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### Theme of Self as Co-constructed Reality

Ponsford-Hill's (2018) book reflects the strange tension between the self-concept as a self-construction and the construction of society. Quoting the Oxford English Dictionary (2017) Ponsford-Hill writes: "self-concept is defined as 'an idea of the self constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others.'" In other words, self-concept is co-created.

Ironically, then, part of our self-concept is not actually our very selves. It is the collective selves of others, acting as a mirror, that reflect back to us our own self. This mirror is at work in every social situation where we encounter feedback about our attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviour, and self-image. When we accept or reject the vision we see, that is our self-concept at work, clearly differentiating between what it likes and dislikes. Gazing outward becomes a way of gazing inward. Such as Levine (2005) contends that people seek therapy - which involves the act of being observed by another - in order to find their true selves.

Self-portraiture becomes one such way of gazing outward to gaze within. It addresses the physical level of the body, but also addresses the psyche through the artist's interpretive eye. The canvas can be its own kind of mirror, both in the art itself and in the attempt to see one's inner self more clearly through the art. Through this outer-inner work, meaning is made. Reflection occurs. It is also deeply spiritual work, addressing the question of who the person is in relationship to others and the universe.

This outer-inner gaze can also be corrective, if not also restorative. The story told of B.L. Moon's (1997) former art student is a powerful one. The student was successful but miserable. He was not able to see what was wrong until he drew a picture of himself. When he did, it so shocked him that he begged Moon to direct him to a good therapist. I was profoundly moved by this story, as with the stories of the artists who received strong epiphanic visions of themselves through the work that they did. Although I consider myself to be creative, I diminished the value of self-portraiture as a way of finding insight into myself as a person and as a therapist. It took me gazing outward at their stories and gazing inward through my own self-portrait, to realize how wrong I was. This illustrates again how my own self-concept is continuing to be made and remade within the reflective visions I see from others.