., the market was already lively with people moving about the fish and vegetable markets and people setting up their artworks. My body absorbed the energy, and I set up my booth with a cheerful mood. Two friends were visiting me from a nearby city. They gave me and my canvases a ride to the market. Their presence gave me strength to believe in what I*
was doing. People stopped by at my booth to see my artworks. I was on the other side. One by one they came and treated me as an artist. They did not have doubt. Exposed to visions that see me as an artist, I gradually become an artist.

How much do you want for this painting? A woman with a baby stroller was pointing to an orange and green woman torso. Her torso had the same firm quality. I was not prepared. “You should know how much you want for each painting.” Timidly I stated a small amount. She said she would frame it nicely and hang on the bathroom wall, for it will fit perfectly there.

I was shaking. My whole world was shaking as if my physical presence in the world had just made a big shift and touched the desire of my soul. My soul shivered with joy and my self convulsed in shock. My understanding was not prepared for such a powerful shift. The familiar perception of who I am and how I belong to the world was shattered. I needed to get used to the expansion of my identity.

One day before the display, I was afraid. I felt careless. Paintings and public display felt suddenly worthless. They might see what I’m doing as worthless. Now, I felt generous, trusting, and deeply fulfilled. The volume of support and love that I received was stretching the limits of what I think I could possibly receive.

Two days after the art display, the shift in the location of my being baffles me. The bodily feeling is as if my being occupied temporarily an unfamiliar place. As if I can either accept it and be there, or I can sweep that event under the rug and place photos in my album of a wonderful memory and return to a familiar place. Active acceptance is required to let the unfamiliar locus continue to be. Depending on how much the solid part of myself can
yield, the unfamiliar locus that has just come to existence will disappear from my consciousness, made invisible. A soft existence does not force.

Image [three]

I was mesmerized by the soft lay of light that fell on the dirt ground, on the particles of dust in the air, and on small shoulders. The lama's robe is the only color in the kitchen. I see a body on the ground. The lama splashes water on it. When it moves, I can tell she is a middle-aged woman. Neatly set pans on the dirt stove behind the light. A hot tea glass in the shade on the table. The lay of sun from the ceiling lights the edge of the table and moves very slow toward the tea. I feel I belong to the scene. It is a dreamy feeling.

At Cagbeni, a remote village of 3,500 meters in altitude, I look for a place to sit for tea. The house says 'restaurant' on the 2nd floor windows. Passing through the gate, I hear chanting. I forget about tea and follow the chanting voice to find where it comes from.

Walking into the house and up the stairs, I encounter no one. At the doorway to the dark room, I stand. A woman sitting closest to the entrance turns to see me. I gesture to ask if I could come in. She invites me, with a gesture. A man, further in the dark, notices and offers me a chair, where I sit. A few gestures and chanting. Layers of light in the dark.

Then, Nande's silhouette. Villagers must have told him where the woman traveler was. He found me. I no longer belong. I feel I woke up from a dream. The global economy spreads a matrix in our relations. We unpack in the room that was shown.

On the rooftop, I see a woman lying, groaning. A few other women and children surround her. Her swollen thumb is the center. I realize the crouching woman in the dark kitchen was her. It was a purification ritual. The sun is above us. There is nothing to do in
this village. There is nowhere to walk to today. I sit down beside the woman on the rooftop, and extend my hand toward her thumb. She extends her swollen thumb toward me. My fingers meet her thumb.

Watching the clouds drift by and the changing angle of the shades, my fingers touch the thumb to soothe the thumb’s heat. I imagine water running through the thumb. I imagine, water cooling its heat. I imagine water removing impurity. A boy pushes a low wooden stool to me. I sit on it, and return to her thumb. I feel I belong again. The matrix of the global economy shrinks, and I notice the sky and the wind. The women who surrounded her are back in the kitchen. Their easy and total receptivity made possible my radical trust in what I am doing. An elderly woman brings a bowl of soup for her, and sweet tea for me.

The temperature has dropped. The woman of the wounded thumb is loosening the tension. I watch the occasional clouds, feeling the imaginary water clearing the pus in the swollen thumb. Four hours has passed. Nande has wondered off a long time ago.

The next morning, a woman approaches me as I finished washing my face. She is smiling at me. My eyes go to the dressing on her left thumb. A basket is on her right arm. I did not recognize her. She is much younger than I thought. She raised her thumb and said “good, good.” We are simply two happy people. And, she goes off to join the rest of the family working in the field.

Nande, my guide, and I leave for Muktinaht. The woman’s thumb is bleeding. Men and women are gathering around her as the running water washes her thumb.

A NOTE

I note that the three images are concerned with how I belong more peacefully in the world.
THE ALREADY FORMED

Now, let me turn to what has already been manifested. This is the realm that we call the past. Reviewing the written pages and painted images from up to four years ago, something odd strikes me. That is, there are times when I live an image that had stayed with my consciousness months ago.

[one]

I wrote: If it is painting that helps us imagine and form our life, what kind of painting? Watercolor or oil? Abstract or impressionist, realist, or surrealist? If watercolor, which color, which paper, which lines? What kind of movements does the body make? How does it interweave itself into other part of our life? To our memories, emotions, thoughts, and relationships?

Painting was an example in the discussion of forming. It might as well have been music or cooking or starting a business. I had no intention to begin painting then. I do not remember being particularly good at arts in my school days. In less than a year, however, I was painting. Now, every time I paint, I ask the imagining body: which medium? Which color? Which line? What movement? When not painting, I ask: How can painting be part of my life? What does it teach me about how to relate?
I wrote: Can I invite people for collective learning? It would be a series of sessions through which each participant chooses a particular project and engages in it, while sharing experiences of imagining a form.

In 1997, when I explored the possibility of collective learning, my thoughts were on what I would have to do if such collective learning were to be facilitated. I felt responsible and burdened. My body was held tight. A year later, collective learning gave birth to itself. It was born out of my own needs to be supported, rather than for the sake of research or facilitating a learning process. I was engaged in drawing and painting, which were totally new ventures to me. I needed support from those who were going through a similar creative imagining processes in order to stay in my imagining engagement on a daily basis.

I wrote: I am a woman who works in the dark. A dark room. No light. Many bodies. Stones, ground, earth, trees. But no light. Bodies are moving. They are dying. A gloomy room. I am a woman who works in the dark. I am not scared. For I see light. Where do I see light? I see it within. I see light within. I keep working in the dark. Many people. No words. Pre-linguistic sounds comfort me. I work in the dark. I see bright colors in the dark. Strange because colors are aspects of light. But I see colors in the dark. They are bright. Floating into each other. I smell colors. I touch colors. I walk through colors. I work in the dark.

One year and a few months later, I was at Kalighat in Calcutta serving dying people.
NOT SO MUCH OF CAUSALITY

From the third person objective perspective, one may be interested in placing these images and events, and discuss which was the cause and which was the effect. One may say that it was the image of working in the dark that intrigued and inspired me to pursue the possibility of working at the Home for the Dying at Calcutta. Or, you can also argue that because my psyche longed for such experience serving other people, the image was stirred up in the subconscious and surfaced with certain stimulation. Both interpretations are right in their own ways.

Somatically, and phenomenologically, however, to discuss which caused the images and events and in what ways is not of interest to me. C. G. Jung, who studied synchronicities, argues that, in certain areas of sciences such as biology, only one example is needed to establish the existence of a phenomenon, no matter how unbelievable it may be. In a phenomenology of the imagining process, too, I believe, that examples of the existence of embodied experience, however odd, should be acknowledged.

Here, I would like to simply acknowledge the existence of those phenomena described above and trace the footprints of the imagining body during the periods between the images and the events. In order to find the traces of my imaginings, I will return to the stored piles of written pages and painted images.

VOICES IN RELATION TO IMAGES

Returning especially to the written pages during those periods, it is notable how much I valued ‘voices’ of the imagining body in daily living and how much I reminded myself to be responsive to them one voice at a time.
Voices, as in painting processes, are bodily sensations of hearing or felt attractions. They are moment to moment vectors that my body lives, specific claims for the precise moments' (non-)actions. They do not indicate the broader contexts in which the actions can be understood as being reasonable. They say: This is good, why not do that?. Stop that now. Go this way, and that way etc. The vectors of the voices are very short. It does not point to the desired outcome.

The image [three] of a woman who works in the dark was received tenderly. It was initially taken as a metaphor of a way of life. I wrote that the frustration came from my holding on to the desire to be under a spotlight. That I was in the phase in which I worked in the dark. But then, slowly I was guided to actually serve dying people. One friend mentioned about her friend’s trip to India. A man at the next table at a café was showing photos from India. My journal reads on that day: Perhaps that's where I want to go. Still another friend suggested to me the possibility of taking a month off after the conference in Hawaii that I was planning to attend. Noticing that Mother Teresa was a woman who worked in the dark, I read her biography. By being receptive to small 'voices,' I gradually began to feel that I might actually be going there. At the banquet in the Hawaii conference, I unwittingly muttered to a stranger that I might leave for India. It turned out that he had spent 2 years in Nepal and a year in India. I felt a gentle but firm push on my back. Go. One day before the flight, someone who sat next to me on the bus gave me the name of a good guesthouse in Calcutta where he had just came back from. Everything was easy and smooth, as if someone was sending me a warm invitation and preparing the road for me.

On the other hand, the image [two] of collective learning was quickly taken over by my ideas of how to make it happen. I felt burdened and nervous. The idea was put aside.
But, underneath the ideas, there was a strong current of my heart longing to be part of such a supportive group. I talked about it with my friends who were engaging in creative works. I found out that they, too, were feeling the need for support. We decided to meet. Thus, a collective learning manifested, but in a quite different way from I had initially thought.

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Now, I am bringing myself very close to the thought that images beckon what might be coming to exist and that it is by way of responding to the voices of the imagining body that I witness the images gradually unfolding their substantiality.

SUMMARY

Ascending in the imagination as a mode of being in the body is incarnating a form with which we come to terms with the unfolded. As follows, I summarize the aspects of ascending that have been articulated in this chapter.

1) Ascending is forming, not the formulated. It takes place as we criss-cross the boundaries of logical spaces.

2) The two facets of the imagination, that is, descending and ascending, are intermeshed in the actual imagining.

3) Ascending is the ethos of the imagination which locates a grounding to live with others, while descending is the poiesis of the imagination that uncovers what has not been acknowledged. The two facets of the imagination are complementary to each other.
4) Ascending is forming and re-forming the self and how we relate to the world.

5) Form will emerge from within the interweaving process of the imagination.

6) Ascending requires patience and the capacity for living with uncertainties.

7) There is something other than our effort and control that moves within the forming process.

8) Treat the unfolding images with the attitude of the palms up, and they will keep the quality of roundness that cradles what is gathering.

9) Phenomenological consciousness is the consciousness of the imagining body. It has the aptitude to notice when claimed by the unknown.

10) Phenomenological consciousness releases the head neck area from the dominant task of figuring out what is important and makes the whole body available to discernment.

11) Not knowing what will happen next is a key in the forming process in the imagination. It keeps us from limiting ourselves from our repertoire of known possibilities, which is usually some version of the same old pattern that we hope to release.

12) In ascending, images beckon what may be coming to exist. Through responding to the voices of the imagining body, I witness the images gradually unfold their substantiality.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE OPENNESS OF THE IMAGINING BODY

THE BOUNDARY DISSOLUTION IN THE IMAGINATION

This chapter focuses on understanding the open nature of the imagining body. One of my purposes here is to phenomenologically trace the felt experiences of the openness of the body. Those felt experiences are drawn from all parts of my daily life observed in these few years as much as from the painting processes. The body's openness will be discussed from three angles: the opening to the ground, the opening to the sky, and the opening to other beings.

Another purpose of this chapter is to gather conceptual insights, so that we can rationally grasp this openness of the imagining body. I will draw ideas that have affinity with my phenomenological observations from philosophy, mythology, anthropology, psychology, and mysticism, so as to show that the concepts of the open body have been developed in various traditions. I hope that what has been unfolded in this inquiry becomes integrated in my understandings with the help of the precedent thinkers' wisdom. I also hope, to a modest extent, to re-contextualize and thicken the already existing concepts with my observations and reflections.

The last part of this chapter will ponder over the question of what might be beyond the body's opening. I speculate that there lies the source from which the imagining body issues. The body, by connecting itself to that which is beyond the boundary, becomes the imagining body. Thus, boundary dissolution is a necessary condition for the imagining body to arise.
THE BODY'S OPENING TO THE GROUND

As the imagination deepens, the imagining body stalks toward me. I would, at first, notice it by its soft voice that suggests to me to take certain (non-)action. Responding to them, gradually I would sink into the space in which the imagining body invites. I would feel the imagining body very closely guiding me to one movement after another. And, I would feel that I am at one with imagining body, and that I am the imagining body. For example, adding bright squares in Painting #3 was such a moment of the total oneness with the imagining body.

Being guided by the imagining body or being at one with the imagining body, I am looser than my usual state, and the boundary between the I and the non-I is blurred. In such times, my felt bodily sensation is that I am, first of all, open to the ground. For instance, voices of the imagining body are often felt as if the echoes from the underground move through my body toward a specific action or thing or person in its physicality. The pilot research on the painting process in Chapter 3 notes qualities of the imagining body's voices. Among them is that they are felt as if echoes from the underground.

The imagining body stalks me outside of the painting practice as well. One afternoon, I was letting myself bask by the beauty of yellow flower bushes in a neighbour's garden. After a while, my posture changed. Something fluid moved through my body, from the headneck area down to the chest and through the pelvis and legs, and it penetrated into the ground. The lukewarm fluid moved through inside the torso and legs. The inside of my body opened up like a tube, to receive the caress, and the boundary between body and the ground dissolved. The sides of my skull toward the back expanded slightly, the muscles behind the ears relaxed. The forehead was broader. The neck released the tension and
recovered its length. The upper body was light, while the feeling of the body grounded to the earth was still there.

At the fringe of my consciousness, I noticed that I was no longer looking at the flowers. My eyes were softened over the flowers. That reminded me of the almond eyes of the Indian girl. I was taking in the whole field of what was before me, absorbing rather than looking. The vision ceased to be the dominant role in perception, in comparison to just a few minutes ago when I was walking toward the flowers admiring their beauty. What is felt now is more synaesthetic. The whole body became one sensory organ as if to receive what is being emanated from the flower bushes. In other words, it is as if I was offering myself to merge with the environment.82

I note, retrospectively, that usually I tighten the head, neck, and pelvis areas. That might be limiting myself from receiving what can possibly be given.

THE BODY'S OPENING TO THE SKY

There is another sense of openness in the imagining body. Besides being open to the ground, I as the imagining body am open upward. For example, the image [one] of myself being an old woman in Chapter 4 is felt cascading softly over the body, penetrating into the skin, especially of the head neck areas. I ask myself: Does the image come from the physical body or from the external source? I notice that probably that line of speculation is not on the mark. Let me open myself to the possibility of non-boundary.

I reflect on the strong image that I experienced two days after the art display, which was presented in Chapter 4. The image was vivid since it was lived only a few days ago. The vividness of the image made me feel as if I were half-living. And, as almost living the
image, my perspective point was literally higher. To put it in another way, the image claimed me from the point a little higher than my head. It was as if I resided in an unfamiliar locus that had just popped up. I felt that the centre of my perspective was a foot higher than the top of my head, a little toward the right side.

From the objective standpoint, the locus can be taken as my understanding of who I am in relation to others and emotional attachment to that understanding. This experience of shift can be said to demonstrate how powerfully our self-understanding is influenced by the other people’s perspectives. However, my experience of the locus was primarily sensed as a subtle but tangible location where I existed. At the new locus, I felt elastic, light with wings, at little higher from the ground, vulnerable, generous, deeply fulfilled and loved. In the familiar locus, I felt solid, stable, closer to the ground, sober, knowing what to expect, cautious, skeptical about the new locus’ softness, responsible, and of the world.

There is another example of the body opening towards the sky. At Dr. Lee’s office, my consciousness awareness resided, again, higher, for a moment. A Chinese doctor, Dr. Lee, finished treating my neck and shoulders. I plopped up from the bed and stood up. I was looking strangely down on Dr. Lee. That was an unusual perspective, as if I suddenly became a foot taller. Attending more to this feeling, I noticed it was as if there was a large circular field on my shoulders, whose diameter was twice as large as my head’s. And, the unusual perspective was the perspective from that circle.

I thanked Dr. Lee, and he gave me some instructions. When I looked for the unusual perspective, it was not there any more.

I wonder, when the ancient spiritual documents talk about a higher consciousness, if that description wasn’t at first felt bodily, and then later interpreted as symbolic.
THE BODY'S OPENING TO OTHER BEINGS: MERGING BODIES

The third facet of the openness in the imagining body is the horizontal opening. Since its direction of opening is horizontal, it often involves inter-personal experience or exchange with non-human beings. When I notice the body’s opening, the body feels larger than what I know of as the physical body. The boundary of the skin loosens, and there is a sense that I am being merged with other bodies.

The merges can happen with non-human beings as well. For instance, in Chapter 2, I presented my felt experience of exchange with the trees after drawing. That was the first horizontal opening that I experienced in the imagining process. At another occasion, while conversing with someone, I felt the field of the listener's body expand toward me, penetrate my body as if to scan, and settle back into her physical body. The sensation was not what we call empathy. It was primarily a sensuous event and not an emotional one, though it was emotionally gratifying to feel the merges of the bodies.

Once, I was in a mountainous region and spent hours looking at the hills. I noticed an odd feeling. As I watched people walking along the small paths on the hills, there was a tactile feeling of their footsteps on my flesh. Sparse cars crossing the land as well as trees were felt moving and existing on my flesh. At that moment, my body must have merged with that of the earth. Satprem asks “whether one could leave the cocoon without dying, ... whether one could be both the part and the whole.” For those moments of the merge, I feel that we are part and whole already.
Below, I will trace a series of somatic experiences which took place during several months in 1998. It is an experience of the heart opening. The [four] in the series involves an inter-personal somatic exchange.

[one]
Something unknown was screaming in my chest. The chest was an iron cage. Under the chest bones, I could feel it there. *Let me out!* Pressing the chest bones from inside. I recalled a scene from the film, *Alien*, where a creature bursts out of the human chest. The body tightened, frightened.

two]
A month later, in meditation. It began with the feeling of my hands that happens often. The hands became very warm with a prickling sensation. They soon felt stuffed, as if an unusual amount of energy had piled up. The sensation expanded beyond the boundary of the skin. At the same time, there was a feeling of holding something immense. When each field of the hands swelled as large as a laundry basket, the two became joined and grew before my torso. Then, this energy field swallowed me. I lost control. That which is immense took over my body. Bright lights from above penetrated through me. Very warm. The breath was fast and deep. It was marked with a feeling that is similar to sexual excitement. A union, I thought.

Then, something was coming into my chest. The top of it had already penetrated the boundary of the skin and chest bones. It was semi-transparent, contoured by bright light. It took a long time to let myself open to it. With exhalation, I released the tension the body held onto. With my breath, pre-linguistic sounds followed. The body began to shake as the
lid of a pot when the water is boiling, and then was thrown back on the sofa with one last jolt.

What had come into the chest spread smoothly and filled the body, as if warm water.

It was now within. I saw large red eyes. They belonged to the something that came in. With the red eyes, I was embracing my friends. I reached out my hands and held each person's cheeks. Unwavering compassion, peace and deep security.

[three]

On the same day, walking on the street. The chest area felt wide open. I felt a big empty hole. The wind of the universe was blowing into the heart. I felt connected to the universe at my heart.

[four]

Six months later. It was a sequence of tiny sensations. First, I noticed that the heart of a person was open toward me. Then, the two hearts felt connected. It was a subtle but bodily felt sensation. I might call it a tactile event. The next second, I saw a column of white light between the two hearts. At the conversational and affective levels, our relationship had not developed very much. The strong connection took place at the somatic level. Deep warmth filled my heart. I felt protected, light, and free.

THE SKIN BOUNDARY DISSOLVING

We believe that the skin is the boundary between the I and the non-I. Perhaps, that is only one way of perceiving. The strong mental boundary has been established at the skin level. And it is functioning as if it were the only reality. Valery says that "an idea, even if
thoroughly absurd, ... never fails to goad the mind in some way.⁸⁴ And, it goads the way we perceive reality. The idea that the skin is the limit of who we are must have developed in relation to the way we perceive ourselves as separate entities.

In some cultures, the boundary of the skin is not as tightly defined as in ours. For example, Kit Griffin points out, in his study of the Moroccan sensorium, that the sense of touch in the Moroccan culture is a mediator between the human world and the world of the spirits, the invisible.⁸⁵ Touch is used by the spirits to contact a person, and by Moroccans to protect vulnerable ones, such as an infant and the mother after giving a birth from unwanted spirits. The Moroccan skin boundary must be looser than ours.

Having attended the felt experience of the body, I came to notice the skin boundary loosens. The series of somatic experience in the previous pages are rare ones. Smaller experiences of the boundary dissolution take place more often among day to day activities. I described how I felt the boundaries were dissolved with the ground, upward, and horizontally to other beings. During drawing the merges of the self and the object is experienced. After yoga, the leaves and branches from the windows penetrated into my body. Their swaying movement and vibration were experienced as if part of myself. Now, the boundary of the skin is felt to me as if an ancient door that had not been opened in hundreds of years. The heavy door opened, making sounds. The mysterious darkness awaited.

Years ago, I attempted to propose a broader notion of the body. The working definition was: It includes everything that seems to be happening in, at, and around the physical body when we perceive. In relation to this working definition, what I am exploring through this phenomenological inquiry as a way to learn is what might be possibly happening in, at, and around the physical body when we perceive. I emphasize the importance of the
part, ‘when we perceive.’ Valery says “everything that is masks for us something that might be.” Yes, usually so in perception. The imagination as a mode of being in the body, which is a conscious exploration of the inhabitation of perception, guides us into a further plunge and attentive interweaving. That’s where the unforeseen, something that we did not expect, emerges and grows. In other words, it is through sensing that which is more attentively and kindly that we can possibly glimpse that which might be.

**THE DREAMTIME**

The Australian cosmology of the Dreamtime has affinity to the body’s openness. In the Australian Aboriginal myths, the world was believed to be created through the Ancestors’ journeys across the land. In the Dreamtime, when the earth itself was still in a half-wake pliable state, Ancestors, such as the Wallaby, the Jew Lizard, the Snake, and the Honeyant wandered singing across the continent. The original events and encounters in these Ancestors’ journeys formed the landscapes of waterholes, hills, lakes, and rocks. At the end of the journey, each Ancestor went ‘back in’ to rest as a particular feature of the landscapes such as a hill. In their cosmology, those landscapes keep their presence, because the Ancestors are perpetually manifesting themselves from underground. The people participate in the cosmos’ autopoesis through singing the ancestors’ songs over and over again.

The myths of the Ancestral journeys, the Dreamtime, is the story of Creation. It is at the same time, a cosmological perception in which things are ever continuously emerging from the potential dreamy indeterminate state into full manifestations, including animals, plants, and people alike. In other words, the perceived world exists because it is perpetually emerging from the realm that is apparently hidden from us. All the things that exist and have
existed in material forms “had been made in secret beneath the earth’s crust … all the white man’s gear – his aeroplanes, his guns, his Toyota Land Cruisers – and every invention that will ever be invented; slumbering below the surface, waiting their turn to be called.” The Dreamtime is, thus, not time elsewhere separated from the present, as the past and future are in the modern cosmology. The Dreamtime is right here with us and with all that we perceive, but in a slumbering metamorphic state, in the process of emergence. It is in the process of the imagining.

Let me return to the openness in the imagining body. As the imagining body, my body experienced is softened, and the boundary between the ground and I is dissolved. This experience of mine fits in the Dreamtime cosmology that any physical existence is part of the landscape. My body is felt as part of the ground, that is, of the landscape. Being part of the landscape, the imagining body can be considered as the aspect of being that is emerging from the indeterminate at every moment. The imagining body is the part of us that is constantly manifesting from what is slumbering and invisible into the tangible and visible. The images and voices of the imagining body that have been discussed in the previous chapters can be thought of as part of this vital movement of the emerging aspects of our existence.

THE SELF AS BASHO

Kitaro Nishida’s philosophy, which bases the foundation of being in spatiality, offers insights for us to reconcile with the phenomena of the open body. Kitaro Nishida’s concept of the self as basho is close to the body that is us and that opens itself to the ground and moves to a certain (non-)action.
Basho, in the ordinary usage of the Japanese language, means place or space. Nishida differentiates two kinds of basho in which we experience; one is the basho of being and the other the basho of nothingness. The basho of being is the space in which the self-conscious human being experiences the world. Residing at the basho of being, we bodily perceive the external world and through action we actively relate to the world. This subject-object relation to the world is the experience of the everyday self. Basho of being is the space which our everyday selves experience. The basho of nothingness, which is central to his philosophy, is the invisible basho that exists in a hidden dimension, just like the Dreamtime. It arises for us when we let the everyday self disappear by releasing the fact that the self is self-conscious. In such moments, the self descends and disappears to the dark depth of the basho, and the basho of nothingness is revealed for the non-self-conscious existence. Then, the basho of being, which is constituted of form and matter, disappears to us, and the self becomes the self as basho. There, the roles of perception and action are reversed. Perception becomes intuitively active, and action becomes passive. The self that is no longer self-conscious is compelled to release certain (non-)action issued by the flow of integral energy discharged from the hidden dimension, the basho of nothingness. Unlike the basho of being, the basho of nothingness is an infinite region.

By relating the openness of the imagining body to Nishida's concept, the imagining body can be said to be the body that lets itself descend and disappear in the normally concealed dimension. The body, then, is no longer the heavy matter that resists the self's action. The imagining body is us that is not self-conscious. It moves, as it becomes an embodiment of the larger consciousness.
This concept of Qi helps us grasp the phenomena of the open body without dichotomizing matter and spirit, the body and the mind. In Chinese philosophies and practices such as medicine, Qi is considered to be the source of all that is. It is a kind of energy that underlies all phenomena in the universe, including substance as well as function. It flows through us, plants, animals, mountains, rivers, boulders, and the sky, equally. The body, or any form that is tangible and visible, is considered condensed Qi. When it is dispersed, we call it nothing; other portions of it are the emotional, mental and spiritual, or the wind or ambience.\textsuperscript{90}

All forms as well as non-form is understood as the degree in difference of how condensed or dispersed Qi energy is. In this perspective, the imagining body can be considered as the less condensed and more fluidly moving form that we are at the time of the imagining process. The fluidity of Qi movement makes us feel as if the boundary of the body is not as rigidly defined and bounded within the skin as it usually feels to be.

**A DREAM OF HANDS**

Here, I would like to interject a description of a chronic nightmare from my childhood.

In the beginning, I always notice myself holding a sphere on my hands. There is no sense of weight. But, it grows. It grows bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Its growth is unbearably slow. I stretch my hands not to drop it. Then, it begins to turn. I become extremely tense. No voice. The hands feel like swollen balls. The sense of holding is lost. The boundary between my hands and the sphere disappears. But, I know that the sphere is now huge. I look up and sense only the bottom of it. The constant slow motion and growth of the sphere. Uncontrollable, and vast.
The image of this dream and the sensation of the hands visited me occasionally in adulthood, with a hint of the panicky feeling. In 1996, the image of the expanding hands and the sphere came back for the last time. I was driving along the highway. My hands gripped the wheel tighter, to feel the pressure. I felt the contraction of the arm muscles, but no sensation of the hands. I had no hands. The body showed no aversion. I was not the least in panic. The vision kept track if the hands were doing their job.

Since then, the image does not come back, as if it had finished its task. Had the image been working with my body, for two decades, to teach me something? Without me knowing it? Has my body learned something? Just like pain and fear disappear in acceptance,91 the image left me when my body showed no aversion. What was it of the image that I had been afraid of? Was I trying not to lose control? Was I afraid of the loss of boundaries? Sansonese says that in various myths within the Indo-European tradition, there often appear three worlds, such as heaven, earth, and hell.92 In these mythologies, the division into three worlds appears at the Creation of the perceptual world, of the human realm. The appearance of the perceptual world disrupted "the unity of the mystic seas," the undivided oneness before Creation.93 Practices such as yoga, he says, are attempts to recover the undividedness in our experience. Was I afraid to lose the perceptual world? Was I afraid of dissolving into the unity of the mystic seas, and the loss of control?

**BODY'S LEARNING**

The body accepted the image that kept visiting me from childhood. In fact, it is not true to say that the image is gone. For I now enjoy the energy fields of the hands that expand beyond the skin boundary and the eventual loss of the senses, in relaxation and meditation.
The image did not go away. It became part of my embodied self. The image ceased to be a threatening one that visits me from nowhere at any time. It is reconciled as an image that symbolizes peace and compassion and that I can call forth as I wish. Something similar to what the Mother calls learning at the cellular level might have happened.

The Mother, who explored the consciousness of the cells through her embodied presence with Sri Aurobindo, discusses cellular learning. According to her, the body is now being controlled by ‘the physical mind,’ which is our habitual perception of what the body is and does. But, the cells themselves have a greater potentiality than what the physical mind dictates. If we let the physical mind release itself and the cells recover their original nature, we will slowly learn to live a life that is ‘divine.’ The concept of cells that learn is akin to the body that opens itself to the invisible and integrates what might be. Coming to terms with the previously threatening image of the expanding hands and the sphere may be a small incident of such learning of the cells.

Cellular learning, or the body’s awakening, is a very long process. There are thousands upon thousands upon thousands of cells in our body. So, the experience recurs again and again, and in another style. I am thinking of the heart opening presented in the series of somatic experience. ‘The physical mind’ resisted at first. No! My chest cannot be cracked open. What I felt at the chest might be what the Mother calls the lower power, “which brought about a material ability to separate oneself from [the physical mind].” Interestingly, the lower power did not override “the physical mind.” I had an option to push that away. I surrender to it and let it lead the experience. The body was convulsed, seized by “the panic of unknown.” The response was the opening of “a suffocating shell.”
The sphere that swallowed me before the heart opening is the same as the sphere that grew on my hands in the childhood dream. It is also the same as the energy that piles up at my hands in meditation and yoga. This sphere may be my body's idiosyncratic way of learning to reconcile with something that is larger than itself, something that is not subject to the self's control.

WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY

Let us for a moment ponder upon the 'out of body' experiences that people discuss in various ways. I wonder if they discuss two similar but different somatic experiences without differentiating them. I ponder on the feeling of the unity and bliss that I have had (not many) in drawing or in my heart opening/ connecting experience, and then try to place myself back in the memories where I was escaping from the body in pain, fear, anxiety, or an anticipation of them. I would call the former the finer awareness of the body. The awareness in which the body is looser thus felt larger. Many say that they have no body in the deep meditative state, as they feel the body is the universe and the universe is the body. That is a feeling of no boundaries. Qi is flowing much less obstructed, from within to without, from without to within. There is smoothness in the flow to the extent that one does not sense the distinction between the internal and external. It is my belief that this finer awareness of body is rooted where the physical body is.

'The escape from the body' is different. The physical body is tight with fear or pain. Qi is stagnated. There is no smooth exchange of Qi beyond the skin. While escaping from the body, the core of oneself is away from the physical body. The physical body is not a safe place. The pain and fear are too threatening. The psyche is in exile. The body's breath is
shallow. It does not accompany the blissful feeling of unity, or deep security. The salient feeling that I seem to have in 'the escape from the body' is suspension, waiting to come back.\textsuperscript{98} There is a feeling of distance and indifference about the well being of myself and others.

'The escape from the body' has the quality of 'borderline personality disorder.'\textsuperscript{99} Peter defines 'borderline personality disorder' as the case of an attempt at self-transformation that went astray due to the lack of support during the passage. Like in traditional rites of passage, borderline personality patients prepare themselves for the keen experience that challenges the presence of the body through fasting, ingestion of drugs, physical deprivations and mutilations. Unlike in the traditional rites of passage, however, they are not guided by the initiation master. Our cultures do not have a developed support system for such rites of passage. While acceptance of pain and fear is crucial in completion of the passage, the lack of guidance and support make such acceptance difficult and the completion less likely. They fail to go through the threshold, which is marked by the symbolic experience of death and rebirth. They are "fixated in transition",\textsuperscript{100} in exile from a physical body that is unsafe.

**INTUITION THAT AFFIRMS THE EMBODIED PRESENCE**

A faint memory. I remember myself as a child wondering how I did not mistake the body when coming back into it. (And, I told myself: It is the scar on the stomach.) I suspect that my psyche was often in exile from the physical body.

Comparing my intuitive experiences of childhood with those of recent years, I notice a difference in quality. My intuition in childhood was often threatening to my existence. The intuition was probably issued through my fear and anger. As it threatened, I habitually
escaped from the physical presence. On the other hand, the recent intuitive experiences are warm and affirming. At intuitive moments these days, I am aware of the presence of the body. A certain kind of bodily sensation accompanies intuitive insights. Sometimes, it is a feeling of a veil dropping from the throat to the bottom of the chest. I feel clear and light at the heart. It leaves me with a sense of down-to-earth certainty and deep security. It accompanies a feeling of connected-ness and belonging-ness.

Can I say, then, that when we are present in the body, intuition, which "points to the possibilities of the whence and whither," affirms our embodied presence in the universe? And, this intuition that affirms our presence in the universe is what I am experientially recovering in this study of the imagining body. To put it in another way, the openness of the body in the imagination is safely connected to the whole at the location of the physicality.

VIBRANT & LIGHT BODY

There are two more phenomenological observations to mention concerning the body's openness. One is the vibrant quality of the open body. The other is the lightness.

Normally, the body subtly vibrates. In pain and fear, it is held tightly and becomes less vibrant. Or, if we continuously hold the body tight, the body grows pain and illness. I tap my sacrum to ease menstrual pain. Vibration can ease the pain and makes us relax. A baby stops crying when picked up and walked.

Being guided by the voices of the imagining body and gradually becoming the imagining body, my body is noticeably more vibrating than usual. The openness in the imagining body coincides with the higher frequency of vibration of the body, or a body's part. After the heart-opening experience, I wrote that I felt the wind of the universe at the
heart. At that time, I didn't know what else to describe. There was no wind. Remembering the sensation, I now say that I was feeling the cells at my heart vibrating at a remarkably higher frequency than usual. The mergence of bodies, such as the heart connection, might be the resonance in each other's vibration.

Occasionally, the vibration is so momentous that it is almost shaking or convoluting. At the heart opening, my body quivered. Sometimes, when I breathe into a yoga posture, slight shaking happens. In such moments, I feel that a tiny breakthrough, or opening, is at hand. A breakthrough to what, I don't know. I remember my aunt. At the moment of death, her body convulsed for a long time. Her mother muttered: Is she cold? The nurse said: It happens when you die. Dying is a prominent example of the boundary opening, in which the boundary of the body dissolves all together.

The last quality of the open body that I would like to mention at this chapter's end is lightness. When it is open and vibrates, the body feels light. Among other things, yoga, meditation, and massage bring me lightness. After the heart opening and at the yellow flower bask, I felt extremely light. I am inclined to say that my body was light. Paying closer attention to what I mean, I notice that by the light body I mean the feeling of lightness in weight as opposed to standing against gravity. But, the consciousness was also light in those moments. By that I mean clarity of mind and a lack of worries, confusion, and aversive emotions. Again, I realize that there is no separation of body/mind.

With the experience of lightness, the impression that matter is divine gradually grew within me through this inquiry. As the Mother says, "[i]n itself, each thing bears its truth ... so luminous, so clear - and when you touch THAT, everything falls marvelously into place." Drawing served me as a gateway to get in touch with the lightness and divinity of
matter. Every detail was experienced perfect. Matter is already perfect and always ready to merge with us. The question lies on whether we are aware of it, whether we pay attention to it. Our careless-ness and haste may be depriving the experience of divinity in matter.

We think matter, or the body, is heavy. But, heaviness may not be an inherent quality of matter. It might be our mental makeup that is rendering matter heavy. Heaviness is experienced when we hold down the vibration due to pain, fear, any kind of aversion, or an anticipation of them. The heaviness of one's own body may be cutting ourselves off from the vibrational, light, divine relations of matter.

BEYOND THE OPENING

I have been writing about my experience of merging into that which awaits when the ancient door of the skin boundary is opened. Metaphorically, the darkness beyond the ancient door is the waterworld; and my experience is descending into the waterworld, exploring, and coming back up to daily life. As I slowly explore the waterworld and our body frays into it, a small area around us becomes illuminated. I learn to dive farther. The illumination of that which previously was dark is the ascending aspect of the imagination. In rare occasions, light illuminated so much that I was swallowed in vast light and did not grasp what was being illuminated. It was an experience of light. Perhaps, dark and light refer to the same thing, in this context, different manifolds. We call it dark when we experience it as darkness, the unknown. In odd moments, it is experienced as pure light. The dark of the waterworld is also the dark of the body. The opening is to both directions simultaneously, to the inner and outer. More precisely, at this point of perception, I no longer can differentiate what is my body and what is not my body. The dark inside is the dark outside.
What is the dark? It is a big question. Although the question is outside this dissertation's scope, I would like to dwell upon what might be beyond the boundary opening with a feeling of wonder to close this chapter. What is beyond the body's opening? I described it earlier as 'something immense' and 'the universe.' My approach to what is beyond the opening is existential. I approach it from a human perspective. Approaching from a human perspective, my impression is closer to the Australian cosmology. The Australian cosmology of the Dreamtime implies that what is beyond is that which is indeterminate and metamorphic, that which is in the process of being formed. Mythologically, it is Chaos before Creation. Sansonese called it 'the unity of the mystic seas.' In Japanese mythology, too, before creation of heaven and the earth was the dark unformed waterworld.\textsuperscript{105}

The primordial universe was water. There was no \textit{ame} (heaven) no \textit{tsuchi} (ground). It was before Gods and Goddesses. Yin and Yang were not separated yet. The water was dark and jumbled. Very slowly, the clear and light began to spread above and became \textit{ame}; the heavy and dense precipitated and settled down as \textit{tsuchi}.\textsuperscript{106}

Beyond the boundary opening is the jumbled waterworld where that which is not yet formed is spreading and settling toward what might be in manifestations.

In Shingon Buddhism, there is a concept that the body of \textit{Mahavirocana} is the universe itself, and that the perceptual world is the phenomenal form of \textit{Mahavirocana}'s body.\textsuperscript{107} That which is beyond the boundary opening in this perspective is \textit{Mahavirocana}. Any form or body is the abode of the Buddha. The human body also is in its potentiality the
body of Mahavirocana. This potentiality is called Sokushinjobutsu, “becoming a Buddha in this very body.” To bring forth this potentiality, the cultivators practice various kinds of meditation, reciting mantras, and forming mudras. Those practices guide their awareness into the dark of their body, of the unknown. Eventually, “[l]ight radiates from beyond this darkness,” and flows into the cultivator’s body to fill it. They are liberated into the blissful body of light, the body of Mahavirocana.

The fact that Shingon Buddhism uses the word ‘the body’ of Mahavirocana, I believe, shows us the emphasis on the substantial (however subtle) nature of Mahavirocana. Mahavirocana is not an abstract idea. It is considered and experienced as real. There is a limit to our sensory organs, and our mind tends to hold on to what is known. But, like Australian aboriginal people believe and really perceive in their imagining consciousness the unfolding Ancestors in the landscapes, Mahavirocana is also experienced and perceived by Buddhist cultivators, and by us laypeople in rare occasions.

C. G. Jung’s concept of ‘collective unconscious,’ which is defined as being made up of archetypes, is an interpretation of what is beyond the body’s opening from the psychological point of view. When in the imagination’s world and the body’s boundaries are loosened, and contents of the collective unconscious or archetypes would penetrate us. Archetypes can be part of what unfolds in the process of the imagination. However, I do not assume that they belong to the inherent quality of what is beyond the boundaries. Since what this thesis concerns is not confined to the field of psychology, what is beyond the body’s opening in our discussion is also not limited to the perspective of the psychology of human beings. What is beyond the body’s opening in this thesis is closer to the Buddhist idea of
‘the empty mind.’ It is said in Buddhist traditions that the true nature of ‘the mind’ is empty in the sense that it is void of forms.\textsuperscript{111}

From the European phenomenological tradition, Merleau-Ponty reflected upon the question of what is beyond the boundary opening with the notion of “the flesh.”\textsuperscript{112} The flesh, to him, is a sort of textural expansion that occurs at perception in the coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body. That textural expansion is not what I form but what forms me. It is the invisible that forms, sustains, and renders all that is. The flesh is “the inauguration for the fact”\textsuperscript{113} for what is visible and tangible.

Darroch-Lozowski says that “the uncoded world always exists.”\textsuperscript{114} The uncoded world is her word for that which is beyond the boundary opening. Being in touch with the uncoded world, we experience another ontology, another way of being. She claims, and I agree with her, that what we experience through this other way of being is neither illusory nor unimportant. On the contrary, the uncoded world and our experience of it are “unfailingly tied”\textsuperscript{115} with our nature as human beings. It is where our urges for change, aspiration for a greater balance, longing for belonging, and yearning toward the beautiful issue from.

\textbf{TIME \& SPACE THAT DISAPPEAR}

Today, there were many things I have to do, and I felt I was not doing any. The feeling of the body was the lack of energy and sluggishness. Writing the thesis, doing the laundry, cooking supper, mailing letters, going shopping. As the list goes on, I unwittingly make sure to stay out of those to-does. It is aversion. I am refusing to merge into any of what is related to those activities. I use a lot of attention and energy to distance it. I tell myself: \textit{There will}
not be enough time after all. There is a meeting to attend in the evening. Only 6 hours left before the meeting, and before the meeting, I need to finish cooking and eating supper, which gives me only 4.5 hours. What can I do in 4.5 hours? Nothing important. Qi is stagnated and the body is tight. Consciousness is identifying itself with that heavy mood. The mind tricks itself and tries to be in charge of all that this body does. The mind is distancing itself from the body. Time is limited. In fact, Time is a creation of the distancing consciousness.

Time expands. Its expansion coincides with the body’s opening. The consciousness coming back to where the body is allows us to be merged with what is present. What is present may be coffee on the table, the aroma of coffee, the texture and taste of a toasted bagel with butter, and how I feel in the stomach. It could be snow on the branches that creates contrast of dark brown and white, and a bird singing, and more birds, oh there are a flock of them, I didn’t notice that… And footsteps of one’s boots on the slippery snow, then the crisp clear air that I breathe in, the warmth of the breath out. Then, putting the laundry into the laundry bag, and washing the rice in a pot, the cold water and rice through the fingers. Meanwhile, time expands like a balloon. And, it embraces me. Now I am not against time. I am part of it. In this sort of moment, what is this expanded time? It is not separate from space, which is also opened up and into which the body that is me frays. Merleau-Ponty describes this phenomenon as “this very time that is space, this very space that is time.”116 As C. G. Jung says, “[s]pace and time… are probably at bottom one and the same.”117 What is embracing me is that which is vitally emerging and manifesting. It is Darroch-Lozowski’s ‘the uncoded world,’ and it is what is beyond the boundary opening.

More often than not, we locate ourselves at the point which we call ‘the present,’ and talk and think almost exclusively about ‘the past’ and ‘the future.’ This division of time is
not an absolute one. As I feel my right abdominal area, I know ‘the past’ is present. That is the area on which I had surgery twice when I was about six. I do not remember much about the experience. Many of the mental images that I have around it are secondary. Memories are of the stories that my family have told me about it. However, the body remembers firsthand. It keeps the event in itself, though physiologically the problem was solved decades ago. The body’s experience of it is always of the present, not of ‘the past.’ When I pay attention to the right side of my abdomen, I feel existence of the somatic memory, which creeps right below the surface of consciousness. Sometimes it tries to come out, such as when I practice yoga or when I read about a body in pain. A panicky feeling surges. I feel vulnerable and scared. I push it aside.

We embody the fact that we were water creatures and made adjustments to live on land. The middle ear. Fish do not need a middle ear. For “sound skips easily from water to tissues that are themselves mostly water.”118 We, on the other hand, live on land while our tissues are mostly water, like fish. The middle ear was a response to the fact that less than 1% of sound gets through the border of air and water. The middle ear amplifies the vibration of the sound that has traveled through the air so that we can hear. Jourdain says that, prior to coming on land, “certain fish had developed breathing sacks in the millions of years spent at water’s edge, and some of these would evolve into middle ear chambers.”119 Thus, it is not strange to think that we embody the memory of water. As I become aware of vibrating matter, the memory of water comes back. When I explore the mergence of bodies, I have a bodily sense that I am immersed in water. The body must resonate more easily in the water than in the air. For tissues are mostly water. The sense of lightness of matter may be also
related to the memory of the waterworld. ‘The past’ is within us. Certain images tap into the memory, and ‘the past’ opens up.

Sagan and Druyan describe how ‘the past’ that we think is distant is present in our bodies. DNA contains the record of life and carries us back “not a few generations, but most of the way to the origin of life.” We are unaware that we embody the origin. Reflecting on the feeling of unity, I wonder if it was possible because of the origin that is alive as part of my body. A memory of the state in which things were not as evolved and separated.

The body’s opening allows the consciousness to loosen the boundaries of Time and Space. When the body is open and we are the imagining body, ‘past,’ ‘present,’ and ‘future’ are all here as part of the landscape, and as part of the imagining body. What took place and will be taking place are presently in the body. In the body’s opening, space also dissolves. We have discussed the issue of space in terms of skin dissolution. Being part of the emerging landscape, what is happening at this body is not solely personal. What is taking place then is part of the process of a greater whole, to which I belong. We are part of that which is beyond the boundary opening, which is continually unfolding an implicit future into manifestation. I recall the moments in which the imagining body invited me to a chain of events and exhilarating experiences with great ease. In those moments, the boundary of the skin, that is, the space boundary is looser. The door to something beyond personal resources is open, and I feel my endeavour is supported, as if the road is prepared for me. Then, the body’s opening does not in fact harm the self. On the contrary, it opens the self to venues that it did not know. It creates a new possibility for easier emergence of what might be pregnant beneath the apparent.
Gebser discusses our era as the era of integral space-time. His sign for such existence is a sphere that is space-free and time-free. Space-free and time-free means that the sphere is an infinite one. This sphere symbolizes that which is beyond the body's opening. "IMAGINE THE INFINITE SPHERE. HOLD IT IN YOUR HAND." It is okay that you feel incapable of holding it because it is true that you cannot. You are finite, and the sphere is infinite. Indeed, it is the sphere that holds you. This phenomenology as a way to learn was my journey to come to terms with this sphere. The sphere that grew on my hands in the childhood dream, and the sphere that swallowed me in meditation before the heart opening. My learning was to allow this sphere to swallow me and embrace me, and to come to know that it is the natural order. By being swallowed by the sphere, that which is beyond us, my vibrant quality is rejuvenated. And, it also recovers the animated quality of matter that I believed was inanimate.

The palms up, which was discussed as receptivity, is also an offering gesture. It is an offering of my presence to that which is beyond. It is an offering of myself to a greater whole by serving as a vehicle for a certain action or direction that is needed at the moment. As the imagining body, we serve as vehicle through which something that is issued from the beyond, whole, is expressed in its wholeness.

SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the openness of the imagining body. It also offered some speculation on that which is beyond the body's opening and the issue of time and space that is implicit in the experience and conception of the body's opening. I would like to summarize the points that I explored about those issues as follows.
1) Being the imagining body, I can feel the opening of the body to the ground, to above, and to other beings horizontally.

2) The skin boundary, which we normally think as the limit of the I, loosens in the imagining process.

3) Synaesthesia is a mark of the open body.

4) The imagining body that is open is the part of us that is constantly emerging from this indeterminate slumbering toward manifestations.

5) The openness of the imagining body means the body's spontaneous descent into the hidden dimension. The open body allows the integral flow of energy discharged from the dimension carry itself non-self-consciously.

6) The openness of the body in the imagination shows the fluidity and the less obstructedness of Qi energy that moves in and through the body.

7) The openness of the body releases our strong grip on the certainty of the known world.

8) The body opens through learning at the cellular level and what was threatening can be integrated into us and become a symbol of peace and compassion.

9) The opening of the imagining body can take place only when we are safely rooted to the physicality of the body. It is different from an escape from the body that is unsafe. The acceptance of fear and pain can be involved in the body opening.

10) When the body's presence is affirmed, the body can open. When we are safely rooted to physicality and the body's opening occurs, our intuition affirms our presence in the universe.

11) At the body opening, bodies merge into each other.

12) The open body is more vibrant than our usual state.
13) The open body is light. At this point of experience and reflection, we can no longer differentiate the body and consciousness. Thus, the consciousness of the open body is light as well.

14) Beyond the body's opening is that which is indeterminate and metamorphic, spreading and settling toward what might be in manifestations. It is the inauguration of what is visible and tangible.

15) That which is beyond the body's opening is not abstract; it is real.

16) That which is beyond the body's opening always exists, whether or not we are aware of it. It is unfailingly tied with our human nature.

17) Time and Space dissolve in the body's opening. It is the domain of integral space-time. In regard to time, both what took place and what will be taking place are present at the open body. Spacewise, what is happening to this body is not solely personal but also a process of a larger whole, to which I belong.

18) The body's opening creates a previously unconceived venue for the self. It opens up a new possibility to release what might be.

19) The infinite sphere is a symbol for integral space-time perception. I learned, in this phenomenology as a way to learn, that the sphere, that which is beyond the body's boundary, is not subject to control. I am part of it. By merging into it, I recover livelihood within myself and without.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

THE PATH OF THE IMAGINING BODY

HOW CAN I BELONG MORE PEACEFULLY?

The original question of how something new begins in life brought me to the theme of imagination. By interpreting phenomenological observations in my own process of imagining new terrain, I have explored the conception of the imagination as the mode of being in the body. This inquiry aspires not only to explain our having images of what is lacking from the current situation but also to yield a way to move toward the vision of our heart in this day to day world. It has been an existential contemplation on the imagining process. I navigated in and through the imagining process, which bridges between who I am and what I envision. In spite of the personal nature of this inquiry, I believe that it will contribute in its own way to the theorization of how something new in life can be yielded. As Judith Okely says, "[t]he most personal, seemingly idiosyncratic, hitherto unwritten or unspoken, ... paradoxically [finds] resonance with others in a similar position."126 With her words, "others in a similar position," I think of those who are in situations where they feel that changes are needed, but feel difficulty embodying the kind of changes that they desire. And, the contribution that I hope for is a dialogical one. I wish to add to existing thoughts and have the readers' add their experiences and learning.

The first section of this chapter gathers what has been yielded conceptually in this inquiry. I will also add that the imagination’s world is not the ‘authentic’ domain in which we should be dwelling all the time. We are amphibious, so to speak. We live on land
breathing the atmosphere, and sometimes dive into the imagination’s world, as frogs jump into the pond. We then come back to the land incarnating a form with which we can breathe more comfortably with others. I will also discuss what I have learned from the perspective of my personal growth. The conceptual learning is inseparably tied to the learning for day to day living in an existentially based phenomenological inquiry. I then reflect upon the shifts that I notice in my attitude and awareness. In the end, I summarize principles that are important in the path of the imagining body, which nurture the gentle unfolding of something new in personal and collective life.

CONCEPTUAL GATHERING

The imagination as a mode of being in the body was metaphorically described as the process of descending into the waterworld and ascending to land. In the actual imagining, the two facets of the imagination are not distinct from each other. Our experiences of them are intermeshed. This division was solely for the purpose of examination.

The descent of the imagination was discussed as the way in which we are guided into the imagination’s world by paying more attention to what is present. The imagination begins when we accept that something may be claiming us and wonder what it could be. We begin to pay closer attention. The concept of the imagination as a mode of being in the body emphasizes our embodiment. The descent begins when our body meets the sensible, other bodies. Abundant details unfold through our bodily engagement with other beings. The descending was discussed as the conscious exploration of the inhabitation in perception, in Merleau-Ponty’s sense. Reciprocity of perception is quickened, and ‘the flesh,’ which is the texture that unrolls between the sentient and the sensible, becomes thickened. It was also
discussed that the imagination as a mode of being in the body takes place in the domain of particulars. Each unfolded detail is unique and has its own value. The descent into the imagination slowly opens up such a realm of particularity, where every detail is welcomed.

Then, we discussed how we navigate during such descent. The imagination as a mode of being in the body is not a suspension of judgment. In the pilot research of the painting experience, I identified a subtle sensibility of the body that evaluates situations. I named it ‘the imagining body.’ The imagining body is soft judgment in the sense that it accepts what has come to be in interaction, examines the effect of it in relation to the situation and my feeling, and explores a way that would create a better balance. This sensibility requires gentle kindness and patience toward what has come to exist. The six characteristics of the imagining body that were pointed out in the pilot research were: 1) The beginning of the imagining body is a small voice that invites me to a certain (non-)action; 2) The imagining body can bypass my thoughts and desires; 3) The voice of the imagining body is soft, simple, and persistent. It feels like echoes from the underground. It does not give reasons to support its suggestion. Once I respond to such voices, action is released easily; 4) When I am at one with the imagining body, my experience is more synaesthetic than usual; 5) The imagining body requires quiet space within myself to arise; 6) The movement of the imagining body is always in flux, since it arises as a response to the indefinable consequence of each interaction. After the pilot research, the imagining body was also witnessed outside of the painting practice.

Ascending in the imagination was discussed as forming and re-forming our sense of who we are and how we relate to the world. It is the process of coming to terms with that which is being unfolded in the descent. While descending is the poiesis of the imagining
process. ascending is the ethos of the imagination. Through ascending, we re-shape the sense of the self, creating a grounding, however temporary, on which to live with others in the world. In descent, I notice myself following the voices of the imagining body. The voices are a bodily felt indication of the moment to moment vector that my body lives; they are specific claims for the precise moment’s (non-)action. The vectors of the voices are very short. They do not indicate how the suggested action can make sense to my self. Ascending, on the other hand, is marked by images that bear a certain ambience and stay to swirl around my consciousness. These images do not point to anything else. Nor are they interpreted in the continuity of events and meanings yet. The images are not to be taken as the premise from which we can infer a form for the future. New forms slowly emerge from within the interweaving with other beings.

The images of the imagining body need to be treated tenderly so that the ambience that they bear does not disappear. This softness of attention was explained as phenomenological consciousness, which receives that which is presently unfolding in perception rather than identifying what is. Phenomenological consciousness is open to that which claims it. Such receptivity is made possible by accessing to the larger part of the body, as opposed to concentrating on the head area, for the discernment of what is important. The softness of attention was also described as ‘matching’ the now moment. Matching the now moment helps us to stay in the not-knowing of what will happen next and keeps us from staying limited in our known repertoire, which is usually some version of the old patterns that we wish to leave. It is to let the wholeness of beings make shifts in relationships.

The images that stay with our consciousness in the imagination are light that gives us the feeling of what is significant to the heart. Light watches us, so to speak, while we
interweave details moment by moment through responding to the voices of the imagining body. In other words, the images beckon what may be coming to exist, and by responding to the voices of the imagining body while holding the images gently, I witness the images gradually unfold their substantiality.

These notions of the imagining body and the imagination as a mode of being in the body are founded upon the phenomenological observations of the body's opening. The openness of the body was experienced in various manners; to the ground, upwards, and horizontally towards other beings. In each case, there is a feeling that my body is being merged with other (human and non-human) beings. The unobstructed movement of Qi through the bodies makes us feel our body is not as tightly bound within the skin. This skin boundary dissolution implies that the open body is part of the landscape and emerges constantly from the indeterminate state to a fuller physical manifestation. The voices and images of the imagining body are part of the vital movement of the manifesting aspects of our existence. Being part of the landscape, the body becomes connected to a greater source that is normally concealed. The integral energy that discharges from that source invites us to move toward certain (non-)action.

This body's opening does not take place once and for all. The body is constantly opening and contracting. When I trust, the body that is me opens up. When I am fearful and worried, the body contracts. But, we can learn toward a greater openness. The body learns at the cellular level. The body's opening is different from an escape from the body. This opening that is necessary for the imagining body to arise is rooted at the physicality of our existence. The imagining body arises when our embodied presence is affirmed. In those moments, the body that is us marks the quality of higher vibration and lightness.
Then, what is beyond the boundary dissolution was pondered upon. What is beyond is in fact what I have been calling ‘the imagination’s world.’ It is the Dreamtime in Australian aboriginal mythology, the body of Mahavirocana in Shingon Buddhism, Merleau-Ponty’s flesh, and Darroch-Lozowski’s uncoded world. It is that which is not yet formed, in the process of emerging, subtle but not abstract, the invisible that sustains and forms all that is including us. The imagination’s world always exists, despite our awareness. Although we can only glimpse a very small portion of the imagination’s world at a time, the experience tells us that the concept of Time and Space is inappropriate there. As we become one with the imagining body, time expands and becomes indistinguishable from space which our body frays into. In the imagination’s world, the ‘past’ and ‘future’ are experienced in the present moment at the locality of our physical presence. At the same time, what is taking place ‘in’ us is not felt solely as a personal phenomena. The open nature of the body implies that what is taking place is part of the process of wholeness to which I belong. Our awareness of the imagining body and the body’s opening releases venues that we did not know before. It creates pathways in which a new possibility can be incarnated in an easier and gentler way. Finally, this imagination’s world, that which is beyond the boundary dissolution, is not something that is subject to our control. It is as if an infinite sphere that we are part of. Sometimes we consciously explore a portion of it, other times we are unaware of its existence.

AMPHIBIOUS

With the concept of the imagination’s world, I do not mean that it is the authentic place for us to dwell and thus we should live in the mode of imagination all the time. Structures are
necessary as well as inevitable in our experience. They become problematic only when they are too static to allow us to change when needed. To imagine is to visit the place where we get in touch with things that have eluded us, so as to learn something that is new to us and to bring forth a more livable atmosphere around us.

We are amphibious. We dwell both on land and in the ocean. Let the I be submerged, in the imaginary water, into the liquidity of the body. And, we are the imagining body. We play in a temporal roundness, being part of an infinite sphere. Let the I surface. The water goes away. The body is solid again. We notice the differences of beings that we need to be aware of, in order to bring about a balanced form of life together. We can be both "the weightlessness of searching, probing, and listening, of looking into the future," and "the weight of ... thickening and congealing as what is discovered takes shape." The imagination as a mode of being in the body is an attempt to explain and celebrate both the weightlessness and the weight of our embodied existence.

HOW CAN I BELONG MORE PEACEFULLY?

Amaterasu-omikami is the sun goddess in Japanese mythology. When she saw so much violence and destruction in the world, she hid herself, out of fear and anger, in a rock cave. Without the sun, the world turned into a perpetual night. She was in the dark, and the world was dark. So within so without.

The issue of how I belong more peacefully in the world is the bottom stratum in this inquiry as well as in my life. In earlier chapters, this issue has been implicit in the discussions. For instance, it was implicitly present in the three images swirling around me (Chapter 4); and also in the body's openness that creates the merges with other beings
(Chapter 5). The imagining body is, in fact, always the imagining body in relation, since it can only appear within the interweaving with other beings. I am suggesting that the imagining body in relation can be a guide that escorts us to a kind of space where we belong to each other and to the world more peacefully.

My yoga teacher has a wonderful imagining body in relation. Her hands, for example, give me a slight suggestion and I feel that I am being helped in a profound way. When I am in the plow posture, her fingers make circles on my heels softly. I notice my body responds to a greater opening. One day after the class, she came over to me and said, “Let me just put my hand under your arm. I have an urge to do this.” Her hand slipped into my armpit. The other hand of hers supported my hand from below that was hanging down next to my hip. Instantaneously, my shoulder was released a few inches.

Through this inquiry, I began to understand my habit in relations. When I meet people, I tend to hold my vibration. I have witnessed so much (covert and overt) harm done to people. I do not wish to add any. I hold my breath and withdraw vibration. Withdrawing the body’s vibration, I shut myself away from the rest of the world, just like Amaterasu-omikami shut herself in a cave. Retrospectively speaking, this inquiry has been a journey into the dark to meet a part of myself that is scared to hurt and to be hurt. The part of me that is shut restricts the merges with other beings. This habit is a habit of fear. That I want to make sure not to harm anyone including myself sounds innocent, but it also means that I am not willing to experience unexpected unfoldings in relationships. The fear makes me want to control the consequence of relations. I am drawn back in to my familiar enclosure.

To respect the other’s imagining process is not to withhold everything that may issue from my imagining body. If I could pay attention to my body that is vibrant before the
other’s presence, the two bodies would begin to merge. It is as if listening to them with my tissues, unfolding ‘the flesh’ between us. Then, the imagining body would arise from within, and I would notice its beckoning. My yoga teacher was responding to me from such a sensibility. It was the response of her vibrating imagining body to my body that was also vibrating. My body was open and responded to her input. The palms-up was discussed as the attitude of receptivity. It was also discussed as offering one’s presence to what might be needed in a larger whole. Here is the other aspect of the palms-up, that is, offering one’s imagining body to other bodies. It is a gentle and non-dichotic way of relating that would bring us to a more balanced belonging to each other.

How I belong more peacefully is closely tied to the experience of violence. Was I afraid to stay vibrating with others because if I stay vibrant, they may take advantage of the light? They may use light for what I do not like to see? Light illuminates hate and violence as much as warm and happy scenes, as in the story of Amaterasu-omikami.

We notice violence, since we have a practical sense of difference that lies between you and I, between the I and non-I, and simultaneously are capable of dwelling in the visions of others. Often, we are aware of ourselves sensing things around us. This awareness is called proprioception. But, we are not very conscious that we are sensing reverse perceptions. To see is to feel being seen. To touch is to feel touched. Our bodily sense is reciprocal. Through this reciprocal bodily sense, we feel visions that are not ours. These reverse perceptions are not always agreeable to our understanding of ourselves. Sometimes they are hostile. Those disquieting reverse perceptions pile up in silence, usually unnoticed. We may push them aside and stay unconscious of them. But, an uneasy feeling rolls up. Those reverse perceptions demand to be integrated. It signifies the need for realignment of
the self. We again and again descend into the imagination’s world and come back to be reshaped and reshape our selves and our relation to the rest of the world. The imagination is the endless inclination of our embodied nature to gather, integrate, and unify what we feel and sense. It is a reconciliation process. It is a reconciliation of the violence that our body senses, so as to develop a self that is capable of embracing conflict more peacefully than we can today.

**SHIFTS**

As noted in the Introduction, this existential phenomenological study is marked by the quality of movement and shifts in my attitude and awareness. Here, I would like to reflect on a couple of shifts that I notice in myself.

One of the shifts that I notice within myself is that it became clear that I am leaving teaching. At the entry of this inquiry, I noted two voices within myself that contradicted each other. One demanded pressingly that I should get back to school to teach and that there was no other reason to be studying education. The other voice softly said that whatever we do, we are engaged in the education of ourselves and others. Before, I was torn between the two. Now, I know that the latter voice is the imagining body, the subtle sensibility that I recovered through this study. My interests are wider than schooling and teaching at school. I am interested in learning in a broader meaning, learning in the sense of personal growth, life-long learning. To me, learning is concerned with how I breathe with others, how I learn to breathe more easily, deeply, and compassionately. Learning concerns my attitudes toward re-creating relationships with other beings. Education is about how I live.
The second shift that I would like to note is my awareness about that which is beyond perception. In the Introduction, I wrote that this inquiry did not assume any realm beyond the perceptual world. However, as I paid attention to what is there to sense, I began to notice more and subtler phenomena. Through developing perceptual expansion, I was brought to notice the open nature of the body, the ambiguous boundary of the inner and outer, and the existence of that which is beyond the body's opening. The cocoon of my perception, which was a tight enclosure at the beginning, has grown looser. Now, I note that the experience of that which is beyond the body's opening is undeniably real. There are various traditions that acknowledge and affirm this experience, as we have discussed. In the experience, time is expanded and becomes inseparable with space that our body frays into. In spite of some speculation, I do not know what it is that is beyond the body's opening. I can only say that I now know the effect of being in touch with it. The effect of being in touch with it is lightness (weightlessness) and clarity of the body/mind. It is sensed as a feeling of deep security and belonging, warmth, love, and compassion.

The third shift that I notice within myself has a pervasive impact on my day to day life. It is concerned with my attitude towards change. Before, I tried to push myself into a situation of that I envisioned, and this ended in frustration. I tried to push myself into an alternative school. I thought that school was something that I always thought problematic, and that I had experience and knowledge about it more than anything else. It would be meaningful for both society and myself if I could work for an alternative school. But, the body froze and refused what I wanted myself to experience. Through drawing and painting, and through the extended phenomenological observations into day to day living, I learned to be changed from within daily seemingly trivial activities. I learned to be guided by the
voices of the imagining body. Now, I stop during the course of the day, to listen to the
imagining body and consciously respond to it. I am more relaxed about whatever I am
feeling in a situation, positive or negative. Feeling it is an attunement to the imagining body.

I became more familiar with the ways in which the imagining body reveals itself to
me. It reveals itself mainly through voices and images. Concerning the images of the
imagining body, I am now aware that there are images which I pick up but around which the
imagining body does not begin to interweave. On the other hand, there are images which
pick me and stay with me, and around which the imagining body guides me into deeper
interweavings with other beings and a slow unfolding of the images’ substantiality. Before, I
took the images literally and discarded them when I failed them. Now, I embrace the images
that stay with me, softly and patiently. Before, I often ignored or suppressed the voices of
the imagining body. I was not aware that seemingly insignificant claims of the voices are
related to a greater chain of events that may change my life pattern. Now, I take the
suggestions of the voices, even though they seem trivial. These voices support my action,
and the images shape my vision.

Now, I do not recklessly jump to a conclusion in respect to what form a current issue
should resolve into. I am more relaxed not knowing what form my coming life will take,
trusting that the imagining body leads the way. Of course, I still struggle, pushing myself to
be what I am not ready or suited to be. But, at least, in those moments, I notice that I am
pushing and know that there is a more yielding option for change.
THE PATH OF THE IMAGINING BODY

In the beginning, I vaguely described the place where my heart longed to be. There was a sense of my body drawn toward a way of life that is nurturing and peaceful, light and warm, accepting, humbling, and that has deep connections. Tentatively I called it ‘a gentle life.’ I would like to try again, here, to articulate what I was and am even more clearly drawn to. I will describe it as the path of the imagining body. I now use the word ‘path,’ because to me it has a nuance that is more on-going and ever-changing, compared to ‘the place’ or ‘the life’ that I used at the entry. The following are what I consider as principles in the path of the imagining body.

The path of the imagining body is the path that is signified by the feeling of reverence towards that which is. That which is is every possible thing that presents itself to us. It includes the cup of chamomile tea between our hands and its aroma, the bare ground covered with snow and puffed up sparrows, and the magnolia in full blossom that was just buds a day before. It includes our friend sitting across at the table agitated about something and our reaction to it, a scene from the film that stays with us for a long time, and a man curled up at the corner of the street and our feelings for him. The more we pay attention to what is there to sense and feel, the more is revealed. In the path of the imagining body, everything that is and everything that has been noticed has its existence acknowledged as well as our reaction and feelings towards it. To acknowledge that which is is not to decide that it is right and leave it as it is. We respond in the way that feels appropriate to what is noticed and felt in the context. That which is is what is unfolding in our interweaving with each other and other beings. This prolonged expansive attention animates each revealing detail, and we are in turn rejuvenated by responding to it. Our body turns looser and recovers its vibration. That
which is can also involve what is taking place in the neighborhood, city, or glob. The path of the imagining body can take us to an active political engagement, for instance, or business.

In what field things are gathering and taking form does not matter. The point is that, in the path of the imagining body, a new pattern emerges through our act of moment to moment noticing and responding. Noticing and responding is done in small bits, as often as possible.

We do not wait in this path until things pile up and our vision becomes grand.

The path of the imagining body is the path of the heart. In traditions of yoga, the heart is considered to be the location of the body whose opening renders the feeling of compassion. Compassion to me is the potential expansion of energy that helps us pay deep attentions, and allow other beings and ourselves to go through what needs to be gone through and to feel what needs to be felt. Compassion is to witness ourselves and others going through this process of reconciliation, with kindness, amusement, and delight.

The path of the imagining body is the path of faith. The faith in this path is that the imagining body will lead us to resolve whatever issue we are facing and will face. The faith is that seemingly insignificant hints of the imagining body will take us to a chain of events that may change our life toward the direction of greater balance, opening, and ease. The most difficult part is trusting not to know what kind of change would take place in advance.

ONE LAST NOTE

I would like to emphasize one thing in closing. That is to say, I do not consider that the imagination as a mode of being in the body is ours. The imagination is not our power that does something, it is something that happens. We can not own the imagination, since it involves our acceptance of the unknown, the sphere of that which is beyond the body’s
opening. We experience and appreciate its effect. With enthusiasm to unveil the secrets of unfolding, often my attention becomes the intention to manifest what might be forming.

Then, I am tossed between this ‘future’ and that ‘future.’ I am trying to figure it out in advance. I lose touch with the present unfolding itself. My deductions from what was noticed a while ago carries me away from the precious act of noticing. In those times, I am pushing myself to experience what I want myself to experience, rather than noticing and responding to and in the interweaving. Time is felt as limited, space distancing, and resources scarce. The body is tighter. I am drawn back within the familiar boundary. It is as if I am withholding the dynamic movement of the universe with my limited intentional thoughts. Again and again, and again and again, I need to be brought back to the act of noticing and responding, by releasing my ‘answers’ for myself. Although the breath-taking somatic experience of, for instance, the heart opening made me glimpse the boundlessness of things, those rare experiences are not so important by themselves. They are not as important as the everyday practice of noticing and responding, which helps me keep in touch with the imagining body and that which is beyond the body’s opening. At every moment of the imagining process, noticing and responding are primary.

NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 428.


Silvers, "Teaching Phenomenology."

Albert Soesman presents a more explorative categorization of perception. Based on Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, he discusses the twelve senses. Besides the five senses, they include the senses of self-movement and balance, the temperature sense, the life sense, and the speech sense, concept sense, and ego sense. The life sense is the sense of well being, fatigue, illness, and pain. The sense of the self-movement includes the sense of one's own destiny. Albert Soesman, *The Twelve Senses*, trans. Jakob Cornelis (Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 1990).

The traditional concept of sensation and imagination will be discussed later in this chapter.


Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*.


In Greek philosophy, there was no discussion of free will and it was introduced by Christian philosophy and became emphasized in modern philosophies, according to Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 2 (NY: Harvest/HBJ, 1978), pp. 15-20.

‘The imagining body’ will be discussed in Chapter 3.


I present this incident of the missed flight so as to communicate the feeling that I was picked by drawing. This kind of experience into which one drops when absorbed in doing something had happened to me before. For psychological analysis of flow experience, please see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the..."
Psychology of Discovery and Invention (NY: HarperCollins, 1996), pp. 107-126; Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (NY: Harper & Row, 1990). This particular incident was different from my previous flow experiences in the sense that it brought me into the extended imagining process to the point that it carried me beyond the familiar framework of what is real and what is my life. The experience in which I am at one with the imagining body is similar to what Csikszentmihalyi call ‘flow.’ The different perspectives that this study offers are 1) this study approaches it from within the experience and does not objectify it to examine, and 2) it gives an account of the ways in which we begin to notice hints of the imagining body from within the mundane activities by tracing it.

38 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.*
39 Ibid., p. 61.
40 R. G. Collingwood, among many, describes the thick interweaving of the painter and the painted in his *Principles of Art* (pp. 304-8). As a painter observes the object and adds some lines, he says: “This line won’t do.” Refining his line, this and that; he becomes more aware of qualities of the object. His activity is not confined in the realm of visible but reaches tactile, kinesthetic, emotional qualities, and sometimes auditory quality. His observation penetrates into greater details, and his experience goes deeper into the interplay of all these qualities.
41 Rehorick and Taylor, “Thoughtful Incoherence.”
44 Ibid., p. 369.
49 Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* p. 18.
50 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 98.
51 Ibid., p. 98.
52 Ibid., p. 151.
53 Hana, *Bodies in Revolt,* p. 35.
55 As David Abram says in *The Spell of the Sensuous,* to acknowledge this opening of the body is to abandon the belief that we will eventually have the complete knowledge of ourselves and the world around us.
58 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous,* p. 60.
59 Ibid.
64 In The Wake of Imagination, Kearney describes the complementary nature of the poetics and ethics of imagination (1988).
66 ibid.
67 Maria Harris, Teaching and Religious Imagination (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 34.
68 ibid., p. 65.
70 This thought on the palms up and the palms down is borrowed from Vivian Darroch-Lozowski in her lecture on the body. Thank you very much.
71 Hanna, Bodies in Revolt, pp. 196-207.
72 Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination.
73 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception.
75 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception.
77 ibid., p. 28.
78 ibid., p. 28.
79 Arnold Mindell, The Shaman’s Body.
82 Hana, Bodies in Revolt.
88 This discussion on Nishida’s concept of the self as basho is based on Yuasa’s interpretation. Yasuo Yuasa, “Chapter Two: Nishida Kitaro’s View of the Body,” in The Body. Nishida’s philosophy is said to be grown out of his own experience of Zen practices.
89 Nishida suggests that there is the absolute Consciousness, the absolute Nothingness, which is the ultimate true reality. He also says that the self as basho, which resides at the basho of nothingness, is the authentic self, and the everyday self is inauthentic. This dissertation does not assume the same metaphysics. My current stance is that both selves are equally us and that both reality is as real.
Sacred gods and goddesses were born. The drops of *ame* fall to nourish the ground. The rain was thought to be made of the same substance as the heaven. So it is called by the same name, *ame*. The ocean, beyond the seashores, was *ama*. To them, the heaven, the rain and the ocean were part of the cosmic water that surrounded them. Within each living being, too, was part of the cosmic water. ‘To die,’ *shinu*, has the etymologically related to ‘to loose the water, *shinenyu*. (Susumu Nakanishi, “Mizu to Kotoba to Kosumologii (Water, Words, and Cosmology),” in Animizumu o Yomu: Nihon Bunkeku ni Okeru Shizen Seimei Jiko (Reading Animism: Nature, life, and self in Japanese literature), eds. Yukihiro Hirakawa and Tsuruta Kin’ya (Tokyo: Shin’you-sha, 1994).

84. Sansone, “The mind of the cells.”

85. The Mother quoted in Ibid., p. 136.

86. The Mother quoted in Ibid., p. 132.

87. The Mother quoted in Ibid., p. 136.

88. I am not interested in discussing which is the ‘higher’ experience per se. What is important is how you could live more in peace and increase happiness in the world you live in.


90. Ibid., p. 42.


92. Here I am using the word, divine, in a non-religious sense. It means ‘emanated from the unknown’ and ‘perfect in itself.’


94. Satprem, p. 136.

95. Susumu Nakanishi, “Mizu to Kotoba to Kosumologii (Water, Words, and Cosmology).”

96. This is my translation of the first sentences in *Nihonshoki* (6th century), cited in Susumu Nakanishi, Ibid., p. 163.


98. Ibid., p. 148-50.

99. Ibid., p. 151.


103. Ibid., p. 140.


109. Ibid., pp. 9-10.


111. Ibid., p. 80.


113. Here I am using the word ‘the self’ as the sense of who I am, what I am doing in relation to the world.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


