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From the Implicit to the Explicit
An Embodied, Experiential Protocol for Reflection

Vignir Már Másson

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Vignir Már Másson
280198-2939

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Supervisors: Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir, professor & Ólafur Páll Jónsson, professor

Faculty of Philosophy, History and Archeology
University of Iceland
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Ágrip

Það hefur orðið stöðnun í rökræðum um ígrundun innan reynslunáms og fullorðinsfræðslu. Þessi stöðnun varðar nýja nálgun á ígrundun sem yfirstígur ríkjandi kenningarramma reynslunáms, að nafni ígrundandi hugsmíðahyggja (*reflective constructivism*). Ígrundandi hugsmíðahyggjusinnar hafa verið gagnrýndir fyrir að halda uppi of vitrænni nálgun á ígrundun, ásamt því að hafa afholdgaða (*disembodied*) hugmynd um reynslunámsferlið. Gagnrýnendur sem leita leiða til að endurholdga (*re-embodiment*) reynslunám hafa samt sem áður ekki reitt fram sannfærandi nálgun sem getur tekið við af nálgun ígrundandi hugsmíðahyggju. Þess í stað hafa þeir gefið sig á vald því einu að gagnrýna og/eða hafna ígrundun, ásamt því að gera líkamann að grundvallar vettvangi sannrar, ósvikinnar visku og þekkingar. Í þessari ritgerð leitast ég til að feta meðalveginn og færa rök fyrir líkamlegri, reynslubundinni ígrundunaraðferð. Ég byggi á skynhreyfihyggju (*enactivism*) og er innblásinn af heimspeki Eugene Gendlin. Einnig byggi ég á Focusing og Thinking-at-the-Edge aðferðum hans. Á þessum grundvelli færi ég rök fyrir og hanna aðferð til ígrundunar í reynslunámi sem tekur mið af undirskilinni (*implicit*) vídd reynslunnar, auk þess að vekja nemendur til ígrundunar í samræðu við skynfinningu sína.

Abstract

There is an impasse in theories of experiential learning and adult education. This is an impasse that has emerged from critiques aimed at the reigning conceptual paradigm of experiential learning, reflective constructivism, which seek to (re)embody experiential learning. This impasse concerns one of the cornerstone methods of experiential learning and adult education, viz. reflection. Reflective constructivists are critiqued for an overly cognitivist account of reflection and a disembodied notion of the experiential learning process. These critics have, however, not provided an appealing alternative to reflective constructivist reflection. Instead, they have resigned themselves to mere critique and/or dismissal of the notion of reflection, as well as essentializing the body as a site of true, authentic wisdom and knowledge. In this thesis I seek to tread a middle path and argue for an embodied, experiential protocol for reflection. Grounded in enactivism and inspired by the philosophy of Eugene Gendlin and his methods of Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge, I argue for and design a method of reflection in experiential learning that gives the implicit dimension of experience its due, as well as engaging learners to reflect in dialogue with their bodily felt sense.

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1. Introduction

There is an impasse in theories of experiential and adult education. This impasse has emerged from a long-standing critical assessment of the reigning conceptual paradigm within the field, *reflective constructivism*. At the heart of it is the well-known learning activity of reflection. Reflection has been a key component of the learning process as it has been conceptualized within the theory of experiential learning, ever since it first took shape in the 1970's, culminating in its first mature formulation in David A. Kolb's immensely influential book, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Kolb, 1984). Developing from Kolb's work, contemporary experiential learning theory has been characterized by a conception of the learning process as consisting of learners going through a learning activity which is designed to leave a lasting experiential impression. Examples of this are outdoor excursions, service learning, internships, and even role-playing or dramatic-performative exercises. Following this experience learners ought to reflect on it, draw lessons from it, connect it to prior experience, as well as personal and academic knowledge, to then abstract principles from the experience that can be applied in future situations (Fenwick, 2001; Seaman et al., 2017).

According to the paradigm of reflective constructivism, reflection is the key stage of this learning process, where learners learn by transforming experience into knowledge through the act of reflection (Boud et al., 1985; Fenwick, 2001; Michelson, 1996). This account of the experiential learning process has been heavily criticized from different theoretical traditions, such as psychoanalysis, critical theory, situated knowledge theory and enactivism. The crux of these critiques is that reflective constructivists provide an overly cognitivist, decontextualized conceptions of learners and the learning process. Critics argue that reflective constructivists do not give due attention to the embodiment of learners as they are entangled in a multitude of internal and external factors, such as socio-historical power relations and unconscious desires. Furthermore, critics argue that reflective constructivists do not take adequate account of the situated nature of knowledge production as knowledge does not simply reside in

representational form inside their mind. Rather it is enacted through embodied and intersubjective engagement with their environment (Fenwick, 2001, 2006; Holman et al., 1997; Michelson, 2015). These critiques can be interpreted as amounting to a call to (re)embody experiential learning (Fenwick, 2003; Jordi, 2011; Michelson, 1998).

One of the main targets of these critiques is the emphasis reflective constructivists put on reflection in the learning process as well as their conception of reflection. These critiques have, though, mostly resulted in a deconstruction of reflection or an outright dismissal of it. This is the source of the impasse. Theorists, hailing from an embodied orientation, have hitherto not provided an alternative account of reflection, leaving the field still relying on the reflective constructivist conception (Jordi, 2011). This is problematic and has found expression, colored by a certain desperation, in a recent article by Elena Michelson when she writes:

[A]dult learning theory has yet to articulate a viable interface between thought and feeling. On the one hand, we have posited algorithms for learning that rely on simplistic notions of rationality, Kolb's (1984) learning cycle being the most pervasive. On the other hand, we have been enticed by too-facile appeals to a purer knowledge made available by setting the rational mind aside. To find a more nuanced balance, we need to take a closer look at the theoretical work we ask both thinking and feeling to do, what claims we make on their behalf, and how we understand their relationship both to the credibility of knowledge claims and the demands of cognitive justice (Michelson, 2020, pp. 110–111)

In this thesis I aim to answer Michelson's call and take up the task of advancing an account of embodied, experiential reflection that avoids cognitivism and all too-facile appeals to authentic embodied knowledge. To do this I look to embodied approaches to cognition, experience learning and knowledge (e.g. Fenwick, 2003, 2006; Gallagher, 2023; Michelson, 1998, 2015; Rodemeyer, 2018; Schoeller & Thorgeirsdottir, 2019; Tanaka, 2011). In particular, I build on enactivism and the philosophical and psychological works of Eugene Gendlin.

Enactivism, to put it briefly is an embodied theory of cognition which claims that cognition co-emerges through an organism's autopoietic engagement with its environment. Enactivists reject the cognitivist assumptions that cognition and the mind

is a sort of computational, information processor which is mainly in the business of mentally representing the world and interpreting it through said mental representations. Instead, enactivists claim, cognition is more basic than the representationalism of cognitivists suggests. Cognition, according to enactivists is an achievement of the holistic, sensory-motor activity of an organism as it copes with and enacts its *Umwelt*. Mental representations only come after the fact, through appropriate socio-cultural scaffolding (Gallagher, 2023; Hutto, 2023).

Gendlin can be seen as a fellow traveler to enactivism because he had a lifelong fascination with the pre-conceptual, nonrepresentational, implicit dimension of experience and how it functions in language, expression, action, etc. This dimension and its function in language was conceptualized by him, in quite enactivist terms, as the regenerative process of an organism. Through his philosophical engagement with this issue he crafted a plethora of concepts that could take account of this functioning of the implicit in the explicit. Concepts such as felt sense, which refers to a holistic bodily sense of a situation, felt meaning, referring to the meaning which the felt sense carries, direct reference, the inarticulate 'pointing' or 'turning' to the felt sense and felt shift, the feeling when the inarticulate felt sense is carried forward through articulation, just to name a few (Gendlin, 1961, 1970, 1981, 1995, 1995, 1997, 2009, 2012, 2018).

I begin the thesis by setting the scene and providing the context of the debate which I'm addressing. I give a brief description of the key characteristics of experiential learning which can be neatly summarized as the learning process in which learners go through the stages of experience, reflection, abstraction, and action. I then discuss the reigning conceptual paradigm of contemporary experiential learning. This paradigm is characterized by a constructivist theory and epistemology of learning. This theory and epistemology of learning is characterized by the claim that knowledge exists inside the mind and not "out there" in the world. Truth is therefore not absolute and waiting to be discovered. Rather, it is actively constructed by individuals based on current and past experiences as well as prior knowledge as they seek to make sense of the world. Another characteristic of this paradigm is its preoccupation with reflection, conceptualized as a

cognitive activity where experience is transformed into knowledge. These two characteristics give the paradigm its name, reflective constructivism.

After this I go over the criticisms that I have already mentioned but point out two issues that must be avoided when appealing to embodiment. These are, (i) treating the body merely as a repository of experience for the mind to mine and mold into knowledge; (ii) essentializing and romanticizing the body as a source of authentic wisdom and knowledge, giving it undue epistemic credence (Michelson, 2015, 2020). I do this to further establish my position within the debate, which is that we do not need to pick one side or the other, the body or the mind. Rather, we need to provide an alternative which integrates body and mind into the process of experiential reflection.

When this context has been laid out, I make clear the enactivist framework which I ground my account of reflection in. I then discuss the difference between implicit experience and explicit experience which I base my critique of reflective constructivist protocols of reflection on. This critique is that prevalent reflective constructivist protocols of reflection single-mindedly focus on explicit, secondary, representational experience at the cost of implicit, lived experience. To illustrate this, I critique three protocols for reflection that are prevalent in contemporary experiential learning practice. These protocols are *Gibbs' Reflective Cycle* (Gibbs, 1988), the *Integrated Reflective Cycle* (Bassot, 2013, 2016), and the *5R Framework for Reflection* (Bain et al., 2002).

I then turn to elaborating on my own account of experiential reflection where I bring in key concepts and methods formulated by Gendlin. These concepts are felt sense, felt meaning, felt shift, direct reference, instancing, and crossing. The methods of experiential based reflection that I draw from are Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge. On the basis of these concepts and methods, grounded in the enactivist framework, I advance a reflective method that moves from an implicit, felt sense of the body to explicit experience and reflective analysis. I also point to methods that can supplement this reflective process, such as *felt sensing memento* and *focusing inventory notes* (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017). This, I believe, provides us with a protocol for reflection that engages students to reflect more intentionally on and with their embodied experience,

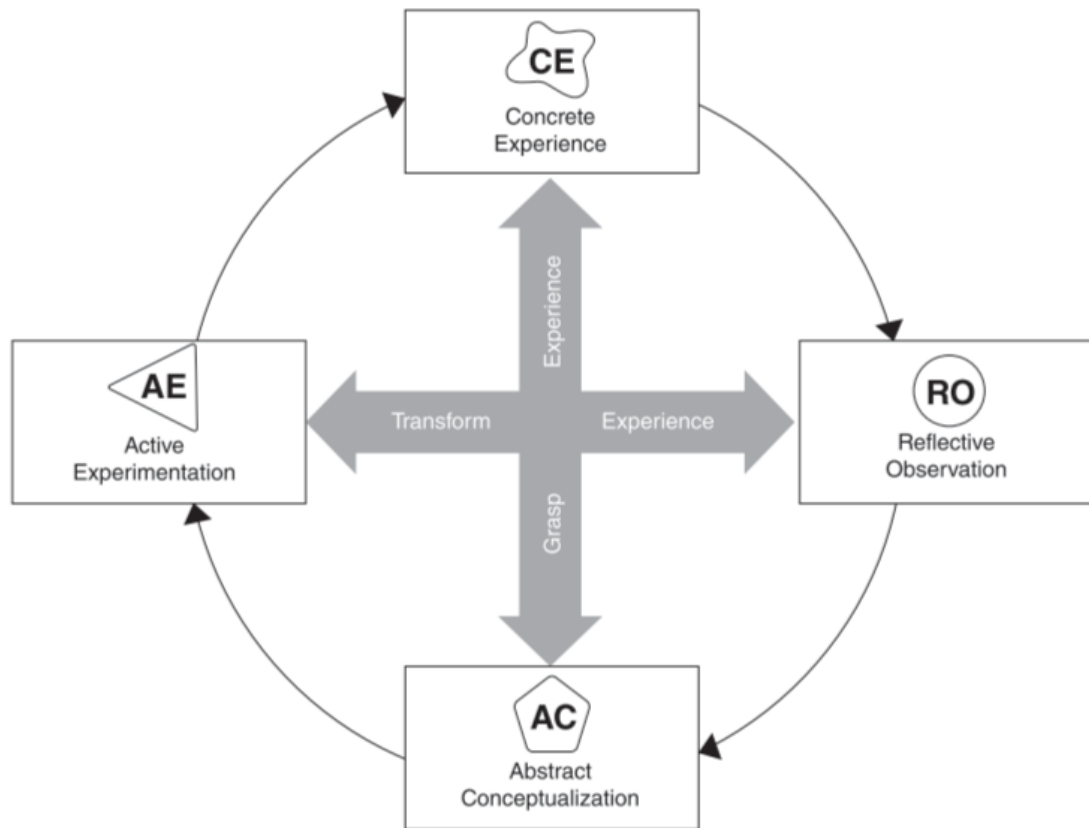
without simply objectifying it or romanticizing their embodied knowledge. The driving characteristic and aim of this protocol of reflection is to enable students to reflect in conversation with their bodily experiences to create new meanings, ideas, and nurture personal growth.

2. Experiential Learning: A Very Brief Overview

Experiential learning is a theory of learning that sets itself against traditional theories of learning where learning is conceptualized as acquisition of pre-established, fixed knowledge and the teacher is in the didactic role of transferring knowledge to ignorant students, i.e., what Paulo Freire dubbed the banking concept of education (Freire, 2000). Contrary to this conception of learning, experiential learning theory, broadly speaking, conceptualizes learning as a holistic transactive process between teacher, learners and environment. Learners take an active part in knowledge, skill and value acquisition through learning experiences that engage learners in their entirety through physical activities, sensorial and emotional experiences, and intellectual exercises which are facilitated by a teacher. Teachers are not mere mediators of knowledge but facilitators that structure productive learning environments and provide continuous possibilities for (individual or collective) reflection and reconstruction of experiences and ideas in order for learners to draw meaning from their prior experiences. Knowledge is thus subject to transformations through a process of continuous creation and recreation (Kolb, 1984). Characteristic activities that are informed by experiential learning theory are e.g., more “hands on”, practical learning activities such as field trips, work or service learning, dramatic exercises, internships, etc. (Burroughs, 2016; Oxley & Ilea, 2016; Wisnewski, 2016).

There is a great diversity of theories and models of experiential learning but many of them are based on some formulation of an experience/action-reflection cycle, i.e., learners go through some kind of learning experience and reflect on it after the fact (Joplin, 1981). The pervasiveness of this formulation of the experiential learning process can be attributed to the immense influence of David A. Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* (KELT). Put simply and briefly, Kolb conceptualized the experiential learning process as a four phase cycle.

Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle¹



The first phase is *concrete experience* which students gain through learning activities such as those mentioned above. In this mode students are faced with a situation in which they must use their prior knowledge and experience to cope with the situation (solving a problem, learning to confront others, or learning a new skill). Second, is *reflective observation* where students reflect on the concrete experience with the guidance of deep and engaging questions. This is where analysis and synthesis of prior knowledge and the experience create new knowledge. Third is *abstract conceptualization* where the learner uses insights from reflecting on the experience to derive principles, concepts, rules of thumb and novel understandings of the particularities of unique situations so as to generalize and transfer this understanding to future situations. Lastly is the mode of active experimentation where the learner applies

¹ Retrieved from (Kolb, 2015, p. 51).

the new knowledge to new contexts to gain further understanding of how that knowledge is applicable and in what situations. For Kolb, the phase of reflective observation is crucial in the learning process because in that phase learning happens and new knowledge is created (Kolb, 2015). So along with experience, theorists of experiential learning have, following Kolb, put a heavy emphasis on the importance of reflecting on experience and the theoretical paradigm in experiential learning that has developed and built on Kolb's, as well as others, work has been called *reflective constructivism* (Fenwick, 2000, 2001; Jordi, 2011).

3. Reflective Constructivism

Based, most notably, on the works of David A. Kolb, David Boud, Donald Schön and Jack Mezirow, reflective constructivism is a theory of experiential learning that is characterized by a constructivist epistemology and an emphasis on reflective observation in the learning process. Reflective constructivism adheres to the constructivist claims that knowledge exists inside the mind and not “out there” in the world. Truth is therefore not absolute and waiting to be discovered. Rather, it is actively constructed by individuals based on current and past experiences as well as prior knowledge as they seek to make sense of the world (Yilmaz, 2008). Knowledge is thus developmental as learners gain knowledge by building, growing, and adjusting the internal knowledge structures that collect and organize their perceptions of and reflections on reality. These structures are stored in memory as concepts and mental representations² that can be expressed and transferred to new situations (Fenwick, 2001). Knowledge structures are developed through reflective processes of accommodation and assimilation. Learners accommodate new experiences by reframing their mental representations of the external world to fit this new experience and assimilate it into their knowledge structure. Learning and knowledge is therefore individually unique as each learner is believed to reflectively construct a personal understanding of the world in specific ways from information gathered from texts, testimonies, experiences, and actions (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Fenwick, 2001; Fox, 2001; Swan, 2005).

Reflective constructivism’s conception of the learning process is inspired by Kolb’s learning cycle and it takes up Kolb’s claim that reflection is a key process of transforming experience into knowledge. Reflective constructivism does, however,

² Mental representation is a crucial concept in psychology, cognitive science and philosophy of mind. It is defined broadly as a mental entity, instantiated in the brain by neural structures, that represents the world. This entity possesses the semantic properties of content and correctness conditions which specify if a representation represents objects correctly or not (Smortchkova et al., 2020).

differ from Kolb's theory in orientation in an important way.³ In Kolb's learning cycle the learner, in learning from experience, goes through the process of apprehending, where they take in the tangible, felt qualities of immediate experience. This corresponds to the concrete experience stage of the learning cycle. Then they go through the process of transforming the apprehension of immediate experience through internal reflection, or intention as Kolb also calls it, which corresponds to the reflective observation stage of the learning cycle. Then they comprehend the experience through the reliance of conceptual interpretation and symbolic representation. This corresponds to the abstract conceptualization stage. Then finally the learner transforms the apprehension, reflection, and comprehension into active external manipulation of the world which corresponds to the active experimentation stage. Through this process the learner grasps a figurative representation of experience, i.e. the mental representation constructed from experience and abstraction. The learner then transforms that representation into knowledge through reflection and active experimentation. In this schema the concrete apprehension of experience and the abstract comprehension of conceptualization compose a dialectic which Kolb says "is one of *prehension* (Kolb, 2015, p. 67, emphasis in the original)".⁴ Both stages of the learning process are concerned with grasping experience, although in opposite ways, directly and abstractly. Internal reflection and active external manipulation then form a dialectic of *transformation* as experience is transformed, again in opposing ways. Through this process of prehension

³ For this reason I hesitate to label Kolb a reflective constructivist, although some theorists do (see e.g. Fenwick, 2001; Michelson, 2015; Seaman, 2008; Seaman et al., 2017). I would rather label Kolb a pragmatic constructivist and in recent years he has distanced himself from many of his constructivist commitments, giving nod to more embodied approaches to experiential learning, e.g. enactivism, and elevated Eugene Gendlin's Focusing as an important method for experiential learning to adopt (Kolb, 2015; Stock & Kolb, 2021). Kolb, therefore, seems to be slowly aligning himself with the position and approach I take in this Thesis, which is enactivist and inspired heavily by Gendlin's philosophy and methods.

⁴ Kolb's definition of prehension here is "a process of grasping or taking hold of experience in the world (Kolb, 2015, p. 67)".

and transformation the learner accommodates and assimilates new experiences into their knowledge structures (Kolb, 1984).

Reflective constructivism is mainly concerned with the transformative process of internal reflection and comprehension as opposed to concrete experiences and active manipulation of the external world. It develops Kolb's idea of internal reflection into a more detailed account of the nature of reflection and reduces the learning cycle into the rudimentary form of a experience/reflection cycle (Boud et al., 1985), at the cost of the more holistic orientation of Kolb's theory. This reduction or simplification of the learning process is the main difference between reflective constructivism and Kolb's experiential learning theory. This move is interesting because it seemingly posits an embodied and a thinking dimension of the learning process. Concrete experience and active experimentation collapse into experience and reflection and abstract conceptualization collapse into reflection. This differs from Kolb, who connected reflection and active experimentation through the category of transformation and concrete experience and abstract conceptualization through the category of prehension. This splitting between an embodied and a thinking dimension, along with the emphasis on cognitive reflection has been criticized by several theorists, most notably Fenwick (2000, 2003, 2006) and Michelson (1996, 1998, 2015) on the grounds that it reproduces the Cartesian bifurcation of mind and body, celebrates rationality over emotions and decontextualizes learners and knowledge. I will bracket further discussion of these criticisms for now and take it up in the following chapter.

Experience, according to reflective constructivism, is conceptualized as consisting of the "total response of a person to a situation or event: what he or she thinks, feels, does, and concludes at the time and immediately thereafter (Boud et al., 1985, p. 18)." Experience is both internal and external, being provoked by an internal discomfort, curiosity, etc., or an external agent. Initial experience is in most cases complex and constituted by several experiences. Reflection then follows the experience as a processing phase where learners deliberately recapture their experiences, think about them, mull them over and evaluate them to accomplish analytical detachment. This is done to extract knowledge from it and gain flexibility and creativity in responding

to present and future situations (Kolb, 1984). It is an intellectual and affective activity in which learners “engage and explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations (Boud et al., 1985, p. 19).” Also, an important element of reflection for reflective constructivists is the significance of the learning context, what learners bring to their learning experiences and how that shapes their responses to those initial experiences.

So, to summarize, the reflective constructivist account of reflection is that it consists of learners recalling their experiences; attending to their feelings in connection to the experience; linking the new knowledge extracted from the experience to old knowledge; re-evaluating their initial experience in light of their goals; integrating learning into existing knowledge structures; and rehearsing the experiences with a view of subsequent action (Boud et al., 1985). What this describes so far mostly corresponds to a mode of reflection that has been called *reflection-on-action*. Reflective constructivists have, however, also taken up and developed different modes of reflection, such as *reflection-before-action*, or *preflection*, *reflection-in-action* and *critical reflection* (Fenwick, 2001).

3.1. Modes of Reflection

Here I will give a brief explanation of the different modes of reflection. Each mode maps out the reflective process from before, during and after a learning experience. Along with the explanations, I provide illustrative examples. I will start with *preflection*.

3.1.1 Preflection

Preflection is, as the name might suggest, a mode of reflection that comes prior to experience. It generally consists of students being informed of what is to come. Then the “students start to explore what is required of them, what are the demands of the field setting and the resources which they themselves have to bring (Boud et al., 1985, p. 9)”. This mode of reflection is about preparation. It is forward-looking, built on prior knowledge of situations like the one that students are preparing for. Students try to anticipate what is to come, take stock of their abilities in relation to the requirements

of the situation, what is needed to act successfully in the coming scenarios and attending to the feelings that the experience might provoke and how to deal with them, as well as formulating a plan of action (Boud et al., 1985). Let me relate this to my teacher training experience.

During my teacher training, I had to organize and teach allocated periods which were often divided between different groups of students. This meant that I rarely taught the same group of students. Organizing and teaching the same group over and over again can be hard enough. One needs to create a lesson plan, study and grasp the teaching material, put together slides, decide on an appropriate teaching method and craft engaging classroom projects. However, when one is tasked with managing a different group each time, the preparation necessitates reflection. “What do I know about the group?”, “how can I engage student S?”, “what are my strengths/weaknesses and how do I utilize them optimally?”, “what do I do if X happens?”, “what emotions did I feel when X last happened and how can I deal with the situation better?”. These are all reflective questions which one needs to ask oneself when preparing for a situation like this. With the information that I had about each group and my previous experience of teaching, I had to reflect on the coming periods. I had to be forward-looking and contemplate the different factors that might affect my teaching and the students learning. What worked for one group did not necessarily work for the others. The teaching materials were different according to groups because each group was enrolled in different courses. Some groups were more diverse than others, constituted by students of many nationalities and differences in language proficiency. “Should I teach in English or Icelandic?”, I asked myself. I had to be mindful of the resources that were available. Some students did not own computers, so they had to borrow or I needed to pivot and craft learning activities which accommodated this fact. I needed to reflect on all this and take it into account as I prepared the period. However, as much as one prepares for or reflects on a coming activity, things do go wrong or go unaccounted for so one also needs to think on one’s feet, or better yet, reflect-in-action.

3.1.2. Reflection-in-action

Reflection-in-action is the process of reflecting while engaging in an experiential activity.

As Schön puts it:

In an action-present - a period of time, variable with the context, during which we can still make a difference to the situation at hand - our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it (Schön, 1987, p. 26).

Reflection-in-action, for Schön is a process of on-the-spot, deliberate trial, and error inquiry. Deliberate because, “trials are not randomly related to one another; reflection on each trial and its results sets the stage for the next trial” (Schön, 1987, p. 27). This reflection-in-action process comes about because our tacit knowing-in-action, i.e. the exercise of tacit knowledge in performing a task, does not go as planned and we ask ourselves, while engaging in the activity, ‘why did I do what I did?’ (Fenwick, 2001).

Tacit knowledge refers to the fact of human knowledge that “*we can know more than we can tell* (Polanyi, 2009, p. 4)”. It is knowledge that can’t be fully explicated, e.g. in the case of a football player who has a feel for the ball as he receives a pass from a teammate. The player sees the trajectory of the ball, its speed and rotation. Through the experience of receiving multiple passes and training their touch of the ball the player can seamlessly receive the pass, control the ball, and carry it with them forward up the pitch. Very skilled players can even do this without being fully attentive to the ball, scanning the field in the same instance. They quickly anticipate it and *know* how to react. However, if one would ask the player how they do this, they would not be able to fully explicate all the important moves and micro-moves they make in this act. At least in my case, having more than ten years of experience as a football player, could never explain what specifically goes on in this event. Reflection-in-action then comes about when this skilled football player fails to receive the ball smoothly and in the worst case loses possession, which disrupts the players flow. This disruption makes the player think about the action in a different light and one of the constructive approaches to this disruption is reflection-in-action, which Schön describes as a critical function that questions “the assumptional structure of knowing-in-action” (Schön, 1987, p. 28). The

player reflects on what went wrong, questions his assumptional structure, and seeks e.g., to adjust his touch on and attentiveness to the ball when the next pass comes, going through the trial and errors of the maneuvers in the game.

Schön points out two distinct kinds of practice situations and two kinds of knowing relevant to them, explicit and tacit knowing. Familiar situations and where we can respond to and solve problems procedurally by drawing on e.g., rules for data gathering, inference and hypothesis testing, to make connections between the situation and existing knowledge (theoretical or personal). The knowing that is implemented in this situation is explicit, i.e. it is codified and formalized into, e.g. language, procedures, rules, and symbol systems (H. Collins, 2010; Polanyi, 2009). Schön says this knowing-in-action is characterized by a technical rationality (Schön, 1987). This can be illustrated with a teacher that has been teaching the same course for many years. Most of the time the teacher 'goes through the motions', knowing well how to maneuver in and manage the classroom, as well as knowing the material like the back of their hand.

Then there are unfamiliar situations where existing, known rules, procedures, models, and notions of action don't quite fit the situation and we must respond to it by creating new rules, procedures and techniques that are able to resolve the situation at hand. This might also be the case of a teaching student in training which really does not have any concrete known rules, procedures, models, or notions of action to guide them. It is in these situations that reflection-in-action is triggered and Schön calls this kind of knowing-in-action and ability to reflect-in-action, artistry. It is "an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing, though different in crucial respects from [technical rationality] (Schön, 1987, p. 13)", i.e. it is tacit knowing. This exercise of intelligence is the learning-on-the-spot of new ways of using kinds of skills and competences we already, tacitly have (Schön, 1987). So, to return to the example of the football player, the player, through having multiple and repeated experiences of receiving passes in several different situations develops tacit knowledge of how to respond and adjust to different ways of receiving the ball successfully. So, when the player encounters a novel situation that does not really resemble his prior experiences (thick layer of snow on the pitch, heavy ball due to excessive rain or an injury that affects their movements) they

have, nevertheless, fostered this kind of artistic knowing-in-action and ability to reflect-in-action that gives them the ability to successfully navigate the game through trial-and-error inquiry.

The same can be said of the teacher student, e.g. me in the example I gave in the previous section. Different from the football player, though, which in my example is very experienced and skilled at their craft, I had no such experience. In that kind of scenario, which I experienced, I had to reflect-in-action and create certain rules for myself, based on prior experience and skills which I had gained from different situations than the situation of teaching a class. I had to e.g., draw on my tacit people skills, cultivated through years of service jobs, or draw on my tacit experience as a student and try to put myself in the shoes of my students and through deliberate trial and error I crafted my own rules and procedures for how to deal with the situation. This is reflection-in-action. However, when the dust settles and the game or period is over, another mode of reflection takes place, viz. reflection-on-action.

3.1.3. Reflection-on-action

Reflection-on-action is the mode of reflection which happens after the learning experience. In this mode, one takes stock of what has happened. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is where one recollects the experience, what happened, how did it happen, who did what, etc. One contemplates what went well and what did not. How the experience made oneself feel. What specific incidents made one feel. How one reacted to said incidents. One also seeks to make sense of how things could have gone differently. What could have been done better and what resources are available to help make sense of the situation and ensure that one will do better in the future. Then one looks to the future and tries to come up with plans and procedures that will increase the likelihood of success in a similar situation down the line (Boud et al., 1985). This is perhaps the mode of reflection that most of us think of when someone utters the word 'reflection'. It is the looking back on what has been experienced to draw some lesson or conclusion from it. The object of this mode of reflection is usually the activity one has just gone through, its context and the reflection-in-action that occurred during that

activity, but it can also encompass the reflection. Where one reevaluates one's preparation and assumptions going into the situation.

To return to the example of myself. After teaching a period I was, throughout my studies, tasked with reflecting on my experience. Here I just want to illustrate this kind of reflection-on-action in an informal, unstructured way, which does, however, hit the marks that reflective constructivists have put for a successful reflection.

Once I was teaching a class on human rights and the refugee crisis. The period was 120 minutes, the longest I had ever taught up to that point. The length of the class did make me nervous because I did not want to run out of material before the class was over. I had organized the period in a way that I divided it into three parts, an interactive lecture, group work and class discussion. I allocated 50 minutes for the lecture. 20 minutes of group work and 40 minutes for class discussion, leaving 10 minutes for summing up and bringing the lesson to a close.

My lecture was a general introduction to the refugee crisis, how human rights connect to it and what the situation in Iceland is with regards to refugee reception. A couple of things went right, and a couple of things went wrong during the lecture. The lecture was supposed to be interactive, but the students were passive, even when prompted. Students did though seem interested when I connected my general discussion of human rights and the refugee crisis to the situation in Iceland. So far, one negative and one positive. Disaster did, however, seem to strike when I finished my lecture and realized that it had only taken me about 30 minutes to get through the material. This meant that I had to fill up a 20-minute gap in the lesson plan. I had to think on my feet or reflect-in-action. I pivoted by giving the students 10 more minutes of group work which consisted of dividing the class into groups of 3-4 students where they were supposed to read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and choose five articles that they thought were relevant to the refugee crisis and the conditions of refugee in receiving countries. They were then supposed to formulate an argument for why they thought this was important to present in class discussion. To draw this group work out and fill up the extra 10 minutes I had allocated I walked from group to group and tried to engage them in deeper conversation about the articles and their arguments.

This worked to an extent. The groups became more active as I was speaking to them but when I left to speak to another group this activity died down. After about 30 minutes I opened the discussion up for the whole class. At this point I still had 50 minutes left of the lesson. So again, I pivoted and made every group start by naming only one article and argue for it. This went from group to group and we discussed each article and argument for some time after a group had made their case. This was very successful in killing the time.

One thing I noticed, however, was that much of the discussion happened in one part of the classroom. This was perhaps due to how the room was organized. On the right side of the room, sofas were aligned in a U-shape and on the left side there was a row of roundtables. This effectively segregated the classroom into two groups, those who sat on the sofas and those who sat at the roundtables. Those who were in the sofas were much more likely to engage in conversation. So, I had to try to engage the 'roundtablers' myself to bring them into the fold. In the end all went well and I sighed of relief when all the students had left the classroom.

Now, having informally recalled the events of the period, the next step of reflection-on-action is to attend to the feelings that I had in connection to the experience. As I have already noted, I felt a great nervousness before the lesson and became anxious during it when things did not go as smoothly as one would hope. I did, however, also experience relief when I found out ways to pivot and became happy when students showed interest and engaged in conversations. I also experienced alarm when I noticed the segregation of the classroom, something which had not been apparent to me until then, even though I had been in that classroom before.

Prior to the lesson I knew that the format of lecture, group work and discussion worked well. This knowledge, however, only came from periods that were only half as long as this one, i.e. 60 minutes. Although this format happened to workout this time I realized that this division of three was perhaps not the most effective way to organize such a long period. A lesson which I also drew from this was that although things did not go according to plan, there can be success in failure. I'm here referring to the incident when I had to drag class discussions out for about 50 minutes. My initial experience was

anxiety but also joy when things started to turn around. My goal as a teacher, when I started my teachers training, was to foster great classroom discussions. Up to that point I had attempted to facilitate these kinds of discussion in a pretty relaxed and informal manner. The discussions that happened in this period were, however, the best I had had so far. So, I re-evaluated my initial experience in light of my goal to foster classroom discussions and realized that the structure of the conversation (each group arguing for one article at a time and the class discussing it) facilitated it. It was, therefore, a kind of luck. Through this I started to form a picture and a plan for how I might, not only organize future 120-minute periods, but my lessons in general, implementing this kind of structured discussion, instead of relying on informalities. This was the outcome of my reflection-on-action.

3.1.4. Not So Much a Mode, Rather an Orientation: Critical Reflection

What has been called critical reflection in the academic literature on reflection is not really a mode of reflection in the same way that reflection, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are. It might rather be viewed as a certain orientation taken in each of these modes of reflection. The main characteristic of this reflective orientation is the critical interrogation of our premises, assumptions, and prejudices. The critical reflective process then consists of identifying underlying assumptions of thoughts and actions, scrutinizing their accuracy and validity in terms of how they connect to or are discrepant with our experience of reality and reconstituting assumptions to make them more inclusive and integrative (Brookfield, 1995). It is a cognitive reflection on our own fundamental premises, taken-for-granted norms and understandings, where we move through our cognitive knowledge structures, identifying and judging presuppositions so as to change our minds, or what Jack Mezirow calls achieving a transformation of our meaning-perspective (Mezirow, 1991). We ask ourselves: 'What's wrong with how I frame, see, or think about issue X?', so that we can change how we view the world. Critical reflection also often involves the rational assessment of social and historical factors connected to the learning experience, in tandem with these more personal factors (Fenwick, 2001). As I said, this critical reflective orientation can be and is

generally implemented into the different reflective modes that I have described above to facilitate greater critical thinking and transformative learning in experiential learning.

In prelection a learner might critically assess how they are framing their approach to the coming learning experience based on prior experiences of failure, dissatisfaction or simply curiosity about different ways of doing things. They might critically assess prejudices that they feel about what they are about to engage in. For example, a student tasked with service learning in a predominantly immigrant community might have to assess some xenophobic feelings that they have coming into the experience. In reflection-in-action that same student might be provoked to critically reflect on their assumptional structure of knowing-in-action when they have a difficult communicative encounter with an inhabitant of the community because the student and the inhabitant have different social cues, norms and conventions which results in an insult on behalf of the student. The student's knowing-in-action is colored by an assumptional structure that is in accordance with their community's way but not the inhabitant's and so the student must reframe their social assumptions. In reflection-on-action the learner, just as I have described above, might further reflect critically on their premises, understandings and assumptions that characterized their prelection and reflection-in-action, now perhaps tying in an assessment of the social and historical factors that shape these assumptions, the context of the learning activity and the learning activity itself.

3.1.5. Summary

To summarize what has been gone over so far, reflective constructivism is the paradigm approach in contemporary experiential learning. It builds on Kolb's experiential learning theory but diverges from it in important ways. It emphasizes internal reflection at the cost of the more holistic orientation of Kolb's theory and simplifies the learning process into an experience/reflection cycle. Reflective constructivism conceptualizes experience as being the total response of a person situations or events. Experience is both internal and external, provoked by internal feelings or external agents and is complex, constituted by many experiences. Reflective constructivists conceive of three modes of

reflection: Preflection, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, as well as a critical orientation to reflection. Preflection is forward looking and is characterized by preparation for an upcoming learning activity. Reflection-in-action is reflection in the midst of engaging in a learning activity which is usually provoked by an error in a learners tacit knowing-in-action. Reflection-on-action consists of learners recollecting experiences; attending to their feelings; linking new knowledge to old; re-evaluating initial experience in consideration of goals; integrating learning into existing knowledge structures; and rehearsing the experiences with a view of subsequent action. Then there is the reflective orientation of critical reflection which is generally integrated into the three modes of reflection. Critical reflection is characterized by a critical interrogation and assessment of taken-for-granted norms, assumptions, understandings, etc. which is undertaken with the goal of facilitating critical thinking and, ideally, achieving a transformation of a learners meaning-perspective.

These are the core theoretical characteristics of the reflective constructivist conception of reflection. Like all paradigm approaches, reflective constructivism has garnered a lot of criticisms. I have already alluded to criticisms with regards to the positing of an embodied and thinking dimension to the learning process, where the thinking dimension is heavily emphasized. Much of the criticism against reflective constructivism targets this characteristic. In the chapter that follows I will discuss these criticisms in more detail and interpret the convergence of these critiques as positing an embodied critique of reflective constructivism.

4. Unmasking the Disembodied Nature of Reflective Constructivism

Several criticisms have been levelled at reflective constructivism. Although these critiques originate from different perspectives, such as psychoanalysis, critical theory, situated knowledge theory, enactivism and feminist theory, they all combine to critique reflective constructivism's conception of the learner and the learning process (Fenwick, 2001; Jordi, 2011). This conception, according to these critiques, is of a disembodied,

decontextualized, rational learner that autonomously moves through contexts, learning by extracting knowledge from experience through the process of cognitive reflection and rationally applying it to new contexts (Fenwick, 2001). This conception, critics claim, does not properly consider the fact that learners are always bodily situated in historical, political and cultural contexts, entangled in social and power relations, cultural norms and vocabularies relative to their community or society, that shape learners' identities, interpretations, desires, experiences, knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, it does not take enough account of the situated nature of knowledge and knowledge creation, through the complex interplay between learners and environment or (joint) action where learners enact knowledge in engagement with the environment. Reflective constructivism does take context into account but context, critics claim is conceptualized problematically. Reflective constructivism has a 'container concept' of context where learners are situated in spaces, populated by items and persons which they act in and are affected by. The extent of the contextual effects on the learner are, however, simply changes in mental representations and knowledge structures as learner accommodate and assimilate experience and information gained from the context. This 'container concept' of context effectively decontextualizes learners by conceptualizing them as unitary selves, autonomous from their environment, in the sense that they extract and construct knowledge from concrete experience, accommodate and assimilate it into their knowledge structures, which are, as noted at the beginning of the prior chapter, stored in memory as concepts and knowledge representations that can be expressed and transferred to new situations. Knowledge is implicitly conceptualized as a substance residing in the mind, "a third thing created from the learner's interaction with other actors and objects (Fenwick, 2001, p. 21)", through the act of cognitive reflection. Reflective constructivism's emphasis on reflection and the thinking dimension of the learning process also, according to feminist theorists of experiential learning, contributes to the denigration of bodily and intuitive experience, celebrates reason over emotions and reproduces the Cartesian bifurcation of mind and body which justifies and emphasizes rational control and mastery. This rational control and mastery is over experience, where the rational, autonomous learner rises above the

dynamics and contingencies of experience and retreats into the ivory tower of reason from which 'raw' experience can be disciplined and controlled. This overlooks the transgressive nature of experience, which always exceeds total conceptualization, coherence and control (Fenwick, 2001, 2006; Michelson, 2015).

This last point is of special interest to me and what I see as the main deficiency of the reflective constructivist approach to experiential learning. It overemphasizes what I call *explicit experience*, i.e. experience that is already known and conceptual. Experience that is explicable. It only engages students to reflect on experience and not with experience, i.e. the dimension of experience that is not so easily explicable, that dwells underneath the surface of mental representations and concepts. This dimension is what I call *implicit, lived experience*. To expand the focus of experiential learning from simple cognitive reflection so that we can take greater account of this implicit dimension of experience, one needs to take seriously the embodied approach and ground our theorizing of learners and the learning process in embodied terms. There are, however, some issues that can be discerned in embodied approaches to education. These issues are of two kinds. First, one can discern superficial claims to embodiment that do not escape the mind-body dualism that embodied approaches seek to transcend, instead continuing to privilege the mind over body by approaching the body as a reservoir of experience for the mind to mine. Second, are claims that turn Cartesian dualism on its head, swinging the pendulum to the other extreme, essentializing the body and discarding mind, reason and reflection (Jordi, 2011; Michelson, 2015, 2020). Before I move on I want to address these issues to make clear what pitfalls must be avoided on the road to positing an integrative account of reflection.

4.1 The Issues with Appeals to Embodiment in Experiential Learning

There are two issues that can be discerned in appeals to embodiment in experiential learning. Some appeals to embodiment end up being superficial and do not escape the mind-body dualism that embodied approaches seek to transcend, instead continuing to privilege the mind over body by approaching the body as a reservoir of experience for

the mind to mine. Other appeals can also be said to reenforce mind-body dualism by turning Cartesian dualism on its head, going towards the other extreme by essentializing the body and discarding mind, reason and reflection (Jordi, 2011; Michelson, 2015, 2020). Let me start by addressing the superficial appeal to embodiment and then address the essentializing of the body.

4.1.1. Superficial Appeals to Embodiment

Superficial appeals to embodiment come from a tendency in experiential learning that covets bodily activity in education, such as in outdoor education, movement training, workplace education, etc., but continue “treat the body as a convenient resource for educating a self securely located in the mind (Michelson, 2015, p. 79)“. The body is viewed as a reservoir of experience from which the mind can use to extract knowledge or develop emotional and physical qualities. This kind of ‘embodied’ approach does not intend to engage the body as a source of knowing, or to ground knowledge in the body, or to listen to what the body knows. The activities are mainly meant to develop the mind (Michelson, 2015). Like army training or martial arts, the only goal of these physical activities is not to exercise and strengthen the body or develop a skill, it is also about disciplining the mind, developing toughness and tenacity. Michelson (2015) takes examples from workplace learning and outdoors education when critiquing this tendency. First, she criticizes workplace learning that simply aims to use physical activity, such as bike riding, cooperative cooking, and dancing to ease the psychic stress of the employees’ work and develop mutual loyalty between employees. In these examples bodies are indeed active but their activity only serves to goals of team building and stress relief. No interest is taken in the body as knowledgeable about workplace conditions or the work itself. The activities are rather a playful break from the monotony of the working day. In outdoor education the use of the body to cultivate character and mind is more apparent. Outdoor education is deeply inspired by the work and concerns of one of its most important initiators, Kurt Hahn. Hahn was very concerned with developing qualities such as fitness, confidence, leadership, initiative, group cohesion and self-discipline and knowledge in the youth of his day. His approach, which still

inspires contemporary outdoor education, was the use of difficult and physically challenging expeditions and activities. Here, again, the focus is not on the body itself, but on the use of physical activity to develop social, psychological, and emotional traits and virtues. These kinds of appeals to embodiment do not contribute to the resistance against Cartesian dualism. Rather, it reinforces it by conceptualizing the body as a reservoir of experiences which the mind can mine in order to develop itself. The body is not taken to be an active and integral part of cognition itself. It is taken to be an inactive container of resources. A crucial concept that undergirds Michelson's critiques of these superficial appeals to embodiment is the notion of the body as a knower, as a bearer of *embodied knowledge* (Michelson, 2015).

4.1.1.1 The Notion of Embodied Knowledge

Embodied knowledge is knowledge that resides in the body, not the mind. The body is a knowing subject that knows how to act in situations because there is a pre-reflective correspondence between body and world. This knowledge can be sensory-motor knowledge, like I described in my example of the football player, but it is also knowledge that concerns a "variety of human experiences, all of which share the property of 'doing without representing' (Tanaka, 2011, p. 149)". It is a particular kind of knowledge that is imprinted in the body and "is not distinctly explicit, conscious, mentally representative or articulated (Tanaka, 2011, p. 149)". Like Polanyi's notion of tacit knowledge, embodied knowledge is knowledge that is not fully explicable and does not need explication or representation to be operational. It is knowledge that is imprinted on the body through social forces such as language, norms, identity, etc. Repeated actions and experiences shape and influence how we act in the world, interpret it and learn from it. I find the idea of five aspects of embodiment found in Lanei Rodemeyer's reading of Husserl's theory of embodiment (Rodemeyer, 2018) and reformulated by Hilde Margarethe Hegna and Trine Ørbæk (2021) helpful here.

Rodemeyer identifies five layers in Husserl's theory of embodiment that overlap and intersect. These are, primordial flow, passive synthesis, active constitution, interpersonal intersubjectivity and intersubjective community. In Hegna's and Ørbæk's

reformulation they refer to these layers as aspects of embodiment which they call *sensory experience*, *bodily experience*, *cognitive experience*, *intersubjective experience*, and *discursive experience*. Sensory experience is the flow of primary sense data that underlies active perception. It includes all bodily sensations and grounds the other aspects, going far beyond the five senses. Bodily experience is the layer of embodiment where consciousness is engaged indirectly, and we are not attentive to the work being done by consciousness. “This aspect relates to embodied habits, patterns of movements such as sedimented practices, movement repetitions, and movement training (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2021, p. 3)”. Cognitive experience is the embodied layer of cognitive awareness, where individuals constitute meaning based on their bodily experience of themselves. Intersubjective experience is the aspect of embodiment that concerns direct relations to other, one-to-one or in small groups and the experience of living in a shared world with others. Lastly, discursive experience is the meanings of embodiment that develop within culture and society and shape perceptions and expressions of bodies (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2021). Embodied knowledge is then mainly located in the bodily experience aspect. It is however important to note that this is not a hierarchy of embodied experiences. As expressed, these layers or aspects overlap and intersect, influencing each other. Embodied knowledge is thus shaped by, developed and gained through sensory, cognitive, intersubjective, and discursive experiences which mark the body (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2021). This notion of embodied knowledge is important for my account of reflection, but there are dangerous tendencies that one must avoid with appeals to the body as knower, viz, essentializing the body and romanticizing bodily wisdom over cognitive thinking as somehow more authentic and truth telling (Michelson, 2015).

4.1.2. Essentializing the Body

Just as the superficial appeals to embodiment do not escape Cartesian dualism, essentializing notions of embodiment do neither. Instead, they simply flip Descartes on his head, romanticizing a return to the body as a site free from cultural corruption, located in the natural, like Rousseau’s noble savage (Rousseau, 1992). This leads to a

tendency to conceptualize bodily and lived experience as straightforward, self-evident, and unmediated by socio-cultural forces. This has also been called *experiential foundationalism*. This swings the pendulum from one extreme to the other. The fact is that bodies do lie and a return to the body does not grant us some privileged access to the real, free from the complex matrix of social and biological factors. Giving too much weight to the particular 'gut feelings' of the body can obscure dangerous prejudices and justify unhealthy desires, e.g. my personal addiction to nicotine (Michelson, 2015, 2020).

As Michelson puts it:

“Some ‘truths’ mediated by the body – hate, fear, irrational fundamentalism – can be pathological, and sorting out the implications of what our guts tell us is the important other side of trusting them (2015, p. 78).”

These kinds of negative, reactionary gut feelings and distrust of expert knowledge that does not correspond to the particular bodily and lived experiences of some people have become quite visible nowadays where right-wing political forces mobilize peoples trans-, homo-, and xenophobia as well as peoples political and religious gut-feelings of repulsion at the notion of abortion (Michelson, 2015, 2020).

As one can observe, I have heavily referenced Michelson (2015, 2020) in this discussion of the tendency to essentialize the body. Michelson is very sensitive to this danger but still she falls into this tendency when she, arguing against Kolb, shifts the focus of the 'moment of learning' in the experiential learning process from reflection to the immediate experience of the learning situation. She illustrates this with the example of Mary, a newly promoted team manager (1998, 2015). The example is as follows:

Mary has recently been promoted to a position of greater authority at work in which she will be responsible for managing a team of professionals. At the first meeting of her team, she is aware that two of the senior men in the group repeatedly dismiss points made by the less-senior women, only to restate them subsequently as their own. As a new manager, Mary is eager both to comport herself well and to have the team operate effectively, and so she does not address this behavior in any form. She hides her increasing irritation and, by the end of the meeting, is aware that her shoulders are hunched and stiff to the point of physical discomfort. She is still emotionally agitated and in physical

pain in the car driving home. When Mary replays the meeting in her thoughts, it occurs to her that she should have found a way to intervene in the two men's conduct. She not only had a general professional responsibility to the team as its manager, but also a political responsibility – and loyalty – to the more vulnerable women in the group. Mary spends the rest of the drive identifying creative options for running the next meeting and beginning to develop strategies (2015, p. 91).

Instead of the Kolbian and reflective constructivist interpretation of this example, which would state that Mary's moment of learning happens in the car, after the workplace experience of the dismissive senior men in the group, Michelson claims that the moment of learning

was at the meeting, not in the car, and was located in [Mary's] initial emotional and physical response. The understanding that came to Mary on the way home was not a cognitive flash of new learning, but simply the moment in which her mental processes caught up with what her body already knew. This reinterpretation both requires and enables a quite different understanding of the process of learning. First, it posits Mary's emotions and physical responses as the repository of prior experiential learning. Second, it sees her body and her feelings as producers of new knowledge based on events as they are happening. Third, learning is understood as a moment of emotional and physical response, not a moment of dispassionate self-reflection, as the product of an embodied, social selfhood rather than of a disembodied mind. Mary's capacity for insight is a function of a gendered subjectivity, of a social existence lived within a woman's body in which the traces of past angers and hurt feelings, of personal and collective memories reside. Seen in these terms, the production of knowledge is a moment of social self-location, not transcendence, and one that uses all the cognitive, emotional, sensate, and muscular neural faculties (2015, p. 94).

By shifting this view of the moment of learning from reflection to the embodied response of the situation Michelson seeks to argue that "Mary's aching shoulders, speak truths about the world" and that learners "can learn from their experience, not by detaching from their bodies and feelings, but, rather, by learning to trust them (2015, p. 94)". Michelson is here advocating for taking embodied knowledge seriously in the learning process, to "cultivate awareness of how it feels to 'be' a body from the inside

(2015, p. 78)“. This is a positive advocacy but the shift in perspective which she advocates does, however, fall into this kind of essentializing tendency which I have already discussed. There is no need to pinpoint a single moment of learning. Rather we should view learning as a continuous process which encompasses many disparate moments and factors of learning, embodied, emotional, cognitive, etc. (Jordi, 2011). As Jordi puts it:

(H)uman learning cannot happen without the mind. Because the embodied human brain has an intrinsic capacity to mentally symbolize experience through images, metaphors, and language, our experience and consciousness is immediately mental and symbolic. Language is implicit in the human process of living (Gendlin, 2004). To embody experiential learning requires not that we give preference to the body as the site where any single “moment of learning” happens but rather that we embody the human mind as one important dimension of the distinctively human learning process (Jordi, 2011, p. 189).

The post-experiential reflection should, therefore, not be conceptualized as the mind merely catching up to Mary’s embodied knowledge. Rather, it is an elaboration of it, a further explication it.

Michelson does complicate this shift by claiming that we ought, rather, to understand the body as holding the tensions and struggles that the body has been marked by through its being in the world. It speaks truths about the world in a variety of ways that are shaped by a history of societal and biological factors and their interplay that have affected the learner. Michelson, in fact, seems to roll a little bit back on this claim of the embodied moment of learning and, again, she seems to allude to that analytic reflection has value for learning from experience when she writes:

None of what I have been arguing here is in any way to suggest that thinking hard about one’s experience and one’s behavior is not a good idea. It is, of course, a very good idea. Mary will do well to think hard an long about her location within multiple material, social and discursive relationships and about what she wants in, from and for herself, her colleagues, and her society (Michelson, 2015, p. 95).

Furthermore, in a more recent article, Michelson reiterates the problematics of an embodied approach to experiential learning that dogmatically privileged “embodied wisdom” over critical inquiry. The body does lie and emotions get coopted by pernicious forces of hate and are subject to biases, as I have already discussed (Michelson, 2015, 2020).

It is thus not enough for theorists to honor the transformative power of embodied and affective knowledge. We must also do the work of parsing the difference between the deep wisdom of experience, feeling, and the body and a currently triumphant demagogic irrationality (Michelson, 2020, p. 110)

It is on the grounds of these concerns that we need to posit a rehabilitated account of reflection, where the cognitive and embodied intermingle in dialogue with each other and where we do not privilege the one or the other. Room must be made for both the body and reflection. This hasn’t been adequately done by experiential and adult learning theorists that approach the field from an embodied perspective (Jordi, 2011). This lack of a middle ground has resulted in Michelson arguing that

adult learning theory has yet to articulate a viable interface between thought and feeling. On the one hand, we have posited algorithms for learning that rely on simplistic notions of rationality, Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle being the most pervasive. On the other hand, we have been enticed by too-facile appeals to a purer knowledge made available by setting the rational mind aside. To find a more nuanced balance, we need to take a closer look at the theoretical work we ask both thinking and feeling to do, what claims we make on their behalf, and how we understand their relationship both to the credibility of knowledge claims and the demands of cognitive justice (Michelson, 2020, pp. 110–111).

To tread this middle path, in what follows I advance an account of reflection that seeks to recognize embodied knowledge and experience that avoids treating the body simply as a reservoir of experience for the mind to mine and avoids essentializing and romanticize the body as a source of unproblematic, authentic wisdom. I will work from the critiques from embodiment which I have explicated above and elaborate on it to put forth a positive account of integrated experiential reflection that recognizes the role,

effects, and potentialities of embodiment in experiential learning. The theoretical framework that I find most promising to accomplish this is *enactivism*.

5. Enactivism: Emergent Cognition from Organismic Activity

Enactivism is a relatively novel but powerful current in contemporary cognitive science, psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy which advances an integrative account of mind, body and environment, conceptualizing cognition in terms of being enacted through active, embodied engagement with the world, not just in terms of the internal mental activity of the brain. Originally stemming from the work of Maturana, Varela, Rosch and Thompson (Maturana & Varela, 1992; Varela et al., 1992) and influenced by phenomenology, ecological psychology and pragmatism, enactivism sets itself against cognitivist and computational models of cognition and their theories of mind as a representational, information processor. In contemporary debates, enactivism takes on a number of varieties, the main ones being *autopoietic enactivism*, *sensorimotor knowledge enactivism* and *radical enactivism* (Hutto, 2023). Here I will not go into the details of each of these variations. Rather I aim to give a general account of enactivism. When explaining enactivism I find it helpful to start with what enactivism is reacting against. Enactivism sets itself against cognitivist approaches to cognition. Cognitivism denotes a family of approaches to cognition and mind that are united by a conceptualization of the brain as a computational, information processor and a view of cognition as strictly a mental process, mediated by mental representations which the brain constructs and interprets the world through. Mental representations, according to cognitivists, are formal, have syntactic properties and causal power because of these properties which instantiate mental states (Hershfield, 1998). As Hershfield writes:

[T]he mind is glossed as a 'syntactic engine': Mental states are realized as (instantiated by) syntactically structured representations and psychological processes such as deductive reasoning are implemented by computational processes defined over (the syntactic features of) such representations. These computational processes are understood to capture causal relations between the representations over which they are defined. Insofar as these processes are defined in terms of the syntactic features of representations, it follows on this view that syntax is causally efficacious. Cognitivists thus

see psychological states as inheriting their causal powers from the formal or syntactic features of the representations that instantiate them. Although there is some controversy as to whether this obviates the need for psychological laws stated in terms of content, cognitivists are in general agreement that the causal mechanisms of the mind can be described in syntactic terms (1998, pp. 506–507).

Enactivists are critical of what they perceive as the intellectualist, internalist and individualist assumptions of cognitivism. It is internalist because cognition is viewed as being located in the brain, it is individualist because cognition is conceptualized as stemming solely from the causal mechanisms of individual brains and it is intellectualist because it posits that the computational manipulation of mental representations is the main function of cognition and is necessary for action. This last point displays the anti-representationalism of enactivism. As Gallagher states it:

[Cognitivist] models view cognition in terms of information processing understood as the manipulation of abstract symbols with representational content that in some way mirrors the world. On such a view, internal (“in the head”) mental representational content is necessary not only for sophisticated thought but also for action. Mental representations involve truth functions or accuracy conditions of satisfaction (Gallagher, 2018, p. 625).

This representationalism inherent in cognitivism rests on dualisms between mind and body, body and environment, language and reality, individual and society etc. (Gallagher, 2018). Because enactivists seek an integrative account of cognition that encompasses mind-body-environment they put forth an account of cognition that does not rest on the assumption that the fundamental nature of cognition is representational. Cognition is not, as Gallagher puts it, ‘post-perceptual’, i.e., something added to perception after the fact to make sense of perception (Gallagher, 2018). Cognition is action-oriented and is enacted through acting in and upon the world. This does, however, not mean that enactivism necessarily rejects representation wholesale. It only claims that cognition is not fundamentally in the business of representing the world and “that representational cognition is enabled only when basic cognition is supported in the right way by appropriate sociocultural scaffolding (Robertson, 2023, p. 173)“.

This anti-representationalism is an important characteristic of most embodied approaches to cognition and learning and plays an important role in the account of reflection which I will advance in this thesis. If we bring it to bear on reflective constructivism it forms a powerful critique of it. Although not explicitly cognitivist, reflective constructivism is very much preoccupied with the role of representational cognition in the learning process, with its emphasis on cognitive reflection and the thinking dimension of the experiential learning process. It implicitly holds that learning is more or less the process of representing reality, manipulating these mental representations through reflection, so as to accommodate and assimilate them into knowledge structures. This is the root of an important part of the critique from embodiment, which states that reflective constructivism overlooks and denigrates the more implicit, nonrepresentational, bodily, and intuitive experience. This experience is what I will call *implicit lived experience* which I juxtapose with representational, *explicit experience*. It is, however, important to note that I do not reject the existence of mental representations as e.g., Baker (1995), Collins (1987), and Gibson (1966, 1979) do. Mental representations do factor into my account of reflection. What is important with regards to the anti-representationalism of enactivism is the claim that cognition exceeds the role of simply representing. For now, I will bracket further discussion of this and continue my discussion of enactivism.

Against cognitivism, enactivism advances an integrated account of mind, body and environment that conceptualizes cognition, not as a mere mental activity, but as emerging or being enacted through sensorimotor capacities, affective and autonomic aspects of living systems, i.e. organisms, as they are situated and act in the world and are acted upon (Gallagher, 2018; Hutto, 2023). Enactivists, contra cognitivists and reflective constructivists, conceptualize context and environment in highly relational terms. An organism's world is not a prespecified, neutral, external domain that the organism cognitively represents, i.e. it is not a 'container'. It is a relational domain of significance, populated with items of relevance, or *affordances*, and through interactions with the environment and its affordances an organism is said to enact its

cognition and bring forth its world, or *Umwelt*.⁵ As stated above, the environment is also always acting on the organism, changing it and conditioning it. This changing and conditioning is, however, also on the part of the organism as it copes and in return changes the environment in which it is situated. The conditioning is thus not wholly external but also a “self-conditioning” that the organism undertakes with its active engagement with the environment (Gallagher, 2018, 2023; Hutto, 2023). That is, organisms aren’t simply shaped by their environment; “they also dynamically fashion, curate, and adapt to them (Hutto, 2023: Section 1)“.

Enactivists can claim this because they conceptualize organisms as autonomous, self-organizing, self-generating and self-maintaining, living systems. Autonomy, according to enactivism, is not understood in terms of an organism being autonomous from their environment. Again, organisms are always entangled in the complex web of factors that constitute their environment. Rather, it is understood in terms of the notion that an organism’s organization, (re)generation, and maintenance is not wholly determined by external factors. It is also conditioned by their biological make-up *and* prior history of the organism’s active engagement with environments and their particularities, including e.g. other organisms, socio-cultural factors, natural objects, artifacts, and environmental processes. This autonomous character of organisms has been termed *autopoiesis*. To put it another way, an organism’s autopoiesis is particular to itself because of its biology, situatedness and prior engagements with the world. Furthermore, they bring this particularity to every further engagement with the world

⁵ *Affordances* is a term coined by the ecological psychologist J.J.Gibson and refers to that which an environment (e.g. artifacts) offers an organism. For example, a cup has the affordance of holding liquid. Affordances are, however, not merely present in an artifact. It comes about in the interplay between a conscious organism and an object. Through greater understanding of how to manipulate things, an organism’s affordances multiply and affect its behaviour. A tree’s affordances can be climbing in it, chopping it down, making wood, building tools and houses, etc. (Gibson, 1979).

Umwelt is a term coined by the German biologist Jakob von Uexküll (2010), which is a “sub-set of the physio-chemical world that is relevant to the organism in question (Hutto, 2023)“.

which accounts for each organism's creative, flexible and open-ended adaptation (Hutto, 2023).

Cognition, then, is not simply a mental activity but an embodied activity that is enacted through the organism's autopoietic engagement with the environment and its affordances. This is generally put in terms of an organism-environment structural coupling, which is the notion of two interacting systems affecting and adapting to each other's effects on the other. Cognition is enacted and takes shape through the precarious, adaptive, autopoietic, regulative, coping of organisms with their environment (Varela et al., 1992). This is illustrated nicely by Hutto:

[A]n organism's characteristic patterns of sensorimotor interaction are deemed to be shaped by its prior history of active engagement with aspects of their environments. Its past engagements reinforce and tend to perpetuate its sensorimotor habits and tendencies. Yet organisms are not wholly creatures of past habits. Living beings always remain flexibly open to adjusting their repertoires and ways of doing things in new and novel ways. Cognition, which takes the form of patterns of open-ended, flexible, extended spatio-temporal activity, is thus deemed 'autonomous' in the sense that it unfolds in ways that are viable for sustaining itself and that are not externally regulated or pre-programmed (Hutto, 2023: Section 1).

The claim that organisms are not wholly creatures of habit, remaining flexibly open to adjusting their repertoires in novel ways, points out that enactivism is not deterministic. Organisms are creatures of habit, sure, but they are only shaped, not determined, by their habits. Habits, whether they are in the form of actions, thoughts, emotions, etc., can be changed and they do change according to what goals the organism has and what life demands of it. Furthermore, cognition, because it is enacted through the structural coupling of organisms and environment, is intersubjective, socially situated and its "processes acquire meaning in part by their role in the context of action, rather than through a representational mapping or a replicated internal model of the world (Gallagher, 2018, p. 626)."

Conceptualizing experience, enactivists claim that subjective experience, i.e. what it is like to experience something, is an achievement of the kind of organismic activity explained above. Here Hutto is again helpful:

[P]erceptual experience arises and takes shape through an organism's active exploration of aspects of its environment. It is through such engaged efforts and the specific ways they are carried out that organisms experience the world in particular ways. Accordingly, organismic activities of certain kinds are required to achieve phenomenal access to aspects of the world or for things to 'show up' or "to be present" phenomenally (Hutto, 2023: Section 1).

So, an organism's experience and what it experiences arises from the structural coupling of the organism with its environment. What is and how it is experienced is affected by the organism taking account of its individually specific prior history of engagement with world and the present environment, which explains the novelty of every organism's subjective experience of the world. The cognition of organisms is autonomous and open-ended which enables a space for creative, flexible adaptation and adjustment to dynamically fashion and curate their environment (Hutto, 2023). I would like to add that, although Hutto only mentions perceptual experience in this quotation, subjective experience does not simply take shape through perception of the outside world, i.e. an experience about something 'out there', it also takes shape from the prior history of an organism, biological make-up, and the structural coupling with the environment.

To summarize, enactivism is an integrative account of mind-body-environment which conceptualizes cognition as being enacted through an organism's autopoietic engagement with its *Umwelt*. An organism, and thus cognition, is always biologically and historically situated in complex relations of significances and affordances which its environment consists of. In the act of engaging with the environment the organism changes and is changed by its environment, having its habits reinforced and/or flexibly adapting according to goals and demands of the environment.

5.1. Implications of Enactivism for Education and One Slight Oversight

This framework (and other embodied approaches for that matter) has interesting implications for approaching learning and knowledge. Most importantly it expands the horizon of what we deem to be learning and knowledge, bringing our attention to other important factors of education other than deliberate cognitive learning and knowledge. Enactivists insist that learning must be understood in terms of co-emergence, where a learner's understanding is entwined with the understandings of their fellow learners and the teacher, as well as the environment. It is a "continuous invention and exploration, produced through the relations among consciousness, identity, action and interaction, objects, and structural dynamics of complex systems (Fenwick, 2001, p. 48)". The notion of experiential learning as a holistic approach to learning that is supposed to engage learners, bodily, emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually, where knowledge is continuously created and recreated, already has, built in it, similar commitments and ideas. It has, however, as I have shown, retreated into an emphasis on cognitive reflection at the cost of embodied aspects of and a holistic approach to experiential learning.

Enactivism, I believe, provides a theoretical framework that avoids most of the criticisms that have been levelled against reflective constructivism. Just to recall, embodied critiques of reflective constructivism have pointed out that reflective constructivism conceptualize learners as disembodied, decontextualized, unitary rational selves that are autonomous from their context and extract knowledge *qua* representation from experience through the process of cognitive reflection to rationally apply it to new contexts. Enactivists avoid these charges by conceptualizing learners as embodied, environmentally coupled organisms that are always entangled in the myriad of internal and external factors that compose their Umwelt. Enactivists also conceptualize learning, knowledge, and self, in non-representational terms as being first and foremost enacted through an organism's engagement with their environment. Furthermore, learners are always situated in historical and social contexts which shape

them, have shaped them and their engagement with the world. Learners are therefore always carrying with them embodied knowledge in the shape of bodily habits that shape the enaction of cognition and learning. They always bring their prior life with them into every learning environment and situation.

One thing that has, however, been missing from the enactivist research program in education is a focus on first-person processes of learning, like experiential reflection is. Enactivists have put more of an emphasis on educational design and technologies as well as outward bodily expressions, e.g. gestures (see e.g., Abrahamson et al., 2015; Abrahamson & Hutto, 2022; Abrahamson & Trninic, 2015; Flood et al., 2020; Gallagher, 2018; Hutto et al., 2015; Skulmowski & Rey, 2018; Yang et al., 2022). They have emphasized more behavioral aspects of learning and sought to demonstrate nonrepresentational learning.⁶ Good work has come of this, but I believe that it only presents half a picture. Enactivists have put little attention on the subjective experience of learners and how to engage that from an enactivist standpoint. My approach here will emphasize the first-person perspective of learners and how experiential educationalists can engage it in all its experiential dimensions. To do this I will utilize the work of Eugene Gendlin, which can be read as a fellow traveler to enactivists because of his theory of organism-environment interaction and his theory of the emergence of meaning from bodily experiential processes (Gendlin, 1997, 2012, 2018). To do this I will utilize Gendlin's work on experience to elaborate the notion of implicit experience and how we might engage students to reflect *with* experience and not simply *on* experience.

⁶ One famous example of this is the use of mathematics imagery trainers (MITs). MITs are innovative educational devices that can be designed to give learners an opportunity for interaction with mathematical phenomena that is non-symbolic, so that they get an embodied grip on said mathematical phenomena. Hutto and Abrahamson describe it as follows:

MITs use natural user interface systems that enable children to engage in tasks that initially do not demand any proficiency with mathematical symbols at all, only sensorimotor behaviors such as moving (virtual) objects in order to satisfy some task condition. Once they have solved the set problem, the students are offered mathematical tools to enhance their interactions. The students adopt these tools because they recognize in them potential utilities for enhancing their actions. But in so doing the students shift into quantitative forms of reasoning about their own actions (Abrahamson & Hutto, 2022, p. 46).

6. Notions of Experience

To recollect, reflective constructivists conceptualize experience as being the total response of a person to situations or events. Experience is both internal and external, provoked by internal feelings or external agents and is complex, constituted by several experiences. This conception is not strictly wrong, but it is lacking. If we just look at the experiences that form different aspects of embodiment listed in the previous chapter, it becomes apparent that the concept of experience is multitudinous, and many theorists have put forth different ideas of experience or framed it in different terms. It can, therefore, be easy to get lost in disarray when writing and thinking about experience. So, to simplify I choose to frame my thinking about experience in terms of two general concepts, *implicit* and *explicit* experience.

What I term implicit experience roughly corresponds to the first two aspects of embodiment, sensory experience, and bodily experience, viz. the nonrepresentational, pre-conceptual primordial experiences of the body that is not fully explicable. Explicit experience then, again, roughly corresponds to the other three, i.e. cognitive, intersubjective, and discursive experience. I derive this concept from the works of Eugene Gendlin who, throughout his career was preoccupied with how meaning is created from bodily, lived experiences (Gendlin, 1997). This is, however, not an idea that originates from Gendlin. It corresponds to John Dewey's notion of primary and secondary experience which he conceptualized as a difference between experience that is directly 'felt' or 'had', barely without regulation or reflection and experience that is mediated by reflection and abstracts away from primary experience, i.e. it is experience that is 'known' (Hildebrand, 2023). It also corresponds to the German distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, which Gendlin was especially inspired by through his reading of the works of the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (Casey, 2023; Roberts, 2012; Schoeller & Dunaetz, 2018). For this reason I will focus on the German distinction instead of the Deweyan distinction.

6.1. Erlebnis & Erfahrung, or Implicit & Explicit Experience

Erlebnis refers to the immediate, embodied, first-person, pre-reflective, constant, lived experience of ourselves in the world. Like Dewey's primary experience, it is 'had'. The modern use of this concept has its origins in the works of the German philosopher Wilhem Dilthey which argued that this kind of experience forms the basis of knowledge, meaning and understanding. According to Dilthey, our basic experience does not come in the form of reflective modes of experience. It comes in the form of lived experience; when we are bound up with life in an embodied way. In advancing this concept of experience, Dilthey was arguing against Neo-Kantian, empiricist and positivist notions of experience that he saw as being overly cognitive and implied distance, detachment and a theoretical orientation towards the world (Casey, 2023). This kind of experience is what has been called *Erfahrung*.

Erfahrung is experience that has become associated with objectivity, the quantifiable and measurable, as well as "sense impressions, outer perceptions and judgements made about them (Casey, 2023, p. 285)". Furthermore, it is conceptual, reflective, and connected to collective wisdom. As Casey puts it:

Erfahrung connotes experience in the sense that one has "learned from experience" as when we say of a doctor that she is experienced – she knows the terrain so well and walked it so frequently as to have worn a path. This kind of experience is transformational, involving the shaping of the self over time and invokes the notion that "cumulative experience can produce a kind of wisdom that comes only at the end of the day". *Erfahrung* thus suggests experience that is gained cumulatively. But not only for an individual. *Erfahrung* can also be translated as "learning" and can indicate knowledge gleaned from experience that can be handed down, becoming "received wisdom" that is passed down through tradition. This traditional knowledge, accumulated over the generations and embedded in cultural forms can be used as a roadmap to guide and make sense of our daily life (Casey, 2023, p. 284).

It is experience that is sedimented, already conceptualized or bounded in traditional forms, patterns and logical structures that are embedded in culture and a community's

language. It is the integration and synthesis of discrete moments of experience into a narrative whole (Gendlin 1991; Roberts 2015). In other words, it is, explicit, cognitive, intersubjective, discursive, 'known' experience, gained through accommodation and assimilation. Dilthey argued that in "this way of thinking, our primary mode of engagement with the word is theoretical and representational – a mind which seeks to mirror an independent world which stands apart from us (Casey, 2023, p. 285)." Dilthey argued against this

representational theory of consciousness, that there is only immediate access to the contents of our consciousness, and we need to build bridges between our consciousness and the external world. On the contrary, Dilthey believed self and world to be fundamentally connected with one another in lived experience. While we can distinguish between self and world in analysis – and even focus our attention on one or the other through what Dilthey calls inner and outer perception – they are originally two poles of the same fundamental reality encountered in lived experience (Casey, 2023, p. 287).

For Dilthey, humans are historical creatures, and everyone brings their personal, embodied history to bear on the world. Consciousness is peculiar to each individual and the world that they encounter is meaningful, full of significance and affordances. This historicity of people means that their lived experience "is inflected by the contingent culture into which we are born, are raised, and live, because it provides us with the language and cultural forms that shape experience itself (Casey, 2023, p. 287)." It is important to note that lived experience is only inflected by culture, not determined. It is necessarily subjective and perspectival, and resists being fully conceptualized, represented, and reflected. Furthermore, lived experience is immediate because it is peculiar to each person and is not a result of their inference about the world or their experience. It is immediate awareness of self and reality. Self and world meet and fundamentally connect in lived experience (Casey, 2023). To frame in the embodied enactivist terms that I have used throughout the thesis, lived experience is a fundamental part of the nonrepresentational cognition of organisms as they enact themselves and their world of affordances through autopoietic engagement. It is the implicit experience that is the backdrop and generator of any explicit experience. As

Dewey notes about primary and secondary experience, both are had but only secondary experience is known. Without primary experience, secondary experiences are not possible.

Dilthey, although he rejected the representational theory of consciousness, did not, reject the reflective mode of experience. He maintained, as I just noted, that reflective experience springs from lived experience, through the training of attention in various ways.

[W]e can “step back” in our consciousness and intentionally direct our attention inward, objectifying mental states like our emotions. Or, as is typical of the natural sciences, we can intentionally direct our attention outwards to objects in the environment, even dimming our initial first person connection with them, in an attempt to describe or explain them theoretically. But this reflective or theoretical stance – whether directed inwards or outwards – is a modification of lived experience and is not our baseline attitude towards the world (Casey, 2023, p. 286).

Again, in enactivist terms, the reflective mode of experience is not the nature of our experience or cognition. It only arises from basic, implicit, lived experiences as they are scaffolded by culture. It is important to reiterate, though, that primary, lived experience is not independent of secondary experience. Just as I noted in my discussion of embodied knowledge and the five aspects of embodiment, lived experience is always shaped and inflected by secondary experience, although not determined. They are in dialectical relations. Gendlin puts this nicely with the Kantian flavored phrase: “Feeling without symbolization is blind; symbolization without feeling is empty (Gendlin, 1997, p. 5)”. Lived experience functions in what we think, perceive and how we behave, as well in the formation of secondary experience. It, however, also functions together with secondary experience in the formation of meaning (Gendlin, 1997).

Now, having laid out the embodied critique of reflective constructivism, described the enactivist framework that I’m working within and made clear the distinction between implicit, lived experience and explicit experience, I want to flesh out my critique of the reflective constructivist conception of reflection-on-action by analyzing prevalent protocols in the field of experiential learning. The protocols that I

will be critiquing are the *5R Framework for Reflection*, the *Integrative reflective cycle*, and *Gibbs' Reflective Cycle* (Bain et al., 2002; Bassot, 2013, 2016; Gibbs, 1988). These protocols fit into the schema of reflective constructivism because they all roughly follow the conditions set out in the reflective constructivist conception of reflection-on-action which, to recall, are that learners recall their experiences; attend to their feelings in connection to the experience; link new knowledge extracted from experience to old knowledge; re-evaluate their initial experience in light of their goals; integrate learning into existing knowledge structures; and rehearse the experiences with a view of subsequent action. I will also comment on the shortcomings these protocols have of facilitating the transformation of meaning perspectives that a critical orientation to reflection is supposed to instill in them. The reason I discuss all three of these protocols is to show how pervasive and dominant the reflective constructivist conception of reflection is. What will become apparent is that theorists have been unable to adequately broaden the scope of reflection. This, effectively, makes all the protocols the same with regards to the fact that they only engage learners to reflect on explicit experience. Now, let me illustrate.

7. An Analysis of Three Reflection Protocols

Many models, protocols and frameworks have been designed to facilitate reflection-on-action. Here I will discuss three protocols, viz., Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988), the Integrated Reflective Cycle (Bassot, 2013, 2016), and the 5R Framework for Reflection (Bain et al., 2002). All these differ in certain respects, some are more extensive than others, but they each fulfill the reflective constructivist conditions for reflection. Another thing that they all share is a one-dimensional engagement with explicit experience. I don't claim that this one-dimensionality is a result of deliberate disregard for lived experience, it is most definitely not. But this single-minded focus on explicit experience is, however, implicit in all these protocols. I will begin with Gibbs' reflective cycle.

7.1. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Gibbs' reflective cycle (GRC) is one of the most famous models of reflection. It consists of six steps: Description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions, and action plan (see for details of each step). Gibbs formulated it to facilitate a more structured reflective process to overcome three problems which he identified with reflection-on-action. Reflections, or 'debriefs' as he called them, "often lurch from super superficial descriptions of what happened to premature conclusions about what to do next, without adequate reflection or analysis (Gibbs, 1988, p. 49)". The reflective process can also be halted if the experience was powerful, never progressing beyond descriptions of the event and accompanying feelings. Finally, the cycle can be broken if description and feelings aren't dealt with in an adequate way. Learners might return to those stages when they ought to be drawing conclusions and formulating an action plan (Gibbs, 1988).

Table 1: Gibbs' Model of Reflection

Gibbs' Model of Reflection		
Stage	Description	Prompts
Description	Describe, nonjudgmentally, the learning activity in detail	“What happened?”; “when and where did it happen?”; “what did you and the other people do?”; “what was the outcome of the situation?”; “why were you there?”; “what did you want to happen?”.
Feelings and thoughts	Explore feelings and thoughts had during the experience and their impact on the experience. Refrain from analyzing.	“What were you feeling during the situation?”; “what were you feeling before and after the situation?”; “what do you think other people were feeling about the situation?”; “what do you think other people feel about the situation now?”; “what were you thinking during the situation?”; “what do you think about the situation now?”
Evaluation	Evaluate what worked/didn't work and what was good/bad about the activity. Make value judgements.	“What was good and bad about the experience?”; “what did/n't go well?”; “what did you and others contribute?”
Analysis	Analyze to make sense of activity. Ground in previous steps and integrate literature to help with sense-making.	“Why did/n't things go well?”; “What sense can I make of the situation?”; “what knowledge (mine, or others) can help with understanding the situation?”
Conclusions	Summarize what has been learned from the activity and draw conclusions about the experience and analysis.	“What did I learn?”; “how could this have been a more positive situation for me, or everyone involved?”; “what skills do I need to develop for me to handle a situation like this better?”; “what else could I have done?”.
Action plan	On the grounds of previous steps, plan action and conduct for similar future situations	“If I had to do this again, what would I do differently?”; “How will I develop the required skills I need?”; “How can I make sure that I can act differently next time?”.

Gibbs thought it was important, if possible, to move logically from one stage to the next. This, he noted, can be difficult for learners so he advised demarcating the process through changes in activities, blending personal and dialogical reflection. Describing could be done individually. Reporting feelings might be done in pairs. Analysis could be done in a group of four. General conclusions could be drawn in a whole class discussion while personal conclusions could be drawn individually. An action plan could then finally be formulated individually and presented to the whole class (Gibbs, 1988).

7.2. The Integrated Reflective Cycle

Introduced by Barbara Bassot (Bassot, 2013, 2016), the Integrated Reflective Cycle (IRC) draws on a number of prevalent theoretical approaches from the literature on reflective practice. It draws on GRC, as well as the work of Kolb (1984) and Schön (1987), just to name a few. The main difference between the integrative reflective cycle and Gibbs' model is that it consists of fewer steps and more deliberately implements a critical orientation into the reflective process. The four steps are: The experience, reflection-on-action, theory and preparation (Bassot, 2013, 2016).

Table 2: The Integrated Reflective Cycle

The Integrated Reflective Cycle		
Stage	Description	Prompts
The Experience	Describe the learning activity, think about context and examine contributing factors.	"What happened?"; "What were the contributing factors?"
Reflection-on-action	Interrogate approach, examine feelings, assumptions, and consequences of assumptions.	"What was I trying to achieve?"; "Why did I do what I did?"; "What assumptions did I make?"; "What were the consequences?"; "How did I feel?"; How did others feel and how could I tell?"
Theory	Examine how experience can contribute to current knowledge and be made greater sense of through consulting literature.	"How has this contributed to my prior knowledge?"; "What have I learned that I can apply to similar situations?"

Preparation	Look forward and contemplate how this newly acquired knowledge can be utilized in future situations. Consider possible strategies.	“What will I do next time in a similar situation?”; “How could I do better next time?”; “What will I now consider for next time?”; “What other strategies could I adopt to move forward?”.
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In the first step the learner describes the learning situation with an emphasis on a clear and detailed definition of the context. The learner should describe what happened, what were the contributing factors, who were the actors involved and what actions were taken (by the learner or others in the situation). After that the learner should start to make sense of the situation through a self-interrogation of assumptions, i.e. through critical reflection. This reflection-on-action stage should accomplish the challenging of the status quo of the learner’s actions and assumptions. The reflection is guided by questions regarding the learner’s goals in the situation, reasons for acting, underlying assumptions, consequences of actions for learner and others and feelings connected to the situation (personal and others'). In the theory stage the learner should think about the situation in a larger context of professional literature and their own learning and personal experiences. Questions of how the experience of the activity has contributed to personal, theoretical, and general knowledge as well as transferable knowledge guide the reflection. The final step, like in Gibbs' reflective cycle, is all about formulating an action plan for similar future situations. Learners evaluate what should be done and considered for future action in similar situations as well as reflecting on what the best course of action or strategy would lead to success in future situations (Bassot, 2016)

7.3. 5R Framework for Reflection

The 5R framework for reflection, introduced by John D. Bain, Roy Ballantyne, Colleen Mills and Nita C. Lester, is both a protocol and an assessment scale for reflective writing and thinking. It was put forth to achieve two goals. First, to enable learners and teachers to get a clearer sense of what a serious reflection involves. Second, to enable learners and teachers to assess journal writing. The framework is composed of five components: Reporting, responding, relating, reasoning and reconstructing (Bain et al., 2002).

Table 3: 5R Framework for Reflection

5R Framework for Reflection		
Stage	Description	Prompts
Reporting	Briefly describe the learning experience. Include the key elements of the situation that are essential for you to communicate the context to another person without any judgement	“What happened?”; “What are the key aspects of this situation?”; “Who was involved?”; “What did I do?”
Responding	Describe your response to the situation. Include your feelings, thoughts, observations and questions you have with regards to the experience.	“How did the experience make me feel?”; “What thoughts were sparked by the experience”; “What were your personal highs and lows?”; “What did you observe?”; “What questions have emerged from the experience?”
Relating	Relate the learning experience to prior knowledge, experiences, skills and understanding.	“Have I seen this before?”; “What are the similarities/differences between <i>this</i> learning experience and prior experiences?”; “What skills and knowledge do I have to deal with what I have experienced?”
Reasoning	Explore and explain the learning experience by contemplating the significant factors of the experience and what is important about these factors for understanding the experience. Consult relevant theoretical literature.	“What is the most important aspect of this situation and why?”; “What, if any, theoretical literature is helpful for making sense of the experience?”; “What are the effects of taking a different perspective on my present understanding of the experience?”
Reconstructing	Draw conclusions from the previous four steps to reconstruct future actions and develop an action plan.	“In future situations, what need to be done differently?”; “What might work and why?”; “Are my ideas supported by theory?”; “Are there different options?”; “What might happen if?”

The first component of the framework is reporting. This is where learners describe or report what happened in an impartial manner, only to provide a sufficient description so that others can draw their own conclusions about the incident. Learners should refrain from interpreting or making judgements about the learning activity and

situation. The second component is about responding to the learning activity by making observations, expressing feelings, and presenting questions regarding the learning activity. Learners should draw attention to significant factors of the learning activity, make judgements about the activity in the form of emotional expression or questions. The third component is where learners relate the experience of the learning activity to prior experience, learning, knowledge, understanding and skills. The fourth component is about reasoning about the experience. Here learners analyze in detail a significant factor of the experience by considering whether the factor is important to the described learning activity, how it impacted the learning activity and what questions it raises about future actions. In this component learners also consider and compare alternative perspectives. In the last component, reconstructing, learners, based on prior components, reframe, or reconstruct future practices. Conclusions are drawn and a plan for future action is formulated. Learners also consider possible reasons for and implications of the conclusions and action plan for different contexts. Finally, learners integrate this inside into their knowledge structures for future use (Bain et al., 2002).

7.4. Commonalities and Limitations of the Three Protocols

If we take stock of these three protocols for reflection, many commonalities become apparent. Although the protocols differ in formulation, some have more components than others and differ in the details of what they prompt learners to reflect upon, they do, however, all share the core characteristics of the reflective constructivist conception of reflection which were that learners recall their experiences; attend to their feelings in connection to the experience; link new knowledge extracted from experience to old knowledge; re-evaluate their initial experience in light of their goals; integrate learning into existing knowledge structures; and rehearse the experiences with a view of subsequent action. This does not mean that all the protocols break down the process in this exact manner. They do, however, check all these boxes. This is illustrated in , where the reflective constructivist conditions have been broken down into four categories: Recollect, attend to feelings, link & integrate, and re-evaluate & rehearse.

The description stage of GRC, the experience stage of the IRC and the reporting and responding component of 5R all correspond to the recollection condition. In GRC's feelings and thoughts stage, the IRC's reflection-on-action, and 5R's responding component, learners are prompted to attend to their feelings. All the protocols also prompt learners to link and integrate the experience and new knowledge. GRC does this in the analysis and evaluation stages, IRC does this in the reflection-on-action and theory stages and 5R does this through the relating and reasoning components. All the protocols then, finally, include a re-evaluation and rehearsing of the experience with an eye for the future stage or component. GRC through its conclusions and action plan stages, IRC in the theory and preparation stage and 5R in its reconstruction component.

Table 4: Commonalities Between the Three Reflective Protocols

Commonalities Between Three Reflective Protocols				
Model	Recollect	Attend to feelings	Link & Integrate	Re-evaluate & rehearse
Gibbs' Reflective Cycle	Description: Describe, nonjudgmentally, the learning activity in detail.	Feelings & Thoughts: Explore feelings and thoughts had during the experience and their impact.	Analysis & evaluation: Analyze activity and integrate literature to make sense of activity. Evaluate the experience. Make value judgements.	Conclusions & action plan: Summarize learning and draw conclusions. Plan action and conduct for similar future situations. done differently
Integrative Reflective Cycle	The Experience: Describe the learning activity, think about context and examine contributing factors.	Reflection-on-action: Examine feelings had during the experience, both personal and that of others.	Reflection-on-action & theory: Interrogate approach, assumptions, and consequences of assumptions. Consult literature.	Theory & preparation: Examine how experience can contribute to current knowledge. Contemplate how newly acquired knowledge can be utilized in future situations. Consider possible strategies.
5R Framework	Reporting & responding: Describe the experience impartially and include key elements needed to communicate to others. Describe your response to the situation (thoughts, observations and questions)	Responding: Describe feelings had in response to the experience.	Relating & reasoning: Relate experience to prior knowledge, experiences, skills and understanding. Contemplate significant factors of the experience and why they are significant. Consult relevant theoretical literature.	Reconstructing: Draw conclusions from the previous four steps to reconstruct future actions and develop an action plan.

That these protocols fit into the reflective constructivist schema of reflection is not a bad thing. They all engage learners to reflect on important things and do so in a detailed fashion. They do, however, all share the deficiency of only engaging the explicit experience of learners. They involve, engaging learners to describe the learning activity

and the emotions and feelings they felt during it. It engages learners to analyze and connect these experiences to prior learning and experiences and the greater body of knowledge relevant to the learning activity. They then prompt the learners to formulate from this rational process an action plan for future situations. Not once do these protocols engage learners to reflect on their implicit, lived experience, their bodily stirrings that they might feel when they are recollecting the learning activity, analyzing it and formulating an action plan. The implicit experiences are present in all of these reflective moves, but they are never intentionally engaged.

But how, some might ask, is reflection on emotions and feelings not taking implicit experiences into account? Of course, through reflecting on emotions and feelings, learners will at times enter into their implicit experience. That is an inevitable part of the process of thought. The problem I'm pointing to is not that implicit experience is not present in or completely closed off from the reflective process in the current paradigm of experiential learning. The problem is that these models cannot properly, through their one-sided analytical approach, intentionally engage implicit experience with their reflection protocols. An engagement with implicit experience is here, in these protocols, only a 'happy accident' that depends on a learner's disposition and not through design and prompting (Vermersch, 2008). The learners, following these protocols, are only prompted to reflect on their experience through concepts and traditional patterns. Therefore, reflecting on emotions and feelings does not guarantee reflection on experiencing. In these protocols there is a missing first stage, where implicit experience is given space and is attended to without treating it as explicit experience. Per experience *as* explicit experience, emotions and feelings are shaped by cultural, discursive, and political factors which are influenced by habitual patterns of meaning making (Michelson 2020) and these models can't intentionally prompt students to break the larger scheme of these multiple habitual patterns. Even through critical reflection, there is always the danger, if students don't have the inclination or aren't prompted to use the disruptive force of their implicit experience, that they simply move from one habitual pattern of meaning-making, or meaning perspective, to another, e.g. a move from generally conservative assumptions towards post-colonial

assumptions. This is not awful and, of course, people's frames of thought and experience are always inherited from the larger culture, but we aren't fully culturally determined (Michelson, 2015). We are experiencing actors, situated historically in unique points of view. Characterized by our peculiarities, shaped by our life of active engagement with the world (Hutto, 2023). Language and concepts are not rigid steel cages and there is always an experiential remainder that they do not fully grasp. One of my favorite ways this has been put is by Michelson when she explains Shari Stone-Mediatore's attempt to reconcile between post-modernist and 'experiential foundationalist' feminists:

Shari Stone-Mediatore (1998) suggests that we do not need to choose between the imperatives of experience and the recognition that experience is constituted within language. If we begin with the "complexities and contradictions" of individual lives located within specific social arrangements, then experience can be seen as the matrix of material conditions, social ideologies, and the discursive structures through which individuals and collectivities make meaning. In other words, if renditions of experience are seen as "emerging from and engaging historical and ideological processes and exploring contradictions" (p. 117), then we can account for the shape of experience without treating it as a transparent confrontation with the real on the one hand or, on the other, as a mere artifact of language. Rather, we can see it as enacting the ways in which individual consciousness sustains, challenges, exceeds, and trips up on the language we use to explain things (Michelson, 2015, p. 66).

This experiential excess, remainder and this tripping up on language, if prompted, has the potential to explode into novel ideas and concepts that can come to bare, importantly on situations of experiential activity (Gendlin, 2009).

The question then remains, how do we formulate a different protocol that evades these faults of reflective constructivism and intentionally engages the implicit, primary, lived dimension of experience. Hitherto, embodied theorists have insisted on the importance of taking implicit, lived experience seriously but they haven't proposed any alternatives. They have not left room for reflection but instead been seemingly content with critique and facile appeals to the body (Jordi, 2011; Michelson, 2015). Let's remedy that. To offer an alternative I draw on Eugene Gendlin's philosophy of the

implicit as well as his methods of Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge. What makes Gendlin's work especially helpful here is that he formulated theory of how implicit experience functions in thought and explication as well as putting forth a protocol for thinking and introspection which centers around implicit experience. In the next chapter I will discuss these important contributions of Gendlin to pave the road for an alternative protocol for reflection that gives the entirety of experience its due and engages learners to reflect in conversation with their bodies, without treating them as a reservoir of experience or essentializing it.

8. Making it Explicit: Embodied, Experiential Reflection

As has been argued, current protocols for and approaches to reflection are inadequate to encompass the implicit *and* the explicit facets of experience. If we frame them in Kolb's terms of the Learning Styles Inventory they mostly fall into the analyzing style of reflection, "where reflection is more systematic manipulation of abstract symbols fully independent of experience and context" (Kolb, 2015, p. 58). Furthermore, as Kolb states in his most recent statement of his experiential learning theory, inspired by William James' radical empiricism, all the modes of his learning cycle, from concrete experience to abstract conceptualization are experiences (Kolb, 2015). If we are committed to this idea and do not take the route of rejecting reflection all together, a new protocol of reflection is necessary that can intentionally and explicitly tap into the experiencing dimension. Reflection needs to be, as Jordi puts it, rehabilitated (Jordi, 2011). Also, as I have stated, experiential learning theory that incorporates Mezirow's transformative learning theory and critical reflection has a transformative commitment, but it is not necessary to limit the aim of the transformation of a meaning-perspective, that Mezirow centers his theory around, to description and critical analysis. I find Pierre Vermersch's comments on transformation and descriptive analysis quite illuminating here.

What is in question is the nature of the intentionally pursued goal. If one wants to do investigative work, research, to inform oneself about what trainees, students, professionals are doing, to help them become aware of their practices and to appropriate them, it is quite relevant to use the explication interview directly. Working in this way inevitably produces "collateral" changes that are not wanted and not controlled, like any in-depth and sincere interaction, but this is not the main aim, and certain changes, on the other hand, are not possible through this investigative work alone. If one clearly pursues as a goal, help with change, overcoming a difficulty, orienting one's choices, evolving as a person, etc., it is not even certain that one should always go through a documentary descriptive phase (Vermersch, 2008, p. 39).

Vermersch is here writing in the context of psychotherapy, but this is equally relevant in the context of reflection in experiential learning. The kind of descriptive-analytic

reflection that reflective constructivists emphasize is valuable if the aim (which is itself valuable) is for students to become aware of their situatedness in contexts, practices, behaviors, emotions, etc. in the context of the given experiential learning activity and appropriate lessons from that for further future action. Analytic-descriptive reflection also inevitably results in the kind of dipping into the felt-sense that I argue we should aim for in experiential reflection but this dipping and the changes associated with it are only incidental, collateral and unintentional biproducts which are more up to the student that does the reflecting instead of the explicit procedure of reflection that standard models of reflection outline. What we need is to design a reflective procedure that does not render this dipping and its accompanying changes incidental to the reflective process. It must be made an explicit goal of reflection. To do this I draw on the principles of Gendlin's practical methods of Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge. I will start by explaining the methods, key concepts and principles and then I will appropriate them to design a protocol of reflection that gives implicit experience its due.

8.1. Gendlin's Method of Focusing and Its Key Concepts

As I noted earlier, the origins of Focusing are found in Gendlin's early work with the eminent psychologist Carl Rogers. Gendlin, along with other researchers, were investigating a variety of factors in the field of psychology, including psychotherapeutic method, therapeutic issues, and the qualities of the therapist. This research was mainly conducted through listening and analysis of audio recordings of therapy sessions. They discovered that the probability of success at the start of the therapeutic process had little to do with the therapist, methods or setting (Gendlin, 2009). As Mary Goodman describes it:

What became clear through the researchers' analysis was that it was something that the client did within himself or herself that determined a successful outcome. The clients who would ultimately succeed in achieving therapeutic change were the ones who became inarticulate at certain points in the session, searching for words to describe an inner bodily sense of the issue at hand. It was their ability to tune into this inchoate bodily experience

that allowed clients to sense both where change wanted to happen and also when it did happen (Goodman, 2007, p. 280).

This incidental “search for words to describe an inner bodily sense of the issue at hand” and the client’s tuning into the inchoate bodily experience, what I have thus far called implicit, primary or lived experience, became a great interest for Gendlin and he later wondered whether this ability could be taught to clients that did not naturally engage in this kind of introspection (Goodman, 2007). A crucial concept that Gendlin formulated to make sense of this is *felt sense*.

The felt sense is a manifestation of a person’s implicit experience which they can turn their awareness to at any given moment. It is the bodily sense of the experiencing of the present moment, or the sense of a whole situation, not of a particular thought or feeling about it. To take an example, when hiking in the woods, one has a felt sense of the place, of being precisely *there*. The sounds, the smells, the lighting, the colors, the feeling of the unequal terrain of the path and the feeling of slight fatigue from the walking, all come together in a holistic manner and get expressed in the felt sense of one’s lived experience of the moment. This is not a sense that can be fully articulated as a particular thought or feeling. It is on the border zone between the implicit and the explicit, the inarticulate and the articulated. In its most mundane manifestation the felt sense makes itself known when one encounters a wordlessness or sense of being stuck, when one forgets a word or a thought but feels that it is right there, just beneath the surface, at the tip of the tongue, barely evading articulation. There is a meaning there that one wants to articulate about a given issue but evades conceptual capture (Gendlin, 1997; Ikemi, 2005).

This meaning is what Gendlin referred to as *felt meaning*. This felt meaning is very precise according to Gendlin. It is a meaning of something very specific that the felt sense communicates of the lived experience. The problem, however, is that this precise felt meaning can only be partially expressed in a multitude of ways through concepts, gestures, signs etc. Gendlin, juxtaposes, this felt meaning with conceptual meaning which he claims is univocal and explicit. Concepts have a relatively explicit meaning that is particular to a given concept. Felt meaning is, on the other hand, implicit and

ambiguous. It is that which we seek to capture with concepts. It is, however, internally differentiable, i.e. it can contain a multitude of conceptual meanings which is why it always evades ultimate codification (Gendlin, 1970, 1997).

If we revisit the example of hiking in the woods, a person might ask us after the fact how the hike was. We might answer by describing the environment, the fatigue we felt from the walk, the lighting and the weather. But ever so often we might seek to communicate this holistic sense of place that the felt sense communicates when we are there. A sense which one felt and is particular to that place at that moment. Here words fail. We might say: "It is a feeling that I can't really explain". We might try to articulate it with a gesture by stroking up and down our arms or rubbing the chest plate with a knuckle. "It was a feeling *here*", we might say. This kind of inarticulate referring is what Gendlin called *direct reference*.

Direct reference, for Gendlin, is the act of referring directly to the felt sense through the use of an empty signifier, a symbol that does not articulate anything about the felt sense. Rather, it simply points to it. This direct reference is a way for people to point to the existence of the felt sense and its felt meaning without severing any part of the felt meaning by explicating it with the use of concepts. It leaves the felt meaning intact but leaves in the realm of the implicit. It is what Gendlin called a functional relationship between felt meaning and symbols, where symbols function as non-articulating markers that refer to felt meaning and felt meaning functions as the referent and container of meaning that is independent of any representative meanings the referring symbols might have (Gendlin, 1961, 1997).

From the experience of working with Rogers and this line of thinking that emerged from Gendlin's discovery of patients' felt sensing during therapy, he developed the method of Focusing which sought to formulate this introspective process so as to teach those who do not have the natural disposition for it. To achieve this Gendlin crafted a protocol which consists of six steps (Gendlin, 1981; Goodman, 2007).

The first step of Focusing is *clearing a space*. In this step the practitioner settles into their body, scanning from the periphery, from the hands and feet, towards the center, the throat, chest, and abdomen. The practitioner makes a mental inventory of

what is on their mind, whatever might be interfering with them from being mindful of the here and now, present moment. This is not a proposal to repress distracting emotions or thoughts but to simply bracket them for the time being. The aim of this is to allow the practitioner to focus on a single issue at a time (Goodman, 2007).

The second step is *getting a felt sense*. In this step the practitioner chooses an issue or topic of interest or allows it to come. Awareness is then brought into the body to allow the practitioner to develop a felt sense that is all about the chosen issue or topic. Because of the felt meaning of the felt sense, the felt sense is characterized by vagueness. It is unclear and the Focusing practitioner ought to sit with this vague sense and get familiar with its felt meaning. In these first two steps the practitioner ought to refrain from going into detail and bracket the urge to immediately conceptualize the vague bodily felt sense of the situation. They should leave the felt meaning intact and rather directly refer to the felt sense. This step is often characterized by a pause which Gendlin later symbolized with “....” (Gendlin, 1995). This is a tension filled pause where the felt sense seeks to be articulated but still evades it. Think once again to the feeling of having a word at the tip of your tongue (Goodman, 2007).

In the third step, called *getting a handle*, the practitioner looks for a conceptual symbol that best fits the direct experience of the bodily felt sense. This can be a word, image, or a phrase. This is the handle that the practitioner uses to hold on to the felt sense. The handle ought to represent the qualities of the experiencing and is ideally formulated in metaphorical terms. So, instead of using a “feeling” term to hold onto the felt-sense such as ‘anger’ or ‘happy’, the practitioner should seek to represent the quality of the felt-sense through metaphorical language like: “it is a balloon expanding in my throat” (Goodman, 2007). The point of this is to begin the process of enabling what Gendlin calls the *felt shift*.

Step four is called *resonating*. In this step the practitioner tests out the handle to see if it fits the bodily felt sense. They oscillate between the handle and the felt sense. This can result in a development and changing of the handle. The original handle might not exactly fit and so the handle must be replaced with another handle to get a better grip of the sense. When a better handle is found an opening of an inquiry into the felt

sense becomes available (Goodman, 2007). This opening is the felt shift. Felt shift refers to the feeling of a change, e.g., release of tension, in the felt sense that is generated by an attempt at symbolizing felt meaning. In the third step of Focusing, the practitioner begins the search for a successful symbolization of the felt meaning. The practitioner attempts to explicate the felt meaning by finding a handle. With this explication, the felt sense changes. This change is the felt shift. When the felt shift happens the “...” is changed, it releases the tension of the “...”. But the tension, Gendlin says, is not simply lost. It is *carried forward* with the words, like an energy, into subsequent words, sentences, thoughts, gestures and actions (Gendlin, 1995). Goodman illustrates this by framing this in terms of the analogy of the unfolding conversation between people after they have been properly introduced (Goodman, 2007). Here we encounter another of Gendlin’s key concepts: *Carrying forward*.

When a felt shift occurs and a handle successfully symbolizes a felt meaning the tension filled “...” gets released. This release is, however, not like a balloon being deflated. Rather, it is as if a dam broke, where the energy encapsulated in the “...” pushes the felt meaning further, transforming it. Gendlin explains it as follows:

When people explicate something implicit they usually say that their words “match” their experience, as if they were comparing two forms. But an implicit sense does not have the kind of form that could match words or concepts. What people call “matching” is indeed an important relation between implicit and explicit but the relation is not representation. It is rather the characteristic continuity we experience when new sentences and then new concepts articulate and explain what we had understood only implicitly. We call this relation “carrying forward” (Gendlin, 2009, p. 150).

The released tension of the “...”, through resonating a handle with the felt sense, is carried forward into newer, more precise handles. New sentences and concepts unfold in conversation with the felt sense as it slowly (or rapidly) makes itself explicit. This leads the practitioner into the fifth step.

In step five, called *asking*, an inquiry of the felt sense ensues. The practitioner enters into a “conversation” with the felt sense. This “conversation” is however not conducted through a split between the practitioner and the felt sense. It is not a

conversation between the practitioner here to a felt sense over there. The felt sense is explored interiorly, through the lens of the body. This is done by continuously oscillating between questions regarding the felt sense and the felt sense itself to “hear” the bodily responses. Again, here a felt shift generally happens. A noticeable physical sensation of bodily release where the vagueness of the bodily felt sense, its felt meaning, is successfully explicated and a new perspective emerges. This step is characterized by an attitude of curiosity and an interest in knowing the body’s point of view about the issue. One could say an interest in the bodily knowing or thinking of the issue, topic or situation. In this process there is no set structure to the questioning. Just like an everyday conversation it flows according to the ability of the interlocutors (Goodman, 2007).

In the final step, when the practitioner has gone through felt shifts towards a greater explication of a felt meaning, the practitioner closes the session by acknowledging what the body has expressed about the issue and whatever shift in perception has occurred about the issue. This closure does, however, not necessarily mean that the practitioner leaves the issue at that. The issue can be revisited and the shift already accomplished ought to be “bookmarked” so that it can be carried on further in the future. This closure and appreciation of the new understanding ought also to bracket criticism. The practitioner should, for the moment, trust their new insight, whatever its validity may be (Gendlin, 1981; Goodman, 2007).

The outcome of the Focusing process is thus a change in perspective on the original concern that the practitioner started with through a conversation with the body and its responses. As Goodman states it:

The main point in the focusing process is to be genuinely interested to know how the body itself is in relation to the issue. It is of utmost importance, and the essence of focusing, that the focuser wait for the body to respond, and, as mentioned earlier, this can take sometimes several minutes. Here is where new information comes, information that is fresh and appropriate, not bound by conceptual limitation or past conditioning. When we truly get to know how the body is, we learn something new, as we would when we get to know another person (Goodman, 2007, pp. 281–282).

This main point of Focusing is in line with the transformative aim of experiential learning. As Goodman notes, through the attentive listening and “conversation” with the body, new, fresh and appropriate information and meaning that is not already conceptual springs forth. This is crucial in the process of transformation of meaning-perspectives. It is a way to avoid a mere shift in meaning-perspective regarding an issue. There is a danger of critical reflection not resulting in a meaningful transformation, rather it can merely teach learners “to be credulous and to borrow the reason of others (Rousseau, 2003, p. 54).” Gendlin, later in his career, along with Mary Hendricks and Kye Nelson, developed, on the foundations of Focusing, a more intricate method for integrating implicit experience into constructing theories. It was a development of Focusing that took it from the therapeutic to the philosophical, i.e. utilized the principles of Focusing to train philosophical thinking (Gendlin, 2004). This method is Thinking-at-the-Edge.

8.2. Thinking-at-the-Edge:

Constructing Theory from the Felt Sense

Thinking-at-the-Edge (TAE) is a more intricate method than Focusing which was designed to serve a different purpose. While Focusing was designed for psychotherapy and as a self-help technique for people to reflect on their conditions and problems, TAE was designed for theory building. This method stemmed from a course Gendlin taught at the University of Chicago, called ‘Theory Construction’ and it was formulated so that people could attend to their implicit knowing and develop it into a greater whole, i.e. a theory. TAE consists of a few more steps than Focusing. Instead of consisting of six steps, TAE consists of five phases and fifteen steps (Claxton, 2006; Gendlin, 2004; Nelson, 2003).⁷

The first phase is, *entering the implicit* and consists of steps 0-2. These steps are: (0) *Birthing*, (1) *dip into the felt sense and formulate a key sentence* and (2) *find the more*

⁷ Gendlin (2004), Nelson (2003) and Claxton (2006) all use different titles and formulations to refer to and explain these steps. I do the same here because I find their titles too opaque when it comes to referring to the content of each step. I, however, most closely follow Kye Nelson’s formulation of the TAE process.

than logical. In this phase the practitioner enters the *murky waters* of the felt sense, takes their time with the bodily felt sense and then proceeds to carry it forward by beginning to form a crux of what interests them (Nelson, 2003).

Phase two is *evoking experience* and consists of steps 3-5. These steps are (3) *words fail*, (4) *words can work* and (5) *words can evoke this*. This phase is all about creating evocative language. One, however, need to discover how one is misunderstood when using ordinary language. Ordinary language comes with assumptions which make something novel seem illogical. Therefore one must bring people in with evocative language, refraining from merely talking *about* the issue at hand (Nelson, 2003).

The third phase is *abstracting patterns* and includes steps 6-9. These steps are (6) *instancing*, (7) *finding structures and patterns within instances*, (8) *crossing* and (9) *free writing*. In this phase the practitioner allows themselves to be surprised by that which emerges from specific instances of the felt sense. Instances are described, patterns that are found in each are articulated, then the instances are crossed, i.e. they are viewed from the standpoint of each other, to cast light on something that was not clear before.

Phase four is called *deriving a core structure*. This phase encompasses steps 10-12. These steps are: (10) *Relating terms through the felt sense*, (11) *drawing out inherent relations* and (12) *tracing the path, forming the nucleus*. In this phase the practitioner starts to form a theoretical structure from the terms that have emerged from prior steps. This is done by defining terms in relation to each other (Nelson, 2003).

The fifth and final phase is *developing implications* and is composed of the last two steps, 13-14. These are, (13) *extending the theory*; and (14) *implications*. In this phase the practitioner lets the theory that has formed 'talk back' as it is further developed and applied so that prevailing understanding of key concepts in a given field, or fields outside of it, can change (Nelson, 2003). More detailed explanations of the contents of each step can be seen in table 5.

Although TAE is more intricate and was designed to serve a different purpose, it builds on the foundations of Focusing and that can be discerned by a brief comparison. Step 0 is akin to the first step of Focusing, where the practitioner clears a space and

brings their awareness into the body. Then, just like in Focusing, the practitioner dips into the felt sense in step 1. One can notice that the procedure then prompts the practitioner throughout steps 1-5 to find a handle, resonate and “ask” the felt sense about the issue of concern. At steps 6-9, TAE brings in novel steps to the thought process that are not touched upon explicitly in Focusing. Here thought is arriving at a higher level of abstraction where the practitioner brings in instances from their own life, notices how they change the felt sense and begins to cross the instances with each other, producing even more changes in the felt sense and more concepts. The rest of the steps, 10-14, are then characterized by drawing relations between the ideas, concepts and terms that have been generated from the prior steps and forming them into a coherent functional theory or idea.

Table 5: The steps of Thinking-at-the-Edge

The Steps of Thinking-at-the-Edge	
Step	Description
Step 0: Birthing	Inner space is cleared. An issue that preoccupies in a playful or agitating way is engaged to draw out what one feels is missing into the realm of the explicit. One writes whatever is needed until one feels that the page holds all that is needed.
Step 1: Dip into the felt sense and form a key sentence	One dips into the felt sense where something draws interest. In attending to the felt sense one ought to find a handle which holds the crux of the interest, e.g., by writing a paragraph of an instance relating to this interest, a short sentence which points to the essence of the matter or, even, a single word.
Step 2: Find the more-than logical	One brings attention to the more-than logical character of the felt sense to notice where the usual thinking breaks down with one’s own experiences. Done to move beyond the usual logic which one feels is missing something. One then modifies the handle to accommodate this paradoxical character.
Step 3: Words fail	One compares the usual definitions of the words or phrases to notice what has been missing. Then one goes back to the felt sense to find another word or phrase that brings in the missing

	aspect of one's felt sense. This should be done in a few attempts to bring out new aspects of the felt sense.
Step 4: Words can work	One brings back the usual words or phrases and redefines their meanings for oneself in conversation with the felt sense.
Step 5: Words can evoke <i>this</i>	One creates an evocative sentence for each word or phrase from step 4 to communicate with others. These sentences should evoke a feeling rather than be mere descriptions.
Step 6: Instancing	One tries to bring in one's prior experience. Bring in an instance which has something to do with the subject at hand. A specific example that emerges from the knowing that is had as a felt sense. Then bring in another instance that describes another aspect of the felt sense. One writes down several of such instances in detail to bring them to life. If one is doing collaborative TAE, then one should tell a partner the stories of these instances.
Step 7: Finding patterns and structures within instances	One notices what new facets each instance shows about one's emergent knowing. What does the instance demonstrate? What is it a good instance of? How and which aspects of the instance are related to the felt sense of the issue? Are intricate relations between details of the instance? From these facets words ought to come which are written down. Some facets might be familiar, but one should also bring attention to the unfamiliarity of these facets. From these specificities of each instance, one ought to seek a pattern by pinpointing the terms used and link words. Then one should notice the structure that emerges. The patterns are inherently related because they emerge from the same felt sense and through checking the facets from each instance and their relations against one's felt sense one should eventually arrive at an affirming "yes, that's it!". A bodily feeling of "being on the right track" should follow from this affirmation.
Step 8: Crossing	One begins crossing the facets of each instance with the other instances to bring out something new in each instance that one wouldn't have noticed earlier. One looks at facet A and attributes its point to facet B. It involves considering facet B as if it were an instance of facet A. What does looking <i>from</i> A

	<p>reveal about B? What new facets emerge if a pattern of instance X is considered as relevant to instance Y? Through the emergence of these new details, one should make changes to the facets which the new details call for. What is the whole issue for you now and do these new patterns match the felt sense? From this, one should continue to develop one's private dictionary of terms to track that "something" that is emerging. The unity of all the previous threads from the original felt sense ought to be palpable now and the simple shape that is emerging allows one to coherently grow that which has become so complex into a crystalline structure.</p>
Step 9: Free writing	<p>One freely writes down whatever comes from the crystalline structure that has emerged to tease further new aspects of it and form the informal "talking points" which form the ground for the construction of a mature theory or an idea.</p>
Step 10: Relating terms through the felt sense	<p>One begins to map the terms by defining them in relation to one another. The relations should come from the felt sense and the major features should start to form links and secondary features should follow later. The links that one makes in the relational definitions ought to include the paradoxical phrases that have up to this point been a feature of the felt sense of the subject. Through playing with these relations, one should arrive at a further affirmation.</p>
Step 11: Drawing out inherent relations	<p>One draws out the inherent relations between terms that seem illogical. One tries to uncover the underlying logical structure that links the illogical in one's felt sense. One is noticing where there must be something that is not yet clear. Again, one should write freely and bring new terms to the table as the logical structure emerges from the felt sense.</p>
Step 12: Tracing the path, forming a nucleus	<p>A nucleus of the theory/idea forms. The essential elements are drawn out so that the theory/idea can function. An unbroken link should form from the initial term to the end terms. Here one is simply tracing the path one has already laid.</p>
Step 13: Extending the theory	<p>One extends the theory by deriving a secondary structure of the theory using one's facets to see what needs to be included. By e.g., bringing in a large topic one can gain a different</p>

	understanding of the topic in relation to the theory/idea if the public understanding makes the theory impossible. If the theory is sound, then the topic must be redefined. Again, one must pay attention to the affirmation when it comes.
Step 14: Implications	One draws out the implications of one's theory/idea by describing the topic and a problem which relates to the theory/idea. Then describe how the theory/idea changes the understanding of the topic. Through this process new insight is gained and the felt sense changes which might lead to further changes and developments of the theory/idea or an emergence of exciting new ideas

The process of TAE can be both performed on an individual and cooperative level as people seek to bring out from within their own embodiment and embodied knowledge, novel meanings, concepts and understandings through introspective reflection as well as assist one another in bringing out these embodied felt meanings by way of mirroring and active listening (Claxton, 2006; Schoeller, 2023; Schoeller & Thorgeirsdottir, 2019).

For my present purposes, what is of most interest about TAE is phase 3, abstracting patterns, specifically steps 6-8. This is of importance because, in my experience of practicing TAE, steps 6-8 are quite powerful in carrying forward the felt sense and in the context of experiential learning it has great correlation with the linking and relating steps of the standard protocols. The main difference, though, is that instancing is not strictly about relating new experience to old or relating present or newly experienced situations with analogous situations from the past. That is, it is not about relating explicit experiences. It is about bringing in detailed instances from the past which are not necessarily analogous to the present learning activity concerned. What is analogous is that these instances share some facets of the felt sense, the implicit lived experience, with the learning activity of concern. They are different strands of the same felt sense which show new facets of it. Each event contributes a specificity which is an expression of the felt sense. This specificity and an instance's facets are checked with the felt sense so as to match them with the felt sense. When these facets have been drawn out from the instances they are crossed. The a facet of an instance is used

as a magnifying glass on a different instance to crystalize their relations and how they are connected by the felt sense. (Nelson, 2003). The purpose of this is not to compare situations to draw from them rules of thumb that might help in future situations. It is about drawing out unlikely relations between different instances and bring out insights and productive patterns that dynamically shift through resonance with the felt sense. This then carries the felt meaning forward, nurturing and growing an idea, derived from the kind of bodily introspection which characterizes both Focusing and TAE (Claxton, 2006). It is about “reading insights through one another in attending to and responding to the details and specificities of relations of difference and how they matter (Barad, 2007, p. 72).”

With all that being said and having explained the key concepts relevant to my present purposes I will now briefly explicate the principles and moves I draw from Gendlin’s methods of Focusing and TAE to formulate an alternative reflective protocol.

8.3. Principles and Moves of Focusing and TAE

Now, having laid out the details of Focusing and TAE, I want to make explicit what the principles and moves from the two methods I will integrate into my embodied, experiential formulation of the reflective process. The aim is not to simply attach Focusing or TAE onto a standard model of reflection in experiential learning, but rather to incorporate their principles and moves so as to present an integrative account of reflection.

The main principles of these methods are curiosity, patience, empathy, bodily attentiveness (Gendlin, 2004; Goodman, 2007; Schoeller, 2023) and, in Donna Haraway’s phrasing, ‘staying with the trouble’ (2016), i.e. embracing the vagueness of the felt sensing of implicit experience in the body. The moves that I view as most congenial to the reflective process of experiential learning are clearing a space, dipping into the felt sense, finding a handle, instancing, crossing and tracing. The final step of thinking-at-the-edge, implications is also consistent with the final steps of the standard protocols of reflection. It can be viewed as a part of the formulation of the action plan because the learner teases out the changes to understanding of the topic of concern

that has developed in the process of reflection. This new understanding then ought to affect the learner's orientation to future situations. Furthermore, I retain the spirit of the final step of Focusing where practitioners acknowledge and appreciate what has changed and what the body has contributed. These moves will, however, take on a modified form in my integration of them into an account of embodied, experiential reflection.

9. Embodied, Experiential Reflection: Integrating Implicit Experience

So, how might the reflective stage of the experiential learning process look when we implement these principles derived from Gendlin's work? As I alluded to, my aim is not to simply attach his methods to prevailing protocols of reflection but to integrate the principles of his methods into an integrative protocol of reflection. To do this, one needs to be careful not to prioritize either the bodily or cognitive dimension. How I propose to do this is to ground the analytic in the experiential. That is, reflective analysis of the learning activity ought to be guided by the explicit concerns that arise from the felt sense. It ought to be a reflective process that transitions from the implicit to the explicit, but where the explicit and analytic is continuously checked with the felt sense for resonances.

In my formulation this process consists of eight steps. These steps are: (1) Positioning and situating, (2) felt sensing, (3) handle, (4) instancing, (5) tracing and transitioning, (6) analysis, (7) reasoning, (8) findings and acknowledgement. Let's go into the details of each step.

1. *Positioning and situating*: In the positioning step, just as in Focusing and TAE, the learner should settle into their body and clear their inner space by scanning the body from the periphery to the center, taking a mental inventory of what is on their mind and bracketing whatever might be interfering with their mindfulness of the present moment. This is done to allow the learner to focus on a single issue. The learner then recalls the context of the learning activity. Distinct

characteristics of the space in which the learning activity occurred, the practices that were performed during the learning activity and other contextual information of relevance should be described in a nonjudgmental way. During this a hint of a felt sense will probably start to form, transitioning the learner to the next step.

2. *Felt sensing*: In the felt sensing step the learner dips into the felt sense. A topic or issue related to the learning activity is chosen or allowed to come. This can be a vague idea or a feeling connected to the learning activity or it can be an instance in the process of the learning activity that preoccupies the learner in a playful or agitating way. The felt sense of the issue is allowed to develop by attending to the body. Just like in Focusing and TAE, the learner should be patient and open to sitting with the vagueness of the felt sense, refraining from going into detail and bracketing the urge to conceptualize the felt sense. The learner should simply refer directly to the felt sense.
3. *Handle*: After dipping into the felt sense, the learner should find a handle which holds the crux of the interest and represents the qualities of the felt sense e.g., a word, image, or phrase. The handle should be formulated in metaphorical or evocative terms. The handle is then checked and tested against the felt sense for resonances to make it best fit the experience. This is an oscillating process where the handle develops according to felt shifts and allows for a better grip of the felt sense, carrying the felt meaning forward.
4. *Instancing and crossing*: When an adequate handle is formulated and an opening of an inquiry into the felt sense is achieved, the learner should bring in their own prior experience. They ought to bring in an instance which has something to do with the issue of concern. This instance can be either closely or vaguely related. This instance should be brought out in detail so that it can be brought to life. More than one instance can be brought in and this is preferable. The learner should then bring attention to how each instance changes and brings out

different facets of the felt sense. The learner should be aware of patterns that might emerge and seek to pinpoint the idea that is being brought out of the implicit. Depending on the familiarity of the learner of TAE, this would also be the step where the learner crosses the instances to draw out further changes in the felt sense and bring greater clarity and detail to the implicit bodily knowing.

5. *Tracing and transitioning*: After instancing the learner should trace their steps to form the nucleus of the idea that is merging. In this step the learner attempts to make their idea functional or at least clear enough so that it can be brought to bear on an analysis of the learning activity. When the idea becomes functional the process of transitioning from the embodied dimension to the analytic dimension begins as the learner seeks to draw out the implications of their idea in their analysis of the learning activity.

6. *Analysis*: In the analytic stage the learner starts to interpret the learning activity and situation through the idea that has been formed in the embodied stage of the reflection. The learner aims to understand the situation described at the beginning of the process by thinking about what the idea brings to bear on the situation. Counterfactual thinking and making judgements about the course of events, both from the perspective of the learner themselves, the perspective of the other learners and relating to the environment, should characterize this step. In this stage the learner should also interrogate their own assumptions by taking a critical, though empathetic, perspective on the situation. Like IRC, this stage should accomplish the challenging of the status quo of the learner's actions and assumptions. The reflection is guided by questions regarding the learner's goals in the situation, reasons for acting, underlying assumptions, consequences of actions for the learner and others and feelings connected to the situation. This should, however, always be done in conversation with the idea from the embodied stage and by checking it and the judgements made with the felt sense, i.e., be aware of how they resonate with the felt sense and how the initial idea develops.

7. *Reasoning*: Through the preceding steps, especially the instancing and analysis steps, the learner should recognize the factors of the situation that are significant for them. In this step these significant factors are articulated more clearly and the activity should be brought into the larger context of academic literature, the knowledge of others (e.g. fellow learners and teachers) so as to supplement and continue to develop their idea and understanding of the learning activity. Again, this is done by continuously referring back to the felt sense and being aware of the resonances.

8. *Findings and acknowledgement*: At the end of the reflective process, the learner takes s stock of what has been gained from reflecting on the learning activity and what they perceive as the gain that they received from the learning activity itself. Like the action plan steps of the conventional protocols, the learner also takes a forward-looking stance and thinks s about how the insights from the reflective process can inform future actions in a similar situation. Furthermore, just as in Focusing, the learner needs time to acknowledge and appreciate what the body has expressed with regards to the learning process and what transformation of perspective has occurred. Again, like in Focusing, this does not mean that the issue of concern will be abandoned, only that it will be left for the moment, always open to being returned to again. The learner takes a mental note of the change that has happened so that it can be carried forward through future actions and reflections. This acknowledgement can be affirmative regardless of what the validity of the insight is. This is, though, not to be taken as dogmatically affirming the insight as some authentic, pure wisdom. It only means that one affirms the value of the insight, brought forth from the bodily knowing, as a step in the process of growth which learning aims at.

As I mentioned above, the key principle of this kind of reflective process that I'm proposing is beginning from the body, its implicit knowing and the felt sense and keeping an awareness of and staying in conversation with that felt sense throughout the process of reflection, even when the student transitions from the embodied to the analytical.

The aim of this is to intentionally, nurture and let the body “speak” and contribute to the reflection and refrain from merely using the body as a reservoir for the mind to extract meaning from (Michelson, 2015). In line with the enactivist approach that I have taken in this thesis, this approach to reflection is supposed to intentionally guide learners to dip into the implicit knowing of the body, the tensions that it holds from being shaped by a history of social and biological factors and their interplay. It is supposed to enable students to tap into the transgressive power of experience, the remainder of experience that has slipped from the confines of the symbolic order of society, from the conceptual capture of experience. As Michelson states it: [Experience] is embodied, communal, and fruitfully incoherent; its very excess is what allows it to undermine hegemony (Michelson, 2015, p. 19).” This move, to intentionally and methodologically start from the implicit, in the reflective process is what I see as being the major absence in standard protocols of reflection and inhibits its transformative potential.

This formulation of the reflective process, furthermore, is supposed to provide a guideline for the reflective process in its numerous kinds of reflective activities, such as written reflection, dialogic reflection, group reflection and reflection through alternative media. It is an outline of the different moves and concerns that students should progress through and keep in mind throughout the reflective process. To support this kind of reflection some additional methods can be introduced which I have drawn from Focusing-oriented design.

9.1. Supplemental Methods for Embodied, Experiential Reflection

A domain of innovation in relation to the reflective procedure which I have proposed here is the development of Focusing-oriented methods which can provide support for an embodied, experiential reflection. Proposing novel methods is outside the scope of this thesis but drawing from the work of Claudia Núñez-Pacheco in the field of design, I want to highlight some potential methods that can provide this kind of support (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017)

In Núñez-Pacheco's work on developing Focus-oriented design methods, she puts forth several methods to facilitate Focusing in the design process. I find a couple of these methods fruitful and adaptable to the experiential learning context. These are what Núñez-Pacheco calls *felt sensing mementos*. These are narrative devices that a learner can use to capture a moment of the experiential learning activity which can then be used in the subsequent process of reflection. She defines it as follows:

A memento is an artefact that represents an event we want to cherish or remember. Not all mementos generated through felt-sensing are positive, yet these might embody a lesson, a discovery or at least a small realisation, which makes them meaningful artefacts. In order to be a memento, narratives should contain texture, and some evidence of the inner dialogue between body and mind. As such, mementos are ephemeral photographs of a moment in the life of a person. The logic behind mementos is embracing the fact that experiences are temporal and ongoing, yet still able to generate feelings of self-identification (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017, p. 140)

Núñez-Pacheco mostly discusses these mementos in the context of writing but I believe they can be adapted to different mediums, such as audio or video recordings or images. In the context of writing or recording felt-sensing mementos, learners allow consciousness to flow, are invited to disregard linguistic conventions, and suspend assumptions. The mementos are then written right after the learning activity or an experience the learner has during the learning activity to avoid "the dissipation of sensations and memories" and capture the "richness or *texture of the experience* (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017, p. 107)", avoiding over rationalization. With regards to the suspension of assumptions, Núñez-Pacheco writes:

Participants are encouraged to leave the 'story line' aside, and open the mind to establish new relationships, which are useful in the context of Focusing [...]. If we stay within our assumptions, we risk getting stuck in certainties, closing the door for the emergence of the felt sense (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017, p. 107).

So, the mementos ought to capture the moments of experience which have the potential to create a rift in the established order of thinking of the learner. These mementos are therefore very helpful when it comes to reflection.

Another method, similar to the mementos, that Núñez-Pacheco proposes is what she calls *focusing inventory notes*. These notes can be viewed as being a tool to assist the learner in positioning themselves during the reflective process. The notes are of two kinds, each kind representing different dimensions of experience: (1) Felt sensing qualities (FSQ) and (2) contextual information (CI). These notes can be used in both an individual and collaborative sense (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017).

FSQ notes are used to note down bodily sensations, thoughts, ideas, memories triggered, metaphors and insights that emerge in the course of positioning oneself. Núñez-Pacheco sets some ground rules for the use of FSQ notes. First, one note should only express one insight or impression. Second, each note should be worded as a first-person description. Phrases such as 'I noticed', 'I felt' or 'it felt like' are examples she gives. Third, notes should be specific. Notes shouldn't describe the general aspects of the felt-sense, they should illustrate the uniqueness of each situation. In Gendlin's terms, each note should contain an 'instance' of a felt sense in relation to the situation in question. In a collaborative sense, preferably in dialogue between students, these notes are utilized in a way where each participant explains the content of each note, discussing whether they discovered something new in the course of attempting to articulate their experiences through the notes. After the use of FSQ notes, CI notes are introduced (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017).

The purpose of CI notes is to explicitly acknowledge the context of the activity in question. They should contain distinct characteristics of the space where things happened, e.g. infrastructure, the everyday practices done in the space where the action occurred, personal or/and interpersonal, situations that might have occurred outside interpersonal interactions and any other contextual information of relevance. CI notes can be viewed as tools to assist learners in the situating part of the first step of the reflection procedure I have proposed (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017).

The notes should then be combined to inspire ideas, into what I will simply refer to as idea notes. Learners should try to generate connections between both sets of notes. Collaboratively, learners should after this initial generation discuss the ideas in pairs to refine them and/or generate new combined ideas. The learners are then, finally, supposed to select a couple of ideas to develop and articulate (Núñez-Pacheco, 2017). Here the notes diverge a little bit from my proposed procedure but this does not need to be a problem. Just like the mementos the idea notes can come later in the process, e.g. during the tracing and transitioning step where the documentation of the felt sense and context can help learners get a stronger handle on the idea that they have been attempting to form. The idea notes can then provide learners with an anchor which they can use in their analytic process.

These are just two proposals for supporting method that can supplement an embodied, experiential reflection. Designing and implementing more methods of this kind is an exciting path that can be explored further. That is however, as I have already stated, outside the scope of this thesis, so I will let these methods do for now.

9.2. A Short Summary of the Embodied, Reflective Protocol

In this chapter I have put forth and argued for a new embodied, experiential account of reflection which builds on Gendlin's methods of Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge. The core of the approach that I propose is starting from the body, not analysis like standard protocols of reflection do, and during analysis the learner should keep their awareness on the bodily felt sense and how it shifts as the analysis unfolds. The reflective process should progress from the vague, bodily felt sense to the analytical where the analysis is informed by a concern that the learner develops from the felt sense. During the analysis phase the reflection of the learner should shift from being mainly in conversation with the felt sense to an evaluation of the recollected learning activity, the learners actions, reasons for them, contextual issues, etc. Although this shift happens the learner should not abandon the awareness of the felt sense, but rather continuously return to it to see how the initial concern that sprung forth from the felt sense changes and resonates in "conversation" with the felt sense and in return how it changes the analytic perspective.

The aim of this is to intentionally guide students to think from the body and be aware of how it is to be a body in reflection. Furthermore, it aims to enable learners to dip into the fruitful incoherence of experience and to allow its remainder to challenge and transform their meaning-perspective through the generation of tensions and ideally novel concepts and meanings.

10. Conclusion

As I said in the opening of this thesis, there is an impasse in theories of experiential learning and adult education, the impasse of reflection. I first came across the teaching methods of experiential learning during my time as a student in the teachers training program at the University of Iceland. As I have discussed on multiple occasions in the thesis, experiential learning constituted a big part of the program because we were tasked with going out into the field, so to speak, hone our skills and get experience in actually teaching. It was at this time that I also came across the kind of structured reflection that I have discussed and critiqued here. Having a background in philosophy, this kind of reflection came quite naturally to me, as I had been doing it, albeit in a more unstructured, informal manner, for four years at that point. This sparked my interest from the beginning and the kind of learning by doing that the teacher training enabled quickly became my favorite part of my teacher education. I felt that I was *really* learning in these instances. I did, however, feel when I was tasked with reflecting on my learning experience after each period I taught, that this form of structured reflection had the potential to easily fall into a boilerplate description and analysis of a situation without engaging me experientially.

This became one of the catalysts for my research that underpins this thesis. How could these reflective protocols be designed differently so as to avoid this regression into “boilerplate-ism”. How could reflection be designed so that it engaged students truly experientially and not rely on the mere dispositions of students. Another catalyst for the direction of this thesis was being introduced to embodied theories of cognition, learning and knowledge. That sparked my interest in the *more-than-cognitive* learning that has historically not been given enough due in the field of education. Then, the last

catalyst which determined what specific direction I would take in rethinking reflection was being introduced to the work of Eugene Gendlin, through my supervisor Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir and the *Training Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding* (TECTU) program which she directs among others (Schoeller, 2023; Schoeller & Þorgeirsdóttir, 2019).⁸

In the summer of 2023, I took part in TECTU and travelled to Groningen. There I got to learn, train and experience Gendlin's methods in a community of similarly curious people, as well as through an engagement with the surrounding nature of Groningen. In fact, the execution of the program let me learn about the methods through experiential learning techniques, as we went out into nature, cycling through the country side and walking on mudflats to inform us of how to do this kind of embodied introspection which Gendlin put forth. This was at the beginning stages of my idea which I have presented in this thesis.

I have sought to synthesize these different sources of interest and experiences to argue for a rehabilitation of reflection in the field of contemporary experiential learning (Jordi, 2011). I have advanced and argued for an approach to experiential reflection that takes due notice of the complex layered experience of learners as embodied beings. I have done this in opposition to the overly cognitivist account of reflection, emblematic of reflective constructivist approaches, and two tendencies that can be discerned in embodied approaches to experiential learning. First of these is a superficial appeal to embodiment that treats the body as a reservoir of experience for the mind to mine from. The second is a dismissal of reflection in favor of an essentializing, romanticized notion of direct, embodied knowledge as somehow more authentic and true.

Working within the framework of enactivism and appropriating concepts and methods formulated by Eugene Gendlin, I have advanced a protocol for reflection which is characterized by a dialogical orientation towards the body as knower. The movement of reflection, according to this protocol, is not from description to analysis which results

⁸ See also the Training Embodied Critical Thinking webpage for further details: [TRAINING ECTU - Home](#).

in abstractions to be deployed in future situations. Rather, it is a dual phase account which moves from the development of an idea through focusing on an implicit felt sense to a broader analysis of the learning experience in question which is driven by the idea developed through focusing. The stages of reflection on this account are positioning and situating, handling, instancing, tracing, and transitioning, analysis, reasoning, and findings and acknowledgements. Additionally, I have pointed to and described methods that can help facilitate this kind of embodied reflection. These are felt-sensing mementos and focusing inventory notes. Both of these methods can help students record moments of implicit experience for further reflection as well as help students to explicate their ideas that arise from the embodied felt sense.

The motivations for advancing this account, other than seeking to break the impasse that has emerged in experiential learning theory with regards to reflection, are that I believe it provides experiential educators with a method to engage students on a deeper experiential level, foster within them greater awareness of their unique creative, embodied potential and facilitate a more meaningful critical reflection to achieve a truly novel transformation of meaning perspectives.

This thesis is a theoretical work, so an obvious limitation is that the approach that I have laid out and argued for needs proof of concept. The methods of Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge have been picked up around the world, developed to suit different contexts (Aoki & Ikemi, 2014; Claxton, 2006; Gendlin, 1981; Goodman, 2007; Harris, 2013; Hendricks, 2002; Ikemi et al., 2023; Madison, 2010; Núñez-Pacheco, 2017, 2018; Schoeller, 2023; Schoeller & Thorgeirsdottir, 2019; Vanhooren et al., 2022). This gives hope that this kind of embodied, experiential reflection which I have advanced here has some practical efficacy. There is, however, still a need to put it to the test, i.e. go from theory to practice.

There are also avenues for development. Here I have presented a protocol that best suits reflection-on-action. I believe it can also be utilized in pre-reflection, as both modes of reflection share many similarities, though one is mostly backwards-looking and the other forward-looking. In pre-reflection the protocol might take the form of a learner turning to their felt sense which makes itself known when they look to a future

learning activity and develop an idea from their that informs their preparation. There are also questions of how to implement the principles which inform my account to the direct, active engagement of a learning activity that reflection-in-action was designed to facilitate. This might be realized through a formulation of *Focusing-in-action*, where a learner is trained to bring awareness to the bodily felt sense as it arises in active engagement, being attentive to and mindful of the felt shifts that happen as they try to orient themselves and act within the learning activity. This does, however, call for greater elaboration that is outside the scope of this thesis.

So, I believe what I have presented here provides experiential learning theorists and practitioners with a novel approach to reflection which overcomes the current impasse of experiential learning. By formulating a reflective protocol this account is amenable to testing and further development through implementation in experiential education. It also leaves open avenues to be explored e.g. developing *Focusing-in-action* and diverse methods to facilitate embodied, experiential reflection. Therefore, there is work to be done—but at least there is an opening, a way out of the impasse into new planes of reflective practice in experiential learning.

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