
Reality

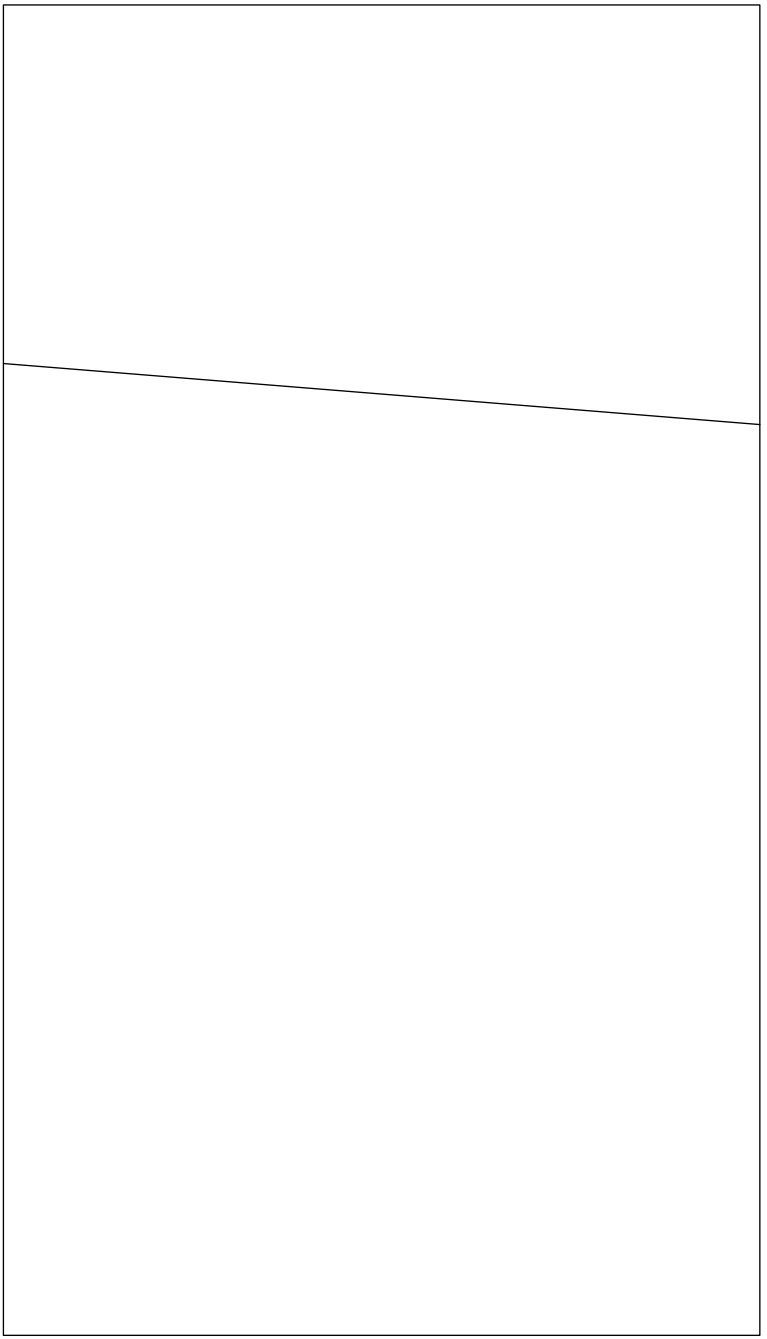
Reality



a **wide open windows** production

Reality

Ton Haarmans



This book asks for no agreement.

Nor does it ask for rejection.

What appears here does not need to be accepted as true, nor dismissed as false. It does not need to be understood as theory, nor followed as a path.

Read it as something that takes place.

Not to extract what is correct, but to see how it holds together.

Sometimes something will feel immediately recognizable. Sometimes it will remain flat. Sometimes it may seem to contradict what came before.

That does not need to be resolved.

There is no line that must be followed, and no conclusion the text is moving toward.

What appears, appears each time again as a whole.

And can disappear again as well.

Part I
Appearance



There is no world given in advance.

What appears is always already structured, named, and experienced as something.

Identity, language, and knowledge do not merely describe what appears.

They participate in shaping it.

But what is shaped never fully holds.

This morning I woke up and the familiar world assembled itself once again.

A dark room.

Clothes on a chair.

My body.

A dog moving in her crate, waiting to be taken outside.

Daylight filtering through the blinds.

A rooster in the distance.

But what seems self-evident is not simply given.

What appears, always appears as something.

A swallow flies past.

That sharp, piercing sound.

Fast, skimming close beside me.

Its partner remains on the nest.

Just visible, her small head above the edge.

Beneath the nest: cardboard on the floor, covered in droppings.

It needs to be cleaned.


Nothing appears without form.

It happens without delay.

There is no moment in which something first appears and is only afterward recognized.

No transition from “not yet anything” to “something.”

What appears, appears immediately as something.

Recognition does not come after what appears.

It is already there.

There is no looking without something already being seen.

No hearing without it already being something.

Nothing ever appears as just something.

It also appears for someone.

What appears does not only appear as something, but also as “for me.”

That involvement seems self-evident.

Someone sees, hears, thinks.

But that “for me” does not appear separately from what appears.

It appears together with it.

That “I” does not appear outside the world.

It appears *within* it.

There is no appearance without world.

Not as separate things, but as a coherence that is immediately recognizable. A space in which places, objects, and actions already carry meaning.

That coherence seems self-evident.

As if it were already there before any looking took place.

But what appears never appears without that coherence. It does not arise afterward. It appears simultaneously.

What appears always already appears as a world that holds together and yet never fully settles.



The coffee is still warm.

I place the cup on the table and notice a brown ring already there.

My hand rests on the surface for a moment.

Outside, a car passes by.

The sound moves along and disappears again.

On the screen is a sentence I just wrote.

I read it back and change a single word.

It immediately feels better.

As if it now fits.

The coffee has gone cold.

I take a sip and put the cup back down.

The same sentence is still on the screen.

I read it again.

I change the word back.

It still does not feel right.

I read it once more.

Again.

It continues to resist.

What Appears

It seems simple.

A world appears. Things are recognized. A sentence fits, or does not fit. Everything feels self-evident, as though it could not be otherwise.
That is precisely where the deception lies.
That sense of obviousness creates the impression that something exists prior to seeing. As if there were a world already there, which is then perceived and only afterward recognized, named, and understood.
But that sequence does not hold.
Nothing ever appears that is first still nothing. No moment lies open only to receive meaning afterward. What presents itself does so immediately as something already shaped.

A sound is heard and is instantly a car, or something like it.
A movement appears as an animal.
Words fall together into a sentence that either fits or resists.

Nothing appears undetermined. Meaning does not come later. It is there from the beginning,
in the way everything takes shape and falls into place. And precisely for that reason, it never fully holds still.

I am sitting at the table again.

The screen is still open. The sentence has not changed.

Outside, it has become quiet.

I read it again without changing anything.

The words are exactly as they were before.

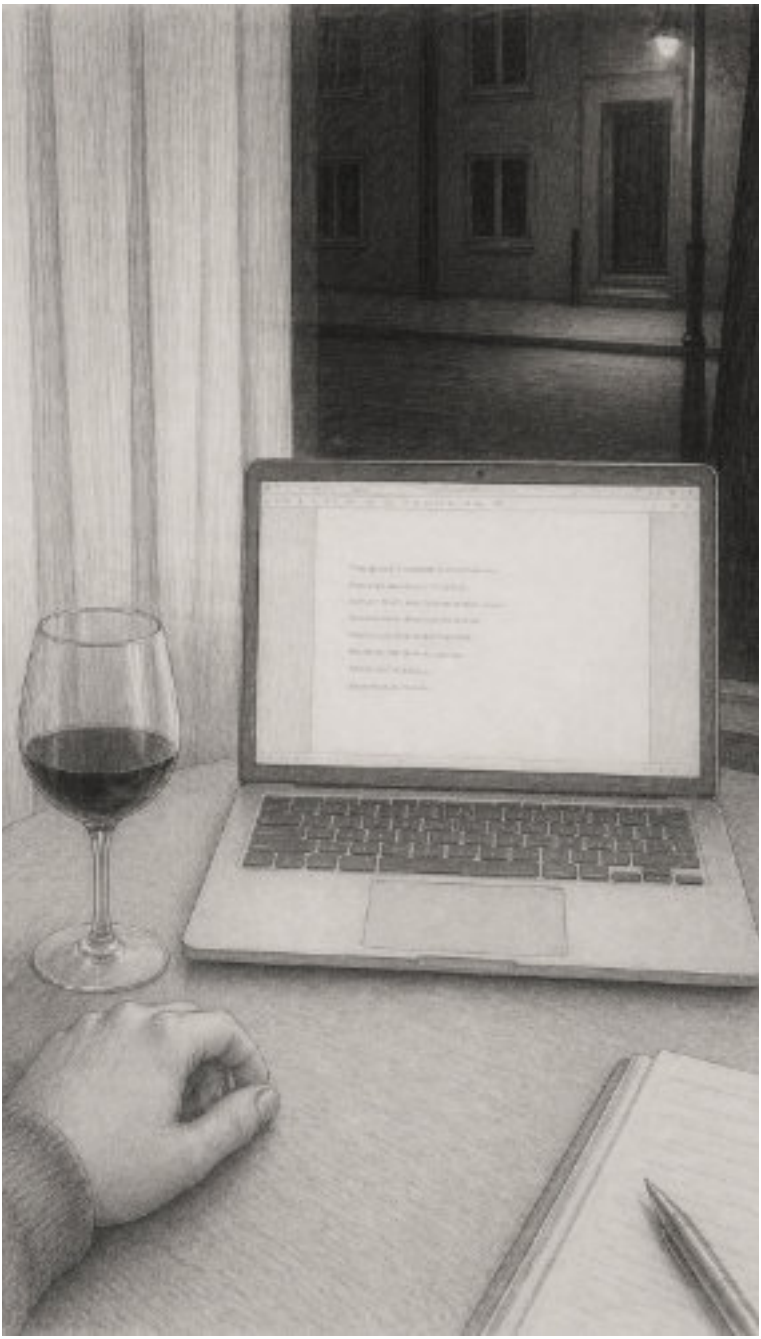
And yet it feels different now.

Less sharp.

I do not know.

I keep looking for a moment.

Nothing happens.



The Dioramic Approach

It seems simple. A world appears, things are recognized, a sentence fits or does not fit, and all of this feels self-evident. It is precisely that self-evidence that makes it difficult to see what is happening, because it suggests that what appears is already there before it is seen, as though there were a world existing prior to perception, which is then recognized, named, and understood.

The approach in this book begins by letting go of that assumption. Not by replacing it with another theory, but by closely following the way what appears presents itself. What appears never appears as something isolated, but always as a coherent whole that already carries meaning. It does not emerge as separate impressions that are afterward assembled into a world, but as a world already present in the very form in which it appears.

That whole can be understood as a diorama, not because it would be a model of a reality outside itself, but because it presents itself as a complete and convincing world. Just as a diorama in a museum presents a scene with such coherence that it is experienced as reality, the experienced world likewise appears as a whole that carries

itself. The difference is that this no longer seems like a model, but reality itself.

Appearance is therefore never neutral. There is no moment in which something first appears as nothing and only afterward acquires meaning. Meaning is there immediately, not as something added afterward, but as a manner in which the whole takes shape. Sounds appear as recognizable events, movements as familiar forms, words as sentences that either fit or fail to fit. What appears always already appears as something understood.

At the same time, that whole never remains completely stable. The coherence can shift without anything visibly changing. What once seemed evident can become strange, and what initially did not fit can suddenly feel exactly right. The same elements remain present, but the way they come together changes. This makes visible that the world does not exist as a fixed given that is merely perceived, but as a coherence continuously taking shape.

The dioramic approach does not attempt to correct this process, nor to explain it from a position outside experience. It remains within what appears and follows how it takes shape, how coherence arises, and how that coherence can shift again. Not in order to provide a definitive description of reality, but to make visible that what is experienced as reality is nothing other than that continuously formed

coherence.

The dioramic approach does not stand outside what it describes.

What appears always already appears as something, and precisely for that reason, it can also appear otherwise.

Intermezzo — The Diorama

The image of the diorama did not come from theory, but from a memory.

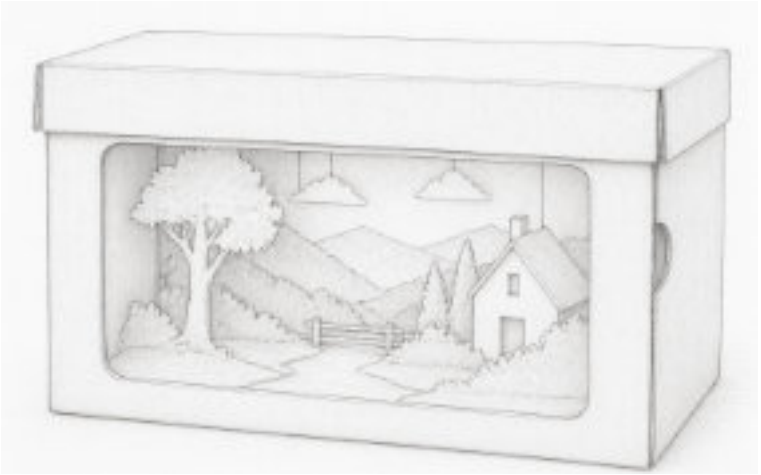
As a child, I had a diorama box. A simple cardboard box, with an opening at the front to look through. Inside, layers of paper were placed at different distances from one another, creating depth. Cut-out images of trees, houses, figures, sometimes a landscape, sometimes a room. Everything was flat, suspended and arranged, yet from the right viewpoint it came together as a whole.

From the outside, it was obvious what it was.

A construction. A collection of separate elements, visibly attached, without mystery. But the moment you looked through the opening, that awareness disappeared. What had been cardboard became a space. What had been separate shapes became a world.

That transition is difficult to locate precisely. There is no moment in which the separate parts are still perceived as separate parts and only afterward suddenly become a world. The moment you look, it is already there. Not as an accumulation, but as a whole.

Later, that image became important again, though no longer as a memory. More as an insight. What appears resembles that diorama box, but with one crucial difference. There is no longer an outside visible. There is no position from which the construction can be seen as a construction. The whole appears immediately as reality, not as a model.



What in the diorama box could still be seen as constructed, appears here as self-evident. The layers, the choices, the arrangement, disappear into the whole they form. What remains is a world that fits together.

And yet the resemblance remains unmistakable. As in the diorama box, the coherence does not arise afterward. It is there immediately. And as in the diorama box, it can also shift. A slight change in viewpoint, a different light, and the whole takes on another depth, another meaning.

The approach in this book is nothing more than taking that image seriously. Not as a metaphor that explains something, but as an indication of how what appears takes shape. Not as a comparison with a hidden reality behind appearances, but as a description of what is in fact taking place.

Everything appears as a composed whole that carries itself as a whole. As in a diorama.
Except that here there is no opening to look through.
You are already inside it.

Intermezzo — Affinities and Distance

The dioramic approach does not stand alone. It touches existing approaches, sometimes closely, sometimes from a distance, yet it does not fully coincide with any of them.

There is an affinity with phenomenology, insofar as it too attempts to describe how the world appears. The emphasis shifts from what the world is to how it is given. Yet phenomenology often still works with the idea that something appears to a consciousness, as though there were a distinction between what is experienced and the one for whom it appears. The dioramic approach lets go of that distinction. What appears and the "for whom" it appears arise together within the same whole.

There is also an affinity with constructivist and philosophy-of-language approaches, which emphasize that what is experienced as reality is shaped by language, interpretation, and cultural frameworks. These insights are important, but they often remain focused on explanations of how such constructions come into being. The dioramic approach shifts attention toward the result: the world as it presents itself, already formed, already meaningful, without requiring its origin to be reconstructed.

In science, and especially in physics, a similar movement can be seen. What was once regarded as objective reality increasingly appears dependent on the way it is measured, described, and interpreted. Yet even there, the assumption often remains that behind these dependencies lies an underlying reality that exists independently of observation. The dioramic approach makes no claim about such a possible reality, but observes that it never appears apart from the form in which it is experienced.

There are also points of contact with nondual and spiritual traditions. These often emphasize that the separation between subject and object is not fundamental, and that what is experienced as separate is in fact part of a single whole. The dioramic approach shares that observation, but avoids turning it into a final truth or endpoint. It remains with what appears, without elevating it into an absolute standpoint.

The difference does not lie in something entirely new, but in the consistency with which this approach remains with one simple movement: it takes what appears seriously as it appears, without reducing it to something behind itself, and without explaining it from a position outside the whole.

In this way, it neither places itself against other approaches, nor fully within their framework. It moves along their edges, uses what is useful, and lets go of what is unnecessary.

Not as a correction.

But as a shift in attention.

Recognition

There is no moment in which something appears without already being something.

That seems self-evident, yet it is rarely truly seen.

A sound is heard. It is immediately a car, or a voice, or something that cannot quite be placed yet still appears as "something." It is never merely sound.

You look up from the screen. The room is there again. Not as surfaces and colors, but as a space in which everything is already in place. The chair, the table, the window. The barking dog outside. Nothing still needs to be recognized.

It is already there.

Not because you recognize it, but because it does not appear otherwise.

There is no step between what appears and what it is. No transition from not yet anything to something. No moment in which it first lies open and is only afterward filled in.

What appears, appears immediately as something that fits, or does not fit.

A sentence on the screen feels right. Or it resists. That judgment does not come later. It is contained in the way the sentence appears. You read it and already know, even before you can say why.

You change a word. You read it again. It is different.

Not because the letters are different, but because the whole now comes together differently.

Recognition shifts.

And with it, what appears shifts as well.

This happens without anything being added or removed. The words are still there. The room is the same. The sound outside has not changed.

And yet it is different.

Something that once seemed obvious can become strange, while what previously did not fit can suddenly fall perfectly into place.

That shift makes visible that recognition does not rest on anything outside the moment itself.

There is no underlying layer upon which things are fixed and afterward recognized. What seems fixed appears fixed only as long as it continues to come together that way.

The moment that shifts, everything shifts with it.

Recognition is therefore not an addition.

It is the manner in which what appears takes shape.

Not as an act,

not as something that is done,

but as appearance itself.

What appears, appears as something.

Always already.

I am sitting at the table.

The screen is still open. The sentence has not changed.

I read it again without altering anything.

Outside, a car passes by. The sound rises, moves along the window, and fades away again.

I follow it for a moment without looking up.

A pen lies on the table. My hand moves toward it, picks it up, puts it down again.

There is no reason for it.

I read the sentence once more.

It fits.

Or perhaps not entirely.

There is something in it that does not quite fall into place.

I do not know what.

My eyes remain fixed on the same words.

Nothing changes in the letters.

And yet the sentence slowly seems to loosen

from what it first was.

I read it aloud, softly enough that only I can hear

it.

Now it sounds different.

As if it belongs to someone else.

As if it is not finished yet, or perhaps already too

much.

My hand moves toward the keyboard.

I change a single word.

I read it again.

It is better.

Not because it is clearer, but because

something in it now comes together more fully.

I lean back slightly.

Outside, it has become quiet.

The room remains as it was.

The light is the same.

I read the sentence once more.

Now it fits.

Or at least it feels that way.

I remain seated for a moment without doing anything.

Nothing happens.

The sentence is there.

The table, the pen, the screen.

Everything is as it is.

And yet it is no longer the same.



The Room Is There Immediately

Not as something that first has to be assembled, but as a whole that already fits together.

The table stands where it belongs. The chair is pushed slightly backward. The screen casts a faint light across the surface.

There is nothing that still needs to be searched for.

And yet what appears is not merely a collection of things.

The table is not only a shape, but a place to put something down. The chair is not merely present, but ready to be sat on. The screen does not merely display signs, but something that can be read, altered, worked on.

Everything appears within a coherence in which it already carries meaning.

That coherence goes unnoticed as long as it remains intact.

You walk into the room without thinking about it. You take something from the table without searching. You read a sentence and immediately understand it. None of this demands attention.

Only when something no longer fits does it become visible that something had been falling into place all along.

You look for your glasses and cannot find them where they are supposed to be.

The table is the same, and so are the things on it, yet the coherence is gone. What once spoke for itself must now be found again.

Or you read a sentence you had understood effortlessly just moments ago, and suddenly it seems strange. The words are the same, but they no longer come together. You read it again, more slowly, trying to see what it says.

What appears does not necessarily change in form.

But it comes together differently.

That coherence does not arise after the things are already there. It is there immediately. Without that coherence, nothing would appear as anything at all.

This is difficult to see because it never becomes

separately visible.
There is no moment in which isolated elements first appear and are only afterward assembled into a whole. The whole is there from the beginning, and the parts appear within it.

The table appears as part of this room.

The room appears as the place in which you are sitting.

The sentence appears as something being read.

Nothing stands by itself.

Even what seems isolated appears within a field in which it already has its place. A sound outside is immediately placed somewhere. A movement is immediately understood as something happening in this space, at this distance.

That placement is not a step that follows appearance.

It is appearance.

Appearance always already appears somewhere, in relation to something else, within a coherence that does not first need to be created.

That is why what appears feels so self-evident.

Not because it is simple, but because nothing

stands apart. Everything already refers to something else. Everything already fits somewhere. What appears carries its place and meaning with it immediately.

As long as this remains so, there is nothing remarkable about it.

But the moment it shifts, it becomes visible that what had been experienced as fixed is not fixed at all.

You walk into a room you know well, and yet something feels different.

The light falls differently, or the room seems smaller, or something stands slightly out of place. You cannot immediately point to what has changed, but the coherence no longer fits together as it did before.

Or you are in the middle of a conversation and notice that what is being said no longer reaches you in the same way it did moments earlier. The words are clear, but they no longer land the same way. A distance appears that was not there before.

It is not one thing that shifts.

The whole shifts.

And with it, what everything is changes as well.

There are never isolated things merely existing beside one another.

What appears, appears as a coherence that carries itself, and within which everything immediately has its place.

That coherence cannot be found separately anywhere.

It is visible only in the way everything comes together.

And that is precisely why it feels so self-evident.

Not because it is always there,

but because it is there again and again,

for as long as it does not fall apart.

(transition)

It sounds clear this way.

As though that settles it. As though what is happening has finally been stated precisely.

I read it once more.

The sentences stand firmly in place.

Everything seems to fall together. Nothing protrudes.

And yet something else is happening.

The table is here again.

The screen, the cup, the light entering through the window.

I am not looking at an analysis.

I am sitting here.

My hand rests on the surface.

The rim of the cup feels cool.

Nothing still needs to be explained.

What was said changes nothing about what is

here.

And yet it is no longer entirely the same.

I read a sentence.

It is immediately understood.

Not because it is correct according to a line of reasoning, but because it falls the way it falls.

Or does not fall.

I keep looking for a moment.

The words, the room, the sound outside, everything is there at once.

Not as separate things, but as something already coherent.

There is nothing that still needs to be added.

And nothing that first existed and is only now understood.

It is already there.

Not as a conclusion.

But simply like this.

Analysis

Appearance cannot be understood as the emergence of an unstructured content to which meaning is subsequently assigned.

What appears, appears only as already differentiated.

There is no phase in which something appears that does not yet appear as something.

The assumption of a “raw” givenness rests upon an abstraction that can only be conceived through the very distinctions it claims to lack. Every attempt to indicate an indeterminate content already makes use of the structure by which it is qualified as indeterminate.

It follows that the distinction between perception and interpretation cannot be maintained as a temporal or functional separation. What is referred to as perception already appears in a form that can be recognized as meaningful. Interpretation is not an addition, but inherent to appearance itself.

Nor can it be maintained that elements precede the coherence within which they appear. What is identified as separate appears as such only within a field of distinctions in which it is experienced as this and not that.

The unity of appearance is therefore not the result of

a later synthesis, but the condition under which anything can appear as differentiated at all.

There is no position from which this structure can be established without already making use of it. Every attempt to ground appearance in something that precedes it appears within the same structure it seeks to explain.

The conclusion is not that appearance is subjective, nor that it depends on an underlying reality outside itself, but that it has no ground apart from the manner in which it presents itself as a differentiated whole.

Literature

Phenomenology of Perception by **Maurice Merleau-Ponty**
An analysis of perception as an already structured field in which meaning and appearance coincide.

Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology by **Edmund Husserl**
A foundational attempt to describe appearance while retaining a transcendental structure.

Philosophical Investigations by **Ludwig Wittgenstein**
A dismantling of the idea of meaning as fixed reference; meaning arises within use and coherence.

Ways of Worldmaking by **Nelson Goodman**
A formulation of worldmaking as a constructive process within symbolic systems.

Art and Illusion by **Ernst Gombrich**
An analysis of representation as dependent upon recognition and structures of expectation.

Part II
World



World and I

The coherence that appears is usually referred to as a world.

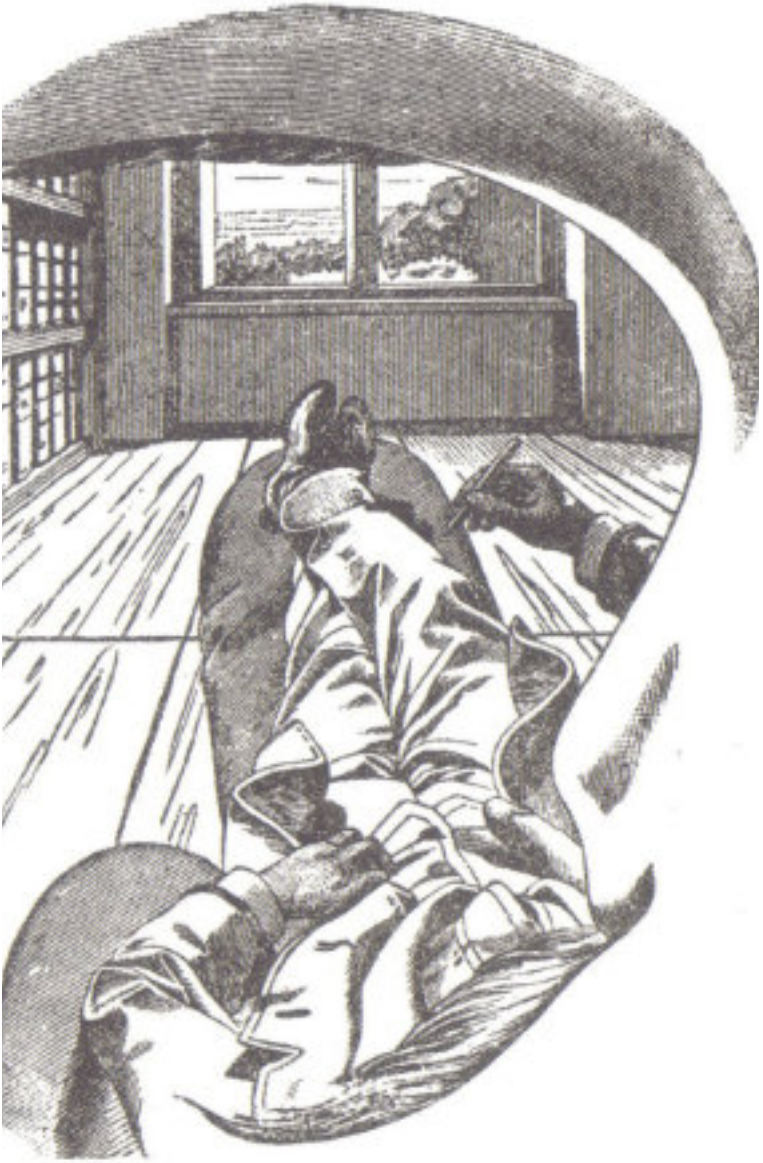
Not as a collection of things, but as the whole within which everything has its place, within which actions are possible, and within which meaning presents itself effortlessly. The room is such a whole. The street outside as well. A conversation, a memory, even a train of thought can form such a coherence.

What these wholes share is not what they contain, but how they appear. They appear as complete, as something that fits together, as something in which nothing is missing for as long as it continues to come together in that way.

That is what makes them a world.

That world does not appear somewhere outside, but precisely here. And at the same time, within it, a position appears from which that world is experienced. Not as a separate point that first existed and afterward perceives the world, but as something that arises together with that world.

The room appears, and within it there is a place from which looking occurs.



Ernst Mach, Die Analyse der Empfindungen (1886)

The sentence appears, and within it there is someone reading it.

The sound outside appears, and within it there is someone for whom it sounds nearer or farther away.

That involvement feels so self-evident that it is rarely noticed.

There is a world, and within it, there am I.

But what becomes visible when this is followed carefully is that the sequence does not hold. It is not that there is first a world in which an "I" subsequently appears, nor that there is first an "I" perceiving a world. Both arise together, as two sides of the same whole.

When the coherence changes, not only what appears changes, but also who appears within it.

The same room can feel open and light, or closed and heavy, without anything visibly changing. What shifts is not only the room, but also the way it is experienced, and with that, the position from which it is lived.

In a conversation, everything can feel clear, self-evident, without friction. Moments later, that same conversation can become tense, difficult, as though words begin to lose their meaning or no longer fall into place. What changes is not only what is being said, but also who is speaking

and who is listening.

The "I" that appears within this cannot be separated from the world in which it appears.

And yet that "I" is often experienced as something that remains, as a stable core that stays the same throughout different situations. That impression arises because the shifts are usually gradual, and because there is enough continuity for a recognizable line to persist.

But that continuity is not proof of an underlying identity existing apart from what appears. It is an effect of recognition, of the capacity to see something familiar returning across different coherences.

That familiarity is then experienced as "I."

But that does not mean it exists independently of the world in which it appears.

When the coherence shifts more strongly, this becomes visible. In an unfamiliar environment, in an intense situation, or sometimes without any clear reason, the feeling can arise that what once seemed self-evident no longer fits. Not only the world, but also one's position within it becomes uncertain.

What then remains of that stable "I"?

Not a core that remains untouched, but a shifting

involvement continually taking shape again.

This makes the relation between world and self less solid than it appears.

Not because it disappears, but because it rests on nothing outside appearance itself.

What appears, appears as a world.

And within it, an "I" appears at the same time.

Not as two things encountering one another,

but as one coherence presenting itself in that way.

Stabilization

When coherence briefly opens up, it rarely remains open for long.

The coherence may loosen, the sense of a central "I" may momentarily disappear, yet almost immediately the whole closes again. The room once more becomes a place in which someone is sitting. The hand becomes my hand again. The words on the screen once again become something that I am reading.

That return does not occur as a conscious choice. It unfolds by itself, as a restoration of what is familiar. As though coherence can not only shift, but also has a tendency to stabilize itself.

That stabilization is not something added afterward, but a movement within appearance itself.

What appears once again appears as something that fits, and within it there once again appears a position from which it is experienced. This does not feel like a construction, but like a return to how things are supposed to be.

The "I" becomes self-evident again.

It has a place, a continuity, a history. It knows what it is doing, where it is, what it has done before, and what it will still do. That line does not need to be stated explicitly. It is there implicitly, in the way everything comes together.

And yet this self-evidence is not neutral.

It is sustained by recognition directed not only toward what appears, but also toward who appears within it. Not only is the table recognized as table, the room as room, but the position within it is also recognized as "I."

That recognition reaches back toward what was previously experienced as familiar. It establishes connections, holds things together, creates a line that seems to extend beyond the moment itself.

A sense of identity emerges.

Not as a thing existing somewhere, but as a coherence continually reaffirming itself. The memory of what has been, the expectation of what is still to come, the recognition of what repeats itself, all come together into something experienced as stable.

That stability is then experienced as who I am.

But that stability is not given.

It must continually come into being again.

Most of the time this happens so effortlessly that it goes unnoticed. One situation flows into the next, one moment seems to emerge naturally from the previous one, and in this way a sense of continuity arises that is rarely questioned.

Only when that line is interrupted does it become visible how dependent it is upon coherence.

In an unfamiliar environment, during a sudden event, or in a moment of confusion, it can happen that the self-evidence of the "I" briefly falls away. Not because nothing remains, but because the recognition holding it together no longer closes properly.

The hand still moves. The room is still there. Words are still heard. But the involvement that gathers all of this into "for me" becomes less self-evident.

In such moments it becomes visible that the "I" is not the source of experience, but a form arising within it.

And yet it returns. Almost always.

Because the movement of recognition does not stop. It once again searches for coherence, for something that fits, for something that connects with what is already familiar. And the moment that coherence is found again, the "I" reappears as a self-evident center.
Not as something emerging out of nothing,
but as something being stabilized again.

That stabilization does not happen once.

It happens continuously.

Every recognition confirms it, every memory reinforces it, every expectation extends it further. What first appeared as a shifting involvement gradually becomes a fixed identity.

Not because it is fixed,

but because it is continually being fixed into place.

And precisely therein lies its strength.

But also its limitation.

For what stabilizes itself in this way simultaneously excludes other possibilities. What is experienced as self-evident leaves less room for what else might also have appeared.

The "I" that stabilizes itself makes the world stable.

And the world that appears stable confirms the "I."

In this way they sustain one another.
Not as two separate things,

but as one movement continually repeating itself.

No Foundation

The tendency to search for a foundation is understandable.

If what appears is not fixed, if coherence can shift and recognition has no stable ground, then the question almost inevitably arises whether there is nevertheless something that does remain. Something beneath all these forms of appearance that can serve as a final point of certainty.

That question appears almost automatically.

It seems necessary, as though without such a foundation everything would collapse into arbitrariness.

But in the preceding steps it has already become visible that this question belongs to the same movement.

The search for a foundation also appears as something.

It appears within a coherence, as an understandable response to the loss of self-evidence. It is recognized as a problem that must be solved, as a direction in which thought can

move, as an attempt to restore stability.

In this way it forms part of what is being examined.

It does not stand outside it.

And when an answer is subsequently given, a principle, a truth, an ultimate reality, then that answer too appears within the same structure. It is recognized, named, understood, and takes its place within a whole that can once again be experienced as self-evident.

But nothing fundamental has thereby been achieved.

Only a new coherence has emerged that temporarily holds together.

This applies not only to everyday beliefs, but also to philosophical systems, scientific models, and spiritual insights. Each of these can produce a powerful sense of truth and stability, yet that sense cannot be separated from the way the whole takes shape at that moment.

There is no position from which it can be established that one of these is truly more fundamental than another.

Not because they would all be equally true, but because the standard by which such a distinction would have to be determined never

falls outside appearance itself.

Every attempt to establish a hierarchy, to speak of higher and lower realities, presupposes a standpoint that no longer needs to be questioned. A point from which one can say: this is more real than that.

But such a point never appears.

What appears always appears as a world that fits together at that moment. The conviction that this world is merely an illusion and that a deeper reality lies behind it is itself another way in which a world appears. It may feel convincing, clear, even undeniable, but it is not free from the structure it seeks to transcend.

The dioramic approach therefore adopts no absolute standpoint.

Not out of caution, nor out of relativism, but because such a standpoint cannot be pointed to anywhere without immediately becoming part of what appears.

Nor does it distinguish between higher and lower realities.

Not because all realities would be equal, but because the distinction between "higher" and "lower" acquires meaning only within a particular coherence that itself cannot rise above the others.

What in one coherence is experienced as higher may in another lose its persuasiveness, while what is regarded as fundamental can shift and lose its self-evidence.

There is no final level at which this no longer occurs.

This does not mean that there are no differences.

There are differences in coherence, in stability, in scope, in persuasive force. Some configurations hold together longer, connect more strongly with what is recognized, or make more possible.

But these differences do not form a hierarchy pointing toward an underlying reality.

They are properties of how something appears.

The approach therefore remains with what appears, without reducing it to something behind itself, and without elevating it into an absolute point from which everything can be judged.

Not because such a point is undesirable,

but because it never appears anywhere.

Naming

The coherence that appears can shift, yet such shifts rarely remain for long. The whole has a tendency to stabilize itself, not because there is some fixed ground beneath it, but because something occurs that holds the coherence together and makes it repeatable.

That movement becomes visible the moment words enter the picture.

A word seems to do something simple. It appears to refer to something already there, as though it merely attaches a label to an existing reality. The table is there, and is then called "table." The sound is heard, and afterward recognized as a car. The person across from me receives a name, and with that, a place within the whole that presents itself.

And yet the word does not follow something already given.

The moment naming occurs, the way the whole takes shape changes. The table acquires a solidity extending beyond the moment itself. The sound is not only heard, but fixed as something that can return again. The name of the other person lingers and already pulls future

encounters in a particular direction.

In this way, the nature of coherence shifts.

Previously everything could still move lightly. The table was a place to put something down, but it could also appear differently depending on the situation. With the addition of the word, something arises that can be held onto more firmly. What is named remains recognizable even when the context changes.

This is how continuity emerges.

That continuity does not rest upon a fixed reality behind experience, but upon the capacity to recognize something again. The word connects moments to one another and allows experience to extend itself. What appears here remains valid elsewhere as well, and can later be called forth again.

From there, a network begins to grow.

Words do not stand alone, but refer to one another. The table belongs with the chair, with the room, with sitting and working. Each word opens a field of other words and thereby reinforces the coherence within which everything has its place. The stability that arises in this way is not merely the stability of one thing, but of a whole supporting itself.

That whole becomes convincing.

Not because it is absolutely true, but because it remains consistent. Recognition repeats itself, confirms itself, and through this, trust emerges. What is familiar no longer needs to be questioned.

This movement is not limited to things.

A situation can be named a misunderstanding, and from that moment onward it appears in that light. Memories shift, emphases change, expectations are adjusted. The name that has been given continues to shape everything that follows.

The same applies to other people.

Someone is experienced as friendly or distant, and that designation influences how that person appears. The word does not uncover something existing independently behind it, but participates in shaping how the whole is seen and understood. Once something appears in that way, it continues to confirm itself in that direction.

The "I" is formed in this way as well.

A line emerges, a story, a coherence experienced as recognizable. It is said: this is who I am, this belongs to me, this does not. Such statements do not remain on the surface. They continue to shape how situations are experienced and how choices are made.

In this way the "I" acquires a form that endures.

Not a fixed core, but a pattern continually reaffirmed. Memories, expectations, and repetitions interlock and produce the feeling that something persists through time. That continuity is not discovered, but constructed and maintained.

And yet this stability has another side.

Every act of naming draws a boundary. What falls within that boundary becomes visible and recognizable. What falls outside it recedes into the background, or no longer appears as a possibility at all. The space in which something else might have emerged becomes smaller.

The table remains a table and becomes less able to appear otherwise.

The situation remains what it has been called and loses part of its openness.

The "I" remains who it thinks it is and becomes less flexible.

Change remains possible, but it demands more.

A word must be released or shifted, and with that an entire coherence is affected. Not only does the name change, but also everything that has formed around it.

Naming is therefore not an innocent addition.

It is a movement within appearance itself

through which coherence stabilizes and remains recognizable,

while at the same time becoming less free to appear otherwise.

Analysis

It has become clear that appearance is necessarily differentiated. What appears, appears as this and not that.

Yet this differentiation cannot be thought independently. A distinction presupposes a field within which the difference has meaning. Without such a coherence, the distinction loses its determinacy.

It follows that what appears as separate can appear as such only within a coherence that determines the conditions of its distinction.

This coherence cannot be understood as an additional context. It is constitutive of the appearance of what is identified as an element.

In this sense, appearance must necessarily take the form of a world.

A world is not understood here as a collection of entities, but as the structural coherence within which something can appear as an entity at all. What appears as a thing derives its identity from the relations within which it is embedded, and not from an independent core preceding those relations.

The world therefore neither precedes appearance, nor follows from it as a result. It coincides with the

manner in which appearance presents itself as a differentiated whole.

It follows that there is no access to an element outside the worldly coherence within which it can be determined as such. Every attempt to think an element apart from this coherence already makes use of the distinctions that have meaning only within a world.

The distinction between “thing” and “context” thereby loses its independence. What appears as a thing appears only within a context that is not external, but constitutive of its appearance.

The world is not a background of appearance, but the form in which appearance occurs.

There is no position from which this world as a whole can be established without already operating within its structure. Every description of the world appears as part of the world it describes.

The conclusion is that appearance is necessarily worldly. What appears, appears not merely as differentiated, but as part of a coherence that determines the conditions of that differentiation.

Literature

Being and Time by **Martin Heidegger**
An analysis of being-in-the-world as prior to the separation between subject and object; entities appear within an already given field of meaning.

The Visible and the Invisible by **Maurice Merleau-Ponty**
A development of world as a field of mutual intertwining in which distinctions are never absolute.

Ways of Worldmaking by **Nelson Goodman**
A conceptualization of worlds as the result of symbolic construction and selection.

On Certainty by **Ludwig Wittgenstein**
An investigation into the implicit certainties functioning as the background of meaning and knowledge.

The Social Construction of Reality by **Peter Berger** and **Thomas Luckmann**
An analysis of how social processes contribute to the stabilization of shared worlds.

Metaphors We Live By by **George Lakoff** and **Mark Johnson**
Shows how language and metaphorical structures contribute to the ordering and stabilization of experience.

Part III
Identity





Identification

The stability that arises through naming does not remain limited to things and situations. It also continues to shape the way someone experiences themselves.

Recognition is directed not only toward the environment, but also toward one's position within it. There comes a moment when an action, a reaction, or a thought is not only noticed, but also related to who someone is. Not in the form of a conscious conclusion, but as a shift in the way coherence is experienced.

A reaction is no longer seen merely as something that happens, but as something that belongs to me. A preference is no longer simply followed, but experienced as characteristic. A way of speaking, of looking, of responding begins to show a certain consistency and is recognized as such.

In this way, a first form of identification emerges.

This identification is not a separate step added to experience, but a condensation of it. What could previously still shift is now gathered into something that keeps returning. Repetition plays a decisive role here. Not because exactly the

same thing occurs, but because there is enough similarity for a line to be recognized.

That line is not only seen, but also confirmed.

What happened before is remembered as something that fits me. What happens now connects with it. What is still to come is expected in the same direction. In this way, a coherence emerges that stretches across moments and is experienced as a single whole.

That coherence then receives a name.

Not necessarily in words spoken aloud, but in an implicit form that can be summarized as: this is who I am. This may relate to something small, a preference, a habit, a way of responding, but also to something experienced as essential.

The moment that coherence is recognized as such, the role it plays begins to change.

It is no longer merely a pattern that appears, but becomes a point of reference. New situations are measured against it. New experiences are compared with it. What fits is confirmed. What does not fit creates tension.

Identification therefore works selectively.

Not everything that happens is given equal weight. Some aspects are magnified, while others fade into the background. This process

usually unfolds unnoticed, yet its consequences are far-reaching. It determines which experiences are taken up into the line of who someone is, and which remain outside it.

In this way, a form of consistency emerges that goes beyond simple recognition.

Experience is not only recognized, but also organized around a center experienced as enduring. That center does not need to be explicitly present. It does not need to be constantly thought about. It is implicitly present in the way everything is lived.

In this way, the "I" acquires a solidity it did not have before.

Not because a core is discovered that had always been there, but because the movement of recognition has begun to turn toward itself and confirm itself. The "I" becomes something that seems to remain, not because it is unchanging, but because it is continually repeated.

That repetition makes it reliable.

What is recognizable feels familiar. What is familiar is not easily released. In this way, a stability emerges that encompasses not only the world, but also the "I."

And yet that stability comes with a limitation.

Because certain patterns are continually confirmed, others are given less space. What does not fit within the formed line is less easily noticed, or taken less seriously. Possibilities that do not align with what is experienced as one's own remain unexplored or are quietly avoided.

Identification narrows the field.

Not by actively excluding something, but because attention repeatedly returns to what is already familiar. The familiar draws attention again and confirms itself, while the unfamiliar is given less opportunity to take shape.

This does not mean that change is impossible.

But it becomes less self-evident.

When an experience does not fit the existing image of who someone is, tension arises. That tension can be resolved either by adjusting the experience to fit the existing image, or by allowing the image itself to shift. In both cases, friction is involved.

The line that once seemed self-evident turns out to be less flexible than it appeared.

And yet the movement of identification continues.

It keeps searching for coherence, for continuity, for recognition. In every new situation, the same

question quietly returns: does this fit me, does this belong to who I am, does this connect with who I have been?

In this way, an ongoing confirmation takes place.

Not as a conscious choice, but as a manner in which experience organizes itself. The "I" continues to exist because it is continually formed, confirmed, and fixed into place.

Identification is therefore not a one-time event.

It is a process that keeps repeating,

in which recognition turns toward itself

and in doing so creates a form experienced as stable.

Recognizing Yourself

There comes a moment when recognition turns back upon itself. Until then, recognition is directed outward, toward things, sounds, faces, and situations. Everything finds its place without effort. The whole holds together, and there is no need to question how.

Then something changes.

A child looks into a mirror. At first there is only movement: a face that moves, a body that responds, an image among other images. It belongs to what appears, without any clear distinction between what is seen and the one who is looking.

Then recognition shifts.

The movement is no longer experienced as something merely happening there, but as something connected with what is happening here. What appears in the mirror begins to coincide with what is felt directly. The image is no longer just another image.

This is what I look like.

That is me.



The shift is small, almost invisible, and yet it changes everything.

A connection is formed between what can be seen and what until then was only lived from within. The face in the mirror is no longer simply perceived. It becomes an image that belongs to me, something that can return, be recognized again, be remembered.

From that moment on, the "I" can be pointed to. Not only from within, as involvement in what is happening, but also from outside, as something visible, something others can recognize, describe, and name.

That confirmation follows almost immediately.

A name is given, repeated, used. The child is addressed, corrected, encouraged, recognized. Gradually the face, the body, the name, and the responses of others begin to fall together into a single line. What first appeared as open involvement now begins to take on a contour.

The "I" becomes something that can return.

That return creates stability. The face changes, situations change, feelings shift, and yet enough remains recognizable for the sense of continuity to hold. There is no need to prove that it is the same person. Memory, language, and the responses of others keep confirming it.

This is how identification takes hold.

Not in a single moment, but through repetition. What is first seen is named. What is named is repeated. What is repeated becomes familiar. And what becomes familiar is not easily released.

And yet the tension remains.

The face in the mirror is only one form. It changes, ages, distorts, disappears. The same is true of the name, the qualities that are assigned, and the stories that are built around them. None of these remain fixed.

And yet as long as recognition continues to return, so does the feeling that all of this refers to something that remains the same.

That feeling is powerful.

Not because it reveals a fixed core, but because the movements of recognition, naming, and confirmation continue to repeat themselves.

This is how an "I" comes to seem stable, while in fact it is being formed again and again.

Confirmation

The image in the mirror does not remain by itself. What appears there as "I" only begins to carry weight when it is taken up into an environment that continues to repeat it. It is not only taken in from within, but also addressed from outside. The name that is given returns again and again, at first hesitantly, then as something entirely self-evident.

The child hears its name and responds, not because the meaning of that name is already understood, but because a connection begins to form between that sound and what is happening. There is looking, pointing, correcting. The name begins to coincide with the body, with movement, with reaction. What begins in this way does not easily come apart again.

From that moment on, recognition is strengthened, not only through repetition from within, but through an environment that continually confirms what had already begun. What is seen is named. What is named is addressed. What is addressed becomes expected.

This process rarely unfolds explicitly. It lives in small gestures, in intonations, in reactions so subtle they

barely stand out. A parent saying, this is who you are. Someone laughing at a particular reaction. Someone correcting, that is not like you. What is confirmed begins to carry weight. What is rejected gradually loses ground.

In this way, a field of expectations begins to form in which behavior is not only followed, but also guided. What fits within the image that is taking shape is reinforced. What falls outside it is ignored or redirected. This does not have to happen harshly. It can happen softly, playfully, almost invisibly, and precisely because of that it can be so effective.

Through repetition, it becomes self-evident. The name is used again and again, the face recognized again and again. Certain reactions return as typical, fitting, recognizable. What takes shape in this way acquires a stability extending far beyond the moment itself.

And with that, the nature of identity begins to shift. What began as an open movement of recognition and involvement is gradually fixed within a network of confirmations. The environment carries that network, and the one growing within it takes it over, not as a conscious choice, but as the way the world presents itself.

The other thus becomes a mirror that remains. Not one that merely reflects an image, but one that holds it in place and repeats it. Through that repetition, the image becomes less dependent

on the moment. It remains, even when the situation changes.

That stability feels like reality, not because it exists independently of circumstances, but because it continues to confirm itself within them. What is seen and named by others becomes difficult to separate from what someone experiences inwardly.

In this way, the "I" arises within a shared field in which others are constantly involved. Who someone is is not formed from within alone, but also confirmed, shaped, and redirected from outside.

There is strength in this. The world becomes more predictable, reactions gain meaning, and a line begins to emerge that can be followed. Living together becomes possible because expectations begin to align and behavior remains recognizable.

But that same strength also fixes things in place. Confirmed patterns are given priority, while what is not confirmed recedes into the background. Possibilities that do not fit within the existing image are given less space to develop, not because they are impossible, but because they are not seen, not recognized, not supported.

In this way, the field narrows further. Not through a deliberate limitation, but through a continuous selection of what counts and what does not. The

familiar is confirmed again, and for that reason remains central.

Even later, this movement continues to shape experience. The environment changes, but the way confirmation is sought and given remains recognizable. Attention moves toward reactions, toward what is being said, toward whatever fits what is already experienced as familiar.

Confirmation shifts, but it does not disappear. It becomes subtler, less direct, yet remains present in the way someone sees themselves and in the way others respond. A glance, a remark, even a silence can be enough to strengthen something, or quietly undermine it.

Identity thus remains dependent upon what happens between people, not as a weakness, but as a feature of how it comes into being.

The "I" that feels stable is not available in isolation.

It exists only within a coherence in which it is recognized, named, and confirmed.

And that is precisely why it feels so solid,

because it is not sustained by a single movement,

but by many, continually reinforcing one another.

Roles

Identification creates a certain stability, yet that stability never fully closes. In different situations, the way someone appears shifts, often without any explicit awareness of it. What feels entirely self-evident in one context may lose that self-evidence in another, and yet the feeling remains that it is still the same person.

This shift becomes visible the moment the environment changes. In one group, someone may appear open and talkative, while that same person withdraws elsewhere and hardly speaks at all. At work, a certain firmness and purposefulness may come forward, while in a familiar setting something lighter, more playful, becomes visible. These differences are rarely experienced as contradictions, but rather as variations within a single identity.

This makes visible that the coherence experienced as "I" is not singular, but multiple. Not as separate identities existing side by side, but as ways of appearing that continually align with the coherence within which someone finds themselves. What feels self-evident in one situation does not necessarily do so in another, and yet these differences are gathered under a single explanation: this is simply who I am,

depending on the situation.

In this way, the differences are absorbed. They do not appear as separate forms with their own independent coherence, but as variations of one underlying identity. That underlying identity remains implicit. It is not directly experienced, but inferred from what keeps returning.

When this movement is followed more carefully, the perspective begins to shift. The different ways of appearing no longer need to be reduced to a single core, but can instead be seen as forms arising within specific coherences. What appears there is not a mask placed over a fixed face, but a way of being taking shape within what that situation makes possible.

A conversation calls for a different involvement than silence. A group evokes something different than being alone. Familiarity allows for reactions that unfamiliarity does not. What appears aligns with what the situation allows and asks for, and within that alignment, the role takes shape.

That role rarely emerges as a conscious choice. It forms itself in speaking, in moving, in responding. Only afterward can it be said: that is how I was there, that was typical of me. But in the moment itself, the one acting coincides with what appears. There is no distance between a fixed "I" and the role being lived.

And yet roles are often understood as something

being played, as though there were a stable self making use of different masks. That image presupposes a distinction between what someone truly is and how that person presents themselves. But that distinction does not hold when followed carefully. The way one appears in one situation is no less real than in another.

What is experienced as a core arises from recognition across different situations. It is inferred from repetition and continuity, not assumed in advance. In that sense, roles are not superficial. They are precisely the concrete forms through which identification expresses itself. In every role, what was formed earlier is confirmed, while at the same time being adjusted to the context in which it appears.

The stability of the "I" therefore does not lie in stillness, but in the capacity to maintain itself through shifting. Roles flow into one another without the sense of continuity being entirely lost. What is experienced as "I" moves with them, and yet remains recognizable.

And yet this flexibility has its limits.

When the differences between roles become too great, tension begins to appear. What feels entirely natural in one situation may seem impossible in another. The roles no longer connect smoothly, and the coherence holding the whole together begins to come under pressure.

In such moments it becomes visible that the “I” is not a fixed unity standing above the roles, but rather the movement that continually tries to connect them.

When that connection no longer arises by itself, the question appears:

Who am I, really?

That question seems to point toward something behind the roles, but in fact it reveals the uncertainty that emerges when the coherence between roles no longer closes.

The longing for a core is then an attempt to resolve that tension and restore stability.

Whether that stability returns depends on how the roles begin to reorganize themselves. Sometimes a new coherence forms in which different ways of being align more naturally. Sometimes the tension remains, forcing a shift that goes beyond simple adjustment.

What becomes visible is that the “I” does not precede the roles.

It arises in and through them,

in the way they confirm one another,

overlap,

and sometimes collide.

And with that, the idea of one fixed identity begins to lose its self-evidence.

Not because there is no coherence,

but because that coherence is continually being formed

through the changing ways in which experience appears.

Tension

Roles can continue to shift for as long as they remain connected. In most situations, this happens without effort. One attitude flows naturally into another, a response fits the context, words find their place without needing to be consciously chosen. What appears remains recognizable, even while it changes.

That flexibility, however, has its limits. There are moments when the connection begins to falter. A reaction comes too sharply, or too late. A word that was meant to clarify only makes things less clear. What had felt entirely natural begins to resist, not because something is visibly wrong, but because the whole no longer comes together as it did a moment before.

Sometimes the shift is almost imperceptible. A glance is understood differently than intended. A silence lasts just a little too long. A sentence fails to land in the way it was meant to. And yet these small changes are enough to alter the coherence of the situation. What had formed a single movement begins to split. Roles that had flowed into one another without friction begin to pull in different directions, and what felt natural in one moment no longer fits within the next.

The tension that emerges here is not something added from outside. It arises within the coherence itself. The same elements remain present, the same people, the same words, the same gestures, but they no longer align in the way they did before. What once pointed in a shared direction now begins to diverge.

This is often experienced as uncertainty. Not only uncertainty about what is happening, but uncertainty about who is acting within it. A response that moments ago felt entirely natural can suddenly feel unfamiliar. A way of speaking that once felt effortless can begin to feel forced. A distance emerges between the one acting and what is being done.

That distance rarely remains neutral. Almost immediately there is a movement to restore what has been lost. Someone searches for better words, for a clearer gesture, for some way to make the situation fit together again. Sometimes that means returning to what worked before. Sometimes it means trying something new.

But not every tension can be resolved so easily. There are moments when different ways of being begin to work against one another. One role calls for restraint, while another pushes toward expression. Something asks to be held back, while something else insists on being spoken. What feels right in one coherence collides with what seems necessary in another.

It is in such moments that something essential becomes visible. The "I" is not a stable position standing above these movements, calmly choosing between them. It is already involved in the tension itself. It is part of the movement that tries to connect, to choose, to restore, while at the same time being shaped by what no longer fits together.

In those moments, no clear center appears from which it can simply be decided what is right. Every possibility seems to contain something true, and at the same time something incomplete. Whatever happens leaves something unresolved.

Sometimes this passes quickly, as a brief hesitation that disappears once coherence returns. But sometimes the tension remains and begins to spread into other situations. What first appeared as a disturbance becomes a more lasting condition. Roles still appear, words are still spoken, actions are still taken, but they no longer carry the same self-evidence.

What had once been experienced as a single line of identity begins to open into multiple directions. The sense of self does not disappear, but it no longer fully coincides with itself. What was experienced as "I" begins to reveal how dependent it always was upon a coherence that is now under pressure.

And yet the movement continues. There is still

speaking, acting, responding, but without the same certainty as before. Every action carries a trace of hesitation, as though it can no longer fully settle into itself.

That is what makes tension so unsettling. Not because nothing is happening, but because what is happening no longer closes. There is no clear mistake, yet there is also no convincing sense that things are entirely right.

And it is precisely there that something becomes visible.

The coherence that once seemed so natural was never fixed. It could shift, fracture, or disappear, not because something outside it intervened, but because the movement holding it together had changed.

What remains is not a stable center behind experience, but the movement itself, within which both coherence and tension continue to take shape.



Intermezzo — The Meeting

The agenda is almost finished.

Topics have been discussed, decisions have been made, remarks have been noted. The conversation moves forward in an orderly way, exactly as expected. Everyone seems to know their place. Sentences connect naturally, responses follow without hesitation.

Then the final item comes up.

Something happened in a project. Perhaps something small, but not unimportant. The outcome does not entirely match what had been agreed upon earlier.

He brings it up. Not sharply, more carefully.

"Maybe it would be good to take a moment and look at how exactly that happened."

The sentence remains open enough to leave room.

From the other side of the table, no one responds immediately. A glance toward the screen. A hand moving a pen slightly aside.

Then:

"I don't think that's necessary."

It is said calmly.

As though it speaks for itself.

He gives a short nod, but continues anyway.

"It might help to clarify where things started to shift."

A brief silence follows.

"It didn't shift," she says. "We simply did what was needed at that moment."

The words are not harsh.

But they do close something.

Someone else shifts in their chair. A glance moves briefly from one person to the other. Nothing is said, and yet something changes.

"Okay," he says.

It sounds like agreement, but the conversation does not return to its earlier form. The self-evidence is gone. What had moved as a single line just moments before now begins to branch.

They move on to the next item. Planning. Deadlines. Tasks.

The words are correct. The sentences are clear.

But they carry less.

He looks once more at his notes, as though something is missing there.

She sits upright, attentive, as though everything that needed to be said has already been said.

The meeting continues until the end.

Agreements are confirmed. Actions are assigned. The next date is set.

And yet something remains.

Not spoken.

Not resolved.

But present.

What had first been one conversation

is no longer entirely the same conversation.



Nothing comes together anymore.

Analysis

Stability depends upon repetition and confirmation within a worldly coherence.

Yet this stabilization is not limited to the identification of objects or situations. It also includes the ways in which acting, thinking, and experiencing are recognized as coherent.

It follows that identification emerges.

What repeatedly allows itself to be confirmed as coherent is no longer recognized merely as the same, but as belonging to a unity that appears as "I."

This unity cannot be understood as a pre-given core. It arises within the same processes of recognition and naming that also make the stability of the world possible.

The "I" is therefore not the origin of coherence, but an effect of stabilization.

Repetition plays a decisive role in this.

What appears as "I" appears as that which can be recognized as consistent across differing circumstances. This consistency does not rest upon actual unchangeability, but upon the capacity to interpret variations as belonging to the same.

Naming reinforces this identification.

Through formulations such as "this is who I am," certain patterns become fixed and distinguished from

other possible configurations. What is named in this way gains priority within the coherence and begins to be experienced as defining.

This identification is selective and exclusive.

What does not fit within the established pattern is marginalized, reinterpreted, or excluded. The experience of a coherent “I” depends upon this continuous selection.

Social confirmation plays a constitutive role in this process.

The identifications that function as “I” are not only confirmed internally, but continually reproduced through interaction with others. In this way, the “I” acquires an appearance of independence that conceals its dependence upon these processes.

It follows that identity is not a fixed structure, but a stabilized configuration.

It depends upon repetition, recognition, and confirmation, and can shift whenever these processes begin to change.

There is no position from which identity as a whole can be established without making use of the very coherence that gives rise to it. Every attempt at self-definition appears within the structure it seeks to describe.

The conclusion is that identity has no ground preceding its appearance, but arises as an effect of the stabilization of coherence within a world.

Literature

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life by **Erving Goffman**
Analyzes how identity emerges and is maintained in social interaction, as a continuously enacted role rather than a fixed core.

Mind, Self, and Society by **George Herbert Mead**
Shows how the self arises in relation to others and does not precede social experience.

Gender Trouble by **Judith Butler**
Demonstrates that identity is not given in advance, but is performatively brought into being through repeated actions within existing structures.

Sources of the Self by **Charles Taylor**
Describes how the modern self is formed within historical and cultural frameworks that are often experienced as self-evident.

The Divided Self by **R. D. Laing**
Makes visible how identity can fragment when the coherence through which it is confirmed comes under pressure.

On Becoming a Person by **Carl Rogers**
Approaches identity from lived experience and shows how the self shifts depending on acceptance and confirmation.

Part IV
Configurations



Coherence does not appear only in the way we recognize ourselves. It can also appear in systems that seem larger than the one who thinks them, lives them, or speaks them.

What first appeared personal now begins to take on a different scale.

The Presentation

The room is quiet in a way that feels familiar. At the front stands a screen, and on it a sequence of slides moves forward in a calm, logical rhythm. Graphs appear, arrows connect one element to another, and a diagram gradually unfolds. Someone is speaking. His voice is clear, steady, without hesitation. He explains how things fit together, how they work, how one part leads naturally into the next.

It begins with something simple, a starting point, an observation, something everyone in the room seems able to recognize. From there, the structure begins to build. Each step connects seamlessly with the previous one. What at first appeared scattered begins to find its place. What seemed unclear is gradually absorbed into a whole that becomes increasingly coherent, increasingly convincing.

No one interrupts. People watch, listen, occasionally nod. Someone makes notes. Another leans slightly forward, as if unwilling to miss a single detail. The words follow one another without friction, and with every new slide the impression grows that everything is beginning to make sense.

Halfway through, a slide appears that seems to bring the entire presentation together. It is a diagram, cleanly constructed, with lines, shapes, and carefully arranged connections. Everything that has been said up to this point now seems to converge in that single image. It shows how the different parts relate to one another, how they support one another, how together they form something that feels larger and more complete than any of the separate elements ever did on their own.

The speaker points toward the screen and says, almost matter-of-factly, "This is the model."

He lets the words settle for a moment. Not because he doubts them, but because he knows the silence gives them weight. The sentence remains in the room, and with it the image on the screen. For a few seconds, no one moves. The lines, the shapes, the connections, everything appears exactly where it should be. Nothing seems to fall outside it. Nothing appears to be missing.

When he continues, the tone shifts slightly. Examples are added, applications are shown, situations are described in which the model proves useful. What had first seemed abstract now begins to feel practical, almost inevitable. It no longer appears to be merely a way of describing something, but a way of navigating what comes next.

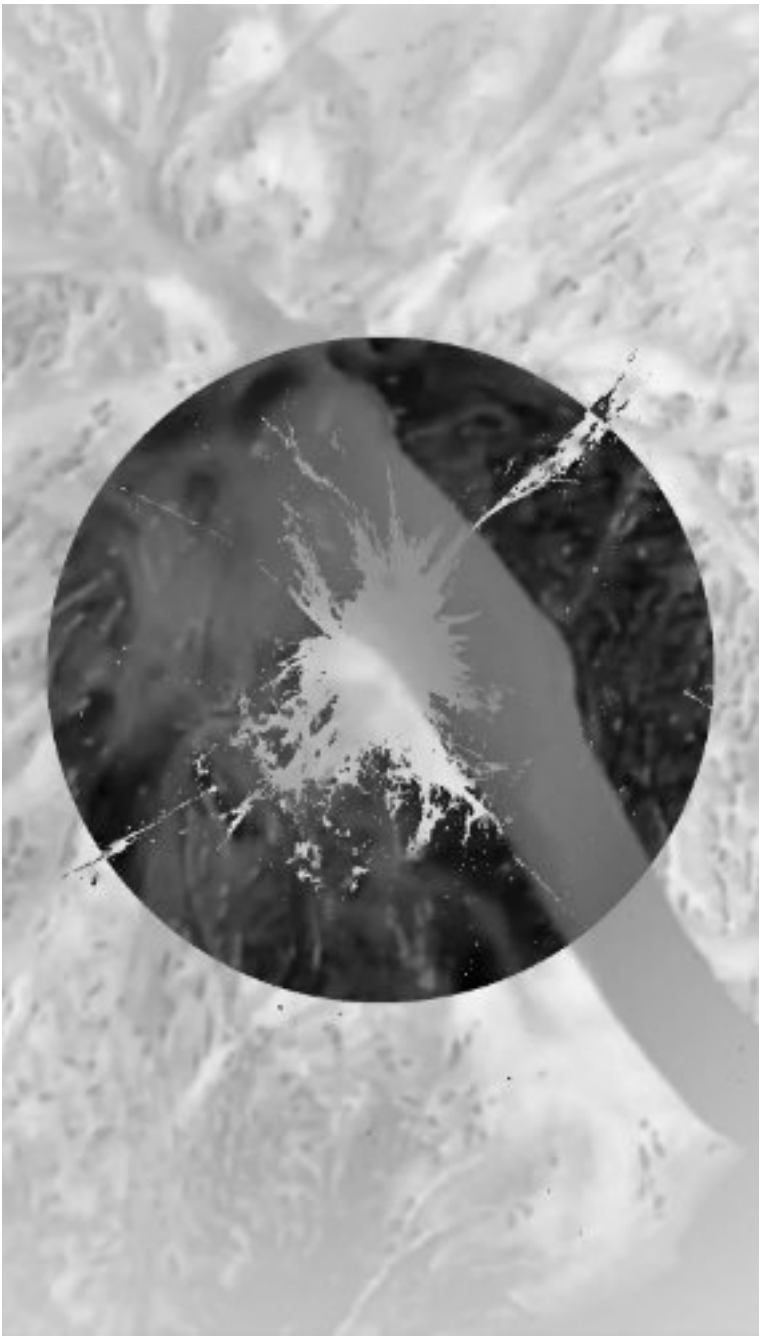
By the time the final slide appears, the structure already feels familiar. A short summary fills the screen. A few key points, clearly formulated, as though they had always been waiting there to be discovered.

“This is what it comes down to.”

He looks around the room. No one seems to question it. At least not visibly. The structure stands. The coherence is persuasive. What only moments ago appeared as separate observations now seems fixed within a form that will remain long after the presentation is over.
Then the applause begins. Chairs shift. People start talking softly among themselves while gathering their notebooks, laptops, and coats. Conversations continue in small groups as they move toward the door, still speaking about what they have just heard.

A moment later the diagram disappears from the screen.

The room remains.



Cosmology

Cosmology describes the universe as a development unfolding through time. What now appears as space, matter, and radiation is understood as the result of a process extending back toward an earlier condition. That condition is referred to as the beginning, not as an event within time, but as the point at which the description itself begins.

When the equations are traced backward through time, density and temperature increase, distances contract, and structures disappear into a condition in which distinctions have not yet crystallized. What later unfolds into stars and galaxies appears here as a homogeneous whole. The same laws continue to apply, the same relations remain in place. What is observed further along in time is traced back toward a condition in which everything is still contained. The coherence is not interrupted, but extended in the opposite direction.

In this way, a continuum appears without leap or rupture, a sequence of states following one another with necessity. Each moment carries the next, even when the sequence is reversed, allowing the history of the universe to be read as a single coherent whole. The beginning is not

placed outside the description, but absorbed into its outermost limit, the point at which variables approach extreme values and the equations remain valid even as their interpretation begins to shift.

That shift becomes explicit when the starting point itself is reversed. In what Stephen Hawking and Thomas Hertog describe as top-down cosmology, one no longer begins with a fixed past from which the present follows. Instead, possible histories are traced backward from the present itself. What appears as the past then depends upon the conditions under which the present is observed.

The beginning thereby loses its status as a fixed point. It no longer appears as a single event preceding everything that follows, but as a range of possible histories that acquire meaning only within a particular observational framework. Not one origin, but a field of possible origins, of which only some appear as actual.

The equations remain, and the relations preserve their validity, but what they describe begins to lose its direct meaning. Space and time, which previously functioned as the framework of description, themselves become part of what is being described and can no longer be assumed as background conditions. The description continues, but the reference point upon which it depended begins to disappear.

What had earlier been understood as a state in time can no longer be understood in the same way, because the structure within which such an ordering has meaning emerges only later. The beginning cannot be placed before other moments, because it is precisely that ordering itself that is now at stake.

The term "beginning" remains, but it no longer refers to a point that can be established as such. It functions as a designation within a model that has reached its own limit. What appears as origin appears only within the coherence that makes it possible to speak of an origin at all.

There is no independent criterion by which it can be established that this beginning corresponds to a reality existing outside the description. What appears as the universe appears within the description that makes it possible to understand it as such. There is no external standpoint from which the whole can be surveyed.

In that sense, the beginning is not a point behind us, but a limit within the description itself. It does not mark where everything began, but where the model encounters its own conditions of possibility. What appears there does not appear as something simply given, but as part of the way it is being formulated.

The universe cannot be fully placed outside its own description. Just as a hammer cannot strike itself, the whole within which we appear cannot

fully understand itself from outside.

What appears, always appears within the conditions that make its appearance possible.

Singularity

The description of the universe can be traced backward, not as a narrative, but as a sequence of states following from one another according to the same mathematical relations. The equations remain valid while the scale changes. What now appears as extended can be traced back toward what is more compact. What appears as complex can be followed back toward conditions that seem simpler and less differentiated.

As this movement continues, densities increase, distances decrease, and the intervals through which change is described become smaller and smaller. The quantities remain defined even as they approach increasingly extreme values, and nothing within the mathematics itself suggests an immediate break. The description continues to hold, even as the physical interpretation of what is being described becomes progressively more difficult to imagine.

Eventually, however, the equations lead toward a condition in which certain quantities no longer remain finite. Density increases without limit, curvature becomes unbounded, and temperature approaches values that can no

longer be meaningfully represented within the same conceptual framework. What appears here is traditionally referred to as a singularity.

That term does not designate an object, a place, or a moment in the ordinary sense. Rather, it marks the point at which the description reaches the limit of the framework within which it had previously been understood. The equations themselves do not simply fail or disappear. They continue to generate results, but those results can no longer be interpreted in the same way as before.

What changes is not the mathematics alone, but the structure within which its meaning had been anchored. Space and time, which until then functioned as the background against which physical events could be located and ordered, become part of what is now being driven toward its limit. The framework that made it possible to speak of "where" or "when" is no longer available in the same way.

For that reason, singularity cannot be understood as a beginning in the ordinary sense of the word. It is not a first moment that can be placed before all other moments, nor a point that can simply be identified as the origin of everything that follows. Rather, it marks the limit at which the description loses the very conditions that made such ordering possible.

And yet singularity continues to function within

cosmological models as a beginning. The timeline starts there, equations are formulated in relation to it, and the subsequent development of the universe is described as unfolding from that boundary. In this way, what can no longer be meaningfully described is nevertheless retained as the reference point from which the description proceeds.

Singularity therefore does not reveal a first thing, a first event, or a final ground hidden behind the universe. It reveals something more subtle and perhaps more unsettling: that the description reaches a boundary which it cannot step beyond, and yet must still include in order for the coherence of the model to remain intact.

What appears as the beginning of the universe is therefore not simply the discovery of an origin.

It is also the moment at which the description encounters its own limit,

and absorbs that limit into itself.

The Boundary Is Absorbed

Singularity marks a boundary, not of the universe, but of the description. What can be calculated up to that point remains valid, yet what appears there can no longer be extended within the same terms.

And yet that boundary does not remain outside

the system. It is absorbed into the way the description organizes itself. The timeline begins at singularity, the equations are formulated so that they reach toward it, and what can no longer be described appears as the beginning of what can.

In this way, the boundary acquires a function. Not as a solution, but as the point from which the description begins to organize itself again. What cannot be understood does not disappear, but is designated, named, and thereby given a place within the whole.

Singularity appears as a starting point, not because it can be established as such, but because the model requires it in order to begin. Without a beginning there is no development, and without development there is no coherence.

In this way, the system remains intact, not by crossing its boundary, but by integrating it.

What once marked the end of the description now appears as its origin.

The tension does not disappear because it has been resolved, but because it loses its independent role. Singularity remains unintelligible, yet within the whole it functions as something that no longer needs to be worked out further.

Attention naturally shifts toward what follows: the

evolution of the universe, the formation of structures, the laws that become visible within them.

What precedes remains beyond reach.

And yet it no longer obstructs the description.

The system continues.

The boundary remains present,

but no longer disturbs,

because it has been absorbed into the way the whole sustains itself.

Closure

A system works not because everything within it has been definitively proven, but because nothing within it seems to break. What appears inside it finds its place. Measurements align, calculations continue, explanations reinforce one another, and nowhere does the whole appear to require rebuilding from the beginning. It fits.

Not as a conclusion, but as an experience. As the sense that nothing is missing, that what once appeared scattered has now come together in a form capable of sustaining itself.
That is where its strength lies.

A system does not need to contain everything. It only needs to organize what appears within it in such a way that it continues to confirm itself. What fits is absorbed into the structure. What does not fit gradually recedes into the background, not necessarily as error, but as something no longer experienced as relevant.
In this way, a boundary begins to emerge.

Not as a visible line, but as something active in what does and does not appear. What falls within the system becomes clear, recognizable, increasingly precise. What falls outside it may still

remain present, but begins to lose its weight. It no longer shapes the coherence of what is being understood.

This movement becomes especially visible in science. Measurements are taken, models are constructed, relationships are confirmed. What works is repeated, and what is repeated becomes familiar. Over time, the distinction between model and reality begins to fade. Theory is no longer experienced merely as a way of describing the world, but as a description of how the world itself is.

The same movement can be found elsewhere, often less explicitly but no less powerfully. In ideas about who someone is, in moral frameworks, in political systems, in shared ways of living, a description can gradually take on the status of something given. What first appeared as interpretation begins to function as reality.
This transition rarely announces itself.

The words may remain the same, yet their status changes. They no longer refer simply to what is being observed, but to what is assumed to be true before observation even begins.

In this way, a ground begins to form that no longer needs to present itself directly. It is already present in every step that follows. What is thought, measured, interpreted, and confirmed all takes place within that ground, and in doing so, confirms it again.

The coherence gradually closes.

What appears is absorbed and given a place. What does not immediately fit is adjusted, reinterpreted, or expanded until it can still be made to belong. New observations are understood through the existing framework. Deviations become noise, measurement error, incomplete data, or problems waiting for future clarification.

And so the whole remains intact.

Its persuasive force does not come from explaining everything, but from the fact that everything that seems to matter already falls within its boundaries.

It is precisely there that it becomes difficult to look beyond it.

Not because anything forbids it, but because nothing any longer seems to demand it. What appears continues to confirm the whole. The question of whether things could also appear differently begins to lose its urgency.

And yet the closure is never complete.

Some appearances resist integration. Some tensions remain. Certain phenomena continue to fit only partially, or require increasingly complex adjustments in order to remain within the existing structure.

At first, these tensions do not threaten the system. They are absorbed like everything else. New concepts are introduced, additional layers are added, exceptions are accounted for, and the structure expands while continuing to appear as the same coherent whole.

But it is precisely here that something becomes visible.

The stability of the system depends not only on what it includes, but also on what remains outside its own field of attention. The coherence holds only as long as its own conditions are not themselves brought into view.

The moment those conditions begin to appear, what once seemed absolute begins to shift.

What had appeared as reality itself begins to reveal itself as one possible ordering among other possible orderings. It does not immediately lose its force, nor does it become false. But its status changes.

What once appeared as ground now appears as part of the very coherence it had been supporting.

And with that, no final foundation remains outside the movement.

What had been experienced as absolute turns out to belong to the same process through which

everything else appears, stabilizes, and eventually closes around itself.



Nonduality

There is no separation between that which perceives and that which is perceived. What appears, appears as a single whole within which no separate position can be identified from which that whole is being observed.

Within this, the thought of a separate "I" no longer holds. Actions still happen, thoughts still arise, perceptions continue to unfold, but they no longer refer back to a center that owns them or controls them. What once seemed self-evidently present as the one to whom experience belonged turns out to be nowhere to be found.

What remains is simply this, without further division. Not as an object, not as an experience belonging to someone, but as a field within which appearance and appearing-for can no longer be separated. Everything that appears, appears within this and as this.

There is a stillness in this that does not depend upon what is happening. There is no distance from what appears, and no second position standing in relation to it. Whatever arises does so without opposition.

That immediacy can feel complete in itself.

Nothing needs to be added to it, and nothing can be taken away from it. What had been sought elsewhere turns out never to have existed outside this. The movement that seemed to be heading somewhere begins to fall away, not because it has arrived, but because there is no longer anywhere for it to go.

And yet within this same appearance, words begin to emerge. Explanations appear. Formulations. Pointers attempting to give language to what is already the case.

These words do not point to something outside this whole, and yet within the whole they begin to introduce distinctions.

Expressions such as "not two," "what is," or simply "this" begin to shape what had previously appeared without division. Not because a second reality has come into being, but because language itself introduces form.

And with that, a position begins to reappear. Not as a deliberate choice, but as a consequence of expression itself. What takes no standpoint begins to function as a standpoint the moment it is spoken.

In this way, a form of absoluteness quietly returns.

Not as a denial of unity, but as its formulation.

What appears without ground begins once

again to function as ground through the way it is being described.

The unity itself is not destroyed by this, but neither does it remain untouched. It begins to take on a particular shape. It appears as something deeply convincing, and at the same time as something that never fully coincides with what is being said about it.

Reading This

Not everything perhaps. Not every sentence equally strong, not every step equally clear. And yet, while reading, something begins to come together. What at first appeared scattered gradually starts to organize itself into a line that can be followed.

This does not happen as a conscious decision. It happens in the movement of reading itself. Words are taken in, sentences begin to connect, and earlier passages quietly shift in meaning as later ones begin to cast their light backward. What first appeared as separate observations gradually forms a coherence that does not need to be deliberately constructed. It arises while being followed.

At times there is hesitation. A sentence does not immediately land, or a thought seems to remain just out of reach. For a moment there may be a sense of distance, as though what is being said has not yet fully found its place. And yet the

reading continues, and with what follows, something that first seemed uncertain may suddenly begin to make sense. What resisted at first can later find its place within a broader movement that was not yet visible.

This does not happen because every claim has been checked or every step has been proven. It happens because the whole begins to carry itself. What is being read gradually becomes the very framework within which it is understood. There is no separate position outside the reading from which that framework can be fully evaluated while it is unfolding.

And yet the coherence does not remain fixed. A passage that felt clear a few pages earlier may return with a different weight when read again. The same words remain on the page, but what they seem to say has shifted. What once felt entirely self-evident may now appear less settled, not because it has become false, but because the context in which it is being understood has changed.

As the reading continues, new chapters, examples, and perspectives begin to build upon what came before. Systems appear that close around themselves, boundaries begin to show themselves, and standpoints emerge that present themselves as complete. Each new movement seems at first to strengthen the coherence that has already been established.

And then, almost unnoticed, something begins to resist. Not strongly enough to break the whole, and not clearly enough to stop reading, but enough to introduce a subtle tension. There is a sense that the structure holds, and yet not completely. Something feels unresolved, though it cannot yet be clearly identified.

Still, the reading continues. What appears now appears as this book itself, as a coherence unfolding while it is being followed. There is no place outside the reading from which it can finally be determined whether the whole truly holds together. And yet that holding is continually assumed, not as a belief, but as the condition for continuing at all.

If it no longer held, the reading would come to an end.
As long as it continues, the coherence remains.

And within that movement, the shifting continues as well. What seemed convincing a moment ago may quietly give way to something else that now feels equally convincing. The transition is not chosen, nor consciously managed. It is simply followed.

What appears, appears as what is being read, and what is understood is understood only within that movement.

And for as long as that movement continues, the whole continues to hold.

Analysis

Coherence can close on different levels: within scientific models, within cosmological narratives of origin, and within nondual experiences in which every distinction appears to dissolve.

Identity emerges as an effect of stabilization within a worldly coherence.

This stabilization, however, does not remain limited to individual identifications. It can be extended, formalized, and developed into broader coherences in which not only recognition takes place, but in which the very conditions of recognition themselves become established.

From this, configurations emerge.

A configuration should not be understood as a collection of beliefs or ideas, but as a structured whole of distinctions, rules, and relations within which it becomes possible to determine what may appear as valid, observable, or meaningful.

Within such a configuration, what appears is not merely recognized, but also evaluated according to criteria that may remain implicit or become explicitly formulated. These criteria do not stand outside the configuration. They belong to the configuration itself, and cannot be established independently of it.

Configurations therefore tend toward closure.

Not because they contain every possible case, but because they create a framework within which whatever appears can be interpreted in ways that continue to confirm the coherence of the whole. What falls within the framework is experienced as consistent. What does not fit is reformulated, excluded, or treated as an exception, a boundary case, or something not yet fully understood.

This closure should not be mistaken for completion. On the contrary, it depends upon the capacity of a configuration to absorb tensions, anomalies, and deviations without losing its coherence. Boundaries do not necessarily appear as external limitations. They can be taken up into the configuration itself and begin to function as internal elements of its continued stability.

In this way, a form of self-confirmation emerges.

The configuration becomes the reference framework for its own validity. The criteria used to evaluate what is true, coherent, or meaningful appear within the same structure that those criteria continue to confirm. From this, configurations can begin to take on an absolute character.

Not because they are necessarily true in any final sense, but because no external criterion exists by which they can be evaluated without once again entering another configuration structured by its own distinctions.

The distinction between ground and consequence

therefore begins to lose its independence.

Even positions that present themselves as dissolving all distinctions continue to function as configurations. The denial of distinction itself appears as a distinction, one that relativizes other distinctions while continuing to operate as an organizing principle in its own right. In that sense, it repeats the very structure it appears to transcend.

There is no position from which a configuration can be evaluated as a whole without making use of the distinctions that configuration itself makes possible. Every critique appears within a configuration, and remains dependent upon it.

The conclusion is that configurations have no external ground.

They function as self-referential coherences that generate and confirm their own conditions of validity. Such coherences may present themselves as absolute, yet they cannot fully establish their own boundaries as boundaries
without at the same time altering the very structure through which they hold together.

Literature

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions by **Thomas Kuhn**
Describes how scientific systems function as closed frameworks that determine what appears as valid, and how shifts within those frameworks take place.

The Order of Things by **Michel Foucault**
Analyzes how different systems of knowledge generate their own conditions for what may count as truth.

The Logic of Scientific Discovery by **Karl Popper**
Emphasizes the role of falsification, while indirectly revealing how systems structure themselves around what appears as testable.

The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes by **Imre Lakatos**
Shows how systems protect themselves from refutation through adaptation and expansion.

Against Method by **Paul Feyerabend**
Underscores that no fixed method exists that stands above systems and guarantees their validity.

On Certainty by **Ludwig Wittgenstein**
Shows that every form of certainty rests upon assumptions that cannot themselves be justified from within the same system.

Labyrinths by Jorge **Luis Borges**
A literary example of worlds that become fully self-contained, and through that very closure begin to reveal their own limits.

Part V
Ruptures



The Teacher

The room is small, the chairs placed close together. She sits at the front, slightly elevated, on a simple chair. There is no introduction. By the time she begins to speak, everyone is already silent.

Her voice is low. Not slow, but without hurry. She speaks in sentences that seem to require no explanation.

"There is no separate self."

No one reacts.

The words are not heard as a proposition, but as something that already feels strangely familiar.

After a moment, a man raises his hand. There is hesitation in the gesture, but not resistance.

"I understand that," he says. "But if there is no 'I'... then who is it that panics? Just yesterday, I—"

She nods and lets him finish.

"Panic appears," she says. "Like everything appears. There is no owner of it."

The man looks down for a moment. He nods, though not entirely.

"But it still feels like me," he says. "As if I'm inside it."

A brief smile passes across her face, but she says nothing at first. She lets the silence remain for a moment before answering.

"That feeling," she says, "is also what appears."

The room grows quiet again.

The man looks up, waiting.

"But then..." he says slowly, "it doesn't really matter what I do."

He does not say it sharply. It sounds less like a challenge than like something he has just noticed for himself.

She opens her mouth as if to answer, then pauses. For a moment she remains completely still. Then she closes her mouth again, looks at him, and finally speaks.

"There is no 'I' that does."

Her voice has not changed.

And yet this time it lands differently.



The man does not nod.
He looks away.

At the back of the room, someone shifts in their chair. Someone else folds their arms.

She continues speaking, saying something about action happening by itself, about life moving without a controller.

The words still make sense.

And yet something has changed.

They still seem correct, but no longer seem to fully connect.

The man remains still, his hands resting quietly on his knees.

After a while, he gives one final, almost imperceptible nod.

Not because anything has become clear.

More because there is nothing left to do.

The Moon

In ‘Against Method’, Paul Feyerabend includes a drawing by Galileo Galilei.

The moon, seen through a telescope.
A circle, unevenly filled.

Light and dark areas.

Shadows that do not entirely make sense.

It looks like what you might expect.

But when you keep looking, it does not hold.
The shapes do not come together as a surface.
Not as something you can recognize as a landscape.

No craters.

No mountains.

Only contrast.

As though it does not yet know what it is.

Galileo looks.

He draws what he sees.

He corrects.
Adds lines.

Darkens the parts that seem darker.

And yet the image shifts while he is looking.

Not visibly.

Not dramatically.

It simply does not settle.

What appears in the telescope keeps moving.

What appears on paper remains behind.

The drawing grows.

And yet nowhere does it fully come together.

Not with what he sees.
Not with what it is supposed to be.

The moon remains still.
The drawing remains still.

And yet they do not belong to one another.

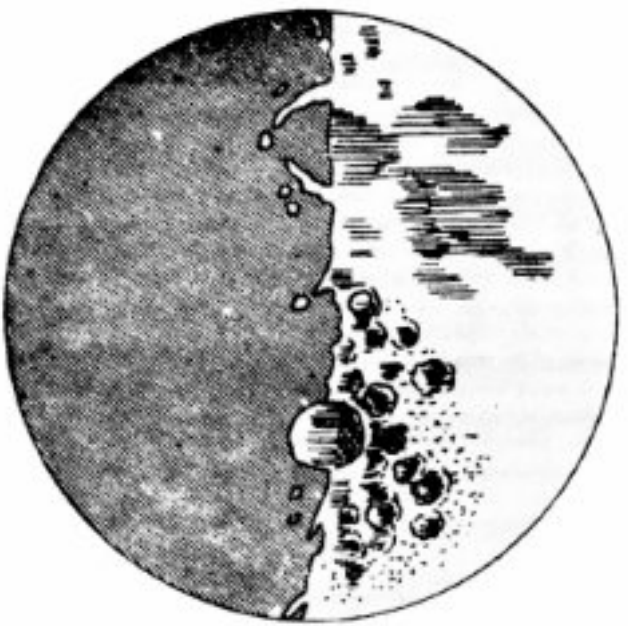


Figure 1. The shape of a lunar mountain and a walled plain, from Galileo, *Sidereus Nuncius*, Venice, 1610 (cf. p. 150).

When Galileo Galilei looks through his telescope, he sees light and shadow, irregularities, contrasts, surfaces that seem uneven.
But there is not yet a stable system through which these appearances can be read as craters, mountains, or landscape.
So he draws what he sees.
And yet what he sees is already partly formed, and partly not yet.
In Against Method, Paul Feyerabend uses precisely this example to show that observation is never neutral.
His central point is simple: **you need a theory in order to see what you are seeing.**
Without a framework, there are only spots, contrasts, shifting patterns of light and dark.
With a framework, the same appearance becomes a lunar landscape.

Awakening

It does not always happen gradually.
Sometimes something shifts all at once, not as an insight that slowly builds over time, but as something that suddenly falls away. The tension that had been holding everything together is no longer there, if only for a moment. The movement to grasp, to interpret, to place things within familiar structures becomes still.

The room is still there. Sounds continue. Movement continues. Thoughts arise and disappear as before. And yet something essential has changed. What appears no longer seems to appear for someone. The familiar sense of a center, of an "I" standing in relation to experience, is no longer present in the way it had seemed to be before.

What remains can feel unusually clear, immediate, almost self-evident. It may feel as though everything has finally fallen into place, not because something new has appeared, but because nothing seems to stand in between. There is no question to resolve, no direction to follow, no problem that still demands an answer.

This is often recognized immediately.

Not as something new, but as something that seems to have always been the case. Something that feels less discovered than remembered. Less created than finally seen.

And almost immediately, it begins to receive a name.

Awakening.

Insight.

Liberation.

From that moment, something begins to change.

Not in what appears, but in the way what happened begins to be held. The clarity is remembered. The simplicity is spoken about. The apparent absence of a separate self becomes something that can be described, pointed toward, or returned to in thought.

And with that, a new coherence begins to form.

Words begin to gather around what happened. Distinctions appear between before and after. Explanations arise. Interpretations follow. What first appeared as a shift without structure gradually becomes a reference point, something that can be remembered as true, something that seems to remain, something that may later be sought again or defended as something that can never truly be lost.

And yet what happened there was not an endpoint.

No structure remained standing.

There was only a shift in which what had previously felt self-evident no longer came together in the same way.

The dioramic approach does not begin by asking what such a shift means.

It begins by asking how it appears.

And when followed in that way, something becomes visible.

Not that the experience is false.

Not that the clarity is mistaken.

But that this, too, appears as something that fits.

The clarity.

The immediacy.

The absence of a center.

Together, they form a coherence.

And like every coherence, it can shift.

What had been experienced as final begins to

reveal its dependence upon the way it comes together. Not because it is less true, but because it does not stand apart from the conditions through which it appears.

There is no final state in which this movement comes to an end.

No point at which the movement itself stops.

What appears, appears as a world.

Even when that world knows no separation.

Intermezzo — Contradiction

She places the manuscript on the table, but does not let go of it immediately. Her fingers remain on the cover for a moment longer before she slowly slides it away and looks at me.

"I'm following you," she says.

She does not say it kindly, but neither does she say it harshly. More as if she wants to be certain I am not going to interrupt her.

"At first I thought you were writing about perception. About how a world takes shape. About how language, memory, identity, science, even spirituality all help determine what feels real."

She nods once.

"And it works. I recognize it too. I can see how people become fixed in stories. In beliefs. In roles. Even in insights."

She falls silent for a moment, as though searching for the exact place where something began to resist.

"But somewhere it starts to shift."

I say nothing.

"Because every time something begins to carry weight in your book, you take it apart again."

She taps her fingers softly against the table.

“Identity turns out to be a configuration. Science turns out to be a configuration. Nonduality turns out to be a configuration. Even what you describe in *Awakening*... even that gets absorbed back into the same movement.”

She leans slightly forward.

“So I keep wondering... what is actually allowed to be real here?”

For a moment, neither of us speaks.

Outside, a car passes by. Light moves briefly across the window, then disappears.

She keeps looking at me.

“Or is this ultimately just a system in which nothing is ever allowed to remain?”

I look at the manuscript lying between us.

At the stack of pages.

The chapters.

The words resting there as though they are about something.

Then I look back at her.

“Maybe,” I say, “that’s exactly where it becomes uncomfortable.”

She frowns.

“Because nothing remains?”

I shake my head.

“Because what remains may never have been something that could remain in the first place.”

She says nothing.

She looks down at the manuscript.

Not as though she is convinced.

More as though she is no longer sure whether she wants to close it...

or keep reading.

Analysis

Configurations function as coherences within which distinctions, rules, and criteria continuously reinforce one another. Within such a coherence, what appears can be recognized, evaluated, and interpreted in ways that simultaneously preserve and confirm the coherence through which it is understood.

This stability, however, is never absolute. It depends upon the capacity of a configuration to integrate whatever appears within the structure through which it already organizes itself. As long as what emerges can be absorbed, reinterpreted, or given a place within the existing order, the coherence continues to function as though it were complete.

A rupture appears when this process of integration begins to fail. This failure does not necessarily take the form of an explicit contradiction or an obvious collapse. More often it appears when something emerges that can no longer be fully incorporated without altering the very conditions through which the coherence had previously maintained itself. What appears remains within the field of the configuration, yet no longer fully coincides with the way it is being understood.

For that reason, rupture should not be understood as something external to the configuration. It appears from within the same coherence whose stability it begins to disturb, and it can only be recognized as

rupture against the background of that coherence. There is no position outside the structure from which such a break can be observed independently of the distinctions that make it visible.

What characterizes rupture is not simply the presence of difference, but the failure of closure. Where a configuration would normally be capable of reinterpreting tensions, absorbing anomalies, or marginalizing what does not immediately fit, rupture introduces a tension that cannot be resolved without the configuration itself beginning to change. Something remains present that resists being fully integrated, and in doing so it exposes the limits of the structure that had previously appeared self-evident.

In certain cases, this shift extends further. The coherence does not merely begin to fragment, but gradually loses the central organization through which it had previously held together. Distinctions continue to appear, perceptions continue, actions still occur, thoughts still arise and disappear, yet they no longer seem to gather around a stable center from which a position can be clearly identified.

Within the existing configuration, such a shift cannot be fully absorbed. It does not merely interrupt the coherence, but reveals that the conditions through which the coherence had been formed were never necessary in any final sense. What had appeared as natural, fixed, or inevitable begins to show itself as contingent upon the way it had been stabilized.

At that point, a further movement often begins. The absence of a center, the sense of immediacy, or the collapse of familiar distinctions may begin to be

interpreted as something fundamental. What first appeared as rupture can gradually become a new reference point, something remembered, named, described, and eventually understood as carrying a deeper truth.

And with that, stabilization begins again.

Language gathers around the shift. Concepts emerge. Interpretations are shared. Practices develop. What first appeared as a break in coherence gradually becomes integrated into a new coherence that begins to confirm itself in much the same way as the previous one.

This makes visible that even the most radical interruption does not stand outside the movement of stabilization. It may appear as that which breaks through all identities, systems, and frameworks of understanding, yet it can still become the center of a new configuration in which that breakthrough is recognized, described, and reaffirmed.

From this it follows that configurations can never fully determine their own limits. The conditions through which something appears as valid, true, or meaningful can never be fixed so completely that every possible appearance remains contained within them. There always remains the possibility that something may emerge which exceeds, unsettles, or undermines the very conditions through which the coherence had previously been sustained.

This indeterminacy is not accidental, nor does it point toward a temporary deficiency that might one day be resolved. It belongs to the structure of configuration

itself. Every attempt to create a fully closed system eventually encounters something that reveals the limits of its own closure.

A rupture makes this visible, not as a separate object, and not as something existing outside the system, but as the moment in which coherence can no longer fully maintain itself as complete. What appears in rupture cannot be fully understood within the existing structure, and yet it cannot simply be dismissed without the structure itself beginning to lose its stability.

There is therefore no final position from which rupture can be completely explained, integrated, or overcome. Every attempt to do so already appears within a configuration, and is therefore subject to the same structural limits that rupture itself has brought into view.

The conclusion is not that configurations fail, but that they remain necessarily open. Their incompleteness is not empirical, as though more data might eventually solve the problem, but structural. Complete closure is not something they temporarily lack, but something their very structure does not allow.

Ruptures are therefore not exceptions within otherwise coherent systems, but expressions of the structural impossibility of total coherence.

Intermezzo — Dialogue

"What you're describing is interesting," the other says, "but in the end it still remains description. There is a reality, and that reality exists independently of how we experience it. Whether we understand it correctly or not changes nothing."

I listen to what he is saying and notice how immediately it begins to form a coherence of its own. There is a world that is already there, fixed, independent, and we move toward it, sometimes understanding it better, sometimes less well.

"Maybe," I say, "but whatever appears always appears as something. Even that independence does not appear separately from the way it is thought, spoken about, and recognized."

He shakes his head.

"That's exactly the problem. You make everything dependent on experience. But the world existed long before there was anyone here to experience it."

There is weight in what he says. Time. History. A reality that continues, whether we are here or not.

"That too appears in that way," I say. "As a world with a past, with a timeline, with events that seem to precede this moment."

He leans back in his chair and looks at me for a moment before speaking again.

“So nothing exists in itself?”

“I’m not saying that,” I reply. “I’m only saying that whatever appears, always appears as something already held within coherence. Even when it appears as independent of experience.”

He falls silent for a moment.

“But then,” he says, “there’s nothing left that is truly real.”

I look at him for a moment before answering.

“What remains,” I say, “is precisely this.”

I let the words settle before continuing.

“But without needing to rest upon something outside the way it appears.”

He keeps looking at me,

as though waiting for a further explanation.

None comes.

Literature

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions by **Thomas Kuhn**
Shows how paradigm shifts emerge when anomalies can no longer be absorbed within an existing framework, gradually accumulating until the coherence itself begins to break.

Against Method by **Paul Feyerabend**
Demonstrates how observation and theory mutually shape one another, and how inconsistencies cannot always be reduced without undermining the system itself.

The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes by **Imre Lakatos**
Describes how research programmes absorb anomalies, and how boundary cases reveal where that absorption begins to fail.

Of Grammatology by **Jacques Derrida**
Shows how structures of meaning depend internally upon differences that can never be fully closed, leaving every coherence marked by its own instability.

On Certainty by **Ludwig Wittgenstein**
Explores how certainties function as background conditions, and how doubt only becomes visible when those conditions begin to shift.

On Having No Head by **Douglas Harding**
Describes the direct experience of the absence of a center, and how such a shift may come to be recognized as fundamental.

Collision with the Infinite by **Suzanne Segal**

An account of a sudden and destabilizing shift in which the sense of a separate self falls away, together with the attempts to integrate that experience.

The Open Secret by **Tony Parsons**
Formulates the absence of a separate self as immediate reality, while also showing how that formulation can itself become a closed coherence.

This Is Always Enough by **John Astin**
Emphasizes the release of all reference points, while showing how even this position may itself begin to function as coherence.

The Unnamable by **Samuel Beckett**
Gives expression to a form of thinking that cannot fully ground itself, and yet continues.

Part VI



The Kitchen

The light is on, while daylight falls in through the window.

I hold a cup beneath the tap and let the water run. I am not really looking at it. The cup grows heavier in my hand as it fills, and after a moment I turn the tap off.

I set it down.

Then pick it up again.

I dry it with a cloth. The cloth becomes damp in my hands. I put it down, then almost without thinking pick it up again.

I look at the counter.
A knife.
A plate.
A few crumbs.

I pick up the knife, then place it back exactly where it was.

My hand remains there for a moment.

I gather a few crumbs together with the side of my hand.



Some remain.
I open the cupboard.

Place the cup inside.

Close the door.

And then I remain standing there for a moment longer,

my hand resting on the counter,

until I finally lift it away

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About the author

Ton Haarmans is a writer and web designer, and the creator of Wide Open Windows, a project in which reality is explored as formed experience.

His work moves at the intersection of philosophy, language, and direct observation. Not in order to offer a theory of reality, but to make visible how every reality takes shape, finds coherence, and can shift again.

The dioramic approach forms the central thread throughout his work. Not as a system standing above experience, but as a way of looking that remains within appearance itself and follows how what seems self-evident takes form.

This book is part of a series of analyses in which language, science, and nonduality are explored, among other themes. Each book begins from the same starting point: there is no world given in advance. What appears, always already appears as something.

More writings and publications can be found at:

https://wideopenwindows.be