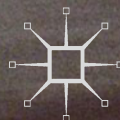
THE REALIZATIONS OF THE SELF

Edited by Andrea Altobrando,
Takuya Niikawa, Richard Stone



The Realizations of the Self

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Editors

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Andrea Altobrando, Takuya Niikawa and Richard Stone

Every now and then they were awarded prizes—Self-help by Smiles, and other books suitable for perusal by persons suffering from almost complete obliteration of the mental faculties.
Robert Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*

Within the history of philosophy and across different cultures, few questions have been raised as frequently as what the realization of oneself means. Certainly, one of the very driving forces of philosophy seems to be the clarification of the self and its life. However, in spite of this, within recent years, there have been few serious critical and philosophical efforts to discuss what exactly it means to *realize oneself*. To this degree, there is a need to critically assess the meaning of self-realization.

Certainly, the topic of self-realization is present in many books concerning ethics, psychology and philosophy of psychology—as well as

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religious (or perhaps pseudo-religious) works. Yet, in spite of this, recently, there have been no books which clearly, directly and specifically address such a concept. The publications in this regard have mainly considered the *philosophical* issue of self-realization in historical terms, i.e. by means of interpretations, and expositions, of past authors, especially the ancient Greeks, Romans, and (often exoticized) Eastern thinkers—such as Laozi, Buddha, Confucius, or the Veda. As mentioned, for current theories, the topic is nowadays mainly left to some religious (and dubiously scientific) works, as well as to some researchers in applied psychology. An up-to-date, open and scientifically rigorous, philosophical discourse on the very concept of self-realization is still lacking. We certainly ought to think of this as a gap that needs to be filled in order to enable an open, critical assessment of both religious and political propaganda. We should furthermore recognize the importance this can have for establishing a critical and democratic political agenda concerning issues concerning the individual and social good as well as well-being.

Indeed, it is not actually obvious what it means "to realize oneself". As a matter of fact, both terms included in such an expression are far from clear. What is the "self" that is supposed to be realized? A person? An ego? A specific form of being which is different from what one "is" as a whole human being, or as a person? And what does it mean "to realize"? To achieve a goal? To actualize a plan? To create oneself into a specific shape? To draw out one's own potential? Perhaps more importantly: Is self-realization an act achieved by the self, or is self-realization something more akin to a re-shaping of the self which we only experience passively? What is the relationship between the self's realization and its environment (both social and natural)? Moreover, what of the relationship between the self and the "author" of its realization? Should we not, indeed, distinguish between the "actualization of what one is", i.e. of the (assumed) essence of someone, and the shaping of someone or of someone's life according to a specific model or ideal?

In order to approach the problem of self-realization in a rigorous and philosophical way, and thus save it from largely unscientific, if not arcane, wisdom, it is clearly necessary to highlight the main aspects entailed by this notion. It is not enough to merely question the relevance of self-realization to our philosophical debate as if it were a unified and clear concept. We should first investigate how the self can be understood, and thus assess the corresponding meaning of its alleged realization. Equally, we need to critically assess what the different doctrines about the ethical

realization of an individual imply as regards the ontological status of the self, without treating the two aspects as separate topics.

Although in the past few decades, the philosophy of mind has become one of the main areas of investigation in philosophy, and has bred publications and debates concerning the issue of what it means to be a self, few attempts have been made to connect these theories with the dynamic and normative aspects of selfhood. There have certainly been some individual thinkers, such as Derek Parfit or Bernard Williams, who both proposed theories of self which are simultaneously a theory of what a self is (and is not) while also clarifying the practical-ethical implications that a conception of self can have. However, most debates in philosophy of mind concerning self and self-consciousness lack this broad view. As a result, most theories in ethics do not sufficiently problematize the very concept of the self they presuppose; in other words, they do not sufficiently work out the ontology, or metaphysics, of the self they try to establish the good, and/or the rights and the duties of. Otherwise, authors merely put forth a view of the self, with no attention to the repercussions that their interpretation may have. To put it briefly, the very connection between self *and* realization has seldom been the focus of recent philosophical theories and investigations.

This could seem especially true for analytic philosophy, mostly because of its (relatively recent) tendency towards hyper-specialization. As a consequence, researchers have focused on singular issues without considering the connections between these issues in a wider picture. For example, by keeping within one's area of specialization, one can easily neglect the practical consequences that the limits of self-knowledge has on the social activity of individuals to protect, or to affirm, one*self*. Likewise, one can focus on the legal, or ethical, duties towards one's body without considering the many questions concerning the relationship between mind and body, i.e. without touching upon what the self can be identified with, and what the limits of one's self-identification with the body are.

With that said, several shortcomings can be found in the writings of the so-called continental philosophers as well. Indeed, such writings either aim to principally discuss only the large picture, while neglecting the various issues and competing views concerning specific aspects of the idea of the self, and of the dynamics concerning the very concept of realization. Thus, many continental writings turn out to be at the very least aporetic in the actual philosophical panorama, or they otherwise end up restricting themselves to specific and quite isolated aspects of the

self and of its realization. Take, for instance, the innumerable writings devoted to the issue of otherness, and intersubjectivity (especially those in the "phenomenological" tradition over the last 20 years). These writings have undoubtedly offered great contributions to our understanding of the self, and its social dimension. As a matter of fact, the phenomenological tradition has become one of the main voices in the current debates concerning social ontology. Nevertheless, the consequences that the phenomenological insights concerning self, otherness, and intersubjectivity may have for practical and normative issues has only rarely been considered. As a matter of fact, almost no philosophical theory of community and society comparable at least in scope to the ones put forward in the past "classic" philosophers, such as Plato, Locke, Comte, or Hegel, has been developed by phenomenologists during the last decades (or at the very least, this has been the case since Sartre's death). As for other "continental" schools, it is clear that—unless one considers some (often dogmatic) forms of Marxism or Christian thought—there are people working on political philosophy and philosophy of law, such as, for instance, the heirs of the Frankfurt School, who develop their views while more or less leaving aside the more technical current issues concerning philosophy of mind. Hence, in the continental school as well, we find a similar gap between self and self-realization.

We can thus say that in spite of all the impressive research, investigations, debates, ideas, and theories carried out in the past decades, philosophers on both sides of the "divide" have only very sparingly been put together in order to develop some kind of systematic view. One could say that the systematic "spirit" has long since been thought deceased. Whether or not a kind of universal philosophy should really be declared dead or whether or not a resurrection of sorts is possible is not a topic that merits discussion in the introduction of this book. However, we must point out that at the very least a kind of overall view of such a sensitive and concretely relevant issue as that of self-realization can, and probably should, be considered in its entire complexity. It permeates throughout our lives, at both the social and individual level. Moreover, this is entirely the case regardless of whether we want it to or not. It would be more than a merely philosophical irresponsibility to leave this topic to some scattered insights or profit-oriented self-help books. This is particularly true when we consider the danger of leaving such an important topic up to a seemingly not uncommon "schizophrenic" view that has snuck into popular society and academia alike. Indeed, we find

ourselves in a contradictory state in which, on the one hand, we declare the self illusory, insubstantial or non-existent and, on the other hand, we insist on the primacy of individual rights (and duties), and fight in the name of freedom and self-determination for this insubstantial self, with no consideration as to how these seemingly conflicting viewpoints can possibly coexist. These problems have very real consequences that become apparent when we consider worth of thinking about the issue of individual well-being, or that of the distinction between commonwealth, and private interests. To neglect a kind of systematic investigation into the very complex idea of the self and its realization could also be tantamount to the declaration of the fatuity of philosophy.

Our goal in this volume is to take precisely the opposite stance. We want to contribute to the development and deepening of the plurality of views concerning the nature of the self, how it is constituted, how it works, and what its good, its rights, and its duties are. How the self, in brief, is self or non-self realized, and, once come to life, how it realizes itself. We want to give space to allow the topics of self and self-realization to grow, and thus give space to a wider panoramic to problems that are rooted in our day to day lives.

Of course, possibly because these questions have deep-seated roots in any number of intellectual and cultural traditions, it would be a mistake to limit our discussions in this volume to developing only one systematic view of self-realization. Our aim here is to respond to this task by collecting authors representing a plethora of different intellectual traditions, time-periods, and cultures. By bringing together authors from various different philosophical landscapes, we hope to lead the way to an open, critical discussion about what it means to realize (one)-self and how some specific topics related to the issue of self-realization can be addressed.

Now, one more note concerning the goal of this volume is in order before we can proceed. Indeed, what we must also consider when we discuss the concept of "self-realization" is the fact that realization has *at least* two main meanings. On the one hand, realization corresponds to the constitution, i.e. the "creation", the "building", the "formation" of something which is called "self" (or "I", or "ego"). On the other hand, realization also points to the process by means of which the (somehow already constituted) self can, or should, be considered as fulfilled. As one may assume from what has been said up to this point, these two sides of "self" and "realization" should not be separated. It is clear, as

we have already said, that different theories of the self require different understandings of the kinds of realization it is entitled to, and vice versa. However, one cannot reasonably hope to offer in one volume the full-fledged version of all theories of self and realization, and of all the connected ontological, ethical, as well as epistemological issues.

Thus, the following contributions in this volume all offer some views of what self can mean, i.e. some *understandings* of the self, as well as some views about how the self can be fulfilled, i.e. some ideas concerning the *achievement* of the self. Each contribution is independent from the others. One could therefore remark that, in the end, also in this volume no full-fledged theory of self-realization is offered, i.e. a theory both of what a self is and of its fulfilment. Such a remark is certainly correct. As a matter of fact, no contributor has been required to specifically cover both sides of the issue of self-realization, nor have they been instructed to tackle only one aspect of selfhood in order to leave other aspects to their fellow authors. What is more, the reflections, and theories, concerning the self and its realization touched upon in the following articles are not necessarily consistent with each other.

However, we do not consider this lack of one fully-articulated, entirely systematized view of self and self-realization to be a defect of this volume. To be clear, providing this only one systematic view of self-realization was also not our goal. Indeed, the assumption of one specific meaning of self or self-realization goes against the very spirit of our goal to overcome uncritical or unreflective acceptance of the consequences of these theories. To this end, we wish to give space for debates to begin, and grow, with authors representing various perspectives that all offer at least a grain of truth into the nature of what it means for us to realize the self. As the reader shall see, the inter-related ideas painted by the authors here are all deserving of further debate and careful inspection.

Perhaps, though, the sheer amount of differing opinions, ideas, and theories on the topic are precisely the cause of its disappearance from serious philosophical investigation. It is clearly an overwhelming issue that very few dare to tackle. In a sense, one is tempted to say that it is, as for a scientific point of view is concerned, at the best an issue for psychology. For some who think more "humanistically", it can be taken as an issue of ethical wisdom. However, one does thus easily forget how the issue is an extremely relevant *social* issue, and that dealing with it requires a thorough philosophical investigation of all its aspects. On the one hand, it is connected to the social dimensions, and

to the social constitution, of the self. Whether one can realize oneself "beyond" a social dimension is far from being a merely psychological issue. It is strictly connected to the ontological status of the self. On the other hand, self-realization is a critically relevant matter in terms of law. It should suffice to remind the importance of self-determination in most modern legal systems. Not to mention the issue of happiness and well-being, which keep more than vague, one could even say empty, if no decently worked-out idea of self-realization is available, also just to differentiate it from them.

These hints should be enough to persuade one of the importance of a thorough *philosophical* investigation about the issue of self-realization is necessary for our both theoretical and practical lives. The hints should also suffice to convince anyone that no single philosopher can nowadays rationally believe that they are able to offer a systematic view of self-realization which covers even just all here mentioned issues.

Hence, it is necessary that nowadays philosophers open themselves to a cooperation which allows a better understanding of what self-realization means from different perspectives, and regarding the different issues it entangles. We should acknowledge that we are in an era where the collaboration between philosophers is a necessity, and is somehow also a duty, because no single philosopher is able to contemplate all issues of philosophy in this day and age. To do one's philosophical job properly, to achieve one's philosophical goals, all in all to realize oneself as a philosopher, one has to partake in a common enterprise, and this implies leaving part of the bigger picture to others.

In order to achieve the lofty goals in this volume, we have separated all works into two different sections, thus that we can create a mosaic of understandings of both "self" and "realization". These two sections are, unsurprisingly enough, "self", and "realization". As has already been stated, no authors were instructed to tackle only one specific facet of either self or realization, much less are there any contributions that only address one of the two. All sectional divisions are only based on a relative difference in the aspect of self-realization being emphasized. Moreover, in the middle, i.e. between the two parts, we have put a kind of intermezzo, Andrea Altobrando and Galen Strawson perform a kind of counterpunctual philosophical exchange with Strawson's theses concerning the self and anti-narrativism as *cantus firmus*.

To begin, our first section will focus more heavily on providing detailed outlooks on what the self is. After all, in order to discuss the

self's realization, we ought to know what it is in the first place. Needless to say, there are so many competing views of what the self is that it has become difficult to keep track of the different interpretations. Yet, it is precisely because of this conclusion that we must ask what it is to be a self, and whether or not there is one prominent meaning of the word. To this end, the authors assembled in this section share a common theme: what is the most basic meaning of the concept of the self, and what does it require to achieve this level?

First, Frischhut starts with a question central to this whole volume: is there such a thing as a true self to be realized? Is it something that passively develops? Or is it something that we actively construct and form? Frischhut argues convincingly that neither of these two views are capable of satisfying our intuitions concerning the true self. Outgoing from this line of reasoning, Frischhut comes to the intriguing conclusion that there is no such thing as a true self—or that, if there is, it is little more than a psychological state.

Taguchi raises another central question to our volume when he asks how it is possible for us to recognize ourselves as one individual self amongst many. While this may seem obvious, the fact that we can never look through the eyes of the other (lest they become our own), raises a serious problem concerning how we can know something we have never experienced. In order to answer this question, Taguchi relies upon the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Kitaro Nishida in order to show the ebb and flow between two poles of selfhood, i.e. between our uncountable, and un-contextual self, and our self as a contextualized individual, which is one amongst many.

Gallagher and Butler provide a different route to a similar question of what it takes to be a self. As the two efficaciously argue, in order to achieve minimal selfhood, the development of habits is necessary. In modern debates, those in the philosophy and phenomenology often put their focus squarely on the relationship between phenomenal consciousness and selfhood, with one popular move being to take pre-reflective self-awareness as a basis for diachronic consistency. What Gallagher and Butler manage to do, however, is to provide a link to what is known as the "narrative self" with the minimal and pre-reflective self focused on in modern debates by considering their connection with habits.

Northoff investigates another necessary component of selfhood when he looks at the temporal aspect of the self. With that said, Northoff provides a unique outlook on the manner by looking at how the temporal

aspects of the self match with the neuroscientific evidence that scientists have found in recent years. Northoff mixes philosophy with neuroscience in order to show that self and self continuity have their basis in the brain's cortical midline structures, thus giving a physical account of how we are able to find continuity in the nature of our self.

Finally, Campagnolo goes beyond purely metaphysical questions to highlight an equally necessary component of selfhood by discussing economic self-realization. Specifically, Campagnolo asks, what is the economic self that we aim to realize in our day to day life? When we consider how recent economics relies on models that seem to reduce selves to purely rational agents, we can lose track of the subjective aspect of this exchange. In order to give a more full-blooded picture of the economic self, Campagnolo relies on the work of the Austrian economist, Carl Menger. In this way, Campagnolo proposes insights apt at developing an economic theory which is concretely capable of dealing with the self and subjectivity.

The next section will serve as a transition from accounts of selfhood to accounts of realization by means of a critical dialogue examining both topics. Specifically, as already mentioned, we feature a special conversation, actually a kind of interview, between Strawson and Altobrando concerning the feasibility—and ethical implications of—what has been called the "narrative view" of the self. On the basis of some of Strawson's texts, and more specifically his "The Unstoried Life", which we reprint here for the convenience of the readers, Altobrando has tried to let Strawson spell out more precisely how some of his ideas concerning the self can be linked to his more ethical, or existential, views. The result is a quite rhapsodic text, where different themes are intertwined, at times confused with each other, but then unravelled towards a clearer understanding of the ideas involved. Following, despite the "polymorphous" nature of the texts, we confide in its capacity to help both the ones who are already familiar with Strawson's texts to better understand them, and the ones less familiar to approach Stawson's writings with a more adequate awareness of their general ideas, and relationships to each other. More specifically, this critical dialogue will simultaneously allow readers a chance to become more familiar with Strawson's powerful stance that narratives are—at best—unnecessary for becoming a moral self, while also touching upon how these issues relate to self-realization. Hence, this counterpointical interlude is aimed not only at entertaining the reader, but also at showing

a concrete interaction between two philosophical voices, and its utility to get a more sharpen view of the link between some ideas concerning the self and self-consciousness and their import on possible views of self-realization.

Our final section will turn to several authors who place more emphasis on what it means to *realize* the self. In precisely the way that authors in the previous section faced the plurality of the meaning of the word self, contributions here will tackle the various questions concerning its realization. Questions concerning how one can realize one's self, and thus achieve one's potential and lead a good life, span the scope of multiple centuries and cultures. Yet, this myriad of different viewpoints all seem to contain at least a kernel of truth. Hence, here we shall assess a plurality of views from a range of different intellectual traditions, in order to critically assess their value to our daily lives.

The first contribution comes from Kondo. While Kondo, like Strawson and Altobrando did in the previous section of the book, tackles topics that can be related to narrative consistency, he does so from the standpoint of the Stoic concept of eudaemonia. Specifically, Kondo expertly navigates the work of several different stoic conceptions of the self to demonstrate how they conceived of self-realization as something self-activity. The wide-ranging and articulate nature of Kondo's investigation gives readers a clear picture of how one of the most important philosophical schools of the ancient world viewed the topic of self-realization. Kondo then finishes these considerations by touching upon different modern analogues of this theory in order to better draw out the meaning of self-activity for both our understanding of Stoic philosophy and its modern applications.

After this concept of self-realization that stand at the roots of Western modernity, Suzuki presents an alternative from a more modern perspective. For Suzuki, realizing oneself is equivalent of realizing what it is that one wants to do. Yet, although it may sound intuitively promising to say as much, the meaning of what it is which one wants to do is not clear. Here, Suzuki utilizes the ideas of Harry Frankfurt, Gary Watson, and Michael Bratman in order to better annunciate his own ideas on the topic. While Suzuki largely agrees with Bratman's ideas on being committed to doing something, he keenly notes the importance of moods for being committed to something. By taking a hint from Martin Heidegger, Suzuki manages to give a new view on what it is to realize what it is one wants to do.

A different view of what it means to realize oneself is put forward by de Tienda Palop. De Tienda Palop specifically emphasizes the importance of the concept of flourishing when considering the topic of self-realization. In order to do this, de Tienda Palop lists three examples of what she labels as authors within the liberal tradition: J.S. Mill, Charles Taylor, and Martha Nussbaum. By progressing through the development of the Western liberal tradition, de Tienda Palop shows several important aspects of flourishing. First, through Mill, de Tienda Palop shows that respect for the autonomy and preferences of the individual are necessary for self-realization. Next, through Taylor that solely allowing for total autonomy and absolutizing individual preference is not sufficient, and that there needs to be a social ground for communication. Finally, through Nussbaum, de Tienda Palop shows that there furthermore need to social grounds for mutually supporting and depending on one another in order to flourish.

In the same vein that de Tienda Palop stresses the concept of flourishing's connection to self-realization, Biasetti asks the question of what the legal basis that is most conducive to flourishing is in the modern world. Biasetti attempts to answer this question with a defence of rights in a post-Parfit atmosphere. Biasetti starts by showing how Parfit's work managed to disassemble the classic defence of rights-theorists against utilitarianism by showing that individuals are not the "thick" entities we typically assume them to be. Against this background, Biasetti attempts to construct different grounds on which we should still accept rights talk. Specifically, Biasetti clearly demonstrates how rights are necessary for building "morality in the narrow sense", which is in turn necessary for morality in a broader sense, and thus necessary for human flourishing.

Liberati highlights a different social aspect of self-realization that is important to our modern society. Specifically, Liberati tackles the question of how we can have healthy human relationships necessary for a fulfilling social life in a technology dominated age. From the background of post-phenomenology, Liberati first demonstrates the changes that new technology such as cell-phones and computers have made to our inter-personal relationships. After this, he then seeks out to answer the question of whether or not fulfilling inter-personal relationships are necessary in this background.

Cheung adds a new dimension to the discussion concerning the interpersonal aspects of self-realization by touching upon a topic of critical importance: love. Specifically, by analysing how two Japanese

philosophers, Kitaro Nishida and Satomi Takahashi dealt with Scheler's notions of sympathy and Agape, Cheung is able to provide a unique understanding of how love can be related to self-realization. Namely, Cheung focuses on the importance of the idea that love is a sort of union between two persons. Through this analysis, we gain a clear picture of the ways that joining two separate selves is possibly necessary for the realization of both.

In the final contribution, Stone also relies on the Japanese philosophical tradition to attempt to show how the loss or abandonment of one's self is, paradoxically, they key to self-realization. In an analysis of twentieth century philosopher Hajime Tanabe's post-World War II thought based on "absolute Other-power", Stone highlights how "giving up" one's self and allowing it to fall into nothingness can allow one to achieve new forms of self-realization once one has encountered limit situations that previously prevented it. Specifically, Stone emphasizes the importance of the relationship between self-abandonment and passivity as a means of re-connecting with others and finding a new source of self-realization.

PART I

Understanding the Self

CHAPTER 2

Is There a True Self?

Akiko Frischhut

Introduction

To 'find one's true self' or to 'reveal one's true self' are common enough expressions, familiar from the way we ordinarily talk. But what do we really mean by the 'true self'? What is it supposed to refer to? Does it play an important explanatory role in understanding ourselves? The aim of this article is to shed light on the intuition that people have a true self—in contrast to their more readily perceptible "everyday self"—and to see whether we can give a clear philosophical account of it. I begin with a closer look at the intuitions that are commonly associated with the true self. When it comes to characterizing the true self on the basis of these, I argue, our intuitions point us in two directions. On the basis of these different understandings, I shall then suggest and explore two theoretical approaches that take some inspiration from Harry Frankfurt. The first approach suggests that the true self expresses a person's essential nature. I argue that this suggestion fails. The second focusses on our own role in creating and maintaining our true self. It, too, proves unconvincing. At the end of my analysis, I hope to have convinced the reader that the notion of the true self does not uniquely refer to some special part of ourselves. Although the idea does not lack

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intuitive appeal, it is neither conducive to a convincing account, nor does it advance a theoretical understanding of ourselves as persons.

Two Aspects of the True Self

There is a widespread idea that our personality is, metaphorically speaking, divided into the core and the periphery. One may describe the character traits constitutive of our core personality with Bernard Williams as 'projects and attitudes with which [a person] is most closely identified' (1973: 116–117). Many think that the core of our personality is the part which makes us the person that we are, the 'essence of a person' as Frankfurt puts it (1988: 175–176), while the less central parts are in some sense secondary. We find this idea articulated in many ways. Here are, for example, Federico Lauria and Alain Pé-Curto:

> Put metaphorically, we can say that some traits are *deeper* than others, in the sense that they capture a person's deep self, and that these traits contrast with more superficial or (…) *external* traits. (2011, 61)

It is widely thought that a person who appears authentic, i.e. behaves in a way that seems to reveal the way they genuinely are, acts 'true to themselves'. This is reflected in the ordinary idiom of the true self. When we ordinarily speak about someone 'not being their true self', or 'showing their true self', or about attempting to 'find our true self', we reveal a view that regards the true self as a special part of our personality which constitutes our unique core, or, differently put, whatever may be regarded as essential to us as individual persons. The mundane idea of the true self accords with the thought that an authentic life is a life that is in line with who you really are, by exhibiting behaviour that expresses whatever traits are essential to us as individual persons.

It is important to note that the ordinary notion 'true self' is distinct from the philosophical notions of the 'metaphysical self' and the 'psychological self'. As a Cartesian mere locus of subjectivity the metaphysical self has no discriminating features other than, perhaps, providing a first-person perspective. As an Aristotelian substance, the metaphysical self is a bearer of properties. The true self, however, must be understood as identical with the traits that constitute it.[1] It makes no sense to think of it without traits.

The psychological self—or everyday self—is plausibly best captured as the whole of one's psychological traits: temperament, habits, strengths,

and weaknesses, behavioural, volitional, and affective dispositions, values, and beliefs. If we take the idea of realizing or finding one's true self seriously, then it should be possible for a person to have a psychological self without having realized their true self. It follows straightforwardly that the true self must be distinct from the psychological self.

The intuition that our personality is divided into a core and a periphery is fundamental to the idea of the true self. There are others. The fact that Lauria and Pé-Curto (2011, 67) distinguish between a 'deep self' and 'superficial' or 'external' traits of a person indicates a further intuition, namely that the deep self, which corresponds to the true self, is less accessible to others (and probably ourselves) than the traits at the periphery. We also generally regard the part of our personality which constitutes the true self as less vulnerable to external influences. Someone who is supposed to have realized their true self, is someone who one expects to behave and act consistently over time, someone who is not likely to change their stance or attitude with every whim. A person who is aware of their true self fully understands the motives and intentions of their own behaviour since these are perfectly transparent to them once they know their true self. It is moreover central to our intuition that our true self is not something we are always automatically aware of. Hence the many colloquial phrases about 'finding', 'revealing', 'recognizing' and 'realizing' one's true self. And while realizing one's true self may be hard, maintaining it is supposed to be effortless; a direct expression of our genuine nature.

These intuitions reveal an interesting tension. On the one side, there is a tendency to think that we are born with a true self which is somehow hidden beneath or secluded by the everyday self and all we need to do is to find, unveil, or excavate it; or, at least, recognize some of our character traits as constitutive of our true self. Once we have realized our true self, these core character traits are maximally manifested in the sense that we are conscious of and act in accordance with them. Call this the *passive characterisation*. On the other side, we create our true self by making conscious choices about which of our traits best manifest the person we want to be, and by establishing and maintaining a maximal consistency between our traits and actions. Call this the *active characterisation*.

The tension between the active and the passive characterisation is made apparent when we understand that the first can come apart from the second. For example, even if all my character traits were or seem to me *prima facie* on a par, I might still select some of them as particularly

important to me. In that sense, we may realize our true self understood in the active sense, without realizing it in the passive sense. On the other hand, my becoming aware of my core traits, the ones constitutive of my true self, does not entail that I have *chosen* these traits as particularly important to me. I may even come to loathe (some of) my core traits when I realize that they are essential features of my personality. It is thus equally possible to realize one's true self in the passive sense without realizing it in the active sense.

Among philosophers sympathetic to the idea of a layered personality with core and peripheral states there has been much speculation about which character traits are principally constitutive of the core. There is no doubt that the true self, if there is such a thing, would encompass some or all of the types of states I collectively refer to as character traits, such as for example dispositions to form, have, or being particularly receptive to certain beliefs, desires, emotions and values.[2] However, I will not dwell further on the question of whether all or only some of those types are constitutive of the true self for that would lead us too far off focus.[3] In what follows I will formulate two accounts of the true self, based on the active and the passive characterisation. I argue that neither can give us a satisfactory theory of the true self.

The Passive Account

We are probably all acquainted with ordinary phrases such as 'finding one's true self' or about a person 'having revealed his or her true self'. Common intuition has it that in some (or even most) cases, the true self may be obscured not only to external observers but even to its bearer, hidden under layers of pretence, beneath the masks we wear in our daily social roles. According to the passive account, we have to discover our true self in order to realize it but we are not actively contributing to its formation. Instead, we are born with a core personality that is unique and essential to us.[4] This foundation of our personality is supposed to remain stable and relatively unchanged through the course of our lives. In *Autonomy, Necessity and Love* Frankfurt says that

> …the essence of a person pertains to the purposes, the preferences, and the other personal characteristics that the individual *cannot help having* (…). (1998, 138 my italics)

There are several features of Frankfurt's view that are reminiscent of the passive characterisation of the true self. First, he also distinguishes between core and superficial traits. Second, the lack of control on the part of the subject in choosing their core defining features (features that a person 'cannot help but having') introduces the passivity that is also at the heart of the passive characterisation of the true self. Frankfurt's account allows us to model and evaluate our first theory, the 'passive view of the true self'.

Note to begin with that the resulting view is based upon the idea of persons having essential natures. That is, while our character traits are contingent in the sense that we would still be persons if we had a different character, some of the traits are also essential since we would not be the *same* person without them. Generally, when a property *F* is essential to some *x*, then *x* cannot lose *F* without ceasing to be *x*.[5] Thus, if I am essentially a greedy person, then I cannot change my ways of being greedy. If I stop being greedy, then I, *qua* person, die (although another person may live on with my body). While this sounds somewhat extreme, Frankfurt certainly doesn't shy away from such strong words:

> Agamemnon at Aulis is destroyed by an inescapable conflict between two equally defining elements in his own nature: his love for his daughter and his love for the army he commands…When he is forced to sacrifice one of these, he is thereby forced to betray himself. (…)Since the volitional unity of the tragic hero has been irreparably ruptured, *there is a sense in which the person he had been no longer exists.* (1998, 139, my italics)

Now, if we interpret Frankfurt here as strongly as David Velleman does (2005, 335) then Agamemnon's essential self ceases to exist as he has to abandon one of his defining character features. Frankfurt's personal essence is our true self. Agamemnon's true self ceases to exist because it cannot change. Such an essentialist conception, I shall argue now, comes with a variety of problems.

The Problem of Personal Identity

An essentialist account of the true self has implications beyond questions of personality. If the loss of a true self results in our ceasing to be as particular persons (though not in losing our personhood), then we have a new criterion for personal identity in the strict numerical sense.

Traditionally, defenders of the psychological criterion for personal identity maintain Locke's idea that only psychological continuity established by memory counts for the survival of a person. A humble cobbler and a proud prince may at different times be the same person as long as they share memories, even if they have completely different personalities. The passive account of the true self agrees that the criteria for personal identity are psychological, but breaks with the established Lockean view when it comes to the importance of character traits (cf. Velleman 2005, 336).

This view cannot be correct. One indicator is that a person can be numerically identical with themselves over time without ever realizing their true self. Of course, not realizing one's true self does not mean that one does not have a true self. It may be that a person has a true self but never realizes it because they never become aware of it. As long as *possession* rather than *awareness* or realization of the very same true self is a necessary criterion for personal identity over time, there is no problem for the passive account.

Still, consider a shell-shocked soldier coming back from war with an entirely different set of values. It seems utterly implausible to think that the man has actually ceased to exist when he changed his core values. Although we do speak about people not being themselves anymore in such circumstances, no one would normally be tempted to understand this literally. Of course, this does not constitute a knock-down argument against the passive account since its advocates may simply choose to accept the consequences. If the soldier is so drastically changed by his war experiences that he abandons his most intimate core values, say the love for his family, a defender of the passive account may not find it too difficult to admit that the soldier has in fact become a new person. Still, this strikes one as unnecessary radical or at least very peculiar. Remember that what is at stake here is not just qualitative but *numerical* change. The passive account is forced to admit that the soldier has literally died in war, although he is fully aware of his pre-war life. The soldier himself would presumably not feel confused about whether he survived the war or not, however much change he should recognize in himself. Nevertheless, a defender of the passive account would have to say that the soldier is wrong about his own sense of survival.[6] This seems to constitute a considerable disadvantage of the passive account of the true self.[7]

Maybe it is not the task of a true self account to solve the question of personal identity. We could still rescue the basic idea by conceding that

the soldier is the same even though his former true self has ceased to be. This puts the passive account in a very awkward position though. Now one and the same person may instantiate different true selves over time. The psychological periphery of a person's character becomes more stable and identity conferring than its core. This, in turn, undermines the entire concept of the true self as central feature of a person.

Missing Criteria Problem

Being aware of my core traits *as* core traits seems an almost trivial prerequisite for realizing my true self. But in order to identify among my traits those that belong to my true self, I need some criteria by which I can distinguish them from other traits I may have. But what could these be? Importance seems necessary but cannot be sufficient. I might love anchovies, even in an all-consuming, unhealthily intense way, but surely this passion does not render my affinity a *core* trait of mine in the sense that it is an ultimately defining feature of me without which I cease to be the person I am.

It might be easier to recognize a core value once it has been lost. Sometimes we realize only after we have given up something how important it was for us as part of our identity; we may have trouble finding our position or indeed our (psychological) identity after losing such a defining part of our lives. This does not always mean that we would have recognized it as a core feature of ourselves before we lost it. A bank accountant may not identify himself with his work but once retired, he realizes what an integral part his work was of him. Certain core traits of him could only be realized in his role as bank accountant. Once this role is gone, he will be unable to live according to his true self. But, in any case, such a posteriori identification is of no use. The identification of a trait as core trait needs to take place in order to realize the true self, and thus chronologically and logically *before* we realize our true self, not after.

Identity conferring, whether in the numerical or psychological sense, also does not help as a criterion for core traits. If I am not aware of which states constitute my true self, I am not aware which states are identity conferring either. The problem is one of lurking explanatory circularity: what it is to be a core trait is to be an identity conferring trait but plausibly, what it is to be an identity conferring trait is just to be a core trait. This is because my true self is precisely what establishes my psychological identity.

Another contender for a criterion that comes to mind is persistence. Given that our true self constituting traits are supposed to be essential it would make sense to think of these traits as more stable than others, in the sense that they persist where others come and go. However, this is not a good criterion for a core trait either. While the theory does not permit any change of the true self, it does not require that our peripheral character traits must change periodically either. I may love anchovies for my entire life. That alone cannot be enough to make this trait part of my true self. Unfortunately, the only way to distinguish between a core trait and a lifelong peripheral trait may be that we cannot survive the loss of the former as individual persons. But, again, being able to identify a core trait after we lost it does not help when we are trying to realize our true self.[8]

Maybe *no criteria* are needed. After a period of trial and error, we may arrive at a state where we feel in accordance with our true self. This would imply either that there are no identification criteria for core traits, or, least, that they cannot be known. Epistemically at least, whether some trait constitutes our true self or not remains just a brute fact. This trivializes the true self. Without identification criteria, any trait might qualify as part of the true self as far as we know. My love for anchovies, for example.

Problem of Inconsistency

According to the passive account, we are born with essential character features. While it allows for some core traits to form through experience, we do not acquire them through the process of careful deliberation and choice. This allows for inconsistent true selves. If I were to choose the values and desire that constitute my true self, I would, as a rational person, be bound by coherence to make my choices compatible. No such constraints exist for the passive account. This makes a passive conception of the true self more vulnerable to inconsistent true selves.

An inconsistent true self inevitably leads to inconsistent behaviour. Such behaviour is not usually associated with persons who have realized their true self. Is the person that is behaving erratically not yet aware of themselves and, in lack of that awareness, torn in a turmoil of competing tendencies and temptations? Or are they acting in perfect accordance with their inconsistent true self? It would be impossible or at least implausibly hard for us to tell the difference. But that hardly agrees with

our intuitions. We value the fact that someone has realized their true self (even if that self may not be particularly admirable) because we value authenticity. If we were not able to recognize such authenticity in a person's character, why would we appreciate that someone has realized their true self? Lacking identification criteria for core traits and counterintuitive implications make for great weaknesses in the passive account. The next section argues that the active account fares no better.

The Active Account of the True Self

Our ordinary intuitions about the true self appear somewhat ambiguous between a passive and an active view. The account I shall propose now will be based upon the active characterization and on what David Velleman (2005, 331) calls Frankfurt's initial answer to the question 'what makes some motives internal'. In *The Importance of What We Care About* (1988), Frankfurt suggested that the subject needs to identify with those motives, by reflectively endorsing them as determinants of his behaviour (cf. Velleman ibid.). Frankfurt's theory will serve as a rough blueprint for our second account. The guiding question in our case will be slightly different: what makes a character trait constitutive of the true self? According to Frankfurt's (1988) theory, our (psychological) identity depends on the existence of certain higher-order mental states, for Frankfurt in particular desires, which a subject 'wholeheartedly endorses', and which in turn determine those psychological states that constitute our identity (cf. Lauria 2011, 68). Suppose, for example, my desire to go swimming competes with my desire to write philosophy. This is what Frankfurt would classify as conflict of first-order desires. Such a conflict can be solved on a higher level by second-order desires: my second-order desire to stay healthy, say, is consistent with my first-order desire to swim, but not so much with my sitting at the desk for days on end. Being aware of one's more important long-term higher-order desires allows one to choose and act on one first-order desire rather than the other. On the second level, though, there may be conflict too: my desire to stay fit might clash with my desire to be career-wise successful. In order to solve this I need to refer to a third-order desire, which may clash with another third-order desire and require a fourth-order one to conciliate, and so forth. It is plain to see how this leads into an infinite regress which requires ever higher-order conflict resolutions, unless at one level, as Frankfurt says, we wholeheartedly, that is unreservedly and

consciously, endorse one of the conflicting parties and exile the other. The conscious endorsement of a desire is an identification of the subject with that desire and brings with it the rejection of the incompatible desire. For Frankfurt, there is a strict hierarchy between a subject's desires, with the wholeheartedly endorsed ones on top, and all of the subject's other desires ordered accordingly.

For the active account of the true self, which takes Frankfurt's wholehearted identity theory as starting point, my true self amounts to a consistent and stable hierarchy of my character traits (for example certain desires and values), some of which I have consciously chosen and wholeheartedly endorsed as core traits, and other lower-order ones, the status of which is determined by the high-level traits.[9] Suppose I fully endorse the desire to live a life of idleness and pleasure, realizing at the same time that my competing desire to achieve academic fame is not part of my true self. I align all lower-order desires accordingly: rather than labouring over difficult texts, I embark on trips around the world. Desires which are not compatible with my wholeheartedly embraced ones, such as the desire to lock myself in to study intricate theories of the self, become, in Frankfurt's words, 'wanton desires'. Wanton desires do not belong to me *qua* person, thus cannot be part of my true self. No ambivalences and conflicts remain. I act in line with my deepest desires. This is when, according to the active account, I have realized my true self.[10] Just as with the passive account, I intend to show that the active account has some highly problematic consequences.

Problem of Choice

The active account requires its subjects to choose which character traits they wholeheartedly embrace. This presents a difficulty since the fact that the subject needs to make a choice threatens to lead into a circularity problem. How do I choose which of my traits to wholeheartedly endorse? My choice can be guided by central or less central character traits of mine. In the former case, I must already have some core traits on the basis of which I choose. To avoid regress, the core traits that guide my choice cannot also be chosen. Their status may be innate, or developed through experience, in any case, they cannot have gone through the same active selection process. Alternatively, the choice of my core traits is guided by superficial features of my character or is entirely arbitrary. Since the true self is defined in opposition to my superficial

features, it would be contradictory if its constitution is fundamentally determined by them. An entirely random choice, on the other hand, amounts to a random personality core which may not be downright contradictory but strongly undermining of the idea of the true self as personality centre.

Problem of Instability

The active account's true self acquires some plausibility by the fact that only a consistent, balanced personality allows for stable behaviour and coherent agency. An indecisive, hesitant, and inconsistent personality hardly conforms to our idea of someone who has realized their true self. The active account serves our intuitions in that sense. However, even a perfectly balanced person changes their desires and values over time. Any change of a lower-order trait may require a complete restructuring of the hierarchical pyramid that constitutes the true self. As a result, the true self becomes diachronically unstable. For example, **I** may feel conflicted between **my** desire for distraction and **my** longing to be idle. This clash may be solved on a higher-order level in that **I** wholeheartedly strive for an adventurous life and consequently reject **my** laziness. However, **I** may have previously been torn between spending a weekend on the couch and using **my** free time to catch up with work. And **I** may on this occasion have endorsed idleness over ambition. Although **I** wholeheartedly endorsed idleness before, **my** latest conflict now forces **me** to exile that very desire. In consequence, all lower-order traits have to be re-sorted to maintain consistency.

According to the active account the balance among our psychological states constitutes our true self. Since we change our desires all the time, the balance between those states, and therefore our true self must constantly change. The active account implies that we instantiate a lot of true selves over the course of our lives. This result challenges several intuitions. First, realizing one's true self is often regarded as an achievement and once this state is attained we think of it as relatively persistent. We also commonly think that we cannot genuinely know someone who hides their true self. After all, our true self is supposed to embody all that is unique and important about our personality. If it changed all the time, it would be impossible (or at least implausibly hard) to tell when someone has realized their true self. And how would we ever really come to know anyone if all our knowledge about a person's character came with an expiry date?

With the problem of stability comes the problem of comprehensibility. One would normally assume that someone who has realized their true self acts in a more predictable, straightforward way. Not according to the active account. Since the true self constantly changes, the motives and actions of a person may be easily explicable given their true self at one time but appear completely out of character with a different true self at a later time. The root of the problem lies with the notion of wholehearted endorsement. It is to my mind not very controversial to think that we all undergo inner conflicts, and it seems to me that genuine inner conflict requires wholehearted endorsement of opposing traits, whether at the same time or over time. The wholeheartedness of our endorsements, however, seems to aggravate such struggles more than appease them. Of course, Frankfurt might reply that if there is unresolved conflict, then the endorsement was not wholehearted. But without knowing more about *how* a wholehearted attitude can end the regress of inner conflict, wholeheartedness has an air of ad hoc problem solving. As it stands, the notion seems too weak and too vague to maintain the fragile balance between a person's psychological states.

Problem of Effort

The active account makes the true self an achievement of will. The realisation of the true self is a constant exercise of will to order one's traits, identify with some, expel others, stay strong in acting according to the traits that constitute the true self, and control 'wanton desires', i.e. desires that have been exiled but may not have ceased to be. This clashes again with ordinary thinking about the true self. While it may be a hard work to find (or establish) one's true self, it is generally not regarded a struggle to *remain* one's true self, once it has been realized.

Fragmented Selves

Some people may be deeply fragmented in that their core selves feature equally important but incompatible traits. Such inconsistencies and ruptures are part of what characterizes them as unique persons. In fact, it is often especially these people who leave the most forceful impressions on us. The active account, however, leaves no space for such fragmented selves. It requires total consistency. The problem is worsened by the fact that the theory ties consistency to rationality.[11] Any act of choosing is

a rational process and as such constrained by principles of coherence; choosing which of my traits are identity-conferring to me is no exception. In reverse conclusion, if I were to choose incompatible traits as constitutive of my true self, I would violate such rationality constraint and thus be irrational due to my choice. The active account would render many people, if not the majority of us, deeply irrational.

Here, the analysis of the true self reveals a dilemma. The passive account allows for inconsistencies within a person's true self. This, however, is somewhat incompatible with our pre-theoretical conception of the true self. On the other hand, the active account leaves no space for inconsistencies, at least not at the very same time, which leads to the implausible consequence that there are either no people with genuinely conflicted personality cores, or that all those which do have such cores are not only torn and fragmented but also irrational.

The Role of the True Self

So, where do we stand? I have started by outlining some of the central intuitions that we have about the meaning of the notion 'true self'. Neither the active nor the passive account, I have argued, is able to accommodate these intuitions—for example the intuition that the true self is the essence of our psychological self, that it is something stable and persistent, that we genuinely know a person once we know their true self, and that being our true selves, once realized, is effortless. If the concept of the true self refers to some feature of our personality, it must be radically different from what we thought. Revisionary accounts are not uncommon in philosophy and as such no problem. But when we set out to analyse the meaning of some concept and find ourselves far from what we intended to express with it in the first place, then we ought to at least carefully examine and evaluate whether such revision is justified or whether the concept is meaningless after all. Examples of radical revision are found plenty. A radically revisionary account of the true self needs to show that the notion plays an important role in our theory of persons. One role that comes to mind relates the true self to personal identity: the true self as consistent core that identifies us throughout the course of our lives. Both the active and passive account, however, allow for a person to meet criteria of personal identity without ever realizing their true selves. Worse, the active account even allows for someone being their true self at all times without their true self being identical over time since the

same person can have multiple true selves over time.[12] Another role for the true self might be that of conferring psychological identity. But we already have the notion of the psychological self, defined as the entirety of our psychological traits. It defines our mental lives and renders our actions reasonable or unreasonable. Its continuity is what determines, for most people, the diachronic identity of a person. It is unclear what role is left for the true self to play, whether we understand it as personal essence or in terms of wholeheartedness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both accounts are in strong tension or even incompatible with most of the intuitions that are commonly associated with the true self. Any compromise account is likely to inherit the weaknesses of both, the passive and the active account. It is unclear what a better suited account could look like. When a term's meaningful analysis cannot accommodate our key intuitions, then we lose our grip on what we meant to express with it in the first place. Revisionary accounts require at least that the relevant notion plays some explanatory role in our theories. Such a role, I maintained, cannot be found for the notion of the true self. I will not go as far as to deny that the idea of a true self may still have some practical value, perhaps in our folk psychological understanding of people, perhaps in providing guidance in forming our own goals and aspirations. We should keep in mind though that the true self is probably no more than a figure of speech and that from time to time, or from person to person, we may refer to very different things when we use it.

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Notes

1. In that sense, the notion of the true self is closer to a Humean bundle theory. However, there is nothing in the Human concept which enables us to distinguish core traits from peripheral ones.

2. Some people are sceptical about the very idea of character traits. 'Situationism' is the (mainly empirically motivated) view that subjects do not show sufficiently stable behaviour over a variety of situations which would allow inference from behaviour to permanent, underlying character traits. There are various problems with situationism, for example the behaviourist assumptions it makes (Deonna and Teroni 2009). For this article, I will assume that situationism is false.
3. There is indeed a debate about which psychological states should be included as fundamentally important for the identity of a person. I take it that the same debate could be had about the constitution of the true self. Lauria and Pé-Curto (2011), for example, argue that desires are not stable enough to constitute the identity of a person since desires cease to exist once satisfied. This would have the unfortunate and implausible consequence that a person who has managed to satisfy all their deepest desires ceases to exist. Instead they suggest, as other authors such as Kevin Mulligan (2009) have, that our personality core is constituted by values. However, which psychological states primarily constitute the true self is not important to the points made here so I will not further debate it.
4. This account does not exclude that our true self matures with experience. The point is, rather, that we do not consciously choose what aspects of ourselves to cultivate as part of our true self.
5. It is not my intent to give a modal analysis of essential properties. I merely determine what it is to have an essential property by listing relevantly related modal facts.
6. Note that this would be different on a memory account of personal identity. According to that theory, a person dies when they have lost all memory continuity; but at least, in such cases, the person who has suffered such loss would not still identify themselves with their former person. A similar difficulty as for the passive account may occur for defenders of the bodily criterion.
7. Thanks to Takuya Niikawa for pressing me on this point.
8. Maybe one could say that it is easier to conceive a loss of a permanent periphery trait rather than the loss of a core trait. This might certainly work sometimes but there seems to be no guarantee that this method works reliably for all traits all the time. Consider yourself as a teenager. Weren't there many features you considered essential to your individuality? Your infinite admiration of a particular band, say. Still, it seems certainly more common for most people to survive the shedding of various teenager characteristics that seemed indispensable then than to become a different person when this happens. Again, my thanks to Takuya Niikawa to press me in this point.

9. Seen this way, the true self is a psychological state, a state of balance between my traits, rather than a thing (like the core of my personality).
10. Seen this way, the true self is a psychological state, a state of balance between my traits, rather than a thing (like the core of my personality).
11. I am not saying that rational persons cannot have incoherent belief dispositions. My claim is weaker. I think that in order to choose between different features, I need to be equally aware of both options. If these options are incompatible, and I still choose both, then this is equivalent to holding a conjunction of inconsistent beliefs true. This, I claim, is irrational. Thus analysed, my claim should not be too controversial, I hope.
12. As mentioned, the passive account leaves room for modification in this sense too.

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CHAPTER 3

Non-contextual Self: Husserl and Nishida on the Primal Mode of the Self

Shigeru Taguchi

Introduction

How can I describe the original perspective from which I am experiencing the world and others? Seemingly there is no problem here. What is problematic about this topic? Let us think about "my" own perspective. It is the only perspective from which I can experience all that encounters me. It is obvious to say that in my experience, I cannot go beyond this perspective. Nevertheless, I *know* that there are other perspectives that are different from mine. This means that, for some reason, I know the outside of my perspective although I cannot go beyond it. How can I get acquainted with any perspectives other than mine without leaving my own perspective? This is a problem that is not easy to solve.

In this paper, I first approach this problem from the standpoint of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl seems to answer the question about "my" original perspective by his meditations on the

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"primal I" (*Ur-Ich*). I will analyse this strange but thought-provoking concept of ego by interpreting it as a kind of "non-contextual self."

Second, I will compare the result of this consideration of Husserl's "primal I" with the concepts of "pure experience" and "*basho*" (place) proposed by Kitaro Nishida, a Japanese philosopher who worked in the first half of the twentieth century. These concepts of Nishida seem to have a certain similarity with the concept of "primal I" in Husserl. According to Nishida, "pure experience" precedes our ego as an individual. He notes: "It is not that there is experience because there is an individual, but that there is an individual because there is experience" (Nishida 1990, 19). I try to show that this seemingly strange idea might be necessary for our understanding of self and others. Individuals can only appear in a certain context, whereas there is a sort of experience that does not fit in any context. Nishida seems to give an in-depth description of such a "non-contextual" self-experience that makes it possible for us to experience the self as an individual different from other individuals.

My Perspective and Perspectives of Others

First, I will show why an understanding of our own perspective is problematic. Let me examine the following thesis: "I can only experience the world from my perspective." This seems obvious and it would be impossible to deny this. Suppose that I could experience the world from outside my perspective. Even then, the perspective of this experience would still be mine insofar as the subject of this experience is me. In any case, I cannot go beyond my perspective. This appears to be obvious.

However, if we admit this obvious fact, it apparently leads to a difficult riddle. The fact that "I can only experience the world from my perspective" can be understood in the sense that "I cannot experience the world from the perspective of others." Keeping that in mind, how is it possible for me to know that there are perspectives other than mine, given that I cannot go beyond my own perspective?

Suppose that I could not know anything about the perspectives of others. Then it would be meaningless to refer to "my" perspective because it would be the only possible perspective from which the world could be experienced. It would have no meaning to distinguish this perspective as "mine" because no other perspective could be called into question. What is seen from this perspective would be the world itself and nothing would be left outside of it.

Yet, in fact, this is not the case. I know that my perspective is somehow limited and that it is nothing more than one perspective among many others. It also seems to be a kind of obvious fact.

In this way, we now have two different obvious facts that seemingly contradict each other. Namely,

1. I cannot go beyond my perspective.
2. I know, for some reason, that my perspective is limited and that there are perspectives other than mine.

Now we are led to a question: how can I know that there are other perspectives although I can never experience the outside of my perspective? We have to find a view from which those two obvious facts are compatible with each other, given that they are both truly obvious and undeniable. How can we resolve this seeming contradiction between both facts?

In order to answer this question, I will refer to Edmund Husserl's concept of "primal I" which he developed in his later works.

Husserl's Concept of "Primal I" as Non-contextual Self

In his last published work entitled *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl refers to the "primal I" near the end of Part III A, which can be seen as a culmination of the train of thought in this work. He points out that when I perform the so-called phenomenological epoché, all human beings are included in the phenomenon of the world. The phenomenological epoché can be understood as a philosophical operation by which all positings of beings are suspended, and all beings are seen as phenomena. Husserl claims,

> *I* am the one who performs the epoché, and, even if there are others, and even if they practice the epoché in direct community with me, [they and] all other human beings with their entire act-life are included, for me, within my epoché, in the world-phenomenon which, in my epoché, is exclusively mine. (Husserl 1970, 184)

As he claims, in the epoché, the world-phenomenon is "exclusively mine" and all others are parts of this phenomenon. This means that in the epoché, I take exclusively "my" perspective. This corresponds to the perspective that I referred to in the previous section, i.e., the only

perspective from which I can experience the world. Husserl points to the fact that here the epoché creates "a unique sort of philosophical solitude." But this solitude is highly unusual and different from the commonplace one. "In this solitude," he explains, "I am not a single individual who has somehow willfully cut himself off from the society of mankind, perhaps even for theoretical reasons, or who is cut off by accident, as in a shipwreck, but who nevertheless knows that he still belongs to that society" (ibid.).

In this passage, Husserl distinguishes two different meanings of "I," i.e., the "I" in the epoché and the single individual I as a member of a society. We are usually aware of ourselves as an individual who is a member of a society. However, Husserl points out here that there is another meaning of "I" which can be disclosed in the phenomenological epoché. Husserl further describes this meaning of the unique "I."

> I am not *an* ego, who still has his *you*, his *we*, his total community of cosubjects in natural validity. All of mankind, and the whole distinction and ordering of the personal pronouns, has become a phenomenon within my epoché; and so has the privilege of I-the-man among other men. The 'I' that I attain in the epoché, [...] is actually called 'I' only by equivocation—though it is an essential equivocation. (ibid.)

The whole distinction and ordering of the personal pronouns are suspended, so that I am no longer an "I" who can be understood in relation to "you," "we," "she," and so on. This means that I cannot comprehend the "I" in the epoché *by situating it in a context*. In my view, Husserl here tries to clarify the contrast between the "I" that is situated in a context and receives its meaning from this context, on the one hand, and the "I" that is deprived of any context so that it can only be called "I" in an equivocal way, on the other hand.[1]

Why does the latter "I" have no context? This is because the only perspective from which I can experience the world is comparable to nothing. It has no other equivalent perspectives outside of or next to it. As I pointed out in the previous section, the original perspective from which I exclusively experience the world leaves nothing to be experienced outside it, because if I could experience something outside of it, I would again experience it from "my" original perspective insofar as "I" would be the subject of experience.

Husserl designates the ego of such an incomparable perspective "primal I." In my view, it is not an extravagant ego superior to the

commonplace ego. There is no separate ego outside of such a familiar ego that can be juxtaposed with other egos. The "primal I" is also familiar to our experiencing life, and it belongs to the obvious fact that I can only experience the world from my perspective. As I said earlier, I cannot go beyond my perspective. This is why the primal I has no comparable egos next to it. It is not incomparable and unique in the sense that it is distinguished from other egos, but, in my view, it has no context in which it can be compared with others and determined in relation to them. Consequently, it cannot be said that a primal I is superior or inferior to commonplace egos because it cannot share a context with them. It is simply a non-contextual self. It is nothing more or less than this.

Now, the next question is, what is the relationship between such non-contextual self, on the one hand, and contextual self, the ego that is understood in relation to other egos, on the other? Is it possible to comprehend the relationship between them, although they have no context in common?

"Primal I" and "I" Among Others

In one research manuscript, Husserl describes the ego in the sense of "primal I" as follows.

> This *ego* is the one that is absolutely unique and allows no meaningful multiplication, or, to put it more sharply, excludes such multiplication as meaningless. (Husserl 1973, 589–590; my translation)[2]

Such an exclusion of multiplication does not entail that the primal ego is numerically single. Klaus Held points out that the uniqueness of "I" does not result from a comparison with other egos; rather it repudiates any comparability. He claims that in this case, "uniqueness" does not mean "numerical oneness" and consequently, "it does not exclude a second or third ego" (Held 1966, 161). The "uniqueness" should not be understood in the sense of solipsism. Other egos do not need to be excluded; it is only that they cannot be put on the same plane as the primal "I" which is non-contextual. The non-contextuality of the primal "I" does not contradict the plurality of egos. It is true that the primal "I" itself cannot be multiplied because "my" perspective is unique and exclusive for the world-experience I myself undertake. However, it does not mean that there are no other egos different from mine. It is only that

they cannot be compared with the "I" as "primal I," which cannot be put in relation to many egos on the same plane.[3]

It is now clear that I can be both a non-contextual "primal I" and an individual ego among many others at the same time. In other words, non-contextuality and contextuality are two different aspects of me myself.

What, then, is the relationship between these two aspects of the "I"? Let us see what Husserl says about this. On one hand, he claims, "the primal 'I,' the ego of my epoché, [...] can never lose its uniqueness and personal indeclinability" (Husserl 1970, 185). The system of relationship between personal pronouns is not valid at this level. On the other hand, Husserl points out:

> It is only an apparent contradiction to this that the ego—through a particular constitutive accomplishment of its own—makes itself declinable, for itself, transcendentally; that, starting from itself and in itself, it constitutes transcendental intersubjectivity, to which it then adds itself as a merely privileged member, namely, as 'I' among the transcendental others. (ibid.)

Husserl claims here that indeclinability and declinability of the ego do not contradict each other, which means that the ego can be both non-contextual and contextual at the same time. What is more, their relationship is described as the movement that the primal I "makes itself declinable." This can be interpreted as a sort of contextualization of the primal I, in which it integrates itself into a context of a relationship between many egos.

Husserl also describes such self-contextualization as a "change of signification of 'I' [...] into 'other I's,' into 'all of us,' we who are many 'I's,' and among whom I am but *one* 'I'" (Husserl 1970, 182). This change of signification is also called "modification" of the "primal I" and analysed in various texts.[4] The "primal I" modifies itself into an ego among others. Consequently, the "primal I" finds itself in a modified form, i.e., integrated into a relationship with "you," "we," "she," and so on. However, after being modified, the "primal I" does not dissolve into its modification. It still remains as "primal I;" and the contextualized ego constantly refers back to the "primal I" whose modification it is. In other words, the "primal I" places itself in a context that is composed of a relationship with many others and finds itself in a contextualized form, but at the same time, it does not lose its fundamental trait.

In this movement of modification, everything is flowing. It is not appropriate to hypostatize any moment of this movement. Before this movement starts, there would be neither the "primal I" nor the contextualized I. Both "I"s find themselves only in the movement of modification, in which they first appear as distinct moments. In other words, they are two extreme poles of this continuously flowing movement. What we call the "I" or "self" is only found in this movement, or rather, it is nothing other than this movement itself.

How can we understand our perspective of experience from this viewpoint? As I said earlier, we see the world from our fundamental perspective that leaves nothing outside it. Everything must be experienced from this perspective, including other egos. But I also experience myself as a member of the society composed of such experienced egos. In this way, I am constantly modifying my fundamental perspective and integrate it into a system of multiple perspectives. On the level of the modified perspective, all perspectives are juxtaposed on the same plane. However, each perspective refers back to its original meaning, i.e., non-modified, non-contextual perspective. Such an original perspective is fundamentally non-contextual. That is why the perspectives of various egos exclude each other. Experience from one perspective cannot be shared by other perspectives. Each perspective fundamentally creates an original context, in which everything that is experienced can be situated. Consequently, each fundamental perspective cannot be situated in the context it originally creates. When it is situated in a context, it is already modified and objectified.

Thus, each of us is constantly living through a fundamental, non-contextual perspective, which is continuously modified into a contextualized perspective. I always find myself as such a contextualized self among others, while still aware of myself seeing from my non-contextual perspective. My life as a self is a movement stretching between these two intrinsically different dimensions.

Nishida's Concept of "Pure Experience" and Its Non-contextuality

Husserl's peculiar concept of "primal I" was thus interpreted as a movement in which I see everything from a fundamental perspective that cannot be situated in a context and, at the same time, from this perspective, I am aware of myself by situating myself in a certain context. In the next

step, I would like to compare this concept of "primal I" with Kitaro Nishida's concept of the self.

According to Husserl, the "primal I" cannot yet be recognized in contrast to other egos. In my view, this is because of its non-contextuality. From "my" primitive perspective, I am aware of myself as non-contextual and, at the same time, I find myself as a modified ego situated in a context. In this context, I find myself juxtaposed with others. This means that I have a non-contextual perspective from which I find both myself and others situated in the same context. This non-modified perspective can be regarded as being prior to any discreteness of multiple perspectives.

Nishida seems to share this line of thought with Husserl insofar as he claims that there is a primitive perspective that precedes the discreteness of many individual egos and their perspectives. In his early work, *An Inquiry into the Good* (1911), Nishida describes such a primitive perspective with the term "pure experience." Experience is "pure" insofar as it is "just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination" (Nishida 1990, 3). Nishida further explains "pure experience" as follows.

> The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be. In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one directly experiences one's own state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified. This is the most refined type of experience. (Nishida 1990, 3–4)

Insofar as experience is pure, it precedes any discrimination made by reflective thought. The seemingly insurmountable distinction between many egos and their perspectives are also made by discriminative thought. In pure experience, we do not yet have any thoughts such as "this is my perspective, it is different from other perspectives and they are all disjunctive," and so on. Rather, everything is experienced in a unity. This means that in pure experience, we see the world from the perspective that is prior to any discreteness of individual egos. In fact, Nishida explains the relation between pure experience and individual in the following way.

> Pure experience can […] transcend the individual person. Although it may sound strange, experience knows time, space, and the individual person and so it is beyond them. It is not that there is experience because there is an individual, but that there is an individual because there is experience. (Nishida 1990, 19)

Here it is clearly expressed that pure experience is prior to the discreteness of individuals insofar as they are all experienced from the perspective of pure experience, which, therefore, is beyond them. Nishida also notes that by such a concept of pure experience, "I thus arrived at the idea that experience is more fundamental than individual differences, and in this way I was able to avoid solipsism" (Nishida 1990, xxx).[5]

In my view, similar to Husserl's "primal I," Nishida's "pure experience" can also be interpreted in terms of its fundamental non-contextuality. Pure experience cannot be put into a context that is more comprehensive than it is. Rather, pure experience always constitutes a fundamental unity *in which* every moment of experience appears and finds its place. In this way, pure experience provides the most comprehensive context for all distinct moments that appear in experience. Thus it is non-contextual itself and if it is contextualized, it is no longer pure.

Such a non-contextuality of pure experience seems to be suggested in the following passage.

> [F]rom the perspective of my theory of pure experience, we cannot leave the sphere of pure experience. Meanings or judgments derive from the connection of a present consciousness to past consciousnesses; meanings and judgments are based on the unifying activity on the great network of consciousness. They indicate the relation between present consciousness and other consciousnesses, and therefore merely express the position of present consciousness within the network of consciousness. (Nishida 1990, 9)

As Nishida suggests here, we cannot go beyond the sphere of pure experience and observe it from the outside. In other words, it is non-contextual. It is in pure experience that any contextualization occurs. In pure experience, consciousness is connected to other consciousnesses. By this, a new context is continuously created and present consciousness is situated in this context. This is the way in which meaning is created in pure experience. Throughout this process, it is always pure experience that generates contexts, and therefore it cannot be put in any context itself.

"Place" or "*Basho*" as Non-contextual Self

Thus, Nishida's "pure experience" can be interpreted as a kind of non-contextual self. However, in his work *An Inquiry into the Good*, Nishida sometimes makes such statements that do not fit with the non-contextuality of pure experience.

For instance, Nishida sometimes attributes the comprehensiveness of pure experience to its "great" or "greater" unity (Nishida 1990, 16). In contrast, individual experience is said to be "small." The following statements are typical examples of this claim.

> The individual's experience is simply a small, distinctive sphere of limited experience within true experience. (Nishida 1990, 19)

> The sphere of consciousness is never limited to the individual person, for the individual is no more than a small system within consciousness. (Nishida 1990, 28)

Such an expression might be misleading. When we say that individual's experience is "smaller" than pure experience, the latter is drawn into a comparison with the former. This means that pure experience is put on the same plane as an individual's experience. We thus end up taking a stance as if we were able to observe pure experience from outside together with other moments. In this case, pure experience no longer has a non-contextual character.

Can we compare pure experience with the individual moments that appear in it? By such a comparison, we would transform pure experience into a new moment of experience, which again has to appear in pure experience. So pure experience itself always transcends any limited, distinct moment of experience. Only the limited moments are comparable with each other, and this comparison is always made in pure experience.[6] If it is appropriate to characterize pure experience as non-contextual, it cannot be said that it is greater or smaller than anything because it is incomparable.

In later works, Nishida himself does not make the kind of statements that have been quoted above. He seems to distance himself from such an expression that our true self is greater than our individual self. Rather, he seems to radicalize the non-contextuality of pure experience by his concept of "place" or "*basho*." Nishida explains this concept in his essay entitled "*Basho*" (first published in 1926) as follows.

> When we think of thing-events there must be a *basho* wherein they are mirrored. Initially we may think of this as the field of consciousness. To be conscious of something one must mirror it upon the field of consciousness. […] By means of it, phenomena of consciousness are mutually related and connected to each other. (Nishida 2012, 51)

Every being is "mirrored" upon the field of consciousness or "*basho*." By this mirroring, various phenomena are concatenated and make the context in which they are situated. In this way, objects can be regarded "as occupying various positions within that field of consciousness-in-general and as capable of being mirrored in various forms" (Nishida 2012, 53).

According to these statements, we can construe the "*basho*" as a non-contextual self that creates the context of every phenomenon but cannot be contextualized itself. This is more clearly shown in another passage. Concerning the "*basho* of lived experience" Nishida states as follows:

> The so-called subject-object opposition is established within it [=*basho*] as the true I—that which endlessly mirrors itself within and which contains infinite beings by becoming nothing. We can say neither that it is the same nor that it is different. (Nishida 2012, 52)

In order to say that something is the same or different, we have to put it into a context. However, it is impossible to place the *basho* in a context, because it is nothing other than the place of every contextualization. *Basho* itself is non-contextual.

Moreover, Nishida claims that the *basho* reaches beyond the field of consciousness because the objects that transcend the field of consciousness are also mirrored upon the *basho*. In order for the field of consciousness to be related to the objects that transcend it, they both have to be mirrored upon a deeper *basho*. However, this does not mean that we simply have to leave the field of consciousness. Rather, we have to find a more profound meaning of consciousness. Nishida himself emphasizes this point:

> When seeing such an object [=oppositionless transcendent object] we may think that we are going outside by transcending the field of subjective consciousness that establishes the contents of opposition. But this means nothing other than that we are advancing from the standpoint of oppositional

> nothing to the standpoint of true nothing. And this means nothing but advancing beyond the *basho* that mirrors the shadows of things to the *basho* wherein things are implaced. This does not mean that we are discarding the so-called standpoint of consciousness; rather we are making this standpoint thorough. (Nishida 2012, 57–58)

What is determined as consciousness is already contextualized in relation to the objects that stand outside of it. In Nishida's view, true consciousness is the place that even mirrors every determined consciousness and everything that is determined in contrast to such consciousness. Therefore he claims:

> What has been determined as the scope of consciousness is that which consciousness is *of* and not that which [itself] is conscious. That which truly is conscious must be that which envelops within even what cannot be determined as so-called consciousness. (Nishida 2012, 68)

Thus, what Nishida thinks of as true consciousness goes beyond any determined consciousness. This means that true consciousness cannot be placed in any determined context. In other words, it is "a nothing that is without any constraint" (Nishida 2012, 60). Nishida further explains such a transcendent "nothing" which is called the "*basho* of true nothing" as follows.

> In no sense can it then be objectified and be intellectually determined. Knowledge instead would have to be what is established by means of its determination. Although it is nothing in the sense that it cannot be determined at all, every being nevertheless must be further implaced in it. (Nishida 2012, 73)

This non-determinacy of the "*basho* of true nothing" signifies, in my view, the non-contextuality of the most primitive perspective of the self. Everything that is determined and situated in a context is seen as it is from this non-contextual perspective. It is the place in which every being has its particular position, but which itself can be placed nowhere. It transcends every determinacy, but nevertheless, as stated earlier, this place, *basho*, is nothing other than our true consciousness. Deep in ourselves, we find a place that transcends every context and determinacy. This is the place from which we see the world the most simply and primitively.

Concluding Remark

Now I will close my consideration by summarizing the main points of my arguments and examining their possible meaning.

Through interpreting Husserl's "primal I," we came to conclude that there is a fundamental non-contextual perspective that we always live through while experiencing the world. At the same time, we always find ourselves in a particular context and situate ourselves in a system of meaningful relations. Our "self" is an endless movement in which the non-contextual modifies itself into the contextual. In this movement, I experience myself both as a merely contextualized self and as a non-contextual self at the same time. I experience myself as a contextualized self in relation to other selves. So I am an individual self different from other selves and, at the same time, I am also a non-contextual self that experiences both myself and others in mutual relationship. The "self" is an incessant oscillation of these two aspects, or rather, a superposition of them in perpetual tension.

A similar thought can be found in the philosophy of Kitaro Nishida. He even radicalizes this thought in one particular direction. His concept of "pure experience" suggests that we have dimension of experience prior to individual selves. This can also be interpreted as a non-contextual self, but Nishida also describes it as if there were a "greater self" prior to individual selves. This problematic expression is later abandoned by Nishida himself. Instead, he seems to make the non-contextuality of the self more thorough with his concept of *basho*. The *basho* makes it possible for various beings to find their own positions in a context; but the *basho* itself transcends every determination and contextualization. So to speak, it is a kind of "transcendence in immanence;" for it is the ultimate immanence that can also be called "true I" or "true consciousness" whereas it is precisely such a bottom of immanence that transcends every determinacy.

In this way, Nishida suggests that there is a fundamental perspective from which the world and all beings are seen as they are. It precedes myself as a self in contrast and in relation to other selves. From this perspective, my individual self and other individual selves are experienced on the same plane. So again, like in Husserl, there is a perspective that is prior to discrete individuals and, at the same time, still constitutes my own self.

Thus, Husserl and Nishida both reach the point in which what is seen from my perspective is nothing other than reality as it is. From this perspective, which can be called non-contextual, I experience myself and others as juxtaposed to each other. I am both the one who sees everything from the primitive perspective and, at the same time, the one who is seen as an individual that stands side by side with other individuals. This might seem paradoxical, but, without accepting this consequence, we cannot understand our highly natural everyday experience of self and others.[7]

Now, in one way, we can answer the question that I asked at the beginning of this paper, that is: How can I know that there are perspectives other than mine although I can never experience outside of my perspective? We can respond to this question by referring to the thought that I experience the relation between my own ego and other egos from my non-contextual perspective. I have a characteristic perspective that transcends my own individual self. My self-experience consists precisely in the movement that this non-contextual perspective modifies itself into the ego that is integrated into the system of mutual relationship between various egos. This means that the structure of my self-experience is composed of my non-contextual perspective and the contextualized relationship between self and others.

When I refer to myself as a "self," I see myself to be different from others and together with them at the same time from the "place" that cannot be limited by any context—the "place" that is neither great nor small and neither same nor different. Living through the most primitive, "non-contextual" perspective from which I see everything, I am aware of myself as being situated in a particular context, which means that I am aware of myself in an entanglement with others. Admittedly, we tend to naively imagine that selves are each imprisoned in a separate room and cannot look into each other's cell. Yet, such a picture is nothing other than an artificial, secondary abstraction. The most straightforward perspective of our life, which is arguably non-contextual, appears to be bizarre if we reflectively gaze at it. For what is extremely obvious does not allow itself to be visible and easily comprehensible.—Rather, we even don't notice it in its natural functioning in our everyday life.[8]

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Notes

1. Husserl points to the fact that in such an epoché, the expression of "I" is equivocal and that the latter "I" of this contrast—the primal I—is "wrongly called 'ego' because an alter ego gives no meaning for it" (Husserl 1973, 586; my translation).
2. The German original text is as follows: "Dieses *ego* ist das im absoluten Sinn einzige, der keine sinnvolle Vervielfältigung zulässt, noch schärfer ausgedrückt, als sinnlos ausschliesst" (Husserl 1973, 589–590).
3. This is suggested in the following passage. "[T]he ego as it is disclosed in the epoché, existing for itself, is as yet not at all 'an' ego which can have other or many fellow egos outside itself" (Husserl 1970, 82). The indefinite article "an" already implies that there are (or can be) other egos. The primal I cannot be called "an I." However, an expression such as "an I" is unusual in everyday language. Rather, the simple "I" (without any article) signifies more natural and fundamental "I." Husserl refers to this obvious fact in a research manuscript (Ms. B I 14/138a). See Taguchi (2006, 159).
4. For more details, see Chapter VI of Taguchi (2006).
5. In "Fragments on Pure Experience," Nishida also remarks as follows. "We have to admit that there is an incessant unifying activity or the true ego behind the fact of the existence and development of consciousness. Given that, the sphere of this true ego is not limited to an individual consciousness. Rather, it can be considered to encompass both my consciousness and the consciousness of others" (Nishida 1966, 382; my translation).
6. Nishida describes the self viewed from the standpoint of pure experience as follows. "The self is an infinite unifier and can never be made the object of comparison and unification" (Nishida 1990, 64–65).
7. Of course we cannot say that the problem of self and other has been satisfactorily solved in this paper. Especially, it must be said that the problem of "radical Otherness" is not addressed here. I discussed this problem in connection with this paper in Taguchi (2019a).
8. See Taguchi (2006), Chapter I and Taguchi (2019b).

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CHAPTER 4

Habits and the Diachronic Structure of the Self

Michael G. Butler and Shaun Gallagher

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the role of habit in giving shape to conscious experience and importantly to our pre-reflective awareness of ourselves which includes the sense of mineness that accompanies our conscious experience. For the most part, discussions in philosophy of mind and phenomenology concerning pre-reflective self-awareness are focused on determining the relationship between phenomenal consciousness and selfhood.[1] For this reason perhaps, the existence of pre-reflective self-awareness is usually appealed to as evidence for a form of selfhood that appears within conscious experience as a component of its synchronic unity.[2] In this chapter, however, we will concern ourselves with the pre-reflective sense of ourselves that appears in conscious experience as it pertains to the diachronic unity of the self—that is the sense of a unitary self as existing over the course of multiple episodic experiences. Our aim is to provide

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a phenomenological account of the relationship between the minimal, pre-reflective sense of self and what is often termed the 'narrative self.'[3] We will argue that habits play a role in preserving the significance of our past in our present experience and in unifying our experience as a self for whom the world is present across disparate episodes of experience.

In service of this objective, our chapter is divided into three parts. First, we clarify the concept of the minimal self and its relation to the pre-reflective mode of experience. Second, we examine the role of the body in the constitution of our minimal awareness of ourselves. In particular we focus on Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the body's ability to acquire habits as crucial for the development of a first person perspective. Habits, we argue, make possible the perception of affordances or action possibilities that are there "for me." Finally, we argue that due to our embodiment, and the body's habitual and developmental character, our self-experience sediments into a recognizable pattern of habitual vectors of experience that show up to us pre-reflectively as opportunities for action. It is this preservation of our past carried out by our bodies and our pre-reflective awareness of it that ultimately allows us to take a reflective stance toward ourselves and to narratively consider ourselves as a diachronically unified agent.

The Pre-reflective Mode of Givenness

In order to understand the minimal self, it is first important to understand what is meant by the pre-reflective mode of experience. Phenomenologists contend that pre-reflective self-awareness is a built-in structure of human consciousness.[4] That is, this structure is a part of the phenomenal character or what-it-is-like-ness of any possible experience—that there is something it is like to experience X means that there is something it is like *for me* to experience X. It is the implicit awareness that, for example, any perception of the world that I have is *my* perception. Zahavi describes this awareness as follows:

> For every possible experience we have, each of us can say: whatever it is like for me to have this experience, it is *for me* that it is like to have it. What-it-is-likeness is properly speaking, what-it-is-like-for-me-ness[5]

An easy way to grasp pre-reflective minimal self-awareness is to contrast it with reflective self-consciousness. The minimal self is not experienced in the same way in which I may be conscious of myself when I take myself as the object of my thought. Consider, for example, the motoric

and perceptual aspects involved in the process of building a model train: I'm holding and manipulating small pieces of the model, I am smelling the glue, and seeing the instruction booklet. As I am in the midst of building my model, I might stop and wonder how long it has been since I last ate. In reflecting on my past I'm now thinking about myself reflectively: I am considering my recent history, noticing sensations of hunger in my stomach, wondering if they can be endured or whether I will feel better if I get up and eat something. Before I started reflecting on my hunger, I was not thinking about or attending to myself; I was focused on my project of building the model.

In building the model, I am attending to the model and perhaps to the instructions; in reflecting on my hunger I reflectively attend to a diachronically spread out notion of myself about which I consider, and make judgments. However, in each of these instances, I am the one doing the building or the reflecting, and in each experience, I am pre-reflectively self-aware of what I am doing. My experiences involve a minimal self insofar as they are the experiences of a subject, that is, insofar as there is a first-personal character to them.

In this way pre-reflective self-awareness does not involve being aware of myself as the object of a perceptual or mental act—a seeing, a touching, a smelling or a considering. Rather, this kind of minimal self-awareness accompanies all of my experiences insofar as I am the one who has them.[6] Thus, the minimal self is not an intentional content of consciousness so much as it is a feature of the structure of consciousness.

It is important to note that it is on the basis of such pre-reflective awareness that my mental life is *mine* that reflective self-consciousness is possible. Only insofar as my experience presents itself to me as my own can I stop and consider my own experience in a reflective manner. For example, only because I am pre-reflectively aware of the fact that the hunger is mine, can I then reflectively take this up, consider the feelings of hunger as my own, and make a plan to remedy the situation. In this way, the pre-reflective mode of experience of the minimal self undergirds and makes possible the reflective consideration of oneself as a diachronic unity, a personal self understood as the subject of a life that can be taken as an object of consciousness, considered and thoughtfully directed.

According to a certain line of thought, there is more that is pre-reflectively available to us in any conscious experience of the world than just the minimal awareness of the "mineness" of the experience. Ecological psychologists like James Gibson[7] and Ulrich Neisser[8] have

argued that there is information available in perception that specifies the position of the perceiving organism. The idea is basically this: As I move around in the world, my visual array covaries in a reliable and law-like way with my position in the environment.[9] As I move to the left for instance, my entire visual array shifts to the right. I am directly and pre-reflectively aware of the movement of the visual field, in such a way that I do not need to make an inference in order to calculate my position.[10] Rather my position with respect to the rest of the visual field is directly and pre-reflectively experienced in the same perceptual act that perceives the object to which I am attending. The information I am picking up reveals not just a new side of the object I am moving around, but also reveals my own position in relation to the object. I thus come to learn, through my movement, not only where and what things are, but where I am in relation to these things. I have a pre-reflective awareness, not only of the fact that the objects I perceive are there for me, but I am also pre-reflectively aware of my bodily position in relation to the objects with which I am concerned.

Phenomenological thinkers have stressed the way in which the awareness of these facts is not an awareness of my body's objective or geometrical position, but an awareness of myself that I experience as motivation for action. The objects to which I attend thus specify, not only an ecological awareness of myself as situated in a physical environment—although this is certainly true—but a pragmatic or existential sense of myself as well—that is, a sense of what I can do and where my interests can lead. Consider, for instance, Sartre's famous example of looking for a friend, Pierre, in a crowded café.[11] Sartre's assertion is that when I see that Pierre is not there, prior to any objective qualities of the café (the tables, the chairs, the bad lighting, the smoky atmosphere), I am aware of myself insofar as my project of finding my friend is as much a built-in structure of the experience as the minimal awareness that the experience is mine. This project, understood both as a something I am continuously and actively pursuing and as a centrifugal projection of meaning out into the world, is what reveals the café as missing my friend. If I did not have this project or intention of finding my friend, or if I were not pre-reflectively aware of it, then the absence of Pierre would not show up. This situation I encounter, already laden with the negative value "missing my friend," motivates my continued searching activity until I find him or give up my search. In encountering the absence of my friend, I am encountering myself insofar as I encounter my own project revealed

to me as a motivation for action. I am thus not only pre-reflectively aware of where I am but also of what I am doing—the project with which I am involved—in this case, the project which motivates me by revealing my situation as missing something. On this view, I, as an agent, project my intentions into the world and experience myself in the form of motivating values which precede objective "things" in my perception.

Sartre's example is meant to show how my pre-reflective awareness of myself is not founded primarily in a calculating consciousness concerned with the objective position of things in the world or the transcendental structures of my experience, one of which is me. Rather the 'me' of which I am pre-reflectively aware is an action-oriented agent[12] situated within a nexus of ongoing projects which supply the motivation for action.[13]

Habits and the Preservation of the Past in the Present

Merleau-Ponty's analysis of habits fills out this picture and helps us to see how our pre-reflective awareness of ourselves as the possessors of bodies with skills is connected to our pre-reflective awareness of ourselves as action-oriented agents motivated by our own projects. Understanding our projects as being carried forth in a habitual manner allows us to see how our past shapes our engagement with the world in an importantly embodied manner. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty argues that an agent's behavior is best understood as the motivated application of habit. In pre-reflective scenarios, like Sartre's search for Pierre in the café, motivation is encountered in the situation as a preferred, general mode of response to a situation that affords a general mode of behavior. In any particular instance, such behavior will differ in its precise motor elements, but will exhibit a family resemblance of sorts across its separate instantiations.

For example, when I form the habit of waking up early to the sound of my alarm clock, I do not weld a specific program of movement (removing my sheets in such and such a way, swinging my legs over the side of the bed to the same position every time, lifting myself from my bed with the exact same muscle movements, heading to the kitchen to make coffee along exactly the same path, etc.) to a specific stimulus (the ringing of my alarm clock). Rather, the ringing of the alarm clock is perceived as having a general meaning for me as an agent already engaged in the world. It invites a familiar form of response whose specific movements may differ across instantiations—getting up to start the day.

For Merleau-Ponty, the body is the medium of consciousness, through which the agent enacts meaning within the world. Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty writes, "consciousness is originarily not an 'I think that' but rather, an 'I can'".[14] On his view, this "I can" is always that of a particular body with particular capacities or powers. In order to look in another direction, for instance, I must move my eyes or my head. In order to see what is beyond the door I must change my position.

These bodily movements which serve to alter my perception are themselves motivated by the incomplete character of the world as it is perceptually available to me as a body. This is because the particular body that I am is limited by its size, position and capacities. As a body so limited, I do not encounter a world full of present discrete objects and then make decisions about how to interact with them. Rather, my perspective is always incomplete. It contains horizons that suggest or hint at something beyond them. When I am motivated by a situation, this incomplete world shows me that there is an ambiguous "something over there," just beyond the horizon of what is determinately present for me—some vibration in my peripheral vision, or a sound that seems to come from behind an object which obstructs my view. This ambiguous, indeterminate phenomenon, just beyond the horizon of what is determinately present, presents itself to me (perhaps) as something to be moved toward, interrogated, gazed upon or made concrete by moving my body and altering my point of view. The world can only suggest this motivation to me insofar as I am a body with a limited perspective, but capable of a certain kind of motion and interrogative action that alters this perspective—in the process clarifying what had previously been fuzzy or ambiguous.

Importantly for Merleau-Ponty, these bodily movements and capacities are always habitual. The acquisition of a habit occurs when my body "has assimilated a new meaningful core" to the way it moves through, interrogates or acts upon the world.[15] Such an acquisition gives rise to new possibilities for the appearance of ambiguous phenomena to be moved toward and made determinate. Habit thus provides a background against which particular action possibilities or affordances can show up as meaningful to the perceiver. In this context, however, such affordances appear as more than objective properties of the environment or logical possibilities for action. Rather, they appear as solicitations,[16] or invitations[17]—that is, they invite or suggest a sort of action to a perceiver. Furthermore, an ambiguous phenomenon in the distance might

suggest not only that it could become determinate, but that I ought to investigate it—a loud crash outside my room in the middle of the night, for instance. In this way, not only are affordances perceived in the environment as present possibilities, they can also be perceived as normative, that is suggesting not only that something is present, but that I ought to do something to it, with it, or about it.[18]

Habit gives rise to such perceptual demands because it stabilizes perception providing a baseline familiarity with the world and what is required for my movement through it; something is carried over from my past negotiation of similar situations. This allows me to attend to a more general goal or activity rather than the more local, component movements necessary for such activity. For instance, if I am driving my car and decide to pass the car in front of me, I don't need to attend to the component parts of such a movement. I don't need to think, "blinker, mirror, blindspot, steering wheel, gas pedal" the way I was taught as an adolescent. Rather, having acquired the habit of driving, these smaller movements are incorporated into a single gesture. I simply pull out to pass and accelerate, accomplishing all of these smaller movements in the process. Similarly, I don't need to compare the objective size of my car with the objective space available in the passing lane the way I might have to if I were driving a school bus for the first time. Rather, because I am habituated to my car and the movement possibilities it affords, I directly perceive the passing lane as "space enough to pass" and seize the opportunity. Thus, my situation on the highway is not a frenetic one, involving countless perceptual variables that need to be monitored, mentally represented, and considered. Rather, by means of my habitual driving ability, the highway presents me with a meaningful situation which calls for a general response—passing the slower car in front of me. In this way, the formation of habits, as the method by which our bodies stabilize our perception into meaningful situations, is our "general means of having a world."[19]

Thus, acquiring a habit like driving is what it means for our bodies to assimilate a new meaningful frame of reference. As a body that has acquired the habit of walking, I directly perceive a doorway as large enough for me to pass through. As a body that has become habituated to my car, I have a similar perception of space, but in this case the passing lane is perceived as large enough to fit the car. My movement capacities are coupled to the car in this sense.[20] My bodily movement becomes habituated to the car as a perceptual apparatus in the same way

that a blind person navigates by the use of a cane. Just as a blind person perceives the space around him in terms of the length of his cane and the space he marks out around himself by its movement, the space that surrounds me on the highway is perceived in terms of the car's movement possibilities rather than those of my organic body.[21] I navigate the space of the highway not as a body that is within a car, but as a body fully integrated with a car on a highway. Thus, in having acquired a habitual way of driving, my body has acquired a new meaningful alignment, which is to say that my body "marks out the space around it"[22] according to the movement possibilities of a body-car-highway system, not just a flesh and bone body.

Examples of coupling my body with perceptual appendages like a cane or a car demonstrate how the formation of a habit "gives the form of generality to our life and prolongs our personal acts into stable dispositions."[23] The world I encounter is not neutral with respect to my personal history of movement within it. Rather, by means of a habit, understood as the acquisition of a meaningful frame of reference or alignment relative to my bodily movement, my situation is structured as calling for a general sort of response. Anything that I perceive as possible will appear so within the general terms of the habitual structure of the situation. I may, for instance, wish to pass the car in front of me, or slow down and follow behind it. But these options are only available to *me* on the basis of an accrued or sedimented general structure of my activity that is a result of my past engagement with the environment in which it takes place: my history of driving on a highway. Thus, to encounter a situation as soliciting action is not only to have an ecological awareness of myself as a zero-point of the first-person perspective, as a bare ipseity or abstract minimal self. It is rather to encounter my own "thickness"—my particular past in the form of the sedimented general structure which allows any particular solicitation to appear for me. Minimal self-awareness includes a pre-reflective awareness of my own past of habitual development in the form of the givenness of a solicitation. In order to have the particular experience of mineness that I have, I must be a particular entity with a particular past that gives form to the first-personal character of my experience.

This analysis of Merleau-Ponty's account of habitual acquisition shows that the body appears in our lived experience, not only as an objective thing that I consider and reflect upon. Rather it appears as my means of access to the world and is revealed simultaneously with it in and through

my engagement of possibilities for movement and perception. In any instance my pre-reflective self-awareness is a temporally dimensioned bodily self-awareness. The world always shows up *for me* as inviting me to engage it through *my* bodily capacities. Indeed, my body appears on the subjective or *noetic* side of experience. It is encountered as agentive, as bound up with the "how" of practical givenness of the object. The world is encountered as a place for my body and its capacities to engage what is possible for it. Importantly, this means that part of the experience of mineness is an experience of my past, not as such, i.e., not as something past, but as a structuring component that both enables and constrains my present experience. There is thus an instituted continuity in my life by virtue of the way that past development of my bodily capacities shapes the sorts of things I can encounter in any particular situation as salient or of interest to me. I encounter a world that is given to *me in particular*, not as a completely anonymous ipseity, but as a particular body with a particular personal history.[24] It is only through this particular history that a general field of possibilities is available *to me*.

Importantly, the possibilities I encounter as motivating my actions are not encountered as something added onto an already fully constituted perceptual field. In other words, I do not first have value-free perceptual content that is then interpreted and given an idiosyncratic phenomenal character according to what I am interested in. Rather, I am interested in or geared into the world from the start. It is on the basis of ongoing or 'instituted' habitual projects that the world shows up to me as a tension that must be relieved, inviting me to act.

Narrative and the Diachronic Unity of the Self

We would now like to postulate that this acquaintance with our past development in the present that is given rise to by the acquisition of habits is in part what allows us, not only to experience ourselves pre-reflectively as a subject with an available past in the form of bodily, agentive possibilities, but also to reflect on ourselves as the same subject across multiple episodic experiences and ultimately as the main character of our autobiography. This is due, primarily, to the way in which our habits are embedded in situations that address us, not only as minimal bodily selves but as more robust personal selves as well. Our relationships with others settle into familiar habit-like structures that we encounter pre-reflectively as solicitations for expressive action. When these habitual ways of relating to others

become either problematic or significantly satisfying, it gives rise to the possibility of taking a reflective stance on our own activity and attempting to alter or repeat our behavior—thereby altering or reinforcing the sorts of personal and interpersonal solicitations we encounter. In this process we regard ourselves as diachronically unified selves with the capacity for growth and change.

Action supplies a structure that is ripe for the narration of episodic experiences given the right sort of intersubjective context.[25] The fact that narrative derives its structure from the structure of action is crucial in the initial development of narrative reflection on ourselves as young children. Importantly, this doesn't happen without others interacting with the child, shaping their actions and habits, and their meanings. For instance, starting with an action, a baby reaching for a cup that is just out of reach instantiates, in the presence of a caregiver, an expressive gesture of desire. The reach, from the perspective of the infant, begins as an instrumental movement. It concerns her responding to a motivation she encounters at the perceptual level, attempting to modify her situation to settle a tension. She wants the cup and reaches for it. The reach becomes expressive because it is situated in and among other people who recognize this activity as expressing desire. The adult caregiver then moves the cup within reach of the infant. Over time this activity takes on a new sort of instrumentality for the infant and becomes a 'pointing toward' desired objects rather than a reach in order to grasp.[26] The pointing is now a habitual means of calling attention toward an object in the world so that it may be attended to by someone else—so that they may jointly attend to the same object.

The achievement of this ability to share attention on an object with a caregiver opens the door to ways in which the infant gets taken up into the world of language and narrative. This happens, for example, in cases of pretend play. Such play is often accompanied by narration from the caregiver:

> The mother takes the toy car and says "Zoom zoom zoom." The child then takes a turn. The vocalization, and gradually, the words, become part of the structure of the pretend play. Commenting on this, the mother says, "the car goes zoom." Later taking the first steps towards linguistic narration, she says, addressing the child, "you played so nicely with the car this afternoon, didn't you?" Later the child appropriates this account saying, 'I play with car'[27]

On this account, the roots of full blown narration as a capacity that the child employs are planted early on and are helped along in their development by engagement with others who already have and perform such a capacity. This allows us to draw a clear line of development from the experience of an embodied individual through to narration.

1. The child's embodied experience is already structured by her agential activity as a successive ordering of events with a beginning middle and end. A reaching for the cup for instance begins with a solicitation, is followed by a sending out of the arm, climaxes in reaching and grasping the cup and returns to the body in a sort of embodied denouement. The complete gestural structure of the reach envelopes and makes sense of the parts as internally related to one another.
2. This action has an outside, it can be seen by others. This means that it takes on a social meaning given the right sort of intersubjective situation.
3. The temporal structure of experience is then taken up into language through the narrative description of the reach by others. It is mirrored back to the child in speech, centering her as the agent in the story.

The child is reflected back to herself by her caregivers and is solicited to tell a story about the action by caregivers who ask her to recount what she did that day, i.e., "We played with the car today, didn't we?"

The child thus builds up her narrative capacity little by little through repetition of these sorts of experiences. Through interaction with others, she is solicited by the world to do more than she has already done in the past. It is toward this intersubjective situation that her activity of narration is first oriented as a means of interaction with the others who share her situation. Only later does speech become internalized and directed toward her own actions first for the purposes of problem solving and later for self-understanding and interpretation.

For instance, after some development, children begin to make use of the sort of speech that others use in playful activity when they are away from others—especially in situations where they must act in such a way as to bring about a goal. By narrating her own activity as she performs it, a child is able to better direct her behavior toward the goal. In service of this point, Richard Menary references an experiment cited by Vygotsky, wherein a

four-year-old girl was asked to get candy from a high cupboard with a stool and a stick as tools.[28] During the experiment, narration similar to the sort that occurs in pretend to play with others spontaneously occurs: (experimenters' descriptions in parentheses, girl's speech in quotation marks):

> (Stands on a stool, quietly looking, feeling along a shelf with stick). 'On the stool.' (Glances at experimenter. Puts stick in other hand) 'Is that really the candy?' (Hesitates) 'I can get it from that other stool, stand and get it.' (Gets second stool) 'No that doesn't get it. I could use the stick.' (Takes stick, knocks at the candy) 'It will move now.' (knocks candy) 'It moved, I couldn't get it with the stool, but the, but the stick worked.'[29]

Following Vygotsky, Menary argues that the child's self-directed speech is as important as the action in attaining the goal. The speech and the action are "part of one and the same complex psychological function"[30] involved in getting the candy. In this way narrative capacity emerges as a problem-solving strategy whereby the child represents to herself a series of embodied perceptions and sensations so as to keep the situation in hand—she "gives a cognitive structuring to the embodied perceptions."[31] The dialogue the child has with herself mirrors the scaffolding provided by the caregiver in earlier similar situations. It helps her to order her perceptions and centers her as the agent in the situation. Importantly, this occurs while she is in the midst of the very activity she is narrating—she is the agent of the story and the storyteller in the very unfolding of the action. As she develops, situations begin to solicit this sort of reflective activity for the purposes of problem solving as one more embodied skill in the child's toolbox. In this way, "the unity of the [reflective] self is pragmatic, it is anchored in the experiences of an embodied self which is embedded in an environment."[32]

By describing the ontogenetic development of a narrative capacity we have been uncovering the way in which the acquisition of inner speech becomes one of the capacities which guarantees continuity between the past of my body and my present situation. As with the acquisition of any other habit, when I learn to narrate, I am opened to a new "general means of having a world."[33] Finally now, we would like to discuss how this intersubjective zone of proximal development and the habitual structures it enables are connected to the diachronic unity of the self.

Let us briefly now think through the way in which this conception of the self shows up phenomenologically in more developed, adult

relationships. The purpose of this description is to see the way in which the past is preserved in a habitual relationship in the world that I encounter. Notice, for instance, that I do not simply carry the past around with me, pre-reflectively, in my body. Rather, reflectively my body in some instances appears for me on the basis of a past that is held open by a meaningful, intersubjective context. The past gives my body back to me—it orients me—in a familiar way by soliciting action from my body as an 'I can.'

In service of this point, consider the experience of returning to one's family home for a holiday meal. Returning to my family home is not just to go back to an objective space in which I can act as I do in other situations, for instance, at work or at dinner among friends who know me as an adult. I do not bring with me my adult self and reinsert it into a neutral situation with other adult subjects who happen to be people I knew as a child. The development that has occurred since moving out of my family home, away from the members of my family does not easily follow me back to the family dynamic out of which it emerged.

To return home is to reopen a past and make it present once again in the same way that an embodied practice is supported by the material arrangement of a situation—my cooking in the kitchen, for instance, is supported and made easy by the way I have arranged my cooking tools and ingredients in familiar places. Returning to my family home, supports a me as the particular self that I am with strongly held beliefs and desires and makes those beliefs and desires real by affording me a place in which to realize them. Perhaps my relationship with my sister is characterized by a deep disagreement about the value of public life—for her, it is the family that lends meaning to life and which must be held above all else as what is important. For me perhaps, the family is an important institution only insofar as it produces individuals who can contribute more broadly to public life—to politics or to making advancements in a field of human knowledge. These values are not internal mental states, but stable structural norms of our relationship. We come to see our commitment to them through our continuing familial relationship and the disagreements that this relationship affords.

To return home is to encounter a situation that brings such conflicts to the fore, not as an object of consideration, but as the context of my behavior. My embodied experience is structured by the habitual relationship I have with my family. I may, prior to going to the holiday gathering tell myself that I will not re-engage my sister in our decades long conflict. I will not lose control of myself in this way. After all, we are now both adults with a world of concerns that has come to replace those which

structured our childhoods—perhaps, for instance, competitions for attention and validation from our parents. Despite my best attempts to avoid conflict at the family dinner table, I find myself, somewhere in the middle of the main course, bickering with my sister about something, that hours earlier, I found completely unimportant.[34] This is because the situation affords me a position to be a person with a set of beliefs and values. These come to the fore, not because they have been called out of some inner reserve where they have been waiting to be enacted, but because they are instituted in the present encountered as structured by the past.

These more long-term structures of habitual behavior are what allow us to notice and tell a story about our more diachronically extended selves. Just as the child in the pretend play scenario uses narrative to center herself in the pragmatic situation she encounters, the situation with my family solicits me to narratively reflect upon stable pattern of habits that structures my experience of my family in the context of a larger life where I behave differently in other situations. My behavior with my family diverges from the way I usually behave among adult friends or colleagues and this gives rise to the opportunity for narrative reflection. Through narrative, I center myself as the same agent in both scenarios. This allows me to notice how I have changed as an adult with different sorts of relationships than the ones I had as a child, but also allows me to attempt to develop my familial relationships into ones more in line with the self I am in my adult relationships. Our long-term autobiographical narrative capacity holds open the possibility of crafting a new narrative and with it, further growth and further realization of the selves we want to become.

Thus, just as the temporal structure of the child's action lent itself to episodic narration, so too does the more diachronically spread out stable structure of our habitual activity—especially in intersubjective contexts—lend itself to narration concerning a more long-term self. Discomfort at a dinner table that we experience pre-reflectively as reflecting our past of interaction with a group of people can solicit reflective activity that can help us narratively re-center ourselves as agents in the situation. This allows us to make moves toward altering our behavior, and toward restructuring the sorts of solicitations we encounter in problematical situations, and eventually to maintain or alter the kind of person we are.

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Notes

1. Gallagher (2000), Zahavi (2005, forthcoming).
2. Cf. Zahavi (2012, 2014), Strawson (2004, 2011).
3. Gallagher (2000), Schechtman (1996, 2011).
4. Husserl (1973, 492–493), Sartre (1992), Zahavi (2012, 2014), Gallagher (2000).
5. Zahavi (2014, 19).
6. This echoes claims in twentieth century philosophy of mind that any conscious experience must include a first personal aspect, cf. Nagel (1974), Searle (1992).
7. Cf. Gibson (2014).
8. Cf. Neisser (1988).
9. This example is visual but could easily be extended to any other sense modality. Simply substitute visual array with tactile, auditory, or olfactory array.
10. Note the similarity with Husserl's phenomenologically derived assertion that, "I have all things over and against me; they are all "there"—with the exception of one and only one, namely the Body, which is always 'here'" (1990, 166).
11. Cf. Sartre (1992, 40–42).
12. Something similar is appealed to by the enactive tradition in philosophy of mind, cf. Hutto and Myin (2012), Noe (2004), Thompson (2007); as well as by several ecological psychologists, cf. Chemero (2009), Rietveld (2008).
13. For a similar account based on Wittgenstein, see Rietveld (2008). Dreyfus and Kelly (2007) use the language of solicitation in the place of motivation.
14. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 139).
15. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 148).
16. Dreyfus and Kelly (2007).
17. Withagen et al. (2012).
18. Rietveld (2008).
19. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 147).
20. Cf. PhP, 144. "The subway door and the road have become restrictive powers and immediately appear as passable or impassable for my body and its appendages."
21. See Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the blind man's cane, *PhP 144*. For useful analysis of this example see Morris (2004), Noe (2004), Sterelny (2010), Chemero (2016). These perceptual modulations are shown in empirical studies of tool use which show changes in the extent of peripersonal space and in body schematic processes (e.g., Maravita and Iriki 2004).

22. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 145).
23. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 147).
24. Merleau-Ponty also speaks of a pre-personal history that shares this same structure and shapes our reception of a general field of possibilities on the basis of a reception of a past of development that my body carries forward (an evolutionary and developmental past). The pre-personal reflects my body's position in a historical or evolutionary timeline of which I am not the origin. There is thus, a particular history to my body that structures my perception, but it may not be my personal history.
25. Gallagher and Hutto (2018).
26. Vygotsky; Sparaci.
27. Gallagher and Hutto (2018).
28. Menary (2008), see Vygotsky (1980).
29. Menary (2008, 81).
30. Vygotsky (1980, 26).
31. Menary (2008, 82).
32. Ibid., 83.
33. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 147).
34. This example is similar to one suggested by Hanne De Jaegher in a number of conference presentations.

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CHAPTER 5

Is Our Self Temporal? From the Temporal Features of the Brain's Neural Activity to Self-Continuity and Personal Identity

Georg Northoff

Introduction

Identity and Cortical Midline Structure (CMS)

Central to human life is our self and its continuity of time—"self-continuity" (Ersner-Hershfield et al. 2009) is the temporal core of our personal identity (Northoff 2016). While much attention has recently been devoted to the self at one particular moment in time, i.e., "synchronic self," and its neural correlates (see below), less is known about "self-continuity" and thus about the "diachronic self" and its identity.

Berkman et al. (2017) assume that the anterior cortical midline structures (CMS) and specifically the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) play an essential role in linking both, the enduring and stable features of identity with the constitution of value. While the CMS have often been highlighted in internally directed cognition like self

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(Northoff et al. 2006; Sui and Humphreys 2015), mental time travel or episodic simulation (Schacter et al. 2012), and mind wandering (Christoff et al. 2016), the exact neuronal mechanisms underlying these regions' involvement in "self-continuity" as core of our personal identity remain less clear. My commentary aims to bridge that gap between the CMS's neuronal mechanisms and their psychological outputs, i.e., self-continuity as core of personal identity.

Cortical Midline Structures and Self

Anterior midline regions such as VMPFC and perigenual anterior cingulate cortex (PACC) as well as posterior regions like posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) (as well as other regions inside and outside the CMS) have been most consistently activated during self-related processing (see Northoff and Bermpohl 2004; Northoff et al. 2006; Murray et al. 2012; Hu et al. 2016; van den Meer et al. 2010; Araujo et al. 2013; Kim and Johnson 2012, 2014). Though VMPFC/PACC and PCC (and other midline regions such as dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, supragenual anterior cingulate cortex, and medial parietal cortex) are related to differential aspects of self-related processing, they are most often nevertheless conjointly recruited and activated (in different degrees) during different degrees and aspects of self-related processing (Northoff et al. 2006; van den Meer et al. 2010; Murray et al. 2012, 2015; Hu et al. 2016; Lou et al. 2016; Araujo et al. 2013, 2015).

Moreover, data show significant neural overlap between the high-resting state and self-related activity levels in VMPFC/PACC and PCC. Several studies observed that self-specific stimuli did not induce activity change in VMPFC/PACC and PCC during task-evoked activity when compared to their resting state activity levels (D'Argembeau et al. 2005; Whitfield-Gabrieli et al. 2011; Davey et al. 2016; Schneider et al. 2008); such "rest-self overlap" (Bai et al. 2015) was further confirmed by a meta-analysis showing VMPFC/PACC and PCC as overlapping regions during both resting state and self-related processing (Qin and Northoff 2011).

Recent studies went even one step further showing that resting state activity and pre-stimulus activity levels predict the degree of self-consciousness (Huang et al. 2016) or self-specificity assigned to subsequent stimuli (see Qin et al. 2016; Bai et al. 2015). If these findings of rest-self prediction are further confirmed, one may want to suppose that

the resting state itself encodes or contains some information about self-specificity in yet unclear ways. The assumptions of "rest-self overlap" may then be accompanied by the one of "rest-self containment" (Northoff 2016) which, reformulated in a cognitive way, amounts to "self-representation" (Humphreys and Sui 2016, p. 4).

The central role of the resting state for mediating self-specificity is further supported by the assumption of a so-called "self network." Based on the functional connectivity analysis of a large resting state dataset, Murray et al. (2012, 2015) demonstrated anterior midline regions such as PACC and VMPFC as well as the anterior insula to form a "self network" in the resting state (see also Lou et al. 2016; Huang et al. 2016). The co-involvement of PACC/VMPFC and insula in self-specificity is further supported by these regions' co-activation in task-related studies (see Enzi et al. 2009). The self-network must be distinguished from what they describe as "other network" that includes posterior midline regions such as PCC and the TPJ (Murray et al. 2015).

Personal Identity—Temporal Stability and "Self-Continuity"

What do the data about CMS tell us about self and identity? The strong neural overlap between self and resting state suggests a central role for spontaneous activity in CMS. The spontaneous activity in CMS must show certain neuronal features and mechanisms that make it well suitable for mediating self and its continuity, i.e., self-continuity. The nature of these neuronal mechanisms that distinguish CMS from other regions and networks remains unclear though. To address this question, we first need to go back to what exactly is meant by the concept of identity—this, in turn, may reveal some psychological features that must be fulfilled by the CMS and its neuronal mechanisms.

What exactly is meant by identity? Taken in a philosophical sense, the concept of identity, i.e., personal identity, is understood in a purely numerical sense: we are one and the same person throughout time even though both our cognitive and physiological features change over time (Northoff 2016; Northoff and Wagner 2017). That is different from the concept of identity in the psychological sense. This leads us back to Berkman et al. (2017).

Berkman et al. (2017) first and foremost point out the temporal nature of identity. They define identity by stability—our self is stable and enduring across time. Moreover, the identity remains context-independent as

distinguished, for instance, from the momentary changes in our psychological contents as they are related to changes in context. Identity thus allows for "stable mental representation of self" across time, i.e., in a diachronic sense which amounts to what I described as "self-continuity." Taken in such way, identity remains rather abstract—it must be distinguished from the more concrete momentary cognitive contents.

What remains unclear is what this stability consists in though: what exactly endures, remains context-independent, and is rather abstract—are these specific cognitive contents, i.e., information? This is rather unlikely given that basically all information including psychological and physiological change over time. As has been extensively discussed in philosophy (Northoff 2016; Northoff and Wagner 2017), neither physiological nor psychological contents endure and remain stable. Even our own brain continuously changes its cells and activity patterns—the brain is highly plastic rather than stable and enduring. The continuous change of both psychological and physiological contents and their information makes such cognitive view of identity rather unlikely.

Berkman et al. (2017) are somewhat aware of that when they associate identity with salience, value, and motivation. That shifts the focus from a cognitive concept of identity to a more reward- and affect-based motivational concept of identity. Identity can then be considered a value, a strong subjective value that is associated with positive affect, i.e., a positive value, as they say. Being such positive value, identity can then impact our long-term goals as well as relate our self to externally-directed processing—the self thus becomes extended (Kim and Johnson 2012, 2014) or, as I say, relational (Northoff 2016).

What does identity as a positive value consist in though? While psychologically the characterization of identity by subjective value rather than cognitive information is a major step forward, we may need to go even one step further. Specifically, we need to search for the underpinnings of the stability and enduring character of subjective values to account for identity and its underlying neuronal mechanisms. That is the aim in my commentary.

Temporal Features of CMS Neuronal Activity—Transformation into "Self-Continuity"

My focus will be specifically on the temporal component of identity while, for the sake of simplicity, I neglect the specific characterization of

that temporal component by subjective value, motivation, and positive affect. Given that the CMS have been shown to be central in the synchronic self, one may also suppose a central role of CMS and their spontaneous activity in mediating diachronic self, i.e., self-continuity as a core of identity. My main and overarching aim is to demonstrate that neural activity in CM shows specific features, i.e., temporal features that make it well suitable to mediate our diachronic self with self-continuity as a core of our personal identity.

Based on the recent data from brain imaging, I will suggest that the temporal features of identity are mediated by corresponding temporal features in the spontaneous activity of CMS. Specifically, I propose that the temporal features of spontaneous neuronal activity in CMS predispose the temporal expansion of the "synchronic self" in time—this results in a "diachronic self" with "self-continuity" as core of our identity. In a nutshell, I postulate that the temporal features of spontaneous CMS neuronal activity transform into corresponding temporal features on the psychological level of self, i.e., "self-continuity" as core of our identity.

Temporal Features of Neural Activity in Cortical Midline Structures (CMS)

Temporal Features of CMS—Strong Power in Infraslow Frequencies

Most of the findings on CMS have been obtained in fMRI. To better understand the physiological and specifically temporal features of CMS, we therefore need to get into the physiological basis of the BOLD signal as measured with fMRI.

The BOLD signal as obtained in fMRI is electrophysiologically best correlated with local field potentials (LFPs) (Khader et al. 2008; Logothetis et al. 2001; Logothetis 2008; Raichle and Mintun 2006) that are based on integrated electrical population-based activity in pre- and post-synaptic terminals (Raichle 2015). The BOLD signal taps predominantly slower frequencies between 0.01 and 4 Hz and is usually filtered within the range of 0.01 and 0.1 Hz (to eliminate artifacts) (Logothetis 2008; Logothetis et al. 2001; Power et al. 2017).

The frequency range between 0.01 and 4 Hz includes the delta band (1–4 Hz), up- and -down states in the range of 0.8 Hz (Mitra et al. 2015;

Mitra and Raichle 2016; Hahn et al. 2006; Steriade et al. 1993), and infraslow fluctuations (ISFs) (0.01–0.1 Hz) (Monto et al. 2008; Vanhatalo et al. 2004; Zhigalov et al. 2015; Hiltunen et al. 2014). The slower frequency range has also been dubbed as slow cortical potentials (SCPs) which either subsumes the range between 0.1 Hz and 1 Hz (He and Raichle 2009; Khader et al. 2008) or the whole slow range between 0.01 Hz and 1 Hz (Raichle 2009, 2015; He et al. 2008; Buzsaki 2006).

The CMS also show a particular high degree of power in the very slow frequency range of ISFs, namely slow 5 (0.01–0.027 Hz) when compared to other regions (Zhang et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2014). For instance, sensory regions show a power spectrum that is tilted more toward the faster frequencies in the ISF's domain (see Zhang et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2014). This means that the power and long cycle durations of the very slow frequencies in the CMS predominate over the faster frequencies and their shorter cycle durations which are more prominent in especially sensory regions.

The long cycle duration of ISFs (0.01–0.1 Hz with their range between 100 and 10s) makes them ideal candidates to integrate different inputs and their distinct points in time (He and Raichle 2009). This is, for instance, well manifested in the functional dynamic connectivity pattern of CMS to other regions in the brain (see above) that occurs mainly in the slow frequency range around 0.1 Hz (see de Pasquale et al. 2012, 2016). Moreover, the degree of power in the slow frequencies (as measured in scale-free activity) impacts task-evoked or stimulus-induced activity with higher degrees of the former leading to higher amplitudes (and higher trial-to-trial variability reduction) in the latter (Huang et al. 2015). Although further confirmation is necessary, these examples suggest that the CMS, on the basis of their strong power in resting state ISFs, can shape and modulate functional connectivity and neural activity in other regions and networks of the brain as well as associated behavior (see Palva et al. 2013; Palva and Palva 2011; He 2014).

Temporal Features of CMS—Strong Scale-Free Properties

The distribution of slow and fast frequencies is also reflected in scale-free activity that measures the long-range temporal (auto) correlation (LRTC) across the different frequencies (Linkenkaer-Hansen et al. 2001; He 2014; Chialvo et al. 2002; He et al. 2010; Palva et al.

2013). fMRI studies demonstrated that the CMS show a particular high degree of scale-free activity (as measured with either the power law exponent (PLE) or detrended fluctuation activity/DFA) (He et al. 2010, He 2014; Huang et al. 2015). The high degree of scale-free activity means that the very slow frequencies have a relatively higher degree of power in CMS when compared to the faster ones—the long cycle durations of for instance slow 5 (0.01–0.027 Hz and thus ranging approximately from 100 to 70s) thus predominate over the shorter ones of faster frequencies

Scale-free activity is also related to the coupling between different frequencies, i.e., cross-frequency coupling (CFC) as it can be measured with MEG/EEG (Canolty et al. 2006; Lakatos et al. 2008; Aru et al. 2015). Early investigations (Monto et al. 2008; Vanhatalo et al. 2004) demonstrated that the phase of slower frequencies (in the range of ISFs) is coupled to the amplitude of faster frequencies (like 1–100 Hz) which is confirmed by later studies using MEG and/or fMRI (Zhigalov et al. 2015; Hiltunen et al. 2014; He et al. 2010; Huang et al. 2015) (see also Aru et al. 2015). Recently, an fMRI study also demonstrated CFC within the infraslow frequency range itself as from the phase of slow 5 (0.01–0.027 Hz) to the amplitude in slow 3 (0.073–0.198 Hz) (Huang et al. 2015).

Due to the stronger power of slow 5 in CMS, one would expect particularly high degrees of slow phase–fast amplitude CFC in CMS when compared to the other regions. While fMRI-EEG studies did indeed demonstrated correlation between ISFs (as measured in fMRI) and alpha amplitude (see Sadaghiani et al. 2010), studies focusing in CFC between the phase of ISFs and amplitude in faster frequencies in specifically CMS (when compared to other regions) are still lacking (see also Palva and Palva 2012 for review as well as Hiltunen et al. 2014).

Taken together, the CMS show an elaborate temporal structure which seems to be predominated and driven by strong power in very slow, i.e., infraslow, frequency ranges (e.g., 0.01–0.1 Hz). The temporal structure consists in differential degrees of power between slow and fast frequencies as well as in the CFC. The slow, i.e., infraslow, frequencies show the strongest power when compared to the faster ones (0.1–70 Hz) as it can be measured in scale-free activity. Moreover, the slow, i.e., infraslow, frequencies and their phase seem to couple to the amplitude of the faster ones as in the CFC. While such temporal structure is established throughout the whole brain, it seems to be particularly strong and driven by the infraslow frequencies in CMS.

Temporal Features of CMS—"Temporal Receptive Windows" (TRW)

What are the functional implications of the strongly powered infraslow frequencies in CMS for the processing of stimuli? The extremely long cycle duration of infraslow frequencies may allow for the encoding of long stimulus sequences. For instance, the 100s cycle of 0.01 Hz contains one high excitable period of 50s and one low excitable period of 50s. If a sequence of stimuli falls altogether into the high excitable 50s period, they can be encoded together and may form one meaningful semantic unit (see also Schroeder and Lakatos 2009; Schroeder et al. 2010, who take a slightly different perspective though).

If, in contrast, part of the same stimulus sequence falls into the subsequent low excitable 50s period, the stimulus sequence as whole will not be encoded together and forms one meaningful semantic unit. The long cycle duration of infraslow frequencies as they predominate in CMS may thus be the ideal candidates for encoding longer stimulus sequences (see Northoff 2014 and 2015 for more details).

How can we further support this point? Though not directly measuring the power of infraslow frequencies and their phase cycles (see also Honey et al. 2012), the group around Hasson conducted a series of fMRI studies on encoding of external stimulus sequences. They applied naturalistic stimuli such as music, movies, or speech which contain meaningful segments of variable durations, e.g., shorter and longer (as compared with a scrambled version as control that did not contain any meaningful segments) (see Hasson et al. 2015 for a recent review).

They observed that words (1s $\mp$0.5s) elicited activation in primary sensory regions like visual (when presented visually) or auditory (when presented auditorily) cortex. Sentences, lasting longer (8 $\pm$ 3s) were associated with higher regions like medial temporal and parietal cortex, while whole paragraph lasting about (38 $\pm$ 17s) recruited neural activity changes in CMS (see Lerner et al. 2014; Stephens et al. 2013; Honey et al. 2012; Hasson et al. 2015).

The encoding of temporal features even extends to the social domain. Simony et al. (2016) let different subjects listen to one and the same auditory narrative (as controlled by a scrambled version). The longest segments (38 $\pm$ 17s) were again encoded in the CMS which also predicted the memory of those segments tested for later. Most importantly, CMS activity during the exposure to one and the same auditory narrative was coupled, e.g., correlated, between the different subjects (as measured by "inter-subject functional correlation").

This and other studies suggest that the CMS, though not receiving direct sensory input by itself, nevertheless is central for social processing as based on its temporal features, e.g., the long TRW (see Silbert et al. 2014; Hasson and Frith 2016; Hasson et al. 2012). That is well in accordance with the observation of the CMS being implicated in various forms of social cognition (see Spreng et al. 2009; Spreng and Mar 2012; Li et al. 2014; Molnar-Szakacs and Uddin 2013; Murray et al. 2015; Amft et al. 2015).

In sum, the data suggest that different regions encode different temporal durations of stimulus material with the CMS encoding the longest temporal frames; for that reason Hasson et al. (2015) speak of the so-called "temporal receptive window" (TRW). The TRW describes the temporal window within which a specific region can encode meaningful units of information. The TRW seems to be rather short for sensory regions (milliseconds to 1–2 seconds) and do therefore encodes short lasting stimuli like words. In contrast, the CMS show the longest TRW ranging from seconds to minutes.

The long TRWs allow the CMS to encode longer stimulus sequences like whole paragraphs (in visual/auditory material) or sections (in music) (Chen et al. 2015, 2016). The CMS with their strong infraslow power and long TRW are thus ideally suited to encode and integrate information over long time scales (see Honey et al. 2012) for which reason Hasson et al. (2015) speak of "process memory": "process memory is not based on the content itself, i.e., not cognitive-based, but rather on the processing of temporal features that shape the content that different regions can (or cannot) encode, i.e., process-based." This converges well with what Margulies et al. (2016) described as "stimulus-independence" and "context-independence" of CMS (as part of the DMN) with respect to stimuli and contents.

Temporal Features of "Self-Continuity" and Identity of Self

Internally Oriented Activity in CMS—"Temporal Expansion Window" (TEW)

How are the temporal features of CMS neural activity related to the diachronic self, that is, its identity over time including past, present, and future? The long TRW in CMS and their "process memory" allow to

temporally expand the external stimulus material that is encoded into neural activity. Longer sequences of stimuli can be encoded by CMS activity and thereby provide meaningful units that stretch or better expand temporally from the past to the present hence the term "process memory." This applies to external stimulus material like videos or music as applied by the group around Hasson to measure TRW. The long TRW of CMS allows to expand the encoding of external stimulus material beyond its actual given point in time to several other points in time ranging from past to present moments.

The same may now apply analogously to internally-generated stimulus material as related to the ongoing resting state activity and its contained or encoded self-specificity. There, for instance, continuous input from the own heart that sends an interoceptive stimulus to the brain basically every second. The cardiac input needs to be related to and integrated within the ongoing spontaneous activity which, as I propose, occurs in terms of self-related processing. Such self-related processing of the cardiac input by the brain's spontaneous activity is behaviorally reflected in the discrepancy between interoceptive awareness of the heartbeat and the objective heartbeat rate (Wiebking et al. 2014).

I now propose that the processing of the internally generated stimuli like the cardiac input also depends upon the intrinsic temporal features of the different regions' neural activity. In the same way, the long TRW in CMS allows the encoding of longer sequences of external stimuli, the long TRW in CMS, at the same time, may also expand the encoding of internally-generated inputs or stimuli in the ongoing resting state beyond their actual point in time. Internally-generated inputs or stimuli at different points in time are then encoded together in terms of one meaningful unit or "process" as Hasson might say.

Due to the long TRW in CMS, that meaningful unit or "process" of encoded internally-generated inputs or stimuli is particularly long, i.e., it expands in time across past, present, and future. One may thus want to speak of "temporal expansion." Analogous to the concept of "temporal receptive window" (TRW) with regard to external stimulus processing, I therefore speak analogously of a "temporal expansion window" (TEW) in the case of internal stimulus processing. The concept of TEW describes the degree to which an internally-generated neural activity at one particular point in time in the present moment can be stretched or expanded across different points in time (in past and future) (see Fig. 5.1).

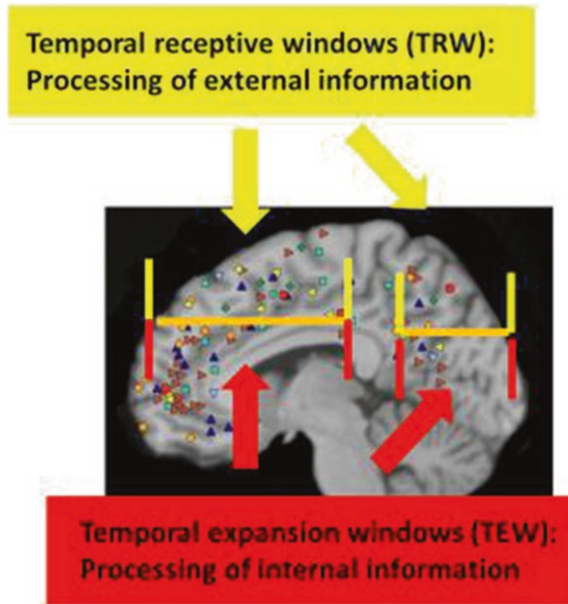

Fig. 5.1 Temporal receptive windows (TRW) and temporal expansion windows (TWE) for processing of external and internal information

Psychologically, the TEW may be directly related to the temporal duration of internally-guided cognition like spontaneous thoughts (Christoff et al. 2016) and self-continuity (see below). Before going into psychological detail (see below), we may want to first shed yet a brief light on the neuronal side of TEW. Neuronally, one would expect that the TEW during internally-generated neural activity is related to the temporal features of the spontaneous activity itself.

Specifically, one would expect that stronger power in infraslow frequency fluctuations in CMS, as indexed by stronger scale-free activity, is directly related to the length of TEW: the higher the degree of scale-free activity (with higher PLE) in CMS, the longer their temporal expansion windows (TEWs). Moreover, as externally-generated activity is dependent upon internally-generated activity, one would expect that the TEW is positively related to the length of the TRW. Unfortunately, no results have been reported so far that directly link spontaneous scale-free activity to both TEW and TRW during internally- and externally-generated neural activity.

"Temporal Expansion Windows" in CMS—Episodic Simulation and Mental Time Travel

How about empirical support from the psychological side? One central feature of our self is its temporal expansion from present into both past and future. Such temporal expansion is described as "episodic simulation" (ES) or mental time travel (Schacter et al. 2012). Most interestingly, ES has strongly been related to CMS. D'Argembeau et al. (2008, 2010) conducted a series of studies where he investigated the neural correlates of imaging self- and non-self-related events in past, present, and future. The interaction between self and time, i.e., past and future, yielded a strong activity in CMS. This is supported by various studies showing that the projection of events including autobiographical and semantic into past and future involves the CMS as common neural substrate (see Addis et al. 2009; Schacter et al. 2012; see also Benoit and Schacter 2015; Stawarczyk and D'Argembeau 2015 for meta-analysis).

Such mental time travel with self-projection into past and future has been described as "episodic simulation" (ES) (Schacter et al. 2008, 2012; Buckner and Carroll 2007; Addis et al. 2007, 2009; Seligman et al. 2013). ES can be characterized by mental time travel that allows to project the own self and related events into time, i.e., past and future. The projection into time allows to decouple the own self and the related events from the specific actual point in time and the current environmental context (Buckner et al. 2008; Buckner and Carroll 2007; Benoit and Schacter 2015).

Moreover, ES makes possible to construct and simulate hypothetical or counterfactual events that are detached or decoupled from current environmental constraints—this amounts to the "constructive episodic simulation hypothesis" with self-projection and scene construction as central features (Benoit and Schacter 2015; Schacter et al. 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013; De Brigard et al. 2013).

Based on both the temporal features of CMS and their involvement in ES, I now hypothesize that the long CMS time windows for temporal expansion during internally-generated neural activity, i.e., TEW, are directly related to the degree of temporal expansion during ES. The stronger the infraslow frequencies with their long TEW in CMS, the more we will be able to simulate and project our self into past and

future. Hence, the length of mental time travel on the psychological side may be directly related to the length of the TEW in CMS on the neuronal side. Mental time travel may, for instance, expand into around 100s which corresponds well to the cycle duration of 0.01 Hz, However, there is probably no simple one-to-one correspondence between the temporal expansion during mental time travel and the temporal expansion of the TEW in CMS. Instead, there may be what can be described as scale-free correspondence where different time scales on neuronal and mental levels are translated into each other in a scale-free, i.e., self-similar and fractal way. That remains to be investigated in the future though. Moreover, it remains to be explored how such temporal nestedness between mental and neuronal temporal features are related to the much longer time scale of the diachronic self as core of our identity.

Scale-Free Nature of CMS Neuronal Activity—Scale-Free Nature of "Self-Continuity"

One may now want to argue that identity of self is not limited to the time scale of ES as mental time travel. The identity of self covers a much longer time scale than in ES. While ES usually concerns second, minutes, hours, or days, identity of self extends over much longer time periods namely years and decades. Hence, put into the terms of frequencies, we encounter an extremely slow infraslow frequency range which, as such, is apparently not present in the brain's neural activity including CMS. We are thus confronted with the question how temporal features on different scales, i.e., CMS and identity, can be related to each other. Most interestingly, especially anterior CMS regions such as PACC and VMPFC have been related to what psychologically has been described as "self-continuity" (Ersner-Hershfield et al. 2009, 2011; see also Martin et al. 2014; Wittmann 2015; Northoff 2014).

The involvement of PACC and VMPFC in "self-continuity" and thus identity of self is further suggested by recent studies and self-consciousness and early traumatic life events. A recent study investigated spontaneous activity in fMRI measuring its degree of scale-free activity with the PLE (Huang et al. 2016). The same subjects also underwent psychological assessment with the self-consciousness scale (SCS). The SCS includes different subscales, private, public, and social self-consciousness. The private subscale measures various items that concern the inner mental life like the amounts of inner thoughts, self-reflection, etc. However, both

the public and social subscales concern more the perception and experience of relationship with other and how one experiences her/himself within the public and social interactions.

Huang et al. (2016) could now observe direct relationship between PLE and private SCS in specifically VMPFC: the higher the PLE in VMPFC of individual subjects, the higher their degree of private self-consciousness (as measured in private SCS). These data suggest that stronger power in infraslow frequencies (as leading to higher PLE values) is directly related to the higher degrees in private self-consciousness. Hence, the temporal features of CMS neural activity seem to translate into internally-generated "self-continuity" as it lies at the core of private self-consciousness. Moreover, it suggests that "self-continuity" may, by itself, be scale-free: if "self-continuity" is related to scale-free activity on the neuronal side, one may suggest its scale-free and temporal nature on the psychological side meaning that "self-continuity" operates across different time scales in specifically structured and organized way.

The assumption of the scale-free nature of "self-continuity" is further supported by a different study that used EEG rather than fMRI to measure spontaneous activity and its relation to SCS (Wolf et al. 2017). The study on EEG and SCS yielded yet again the same relationship: the higher the PLE in spontaneous activity as measured with EEG, the higher the degree of specifically private self-consciousness in the respective subject. The same finding was observed when only selecting electrodes from the midline that are closely related to CMS. Unlike fMRI, EEG allows measuring faster frequencies ranging from 1 Hz to 70 Hz (as in this studies), while the infraslow ranges as measured with fMRI are not included in the signal.

Taken both studies together, the data suggest that internally-generated "self-continuity," i.e., private self-consciousness, is related to both infraslow (0.01–0.1 Hz) (Huang et al. 2016) and faster (1–70 Hz) (Wolf et al. 2017) frequencies. However, it is not the simple power of the frequencies (which did not correlate with private self-consciousness) but their relationship or structure across all frequencies, which is measured by scale-free activity (as indexed by the PLE). Hence, it is the temporal structure of neural activity, i.e., its scale-free nature that is relevant for "internally-generated self-continuity" and thus identity of self. As it is based on the scale-free nature of CMS neural activity, one may assume that "self-continuity" and thus identity of self is by itself themselves scale-free, i.e., its operates across different time scales in a specifically organized and structured way.

"Self-Continuity" and Identity—"Spatiotemporal Memory" Vs. "Cognitive Memory"

The apparent scale-free nature of "self-continuity" and identity of self is further suggested by recent studies on early traumatic childhood events that specifically highlight again the VMPFC. Duncan et al. (2015) investigated spontaneous activity in fMRI in adult subjects and measured their early traumatic childhood experience. This revealed correlation between the degree of entropy (i.e., the degree of prediction or disorder in the spatiotemporal pattern) and the traumatic life events: the higher the degree of entropy in VMPFC spontaneous activity, the higher the degree of early traumatic life events. That suggests direct relationship between temporal structure in VMPFC neural activity and "self-continuity" on the psychological level as manifest in the "neuro-temporal presence" of early traumatic life events in adulthood.

Analogous results were observed by Nakao et al. (2013). Their study investigated the amplitude or power of infraslow frequencies in various regions including VMPFC using near infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS). They demonstrated that the resting state amplitude or power in the infraslow frequencies of specifically VMPFC (as measured during adulthood) was negatively correlated with the degree of early life stress in the same subjects: the less power in VMPFC infraslow frequencies, the higher the subject's degree of early life stress. Most interestingly, both resting state VMPFC amplitude and early life stress were related to the balance between internally- and externally-guided decision-making task, a color preference task: the more early life stress and less VMPFC power, the more subjects shifted their decision-making pattern toward externally-guided decision making and the less they guided their decisions in internally-directed way.

What do these results tell us about the "diachronic self" and its identity that operate on the temporal range of years and decades? Self-specificity and its continuity over time, i.e., self-continuity seem to be encoded in the temporal structure of specifically CMS neural activity in anterior regions, i.e., VMPFC. Corresponding to Hasson et al. (2015) who speak of "process memory" with regard to externally-generated contents, these data suggest an internally-generated "process memory."

Like its external counterpart, the internally-generated "process memory" does not seem to encode specific contents by themselves, i.e., in the cognitive terms of their information. Instead, contents seem to be

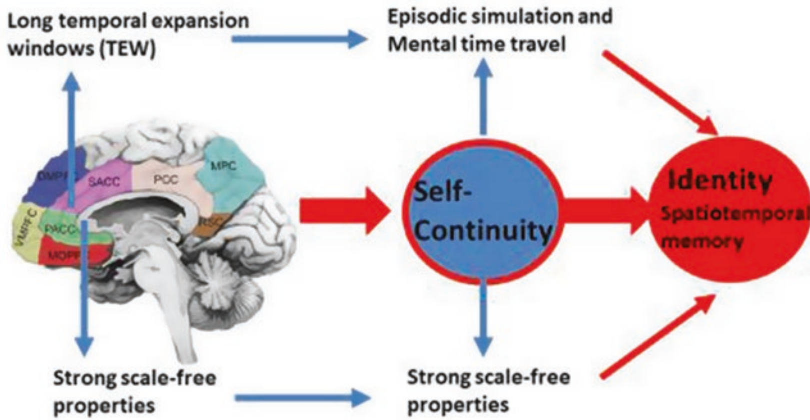

Fig. 5.2 Transformation of the temporal features of CMS neural activity (left) into corresponding temporal features of self-continuity (middle) and identity (right)

encoded in terms of their temporal features by seemingly corresponding temporal features in CMS neural activity. CMS neural activity thus seems to mediate a non-cognitive form of memory, i.e., "process memory." As it is apparently based predominantly on temporal (and spatial) features of CMS activity and its processes, one may want to speak of "spatiotemporal memory." Such "spatiotemporal memory" may, in turn, provide the basis for the more traditional notion of memory that is focused on specific contents or information (for which reason it is cognitive), i.e., "cognitive memory" (see Fig. 5.2).

Taken all together, one may characterize "self-continuity" and identity of self by "spatiotemporal memory" that operates in a spatiotemporal rather than cognitive way over extremely long periods of time, i.e., years, decades. Hence, what is psychologically described as identity of self and philosophically as personal identity may find its neural basis in the spatiotemporal and scale-free pattern of neural activity in CMS and specifically VMPFC. Given the data presented here, I describe identity of self as spatiotemporal and scale-free. Our identity is not bound to specific contents or information—it is not cognitive and bound to specific time scales, i.e., scale-bound. Instead, identity is spatiotemporal and scale-free—this is what the neural data tell us.

Conclusion

Berkman et al. (2017) propose a novel model of identity in terms of value. While they nicely point out the temporal and motivational features of identity as well as its neuronal correlates, i.e., VMPFC, they leave open the exact neuronal mechanisms that give rise to "self-continuity" with identity. I propose that the temporal features of neuronal activity in CMS like high power in infraslow frequency fluctuations, strong scale-free properties, and long "temporal receptive window" (TRW) transform into corresponding temporal features on the psychological level, i.e., long "temporal expansion windows" with episodic simulation, temporal structure and scale-free nature, and "spatiotemporal memory" that account for "self-continuity" as temporal core of our identity of self. I therefore suggest a "spatiotemporal model" of personal identity as distinguished from the traditional cognitive model.

One would then expect that the temporal features of neuronal activity in CMS strongly impact and are transformed into those of the reward- and value-processing system including the ventral striatum. The association between temporal and motivational features of identity may then be based on linking the temporal features of CMS neuronal activity to the ones of the reward and value system including the ventral striatum. This is indeed strongly supported on neuronal grounds by the studies by de Greck et al. (2008, 2010) and Enzi et al. (2009) who demonstrated direct involvement of the regions of the reward system, i.e., VMPFC, ventral striatum, and ventral tegmental area in self-related processing.

The same may hold analogously for cognitive processing. Berkman et al. (2017) and others (Sui and Humphreys 2015) assume that self and identity are central for integrating different contents. On the neuronal level, such integration may be related to the modulation of, for instance, the central executive network by the temporal features of CMS neuronal activity. CMS-based integration of different contents may then longer be based on the cognitive contents themselves but rather on their underlying spatiotemporal features and their relation to the spatiotemporal features of CMS neuronal activity.

What does such "spatiotemporal integration" imply for our concept of identity? Spatiotemporal integration explains well how, for instance, earlier contents like traumatic life events are still neuronally present in the spatiotemporal pattern of CMS neuronal activity (see above). Hence, it is given that the "diachronic self" with "self-continuity" as core of our

identity is not cognitive at all. Instead, mirroring the concepts of "diachronic" and "continuity" in the philosophical discussion of self and personal identity, our identity is literally temporal as it is based on the temporal features of neuronal activity in CMS.

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CHAPTER 6

Self-Realization of the Economic Agent

Gilles Campagnolo

Part 0: The "Self" and Self-Realization in the Science of Economics

0.1. The history of modern economic thought is commonly said to start with Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) where he wrote about "*self-love*" Whether Smith meant "love of the self," or "love of *one*-self," that is love of one's own private interest exclusively, he put forth the issue in telling fashion: is the self a functional device in economics? Is it a value to *realize*, a goal to achieve, or some guideline to follow? How did Smith, a moral philosopher (his chair in that discipline) build upon it a foundation for economic thought? Furthermore, what could any kind of realization of the self *as an economic agent* mean?

It has been noticed by commentators that, in 1776, Smith put *self-love* in a role that had previously been assigned to another concept in his earlier *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). In the latter, the key notion was "sympathy," in the sense of the human ability to put *oneself* "in the shoes," so to speak, of another self. The contradistinction caused the so-called "Adam Smith Problem" to surface[1] and led economists and

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philosophers[2] to discuss the notion of "self," that has strangely almost vanished from the realm of economics in a later era.[3]

What is the cause of this disappearance of "the self," while the founder of the field had used it to set his agenda? Fear of "individuality"? The lack of an *adequate* concept of identity, or of subjectivity within standard economics? In any case, although economics historically pointed to the self from its start,[4] the notion was thereafter commonly overlooked and sent back to morality, psychology, or social psychology. Twentieth-century economics thus long-ago rid itself of the word "self" and of the slightly different economic agent's *identity* problem. The latter was rediscovered only recently. For instance, Akerlof and Kranton, in their "Economics and Identity" defined the concept of identity as "a person's sense of self" (2000, 715), precisely taken from social psychology. John Davis in turn makes this origin explicit (Davis 2011, 72–78) and also criticizes the confusion surrounding its use.

To be certain, this process is actually more of a *re*-discovery. Yet digging through what and who was the "self" all along the history of economic thought would be a topic too wide for this essay. We shall therefore keep to asking *whether* there is any meaningful sense of "*realizing the self*" in economics, and what it may be. In economic parlance, such "realization" usually comes in terms of *utility* gains: when an agent acts to enhance benefits (measured in money) or self-image (in terms of "subjective identity"), a utility function is introduced. One should notice that *others* may also do so to his or her benefit (voluntarily or not, knowingly or not). In any case, measuring utility is the main tool of economists. Yet, this may sometimes be tautological or misleading. Davis states that "the preferences-utility conception of the individual says that if one has one's own (well-ordered) preferences, one can be represented with a utility function and then identified as an independent individual. This however, only assumes what needs to be shown" (Davis 2016, 24). Although said to praise "self-*ish*-ness," economists face an issue that compels them to answer how the self is perceived in third person, while perception "in first person" means how the self sees "itself," so to speak, and that is also an issue for realizing the self.[5]

Contrary to economists, moralists never ceased to discuss the "self." They have long criticized economists in the name of an ethical approach that should assign more "reality" to selves without always asking the conditions for its realization. Sociologists did so with social motivations in mind. But one should clarify *whether* those selves are supposed to find "self-realization" *only outside* of the economic realm. Or would it only be possible there? It does not help to evoke the so-called "self-help"

literature of popular folk psychology, although it fills up sections in bookshops. We shall rather be concerned with epistemological issues; firstly, to disentangle basic concepts that economists use, despite not being fully aware of their contents. Indeed while they often assimilate the self to the individual, they regard the latter as a mere set of properties to mathematize for better theoretical treatment (Weintraub 2002). By doing so, opportunities to deepen our knowledge of the economic self are wasted. Secondly, while philosophers or psychologists debate whether it is appropriate to consider the notion of the "self" (or the "ego") as some plausible inner identity polarity, economists merely tend to leave the issue aside altogether. Consequently, in almost any economics textbook, the definition of the economic agent is reduced to minimal properties for mathematical treatment: indivisibility, atomicity, continuity, and the ability to express/display (wheel-ordered) preferences. The "economic agent" as an individual being is characterized with regard to its needs in material life (goods and services) along strictly the so-called "marginal" utility lines, that is to say the idea that value is defined by the last utilizable unit of good/service that an agent may use and is ready to obtain at some cost. Thus originated the thought revolution that occurred in the last third of the nineteenth century, led by Stanley Jevons, Leon Walras, and Carl Menger. Among those only Menger, the founder of the so-called "Austrian economics" paid attention to the issue of the self (Campagnolo 2016). Methodologically, *economics* became *the science of individualism*. But *should* not it be then built upon a notion of the self? We shall argue this was part and parcel of the Mengerian orientation, but that this chance was forsaken.

0.2. What is (or should be) the "self-realization" of the economic agent? Is it the "self-satisfaction of needs"[6] and is this merely limited to consuming to the full, or does it extend to production and exchange of goods (and services)? By achieving those economic activities, the self *as an agent* becomes a *decision-maker* that is buying, investing, and trading. All those actions can be thoroughly described through models, but do models suffice?

When economists contemplate given economic phenomena, they typically consider decision-making agents as solving a well—(or ill-defined) optimization (or choice) problem. It is from this problem-solving attitude assigned to agents that economists deduce how to model economic actions and interactions that arise between partners. Naturally, social issues are bound to arise as well, but they are often left aside, as is the case for

issues regarding "self-realization." If this tendency was only temporary, little criticism could be made. But economists often skip these issues altogether, thus depriving the individual of its self, at least in their treatment. *The* query is whether economists *can* solve problems pertaining to the self: in contrast with sociologists, for instance, "self-ishness" intrinsic to economic methodology implies to grasp cases in isolation, but their isolated object of study remains deprived of "inner self" issues—even when, little by little, the decision-making process they study extends to larger-size, society-size constraint.[7]

"Mainstream economists" thus regard the self as a bundle of essentially stable preferences borne by an individual entity (mind and body bound together) that makes decisions and economic choices for its survival and welfare. They deal with price–quantity equilibria and set forth macro-aggregated notions, washing their hands of any other matter, shunning altogether the "self." Psychology, conversely, kept it in stock for better or worse, but had other issues to deal with first.

The issue is then whether or not *one* "self" is a "stable" basis for decision processing. Since each and every agent obviously *changes over time*, this may induce one into thinking selves have little "*identity*" (or "personality") in the end. When one may seemingly defeat mainstream economists by acknowledging that preferences are not stable over time, the temptation to obtain multiple selves truly renews the issue: is there any unified self left with independent actions toward self-realization to account for? Davis perceives this danger in the "conclusion of Horst, Teschl, and Kirman, who say that 'personal identity of individuals is relatively weak' (Horst, Kirman and Teschl 2007, 23). For them, people really don't have personal identities when we think of them endogenously" (Davis 2011, 208–209). Horst *et al.* stated that Akerlof and Kranton had missed their target when they modeled an account of exogenously given identity, while what was needed was an account of endogenous identity formation. But they could not obtain either. Davis accurately pointed to that failure.

One reason for this conundrum may be that to regard the self as a substantial entity is not satisfactory and one may rather wish to argue that the self is more of a bundle of converging *intentional* acts. Concerning the fundamental nature of the self, many answers are possible: for instance, Davis (2011) puts forth the currently fashionable "self-narrative" story as a key to individual personal autobiographies.[8] The phenomenological approach, anchored in Husserl's analysis of intentionality, is favored by others.[9] Anyhow, internally orientated subjectivity and its needs should be taken into account. But the issue of economic analysis

facing the self is different in our eyes: it is the feasibility of dealing with a process irreducible to usual notions that makes the difference. This is why other sciences interfere: they have found their own way. Psychologists, for instance, debate about the individual mind and lawyers about the "person." The latter term is telling: from the Latin "*persona*," it designates a "mask." So we may ask: is a "true" face ever accessible as an "economic agent" and how may it function as the potential *locus foci* for economic self-realization? What process is at stake, in the first person for the self, in the third person for its observer? When economics sees the self as an already existing being, its realization is akin to individual-building.

Yet such issues are never solved by mincing words: while economists fail to answer who or what the "agent" is, who or what it may become, the issue surges again directly,[10] or through indirect paths like the "economics of happiness."[11] Where indeed desires and passions were not accounted for by economists, philosophers may rehabilitate other dimensions, like Pierre Livet did for emotions and personal identity revisions (Livet 2006). To grasp the "self," either as *rational* (compatible with economic modeling) and/or as *reasonable* (in a framework of morals or plural social-status), one step beyond models to assess "self-realization" is necessary. This is our intent.

0.3. This chapter consequently questions first economics as a science that rids itself of the notion of "self" (Part 1), as economists "forgot" the "self-like" agent. The "rational *vs.* reasonable" debate underlies moral and historical approaches where *rationality* was (mis)used to discard individual claims and socio-political notions. These queries are not new: they got disentangled at the crossroads of the 1900s. In the resulting so-called "mainstream" until nowadays, much was discarded from economic discourse that could have served it well.

In particular, a path was then opened by the founder of the Austrian school of economics, Menger, whose conception we shall briefly follow (Part 2). Menger featured the economic self as both strictly individual (that is, *not* defined along *social*, *national*, or *racial* lines as was common during that time period) and at the same time apt for methodological study[12] through simple exchange mechanisms that appear to be useful in manifold contextual environments. Menger built devices for the self that are both simple and efficient, and a table of key notions that we drew out from his archives will display an "economic self" aiming at self-realization.

Part 3 returns from philosophical notions to face issues of self-realization within applied economics: what do agents do when they trade? How is

self-realization performed in practical matters from the moment when it starts, from "self-preservation"? A subjectivist methodological individualistic methodology may usefully serve a contemporary setting more aware of the notion of "self," considering that *economic selves* effectively fulfill goals of survival, life and goals in life, along a scale that amounts to a reasonable notion of "self-realization." We shall then conclude in this line.

Part 1: What Kind of Economic "Self"?

1.1. Who are "economic agents"? In the previous section, we evoked commentators who deal with the identity issue nowadays. Here, let us tackle the issue by examining what they do—and incidentally, when needed, by going back to earlier authors. Agents (who are selves in a sense that needs to be defined) exchange goods and services, produce and consume, satisfy their needs as effectively and as efficiently as possible—that is to say "economically." Now, economists have argued that this economic reality calls for a specific notion of human agency and to do that, they usually shun its "identity" (regarded as a sense of being oneself). But if economics should tell something about self-*realization*, then it needs to consider those individual beings as complete and unified (therefore endowed with that very sense). Thus, an economic agent is less an *economic* agent than merely a *human* agent. The actions that the self performs require to be understood as a whole: what are the acting "selves" doing indeed if they are not achieving/realizing their own selves? To assign the economic actions mentioned above (to exchange, to produce, to consume) to some fully disembodied "self-less" entities would be *unbelievable*. Agents are individuals at any rate.

However, what precisely contemporary economics managed to do is to get rid of the self while keeping ghostly mathematized individuals present in models. That was achieved by reducing the self to a series of mathematically-translatable properties, where no subjectivity whatsoever is set in terms of inner features besides the so-called "revealed preferences"—these can be registered by an external observer. No inner differentiated process is taken into consideration in mainstream economics, and no nature of the self needs be assumed. Only initial endowments and inputs through time are considered: these may vary (hence trade may exist) but the standard agent is *indeed* such a skeleton. From a sum of equations, to deduce any case for "self-realization" is unthinkable. To grasp self-realization along its economic dimension assuredly implies considering a process of transformation of the representation of the standard agent.

One critique of standard economics targets this picture that mainstream economics has built. The critique can be articulated in accordance with various "heterodox" traditions. The Austrian school of thought is one of those: this school surfaced as it supported the rise of modern economics based on marginal utility reasoning but, contrary to currents of thought that evolved into the mainstream, never intended to erase the self from its research program. Austrians avoided simplistic versions of "self-less" economics as follows.

On the one hand, economics built a fictitious entity endowed with rationality properties—any realism is denied for the sake of an easier processing (especially with mathematical tools imported into the social sciences at a loss for the latter). Hence the *rational* vs. *reasonable* debate surfaces, when incompatible notions are separate in the name of the "standard agent." A richer (in the sense of multi-faceted, more abundantly endowed) image of the self of the agent should provide insights useful for economics. To expel it from the start is much *too* simplistic since views on *rationality* may accommodate richer patterns. The observer (the economist) and the observed (the agent) being both human *beings*, that is *reasonable entities*, share intentionality, understanding (*in the original German phrasing: verstehende*) patterns that encompass desires, emotions, and passions. This complexity can be dealt with to some extent.[13]

On the other hand, in its display of high technical skills, mathematical economics becomes drowned in meticulous technicalities. Its philosophical claims are left aside: economics has indeed forgotten its sources. The denial of, and moreover the argument against, the role played by desires and passions and the expulsion of emotions as irrational (a facet of individuality then left to social psychology) have mistakenly become the rule. It was indeed possible to separate economics from sociology (and psychology) by setting the line between rationality of means and ends and irrationality.[14] But otherwise specified types of rationality that could accommodate goals *or* values need also be reminded: thus Max Weber distinguished *Zweck*-(goal) vs. *Wert* (value)*-rationalität* (types of rational behavior).

In any case, one should display detailed mechanisms that make pleasure, pain, or self-satisfaction major issues whose measure is in some way tractable. And this track had indeed been followed by economists as early as *hedonistic* (or *felicific*) *calculus* was forged by Jeremy Bentham. This so-called "*utilitarianism*" would later be confronted by "*welfarism*." Were such views making the "self" central, or indispensable? These divergent philosophical patterns debated *rational vs. reasonable* behavior, but nowhere was a path

trodden to specifically deal with *self-realization*—they rather insisted on self-restraint (individual or collective). Unless one agent is interpreted as the image of the other (arguing that the more economically rational an agent is, the more free they become, for instance), then the only realization that makes sense is achieved through *a process of maximizing* material satisfaction with more optimal economic activity. The adjunct hypotheses of pure and perfect competition, for instance, and perfect knowledge of the environment and of markets are implicitly or explicitly taken for granted, so that no obstacle prevents using maximization principles.

Furthermore, many features that a "self-conscious" agent would display could be totally left aside: intentions should not be merely left aside. If "economically active beings"[15] are *perfectly* efficient, where do they differ from automatons?[16] However, questions raised on these topics relate to the issue of the self and how it gets implemented and/or realized in the field of economics. Studies in computer theory and most recent computer multi-agent simulations are key in that regard. Leaving them aside here, let us ask whether available concepts can ground the economic agent as a self, thereby include a subjective expression of one's being? Is "subjectivity" appropriate as a dimension to display a "self-realizing self"? Now, could economics accommodate in practice a kind of self-conscious subject? It does not suffice that it is wishable, it should be tractable. How should/could different currents of economic thought consider a self—if *ontologically* different from cells or atoms—as an object of science? Without acknowledging subjectivity, no criterion to monitor desires, passions, and the like can be reached. But what kind of a self would get realized through considering such an *economic* agent—as a means in sum, not as a self-conscious entity?

1.2. One path that could be trodden is heterodox economic thinking with more concern about the economic life of the "self" than standard economics. Specifically, it is one way to deal with a self-*ish* "agent" scientifically (objectively), while staying aware of the process of transformation that, in any case, the observer (the economist) may see happening. These dynamics call attention to the ontogenesis of the self: if a process can be called "self-*realization*" then it depends on what the individual "self" of the agent and definitions of economic life are.

Now, to return briefly to this topic's historical setting, this very issue was initiated when Smith shaped moral notions. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the notion of *sympathy* and that of *self love* in the *Wealth of Nations* are less antagonistic than complementary: a *self-loving* individual would not

survive without imagining the needs of others. Hence Smith added the "impartial observer" along with the theories of "natural price," "labor value," "demand and supply," and so on. These occupied the whole space of theory when the "self" was left aside.[17]

In the same era as Smith, Adam Ferguson forged the notion of "civil society" and already debated social classes, wherein any individual is reduced to being either a *land owner*, a *bourgeois* (or a *capitalist*), or a *worker* (or a *proletarian*). The self of each such individual is said to vary depending on the source of income. As Marx claimed, actual material life determines the conscience, not the reverse. In that sense, self-consciousness is impossible to disentangle from class-consciousness related to a general pattern of reproduction of economic life. *Homo economicus* in Classical economics is first and foremost a *class*-conscious agent, and in that sense it is *not yet self*-conscious of oneself independently from collectives—these are social classes in this case, but there may be nations or races for other authors: all in all, assessing that material life determines conscience equals to anchoring group awareness substantially within the self, yet granting to some extent that the self is dispossessed of one's uniqueness.[18] Conversely, little is said about a *self* that could blossom in group settings: even though an individual life can be devised for the self, where masses assume a *messianic* role (in favor or against the revolution), "selves" (if any) who become implicated also appear to be (too) easily expendable.

Science believed that historical arrangements implemented with agents effectively at work in the world could not be satisfied with the *homo economicus* view: epistemological debates were raised as a consequence, yet they often kept far from acknowledging individual selves, even less did they bother discussing its realization. Whatever "self" there was within groups (institutions, nations, race, and class), the latter always came first. A science of the economic agent as an individual character was yet to be born. Hence what surprises us is not that today's economics have almost forgotten to discuss any kind of self in the individual agent they consider, but rather conversely the fact that the individual was at some point truly *methodologically* defined and its essence accessible to economic discourse.

Therefore, it is when some space is prepared for individualism that there emerges a debate concerning the issue of the "self" and its potential realization as such. Suspending judgment on the political (and also ontological) nature of basic individual entities in economics as well as defining a distinctive methodology were both indispensable for restarting a branch of economic thought that included the self, one that had stopped somewhere when Smith, after paving the way with "self-love", let it come to a close, or otherwise become entangled in debates around

labor-value. To support the view that, regardless of whether or not one should recognize groups at the ontological level, these are *not a sound basis* for economic reasoning and sound philosophical fundamentals, one must not allow for collective concepts to stand at the ground of economic analysis. Instead, one must make room for a personal self to act as this ground. Here we see Menger ready to appear onstage. We argue in the following part that Menger grounded in his turn new economics that depend on whether individual agents act and interact "economically" in order to realize themselves. We will also discuss whether or not this found more success than Smith's previous attempt.

Part 2: A Path Toward Potential Realization of the Self as an Economic Agent

2.1. How can economics deal with the "self" when it is not excluded as is often the case? Most of the time, an "instrumental self" (Anderson 1993, 39) misses both its very nature and the self-realization that might be its goal. The process of incorporating motivations (desires, passions, and emotions) that are not yet reducible to the standard agent usually fails, since these are regarded as new inputs that the logic utility maximizing absorbs.

We shall consequently *not* discuss whether it is appropriate to apply economic logic to other social sciences generally speaking: in the case of the "instrumental self," the unity of its preferences is already the reference of standard economics and it cannot account "for the rational unity of our emotions, attitudes, internalized norms, intentions, and ways of deliberating. In unifying a person's preferences and choices around the achievement of particular consequences, the instrumental view creates discord among other aspects of the self" (Anderson 1993, 40). Akerlof and Kranton (2000) do include other motivations, but again for instrumental reasons. Maximizing utility is the basis of standard economics and it distorts motivations not directed toward its utility goal. It also engulfs matters of the "self" into instrumental views, while a path toward self-realization would require us to give identity "global authority" (Anderson 1993, 79) in all cases: what urges action cannot merely be the result of "dry" instrumental computation. We shall therefore follow another path.

Should economics appear as a "local" science then? Is in any means the general economic dimension of the self inadequate to display "self"-realization? This issue is solved if we can only find a current

of thought where the notion is used while at the same time recognizing full-fledged unity of the self within its environment and providing a tractable device. We believe that the original pattern upon which Menger founded the so-called Austrian economic thought can at least partly meet such requirements.

After the "Marginalist revolution" of the 1870s, theories that resulted in today's mainstream had only (general or partial) equilibrium concerns built on the view of a "disembodied" agent endowed with minimal properties meant for mathematical treatment. This was the "un-self" agent (that still remains "egoistic" but has lost any substantial self-meaning) already mentioned. Another view arose from the dispute between the Classics and the German Historicists as Menger finally rejected both schools (and equilibrium as such)[19] and promoted individual selves endowed with cognitive abilities. Menger formed a new view and rejected considering collectives as direct objects for economic inquiry. He approached societies from the viewpoint of individuals acting in an *economic* self-conscious way. This was what economists came to label "methodological individualism" and "subjectivism."

2.2. "Self-realization," in this new perspective, needs only be related to a minimal self, if its expanding field is correctly drawn. Rather than criticizing the standard agent for its inability to include all capabilities (and naturally the "capability theory" put forth much later by Amartya Sen is also nowadays the background of such criticisms), one may attempt to describe dynamic developments from a minimal notion of individual self: typified yet sensitive, cognitive and active, such a self remains open to capacities geared toward self-realization. This is what Menger called "*real-typisch*", very close to Max Weber's "ideal-type" (*Idealtyp*), *without* ever cutting the self thus portrayed from its environment. A telling idea of this "subjective self" that gives leeway to individualistic claims was, already in the 1870s, put forth by Menger. If it is not possible to discuss here the pros and cons of "methodological individualism" nor at length "subjectivism" as ways to realize the self in the Austrian school (from Menger to heirs like Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises), yet we may consider the *origin* of the framework through a shorthand manuscript note in the form of a revealing table of concepts drawn by Menger himself (Table 6.1).[20]

The table reads through combinations—for instance: some ends (*Zwecke*) are reachable through means (*Mittel*) when needs (*Bedürfnisse in the plural*) are (innerly) felt by the human being (*Mensch*), like hunger

Table 6.1 Menger's Semantic Field (entitled by himself: *geflügelte Wörter*—source: Duke U. Archives, Perkins Library, box 2)

ZWECK (ends/goals)	MITTEL (means)	VERWIRKLICHUNG (realization)
MENSCH (human being)	AUSSENWELT (environment)	LEBENSERHALTUNG (subsistence)
BEDÜRFNIS (desire or need)	GUT (good or commodity)	BEFRIEDIGUNG (satisfaction)

or thirst can be felt in his/her environment (*Außenwelt*). Thus, Menger begins his *Principles of Economics* of 1871 with a "theory of good" (*eine Güterlehre*—title of the first chapter) that, according to us, can already be interpreted as a *theory of the nature of the self*, a self that tends toward self-realization. As a consequence, some views like the unintended consequences of individual (self-taken) decisions could later become the motto of Austrian disciples like Hayek.

Menger's individualism was neither political nor ontological, but only methodological. This table displays *Verwirklichung* in the upper-right-hand corner: while reading the table, it shows such realization as the "goal." One is prepared to meet a system of needs (*ein System der Bedürfnisse*) once one's own complex of aim-seeking motives (desires, emotions) begin to push oneself toward a means of satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) through some form of good (*Gut*) or service (no distinction being made) and by ensuring maintaining a sustainable life (*Lebenserhaltung*). Key notions are subjective feeling (of needs etc.) and knowledge (of available—*verfügbar*—means) and the stream of consciousness achieved by individuals to enter interaction in given environments.

How and why Menger's notion of human being needs a "self" to make sense of both his theory and methodology would require more consideration on Menger's writings and archives.[21] This is for example Menger's readings of many philosophers: the line that one reads in this table leads from survival needs and *Lebenserhaltung* to the realization of life that follows norms in a given environment (natural and social), ultimately toward self-realization or "good life." Menger's reading of Aristotle supports this view as well (Campagnolo and Lagueux 2004; Campagnolo 2010, 223–253). Actually, it is "economic philosophy" before the term was coined that we contemplate here. It deals with the

nature (essence) of the self and would bring economics concerned with the self back to Menger: even if, in this notional table, the word "*self*" does not appear (in this sense it would be the "*Ich*" of German philosophers), Menger wrote indeed about the *reflexive* attitude that takes the agent from one stage to the next, from basic *needs* (lower left corner) to the most elevated *self-realization* (*Verwirklichung*), back and forth through the lines and columns of squares where *environment* is central and *realization* ultimate.

Part 3: A Useful Economic Notion of Self-realization

3.1. Although we mentioned the Ancients (Aristotle especially—without entering a detailed debate on individuality in Antiquity) as well as Smith and Menger as inspiring economics where the "self" is accounted for, we also confessed that classical and contemporary economists dismissed the notion on their way. Should we doubt its usefulness then? Moreover, economics that tends to stress self-realization patterns, like Austrian economics, often get "marginalized" within the profession. We hinted at reasons why this is so. We shall at last consider which notion of "self-realization" appears as useful in the analysis of economic life. If self-realization is set as a ultimate stage, then a scale of achievements could be accounted for in the process of reaching it.

From the most urgent material needs up to realizing the ultimate goal of life (that is to say contemplative life for Aristotle), there is a path of *progress* through which the *modern* notion of subject coalesces. And this is consubstantial with economics. Far from the cheap popular "how to find self-realization" folk psychology, economics as a science never amounted to a mere motto like "become the entrepreneur of yourself." Yet some economics also incorporated that latter goal on its way. However, concern for self-realization in economics met original puzzles set at the roots of the discipline. Today's debates upon the "identity" of the economic agent touch on this scientific approach. And there exists social demand for concern about the self. To answer it, the *detour* through philosophical grounds of economic stands, within history of thought then, made sense in the previous two sections.

Hence, let us go back to Menger and ask one last time: "In trade, what is justice?" in order to reach a self-based economic viewpoint. This is a question that Aristotle asked. Where human beings exchange goods (and services) with the prospect of "satisfying their needs" there

is "justice" and self-determination is at stake, says Menger as well. While free will is respected in trade (of privately-owned properties), reciprocal contracting without constraint (neither theft nor pillage, which are then excluded) is "fairness in trade" (in other words, one part of "peculiar justice" for Aristotle). It implies that *one* self confronts *another* self, that they come to terms, agree on exchange at some rate, etc.: each one realizes one's own *utility* and *realizes* the other's wishes—not out of altruistic motives (Smith already realized this with his apologue about the butcher and the baker), but seeking one's own advantage. This is "self-ishness" properly used.

Self-realization is thus at the same time the most natural and the most efficient pattern that guides material life. As far as economics is the study of the latter, the self that is at stake remains indeed probably partly a mystery, but economics is precisely that science that expresses its self-realization. Maybe economics will answer neither *what*, nor *who* the self *is*, but it focuses on giving one clear answer: "finding your own interest is your responsibility." This may differ in other ways of life—for instance, piety may conversely require self-oblivion. Yet even in moral and/or religious matters, one should remember, along with Max Weber, that believers' attitudes contributed to shape *economic* behavior. The German sociologist contemporary to Menger actually stated that the most *efficient* (or "maximizing") way (thus opting for an economic standpoint) selected through modern life was the German Protestant or US dissenters' morals (rather than Latin Catholicism). "Austrian" economists (with Hayek notably rejecting the notion of "justice" as a basis for economic analysis) stress that individual awareness of "conscientiously useful partnerships" is the stairway to self-realization: economics tells no tale, just gives directions—while individuals narrate to themselves what they wish to hear.

Regarding science, this amounts to saying that observers (economists) uncover mechanisms governing exchange: they may assume that agents bring about their own self-narratives whereby they recollect their own selves through their own history.[22] Some economists seem unconcerned about the matter: Milton Friedman once ridiculed the idea of asking entrepreneurs what they thought of their own success, arguing that a doctor will not ask an aged patient how he or she has lived so long, but will instead only ask the organs. Yet how anyone who lived long reconstructs one's life path is a key to the kind of self-realization that a long life also surely points to. Sure, self-*preservation* and self-*realization* may differ in many regards, but the former conditions the latter inasmuch as physical material life in a given environment is concerned.

In other words, partners who are defined as selfish, self-oriented, and self-conscious actually contract better agreements for reciprocal self-realization. Whether these can be modeled in a mathematized science matters, yet it does not imply that we should forget a reflective turn of the mind regarding their awareness of self-mindedness: inner needs and outer environment find unity within a subject—granted, the latter has to deal only with limited information, irreducible built-in ignorance and little time at hand, that is why he/she is a *finite* living being where one's self-image is a first-person reconstruction in contradistinction to third-person economic observations. Neither facet can be ignored.

3.2. If economics is seen as the description of a living process, then the self of the economic agent remains a key notion. Its potentialities, when considered from an external economic viewpoint, point toward self-realization as well as any time when the self is discussed in first person. This chapter on such self-realization ended up reading back Aristotle (too briefly) in the third and last part: this should come as no surprise. If standard economics reduces all to maximizing procedures, it leaves aside facets of selves (emotions etc.). But they can be regained through useful simple notional devices like those partly described by the founder of the Austrian school, Menger—even without entering psychology *per se*.[23]

Similarly, referring to self-narratives by individuals is neither contradictory (with the description process required from positive science) nor sufficient. Self-realization points at "economic philosophy" aiming for some "truth," phenomenological, hermeneutic or else, since these very facets of self-intentionality are many and dealing with the self is a never-ending quest.[24] Implicit motivations result in observable preferences, human selves' decision process is self reflective. Some economists expressed awareness of this process, thus reaching beyond their epistemological and political feuds to stress traits of mankind. Though they may belong to opposite trends, they acknowledge the importance of taking up a stance for the self. For instance, Hayek debated spontaneous orders resulting from unforeseen results of decisions and insisted upon selves taking decisions, while his opponent Keynes stated that "human decisions affecting the future, whether personal or political or economic, cannot depend on strict mathematical expectation, since the basis for making such calculations does not exist; and [that] it is our innate urge to activity which makes the wheels go round, our rational selves choosing between the alternatives as best we are able, calculating where we can, but often falling

back for our motive on whim or sentiment or chance" (Keynes 1936, 162–163). What economics deals with may seem disappointingly limited, for it indeed has its boundary. Yet acknowledging it and taking account of notions like the self and self-realization sometimes is its grandeur as well.

Notes

1. This "*Adam Smith Problem*" was formulated first by August Oncken in an essay in German, translated into English as "The Consistency of Adam Smith" (Oncken 1889/1897): 444.
2. Some recent solutions to the "problem" are found in Hirschman (1977), Dupuy (1992), Mathiot (1990). For a comment on these solutions, see Campagnolo (2011).
3. Indeed the most commonly used word is "*economic agent*." Some publications select the term "person" or "moral subject." See for instance Ballet, J., *and alii* (2014).
4. This is surely true in Modern times, but we shall also refer in passing to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* later.
5. Beware of possible confusion: to set definitions, let us remind ourselves that "egoism" or "ego-centrism" are opposite to "altruism" while "individualism" ("self" or "self-ishness" in the *economic* sense) is contrary to "collectivism."
6. In German, *(Selbst)bedürfnisbefriedigung*—precisely the term combined by Menger.
7. Anyhow, few social scientists would dare discuss self-realization *only* at the collective level. In such a case, the notion could be approached through the study of similar opportunities. However, it would still require individual decision. Taylor (2004) provides an example of debating the *priority* of fair equality of opportunity. Yet, extending decision-theory to equality issues between multiple agents does not satisfactorily help to display "one" self-realization process. We stand by a different approach and make no use of the concepts of equality or equity. Nevertheless, Taylor rightfully points to a path to study fair realization of agents as multiple interacting selves.
8. As indicated, issues in this chapter initiated on the occasion of a conference on "The Self and Its Realization" held in Sapporo (Japan) in 2015, where the issue of self-narrativity was central to many discussions (and also largely criticized).
9. In this volume and other works in progress, like those by my colleagues Ivana A. Mlinar and Ricardo F. Crespo.
10. Economists with philosophical training participate extensively within the field, as evidenced by the following examples: David Parfit (1984), Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum (for instance Nussbaum and Sen 1993), Michael Sandel (Sandel says we discover our identities while Sen says we

choose them: Sen 1999), Alan Kirman and Miriam Teschl (2004), John B. Davis (already quoted).

11. Sometimes regarded as a "revolution in economics," see Frey *et alii* (2008).
12. As they appear in his *Investigations into the Method of the Social Sciences* (Menger 1883/1985).
13. There is a great deal that has been written on this complex topic. We regard the founder of the Austrian school as a precursor in the use of features characterizing this notion (Campagnolo and Tosi 2016).
14. This path was explored by Vilfredo Pareto, among others, as he severed strictly behavioral aspects rational (hence economic) and irrational—Pareto's sociology would study interactions between a plurality of individuals.
15. In German: (*wirtschaftenden*) *Menschen*, also a combination term used by Menger.
16. The activity of any cell can similarly be conceived as a maximizing process by the biologist, and the movement of atoms is made understandable in that they follow, for instance, the most "economical" gradient, so to speak. It does not pertain here however to sort out the scientific issue of which properties can be attributed to automatons.
17. We only mention (but cannot discuss here) works by David Hume on human nature as relevant to this issue and contemporaneous to Smith.
18. This point is found in Marx, and in social literature generally. German Historicists stood for collectives, be they a class (proletariate, landlords, civil servants), a nation (assuming the *Volk* entailed nationalism), or a race. None stood for the self, except perhaps some anarchists since extreme individualism was extolled by "individualists" at the time, like Max Stirner (claiming absolute originality of the "Unique" *self*) and the libertarians of today.
19. Menger rebuked both the "*Volks-wirtschaftslehre*" political economy (based on the notion of *Volk*) and a science of economics reduced to a set of price-quantity equations. Neither suffices to grasp decision process.
20. Menger drew in a notebook entitled *Geflügelte Wörter* ('sparse words').
21. We refer the reader to our other works (Campagnolo 2008a, b, 2010, 2016).
22. There is an abundance of work that has been done on this topic and Davis (2011) insists on it. Some qualification may be in order (see the review by Teschl 2011).
23. How economics and psychology got together and divorced along with their history is a major topic. Regarding Austria, despite analogies that caused to call the Austrian school a "psychological school," Menger

separated "pure economics" and experimental psychology (among recent literature from archives, see Campagnolo 2008a).

24. For accounts in "economic philosophy" today: Mäki (2012) and Campagnolo and Gharbi (2017).

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PART II

Intermezzo—Speaking of Oneself

CHAPTER 7

The Unstoried Life

Galen Strawson

I want Death to find me planting my cabbages, neither worrying about it nor the unfinished gardening.
Michel de Montaigne (1563–92, 99)

Proem

'Each of us constructs and lives a "narrative" …this narrative *is* us, our identities.' 'Self is a perpetually rewritten story.' 'In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives.' 'We are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell.' 'We invent ourselves, but we really are the characters we invent.' A person 'creates his identity by forming an autobiographical narrative—a story of his life.' We're 'virtuoso novelists, who find ourselves engaged in all sorts of behaviour, and we always try to put the best "faces" on it we can. We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story. And that story is our autobiography. The chief fictional character at the centre of that autobiography is one's self.' 'The story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself. This refiguration makes this life itself a cloth woven of stories told.'[1]

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According to these theorists—I will call them the *narrativists*—life is life-writing. It is a narrative—autobiographical—activity. We story ourselves and we are our stories. There is a remarkably robust consensus about this claim, not only in the humanities but also in psychotherapy. It is standardly conjoined with the claim that such self-narration is a good thing, necessary for a full human life.[2] I think it is false—false that everyone stories themselves, false that it is always a good thing. These are not universal human truths, even when we confine our attention to human beings who count as psychologically normal, as I will here. They are not universal human truths even if they are true of some people, or even many, or most. Their proponents, the narrativists, are—at best—generalizing from their own case, in an all-too-human way.[3]

'Narrativity'

What exactly do the narrativists have in mind, when they say things of the sort just quoted? I have not yet been able to find out. But it does seem that there are deeply *narrative* types among us, where to be narrative (here I offer a definition) is to be

> naturally disposed to experience or conceive of one's life, one's existence in time, oneself, in a narrative way, as having the form of a story, or perhaps a collection of stories, and—in some manner—to live in and through this conception.

The popularity of the narrativist view is prima facie evidence that there are such people. But it is not decisive evidence, because human beings hold many views about themselves that have very little to do with reality; and many of us are not narrative in this sense. 'Time travels in divers paces with divers persons,'[4] and it also travels in divers guises. This paper offers dissenting testimony from many sources. Some of us are not just not naturally narrative. We are naturally—deeply—non-narrative. We are anti-narrative by fundamental constitution. It is not just that the deliverances of memory are, for us, hopelessly piecemeal and disordered, even when we are trying to remember a temporally extended sequence of events. The point is much more general. It concerns all parts of life, the 'great shambles of life,' in Henry James's expression (1899, 198). This seems a much better characterization of the large-scale structure (structurelessness) of human existence as we find it.

Non-narratives are fully aware of life's biological temporal order (birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, prime of life, maturity, decline, old age, and death),[5] and its associated cultural temporal order and rites of passage (including, in these parts, acquisition of the right to drive, marry, drink, vote, adopt, retire, get a free bus pass). Even with all this knowledge of life structure, they find themselves 'weltering through eternity' (1818a, 198), even on the most ordinary mornings or under clear temporal duress (late for work), and not just (as in Shelley's lines) when thickly dreaming.

It makes no difference to non-narratives whether something has 'burst the spirit's sleep,' i.e., caused them to wake up to life in a way that makes their past seem like sleepwalking (Bellow 1959, 312, echoing Shelley 1818b, 138). This Shelleyan experience is orthogonal (as philosophers say) to any experience of narrative coherence or narrative self-determination or 'self-authorship.' The two forms of experience appear to be 'doubly dissociable,' in the terminology of experimental psychology: one can experience either in the absence of the other (or both together, or neither).

'Self-Authorship'

The experience of 'self-authorship'—the sense that one is engaging in self-determination in and through some process of 'life-writing' or narrative self-constitution—is one thing, mysterious to my kind. The existence of such a thing is another. Perhaps some people have the experience, or aspire to it; some seem to believe in the possibility of self-creation. 'The tendency to attribute control to self is a personality trait,' as the psychologist Dan Wegner says, possessed by some and not others (2002, 202, citing Rotter 1966). There is an experimentally well-attested distinction between human beings who have what he calls the 'emotion of authorship' with respect to their thoughts, and those who, like myself, have no such emotion, and feel that their thoughts are things that just happen (Wegner 2002, 318, 325–326). This difference may run very deep, and it may track the difference between those who experience themselves as self-constituting and those who do not.

Whether it does or not, the *experience* of self-constituting self-authorship seems real enough. When it comes to the actual *existence* of self-authorship, however—the reality of some process of self-determination in

or through life as life-writing—I'm skeptical. Mary McCarthy appears to speak for many when she says

> I suppose everyone continues to be interested in the quest for the self, but what you feel when you're older, I think, is that you really must make the self. It is absolutely useless to look for it, you won't find it, but it's possible in some sense to make it. I don't mean in the sense of making a mask, a Yeatsian mask. But you finally begin in some sense to make and choose the self you want. (1962, 313)

And this, I take it, is how she experiences things, and how—with an attractive degree of caution—she believes them to be. Germaine Greer is less nuanced. She thinks 'human beings have an inalienable right to invent themselves,' and she presumably has experiences to match (*The Times*, 1 February 1986). I go with Emerson in 1837: 'we are carried by destiny along our life's course looking as grave and knowing as little as the infant who is carried in his wicker coach thro' the street' (1835–8, 392). We may be busy all day, intensely engaged in our work, but 'sleep lingers all our lifetime about our eyes, as night hovers all day in the boughs of the fir-tree. All things swim and glimmer. Our life is not so much threatened as our perception. Ghostlike we glide through nature, and should not know our place again.'[6] This is the price we pay for our mental complexity, a great difficulty in our condition, unknown to other animals, but a price that may be worth paying.

Emerson can be overpowering, and for that reason unhelpful, even when he is right. And he uses the ever-tempting general 'we'—like the narrativists. Deep down, he says, we are all equally unknowing; he proposes a universal human truth. So it is not clear that one can use his words to try to distinguish one group of people from another—non-narratives from narratives, or (a different distinction) people who believe in life as life-writing from people who do not. And some naturally narrative types probably experience the pull of Emerson's remarks, even if others feel their lives to be glimmer-free. So I will put Emerson aside. The issue remains: the claim that all human life is life-writing, and that life-writing is not only a necessary task for any self-respecting human being, but also, at least in the best case, an exercise of autonomy—self-determination.

This view seems extraordinarily unappreciative of fate, but above all comic, like Einstein's moon—

> If the moon in the act of completing its eternal way around the earth, were gifted with self-consciousness, it would feel thoroughly convinced that it was traveling its way of its own accord on the strength of a resolution taken once and for all. … So would a Being, endowed with higher insight and more perfect intelligence, watching man and his doings, smile about man's illusion that he was acting according to his own free will. (1931)

—or the all-too-human monkey in *Journey to the West*, in which the Buddha challenges Monkey, aka The Great Sage, to get out of his (the Buddha's) right hand with a single somersault. Monkey, who knows he can cover thirty-six thousand miles in one somersault, accepts the challenge, jumps onto the Buddha's palm, performs a maximal somersault, and marks the distant place of his arrival by writing 'The Great Sage Equaling Heaven Was Here' and urinating—before returning to the Buddha's palm to claim his prize.

> 'I've got you, you piss-spirit of a monkey,' roared the Buddha at him. 'You never left the palm of my hand.' 'You're wrong there,' the Great Sage replied. 'I went to the farthest point of Heaven, where I saw five flesh-pink pillars topped by dark vapours. I left my mark there: do you dare come and see it with me?' 'There's no need to go. Just look down.' The Great Sage looked down with his fire eyes with golden pupils to see the words 'The Great Sage Equaling Heaven Was Here' written on the middle finger of the Buddha's right hand. The stink of monkey-piss rose from the fold at the bottom of the finger. (Wu Cheng-en 1592, vol. 1. Chap. 7)

If there is any defensible sense in which life is life-writing, I think it is—at best—'automatic writing.' One's life is not 'a cloth woven of stories told,' in Ricoeur's words, threaded with varying degrees of fiction. Never mind the fact that claims of this kind seem to insult those who have suffered greatly. Never mind the adamantine fact that one's life is simply one's life, something whose actual course is part of the history of the universe and 100% non-fictional. For now it is enough to hold on to the point that Alasdair MacIntyre made right at the start of the current narrativist movement: 'we are never more (and sometimes much less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. Only in fantasy do we live what story we please' (1981, 199).

Every life comes with a thrilling stack of counterfactuals. You might so very easily never have met the person you love, or believe you love. And what are the chances of your coming into existence? There is a sense

in which they are vanishingly small. Your parents might so very easily never have met, and their parents in turn, and their parents in turn. And if you had not gone to X because Y fell ill, you'd never have discovered Z. The irony is that these counterfactuals are great material for good stories, and easily give rise to a sense of wonder or providence. But the wonder has no justification, if only because spectacular counterfactuals hold true of one's life whatever happens. Consider X, amazed at his astonishing good fortune in meeting Y: it might so easily never have happened. But if he had not met Y, he might now be weeping with happiness at his good fortune in meeting Z.

'Life Is Not Literature'

So I am with Bill Blattner in his criticism of Alexander Nehamas's influential book *Life as Literature*: 'We are not texts. Our histories are not narratives. Life is not literature' (2000, 187). Somebody had to say it. You might think that Proust disagrees, and not only shows himself to be of a narrative disposition, but also sides theoretically with the narrativists, when he states that

> [r]eal life, life at last uncovered and illuminated, the only life really lived, therefore, is literature—that life which, in a sense, lives at each moment in every person as much as in an artist. (1913–27, 4.474)

But this would be a mistake, given the way in which Proust is using the word 'literature' (I'm not going to distinguish between the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and Proust himself). His conception of how we can enter into our real life is complex, but one thing that is clear is that a tendency to self-narration constitutes one of the greatest obstacles to doing so. Literature as *la vraie vie*, literature in Proust's special sense of the word, is a matter of a certain rare state of self-awareness which is not generally much in one's control, and has nothing to do with narrativity. Roughly speaking, it is a state of absorbed, illuminated consciousness of what one most deeply loves. It is an awareness of an aspect of one's essence (a term one should not hesitate to use) which is itself a participation in one's essence—something from which one is generally alienated. And this awareness is emphatically not a matter of narrative. It is, on the contrary, out of time. The unhappy truth of the human condition, according to Proust, is that we run a great risk of dying without ever knowing our real or true life in his sense

('cette réalité que nous risquerions fort de mourir sans avoir connue'). Our narrative tendencies are one of the principal reasons why this is so.

Keats says that 'A man's life of any worth is a continual allegory' (1819, 2.102). Suppose we allow this. Does it follow that he or she should know this, or try to work out what it is? I don't think so. The search might occlude—distort, destroy—its object. Suppose we further allow that allegories are narratives, so that (if Keats is right) lives of worth are always narratives. It certainly does not follow that anyone should be a narrative type, or that all worthy people are narrative types. 'Very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life,' Keats continues, and I think he knows that this includes the worthy person in question.

'La Vraie Vie'

If Proust is right about life, 'real life' in his special normative sense of the term,[7] then it may be that non-narratives have a certain advantage—however small, and however easily nullified by other encumbrances (it is a merely negative advantage—absence of a hindrance—not in itself a positive one). The narrativists, however, may refuse to admit the reality of non-narratives. 'Look, we're sure that you're sincere when you claim to be non-narrative, but really you're as narrative as the rest of us.'[8] In the last twenty years, the philosopher Marya Schechtman has given increasingly sophisticated accounts of what it is to be narrative and to 'constitute one's identity' through self-narration. She now stresses the point that one's self-narration may be very largely implicit and unconscious, and that is an important concession, relative to the strong version of her original 'Narrative Self-Constitution View,' according to which one must be in possession of a full and 'explicit narrative [of one's life] to develop fully as a person' (1996, 119). It is certainly an improvement on her original view, and it puts her in a position to say that people like myself may be narrative and just not know it or admit it.

In her most recent book, *Staying Alive*, she modifies her original thesis still further, but she still thinks that 'persons experience their lives as unified wholes' (2014, 100) in some way that goes far beyond their basic awareness of themselves as single finite biological individuals with a certain curriculum vitae. She still thinks that 'we constitute ourselves as persons… by developing and operating with a (mostly implicit) *autobiographical narrative* which acts as the lens through which we experience the world' (p. 101), and I still doubt that this is true. I doubt that it is a

universal human condition—universal among people who count as normal. I doubt this even after she writes that "having an autobiographical narrative" doesn't amount to consciously retelling one's life story always (or ever) to oneself or to anyone else' (p. 101). I don't think an 'autobiographical narrative' plays any significant role in how I experience the world, although I know that my present overall outlook and behavior is deeply conditioned by my genetic inheritance and sociocultural place and time, including in particular my early upbringing, and also know, on a smaller scale, that my experience of this bus journey is affected both by the talk I have been having with A in Notting Hill and the fact that I am on my way to meet B in Kentish Town.

I am, like Schechtman, a creature who can 'consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places,' in Locke's famous definition of a person (1694, 2.27.9). I know what it is like when 'anticipated trouble already tempers present joy' (Schechtman 2014, 101). In spite of my poor memory, I have a perfectly respectable degree of knowledge of many of the events of my life. I do not live ecstatically in the present moment in any pathological or enlightened manner. But I do, with Updike and many others, 'have the persistent sensation, in my life…, that I am just beginning.'[9] Pessoa's 'heteronym' Alberto Caeiro is a strange man, but he captures an experience common to many (in some perhaps milder form) when he writes that 'I always feel as if I've just been born / Into an endlessly new world.'[10] Some will immediately understand this, others will be puzzled—and perhaps skeptical. The general lesson is the lesson of human difference.

In a rare interview, Alice Munro speaks about her work:

> [t]here is this kind of exhaustion and bewilderment when you look at your work. …. it's all in a way quite foreign—I mean, it's quite gone from you. …And all you really have left is the thing you're working on now. And so you're much more thinly clothed. You're like somebody out in a little shirt or something, which is just the work you're doing now and the strange identification with everything you've done before. And this probably is why I don't take any public role as a writer. Because I can't see myself doing that except as a gigantic fraud.

Here Munro is speaking specifically about writing, and (as I understand her) about her bewilderment at being identified with her previous work, but one's general relation to one's past can have a similar form. It can

in any case be radically non-narrative and find its ideal representation in list form, as in Joe Brainard's *I Remember*, which contains over 1000 'I remembers':

> I remember when my father would say 'Keep your hands out from under the covers' as he said goodnight. But he said it in a nice way.
>
> I remember when I thought that if you did anything bad, policemen would put you in jail.
>
> I remember one very cold and black night on the beach with Frank O'Hara. He ran into the ocean naked and it scared me to death.
>
> I remember lightning.
>
> I remember wild red poppies in Italy.
>
> I remember selling blood every three months on Second Avenue.[11]

Or in Georges Perec's *Je me souviens*:

> Je me souviens des photos de Brigitte Bardot nue dans *l'Express*.
>
> Je me souviens de Ringo Starr et de Babara Bach dans un épouvantable film de Science-Fiction.
>
> Je me souviens du Solarium au Val-André.
>
> Je me souviens de la finale de la coupe du Monde de football à Munich en 1974, j'ai pleuré parce que les Pays-Bas de Johan Cryuiff avaient perdu …

There's an echo of Munro's experience in Updike's complaint about biography:

> [t]he trouble with literary biographies, perhaps, is that they mainly testify to the long worldly corruption of a life, as documented deeds and days and disappointments pile up, and cannot convey the unearthly innocence that attends, in the perpetual present tense of living, the self that seems the real one.[12]

One may be suspicious of Updike, but one should not think that those who feel that their pasts fall away are motivated by a desire to escape responsibility.[13]

According to Schechtman, 'the sense in which we have autobiographical narratives … is cashed out mostly in terms of the way in which an implicit understanding of the ongoing course of our lives influences our experience and deliberation' (2014, 101). And there is one natural reading of this claim given which it is obviously true. One is, say, in the second year of one's apprenticeship, and one knows this; one is coming up for promotion, or two years from retirement, or engaged to X, or about to move to Y, or four months pregnant or terminally ill, and one's knowledge of these facts is of course influencing one's experience and practical deliberation. One knows how old one is, one knows how long people usually live, and one knows how their powers decline after a certain age. But the obvious truth of Schechtman's claim understood in this basic way does not support the idea that it is also true in some—any—further sense. I do not think that it can be asserted in any stronger sense without flipping from true to false—false of many people, even if still true of some.

'A Diachronically Structured Unit'

Schechtman concludes her discussion of narrativity in *Staying Alive* with a further concession:

> [i]t seems more accurate and less liable to generate misunderstanding to give up the locution of 'narrative' in this context and to describe the type of unity that defines a person's identity not as a *narrative* unity but simply as the structural unity of a person's life. (2014, 108)

It is the idea of a life as 'a diachronically structured unit' that 'is doing the real work' for her view (p. 108), and many things which form diachronically structured units are not narratives at all.

I think she is right to drop the word 'narrative,' but what now comes to mind, given this reformulation, is the degree to which any sense of specifically diachronic structural unity seems to be lacking, for at least some human beings, in their experience of existence from moment to moment, day to day, month to month, and year to year.

The lack may seem remarkable—hard to credit—given the profound diachronic/structural unity that does actually exist in any human life. A human being is a single-bodied creature whose constancies and continuities of character through adult life tend to be as powerful as his or her bodily constancies and continuities.[14] Many things conspire to underwrite a person's experience of the diachronic unity of their life; for we are, again, creatures who can and do explicitly 'consider [themselves] as [themselves], in different times and places,' in Locke's phrase. We are capable of 'mental time-travel,' in Tulving's abbreviation of Locke (Tulving 1985, 5), and some of us do a lot of it (some biased to the future, others to the past). As far as the future is concerned, we all know that we will die. This is not a small matter. But none of these things support the narrativist thesis as usually expounded, the thesis that all human life is, in some sense, life-writing, and also ought to be. We can reduce the thesis to the thin claim that we have some sense of the unity of our life, and ought to. But I do not think it looks any better. The unity is there, no doubt, but it is not something one needs to be aware of. To think about it, to try to nurture it, is to risk fantasy and self-deception.

'No,' you say. 'It's a necessary part of self-possession.' But what is it to be self-possessed? Does it involve 'self-authorship'? And does self-authorship involve self-editing? The claim that someone is very self-possessed can carry the suggestion that they are self-alienated, out of touch with their reality. Self-possession as self-alienation; it's a paradox of a familiar sort, but it captures a truth. 'It is all very well,' as the great Lewis Thomas said, 'to be aware of your awareness, even proud of it, but do not try to operate it. You are not up to the job' (1983, 141). It is a familiar point in sports that self-control can depend on a kind of thoughtlessness.

'My Name Is Legion'

According to Dan McAdams, a leading narrativist among social psychologists:

> [b]eginning in late adolescence and young adulthood, we construct integrative narratives of the self that selectively recall the past and wishfully anticipate the future to provide our lives with some semblance of unity, purpose, and identity. Personal identity is the internalized and evolving life story that each of us is working on as we move through our adult

> lives…. I… do not really know who I am until I have a good understanding of my narrative identity. (2005, 287–288)

If this is true, we must worry not only about the non-Narratives—unless they are happy to lack personal identity—but also about the people described by Mary Midgley and Erik Erikson:

> …various selves …. make up our composite Self. There are constant and often shocklike transitions between these selves. … It takes, indeed, a healthy personality for the 'I' to be able to speak out of all these conditions in such a way that at any moment it can testify to a reasonably coherent Self. (Erikson 1968, 217)

> [Doctor Jekyll] was partly right: we are each not only one but also many. … Some of us have to hold a meeting every time we want to do something only slightly difficult, in order to find the self who is capable of undertaking it. … We spend a lot of time and ingenuity on developing ways of organizing the inner crowd, securing consent among it, and arranging for it to act as a whole. Literature shows that the condition is not rare. (Midgley 1984, 123)

Erikson and Midgley suggest, astonishingly, that we are all like this, and many agree—presumably those who fit the pattern. This makes me grateful to Midgley when she adds that 'others, of course, obviously do not feel like this at all, hear such descriptions with amazement, and are inclined to regard those who give them as dotty.' At the same time, we should not adopt a theory that puts these people's claim to be genuine persons in question. We do not want to shut out Paul Klee:

> …my self … is a dramatic ensemble. Here a prophetic ancestor makes his appearance. Here a brutal hero shouts. Here an alcoholic *bon vivant* argues with a learned professor. Here a lyric muse, chronically love-struck, raises her eyes to heaven. Her papa steps forward, uttering pedantic protests. Here the indulgent uncle intercedes. Here the aunt babbles gossip. Here the maid giggles lasciviously. And I look upon it all with amazement, the sharpened pen in my hand. A pregnant mother wants to join the fun. 'Pshtt!' I cry, 'You don't belong here. You are divisible.' And she fades out… (1965, 177)

Or W. Somerset Maugham:

> I recognize that I am made up of several persons and that the person that at the moment has the upper hand will inevitably give place to another. But which is the real one? All of them or none? (1949, 21)

Or Philip Roth's Nathan Zuckerman, who is more or less intimately related to his author:

> All I can tell you with certainty is that I, for one, have no self, and that I am unwilling or unable to perpetrate upon myself the joke of a self. … What I have instead is a variety of impersonations I can do, and not only of myself—a troupe of players that I have internalised, a permanent company of actors that I can call upon when a self is required. ….I am a theater and nothing more than a theater. (1986, 324)

What are these people to do, if the advocates of narrative unity are right? I think they should continue as they are. Their inner crowds can perhaps share some kind of rollicking self-narrative. But there seems to be no clear provision for them in the leading philosophies of personal unity of our time as propounded by (among others) Marya Schechtman, Harry Frankfurt, and Christine Korsgaard. I think F. Scott Fitzgerald is wrong when he says in his *Notebooks* that 'There never was a good biography of a good novelist. There couldn't be. He is too many people if he's any good' (1945, 159). But one can see what he has in mind.

'What Little I Remember'

There is, furthermore, a vast difference between people who regularly and actively remember their past, and people who almost never do. In his autobiography *What Little I Remember*, Otto Frisch writes 'I have always lived very much in the present, remembering only what seemed to be worth retelling'… 'I have always, as I already said, lived in the here and now, and seen little of the wider views' (1979: ix, xi). I'm in the Frisch camp, on the whole, although I do not remember things in order to retell them. More generally, and putting aside pathological memory loss, I am in the Montaigne camp, when it comes to specifically autobiographical memory: 'I can find hardly a trace of [memory] in myself; I doubt if there is any other memory in the world as grotesquely faulty as mine is!' Montaigne knows this can lead to misunderstanding. He is, for example, 'better at friendship than at anything else, yet the very words

used to acknowledge that I have this affliction [poor memory] are taken to signify ingratitude; they judge my affection by my memory'—quite wrongly. 'However, I derive comfort from my infirmity.' Poor memory protects him from a disagreeable form of ambition, stops him babbling, and forces him to think through things for himself because he cannot remember what others have said. Another advantage, he says in his *Essays,* 'is that … I remember less any insults received.'[15]

To this we can add the point that poor memory and a non-Narrative disposition are not hindrances when it comes to autobiography in the literal sense—actually writing things down about one's own life. Montaigne is the proof of this, for he is perhaps the greatest autobiographer, the greatest human self-recorder, in spite of the fact that

> …nothing is so foreign to my mode of writing than extended narration [*narration estendue*]. I have to break off so often from shortness of wind that neither the structure of my works nor their development is worth anything at all. (1563–92, 120)

Montaigne writes the unstoried life—the only life that matters, I'm inclined to think. He has no 'side,' in the colloquial English sense of this term. His honesty, although extreme, is devoid of exhibitionism or sentimentality (St Augustine and Rousseau compare unfavorably). He seeks self-knowledge in radically unpremeditated life-writing: 'I speak to my writing-paper exactly as I do the first person I meet' (1563–92, 891). He knows his memory is hopelessly untrustworthy, and he concludes that the fundamental lesson of self-knowledge is knowledge of self-ignorance.

'An Ordinary Mind'

Once one is on the lookout for comments on memory, one finds them everywhere. There is a constant discord of opinion. I think James Meek is accurate when he comments on Salter's novel *Light Years*:

> Salter strips out the narrative transitions and explanations and contextualisations, the novelistic linkages that don't exist in our actual memories, to leave us with a set of remembered fragments, some bright, some ugly, some bafflingly trivial, that don't easily connect and can't be put together as a whole, except in the sense of chronology, and in the sense that they are all that remains. (2013, 4)

Meek takes it that this is true of everyone, and it is perhaps the most common case. Salter in *Light Years* finds a matching disconnection in life itself: 'There is no complete life. There are only fragments. We are born to have nothing, to have it pour through our hands' (1975, 35). And this, again, is a common experience:

> Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end …. (Woolf 1925, 160)

It is hard to work out the full consequences of this passage from Virginia Woolf. What is certain is that there are rehearsers and composers among us, people who not only naturally story their recollections, but also their lives as they are happening. But when Sir Henry Taylor observes that 'an imaginative man is apt to see, in his life, the story of his life; and is thereby led to conduct himself in such a manner as to make a good story of it rather than a good life' (1836, 35) he's identifying a fault, a moral danger, a recipe for inauthenticity.[16] We should therefore worry if the narrativists are right, and such self-storying impulses are in fact universal.

Fortunately, they are not right. There are people who are wonderfully and movingly plodding and factual in their grasp of their pasts. It is an ancient view that people always remember their own pasts in a way that puts them in a good light, but there is solid evidence that it is far from universally true.[17]

The True Self?

In his poem 'Continuing to Live,' Philip Larkin claims that 'in time, / We half-identify the blind impress / All our behavings bear' (2003, 94). The narrativists think that this is an essentially narrative matter, an

essentially narrative construal of the form of our lives. But many of us do not get even as far as Larkinian half-identification, and we have at best bits and pieces, rather than a story. We are startled by Larkin's further claim that 'once you have walked the length of your mind, what / You command is clear as a lading-list,' for we find, even in advanced age, that we still have no clear idea of what we command. I for one have no clear sense of who or what I am. This is not because I want to be like Montaigne, or because I've read Socrates on ignorance, or Nietzsche on skins—

> How can man know himself? He is a dark and veiled thing; and whereas the hare has seven skins, the human being can shed seven times seventy skins and still not be able to say: 'This is really you, this is no longer outer shell'. (1874a, b, 174; translation modified)

I think of Simon Gray in his *Coda*, written when he knew himself to be dying of cancer:

> the truth is that I don't really know even quite elementary things about myself, my wants and needs, until I've written them down or spoken them. (2008, 114)

Gray is perhaps wise, given the continuation of the above passage from Nietzsche:

> Besides, it is an agonizing, dangerous undertaking to dig down into yourself in this way, to force your way by the shortest route down the shaft of your own being. How easy it is to do damage to yourself that no doctor can heal. And moreover, why should it be necessary, since everything—our friendships and hatreds, the way we look, our handshakes, the things we remember and forget, our books, our handwriting—bears witness to our being? (ibid., p. 340)

I cannot, however, cut off this quotation here, because it continues in a way that raises a doubt about my position:

> But there is a means by which this absolutely crucial enquiry can be carried out. Let the young soul look back upon its life and ask itself: what until now have you truly loved, what has drawn out your soul, what has commanded it and at the same time made it happy? Line up these objects of reverence

> before you, and perhaps by what they are and by their sequence, they will yield you a law, the fundamental law of your true self. (ibid., p. 340)

'Perhaps by what they are … they will yield the fundamental law of your true self.' This claim is easy to endorse. It is Proust's greatest insight. Camus sees it too. But Nietzsche is more specific: 'perhaps by what they are *and by their sequence*, they will yield … the fundamental law of your true self.' Here it seems I must either disagree with Nietzsche or concede something to the narrativists: the possible importance of grasping the sequence in progressing toward self-understanding.

I concede it. Consideration of the sequence—the 'narrative,' if you like—may be important for some people in some cases. For most of us, however, I think self-knowledge comes best in bits and pieces. Nor does this concession yield anything to the sweeping view with which I began, the view—in Oliver Sacks's words—that all human life is life-writing, that 'each of us constructs and lives a "narrative"' and that 'this narrative *is* us, our identities.'

Notes

1. Sacks (1985, 110), Bruner (1994, 53), Bruner (1987, 15), McAdams et al. (2006), Velleman (2005, 206), Schechtman (1996, 93), Dennett (1988, 1029), Ricoeur (1988, 246). When I cite a work in this book I give the date of first publication, or occasionally the date of composition, while the page reference is to the edition listed in the bibliography.
2. Sartre, at least, disagrees on the second point, arguing in *La nausée* that self-storying, although inevitable, condemns us to inauthenticity—in effect, to absence from our own lives. Proust agrees, in *A la recherche du temps perdu*.
3. I doubt that what they say is an accurate description even of themselves.
4. *As You Like It* 3.2. Rosalind considers variations in the experienced pace of time that arise from temporary circumstances, but individual differences in temporal phenomenology run much deeper. In their book *The Time Paradox* (2008) Zimbardo and Boyd sort human beings into 'Pasts', 'Presents', and 'Futures' on the basis of their different temporal proclivities), and classify us further as 'past-negative' or 'past-positive', 'present-hedonistic' or 'present-fatalistic'. It's a familiar point that different cultures experience time very differently (see e.g., Levine 1998).
5. A recent medical classification distinguishes between 'young-old' (65–74), 'old' (74–84), 'old-old' (85+).

6. 1844, 471; the last phrase echoes Psalm 103.
7. One's real life in Proust's normative sense is not one's actual life as this is ordinarily understood. It's a matter of one's essence.
8. 'That's precisely why Proust is so pessimistic', they may add.
9. 1989: 239. Updike's testimony shows that this experience of life has nothing essentially to do with poor memory.
10. 1914: 48. Pessoa's heteronyms are not noms de plume; see, e.g., Zenith (2002).
11. 1970–3: 20.
12. New Yorker, 26 June 1995. Martin Amis (2015) has a more hopeful perspective in a review of a biography of Saul Bellow by Zachary Leader (who also wrote a biography of Kingsley Amis): 'You lose, let us say, a parent or a beloved mentor. Once the primary reactions, both universal and personal, begin to fade, you no longer see the reduced and simplified figure, compromised by time—and in Bellow's case encrusted with secondhand "narratives", platitudes, and approximations. You begin to see the whole being, in all its freshness and quiddity. That is what happens here.'
13. See e.g., Strawson (2007).
14. Putting aside genuine trauma (being 'born again' is a superficial change relative to one's deep structure).
15. 1563–92: 32–3. 'Since my memory is very short', he wrote to his father in 1563 after the death of Etienne de la Boétie, 'and was further disturbed by the confusion that my mind was to suffer from so heavy and important a loss, it is impossible that I have not forgotten many things that I would like to be known' (1563–92: 1276–7).
16. Cases in which the storying is done with perfect self-consciousness—'I was telling myself the story of our visit to the Hardys, & I began to compose it' (Woolf 1926, 102)—are not at issue.
17. See e.g., Waggenaar (1994). See also the end of Tolstoy's story 'The Death of Ivan Illich'.

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CHAPTER 8

Muddling Through: An Episodic Conversation on Self, Narrativity, Transience, and Other Pleasantries

Galen Strawson and Andrea Altobrando

AA: In your article "The unstoried life", you criticize the idea that having a 'storied life' is necessary for a good life. Some authors would probably admit that having a storied life is perhaps not necessary in order to simply exist as an individual, singular being, but they would probably not accept that what you (in *Selves*) call a 'whole human being' is possible without such (self-)narration. In other words, a being can be qualified as a human only if it has a narration of itself. Without a kind of self-narration, there would be no self at all, no 'center of narrative gravity,' and, thus, no identity. If we follow along this line of thought, then a diachronic unity without any narration would be something below the level of personhood and, probably, humanity. According to some authors, such a selfness (I will leave Ricoeur's notion of 'selfhood' for later) is a requirement to in order to be a person, i.e., a morally evaluable

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being, and, possibly, to be happy. Leaving aside (momentarily) your disagreement with them as well as possible critiques, do you have any idea why they believe that to have some kind of self-narration is good and somehow necessary in order to have a fulfilling life?

GS: Thanks Andrea. This whole debate is what William James called a blooming, buzzing confusion. My responses to your questions are likely to be fairly chaotic, but I'll do my best. I hope I don't sound short-tempered at times; I'm just trying to be reasonably accurate and at the same reasonably brisk. I very much appreciate your questions. I don't, however, think I can fully answer them—and this is not just because I have more to say than I can say here ….

The first thing is that I still don't really know what 'a narration of oneself,' or a 'kind of self-narration,' is meant to be. I really don't. What are words like 'narrative' or 'story' supposed to mean, when they're used in contexts like this? If I had to bet on how many of the substantive uses of the word 'narrative' or 'story' in ethics and psychology (not to mention 'self-help' literature) can be replaced without significant loss of meaning by other words like 'explanation,' 'description,' 'account,' 'view,' 'outlook,' 'theory,' 'understanding,' 'theme,' 'belief,' 'concept,' 'conception,' 'picture,' I'd say 95% plus.

Suppose we carried out this replacement, and inspected the few occurrences of words like 'narrative' or 'story' that remained. Perhaps we'd then have a better idea of what the *Narrativists*—as I'll call them, with a capital letter—are after. I'm not sure. I do, though, think that if you're right in your initial description of Narrativism, in your first question, then many of its proponents are going to reject time-honored conceptions of spiritual progress, on the ground that they amount to attempts to abandon one's humanity, become subhuman, give up personhood!

Can this be right? It may help, before continuing, to set up a few points of reference. So let me first state what I take to be the central Narrativist idea, and then list eight claims about human life that I take to be platitudes, giving them names as I go, so that I can refer back to them when I try to answer your other questions.

So, first, I take it that Narrativism is something like this.

(i) we naturally *conceive* ourselves and our lives in a narrative or story-like way;
(ii) we *make sense* of ourselves and our lives in a narrative way;

(iii) we *live in and through* a narrative or story-like conception of ourselves and our lives;
(iv) we *constitute our identity* in a narrative or story-like way;
(v) we *ought* to conceive and make sense of things in this way and live in this way; and
(vi) we *ought* to constitute our identity in this way.

(i)–(iv) summarize *psychological* Narrativism and (v)–(vi) summarize ethical Narrativism.

Obviously Narrativists differ among themselves. Some, perhaps, think that all six of these claims are true; others only accept some of them. Some, perhaps, think that (i)–(iv) are true and (v)–(vi) are false. Others, perhaps, think that (i) is false and (iv) is true. Others again may characterize Narrativism in an entirely different way.

Now for the eight platitudes. First, the *Locke* point.

[1] *Locke* All ordinary people fulfill a fundamental condition on what it is to be a person, a condition that is explicitly stated in Locke's famous definition of a person: they can 'consider [themselves] as [themselves], the same thinking thing, in different times and places' (*Essay* §2.27.9). They are in other words (i) fully self-conscious beings, on the terms of the standard definition of self-consciousness in analytic philosophy—they can think about themselves specifically *as themselves*—and (ii) their self-consciousness has a significant temporal extent: they can engage in what Tulving calls 'mental time-travel,' when thinking of themselves in a standard way as human beings.

[2] *Self-History* Almost all ordinary people have a reasonably good grasp of their own history—basic facts about their own life. They possess a more or less adequate 'self-history,' a basic 'self-chronicle,' where the word 'history' signifies basic factual accuracy.

[3] *Timeline* All ordinary people know how old they are, and they know where they are on the timeline of human life; however, much or little it matters to them.

[4] *Knowledge 101* ('101' indicates an introductory course in the USA): In our world, one thing leads to another in a highly regular fashion; we are vividly aware of this. Our lives involve many series of complexly causally connected happenings: sleeping and waking, working and resting, ageing, bodily cycles, illnesses, days, seasons, and so on. We are engaged in thousands of intelligible relatively long-term orderings of this sort and hundreds of thousands of shorter-term orderings, washing

dishes, singing, cooking, bathing, eating, excreting, and so on. We have to follow a series of steps to make coffee, we have to know what they are. Many thousands of characteristically human things involve such sequences and patterns. We all know all this.

The fifth point, *Explanation*, expands an aspect of *Knowledge 101*:

[5] *Explanation* causal explanation is fundamental to our lives and almost invariably involves temporal order. 'Narrative explanation' often turns out to be nothing other than explanation—causal explanation.

The sixth point, *Psychology*, also expands an aspect of *Knowledge 101*:

[6] *Psychology* A vast number of key facts about human beings' lives are facts about their psychological states—hopes, fears, beliefs, desires, goals, memories, intentions. Vast numbers of these psychological states involve explicit representations of connections between past and future states of the world and in particular past and future parts of one's own life. Vast numbers of these psychological states are crucially involved in the vast numbers of regular sequences and processes that structure a person's life. We all know this.

The seventh point, *Action*, further expands *Knowledge 101, Psychology*, and *Explanation*:

[7] *Action* Vast numbers of the sequences and processes mentioned in the description of the ordered temporal complexity of our lives in [4] play out as they do because of psychological states mentioned in [6]: wants, needs, intentions, likes and dislikes, goals, dreams, hopes, fears, suspicions, superstitions, and so on. Vast numbers of them also involve intentional action on our part, and almost all intentional action involves some anticipation, thinking ahead, planning, knowledge of steps to be taken, calculation of possible consequences, *what if*? thinking. It involves causal–temporal thinking, causal–temporal–psychological thinking: thinking that has causal matters and temporal matters and psychological matters as part of its content. We engage in such thinking all the time. And again, and of course, we know this.

The eighth point adds little to *Locke* and *Action*, but it is perhaps worth listing separately:

[8] *Temporality* We all experience ourselves temporally simply in living from moment to moment as we do, making coffee, remembering one thing, anticipating another. We experience ourselves temporally even when we are absorbed in what we are doing, living—as we say—wholly in the moment. William James and Husserl describe this very well.

Given this list of eight platitudes, one can ask—or try to find out—what psychological Narrativism adds to them. It must presumably make some further distinctive claim, over and above the platitudes. And so it does, I think—the claim summarized in (i)–(iv) ± (v)–(vi).

AA: As I have mentioned, there is an idea of 'identity' which has been particularly insisted on by Paul Ricoeur: that of "selfhood" (*ipséité*). Ricoeur's analyses are long and complex. You criticize one view of his, according to which … 'self-understanding is an interpretation' and 'finds in narrative … a privileged form of mediation,' which borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction' (Ricoeur 1990, 114n.), and you question the reference to fiction. However, to be fair to Ricoeur, one has to acknowledge that he does not seem to be aiming to establish a strong ontological theory of the self, nor of selfhood. He rather insists, as you also do, on the 'Lockean,' i.e., ethical, or (to use Locke's own word), 'forensic' meaning of person. In Ricoeur's view, no action in the proper sense, i.e., in the ethical (and, I would say, existential) sense, can be performed without any kind of self-narration. In other words, we could say that, according to Ricoeur, *to be a person* requires a narration of the self in which the latter is a consciously acting being. Self-conscious agency is a requirement for personhood, and such a requirement cannot be satisfied without embedding one's actions in some kind of narrative framework wherein one is, if not the author of all that happens to her, at least imputable for what happens by means of her own behavior. One could object that the narration which constitutes the self does not necessarily need to be made by the very same self. It could also be a narrative constructed by someone else. One could thus maintain (somewhat like Dennett) that the self is the product of a narrative which takes the self as its protagonist. However, such an actor, and what follows from her understanding as an actor, is but a delusion; and the self did not exist before such narration. That is why, for Ricoeur, narration as such is not sufficient to have a person, i.e., a being provided with selfhood. One must be sensitive to the narratives which others place her in. To be sensitive to a narrative about oneself implies, in turn, that the sensitive subject is a responsive self which is able to understand itself as the actor of a narration. To be responsive, finally, implies that one is able to see oneself in a narration, as the storyteller and not only as the subject–object of the story. In other words, the ethical being, i.e., the person, must have both a diachronic sense of self as well as an awareness of the narratives she has been placed in.

GS: There is a lot of material here, and I'm not sure where to begin, although I'm sure I could restate everything that is true in what you say without using the word 'narration'! I'm a self-conscious (if somewhat imprudent) agent, or so I believe, and I think there's a low-level reading of the clause 'embedding one's actions in some kind of narrative framework' given which I do it as much as anyone else. Some philosophers insist that making coffee is an essentially narrative matter. So be it. If that's sufficient for narrativity, I'm narrative (see platitude [7], *Action*). When I make coffee I do it because—say—my friends and I want some coffee. Animals are narrative too—all the time.

I also know that people tell—narrate—stories about me. Some of these stories are extraordinary! I know that some people I meet have preformed opinions about me and really have no idea of who I am (i.e., what I'm like).

Is it true, as you say, that 'to be sensitive to a narrative about oneself' is to be 'able to understand [oneself] as the actor of a narration'? Certainly I understand if you think I spilt the milk although I didn't, or wrote the anonymous piece I didn't write, and think I'm lying when I say I didn't. More to the point—inasmuch as it considers a larger perspective—I understand it if you think my academic career was a Macchiavellian bid for fame, instead of a kind of accident that began because it seemed a good idea to apply for a two-year grant to study philosophy in order to have time to try to write poetry. I can also understand you if you realize, correctly, that my life, like so many lives, has a deeply haphazard quality. So too I have no difficulty with the idea that someone may have got me fundamentally right in their judgment of my character. But this is an essentially non-Narrative achievement. It is really nothing to do with narrativity, as far as I can see. It is simply a matter of being sensitive to what someone is like.

I sometimes take an attitude to other people that the narrativists would probably classify as a narrative attitude—wrongly, I believe, because all it amounts to is that I think of others and their lives in a rather spread out way, standing back: I have a kind of motionless image of their overall personal-moral shape. But even if this is so I don't think I have any kind of narrative sense of myself—and I take Narrativism to be essentially a thesis about how one thinks of *oneself*, as in (i)–(iii) above: to be narrative is to naturally conceive of *oneself* and one's life in a narrative way, make sense of *oneself* and one's life in a narrative way, live in and through a narrative conception of *oneself* and one's life.

I still don't know what this might be like, although I believe I know someone who does think (live) like this. The eight platitudes—*Locke*, *Timeline*, *Self-History*, *Knowledge 101*, *Explanation*, *Psychology*, *Action*, *Temporality*—are all true of me as they are of any normal human being, but I'm not *narrative*, or so it seems to me when I try to understand what others mean when they say that we are all—and also ought to be—narrative.

Take *Timeline*. I know my position—at the age of 66—on the human timeline. I find that I quite often think of my position on the timeline, these days, when I wake up in the morning. Does this mean I am becoming more narrative? I was, like T.S. Eliot's Webster, much possessed by death, for a large part of my youth. Does that make me narrative? I don't know. I certainly went in for a lot of Being-Towards-Death, good or bad, Heideggerian or not.

As for issues of imputability—responsibility—I take it that they're sufficiently covered by Self-History. One doesn't need to be narrative, as I understand it, to remember what one did. The Narrativity thesis must amount to more this if it is to be of any interest.

Later on in your question you raise some issues about responsibility that arise for someone who is 'Episodic,' or transient, as I now say. These are real issues, and I'll consider them later. Here it's enough to repeat that one doesn't need to be Narrative to remember what one did.

AA: You openly deny this. You affirm that, on the one hand, one can perform ethical actions without a narrative self-understanding, and, on the other hand, that storying one's life can even be harmful to a serene and happy life. What is the relationship between these two claims?

GS: You're right that I think (a) that one can act ethically without having narrative self-understanding in any sense that goes beyond the eight platitudes, and (b) that self-storying can work against living a happy life.

You ask how (a) and (b) relate, other than being compatible. Well, certainly neither entails the other. Apart from that I'm not sure. I do though, think that Kant (the great 'deontologist') would surely agree with (a). And Mill (the great 'consequentialist') would surely also agree. And W.D. Ross (the great believer in *prima facie* duties) would surely also agree. And Aristotle (the great 'virtue ethicist') would surely also agree. And I'm sure they would all also agree with (b).

I hear you object that Aristotle might well have thought that some sort of 'narrative self-understanding' was likely to be helpful when it

came to full possession of the virtue of *phronesis*. I'm not sure—I don't think so. Certainly Aristotle is very keen on good training. A child needs to be well brought up, schooled into virtue. But there's nothing necessarily *narrative* in this: no distinctively narrative attitude is required in the adult. Aristotle might well agree that it can be useful to remember things one has done in the past, and to remember how one felt about them. But, again, I don't think that this has to involve any kind of distinctively *narrative* self-understanding. For we may suppose that *Locke* is in place, and *Self-History*, and *Knowledge 101*. What more is needed? If nothing more is needed, over and above *Locke*, *Self-History*, *Knowledge* 101, then Narrativism is trivially true. It's just a fancy name for some platitudes. If on the other hand something more is needed, I still need to know exactly what it is.

I'm claiming the companionship of Kant, Mill, Ross, and Aristotle. I think I could also persuade Socrates, Socrates the great persuader, both that (a) and (b) are true, and that they have no necessary relation with each other, even if he did not agree at first—perhaps because of his attachment to his famous claim that the 'unexamined life is not a life for a human being.' I would put it to him that his famous claim isn't necessarily understood, or best understood, as a call to *self*-examination. One has to think about—examine—*life*; that's what he said. *Self*-examination may be a good path for some, but not for others, who will profit most from *other*-examination. When you think about something bad you did, don't think about yourself, say I. Don't think about yourself at all. Think about what it was like for those who suffered, and what it was like for them. I think Socrates would nod his head.

Many take Socrates' remark to be more or less equivalent to the injunction to 'know yourself.' This instruction, carved on the Temple at Delphi and attributed to many people (suspects include Thales, Heracleitus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Solon, Bias, and Periander, also Chilon, Cloebulus of Lindus, Myson of Chenae, and Pittacus of Mytilene), is usually taken to be an injunction to investigate and understand your own individual personality. Some, however, trace it back to one of the many statements carved in the Inner Temple at Luxor—'Human, know yourself and you will know the gods'—and this doesn't sound much like a recommendation to engage in individualistic ethical self-analysis. Rather the contrary: it sounds more like a recommendation to understand what it is to be human *completely irrespective of individual personality*: we need to identify the element in ourselves that is in

Aristotle's terminology 'divine'—where by this I think he only means the magnificence of our minds, our mental capacities. I think this is the central idea. I see no reason to think that the Delphic instruction has a different force, and I think it's more powerful if it doesn't.

A further thought about (b). Self-storying can poison a life. It can lead to suicide—I suspect that most suicides are paradigmatically 'narrative' acts. But self-storying may also be good for some people on some occasions. Some people think that outright self-*falsification* can be good for some people, and self-falsification may well involve narrative, self-narration. There is a famous paper by Shelley Taylor and Jonathon Brown on 'positive illusion' ('Illusion and Well-Being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health,' 1988). They challenge what they take to be an orthodoxy, the idea 'that accurate perceptions of the self, the world, and the future are essential for mental health,' citing research that suggests that 'positive illusions,' 'overly positive self-evaluations, exaggerated perceptions of control or mastery, and unrealistic optimism … appear to promote other criteria of mental health, including the ability to care about others, the ability to be happy or contented, and the ability to engage in productive and creative work.'

This view has been challenged in its turn, but I expect there's something in it. Self-delusion will be what works best for some people. 'Human kind/Cannot bear very much reality,' as T.S. Eliot said ('Burnt Norton', 1936). I feel about 'positive illusion' as Descartes does, writing to Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia—his great critic—on 6 October 1645: 'Is it better to be cheerful and content, imagining the goods one possesses to be greater and more valuable than they are, and not knowing or caring to consider those one lacks; or is it better to have more consideration and knowledge, so as to know the just value of both, and thus grow sad? … I must conclude that it is better to be less cheerful and possess more knowledge. So it is not always the most cheerful person who has the most satisfied mind.' And T.S. Eliot said something else: 'the future can only be built /Upon the real past' (*The Family Reunion*, 1939).

'I have a marvellous censor,' Auden writes, 'that refuses to let me remember, if it's any way back, anything unpleasant.'[1] I don't have the Auden option, although I am surely self-deceived in various ways. And I don't think Nietzsche is right without exception when he imagines an exchange between memory and pride in *Beyond Good and Evil*: '"I did that," says my memory. 'I can't have done that,' says my pride, and remains inexorable. Eventually—memory yields' (§68). That said, I think

it's very important (and difficult) for some of us to learn to be as tolerant of ourselves as we are of other people (in particular our friends).

Thinking about oneself in a specifically personal (and arguably non-Delphic) way can be part of a good life, as long as one doesn't overdo it; but—again—I can't see that this supports Narrativism, if 'Narrativism' is more than a fancy name for the platitudes. *Locke* and *Self-History*, for example, don't entail Narrativism. One of the clearest indications of the tendencies of Narrativism occurs when Ricoeur asks how a subject could 'give an ethical character to his or her own life taken as a whole if this life were not gathered together in some way, and how could this occur if not, precisely, in the form of a narrative.' I think we should hope that no one ever does this. The project of trying to give an ethical character to one's life taken as a whole seems to me lethally ill-conceived, a uniquely insidious form of self-alienating self-commodification.

Many of us may find this hard to resist on our death beds—even Saul Bellow. "As he slipped in and out of consciousness on his deathbed, Bellow opened his eyes … and asked: 'Was I a man [*mensch*] or was I a jerk?'"[2] Fortunately, it won't then matter.

'Man [i.e., any human being)] goes clowning his sentimental way into eternity,' as Ihab Hassan observes,[3] and narrative is perhaps the principal vector of the sentimentality and the clowning. It would be nice to get a break at the end, as Ivan Illich does in Tolstoy's great story 'The Death of Ivan Illich.'[4]

AA: I understand, from what I have gathered by reading your articles on this topic, that the second point is somehow more fundamental than the first one, i.e., to be serene is more important than being self-consistent. Serenity could even be considered as an essential condition in order to perform good actions. Although I personally agree with you—or with your view as I understand it—if we maintain this view, i.e., as a slogan, 'serenity is fundamental to goodness,' I think we should consider Ricoeur's idea that one of the main conditions of an ethical life is the capacity to make and keep promises, and that this requires some form of self-narration, in which one identifies oneself with the one who made a promise, and one is following in front of the ethical choice of whether to keep it or not.

GS: The first point here is that *Locke* and *Self-History* are enough for me to know that I made a promise, without any self-narration. Here again it looks as if the word 'self-narration' has expanded into pure platitude and collapsed into triviality. And here again it looks as if there is

a confusion of issues. This query is directed towards someone who is *Episodic* or *transient*, not someone who is *non-narrative*, so I'll address it in my reply to the next question.

Secondly, I don't in fact think serenity is fundamental to goodness. If I did, I couldn't admire the neurosurgeon Henry Marsh as much as I do (see his book *Do No Harm*). I believe a good person can be scatty and irritable—even, perhaps, a bodhisattva. W.H. Auden was wise when he said that '"Be good and you will be happy" is a dangerous inversion. "Be happy and you will be good" is the truth.' (W.H. Auden *Early Auden* ed. Mendelson, 300.) But even if happiness—or serenity—is sufficient for goodness, I don't think it's necessary. I once discussed the case of a person who was 'rackety, partial, inconsistent and comically fainthearted,' choosing these four adjectives to make it clear that this person lacked all four of Aristotle's cardinal virtues (temperance, justice, practical wisdom, and courage). It seemed to me that such a person could lead a good life, and be much loved, and rightly.[5]

AA: You say that you yourself, though non-narrative, are a reliable person, which means that, amongst other things, you can keep promises. Could you tell us, once more, how you can do that without a kind of self-narration?

GS: First, and again, I fulfill *Locke*, *Self-History*, *Knowledge 101*, *Action*, *Temporality* (and all the others too). Second, and more importantly, I think there may be an unclarity behind this question, a confusion of two different things, a confusion of *non-narrativity* with what I used to call *episodicity* and will here call *transientism* or simply *transience*. (This happens all the time when people talk to me about what I have written about Narrativism.)

What is transientism? If one is a transient, one doesn't experience oneself, considered as a self or subject or person, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future, although one is perfectly well aware that one has long-term continuity considered as a whole human being. One naturally feels that what one is most essentially, considered as a self or subject or person, is a fleeting or transient thing, a short-lived entity.

The opposite of transience is endurantism or endurance. If one is an endurer, one naturally experiences oneself, considered as a self or subject or person, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future—something that has relatively long-term temporal continuity, something that persists.

To be *non-narrative*, by contrast, is simply not to conceive of oneself and one's life in a narrative or story-like way, whatever exactly that is. One can do this even if one is an endurer. There's no necessary connection between endurantism and narrativity. I take it that many people are naturally endurers, and that many who are endurers are also narrative. But some aren't. Some people almost never think about their pasts, but they will nevertheless think 'that was *me*' if they do think about their pasts.

With this in place, I can say that I think that here you're worrying about transience, not non-narrativity. (Note that even if transience entails non-narrativity—I'm not sure about this, especially when I consider someone like Stendhal—non-narrativity certainly doesn't entail transience.) I can naturally think that it was I—I who is here now—who made the promise I made, if I am an endurer; whether or not I'm narrative. Non-narrativity raises no problem of the sort you have in mind. The problem that seems to arise has to do with someone who is a natural transient.

So suppose I'm a natural transient—as I am. Why should I keep a promise, since I no longer feel that I'm the one who made the promise? There are many reasons why. I discuss some of them in §4 of a paper called 'Episodic ethics' (pp. 220–224), where I explain how later 'I's can feel themselves to inherit obligations of earlier 'I's, while still feeling that they were not there in the past. It's a little complicated.[6]

But let me add this here. I hate causing pain and disappointment; I care a lot about doing what I know people expect of me (GS, the continuing human being). I love the relations of decency and respect that, when things go well, hold between human beings in their normal dealings with each other, in which they conceive of each other as entities that persist over the long term (indeed from birth to death). And I know, of course, that other people naturally think of me, the self, the person, as a long-term persisting thing.

If you now ask me who this 'I' is who says that he cares, and tell me that I am on my own view a series of different 'I's, I'll reply—truly—that all these 'I's are very much the same in respect of character. (This is hardly surprising! They all occur in GS's persisting body and brain.) They all hate and love and care about very much the same things. This I that I am now knows that GS made a promise to Mary, and this I that I am now knows that Mary thinks of me—GS—in the way that I (or, if you like, all GS's successive 'I's) think of others, i.e., as a persisting

individual, and this I now wants to keep that promise in the straightforward sense that this I—no, this I!—no, now this I!—wants to keep the promise that GS made, the promise that Mary experienced, quite reasonably, and indeed quite correctly, as made by GS. I (all these 'I's) get this world! (I am, in fact, a human being.) As remarked, I naturally experience *other* people as continuing-human-being selves or persons, people like MM, my wife, and ES, my daughter, or RO'H, my exiled comrade in arms. Transience is, quite specifically, a natural way of experiencing *oneself*. It doesn't matter to me whether my wife, daughter and friend are like me in thinking that the I that they are themselves only persists for a very short time, or are quite unlike me in experiencing themselves as birth-to-death persisting 'I's, or at least as relatively long-term persisting Is. All is well. This—transience—is really how it is for some of us. It isn't a boast or a confession. Look up Samuel Hanagid, later in this piece, and listen now to the Earl of Shaftesbury:

> The metaphysicians and notable reasoners about the nice matters of identity, affirm that if memory be taken away, the self is lost. And what matter for memory? What have I to do with that part? If, whilst I am, I am as I should be, what do I care more? And thus let me lose self every hour, and be twenty successive selfs, or new selfs, 'tis all one to me: so I lose not my opinion [i.e. my overall outlook, my character, my moral identity]. If I carry that with me 'tis I; all is well….—The now; the now. Mind this: in this is all.[7]

AA: I would like to point out that, for Ricoeur, to be 'storied,' or (better yet) to be 'storiable,' does not mean simply and only that one has a single, fixed story. To be a storied-storiable being implies that one is always in the state of accomplishing oneself—and thus one is always in an unaccomplished, never-ending story—an endless story. The open-endedness is retroactive, because, depending on the actions and decisions one makes from time to time, the whole previous story can be, at least partially, changed. It would be unchangeable only if the story had a definite meaning, i.e., an end. By not having such a meaning, the story is mutable. To put it short: does the mutable nature of the story in any way challenge your view?

GS: What is the word 'story' doing? It seems somehow demeaning—although I know it isn't intended that way. I'm living my life. I have certain projects, but I don't think I know myself at all well, and I don't

think my life has any meaning at all! Sometimes I realize I misunderstood someone last week—or last year. Sometimes I realize I was wrong about why I felt what I felt. Sometimes, like Tigger, I think I know what I want and find out that I'm wrong. Usually, though, I find I have no idea why the mood of the day is what it is. I usually don't know why I feel what I feel when I feel gloomy—like Antonio at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*:

> In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
> It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
> But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
> What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
> I am to learn;
> And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
> That I have much ado to know myself.

Certainly I have much ado to know myself. But I'm not—no longer—very concerned about this.

I think there's much to be learnt from the way Marya Schechtman's views have evolved over the years. She used to think that explicit, conscious self-narration was crucial to a good life, and to full personhood (see Schechtman 1996 *The Constitution of Selves*). Now she suggests that the word 'narrative' is probably best dropped altogether, when one considers the course of a life, and also that the way in which one shapes oneself over time is a largely unconscious and implicit affair (see Schechtman 2014 *Staying Alive*). And here I think it may help to replace the active voice by the passive voice, and speak, not of the way one shapes oneself over time, but rather of the way one is shaped over time by one's experience and one's reflection on it—given the way one already is. This is surely something real.

AA: When you say that self-narration is not necessary, are you not yourself telling a story?

GS: Oh lord. This is what Narrativists say to Bob Dylan when he says:

> I don't think I'm tangible to myself. I mean, I think one thing today and I think another thing tomorrow. I change during the course of a day. I wake and I'm one person, and when I go to sleep I know for certain I'm somebody else. I don't know who I am most of the time. It doesn't even matter to me. (1997, interview in Time)

The Narrativists jump on him. Your 'one thing today, another thing tomorrow' thing is just part of your story about yourself, they say. But what if it's just true? Is it then a story? What does it mean to say this? Are the Narrativists saying that Dylan first cooked up a style and then carefully applied it to himself?

AA: So, you would affirm that, when you say that self-narration is not necessary, you are not yourself telling a story, right? Even not a story about a 'good life'?

GS: I don't know where non-narrative lives rank in God's great catalogue, his *Book of Lives*. I should think that some particular non-narrative lives are good and some not so good. But I still don't really know what we're talking about. Even so, self-narration sounds overmacerated. I'd rather read a good novel, or talk to a stranger or an old friend—or a dog.

AA: Of course, you are somehow 'liberal.' You admit that non-narrativity is not the only kind of good life one can have—although, sometimes, you seem to suggest that a 'narrative life' can prevent happiness, or goodness.

GS: I'm sure it can. I think Sartre is right to connect self-storying with inauthenticity, even if the connection is not inevitable, and inauthenticity is neither good nor happy. No doubt a Narrativist's life may be a good life, as long as self-narrative doesn't involve fiction, but many versions of Narrativism also have a deep connection to toxic models of religious life. Not all, for sure, but many are internally linked to forms of religious belief that are not only (more or less) sublimated forms of selfishness—like almost all religious belief—but also, and again, modes of self-commodification and (hence) self-alienation. The Narrativists' enthusiasm for Kierkegaard is very telling: here is the perfectly ignoble, perfectly spiritually squalid life. 'Religion, in fact, for the great majority of our own race *means* immortality, and nothing else,' as William James pointed out in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.[8]

AA: You quote Mary McCarthy: 'I suppose everyone continues to be interested in the quest for the self, but what you feel when you're older, I think, is that you really must make the self. It is absolutely useless to look for it, you won't find it, but it's possible in some sense to make it. I don't mean in the sense of making a mask, a Yeatsian mask. But you finally begin in some sense to make and choose the self you want' (1962, 313). Assuming for a moment that McCarthy is right, are you not *choosing* the non-narrativist self you 'want' to be? Is not your 'theoretical' critique of narrativism a plea for non-narrativism? But, then, are

you not proposing a life with a non-narrativist unity? Is such a life not characterized by specific kind of narration?

GS: I don't think I can answer this, because I can't imagine what it's like to be McCarthy. I think she is, although sincere, entirely deluded. I'm not choosing how to be, nor is anybody else. I agree with Nietzsche: 'one is a piece of a fate.' I agree with Juliette Greco: 'je suis comme je suis.' Putting aside that point, which is a high metaphysical point, a universal necessary truth, and descending to the details of individual psychological differences, I have no doubt that my non-narrativism comes naturally to me. It's simply something true about how I am. Some people are like this, and some are very different. It's no big deal. My memory is that both Nietzsche and Proust say something that sounds like an injunction to make oneself. But both also think (as I remember) that what this comes to, in the end, is just the flowering of what you are, with as much self-determination as a rose, or cow parsley.

I'm happy to leave the Narrativists to do their thing, so long as they leave people like me to do our thing. The trouble is that some of them are relentless proselytisers, and they make quite a number of people feel bad—people who don't fit their model. I'm offering an alternative picture for those who are not narrative (whatever exactly being narrative is) and are being told that they are and should be narrative.

Suppose I were after all wrong, wrong that I am a non-narrative type. Then one might say that my believing I was non-narrative was a case of self-narration. But suppose I'm right. Is it then still a case of self-*narration*? Why isn't it just that I know something about myself, just as I know my weight and height and eye colour? Here again the notion of self-narration seems to gravitate towards the ideas of fiction and error.

Is self-knowledge impossible without self-narration? Thinking about what one has done can help one understand what one is like. But [1] it's only one of many devices—watching the world is another, novels, reflecting on other people's lives, seeing how one feels as one does so. [2] Why say that thinking about what one has done—thinking about oneself quite generally—is 'self-storying'? It seems, if anything, somewhat offensive. [3] Thinking about what one might or would do in a certain hypothetical situation might be a good candidate for being a case of 'self-storying,' in certain cases (not just cases in which one is thinking about the best way to get to the station), but here the opportunities for self-deception are great. [4] We're deluged with evidence that we're quite incredibly bad at knowing what we are like (see for example *Thinking, Fast and*

Slow, by Daniel Kahneman). It seems that we're almost bound to go wrong if we try to force the issue. I think Strether knows this, in Henry James's novel *The Ambassadors*: 'Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had?' (Henry James *The Ambassadors*, bk. 5, ch. 2 (1903)). Try to be good, certainly, but let the narrative take care of itself; you can be quite sure it will.

You suggest that a putatively non-narrative life is just another narrated life, a life 'characterized by specific kind of narration.' This takes us back to the Bob Dylan point. It's another example of the way in which the Narrativist thesis is in constant danger of becoming indefeasible and to that extent empty. Once again: is every thought about life, every thought about how one is, a matter of narration? If so, the thesis is trivially true and correspondingly uninteresting. I think I have depressive tendencies—am I narrating myself? I believe I like taking baths in the dark; actually I know this. Is that self-narration?

AA: You certainly admit something similar, when you point out that the kind of narrativism you oppose is not any possible form of diachronic self-consciousness. However, I was wondering whether the specific kind of self-conscious existence you purport to experience does not require a specific form of self-narration—or, at least, of self-telling. The *telos* you, if not prescribe, at least suggest, is a life free of the yoke of self-consistency. An "unstubborn" life, we could perhaps say.

GS: No, I don't think so. I have no interest in inconsistency, although I know and like people who are consistently inconsistent. GS is very consistent over time. Or, if you like, the successive 'I's are very similar to each other—unlike Proust's narrator's 'I's, his many mes or *moi*s, at least in his telling of them. (In fact, of course, Proust's narrator has the same deep consistency as everyone else.) It's hardly surprising: same brain, same brain chemistry, same memories, same genetic base, same early upbringing.

AA: Correct me if I am wrong, but you seem to assume that the narrativists propose a view according to which a good life, and possibly a happy one, is enabled only by a 'consistent' story of oneself. Do I understand you right?

GS: I haven't really considered this question. I expect some Narrativists do hold a view of this kind; but other Narrativists probably disagree. I have two thoughts about consistency that tend in somewhat different directions. (I'll put aside the sense of 'consistent' given which

any true record of one's life is a consistent record, however wild and changeable one is. It's consistent simply because it doesn't contain any contradictions.)

The first thought is something I've just said. I think people are in fact deeply, deeply consistent in overall outlook and character over their lives (although certain illnesses, and certain kinds of trauma, can bring about radical change). One experiences this when one meets old school friends. They may at first seem very different from how one remembers them. Then something flashes through, and one sees—feels—the core, profoundly unchanged. This consistency is very striking, but it has absolutely nothing to do with any activity of self-narration, conscious or unconscious. It's just that people have characteral essences, determined by their genetic inheritance and early upbringing. (Recent research is supposed to contradict this. It is certainly wrong—deeply superficial.)

This leads to the second thought, which is that self-narration and concern for consistency—an inclination to see oneself as consistent—may well be a bad thing if you care about truth. There's an alarming psychological study in which respondents were asked—in 1972 and 1976—to report their political allegiance: in particular, how they voted in the US elections. 78% of them held the same allegiance in 1976 as in 1972; of these, 96% correctly recalled their earlier allegiance as being the same. The other 22% had changed their allegiance; of these, 91% incorrectly recalled their earlier 1972 allegiance as being the same as their current 1976 allegiance, although it was only four years ago. Similar results were obtained when it came to recall of substance abuse, past income, and so on.[9]

This seems to me extremely sad. I don't think you can live well if you're that out of touch with reality. These people, it seems, are 'Stalinist' historians with respect to their own lives (the reference to Stalin derives from the fact that, in the USSR, people used to be airbrushed out of official photographs when they fell from favor).

AA: However, one could perhaps suggest that the narration can be plurivocal—or, perhaps better, 'pluriselfous.' You mention something similar when referencing Pessoa, but I am thinking rather of Pirandello's works, in particular *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand*. In this novel, you have as the main character, one whole human being, to use the terminology you employ in *Selves*, with a plurality of persons. These Pirandello persons cannot be identified with what you call sesmets, I suppose, because they have some kind of longer-term duration—even some kind of story. I was wondering, though, if these many persons have

your sesmets as their very condition of possibility. Indeed, if the whole human being were composed by just one thing, it would be difficult to understand it as made of many, possibly also inconsistent, selves. For Pirandello, they are all somehow also synchronically *there*.

GS: I'm not sure how this relates to what I call 'sesmets'; I'll try to take up that issue later. For the rest, this is perhaps a case of what used to be known as 'multiple personality disorder' and is now known as 'dissociative identity disorder.' Or perhaps they're more like Paul Klee's inner gang:

> My self… is a dramatic ensemble. Here a prophetic ancestor makes his appearance. Here a brutal hero shouts. Here an alcoholic *bon vivant* argues with a learned professor. Here a lyric muse, chronically love-struck, raises her eyes to heaven. Her papa steps forward, uttering pedantic protests. Here the indulgent uncle intercedes. Here the aunt babbles gossip. Here the maid giggles lasciviously. And I look upon it all with amazement, the sharpened pen in my hand. A pregnant mother wants to join the fun. 'Pshtt!' I cry, 'You don't belong here. You are divisible.' And she fades out. (Diaries §638)

Many people describe experiencing something like this, but I can't imagine what it might be like. I've never had any trace of any experience of inner multiplicity. Feeling torn between two desires isn't any sort of experience of multiplicity—at least not in my experience. On the contrary, it's a particularly vivid experience of singleness. If you didn't feel single you couldn't feel inner conflict.

AA: In this regard, Pirandello's perspective seems to agree with your idea that we are just co-authors of our own narrative. Upon taking a closer-look, however, Pirandello partially undermines this idea. Indeed, in Pirandello's novel there is not *one* narrative. Each subject is the character of many stories. But who, or what, is this multi-storied subject? Would you say that there is one only body with many stories? For Pirandello, indeed, the "whole human being" must be described as an intertwining between one, one hundred thousand, and no-one. I believe this sense of no-oneness could be fruitfully exploited without falling victim to some kind of exoticism. We do not have the time to do it here, however. I will limit myself to here to asking you something I find strictly connected with the issue of no-oneness: the (self?)-realization of the sesmets.

GS: 'We are just co-authors of our own narrative.' I think Alasdair MacIntyre said this, not me—but I am obviously influenced by how others react to me.

'In Pirandello's novel,' you say, 'there is not *one* narrative. Each subject is the character of many stories.' But I'm not in a novel. I'm not a character in any story. I like Bill Blattner's response to Alexander Nehamas's book *Life as Literature*[10] 'We are not texts. Our histories are not narratives. Life is not literature.'[11] That said, I think that there is no necessary tension between the idea of 'co-authoring' and Pirandello's multiplicities; and I agree that 'no one' is always with us. Each of us has—is—an inner 'no one' as part of who they are (and who has nothing to do with Heidegger's dreary *das Man*). Here Borges is eloquent, in his little piece 'The Nothingness of Personality.'[12]

AA: Reading Pirandello's novel, one has the impression that the self-narrator of the novel is conscious of himself as someone, or something, that he himself does not really 'know,' and, thus, that there is no coincidence between the self-conscious subject and the totality that this subject feels himself to belong to. I find it extremely interesting that Pirandello does not put this self-conscious self-ignorance in terms of inconsistency or even contradiction. Pirandello instead identifies the 'center of narrative gravity' with no-one, a kind of partially detached consciousness. There is a lot that could be discussed concerning the identity of the Pirandellian subject, but I would here like to limit our discussion to the problem of the self-narrator. You seem to admit that one can narrate oneself in a non-narrative way. If I correctly understand, this means that one narrates oneself not as a unique, solid, perhaps even teleological substance, but rather as a complex, and, if not chaotic, at least not self-controlled, self-determined, and self-developing unique 'thing.' My question is: who tells this? Who is the non-narrativist self-telling self? I would argue that you cannot say that it is the whole human being, because it is the short-term 'I's who are the subjects of experience. Hence, "you" should admit that it is your episodic self who does it. This, however, implies that the episodic self "identifies" itself at least as a part of a larger whole—if not a legion, at least as part of a big band.

GS: First, you say that I 'seem to admit that one can narrate oneself in a non-narrative way.' This isn't so, because I don't think non-narratives narrate themselves at all. No doubt they sometimes think about themselves—but why call that narration? People can think very little about themselves, and people can think about themselves in a non-narrative way. The use

of the word 'narrate' here (and you're certainly following common practice in using it so freely) seems to me to be a good example of the way in which the use of the word goes out of control and begs the question in what is, in the end, a self-defeating way. Everything becomes narration.

Second, I'm not sure what the problem is here. I see that the episodic or transient self has made an explicit appearance in this question (this is your first mention of episodicity or transience as opposed to non-narrativity). But the episodic selves that I've considered have never been members of a Kleeian multiplicity. What's more, Klee's multitudes seem to exercise their multitudinicity in an essentially temporally successive way. In which case, strictly speaking, one of my episodic selves couldn't experience any such multitudinicity. So it wouldn't 'identify itself as part of a larger [synchronically present] whole.' Nor would it identify itself as part of a larger diachronically extended whole—by definition of transience. Samuel Hanagid comes to mind: 'for my part, there is no difference at all between my own days which have gone by and the distant days of Noah about which I have heard. I have nothing in the world but the hour in which I am: it pauses for a moment, and then, like a cloud, moves on.[13]

I do think that my use of 'I' in my everyday thought and speech shifts effortlessly between the (a) short-lived sesmet, (b) the self thought of as something more persisting, and (c) the whole human being GS. It can in other words be interpreted as having any of these references, depending on context. But even when it shifts to the second and third things (I'm very forgetful,' 'I'm six foot two inches tall') it doesn't in my case engage with any significant sense of (b) and (c) as things that have long-term diachronic persistence. That may be weird, but it's just how it is for me.

AA: You speak of your (or one's) essence. Is this the essence of you as a whole human being? The idea that there is an essence seems to unavoidably imply that the self is a substance, some kind of 'thing.' You openly state that the self is a thing, although you seem to restrict the thingness to the sesmets. Sesmets, though, do not seem to be good candidates to have the kind of essence you invoke.

GS: Well, this question raises many other questions. On essence, I have no doubt that people can change considerably over their lifetimes, but it's also true that they have essences, psychological essences, deep structures, fundamental forms. I think this is obvious to anyone who has any grasp of what it is to be human and isn't in the grip of some false

theory. That said, one must always allow for the ways in which trauma and illness can induce radical change.

It may help to think of a graphic equalizer, a piece of equipment used by sound engineers and available in software form in programs like iTunes. A graphic equalizer may have twenty sliders that one can move between a maximum and a minimum in order to change the sound of the output on receipt of an input. So too a human being at birth. The basic psychological sliders—the character–personality–temperament sliders—of a human being are given, a function of genes, body chemistry, but they can be set very differently by upbringing and life, and there are in that straightforward sense many possible options or outcomes for a human being.

Bence Nanay has a little piece ('"Know thyself" is not just silly advice: it's actively dangerous' https://aeon.co/ideas/know-thyself-is-not-just-silly-advice-its-actively-dangerous) which invites interpretation as a rejection of the idea of essence. He argues that the attempt to 'know yourself' is a mistake, given the way the task is ordinarily conceived of, because you are likely to attach rigidly to a certain fixed conception of yourself—'this is who I *really* am'—in a way that shuts down your capacities for change. I like to think that my belief in essence, mediated through the graphic equalizer, is compatible with his point.

Sesmets! Selves as things! My views about narrativity are independent of questions about the metaphysics of sesmets, and I'm not sure it's helpful to take them together, but let me make a few comments.

First, the sense in which a self can be reasonably said to be a thing takes a lot of careful exposition (I attempt this, e.g., in *Selves*, and in 'The minimal subject' in *Oxford Handbook of the Self*, ed. S. Gallagher (Oxford) pp. 253–278). Here—for a start—let me say that I take it that all things (objects, 'substances' if you like) are processes, are best conceived as processes, and that the sense of 'thing' given which a self can usefully be said to be a thing extends comfortably to cover Berkeley's conception of the self as a 'thinking active principle' and equally Fichte's striking conception of the self as a *Tathandlung* or 'deed-activity.' We're far away, here, from any everyday conception of what a thing is according to which a chair, conceived as a static slice of stuff, is a paradigm case of a thing (even a chair is best conceived of as a process). I am, if you like, a 'process philosopher,' although not specifically a follower of Whitehead.

Let me add that I'm not sure there is a plurality of things in the universe, rather than just one vast flecked thing, a great weave of fields. On this view, a thing in our everyday sense, a human being or a chair, is just a wave in the weave. I take this view, which is also Descartes's view about the material world (a little known fact), to be powerfully supported by current physics, and effectively equivalent to the Buddhist doctrine of 'emptiness' or *śūnyatā*. Let me also add that my claim about selves as things is *conditional*: I claim that *if* (if indeed) the universe is best thought of, in an optimal metaphysics, as something that contains within itself a plurality of items that qualify as things or objects or substances (and one may doubt this), *then* selves, by which I mean short-lived entities, short-lived selves, which I also call sesmets, or 'thin subjects,' are the best candidates there are for thinghood; or equal best. There's quite a lot of argument behind this claim which I can't reproduce here.

Do sesmets, also known as 'thin subjects,' have essences? Shortness of existence isn't a bar to essence. To think otherwise is unfair to Z-particles and W-particles! And what is shortness of time? My life is a lizard's nictitation—eyeblink—to an eternal being, while 10^{-34} of a second, although a short time by human standards, 'seems by the standards of early-universe physics as interminable as an indifferent production of [Wagner's] *Lohengrin*' in Ferris' words (1997, 237).

Remember also that these transitory sesmets or thin subjects arise from persisting and (relatively speaking) highly stable brain conditions. Do they know French or algebra? Are they kind or sentimental or irascible? Yes in effect—in every sense in which GS the human being knows French or algebra or is kind or sentimental or irascible. It takes some care to spell out the details of the account, but one thing is sure. The metaphysical picture of things according to which our subjectivity consists in the existence of a succession of sesmets isn't in any sort of tension with the actual character of our everyday experience.

AA: Since this volume is devoted to the realizations of the self, I would like to ask you outright: what kind of realization(s) are possible for sesmets? Does it make sense at all to speak of self-realization in their case? Is their realization not always achieved by their very momentary lapse of existence? Do sesmets not, taken singularly, by their very "essence" exclude any becoming, and thus the very discourse of "realization" empty, if not impossible?

GS: A human being is, if you like, a streaming being. That stream can proceed in the direction of what we, thinking naturally in terms

of persisting whole human beings, call self-realization—some sort of *improvement*. We can think profitably of the stream as consisting of sesmets; I think many Buddhists do this. Buddhist doctrine shows that a theory of self-realization is compatible with a view of subjectivity as consisting of short-lived episodes. A sesmet-stream, a streaming human being, can indeed become a 'stream-winner,' *srotāpanna* (Sanskrit), *srotāpanna* (Pali), 入流 (Chinese), རྒྱུན་ཞུགས་ or *rgyun zhugs* (Tibetan).

Note that, strictly speaking, a sesmet never undergoes what you call 'a momentary lapse of existence.' It simply exists for a short time, and then ceases to exist.

AA: If this is the case, we could meaningfully speak of "realization" only in regard to the whole human being, right?

GS: If Buddhists agree with you, then I do too. But what is a whole human being when we turn up the metaphysical heat? A biological entity, for sure. But even then we need to apply Madhyamaka considerations to excessively individualistic conceptions of human beings. It may also help to recall Averroës' picture of the so-called afterlife, in which individual personality is not preserved. I believe that there are versions of this conception of the so-called afterlife in all the Abrahamic religions.

AA: I would conclude this conversation by saying that I have the impression that you do not like narrativism—at least in the form you characterize it—because of honesty: narrations are too fictional! And fiction, if taken as 'telling the truth,' imprisons life, and does violence to it. Somehow, I have the impression that your work can help one realize that narrativism—as you define it—is, at least latently, an abettor of a kind of totalitarianism, i.e., of an ideology of absolute self-consistency, self-control, an ideology according to which one has to be one's own man (and, possibly, not woman), or 'a straight arrow.' In Italian, we would say 'to totally be of one piece' (essere tutto d'un pezzo).

GS: I think almost all narratives—I mean narrative people—fall into fantasy in the way that Iris Murdoch describes so well. They move progressively further away from their truth. But—such is human variety—there may also be narrative types who are possessed by ruthless truthfulness—fierce self-truthfulness. Very occasionally one meets someone who knows themselves. I can think of two (one of them also spends a lot of time deep in self-deception, but is nonetheless able to surface into remarkable self-understanding). As far as I can see, however, self-knowledge is never the result of successful Socratic self-scrutiny.

It's just a gift (if indeed that is what it is—rather than a burden). And, once again, I don't see any necessary connection with a narrative outlook on life.

You're right, though, that I'm very attached to the idea of not being wildly mistaken. I feel a kind of fear—dread—when Joan Didion says

> the point of my keeping a notebook has never been, nor is it now, to have an accurate factual record of what I have been doing or thinking. That would be a different impulse entirely, an instinct for reality which I sometimes envy but do not possess .... I tell what some would call lies. 'That's simply not true,' the members of my family frequently tell me when they come up against my memory of a shared event. 'The party was *not* for you, the spider was not a black widow, *it wasn't that way at all*' Very likely they are right, for not only have I always had trouble distinguishing between what happened and what merely might have happened, but I remain unconvinced that the distinction, for my purposes, matters. [Didion 'On Keeping A Notebook']

AA: We are, as a matter of fact, made of many parts and pieces. They can be more or less integrated, more or less consistent with each other. They cannot, (and should not) be reduced to *one* piece. Such a reduction is possible only in a violently mendacious fiction. To take such fiction for reality closes the possibility to experience oneself as well as the others and the 'real' world.

GS: As Montaigne says, 'nous sommes tous de lopins et d'une contexture si informe et diverse, que chaque pièce, chaque moment fait son jeu. Et se trouve autant de différence de nous à nous-mêmes, que de nous à autrui'—'we are all patchworks, made of bits and pieces, woven together so diversely and so shapelessly that each one of them pulls its own way at every moment. And there's as much difference between us and ourselves as there is between us and other people' (1563–92/1991, 380).

One good indication of this is the way in which we may, over a reading and film-watching life, successively identify with fictional characters whose lives and outlooks are extremely different not only from our own in everyday life, but also from each other's.

But, once again, and as always, there are huge individual differences. Some people have genuinely painful experience of inner conflict. I don't. I may be pulled between two very different courses of action, but I'm not torn inside. I may have conflicting desires, but I don't experience that as any sort of inner fission. Some people appear to resemble

governments or nationalist parties who can't bear what they perceive (usually rightly) as stains on their country's pasts. I think, once again, that it's better to be as forgiving to yourself as you are to your friends than to falsify yourself. Or, dropping the word 'forgiveness,' it's better to be as accepting of yourself as you are of your friends. There are, no doubt, dangers in self-forgiveness or self-acceptance (there are dangers everywhere), but there are, for many of us, even greater dangers—loss of contact with the truth, the pride of excessive self-castigation—in failure to accept.

AA: We can adjust Sartre's remark that 'we are condemned to freedom,' to say that we are condemned to plurivocity and to self-difference (freedom and plurivocity are strictly related, but we do not have time to discuss their relationship here). I will limit myself to saying that any attempt to deny, or to overcome, the facts of plurivocity and self-difference can only be an operation of bad faith. In brief, it seems to me that your plea for non-narrativism is a kind of plea for a form of authenticity which is first of all a kind of honesty towards oneself as a plurivocal, non-self-transparent, fragile unity. The opposite would, as a result, correspond to dishonesty, which would also involve a kind of violence towards oneself. It would consist in telling oneself as a determined being, a self-identical person, a teleological substance.

GS: Your point about plurivocity seems useful and important. But, first, and as always, we should remember difference: some people are surely a great deal more plurivocal than others. Secondly, although some Narrativists value self-consistency, others may embrace plurivocity. Presumably Narrativism allows a 'self-narrative' to be highly picaresque. Narrativism may often go hand-in-hand with an ideal of self-consistency or a Procrustean Korsgaardianism or extreme (Harry) Frankfurtianism, but there is surely no necessary connection between them.

AA: Would you, then, as some have done, maintain that this is the story our "Western" society requires from us? That we are "formed" as human beings in compliance with such a model, and that, since we are social beings whose self-understanding derives largely from our interpersonal relations, our understanding of happiness and self-realization are social restraints? Connectedly—do you believe that a society of consciously self-differing persons is possible? Can such a form of selfhood be socially realized?

GS: I'm puzzled. [1] As far as I can see most of the ideals of self-realization current in the West derive from the East. [2] Putting those

ideals aside, many people's desire for self-realization, insofar as it exists at all, consists simply in the aim to be good. And for many of these people, being good is simply doing right without much reflection on the state of one's soul or one's past history. One can do a great deal worse than this—simply trying to do good in a more or less present-moment way; and again it doesn't require (and is in certain cases incompatible with) any sort of self-narration.

You don't have to be a Christian to be taken with Jesus' remark: 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' (Matthew's 6:34.) I'm not going to say that this is an anti-Narrative position; I do think it's striking.

These days nearly all of us watch a lot of films. I think that films may well mislead us with their constant use of flashbacks, for example in situations where someone who did the wrong thing in the past is now facing a similar dilemma and is now (one hopes) going to do the right thing: cue flashback. I don't think life is like that; I don't think we (or most of us) replay the former scene. Most of us aren't backflashers—not at least in the moment of action. In most cases, we've simply taken the error on board and are now disposed to act differently.

I could be wrong; it may not be the same for others as it is for me; it's another empirical question. It may also be that people live increasingly through their experience of film. I remember the startling reminiscences of a man who jumped out of a landing craft on a Normandy beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He found himself thinking, where's the music?

I'm puzzled when you ask me whether I believe that a society of consciously self-differing persons is possible, and whether such a form of selfhood can be socially realized. It seems obvious to me that we live in such a society, and that all human beings always have and always will, in North Korea as much as anywhere else—at least until someone concocts some kind of *Stepford Wives* drug cocktail and puts it in the drinking water ….

AA: I think we should start another conversation in order to imagine what the result of such drink would be. As for now, let me just end these conversational episodes with a reference to another, apocryphal conversation.

> **RD**: Therefore I must now ask myself whether I possess some power by which I can bring it about that I myself, who now exist, will also exist a

little later on. For since I am nothing but a thinking thing—or at least since I am now dealing simply and precisely with that part of me which is a thinking thing—if such a power were in me, then I would certainly be aware of it. But I observe that there is no such power; and from this very fact I know most clearly that I depend upon some being other than myself.[14]

AM: Confiamos
en que no será verdad
nada de lo que pensamos[15]

GS: Many thanks, Andrea.
AA: *Arigatou gozaimasu*, Galen.

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PART III

Fulfilling the Self

CHAPTER 9

Stoic Happiness as Self-Activity

Tomohiko Kondo

Galen Strawson (2004) argues strongly against both the "psychological" and "ethical" versions of what he calls the "Narrativity thesis," the ethical version of which claims, as developed by Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), that a good human life is one that has narrative unity. Strawson ascribes this belief to Plutarch, among others, based on a passage in Plutarch's essay *On Tranquility* (473B–474B), in which he advises us to "weave" our lives into a unity through the use of memory (cf. Sorabji 2006, Chapter 9). Nevertheless, it appears that the ethical Narrativity thesis was not widely espoused in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. At least, the three main philosophical schools in these periods—the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Neoplatonists—claimed that length of life is totally irrelevant to achieving

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the good life and happiness (*eudaimonia*), and they preached a way of living the present instant or, in the case of Neoplatonism, the atemporal eternity (Emilsson 2014). However, this does not mean they did not care about any kind of unity of one's self or of one's life. Rather, I shall argue in this chapter, taking up the Stoics in particular, that they claimed that the good life and happiness are achieved when one's self and its way of living is perfectly unified—not by narrative construction but by what we may call self-activity. I shall first critically review the popular conception of Stoic happiness (Section "Happiness as Inner Tranquility?") and subsequently elucidate what I take to be the original Stoic vein of thought on happiness by framing this Stoic view in the context of contemporary discussions on happiness (Sections "Happiness as Activity", "Freedom and Rationality", "Self-Activity as the Goal of Life").

Happiness as Inner Tranquility?

The Stoics have occupied a privileged place in the conceptual history of happiness not only in the West but also in Japan since the early twentieth century. One of the most influential works of literature on happiness in modern Japan has been Carl Hilty's (1891) book on happiness, toward the beginning of which was placed the entire translation of Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, which provided many Japanese people with their first acquaintance of Stoic philosophy. Recently, with the revival of theoretical and practical interests in happiness both in the West and elsewhere, a number of books on happiness for a general readership have been published, some of which claim to draw upon the wisdom of the ancient Stoic philosophers.

What, then, is "Stoic wisdom"? The general view, which we find in these books, can be roughly summarized as follows: a technique to achieve inner tranquility by controlling one's desires. Let us look at a typical example, a small book written by a popular philosopher, William B. Irvine (2009). First, the author explains the difference between "the Greek Stoics" and "the Roman Stoics" as follows: "[T]he primary ethical goal of the Greek Stoics was the attainment of virtue. The Roman Stoics retained this goal, but we find them also repeatedly advancing a second goal: the attainment of tranquility" (p. 38). He then declares that his book, following the Roman Stoics, will highlight tranquility rather than virtue, particularly since "it is unusual, after all, for modern individuals to have an interest in becoming more virtuous" (!) (p. 42).

Meanwhile, the Stoic doctrine of happiness, interpreted as concentrating solely on inner tranquility, has often been given a rather negative appraisal. To take a recent example, a book written by a social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt (2006), mentions Stoicism, especially that of Epictetus, alongside Buddhism, as "ancient wisdom" that provides us with a valuable "happiness hypothesis" such that "happiness comes from within and cannot be obtained by making the world conform to your desires" (p. xii; for more detail, see Chapter 5). Haidt claims, however, that this doctrine is insufficient, as "recent research shows that there are some things worth striving for; there are external conditions of life that can make you lastingly happier" (p. xii).

Suspicion arises here, however, as to the correctness of such an interpretation of Stoic philosophy. Such suspicion is all the more aroused when we try to situate the Stoic concept of happiness—*eudaimonia* in Greek—within contemporary philosophical discussions. Contemporary philosophers, at least in the Anglophone literature, generally distinguish the notion of happiness from that of well-being or welfare: that is, "happiness" is employed to descriptively denote positive mental states, while "well-being" is used for the normative concept defining what is good for a person or, in Derek Parfit's phrase "what makes someone's life go best" (Parfit 1984, Appendix I). If we adopt this contemporary usage, the ancient Greek concept of *eudaimonia* appears to correspond to the latter. Two contemporary philosophical analyses of happiness and well-being explicitly state that *eudaimonia* in ancient Greek philosophy, particularly as found in Aristotle, should be understood as well-being in a normative—and not happiness in a descriptive—sense (Sumner 1996, p. 140; Haybron 2008, pp. 5–6, 32–33).

Nevertheless, the Stoic doctrine seems to have been understood as a technique of achieving happiness as a positive mental state rather than of attaining well-being. Irvine (2009), as we have seen, focuses on tranquility, which he defines as "a psychological state marked by the absence of negative emotions, such as grief, anger, and anxiety, and the presence of positive emotions, such as joy" (p. 39). The same is true for Haybron's (2008) positive appropriation of Stoic ideas. He considers Stoic "tranquility" as the forerunner of what he calls a state of "attunement," which, he argues, forms the core of "happiness" that consists in a person's overall emotional condition (pp. 115–118).

This provides an interesting contrast with the contemporary reception of Aristotle, in particular his understanding of *eudaimonia*. Scholars

have summoned the Aristotelian concept as an antidote to the modern conception of "happiness." For example, Martha C. Nussbaum (2012), after mentioning a poem by Wordsworth—"Character of the Happy Warrior"—she claims, following J.L. Austin (1938), that "Wordsworth is a useful interlocutor at this point, because we can see that the Aristotelian conception of happiness was dominant until Bentham's influence dislodged it, changing the very way that many people, at least, hear the English word 'happiness'" (p. 341). Nussbaum here is critical of the fact that the concept of happiness has become impoverished and flattened into being almost identified with pleasure or satisfaction, which in turn is now largely exploited as the basis of psychological research and public policy. What she particularly deplores is the fact that the "reflective element" is neglected in contemporary conceptions of happiness. She emphasizes this element as the legacy of Socrates—Plato famously has him state, "The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being" (*The Apology of Socrates* 38A)—and as something sorely needed in our democracy (pp. 343–344).

Now, the Stoics seem to be situated at a crossing point between the ancient and modern conceptions of happiness. Do they mark the beginning of the decline—as we may say, following Nussbaum's historical verdict—of the concept of happiness? Or has their philosophy been understood rather poorly? I believe that an "anti-modern" interpretation of the Stoic concept of happiness is possible, which I shall argue for in the following sections. (I shall hereafter stick to the common English word "happiness," rather than resort to the transliteration *eudaimonia*.)

Happiness as Activity

It is true that the Stoics—especially the Roman writers such as Seneca and Epictetus—take substantial interest in achieving a desirable mental state, especially tranquility. René Descartes is one of those who learned much of this aspect from the Stoic philosophy. He comments extensively, in his letters to Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, on Seneca's moral essay, *On the Happy Life*. Interestingly, while interpreting Seneca, he supplies us with a definition of happiness (*la béatitude*) that clearly identifies it with a kind of mental state, that is, "a perfect contentment of mind and an inner satisfaction" (August 4, 1645, AT IV 264; trans. Cottingham et al. 1991).

However, as Donald Rutherford (2004) has rightly pointed out, Seneca himself claims clearly that the supreme good and the ultimate goal, which all the ancient philosophers identify with happiness, is not to be considered, strictly speaking, to be such a mental state (pp. 178–184). Seneca says in *On the Happy Life*: "Even the joy that derives from virtue, though it is a good, is still not part of the perfect good, no more than are joy and tranquility, even though they come into existence from the most excellent causes—for these are goods, but they follow the supreme good and do not complete it" (15.2; trans. Ker 2014 with modifications). Descartes seems to err in taking this text as an indication that the supreme good, which the Stoics as well as Descartes claim consists solely in virtue, should be distinguished from happiness, which is "the contentment or satisfaction of mind which results from possessing [virtue]" (August 18, 1645, AT IV 275; trans. Cottingham et al. 1991). Such a distinction, however, is not what any Stoic would admit to (e.g., Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 85.20).

This is likely the reason, as Rutherford (2004) also claims, why Descartes can easily conclude that the positions of Zeno (i.e., the Stoics), Epicurus, and Aristotle can all "be accepted as true and as consistent with each other, provided they are interpreted favourably" (August 18, 1645, AT IV 275–277; trans. Cottingham et al. 1991). From Descartes' point of view, these ancient philosophers all have essentially the same view of happiness, that is, "the contentment of mind." Again, it is true that the ancient Stoics, including Seneca, sometimes attempt such a reconciliation between the Stoics and the Epicureans (Panaetius of Rhodus seems to have been the first Stoic to take this approach by appropriating the Democritean concept of "peace of mind" (*euthumia*) into the Stoic ethics [Gill 1994]). However, Seneca assimilates Epicurus to the Stoics, not by identifying "happiness" with the contentment of mind but by interpreting the Epicurean doctrine of pleasure as being "sacred and right and, if you approach more closely, sobering" (*On the Happy Life* 13.1, trans. Ker 2014)—that is, as being a road to virtue and true happiness.

On the original Stoic view, it is of the utmost importance to distinguish their conception of happiness from the hedonistic one. We can see this most clearly from the so-called "cradle argument," which is used by both the Epicureans and the Stoics to elucidate the ultimate goal of human life by appealing to the behaviors of newborn infants and nonrational animals (Brunschwig 1986). The Epicureans consider the fact that infants and animals pursue pleasure and avoid pain to support their thesis that the ultimate goal of life is pleasure (Cicero, *On Ends* 1.29–30).

The Stoics, in contrast, argue that infants and animals are not moved by the pursuit of pleasure or by the avoidance of pain but that, as soon as they are born, they have self-perception and a natural impulse (*hormē*) toward self-preservation, which is said to be based on a natural affinity, or "appropriation" (*oikeiōsis*), to themselves (Diogenes Laertius 7.85–86). From this, the Stoics deduce that the ultimate goal of life is the activity by which one's own nature is fully actualized.

It is important here to note that the self, which is thought to be perceived and preserved, is not what we might call the "inner mental self" but what the Stoics call "constitution" (*sustasis*)—that is, the soul-body composite teleologically directed toward certain activities according to one's nature (Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics* II.1–4). Seneca provides us with vivid examples: "A baby that would like to stand up and is just getting used to supporting itself […] keeps getting up, crying all the time, until it has painfully trained itself to do what its nature demands. […] An inverted tortoise feels no pain, but it is disturbed by missing its natural condition and keeps rocking itself until it stand on its feet" (*Letters on Ethics* 121.8–9; trans. Graver and Long 2015, with modifications). The Stoic criticism of hedonism should not be understood as founded on sheer moralism but on the fundamental assumption such that to *be* and to *live* for animals (including human beings) consists in activity, not in passive experience.

Although this theory may appear to be an example of unfounded metaphysics, I believe its reasonableness can be defended to some extent by comparing it with contemporary discussion, such as Robert Nozick's famous thought experiment against hedonism involving what he calls the "experience machine." The "experience machine" is a device that "would give you any experience you desired," even though you would actually be "floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain" (Nozick 1974, p. 42). Now, we may ask, why do most of us not want—as it seems—to plug into this "experience machine"? He explains the reason as follows: "First, we want to *do* certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them. […] A second reason for not plugging in is that we want to *be* a certain way, to be a certain sort of person. […] Plugging into the machine is a kind of suicide" (p. 43). Despite quite different settings, these ancient and modern versions of the anti-hedonistic argument share the same intuition—that is, that happiness or well-being does not consist in passive experience, however pleasurable it might be, but in one's own activity and in what one really *does* (LeBar 2013,

pp. 69–71). This is because, according to both versions, what we human beings *are* consists precisely in *doing* certain activities, without which one would be little better than dead.

Then, what sort of activities does the happiness of human beings consist in? With regard to this question, Nozick (1974) seems to me to point in the right direction when he writes: "Perhaps what we desire is to live (an active verb) ourselves, in contact with reality" (p. 45). The fact that we *desire* to "live oneself" means that this is a difficult ideal to achieve. Now, we may wonder what it means to "live oneself" in the first place and how this can be properly achieved. I believe this is precisely the issue that concerned the Stoics when they approached the concept of freedom, as I shall show in the next section.

Freedom and Rationality

The Stoics claim that freedom (*eleutheria*), alongside happiness, is an ideal that only the sage could attain. Stoic freedom has been traditionally interpreted, somewhat banally, as an inner mental freedom from emotional disturbance, achieved by curbing one's desires and withdrawing from the external world. For example, Isaiah Berlin (2002) describes the Stoic concept of freedom as "the retreat to the inner citadel," which he take to be a form of "the doctrine of sour grapes," which is named after Aesop's famous fable (pp. 181–187, originally 1958). He later argues against this notion of freedom as follows: "If degrees of freedom were a function of the satisfaction of desires, I could increase freedom as effectively by eliminating desires as by satisfying them: [...] This is what Epictetus achieves when he claims that he, a slave, is freer than his master" (p. 31, originally 1969). Although it is true that the Stoics thought freedom involved controlling one's desires, such an interpretation of Stoic freedom, which is clearly in accord with the traditional interpretation of Stoic happiness as we have already seen, must be rejected (cf. Sorabji 2012, Chapters 3 and 10).

This is most clearly shown by interpreting Stoic freedom in light of Plato's *Republic*. I have already argued on another occasion that Chrysippus, the most important early Stoic philosopher, appropriated Plato's *Republic* by picking up the Platonic definition of justice as "doing one's own" (*ta hautou prattein*) and applying it to the Stoic concept of freedom as "the power of self-action" (*exousia autopragias*) (Diogenes Laertius 7.121) (Kondo 2018; cf. Schofield 1991, pp. 48–56;

Cooper 2003). My contention was that Chrysippus, in extracting the Stoic concept of freedom from Plato's *Republic*, took particular care to overcome the introverted and escapist tendency lurking therein by radically re-reading the Platonic texts. However, irrespective of the correctness of my interpretation, we shall be justified in comparing the Stoic ethical theory with that of Plato's *Republic*, which was in antiquity—and still might be now—the most powerful philosophical treatment of happiness.

The Stoics define freedom as the "power" (*exousia*) to act or to live "as one wills" (*hōs bouletai*) (Cicero, *Stoic Paradoxes* 34, Arrianus, *Epictetus' Dissertations* 4.1.1, Philo of Alexandria, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 59, etc.). In Plato's *Republic*, the phrase most similar to this formula, "the power to do what one wills," is found in a derogatory description of the "freedom," conferred by the ring of Gyges (359B–C) or exercised by the people in the democratic *polis* (557B). What is noteworthy is that Plato (or, more precisely, Socrates the interlocutor) does not repudiate freedom as contrary to justice. In fact, the conclusion of the dialogue appears to be that an unjust person could never really "do what one wills." This is clearly indicated by the claims that the tyrannical *polis* and the tyrannical soul, which are both unjust in the extreme, are said to be "least likely to do what it wills" (577D–E) and, therefore, that "the true tyrant is really a slave" (579D–E). By reversing these claims, the Stoics could get the Stoic doctrine that only the sage is the person who can really "do as he wills" and, therefore, is really "free."

I believe this is the key to the central claim in Plato's *Republic* that only the just and the virtuous are—or, at least, can be—happy (Schofield 2006, pp. 265–270). Being able to do what one wills—in other words, being able to do to satisfy one's desires—is plausibly considered an essential condition of happiness. Now, Plato's strategy in order to reach this conclusion appears to be what we might call *idealization*—that is, to count as the desires to be satisfied not whatever desires one may actually happen to have but only the rational desires toward what is truly good and valuable for oneself (The term "idealization" is borrowed from Santas [2010, pp. 178–182], though he rather emphasizes the discontinuity between the Platonic view and the modern *idealized* version of the desire-satisfaction theory). The Stoics, according to my interpretation, explicitly followed this path. Several sources tell us that the Stoics attempted the *idealized* definition of the term "to will" (*boulesthai*) or "the will" (*boulēsis*) as "a longing for something *in accordance*

with reason" (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.12). Likewise, the term "power" (*exousia*) was re-interpreted by the Stoics as "the *lawful* license" (*nomimē epitropē*) (Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 2.10). Then, "the power to do as one wills" would be, by definition, only possessed by the ideal sage. In other words, only the sage can do as she herself really wills.

What is notable is that a similar strategy is found in contemporary discussions of the so-called desire-satisfaction theory. This theory claims—to put it simply—that human well-being consists in the satisfaction of desires. However, this simple version is known to face several obvious objections. For example, sometimes the desires that people actually have are clearly bad and harmful for themselves; sometimes people have been induced not to have the desires that they *should* have in order to achieve their true well-being. In other words, sometimes people make mistakes about what they themselves really desire to do. The typical cases are just what we have already seen, those of the "sour grapes" and the "happy slave." Now, the standard modern strategy to evade these problems is, again, what we might call *idealization*—that is, to define well-being not in terms of the satisfaction of *actual* desires but in terms of *idealized* desires, such as the desires a person *would* have if she *were* "informed" and "rational."

Modern theorists have, however, taken pains not to go further and impose an objective value requirement on the *idealized* desires, because they want to maintain their subjectivism—that what is good for us is ultimately determined by us as individuals (LeBar 2004, pp. 196–201). In contrast, Plato and the Stoics did not hesitate to go to the extremes on this point: they thought that, in order to be happy, we have to be ideally and perfectly "informed" and "rational" so that we know what is truly and objectively good—that is, to use Stoic language, to be the sage. Despite this difference, however, the Stoics side with modern theorists—and go further than them—in adopting the strategy of *idealization*, which offers a countermeasure to the "happy slave" and "sour grapes" problems. The Stoics do not teach us to control our desires, *no matter what they are*, in order to achieve an inner mental state of tranquility or desire-satisfaction, much less any other "happy feelings." On the contrary, they instruct us to desire only what is truly good, which alone would make us really happy, being able to do what we really desire.

The reason for the difference above between the ancients and the moderns, I believe, partly lies in the fact that these ancient philosophers

were much more austere in judging the actual situations of human beings, as indicated by the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic* or by the Stoic claim that the sage is rarer than the Ethiopian phoenix and that everyone else, including the Stoic philosophers themselves, are all "wicked" and "mad" (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate* 199.14–20, Seneca, *Letters on Ethics* 42.1). In contrast, we moderns tend to be more optimistic in this respect, whether we are right or not. Furthermore, and more importantly, this austerity also reflects their deeper assumption concerning the function of rationality as the unifying principle.

The Stoics regard happiness as consisting solely in virtue, which they view as a unity or consistency (*homologia*) of one's self and one's life achieved by perfect rationality (*logos*) (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.89). This Stoic ideal of unity or consistency is also inherited from Plato, particularly his *Republic*, in which justice in the soul is considered to be the virtue that perfectly unifies the soul. There, justice in the soul is defined as "doing one's own," by which a person "emerges as a perfect unity of diverse elements, self-disciplined and in harmony with himself" (Plato, *Republic* 443E; trans. Ferrari and Griffith 2000). Based on this passage, Christine Korsgaard (1999, 2009, Chapter 7) interprets Platonic justice to be a principle of self-constitution, which brings order to the disparate desires of a human being so as to constitute her as "a single unified agent" capable of engaging in "action" in the proper sense of the term. Whether Korsgaard's interpretation of Plato is correct or not, the Stoics can be interpreted as incorporating this point into their broader ontological framework.

The Stoics propose the theory of *scala naturae*, that is, the hierarchy of beings based on the degree of tension (*tonos*) in the *pneuma* (i.e., fiery breath), which gives each level of being—i.e., from the lower to the higher levels: inanimate things; plants; animals; and, finally, rational agents—its degree of unity and self-motion (cf. Hahm 1994). As we can see from this, the ontological function of rationality is to enable its participator to achieve the highest degree of unity and self-motion. According to one source, the highest level of self-motion "from rational impulse" is called "'action' (*praxis*), or even more specifically, to be active (*energein*) in accordance with virtue" (Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* 306.19–27). Inspired by Korsgaard (2009, Chapter 8), I take this to mean that only the activity done with virtue—that is, perfect rationality—is properly called "action," while other activities with imperfect rationality can also be called actions but are *defective* actions.

This way of thinking explains why virtue makes a human being "happy" in the proper Stoic sense; it is because perfect rationality bestows her the power of the highest degree of activity by constituting her as the unified self and enabling her, in Nozickian language, to "live oneself."

Self-Activity as the Goal of Life

The final question, then, concerns what the Stoics teach perfectly rational self-activity to be. The Stoics describe ethical progress as starting from the pursuit of "what is in accordance with nature" and culminating in understanding the "supreme good," which consists in the "order and harmony of actions to be done" (Cicero, *On Ends* 3.21). This tells us that every action should be done to achieve not an external outcome but the "supreme good"—that is, the intrinsic value of one's own actions. Although this doctrine instructs us to concentrate our attentions on our own selves, what is important is that this "supreme good" lies not in inner mental tranquility or the like but in one's own *activity*—that is, a unified or consistent way of dealing with external circumstances. To see this, we shall begin with the argument reported by Cicero (*On Ends* 3.22), which explicates the supreme good and the ultimate goal of human life by referring to the art of archery. The argument notes that, in the case of archery, its ultimate goal consists, not in actually hitting the target, but in doing everything in one's power to hit the target; analogically, the ultimate goal of human life consists in doing everything in one's power to achieve desired outcomes, not in the actual achievement of them.

Now, a remarkably similar argument appears in the aforementioned book by Irvine (2009), dubbed "the internalization of the goals" (though the author says that "I found little evidence that they advocate internalizing goals in the manner I have described" [p. 99]). Irvine explains this strategy as follows: "[H]is goal in playing tennis will not be to win a match (something external, over which he has only partial control) but to play to the best of his ability in the match (something internal, over which he has complete control)" (p. 95). Irvine understands this as a strategy to achieve tranquility as is made clear when he adds: "By choosing this goal, he will spare himself frustration or disappointment should he lose the match: Since it was not his goal to win the match, he will not have failed to attain his goal, as long as he played his best. His tranquility will not be disrupted" (p. 95).

It is tempting to take the above archery analogy in the same way. However, we can and should attempt a different interpretation. What helps us here is the distinction, made by Julia Annas (2011), between "the *circumstances* of a life" and "the *living* of a life" (esp. pp. 92–93). The *circumstances* of a life are, as Annas explains, "the factors whose existence in your life are not under your control," which, as I take it, roughly correspond to what the ancient philosophers called "the externals"; the latter, the *living* of a life, is "the way you deal with the circumstances of your life." Now, I shall interpret the archery analogy by applying this distinction as follows: "actually hitting the target" is distinguished from "doing everything in one's power to hit the target" because the former is the outcome that depends on the *circumstances* of a life, while the latter abstracts the aspect of the *living* of a life, that is, the aspect of the activity that is properly said to be done by oneself and to be one's own life. What is important here is that this distinction between the *circumstances* and the *living* of a life is not to be identified as the one between the external world and the inner mental state, because, as we have seen earlier, the Stoics believe that to *live* for human beings essentially consists in activity. Therefore, the archery analogy should be interpreted as inviting us to concentrate our attentions on our own lives, not *qua* the inner mental state but *qua* our own activity.

It will be useful here to criticize a common view that the Stoics are entirely indifferent to the external world. It is true that the Stoics regarded the externals as "indifferent" (*adiaphora*). However, at least the orthodox Stoics such as Chrysippus introduced value-differences among the "indifferents" (Cicero, *On Ends* 3.50–51). For, if both bodily health and illness are completely equal in value, we would be at a loss whether we should care for our health or not. They responded that, while health is "indifferent"—that is, one could still be happy even if one's health was somehow damaged—it has positive value such that it is to be "preferred" (*proēgmenon*) to illness. This is precisely why they were able to provide, as we see in Cicero's *On Duties*, a complex system of prescribing appropriate actions (*kathēkonta*, *officia*), which one should find by carefully examining the value-differences of the "indifferents" at each occasion. Goodness and badness, as well as happiness and unhappiness, consist in the way we make use of the "indifferents"—that is, how we deal with the *circumstances* of a life. This might be the most controversial, but also the most pivotal, point in Stoic ethics. Already in antiquity, Carneades the Academic raised fundamental objections to it, arguing that it is absurd to

think that what is "good" consists in doing everything in one's power to achieve "indifferent" outcomes (e.g., Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions* 1071B–C). I shall not attempt a full philosophical defense of this Stoic thesis. Instead, I shall only try to make such peculiar Stoic thinking clearer by comparing it with some contemporary arguments.

According to the standard distinction between different theories of well-being in contemporary ethics, "objective list theory" is contrasted to "subjectivist" theories such as hedonism and desire-satisfaction theory. It is usually understood as the theory that provides a list of objectively valuable items, including physical health and so forth, which constitute well-being. However, I believe that the tendency to establish a contrast between "objectivism" and "subjectivism" as such is derived from the simplistic dichotomy that identifies the "subjective" with the inner mental state, such as pleasure, and the "objective" with external objects. What is missing here is the aspect that Annas calls the *living* of a life, which consists in dealing with the *circumstances* of a life while at the same time being subjectively experienced. Annas (2011), in fact, argues that by distinguishing the *circumstances* of a life from the *living* of that life, we can evade the most common objection to the objective theory that its proponents are paternalistic; they appear to force a certain vision of good life on people, whether they like it or not (pp. 128–129, 140–145). I am not sure whether Annas is right on this point; as far as the Stoics are concerned, it appears that they did not regard paternalism as a theoretical problem at all. Nevertheless, the fundamental intuition they both share is that happiness should be considered as something sovereign—something that does not, at least totally, depend on circumstances. That is, even if someone is desperately ill or poor, we cannot and should not judge her to be unhappy solely on the basis of such circumstances. We cannot and should not deny the possibility that there might be someone living in such conditions whom we can still call happy because of her extremely ingenious way of dealing with such circumstances.

The typical Stoic conception of happiness becomes clearer when compared to some contemporary discussions of the meaning of life. (I assume that the modern concept of the "meaning of life" was introduced purely to fill in the gap created by the "impoverishment" of the concept of happiness, but this would require a separate study and discussion.) We shall only refer to two extreme positions: the subjective theory by Richard Taylor (1970) and the objective theory by Peter Singer (1993a,

Chapters 10–11, 1993b, Chapter 12). Consider Sisyphus, to whom was allotted the eternal punishment of rolling the same stone up to the top of a hill, again and again, in vain. Now, we may ask, how could Sisyphus acquire any meaning to his life? To this question, Taylor notoriously answers that it would be possible only by implanting in him a strong desire to push the stone so that he could experience the satisfaction of that desire. In contrast, Singer answers that Sisyphus could acquire a meaning to his life only by actually constructing a temple with the stones he rolled up; here, a temple is to be taken as a metaphor of making the world better.

To which of these two is the Stoic view similar? At first, the objective theory by Singer appears to be the better candidate. The Stoics claim that the ultimate goal of human life is "to live consistently with nature" (*homologoumenōs tēi phusei zēn*), which is further explained by Chrysippus as "doing everything on the basis of the harmony of each person's *daimōn* with the will of the administrator of the whole" (Diogenes Laertius 7.87–88). Does this not mean that the ultimate goal of human life is to "make the world better"? However, the Stoic position is much subtler. For Singer, Sisyphus' life would be given meaning by the value of the temple he would construct—that is, the value of the external outcomes of his activity. However, the Stoics would claim that real value does not consist in external outcomes but in "doing everything in one's power to achieve the desired outcomes"—that is, in the intrinsic choiceworthiness of one's own rational activity itself (Frede 1999). In this respect, the Stoic position is in a way similar to Taylor's, whose central claim lies in that "the meaning of life is from within us, it is not bestowed from without" (1970, p. 334). However, we need not take the "within us" as the inner mental state but as one's own activity itself (cf. Taylor 1987). If we continue on with the metaphor of the temple, we may put Stoic happiness as consisting, not in externally constructing a beautiful temple, but in making one's own *life* itself a beautiful temple.

I shall end this chapter by referring to the impressive image the Stoics use to describe what the self-activity of wisdom—that is, perfect rationality—achieved by the sage is like: "It is like the acting or dancing […]. Here the goal, namely the performance of the art, is contained within the art itself, not sought outside it. […] Wisdom alone is wholly directed towards itself" (Cicero, *On Ends* 3.24; trans. Annas and Woolf 2001, with modifications). The Stoics add that acting or dancing are still not sufficient metaphors, because the sage's wisdom is completely actualized

in every instant of her activity, while the acting or dancing performance needs some duration of time. Marcus Aurelius says: “[The rational soul] achieves its proper end, wherever the close of life comes upon it; if any interruption occurs, its whole action is not rendered incomplete as is the case in the dance or a play and similar arts, but in every scene of life and wherever it may be overtaken, it makes what it proposed to itself complete and entire, so that it can say: ‘I have what is my own’” (*Meditationes* 11.1; trans. Farquharson 1944).

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CHAPTER 10

Realizing Oneself by Realizing What One Really Wants to Do

Yudai Suzuki

In this article I will explore what it is to realize oneself by realizing what one really wants to do. For example, if I really want to work with Médecins sans frontières (MSF), and I fulfill that desire, then it can be said that I realize myself. On the other hand, there might be a case in which even though I have not realized any of my desires, or I do not have any desire at all, I still realize myself; Buddhism, for instance, might teach us a way to realize oneself by giving up one's desire. In this article, however, I will focus on cases in which we realize ourselves by realizing what we really want to do. Then the question is: What does it mean to really want to do something?

When I really want to φ, it is said that my desire to φ is "internal," I "identify with" the desire, I am "committed to" what I want, or if I actually φ-ed, I φ-ed "autonomously." If I φ-ed autonomously, this entails that I φ-ed intentionally. It is widely accepted that in order for me to φ intentionally, it is necessary that I have at least a desire to φ and this desire leads to my φ-ing. For example, if I drank alcohol intentionally, my desire to do so had to lead to my drinking. On the other hand, if my drinking alcohol was led not by my desire, but by something "external" in a sense, such as my friend's pouring alcohol down my throat, then

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my drinking is not intentional. However, my desire to drink alcohol can be "external" in another sense. For example, if an alcohol addict has a strong desire to drink alcohol, but she might not really want to do it, this "external" desire does not deprive the actions of the intentionality, but of the autonomy or the commitment to the desires. In what follows, I will use the term "commitment" in order to refer to the state of really wanting to do something. I really want to do something if and only if I am committed to what I want. Then the question is: What is it to be committed to what I want?

In the section "The Hierarchical View", I will introduce Harry Frankfurt's view of the concept of commitment, and in the section "The Value Judgment View" I will subsequently discuss Gary Watson's view. In the section "My View and Bratman's", I will put forward a part of my view and compare it with Michael Bratman's. In the section "The Final Element", I will sketch a further element for the concept of commitment which is completely lacking in the other views.

The Hierarchical View

Frankfurt famously proposes that one is committed to what one wants, φ-ing, if and only if one has a *second-order desire* that one's first-order desire to φ motivate one to φ (Frankfurt 1971/1988a). According to his view, in the previous example of wanting to work with MSF, I need not only the first-order desire to work with MSF, but also the second-order desire of being motivated by the first-order desire. In contrast, the alcohol addict is not committed to her desire to drink alcohol because she lacks a second-order desire of being motivated by the desire to drink alcohol. Let us call this view *the hierarchical view*.

What the hierarchical view appeals to is "the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second-order desire" (Frankfurt 1971/1988a, p. 12). Bratman also appreciates Frankfurt by saying "[a] major element in Harry Frankfurt's groundbreaking work in the philosophy of action has been an emphasis on our capacity for "reflective self-evaluation"—in particular, our capacity to step back and reflectively assess our motivation" (Bratman 2002/2007b, p. 68). Here the insight is that what is needed for one's commitment to a desire is one's *evaluation* of the desire. The hierarchical view understands it in terms of second-order desires, i.e., the hierarchy of desires.

It is well known that the hierarchical view is not sufficient for understanding the concept of commitment. Watson criticizes the view by saying

"[s]ince second-order volitions are themselves simply desires, to add them to the context of conflict is just to increase the number of contenders; it is not to give a special place to any of those in contention. The agent may not care which of the second-order desires win out" (Watson 1975, p. 218). Even though we try to capture the commitment with a first-order desire by appealing to a second-order desire, the question remains whether the agent is committed to this second-order desire, and if it is possible for her not to be committed to it. For example, I have a first-order desire to save money, and because of my overcautiousness, I also have a second-order desire to be motivated by this first-order desire. However, I might not be committed to this second-order desire, because what I really want to do might be to change my overcautiousness and to rather buy a speculative stock. This means that just appealing to one's second-order desire to be motivated by a first-order desire is not enough to show that one is committed to this first-order desire. There is no use in appealing to one's third-order desire to be motivated by the second-order desire, because then we have to settle the question of whether I am committed to this third-order desire or not. If we appeal to higher order desires, we go into an infinite regress. This means that the tactics of the hierarchical view failed in understanding the evaluation necessary for the commitment in terms of hierarchy of desires. Even if one has a second-order desire to be motivated by a first-order desire, one might not evaluate the first-order desire.

Later Frankfurt tries to avoid the infinite regress by appealing to "satisfaction." "What satisfaction does entail is an absence of restlessness or resistance" (Frankfurt 1992/1999, p. 103). According to this complemented hierarchical view, I am committed to my desire to work with MSF if and only if I have a second-order desire of being motivated by my first-order desire to work with MSF, and there is *no* desire which resists that second-order desire. The point here is that what Frankfurt appeals to is the *absence* of any recalcitrant desire, not to any existing desire. If he appealed to some existing desire, we could ask whether the agent is committed to that desire, but such a question does not arise this time, since he solely appeals to the absence of a desire.

However, there are still objections to the complemented hierarchical view. Bratman gives a counter-example which allegedly shows that the hierarchical view complemented with satisfaction is not sufficient for understanding the concept of commitment yet. His example is depression (Bratman 1996/1999, p. 194; 2000/2007a, p. 34). For example, I have a second-order desire of being motivated by my first-order

desire to drink alcohol, and my depression is what leads me to have no other desire which resists the second-order desire. In this case, Bratman insists that I am not committed to my desire to drink alcohol, even if I have a second-order desire and have no other desire which resists the second-order desire. However, though I agree that some depression can deprive one of the commitment, it is not clear what of depression deprives one of the commitment in this case, because, as I will discuss in section "The Final Element", Bratman also gives a case in which a depressed person is still committed to one's desire.

Furthermore, higher order desires, even if they are complemented with satisfaction, are not only insufficient for understanding the concept of commitment, but they are, in my view, not necessary. The evaluation necessary for my commitment is not my evaluation about my mental state of wanting, but about *what* I want. The distinction I am trying to make here is the so-called act-object ambiguity. "Desire" has two meanings; one's wanting something (i.e., the attitude of wanting), or what one wants (i.e., the object of the attitude). If Frankfurt interprets what motivates us to act as the former, the evaluation which he takes as necessary for the commitment is about the attitude of wanting, and is therefore second-order. However, when I really want to work with MSF, what matters is not how valuable my state of wanting to do so is, but how valuable what I want to do (i.e., working with MSF) is. What one wants to do is normally an action, so the evaluation necessary for the commitment is about an action, and is therefore first-order. It is possible for me to focus on my mental attitude of wanting to work with MSF itself and to value it, but it is too strong to insist that in every case in which I am committed to what I want, I must not only take what I want as valuable, but also take being in the attitude of wanting it as valuable.

If what has been discussed is correct, a commitment to what one wants requires one's evaluation about what one wants, and for this evaluation the hierarchy of desires is neither sufficient nor necessary.

The Value Judgment View

One lesson which we can learn from the discussion above might be that we should appeal to different kinds of attitudes rather than desires. In the hierarchical view, the attitude which is necessary and sufficient for, or which constitutes, the commitment to a first-order desire is also a desire, and it is only different from the first-order desire by its order. But as we

saw above, the order of attitudes do not ensure the commitment. Watson gives an alternative view appealing to *value judgments*, which are attitudes different from desires (Watson 1975). Value judgments are enough for the evaluation necessary for the commitment. He proposes that one is committed to what one wants, φ-ing, if and only if one judges that φ-ing is the best thing to do. According to his view, for example, I really want to work with MSF if and only if I judge that working with MSF is the best thing to do. In contrast, the alcohol addict is not committed to her desire to drink alcohol because she has not made the judgment that drinking alcohol is the best thing to do. Let us call this view *the value judgment view*.

However, later Watson himself criticizes his earlier view by saying "the picture presented there is altogether too rationalistic. [...] Notoriously, judging good has no invariable connection with motivation, and one can fail to 'identify' with one's evaluational judgments" (Watson 1987, p. 150). Here Watson seems to suggest that the commitment requires a "connection with motivation" and since value judgments lack this connection, they are not enough for the commitment. For example, even when I judge that the best thing to do is to donate money to poor children, I may not be motivated enough to do so and not be committed to doing so. However, earlier Watson admits that "to think a thing good is at the same time to desire it" (Watson 1975, p. 208), while of course he denies that the converse holds. So if value judgments include desires, they must have *some* connection with motivation. Then what is this added "connection with motivation" which later Watson required for the commitment?

I agree with the early Watson in thinking that the evaluation of a desire which is necessary for the commitment to the desire is not a desire itself, and it is a value judgment. I also agree with the later Watson in thinking that mere value judgments are not enough for the commitment and they need to have a certain connection with motivation. In the next section, I will explicate this connection by appealing to practical reasoning and intentions.

My View and Bratman's

The usual way we get motivated to perform an action based on value judgments is through practical reasoning, i.e., through thinking about what to do. And practical reasoning leads to intentions which have more stable motivation compared to desires.[1] Suppose that I judge that φ-ing is the best thing to do. If I am committed to my desire to φ, when

I think about what to do, I consider the judgment, weigh it against other value judgments if any (there may be several desires I judge as the best to fulfill), and reach an intention to φ. Therefore, what I take as necessary for the commitment is *an intention based on value judgment through practical reasoning*, or in short, *an intention based on reason-judgment*.[2] So if I really want to work with MSF, I have an intention to do so based on the judgment that there is most reason to work with MSF. In contrast, the alcohol addict lacks an intention to drink alcohol based on the judgment that there is most reason to drink. And in another example above, even though I judge that donating money to poor children is the best thing to do, I am not committed to my desire to do so, because I do not consider the judgment when I think about what to do, or even if I consider it, I give little weight to it and do not form an intention to donate money.

Bratman proposes a similar view which appeals to both intention and practical reasoning (Bratman 2000/2007a). I want to illustrate my view by comparing it with his view. He takes what is necessary for the commitment to one's desire as a general intention to treat the desire as reason-giving in practical reasoning. There are three points to be noted.

First, Bratman stresses that general intentions of treating a desire as reason-giving in practical reasoning are second-order intentions about the desire. According to him, the intentions are not first-order intentions about action, but about what desires to treat as reason-giving in practical reasoning; they are intentions about how to conduct practical reasoning and how to treat a desire in reasoning. In general, it is possible for us to have intentions about how to reason, as when a chess player forms an intention about how long she will think about the next move instead of forming an intention about actually making the next move. Of course the intentions Bratman appeals to are not about how long to reason, but about what desire to treat as reason-giving in reasoning. For example, when I really want to work with MSF, according to him, I have an intention to treat my desire to work with MSF as reason-giving in my practical reasoning on what to do. In this respect, Bratman inherits the hierarchical view's appeal to the reflectiveness, though he still differs from it in appealing to other higher order attitudes than higher order desires.

Secondly, the intentions Bratman appeals to are not mere intentions but general ones which he calls "policies" and characterizes them as follows: "sometimes one's commitment is to a certain kind of action on certain kinds of potentially recurrent occasions—for example, buckling

up one's seat belt when one drives, or having at most one beer at dinner" (Bratman 2000/2007a, p. 27). For example, while an intention to go to a musical tonight is a nongeneral intention to perform a singular action, an intention to go to a musical every Sunday is a general intention or policy to perform recurrent actions on certain occasions. And the policies which Bratman takes as necessary for commitments are not just about recurrent actions, but about recurrent reasoning; in the previous example, I have a policy to treat my desire to work with MSF as reason-giving in my reasoning. He calls such second-order policies about reasoning "self-governing policies."

Thirdly, while we have made sure that the evaluation which has a certain connection with motivation is required for the commitment, Bratman adds a further requirement. It is to capture the *temporal* character of agents; "I see my action at that time as the action of the same agent as he who has acted in the past and (it is to be hoped) will act in the future" (Bratman 2000/2007a, p. 29). Intentions are about some future, and policies are comparatively long-standing intentions about future actions on potentially recurrent occasions. Frankfurt, who later develops his view and tries to understand the concept of commitment in terms of caring, also mentions the same point: "these attitudes [i.e., desires] and beliefs differ significantly from caring in their temporal characteristics. The outlook of a person who cares about something is inherently prospective; that is, he necessarily considers himself as having a future. On the other hand, it is possible for a creature to have desires and beliefs without taking any account at all of the fact that he may continue to exist" (Frankfurt 1982/1988b, p. 83).

I disagree with Bratman on the first and second points, and would like to add on to his third point. In the first point, he stressed that the intentions of treating a desire as reason-giving in practical reasoning were second-order. I agree that they are reflective in the sense that reasoning is a mental action, and they are about this mental action. In my view however, they are not reflective about desires, because when we treat a desire as reason-giving in practical reasoning, what matters is not our attitude of wanting, but its object (i.e., what we want). The distinction I am appealing to here is again the act-object ambiguity. Later on, Bratman himself mentions the same point: "deliberation, according to Watson, is, rather, normally focused directly on what to do; it need not—though it may—involve higher order reflection on one's motivation" (Bratman 2004/2007c, p. 225).[3]

Concerning the second point, the intentions about reasoning which Bratman appealed to were policies about recurrent reasoning. As I mentioned before, my view was that second-order intentions are not necessary to make a commitment, and we furthermore have no need to admit the need for second-order policies. Moreover, my view is that first-order intentions are necessary, but not first-order policies. If the latter were necessary, it would be impossible for us to be committed to desires of performing singular actions. For example, if I intend to go to a musical only once, and do not have any policy about it, I can still be committed to my desire to go to a musical. In one of his articles, Bratman himself admits this point by saying "I also believe that our full theory of agency should make appropriate room for such singular commitments" (Bratman 2000/2007a, n. 61; also Bratman 2002/2007b, §7).

My additional view on the second point, is that there is no restriction on the scope of intentions as long as they are based on reason-judgment. Those intentions are not restricted to policy, and intentions which are completely nonspecific about when the agent will carry them out are also allowed. Many of the intentions are more or less specific about this. For example, even if I intend to go to the musical someday and I am not specific about when I will go, I am still intending to go while the musical is on. However, there can be intentions which are completely nonspecific about time, such as the intention to skydive *someday*. The nonspecific intentions about time cover broad cases of commitment. There are many cases in which we are committed to a desire, but we are nonspecific about when to fulfill it. Here I am appealing to the wide scope of the content of intention about *when* it is to be fulfilled, instead of appealing to long-term endurance of policy.

Concerning the third point, I agree with Bratman that the attitudes constituting the commitment are required to capture the temporal character of agents. Intentions based on reason-judgment meet this requirement because they are intentions and are, therefore, inherently prospective about some future. Bratman also requires the attitudes constituting a commitment to be second-order, but I denied this requirement earlier. Instead of reflectiveness, I want to add another requirement that they have *background* character. In fact, in one of his books, Bratman points out that intentions have background character by saying "that very deliberation may have taken as fixed a background of prior intentions and plans that are not up for reconsideration at the time of the deliberation" (Bratman 1987, p. 30), though he does not

take this character into account when he discusses the concept of commitment. Suppose that I have an intention to work with MSF after graduation, and deliberate what to do during college in order to fulfill that intention. In the result of deliberation, I form sub-plans to intensively study medicine, to learn English, to learn about the political situations of areas in turmoil, and so on. When I carry out these sub-plans, the intention to work with MSF becomes part of my background and I do not reconsider it. Once intentions become a part of one's background, those intentions are not up for reconsideration, but rather becomes a part of one's background of consideration. In my view, this background character is required for the attitudes constituting a commitment, and some intentions can meet this requirement. Even if one has an intention to do something based on the judgment that there is most reason to do it, if one frequently reconsiders whether to fulfill the intention, this shows that one is not committed to doing it.

The Final Element

I said I agree with Bratman that the attitudes constituting the commitment are required to capture the temporal character of agents, and intentions meet this requirement because they are prospective attitudes about a future. However, the prospectiveness for the future is only one aspect of the temporality of agents, and there must be another aspect which is *retrospective for the past*. Not only do we understand ourselves as the one who will act in the future, but also as the one who has acted in the past. I find this retrospective attitude about the past lacking in Bratman's view and also in Frankfurt's characterization of caring, quoted previously.

But what are retrospective attitudes about the past? While intentions are prospective attitudes with which we actively change reality, we cannot change the past and the only attitudes we can take toward the past are to passively *accept* in a certain way what has been the case. When one is committed to one's desire to φ, on the one hand, by intending to φ based on the judgment that there is most reason to φ, one is committed to the value of what one wants to do. On the other hand, however, by the retrospective attitude, one is committed to the whole reality in or on which one acts, and this aspect of commitment is the acceptance of reality. Therefore, the acceptance of reality is a retrospective attitude about the past which is also necessary to make commitments.

I will go on to say more about what it is to accept reality. It is not just a cognitive attitude toward a specific part of the reality such as belief, perception, or memory, but is an attitude toward the reality as a whole. I understand the acceptance of the whole reality in terms of a kind of affective attitude: *moods*. Moods are about the reality or the situation as a whole. Furthermore, moods are different from sensations and emotions. Moods are different from sensations in that while moods are intentional, i.e., are about something, sensations such as pain are not, because they have no conceptual content. However, emotions are also intentional and they are about a certain thing, so emotions and moods are similar in this respect. Their difference lies in that while emotions are about a specific thing, moods are about a nonspecific thing or the whole situation.

Here I am inspired by Martin Heidegger, who sees temporality as essential for agents and takes the retrospective attitudes about the past as moods (Heidegger 1927/1962, §65, §68(b)), although my view and his do not match completely. Suppose that I am usually good at hammering and try to hammer a nail into a wood, but this time I make a mistake and bend the nail. According to Heidegger, in this kind of mistake, the primary way I find my error is not by observing or considering it (Heidegger 1927/1962, §16). Though he himself does not explicitly refer to a mood corresponding to such a mistake, it is natural to assume a certain mood: uncomfortableness, awkwardness, unfamiliarity, and so on. Moods are not about a specific thing, but rather they are about a nonspecific thing or the whole situation.

If what has been stated so far is correct, what kind of mood is proper for a commitment? Here I want to recollect the contrast between depression and satisfaction. I suggested above that it is unclear what of depression deprives one of their ability to make a commitment. If one is depressed, even if one judges that there is most reason to φ, one is unable to reach an intention to φ, though one *used to be able to do it normally*. Moods reflect such changes in one's history. Depression deprives one of the commitment if it includes the mood showing that one is in an *abnormal* situation from a historical perspective; that one could normally intend to do something else. Let us suppose that I am depressed and have an intention to stay in bed. If my depression includes the mood showing that my intention to stay in bed is not what I normally would have intended, then I am not committed to my desire to stay in bed, even if my intention is based on the judgment that there is most reason to stay in bed because my depression deprives me of any other option. In this case, I do not accept my intention to stay in bed as *normal*, and

I do not resign myself to the reality that because of my depression I cannot have other intentions. On the other hand, if my depression does not include the mood showing that my intention to stay in bed is not what I normally would have intended, and if I rather accept my intention as normal, then I can be committed to my desire to stay in bed. Therefore, the mood to accept the reality as normal is the final element for the commitment and I call the mood *satisfaction*, in a different sense from Frankfurt's.[4]

This concept of satisfaction also has the same background character as the intention necessary for a commitment.[5] When one accepts the situation as *normal*, i.e., is satisfied, one usually gives no consideration to what one is satisfied with, i.e., the whole situation, and one's mood of satisfaction does not stand out and stays in the background of other considerations or activities. On the other hand, when one is in the mood showing that one is in an abnormal situation, the mood stands out from the background and one starts giving consideration to what the mood shows as abnormal, i.e., the situation. This means that one is not committed to the situation one lives in. This is similar to when one frequently reconsiders whether to fulfill an intention, because one is not committed to the intention. The satisfaction here is to be distinguished from something like a sense of exaltation. While when one is in the latter mood, it stands out and we are likely to give consideration to the situation, but when one is in the satisfied mood showing that one is in a normal situation, the mood does not stand out and is part of one's background.

Consequently, my interpretation of an example Bratman gives is different from his. He states as follows:

> "an addict is so depressed and resigned to his addiction that he does not try to resist. Instead, he decides [or intends] to treat his desire for the drug as reason-giving, proceeds to do so, and, because of his resignation to his addiction, has no policy to the contrary. But he still sees the desire as criticizable. I think that such an example shows that one can identify with a desire one thinks is criticizable if one really does arrive at, and is satisfied with, a decision to treat it as reason-giving and does in fact treat it that way. Perhaps this is a result of resignation or depression, but that is a different matter." (Bratman 1996/1999, p. 205)

I do not agree with Bratman that this is a different matter. The addict is committed to his desire for the very reason that he resigns himself to his reality of addiction, and accepts it as *normal*.

Conclusion

I have focused on the self-realization by realizing what one really wants to do, and have tried to understand what really wanting to do something, i.e., being committed to what one wants to do, is. I have argued that the attitudes constituting one's commitment to a desire to φ are the intentions based on the judgment that there is most reason to φ with the mood to accept the reality as normal, i.e., satisfaction. I have mentioned three requirements for the attitudes constituting the commitment: the evaluation having a certain connection with motivation, the temporal character, and the background character. The satisfied intentions based on reason-judgment meet these requirements. One realizes oneself by doing what one really wants to do, i.e., by fulfilling an intention based on the judgment that there is most reason to do so, with the mood of satisfaction.

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Notes

1. For the difference between the motivation of desire and that of intention, see Bratman 1987, p. 15–16.
2. Here I identify reason-judgments with value-judgments *considered in practical reasoning*. I judge that there is most reason to φ just in case in practical reasoning I consider the judgment that φ-ing is the best thing to do.
3. Later Bratman, properly in my view, changes the content of policy to treating a *consideration* as having certain weight (i.e., reason) from treating a *desire* as reason-giving (Bratman 2004/2007c, p. 240). However, he still continues to take the policy necessary for the commitment as second-order. Therefore, his argument against Watson's (and my) criticism seems to be different from his earlier view and is not straightforward (Bratman 2004/2007c, p. 229; p. 240 f.).
4. Frankfurt, who tried to understand the commitment to a desire in terms of higher order desires, avoided the infinite regress by appealing to the "satisfaction" which was formally characterized as an *absence* of recalcitrant desires. In contrast, I characterize satisfaction as a mood, which is a substantial attitude. However, my view does not go into the regress either, because it does not understand the commitment in terms of higher order desires in the first place.

5. There is an asymmetry between the intention and the satisfaction. While the intention necessary for the commitment *becomes* part of our background and are not up for *re*consideration, the satisfaction is a background from the start, and not up for *consideration*. The necessary intentions which I have taken for the commitment are based on consideration i.e., reason-judgment. However, we might have to search for the intentions which are not based on any consideration and are rather part of our background from the start. I would like to leave this topic for the future.

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CHAPTER 11

Three Liberal Conceptions of Self-Realization: Creativity, Authenticity and Flourishing

Lidia de Tienda Palop

"enoi enoi oios essi"
(Pindar, Pythia II, 70)

Introduction

The notion of self-realization, in its most contemporary sense, owes much to an idea which arose with the Enlightenment, as the culmination of the process of the rebirth of the subject in the fifteenth century. In the fifteenth century, the human being once again became the protagonist, the measure of all things; while it seemed that at some point the human being had ceased to live up to this role, she resurfaced with a renewed eagerness for self-affirmation and effective presence. In this period, multiple elements came together to make up a lexicon wherein a field of analysis and conceptualization converged; a domain of knowledge whose center is the subject itself: her physiology, psychology, function,

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and relationship with the cosmos. In the Renaissance, the process of the objectification of the subject began: the subject is not only the one who knows, but must also be the one who is known and analyzed. For this, the new field of knowledge had to be equipped with conceptual tools drawn from the theories of illustrious men like Kant, Descartes, Da Vinci and Bacon, among others. The ideas of the ego, the genius, the scientist and the artist joined those of autonomy, experience, creation or utility in demarcating a new conceptual universe very different from that belonging to the field of ontology, theology or metaphysics with their concerns about the being, the substance, and the cosmos. The new sphere of knowledge linked the subject with the sphere of individual freedom in an indissoluble way, making her not only an object of knowledge, but a center of the transformation of praxis. This subject is the one who is capable of deciding before a bundle of possibilities, of expressing her preference according to her will and, in this way, of configuring her destiny according to this criteria. The link between the modern subject and her constitutive freedom can hardly be understood without appealing to the category of self-realization, as the central axis and backbone of the project that the reborn subject initiates in the dawn of Modernity.

However, the notion of self-realization cannot simply be affirmed as a novelty of Modernity or, at least, we must provide a more nuanced drawing of the situation. Already in classical Greek thought the concept of self-realization as "the actualization of that which is in potency" is an essential postulate in Aristotelian thought, but even it appears as a fundamental idea in the odes of Pindar in the fifth century BC (Pindar, *Nemea VIII*, 40–42; 1984). In fact, his celebrated sentence "become who you are" has been interepeted in several different ways. One of the most plausible interpretations is that this phrase carries the maxim of fidelity to the essence of oneself, which implies sincerity and strength against chance or caprice of fruitions. One of the most plausible interpretations is that the one that understands (Ortega 1984, 41–42) that this idea is aimed at updating the excellence that is possessed in an original way, although other readings suggest that the transformation of a subject over the time of his or her life is a factum that presupposes a certain essential nature that develops in a necessary way. The truth is that the famous phrase carries the idea of self-realization in its conceptual core. Now, is this pindarian notion of self-realization the same that is wielded in Modernity and, even more so, in the current twenty-first century or does it entail different nuances?

Before proceeding to elucidate this question and offer some reflections on the meaning of the idea of self-realization, it is convenient to point out some considerations of the concept itself.

First, it is necessary to note that the notion of self-realization is aimed at a subject, understood in an individual way. Therefore, it does not focus on the development of a collective understood as a social body, but rather the term is associated with an individual human being that also has a will. This characteristic, its particular rational faculty of volitional character, presupposes a realm of possibilities that the subject considers and before which she has to choose according to her discretion. The modern subject is framed in a preferential context in which each action is the fruit of a decision freely taken. This implies that, on the one hand, although the concept of self-realization involves a processual-evolutionary synchronic process determined by freedom—understood as "fantastic representation of a bundle of possibilities"—it has a necessarily normative component. It is not a logical-necessary process, nor marked by random chance, but rather that self-realization is conceptually a free and normative process. The articulation of both dimensions—freedom and normativity—is complex because in principle it is the result of two apparently antagonistic components. However, there are three philosophers who have managed to integrate the two spheres in their moral theory to design a particular notion of the idea of "self-realization" that, on the one hand, is central to their own proposals and, on the other, offers the substrate from which to derive an ethical theory. The theses of these three authors: John Stuart Mill, Charles Taylor, and Martha Nussbaum are configured as modern bastions of the articulation of the relation between freedom and normativity in the development of the subject. In fact, these three philosophers have had a considerable impact in the contemporary field of moral philosophy, offering exhaustive characterizations of the way in which they interpret the self-realization of the human being, individually conceived, as a free but structurally moral subject. Therefore, I will review these three ways of understanding the self-realization of a subject that is presupposed to possess an internal freedom, but is also determined by a moral nature which conditions the meaning of her actions. On the other hand, the authors studied represent three well-marked traditions of thought in which center the idea of self-realization, catalyzed in their own concepts, is essential. As we have pointed out, the three understand self-realization as a free process that is also normative and, in that sense, they differ from other philosophers

who have dealt with the question of individual freedom, will or moral responsibility, but without the central idea emphasized in this article: that the own exercise of the freedom and the decision-making which configure the project of life have to be normative in a sense so that they become self-performative of one's essence.

In this way, these three theoretical proposals differ from other theoretical systems that could also have been included when dealing with the issue of freedom, life as a project, will or normativity. However, in my view, the notion of self-realization as a combination between freedom and normativity that is substantiated in an ethics for good living and, therefore, allows the direct application of this category as a regulator of praxis is not the main objective of the theories of these philosophers. Certainly, other classic philosophers offer unique conceptual systems to help us analyze and interpret the issue that concerns us, and their insights have evidently inspired to a greater or lesser extent the particular views of the authors studied more in detailed. However, although it is possible to elicit a notion of self-realization from their works, in my view this idea is not configured as the backbone of their theses, but rather a relevant element. In fact, the defining notes of their particular concept of self-realization can be outlined by going through their writings as a necessary exegetical task.

However, one can observe that Kant's thought should have been considered in this analysis because of his conceptual particularities. Certainly, in the Kantian system (Kant 1989), freedom and normativity come together in an obvious way, catalyzed in the notion of autonomy, but it is not so evident that their articulation is given in order to achieve the fulfilment of the human subject. Although different interpretations can be found, the Kantian opposition between "duty" and "happiness" and their correlations with the categorical imperative, proper to the deontological field, as opposed to the particular—hypothetical ones belonging to the sphere of utility make it difficult for the notion of self-realization be the cornerstone of the Kantian program. Although some interpretations suggest that depending on happiness' meaning it is possible to incorporate self-realization as the foundation of the Kantian project, it is not so clear that this is the case. According to Caffarena, for Kant, happiness would be something like plenary pleasure; that would be a naked need that would be a poor concept devoid of all morality. But, according to Caffarena, Kant sometimes forgets the notion of self-realization, as being coherent with the integral reality, that given the complexity

of man, its realization is also complex (Gómez Caffarena 1983, 179); therefore, Kant sometimes alludes also to another type of happiness of a nobler nature, which would allow one to prioritize. The author contends that this search for happiness would be more than the search for sensible pleasure, a search for "the good in itself" that would transcend the individual dimension and be considered a good for the wholeness. With this interpretation of Caffarena that allows us to link the notion of self-realization to the Kantian moral project, we have once again distanced ourselves from the notion of self-realization as that ideal of individual improvement that combines preferences and the normative dimension of choices. In my view, although a definition of self-realization could be inferred in Kant's work, the key point of his theory is situated in a very different context to the one studied in these pages. Yet, this idea focuses on the concrete form of the moral phenomenon and its transcendental conditions of possibility rather than in a characterization of how an empirical subject can become what it is in essence.

Therefore, I propose to clarify this issue—if self-realization is constituted as the essential articulation of freedom and normativity to support a proposal of good living as the core of a theory of justice—from a review of the theses of three authors, in whose work the idea of self-realization appears in a significant way. Although the three chosen authors—Mill, Taylor and Nussbaum—approach the notion of self-realization from their own presuppositions, they also underlie in their proposals some common elements that together with the elements of other authors, especially Ortega's, I will recover at the end of this chapter, in order to clarify the normative dimension of the notion of self-realization.

Self-Realization as Original Freedom in John Stuart Mill

The idea of self-realization in its modern sense finds an obvious exponent in the work of John Stuart Mill. Mill, in addition to being a continuator of Bentham's utilitarian theses (Mill 1998), was an advocate of individual freedom. For Mill, freedom, substantiated in diversity, is the ultimate constituent of human welfare (Mill 1995, 56–58). Mill's insightful argument suggests that human nature is plural and its individual development must be diverse and differentiated because it is based on another of the conditions of human nature: its imperfection. Insofar as human beings are imperfect,

both their opinions and the actions arising from them are equally imperfect, not in the sense that they are erroneous, but that they are incomplete. Therefore, in order to achieve a certain moral truth in actions, we need diversity in the way we conceive and act in order to weave that normative statute that may confer legitimacy to praxis, which, if human, is finite. Once Mill validates the necessity of plurality of thinking and acting this way, the philosopher also understands that actions cannot all be equally allowed, but that there is indeed an unsurpassable limitation: prejudice against others. Any action that causes harm to a third party exceeds the natural maxim of free and plural development and must be morally condemned and legally prohibited. Mill, however, does not find convincing reasons to limit the free development of what one is in essence and in an original way, if it does not cause harm to any being. Moreover, free individual development is *a sine qua non* condition of happiness and of social and moral progress (Mill 1995, 58). That freedom would contain a component of pure spontaneity—scarcely touched by customs and cultural conventions—which Mill claims to be strengthened and developed under the nomenclature of individual liberty in order to reach the goal of humanity: happiness. Freedom understood as spontaneity coupled with the circumstantial diversity of the *factum* of plural life converges in the Millian concept of originality, that is, what is original in human being stems from the union between "individual vigor and manifold diversity" (Mill 1995, 58).

Millian freedom implies a duality in its conceptualization that responds to a dialectic between the elimination of what constrains and the imposition of the normative. In Mill's work one finds the first characterization of freedom as non-domination, as a conscious task of liberation from prejudices and dogmas, but above all as the emancipation of social conventions. Mill claims the intimate and private sphere of the subject as a non-condescending dimension and reluctant to give into social demands that could eventually and historically limit the action of the subject who, insofar as her actions do not harm anyone else, is sovereign. Mill's freedom is enforced in the face of the state power, but above all in the face of society that generates stereotypes, cliches, and conventions. Against apathy, Mill claims the authenticity of the subject that must be built in time, not only as a reactionary structure before the customs and habits, but as a substantial entity that must cultivate the most intellectual faculties. Only through this conscious self-realization as a regulative idea is it possible to conquer originality: the life created by oneself that is not reflected in imitation, this is the life authentically free ultimately.

In this regard, perhaps this celebrated paragraph of the British philosopher is closer to the Pindarian thesis than it may seem at first. "Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing" (Mill 1995, 60). Nonetheless, Mill is well aware that in order to flourish this plant not only requires health and inner energy, but the most favorable external conditions, which can be diverse, adapted to time and place. Therefore, the condition for a happy development comes from the conjunction of that internal drive and external circumstances that not only influence, but are configured as, the nutritional substrate that allows the plant to blossom and grow. However, external factors can be blocking and damaging issues just as easily as they can be cultivating tools for the achievement of natural potential. In this way, one notes that in the Millean theses two dynamic processes are put into practice: on the one hand the convergence between the spontaneous and the cultural, that is, the inner vigor and the factual diversity, that configures the dimension of *originality*; and on the other, the dialectic between the need for liberation from the inauthentic—the externally and dogmatically imposed—and the integration of experience through the cultivation of faculties, so that reflexive and critical education—as opposed to indoctrination, proper of customs and habits—becomes both the creator and agent of enhancement for one's own self-realization.

Charles Taylor and the Crisis of Authenticity

In the wake of Mill, one can argue that, in principle, free and individual development or the idea of self-realization is a clearly positive maxim of behavior. Self-realization and happiness are united in the realm of the personal sphere, and the absence of self-fulfillment brings with it frustration and dissatisfaction. An "accomplished" person is one who has fulfilled his life goals, who has lived a peaceful course out of his hopes and consequent dreams. She has not been blocked in the process of developing her ego and has managed to realize her personal goals. What happens is that if we leave the concept of self-realization at the outer layer of our arguments and do not delve into what is precisely its content, it becomes a hodgepodge into which everything fits. The problem with "hodgepodges" is not that everything fits, but if everything fits, the shape of the

thing, what gives it its *raison d'être*, becomes so flexible that it deforms the content itself until it becomes liquid: And this is, in short, to liquidate it. And this brief excerpt to indicate that one can define self-realization as "satisfaction of preferences" or one can go a little further and, in principle, one can ask for the objective sense of subjective preferences.

In this respect, Taylor's insightful criticism of this contemporary way of understanding self-realization cannot be ignored. Far from having deviated from that first characterization that the Canadian philosopher offered in 1991, in my opinion, in recent times the current idea of self-realization has been even more radicalized in the sense that Taylor pointed toward.

Taylor's proposal in his essay *The Ethics of Authenticity* is built on the initial diagnosis of a society that, despite focusing on self-realization more than ever before, paradoxically finds itself in crisis. It is said that to be in crisis because it is not a happy society nor a satisfied society, but instead it is a frustrated society with aggressive tendencies that only come from indignation and dissatisfaction. Taylor does not want to express that the idea of self-realization itself carries a negative dimension that tends to selfishness (Taylor 1991, 55–58), but instead implies that the concept has been deviated and perverted precisely because it has lost the horizon of meaning in which it should be inscribed, which prevents it from finding the normative dimension that keeps the subject from wandering adrift.

This idea of authenticity that we find so manifestly linked to Mill's concept of original freedom has been maintained throughout the centuries. However, Taylor's perceptive analysis detects how only one member of the binomial—freedom—has been saved in the notion of contemporary authenticity—and the other, the normative aspect which is the ideal of authenticity, has fallen into oblivion. We argued in the previous section that Mill rescued spontaneity, which was of little interest to the moral reformers of the time, as one of the conditions necessary to achieve individual development. Mill's eagerness to free human thought from the age of dogmas sanctioned by restrictive contemporary Victorian conventions leads the thinker to invoke the idea of choice as one of the requirements for self-realization. The individual preference and the subjective choice acquired a central role in Mill's whole theory, as it could not be of another form, taking into account the necessity of emancipation of the individuals that is reflected in the strict cultural context in which Mill lived. It is in this sense that Mill denounced conformity, the

adoption of customs without discernment, because "it does not educate or develop in him any of the qualities which are the distinctive endowment of a human being. The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice" (Mill 1995, 59). However, we also find in Mill the need to justify and ground the elections on the basis of significant reasons.

But capricious history, often over the course of time, turns virtue into vice and vice versa. The light that came unexpectedly through an inadvertent crack in the Enlightment of the eighteenth century and which Mill inherited, may well forget its true meaning and stay on the surface of the form, eliminating its substantial content. When this happens, the process that is given is the reverse of what was intended and, in the case at hand, it seems that instead of reaching the goal of emancipation, is devoured by a fortuitous forgetfulness and falls again in the nursery activity of passive and numb lethargy.

In this sense, Taylor is keenly aware that, at present, self-realization is understood as being unfailingly linked to over-determined freedom. A freedom that is based only on preferences and their satisfaction. The subtlety of Taylor's argument is found in his observation that a society in which individuals are governed only by desires and preferences of a generally unlimited character is a feature of a society wounded by death, because it can only lead to selfishness and narcissism, which prevent the emergence of compassionate and altruistic feelings, but the insight of Taylor's argument is that these preferences are *trivial* (Taylor 1991, 57). By losing the normative sphere, that is, the regulative ideas of the ideal, the goal, the ultimate *telos* that can constitute the most intimate good, there is no way to distinguish between what is valuable and what is not. Everything is of equal worth because, in contemporary society, the source of legitimacy is freedom shaped by subjective preferences that do not refer to a horizon of shared meaning. Taylor presages the fall into that soft relativism, in which the forge of *ethos* is meaningless because there are no meanings anymore.

At this moment we observe the second subtle point of Taylor's argument: the fall into triviality, into banality, in other words the perversion of the ideal of authenticity that arises largely from social fragmentation. The social body, divided into subjects with unguided appetites because it has lost its common ground of intelligibility in which the horizons of meaning are formed, can only fall into a loss of meaning that implies its

own destruction. Taylor's proposal involves the recovery of precisely that ideal of authenticity: the subject that is the structure of understanding must assume its reality that is not solipsistic, but of dialogical openness (Taylor 1991, 47, 51). However, in this reconstruction, she must be vigilant in order to remain faithful to the inner voice that dictates her orientation, but which at the same time is also shaped by an openness to the otherness to oneself. Only in that dialogical game one can perfect herself and find her true fulfillment.

Martha Nussbaum's Notion of Flourishing and the Normative Recovery of Self-Realization

As we have pointed out, the notion of self-realization entails a certain normative component—a particular horizon of meaning—that allows us to postulate an orientation for the fulfilled development according to the essential nature of what is potential. This notion of self-realization, in its normative dimension, has obvious links with the idea of flourishing. In this regard, Martha Nussbaum has turned this notion of self-realization as *flourishing* to a central point of her theses and, in fact, takes it as the cornerstone of her ethical proposal of the Capabilities Approach.

The concept of flourishing of the philosopher, whose inspiration is also Pindaric, assembles, integrates and articulates all the structural elements of her theory and becomes the regulative idea of her whole proposal. This idea, based on Aristotelian teleology, refers both to the factual character of life and to its normative imperative. Flourishing is an activity, a process, by which what is potential tends to be updated and, therefore, to be perfected into what it is in essence. On the other hand, it is linked to the notion of functioning that, at the culmination of its telos, incorporates some idea of an intrinsic good. Thus, two distinct levels can be distinguished within the notion of flourishing: (a) an *ontological level*, which refers to the activity of unfolding all possibilities of life, which is intimately linked to the concept of capability, as that which is potential and prone to development and updating, and (b) a *normative level* that refers to the stand of perfection of potentiality, which already integrates, as a structural component, the idea of good, which, in the case of humans, refers to the notion of *eudaimonia* that could well be linked with the kind of ethical happiness that Mill holds as the end and foundation of morality.

The Ontological Level of Flourishing

Nussbaum holds that human being is both capable and needy, composed of "the thorough intermingling of what is ours and what belongs to the world, of ambition and vulnerability, of making and being made, that are present in this and any human life" (Nussbaum 1986, 2). Referring to Pindar, she points out that "human excellence grows like a vine tree, fed by the Green dew, raised up, among wise men and just, to the liquid sky" (Nussbaum 1986, 1; Pindar *Nemea VIII*, 40–42). The excellence of the good person is like the young plant: it grows weakly and brittlely in the world, in constant need of external food. To develop well, the vine must stem from a good strain. But in order to stay healthy and perfect, it needs a favorable hábitat, mild dew and rain, the absence of sudden frost and strong winds, and the dedication of fond and intelligent caretakers. The same thing happens with humans. We must be born with the right skills, live in favorable natural and social circumstances, dwell with other human beings who help us and not suffer unexpected disasters (Nussbaum 1986, 1–4). The two elements—vulnerability and fortune—are inextricably linked in the human being. While vulnerability refers to human being's subjective dimension by *which he is* marked by his condition of finitude, fortune refers to the external and objective dimension of the world *in which the human being is*, alluding to the necessary contingency of facticity. Both components turn the human being into a being that ultimately is built upon a structure of possibilities, which, while finite and subject to the vicissitudes of fortune, is able to develop himself, although limitedly by his own condition of need and the contingency of fortune.

The Normative Level of Flourishing

Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* states that "everything tends to an end" and "the ultimate end to which things tend is its good" (Aristotle 2009). The notion of flourishing is inextricably bound up with that which is the thing's good, its most proper function, which is its ultimate end, which in the case of man is *eudaimonia*. Therefore, we observe how following this thesis of Aristotelian teleology, Nussbaum reconverts the idea of flourishing, which was configured as a norm of the human species, in that called *eudaimonia*. For the Greeks, eudaimonia means something like "living a good life for a human being". In fact, Aristotle determines

that, in ordinary discourse, the term is equivalent to "living and acting well". For most Greeks, eudaimonia is essentially active because is related to the praiseworthy behaviors, which are not only means, but constitutive parts of the notion (Nussbaum 1986).

In this way, self-realization understood in the light of the category of flourishing is outlined as a kind of "excellence", which refers not only to the concept of a good life, but also to the better life and, therefore, it entails both a *qualitative* dimension and a *normative* dimension. Not only does it tend toward an end, but also it tends toward the end that is better, which generates a whole logic of the activity necessary to achieve it. From the sphere of good Nussbaum has made a qualitative leap and has moved to the sphere of value as a criterion of normativity.

According to Nussbaum, there are many types and levels of eudaimonism, but all must contain in their structure two key within this category: (a) the self-referential element, that which is closely linked with the particular plans and objectives of the subject, and (b) the general valuation component, in other words, that which is valuable in itself for the subject. Thus, in this conception of Nussbaum's neo-Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, the subjective and particular component coexists dialectically with that of universal value. The articulation of both dimensions is what Nussbaum calls the "rational plan of life", in accordance with the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*, which is understood as "an activity of the soul according to right reason." However, in turn, Nussbaum operates a transformation in the category of *eudaimonia* of Hellenic origin: the development of the rational plan of life, which takes the form of an eudaimonist project, must integrate as a constitutive element the dimension of value. A rational life project is one that is capable of satisfying the conditions of *eudaimonia*, which, according to Nussbaum's proposal, is no longer configured as "living according to right reason", but "living according to what one really appreciates." It is not the object of ethics to achieve precision in the truth in the wake of natural sciences (Nussbaum 1986), but something quite different: to build the life we want to live, according to what we truly care about. The only basis, on which it is not to be deliberated and which constitutes the ultimate goal, is what "truly matters". In Aristotelian terms, *eudaimonia* cannot be identified with pleasure, but with an activity; with a process of living in which we struggle with our boundless desires and our limited condition and in that dialectic that integrates the original drama is where one wants to live a good life: a life that feels fulfilled. But the factual reality of this

life is that it has to deal with vulnerability, the nature of attachments and the ups and downs of fortune. Therefore, a good life cannot be an autarchic life, but *in relation*, because we are structurally dialogical. If the intrinsic end of the vital essence is achieved, then it can be said that that life that attained its goal came to flourish, that is: it fulfilled the course of what is by nature.

Creativity as Normative Dynamism of Self-Realization: The Idea of Project

In light of the considerations outlined above, it is possible to draw some defining features of the idea of human self-realization. We can agree that the notion of self-realization is linked to the idea of a *project*. The notion of the human being as "project" and the idea of reconciliation with what one is in essence, can be found in the work of Martin Heidegger (1953). However, starting from *dasein*, the being that understands being, that in its original essence it does explicit a certain normative authenticity, does not necessarily lead to a moral praxis or an idea of the good that allows to speak of self-realization as essential fullness. On the contrary, Heidegger's original authenticity implies that the project to be developed is not towards the enhancement of excellence, but towards the dissolution in the original truth of Nothingness. Therefore, we can hardly root the notion of an individual and moral self-realization in the Heideggerian system because it, far from clarifying the conditions of good living that we have proposed here, leads us to the dissolution of the subject if interpreted in the radical sense; that is the one that is intended not just to be saved, but empowered under the idea of self-realization.

In turn, the idea of Project should contain a crucial element to lead to a self-realization, and that, in addition, it must be pleasant. If this process leads to frustration or unrest, it can hardly respect the essence of the term. We will be before another thing understood rather as plain development but not before self-realization. Self-realization always involves a component of satisfaction, coherence, and creativity (Maslow 1998). Moreover, the project of self-realization is substantiated by decisions and preferences in virtue of an objective and these decisions are autonomous in the sense of Mill and not so much in the sense used by Kant. This is not the result of a formal will devoid of any empirical anthropology that gives itself norms, but decisions are the result of desires and inclinations

particularly determined by a specific subject, independent of any external coercive instance, either conventional or authoritarian. Ortega y Gasset said that "while the forced occupations are presented with the look of foreign impositions, these other, the delicious, we feel called by an intimate voice that claims them from deep secrets and folds located in our recondite being" (Ortega y Gasset 1962, 15). Ortega called this inner voice "vocation", which is nothing but the natural call to be happy in the human being which crystallizes in each subject in an authentic and particular way. Because, according to Ortega, only she who carries out his or her vocation can live a truly happy life. In this sense, the philosopher writes "there is no life without a vocation, without an intimate call. The vocation comes from the vital spring, and from that vocation stems the project which at all times is our life" (Ortega y Gasset 1983a, 655–656). For Ortega, the human being is given an empty life and has to fill it. Life is a vital project that the human being must build and must do it in an authentic way, this means following his vocation. Only in this way, human being can "become who he is", recalling the maxim of Pindar with which we began this writing. "That intimate conscience constantly tells us who is the one that we have to be, that person or character that we have to strive to realize … a voice that calls us to our most authentic destiny; in short, the voice of vocation, of the personal vocation" (Ortega y Gasset 1983b, 514–515).

Nevertheless self-realization is not a blind process, which is constructed diachronically over the time according to the designs of the will, desires and experience. Self-realization entails an original normativity that limits the possibilities of realization. This original normativity is marked by an essence that prevents of one thing's transmutation into what is not. Any conversion into something that is not in origin or that blocks its natural development is an act of transgression that violates the health of what is called to develop. In fact, it is normative because it allows the updating of what was already in potency, therefore there is an essential logic of self-realizing development. In the case of the human being, it is already clear that she is not nothing. That human being in essence is nothing could be admitted, according to Heidegger, in the case of a return to an initial moment that she—is—not. But there is something that the human being is: an imaginative structure—that is, capable of depicting a bundle of possibilities—and in this sense is free. These possibilities can be more or less transformative, which is the sense that Nietzsche gives to his notion of creativity as linked to the will to power capable of creating reality. Yet there

is a fantasy prior to the actual act of creation that is already performative. That bundle of possibilities represented by the imaginative faculty of the human being convert every decision that configures his project of self-realization into an original and particular action that creates the particular narrative of self-realization of each one. It is true that in Nietzsche's work (Nietzsche 1982) the idea of self-realization appears in a singular way, linked to the superman (*Übermensch*) and the will to power in its creative dimension. However, in my view, the concept of Nietzschean self-realization, while built upon creativity, is lacking in the normative dimension that I maintain is an essentially constitutive element of the idea of self-realization in the most original sense of the term. In fact, according to the Nietzschean thesis self-realization comes, with its primordial character, catalyzed in the creative stages of the will to power. However, this process of self-configuration does not obey the moral regulative ideal, but only focuses on one pole of the two that we have pointed out: that of creative freedom. It may be that Nietzsche's proposal is the most original and authentic, but it is worth exploring the articulation of individual freedom within the normative dimension in a concept of self-realization, which can be the cornerstone of a certain moral order of good living that is in short, the foundation of justice.

As I have pointed out, I believe that there is a dynamic game in the idea of self-realization. It is true that every realization implies a material actualization of that which is potential, but not every transformation from the virtual to the effective can be considered as self-realization itself. Self-realization implies that what is potential develops to actualize itself into what is actually essential and not simply to evolve. Therefore, self-realization incorporates a normative element of authenticity, that is, self-realization is transformed into flourishing only if it occurs in an authentic way. This criterion of authenticity, in turn, carries two dimensions: on the one hand authenticity is always consistency with the original project and on the other, in the human realm, authenticity is always originality due to the creative nature of the human, as a free structure of imagined possibilities from which she has to choose to create her own life's project.

The original project of that "which is called to be" functions as a regulative idea, a horizon of meaning, that indicates the orientation of its development and demarcates operating criteria consistent with that which is its *raison d'être*. But additionally, if the nature of the human being is precisely her capacity to imagine, that is, to be a temporal

structure that envisages future possibilities, then the substantiation of her self-realization can only be originally creative. It enters into play in the nature of the human self-realization a dialectic that entails a normative stand that, in turn, is constituted as the creative freedom[1] of original self-construction. In order to be fulfilled, a human being must pursue the imperative of self-creation over the time in its original form, that is, according to what he authentically is: a creator of future possibilities. This imagined future can only be legitimized by her fidelity to her original project, which is to be according to her nature in a normative way, this turns the human being into a structurally moral being. Not all the updates of the multiple possibilities entail self-realization, but only those in which the two pointed elements converge: normativity and freedom. This dialectic in principle irreconcilable can only be saved through the conception of self-development as a creative project. The human being is essentially an imaginative structure by which it is possible to conceive her as free and in that sense her essence is to be a creator of possibilities. The authentic life is the one that updates the possibilities that are envisaged according to the being's essence. In this way, human being can conceive projects; the authentic life is the free life, that is, the creative life of the possibilities that she imagines and chooses according to her essential being and that materializes to fulfill the being that is in potency. Therefore, self-realization implies a moral imperative to pursue and update the imagined possibilities and create new ones in order to live according to the very essence: being creative is not being destructive, but transformative and enabling. The normative imperative of self-realization entails the obligation to create to enhance the effective updating of the imagination that is liberating and not limiting so that the flow of imagination that is contained in the finite and limited body can emancipate itself from all that constrains it and to be updated in an essentially continuous project that does not end in the Nothingness but in the perpetuation of the potential essential being actually updated by her imagination transformed into factual reality.

Note

1. Freedom understood as the imagination of possibilities.

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CHAPTER 12

Rights and Persons

Pierfrancesco Biasetti

Introduction

One of the main reasons for justifying rights in a moral theory originates from the principle of the separateness of persons (henceforth: SP).[1] This principle states that persons exist as discrete and separate entities, and, as a consequence of this metaphysical fact, that we ought to respect the boundaries between their lives, protecting them with deontic structures such as rights. However, it can—and has—been denied that persons are definite and "thick" entities, and, as such, that their supposed separateness expresses a fundamental metaphysical or normative principle. Considering this, should we reconsider or abandon rights-talk in moral theory? I will argue for the contrary, and claim that an extreme reductionist position toward persons is flawed. Starting from this claim, I will try to supply some reasons for taking rights seriously, even in a post-Parfitian view of persons. In particular, I will claim that right-discourse can be anchored on grounds other than SP, as principles of distributive justice and rights are still needed to build up what

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has been called "morality in the narrow sense", which is, in turn, necessary for protecting "morality in the broad sense": that is, the individual pursuit of a good life. In the following paragraphs, I will proceed in the following way. I will first sketch the arguments that can be built outgoing from SP: a negative argument against utilitarianism, and a positive argument for justifying rights (part 1). I will then expound upon a classic reductionist view of persons (part 2) and some of its possible effects on the arguments from SP (part 3). In the last part (part 4), I will propose an argument for justifying the attribution of rights to persons, even if we accept a reductionist account of personal identity.

The Arguments from the Separateness of Persons

It is likely that the first clear statement of SP was made by Henry Sidgwick.[2] However, it was not until the second half of the previous century that this principle gained a fundamental status in moral thinking. John Nyemer Findlay, for instance, called it "the basic fact for morals,"[3] and ten years later, John Rawls used it to attack utilitarianism, a moral theory guilty of not taking seriously this "basic fact."[4] From then on, SP has been evoked several times in order to accomplish two tasks: on the one hand, to criticize utilitarianism, on the other, to justify rights as barriers against utility-based policies.[5]

A. From separateness of persons, against utilitarianism:

- (A1: SP) Persons exist as discrete and separate entities. This constitutes a solid metaphysical fact with normative value.
- (A2) Utilitarianism ignores this fact.
- (A3) Utilitarianism is problematic.

B. From separateness of persons, in defense of rights:

- (B1: SP) Persons exist as discrete and separate entities. This constitutes a solid metaphysical fact with normative value.
- (B2) As the best way to respect this fact, rights embody the correct way to frame our principles of justice.
- (B3) Moral theories need rights.

I will here briefly discuss A2 and B2.

Starting with A2, there can be two interpretations as to why utilitarianism can be said to ignore SP.

According to the first interpretation, it could be claimed that utilitarians take society as a whole—and not the individual—as the fundamental unit of moral reasoning. In fact, the goal of maximizing the sum of utility could be taken as authoritative only if there were some kind of subject actually capable of experiencing this sum: for why should we maximize something which is not experienced by anyone? And this could be possible only if we take society as a sort of super-individual. This means that utilitarians are committed to an implausible moral ontology which sees society as a super-being, more real than the actual individuals, which is furthermore capable of having desires, interests, and the capacity to feel pain or pleasure. Of course, this bizarre moral ontology is rejected by many utilitarians, but this is usually taken as proof that utilitarianism, if taken to its logical conclusions, has to be rejected—even by its own proponents.

On the second interpretation, it could be claimed that utilitarians do not respect SP, as they adopt as the proper moral standpoint for evaluating the impersonal standpoint from which an agent should be ideally capable of identifying him or herself with all the subjects involved in the situation to be evaluated. This, in turn, is problematic in at least two ways.

First, it may be claimed that, as shown by Rawls' famous quote, utilitarians mistake impartiality for impersonality.[6] In other words, in their obsession with adopting the most neutral standpoint on things, utilitarians discard every peculiarity possessed by single individuals, and thus reduce personality to a mere recipient for utility.[7] Persons then become mere chunks of utility, and as such they are not really distinguishable from one another: they are fully comparable, decomposable, interchangeable, and in this sense have really no borders or contours that individuate or separate them.

Second, the claim can be taken as stating that utilitarians are committed to a false analogy between different lapses of time in the life of the same person, and synchronous lapses of time in the lives of different persons.[8] We usually accept that it is rational to sacrifice some present satisfaction in order to reap a greater satisfaction in the future. However, this does not entail that it is legitimate to sacrifice the satisfaction of some people in order to have a greater satisfaction for other people. We live our lives viewing different moments impartially. It does not matter when a burden comes, as long as this is planned in order to maximize benefits and minimize drawbacks. Yet, this does not entail that we ought to extend this way of reasoning across different lives.

For these reasons, then, SP seems to be ignored by utilitarians, a fact that makes their theory problematic. If we instead consider B2,

that is, the claim that rights are the best moral tools for meeting the normative demands contained in SP, we could face the counter-argument that the same task could be also performed by *duties*. However, it is usually claimed that rights can better capture the concept of *dignity* that should accompany our modern conception of persons. This is because rights give a special role to the interests and to the autonomy of people, and thus refer to major reasons for treating them with respect. As stated by Peter Vallentyne:

> Although impersonal constraints do reflect a normative separateness of individuals, they do not do so, I believe, in the relevant manner. They fail to capture the *respect due to persons*. Persons (beings that are protected by morality for their own sake) have interests and often autonomous wills. Any constraint against treating a person in a specified way that applies even when the holder validly consents to such treatment and such treatment is in the holder's interest fails to reflect the respect due to that person. Impersonal constraints fail to reflect this respect. (Vallentyne 2006)

For this reason, then, SP can be seen as requiring the attribution of rights to people, and thus justifying the existence of this kind of deontic structure in our moral theories.

Persons and Moral Theory

SP takes the person as the fundamental unit and scale of moral reasoning. However, in its generic formulation, the definition of the key term "person" is usually left to a commonsensical and intuitive level. In fact, there had been a certain tendency in moral philosophy to take for granted the notion of person as something primitive (with Locke certainly being a notable exception).[9] Nowadays, however, it is no longer possible to take for granted the idea that persons are discrete and persistent entities. Starting from the 1970s, the ideas of person and personal identity have been heavily debated, in conjunction with a renewed interest in "fission" cases[10] and experimentation done on split-brain patients.[11] The major breaking point in the debate has been the publication, in 1984, of Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons*.

Parfit rejected what he defined as the non-reductionist account of personal identity, that is, the view that persons exist somehow separated from their body, brain, or experiences (as something like Cartesian

Pure Egos, souls, or spiritual substances), and embraced instead a reductionist, neo-Lockean[12] theory, claiming that numerical[13] personal identity consists in facts related to bodies, brains, or mental events. I will now briefly recap the main points of Parfit's analysis of this topic.

Parfit claims that two entities are the same person if and only if they are psychologically related through a relation called "Relation R"—s long as this relation does not take a "branching form", that is, as long as it does not split as in cases of fission. Relation R is made up of two kinds of psychological features: "psychological connectedness" and "psychological continuity". Parfit defines psychological connectedness as "the holding of particular direct psychological connection," (Parfit 1984, 206) that is, as the presence of direct psychological relations such as memory links, character continuity, and connections between beliefs, desires, and other psychological features. Compared to this, psychological continuity is defined as the holding of a strong psychological connectedness: there should be "enough" direct psychological connections between different temporal selves for them to count as a single person, "at least half the number that hold, over every day, in the lives of nearly every actual person."[14]

After having defined numerical identity of persons, Parfit proceeds by claiming that "personal identity is not what matters" regarding survival, and deploys a rather sophisticated battery of arguments based on fission cases in order to support his claim.

> In this imagined case [of fission], each half of my brain is successfully transplanted into another body. What happens to me? Unless we grotesquely distort the concept of person, the only possible answers are that I shall be one of the resulting people, or the other, or neither. If we believe that identity is what matters, each of these answers is hard to accept. Given the exact similarity of the two resulting people, it is hard to believe that I shall be one of these two people. If I shall be neither of these people, and identity is what matters, I ought to regard division as equivalent to death. But this is also hard to believe. My relation to each resulting person contains everything that would be needed for survival. This relation cannot be called identity because and only because it holds between me and two future people. In ordinary death, this relation holds between me and no future person. Though double survival cannot be described in the language of identity, it is not equivalent to death. Two does not equal zero. (Parfit 1984, 278)

Personal identity requires that Relation R does not take a “branching form”. Yet, there is nothing new in fission cases which authorizes us to say that the “newborn” persons are not psychologically connected and continuous with the old person, since on a reductionist view people are not substances. The person may cease to exist, but the psychological stream, even if branched, continues to be there.

Given this view, the concept of personal identity must then be weakened, while the concept of survival has to be loosened so that it can apply to inter-personal survival. What happens to the original person in a fission case is, in Parfit’s view, just as good as ordinary survival, even if it excludes numerical identity. This means that personal identity, strictly speaking, does not carry out the usual practical concerns we thought it did: these practical concerns are rather carried out by psychological connectedness and continuity, which can still apply even when persons actually die out, as in teletransport cases or in split-brain transplant scenarios. It is only on the Non-Reductionist view that personal identity is what matters: here psychological unity is explained by ownership.[15] However, this requires, in Parfit’s view, the existence of a further fact, and there is no further fact: as entities, we do not differ from our stream of thoughts. In this sense, persons, Parfit claims, are not Cartesian Ego, they are instead, using a Humean expression, “like nations, clubs, or political parties” (Parfit 1984, 277).

Momentary States as the Fundamental Unit of Moral Reasoning

According to Parfit’s theory, the unity of our lives is not guaranteed. Instead of having a single discrete life, individuals are rather like sets of different lives and there is nothing “essential” in them. On Parfit’s view, then, there could be more candidates for the role of fundamental unit of moral reasoning other than the person:

1. *Persons.* Persons are the larger entities we can assume to be the fundamental unit of moral reasoning. A person is a stream of psychological states such as beliefs, desires, memories, etc. bounded by the relation of psychological continuity in the strong sense. Normally a person starts its existence with the psychological birth of a human being, and comes to an end with his or her psychological death.

2. *Selves.* Selves[16] are more precarious and undefined entities than persons. A self is basically a segment of the stream of psychological states which is the person. What bounds together a self is psychological connectedness. A self has no clear beginning or end: its center of gravity is mainly a narrative.
3. *Momentary states.* Momentary states are the smallest entities which we can assume. They are particular states of experience present now in a stream of psychological features. They are nothing more than abstract snapshots of the fluid process which gives rise to a person: if we imagine a person as a continuous line, selves are particular segments of this line, while momentary states are points.

Parfit seems to believe that momentary states are more important than persons, and even selves for our practical concerns. What counts is the experiences people have, not who is having them. For this reason, we should give less moral importance to the person, and more to the "experiences themselves" (Parfit 1984, 341). Persons are basically essence-less, and the only concrete differences between them are contingent differences in bodies and psychological features—not enough to constitute a deep distinction. On the contrary, experiences are real, and as we ought not morally discriminate between people coming from different nations, we ought not discriminate between experiences coming from different lives.

The consequences for Parfit's moral theory go in two different "directions". The first consequence goes in a horizontal, spatial, direction—across different individuals—by weakening the difference between people, we can refute the normative importance of SP. The second direction is vertical, temporal—through the same individual—by weakening the unity of a person, disintegrating its coherence in a series of different and consecutive experiences, we can no longer take the maximization of utility within a single life as a rational strategy of behavior.

By rejecting the importance of SP and taking momentary states as the fundamental unit of moral reasoning, this argument refutes both of the arguments sketched in the first paragraph, thereby vindicating utilitarianism and rejecting any justification of rights grounded on SP. However, no matter how bold, taking the momentary state as the fundamental unit of moral reasoning is a move that leaves several issues unresolved.

The first issue is the evaluation of *intrapersonal choices* of different courses of actions.[17] As we have seen, if we take the momentary state as the fundamental unit of moral reasoning, it is not rational to choose a course of actions that will make us suffer now in order to reap a great benefit later. However, between two different courses of actions with the same immediate effect on us, we should still, following utilitarian logic, choose the one with the greater future payoff in order to maximize future utility. This is not always possible if we watch our choices through the lens of the momentary state. An intrapersonal choice occurs when an agent has to choose between different courses of actions, each one with the same payoff. The choice would be indifferent, unless each payoff has a different time of collection. In this case, while the abstract value of each payoff is equivalent to the other, its real value could differ for contingent reasons pertaining to the agent: for instance, a payoff collected in hard times could bear more value than the same collected in happier times. But there is no way to assess this difference of value if we do not make the choice from the standpoint of temporary extended entities—like persons or selves.

The same difficulties arise concerning "holistic goods" like success, autonomy, and aesthetic quality of lives. Success in a marriage or in a career, for instance, is not reducible to the sum of good individual moments, but must be evaluated from a temporally extended perspective since it is the *pattern* of good moments that makes a marriage or a career successful. Autonomy is an even better example. It cannot simply reduced to the fact that, if someone makes a certain number of autonomous choices over time, then he or she is autonomous.[18] Autonomy has to be understood and evaluated by looking at the life at large of an individual.

A possible response to these arguments could be simply to bite the bullet, and accept all the consequences of narrowing the temporal dimension concerning our choices to the limited view of the momentary state. However, this would lead to incoherence in our decision process and could also leave our theory incomplete.

This incoherence comes from the failure to recognize the fact that two choices, all other things being equal, cannot be considered indifferently if our goal is to maximize utility, when they can produce different payoffs if collected in different times of our lives. The incompleteness comes from the failure of recognizing some important aspects of our moral lives like those expressed in the holistic goods, which can

be assessed only retrospectively, and by imposing a coherent framework on our past history. Given these issues, it is probably better to relax our reductionist views on who we are, and accept the possibility that selves—something which is not as definite and structured as a person, but is still temporally extended unlike a momentary state—are the best candidates for being the fundamental unit of moral reasoning.

This would also permit us to admit the rationality of prudential investments on our future personal interest. Selves blend and overlap in a line of succession, and it is perfectly natural that an existing self would care most for its closest relative selves—its proximate selves, starting from the one coming immediately after it. However, selves are part of a psychological stream in which transitivity applies: this means that, at least *indirectly*, it is reasonable to share an interest with parts of this stream that will come much later on. An example will clarify this argument: at first glance, if I follow a reductionist account which gives priority to my selves, instead of my person, it would seem that, presently, I should not really care in investing in a pension fund. My 70-year-old selves are very far from my current self, and it is very probable that they will be psychologically very different from me as I am at the moment: for this reason I should not really care much for them—at least not as much I should care for the selves of other persons existing at this time—and the money I could invest into a pension fund would be better placed, from a moral standpoint, into charity. However, my 40-year-old selves are not very far from my current self, both from a temporal and a psychological standpoint, and it is perfectly reasonable to assume that I worry for their interest: they are, in a sense, the proximate relatives of my current self. My forty year selves would probably also care in this way for my 50-year-selves, as they will be their proximate relatives, and my 50-year-selves for my 60-year-selves, and so on and so forth. Hence, even if I do not presently have a *direct* interest in my farther selves, as they are temporarily remote and psychologically dissimilar to me now, nevertheless there exists a chain of overlapping interests which tie them to me in a way that do not subsist for the selves of *other people*.[19]

Persons, the Good Life, and Rights

The latter argument applies even to the expectations of other people. As Bernard Williams noted, 25 centuries after the Syracusean playwright Epicharmus first expounded this paradox in a comic scene,[20] “it is clearly

a lunatic idea that if I promised to pay A a sum of money, then my obligation is to pay A* some money, but a smaller sum" (Williams 1976). It is impossible to make sense of our present actions—as it is impossible to understand them as our actions—if we do not understand them as parts of "the projects of one [person] who will […] change" (Williams 1976). We simply cannot think ourselves and others as evanescent momentary states.

However, this does not amount to saying that we can return to the familiar shores of our intuitive and commonsensical notion of person: unless we want to retrieve the idea that there is something like a soul, a Cartesian ego, or a spiritual substance of some kind packing together the collection of psychological events that we are, we need to accept to some points of a post-Parfitian view on persons. Do rights and, more generally, principles of distributive justice, have a place in this view?

As we have seen, if we take the self to be the fundamental unit of moral reasoning, there is enough room in our views for taking into account holistic goods and concerns for the future on a temporal dimension stretching along all the extension of our lives. In this way, we can build an argument from the need to protect people's capacity to plan their lives according to their pursuit of a good that, while probably less dramatic and ambitious in its scope than the previous argument from SP, nevertheless provides a strong justification for rights and other deontic principles.

The argument runs as it follows. According to some authors, morality is comprised of two different tasks, and can be thus sorted into a "morality in the broad sense" and a "morality in the narrow sense".[21] Morality in the broad sense occupies roughly the area cultivated by the ethical reflection started by Ancient Greek philosophy, and focuses on the personal research of the good life, through a general and somehow abstract theory of conduct (Socrates' investigation is the model for this research). Morality in the narrow sense focuses instead on the research of a system of obligation and constraints for all individuals. The immediate purpose of morality in the narrow sense is to ensure the protection of the interests of its adherents, as well as the coordination of their actions so that they can maximize the outcomes of cooperation. However, in the end, the final purpose of morality in the narrow sense is to assure the conditions of possibility for the personal research conducted by morality in the broad sense.

As long as we admit that people are not a series of compressed momentary states, but rather form a complex pattern of different, yet blending, selves, we have again subjects properly equipped for embarking themselves in the task followed by a morality in the broad sense. However, in order to make possible the pursuit of the good life, we would need first to devise a functioning morality in the narrow sense. In fact, without some kind of morality in the narrow sense, things usually tend to go quite badly: even if we do not believe that universal benevolence is somehow limited by rational egoism, we still have to deal with problems of scarcity of resources, intellectual powers, and time that may interfere with people's pursuit of a good life. People differ in character and constitution, and thus have different capabilities to take advantage of the resources needed to flourish, and this again presupposes an external intervention for avoiding conflicts and creating the premises for coordination and cooperation. Moreover, since there are many ideas of the good, even if we suppose an ideal condition of equal personal luck and capacity to access resources, conflicts and coordination problems would still be real. All this means that a deontic framework of morality will be needed to coordinate all these interests, in order to simultaneously avoid conflicts and problems of coordination.

Morality in the narrow sense employs many different moral tools. Most of them are constraints of some sorts. Even in the case of constraints, rights seems to be better than duties. Duties can fulfill only a part of the tasks needed for morality in the narrow sense. Rights are better than duties in when considering the standpoint of the individual, and since the ultimate goal of morality in the narrow sense is to guarantee the best conditions for the practice of morality in the broad sense, and this latter coincides with the individual research of a good life, rights are better suited to form the core of morality in the narrow sense.[22] In this way, we have assured a fundamental and decisive place[23] for rights in moral theory: a place no longer occupied by the virtue of the horizontal principle of separateness of persons, but by virtue of the vertical ideal of the research of a good life which cannot be eliminated as long as we conceive of the fundamental unit of moral reasoning as something temporally extended, and not as something merely reducible to momentary states of pleasure or pain.

Notes

1. The notion of rights is multifaceted, as it has been noted several times, such as in the classical analysis of Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld – see Hohfeld (1913), (1917), and (1919). I will not recap here Hohfeld's analysis. Summaries can be found in Kramer (1998) or Biasetti (2015). In the rest of this contribution, I will speak of rights as regards their meaning of «claims».
2. "It would be contrary to Common Sense to deny that the distinction between any one individual and any other is real and fundamental, and that consequently 'I' am concerned with the quality of my existence as an individual in a sense, fundamentally important, in which I am not concerned with the quality of existence of other individuals: and this being so, I do not see how it can be proved that this distinction is not to be taken as fundamental in determining the ultimate end of rational action for an individual."—Sidgwick 1907, 418–419. A discussion on Sidgwick's enunciation of SP can be found in Brink (1992). Sidgwick championed utilitarianism, and it may seem strange that he introduced a general principle that is widely held against utilitarian moral theory. In fact, Sidgwick believed in the dualism of practical reason: "rational egoism" and "rational benevolence" are equally defensible as positions, and they are at least partly incompatible. While utilitarianism is supported by rational benevolence, rational egoism is instead grounded on the metaphysical fact of separateness of persons, and neither of the two principles can be used to resist the other (Possible strategies for resolving this tension are examined and rejected in Mackie [1985]). So, while his moral theory was strictly speaking utilitarian, he was nevertheless able to claim that SP is a solid fact, because rational egoism, for practical reasons, is something both fundamental and inescapable.
3. Findlay (1961).
4. Rawls (1999)—see especially pp. 26–27.
5. See for example Nozick (1974), Hart (1979), Spector (1992).
6. Rawls (1999).
7. For this image of utilitarianism, see for instance Regan (2004) or Sen (1989).
8. "[Utilitarianism] treats the division between persons as of no more moral significance than the division between times which separates one individual's earlier pleasure from his later pleasure, as if individuals were mere parts of a single persisting entity"—Hart (1979, 831).
9. The most famous example is probably that of the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid—see Reid ([1785] 1941).
10. In the literature on personal identity the term "fission" is used to denote those hypothetical cases in which the consciousness of a person is somehow split into two (or more) parts, with each part being mentally

complete and autonomous in itself, and not aware of the mental states of the other parts. Locke is probably one of the first philosophers who managed to devise a fission thought experiment, even if he did not explore the consequences of the case—see Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding*, II. xxvii.18 and II. xxvii.23.

11. For the history of this issue, see Martin and Barresi (2006).
12. When Locke proposed his theory, the majority of philosophers subscribed to a soul-based view of personal persistence. Ironically, when Parfit proposed his neo-Lockean theory, the majority of philosophers subscribed to the contemporary (and materialistic) analogue of the soul-based view, that is, the body-based view of personal persistence.
13. Numerical identity is distinct from qualitative identity. Two things are said to be qualitative identical if they share the same qualities. Two things are numerical identical if and only if whatever is true for one of them is also true for the other, and vice versa.
14. Here is the full quotation: "Connectedness can hold to any degree. Between X today and Y yesterday there might be several thousand direct psychological connections, or only a single connection. If there was only a single connection, X and Y would not be, on the revised Lockean View, the same person. For X and Y to be the same person, there must be over every day *enough* direct psychological connections. Since connectedness is a matter of degree, we cannot plausibly define precisely what counts as enough. But we can claim that there is enough connectedness if the number of direct connections, over any day, is *at least half* the number that hold, over every day, in the lives of nearly every actual person. When there are enough direct connections, there is what I call *strong* connectedness"—Parfit (1984, 206). It has to be noted that connectedness is what matter most for having persistence between today and tomorrow, but what really count for having numerical identity is *continuity*. This happen because psychological continuity is transitive, while psychological connectedness is not. Since the relation of numerical identity is transitive, psychological connectedness does not suffice for establishing a criteria of personal identity: it is needed the further fact of strong psychological continuity, even if this latter is built on a certain amount of psychological connectedness.
15. See Parfit (1984, 275).
16. Parfit recovers Locke's tendency to use the word "self" for describing the "momentary entity" within the psychological stream, and the word "person" to describe instead the temporally extended flux of the stream. On this tendency, Martin and Barresi (2006).
17. See Shoemaker (1999).
18. "It would simply make no sense to say that, because a person made a certain number of seemingly autonomous choices over a certain period

of time, that person's overall end of autonomy had been achieved. Autonomy has to do with the relation between certain choices and moments of action, it has to do with a person's ongoing reactions to certain contexts and that person's ongoing relationships with other people, and such elements are simply not captured by a mere summation of certain momentary goods. They make sense only within a larger context"—Shoemaker (1999).

19. This does not amount to saying that we have to accept the response given to Parfit by Kantians like Christine Korsgaard (1989), who claim that agents are built up from a practical standpoint which is irreducible to the theoretical standpoint adopted by Parfit. This thesis is committed to a dualism of reason that is, in my view, untenable.
20. The scene runs as follows: while gathering a handful of pebbles, arranging them in a pile, a debtor asks his lender: "See this pile of pebbles? If I add two more, is it the same pile?". The lender agrees that it is not, and the debtor continues his argument: "Many days have passed, during which the man whom you lent your money has changed, and, therefore, no longer exists. I'm not responsible for his debt". "I get it", answers then the lender, and after that he punches the debtor in the face. "Why you did that?" complains the debtor, rubbing his punched nose. "Me?"asks in an offended tone the lender. "That wasn't me!". The scene is reconstructed in Sedley (1982).
21. On this distinction see Warnock (1971) and Mackie (1977).
22. On this, see Mackie (1978).
23. It could obviously be countered that this place is not as much *fundamental* or *decisive* as I claim, since the defense of rights proposed here is weaker than the one following from SP. After all, if rights are needed only insofar as they are a useful tool for personal flourishing, it could be possible to argue that, for instance, they could be revoked in situations where they are not directly beneficial to this task and their content conflicts with other moral claims. "Exceptional" cases can be problematic for every deontic formulation of morality, and I am not interested in committing here to the view that no situation should ever be evaluated by resorting to the utilitarian logic of confronting actions according to their outcomes. However, in my opinion, this does not amount to say that if we renounce SP and adopt instead a justification like the one proposed here then rights could be seen as mere commodities with a specific and measurable weight in "utility". The core of moral theory remains rights-based, as the overall goal is not that of maximizing this utility, but, instead, of assuring the possibility of personal flourishing. And in order for people to flourish, many of their choices could be irrelevant, sub-optimal, and even inefficient from a utilitarian standpoint.

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CHAPTER 13

Achieving a Self-Satisfied Intimate Life Through Computer Technologies?

Nicola Liberati

Introduction to Intimacy and New Computer Technologies

Computers are becoming pervasively used in everyday activities. They are embedded into common objects like doors and heating systems (Gupta et al. 2009), and they accompany the subjects' everyday actions making systems more effective like in the case of the braking system of cars (Fletcher et al. 2003). These computer technologies are all around us as the terms "ubiquitous computing" (Weiser 1991, 1993, 1996; Weiser and Brown 1996) and "Pervasive computing" (Hansmann et al. 2001; Roussos et al. 2005; Ye et al. 2008) clearly point out.

However, digital technologies are not merely "around" us in our environment, but they are "on" us and "with" us (PSFK 2014) like in the case of wearable computers (Thomas 2012) and smart textile (Schneegass and Amft 2017) where computers are directly worn by the users by being part of their own clothes. These technologies capture our every movement and they are designed to monitor and to record our actions.[1] They constantly look at us providing information about who

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we are and what we do in our everyday activities. They are so close to us to lurk on our intimate life too (Lupton 2015; Zwart 2015). More specifically, these devices are "intimate technologies" (Prager and Roberts 2004; Vetere et al. 2005). They are intimate because they directly touch the users' personal life, their personal private experiences, feelings, and emotions, and they can even help them exchanging sexual activities with other users. In this work, we will focus our attention only on one aspect of this intimacy. We will analyze how digital devices mediate sexual activities among users.

Many people already use digital technologies in order to mediate their sexual encounter with other people (Ben Ze'ev 2004). These kinds of mediation can be achieved in many ways. Users can find possible dates through dating application like *Tinder* where people use their mobile phones and their *Facebook* accounts in order to find possible sexual matches and to decide where to meet. They can also use much more explicit devices which directly mediate the sexual intercourse between the subjects, or programs which allow them to exchange texts messages, photos, and video calls. Especially the phenomenon of exchanging naked pictures or messages with an explicit sexual content called "sexting" has become notorious and widely used by the population (Brown and L'Engle 2009; Parker 2014).[2]

Sexting is just the tip of an iceberg (Lomanowska and Guitton 2016). Sexual praxes have been developing in many different ways through the use of different devices which make the fruition of sexual material and "virtual meetings" among different people much more "vivid". For example, virtual reality already allows users to perceive 360 degrees porn video thanks to cheap head mount displays like *Oculus rift* or even cheaper devices like the *Google cardboard* with the applications like *Homido* player. We already have the possibility of having a video call on 360 degrees enabling the users to turn their point of view exploring the surroundings. Moreover, in virtual reality, it is already available the possibility of having sex among avatars by designing users' own virtual bodies through programs.[3]

Intimacy is an important part of ourselves, and the realization of the self directly relates to what kind of intimacy the subject has with others. Therefore, the introduction of new computer technologies aiming to shape our intimate life has potential effects on the self-realization of the subjects.

Summing up, technologies deeply intertwines their own activities with our intimate sexual relations in many different ways. This intrusion in our intimate life raises many questions and fears about their use and the effects it has on our life.

Fears and Modifications

Fears

Sherry Turkle clearly points out a problem rising from the uncontrolled use of digital technologies. According to her, the use of these devices is killing our ability to be in a face-to-face relation (Adams 2015; Pitsillides and Jefferies 2016; Turkle 2011, 2015). People do not communicate if not through digital devices. People do exchange an enormous number of messages and information, but they do it only through digital technologies and not in a face-to-face communication. The risk is to rely on merely this digitally mediated communication instead of anchoring our social relations on face-to-face meetings. Turkle highlights how, in this change, we might lose some important elements.

By losing our way of being directly connected with other people, we simply lose contact with them. People do not perceive the others in the same way because their perception is constantly mediated by these devices. Turkle points out we risk to lose our ability to have even empathy since we never face another person directly, but we reach the encounter with the other merely through digital mediations. Therefore, in the future, people could be "alone together" (Turkle 2011). Turkle's argument can be directly applied to our case. Since we use these digital devices to mediate our intimacy, we risk to lose a real connection with another human being and to close ourselves to the others. The moment we constantly use digital devices to mediated our intimate relationships, we risk to lose the contact with the other person and so to lose the intimate connection we have in the case of a face-to-face meeting. In our case, this element directly affects also the way subjects realize themselves in their intimate life since these technologies risk to make them alone.

However, it is not clear what produces this change in how the subject perceives each other through the technologies, and if there are differences in the technologies used or every digital produces the same effect. This work will provide a phenomenological analysis to this intimate

change in order to found this risk on the modification in perception the subjects have through specific digital devices.

Modifications

Following postphenomenology, mediation theory focuses on the changes achieved through the use of new technologies. It states the introduction of every technology yields a modification in the users and the objects around them (Rosenberger and Verbeek 2015).

On the one hand, technologies change who these subjects are by shaping their perceptual capabilities (Verbeek 2001). Once subjects can use a specific technology, they turn into something different. On the other hand, the objects perceived through the technology are shaped by it as well since they are constituted taking into consideration the new aspects made available and perceivable by the technological device (Liberati 2015). Subjects and objects cannot be taken as isolated without introducing the technologies and the interactions made available by them because they are the two poles emerging from the technological interactions (Verbeek 2015).

More specifically, mediation theory highlights how, by changing one technology and the way the subjects act through them, we change what the subjects are and what they perceive. The way technologies are designed to mediate the actions and perceptions of the subjects is the key element on which to focus the attention in order to understand the effects on the constitution of the subjects and the objects. However, mediation theory does not particularly highlight what kind of loss is involved in the change since it focuses on the process of reconstitution of these elements.

The analysis made by Turkle and the one made by mediation theory seem to complete each other. On the one hand, Turkle clearly highlights a problem concerning the use of new digital technologies, but she does not provide a phenomenological analysis on how the effects are produced by the change in the subject's perceptual capabilities. On the other hand, mediation theory provides the analysis on the modification of the perceptual capabilities of the subjects through the use of technologies, but it does not highlight the possible loss involved with the change.

Therefore, we can use mediation theory to analyze the change by studying how people are intimately together through the use of these new devices keeping an eye on the possible loss involved in it thanks to

the work by Turkle. More specifically, we can focus our attention on how users perceive each other through the use of new technologies in order to see how they are shaped through their use. We can analyze if this change yields a loss in some elements which make intimate relationships possible in the case of a face-to-face encounter. Therefore, thanks to this analysis, it will be clear if the subjects are able to self-realize with digital technologies in the same way as a face-to-face relationship.

Firstly, we need to have a framework which defines the elements needed to have intimacy in order to understand if we have a modification of these elements in the case of digital mediations. We will use Sartre analysis of other's gaze in order to highlight the needed elements for establishing an intimate connection among subjects since Sartre grounds these elements in perception and in the presence of the other's gaze.

Secondly, we will need to understand if these digital devices can provide us with the same kind of relation of a face-to-face meeting. We will introduce two main technologies: Virtual Reality and Teledildonics. We will analyze how subjects relate each other through these technologies from a phenomenological point of view focusing on how the other is perceived and how it has access to the subjects in order to highlight the elements made relevant by Sartre. If in the use of these digital technologies we find the same elements needed for intimacy highlighted by Sartre, we can still think of a possible intimate connection with the other even if it is mediated through digital technologies. Otherwise, we have to state that the introduction of digital technologies is producing an alarming effect of making us unable to develop the same kind of intimacy, and so also unable to self-realize ourselves in the same way.

Ways of Mediation

According to Sartre, in order to be able to develop love towards another person, we need to open ourselves to the gaze of the others. The gaze of the other is not merely something which allows the other person to perceive us, but it is something which makes us vulnerable and objectified for another person (Gray 2016, 89; Overgaard 2013, 115).

Only in the moment we open ourselves to the other by making us vulnerable, we can develop love and intimacy towards the other person by accepting his different point of view (Lopato 2016, 202; Sartre 2001, 235). Therefore, a technology which is not designed to allow such opening to the gaze of the others excludes the possibility of having intimacy.

We will focus our attention only on two different technologies: virtual reality and teledildonics. These two different technologies will show two different ways of being together, and two different ways of perceiving the "other". Thanks to this difference it will be possible to understand where it is possible to have intimacy.

As Lopato highlights, to be in touch with another person through digital technologies or in a face-to-face meeting is not the same. The digital mediation changes the way we are able to look at another person in a phenomenological perspective (Lopato 2016).

If we look at another person through social networks such as *Facebook*, we do not perceive the other directly, but just the other's representation (Lopato 2016). More specifically, in this relation, a subject does not perceive the other, but just a collection of pictures accurately chosen by the other user which represents that person. This difference with the face-to-face perception yields two major effects.

Firstly, the subject has no direct access to the other body, but just to the stock of images which stand for the "original" person. Since the pictures are not the person, but they merely stand for that person (Husserl 1980; Lotz 2007), the perception of the other is excluded.

Secondly, the pictures are not chosen by the perceiving subject, but they are accurately chosen by the other person. Therefore, the subject has a perception of the other which is drastically defined by the other, and the subject is not able to change it. The subject has no power to take different pictures or to look at the subject from a different angle because the perception of that specific set of pictures pre-arranged by the other person is the only access to the other.

In the case of virtual reality, we have a similar situation. The users immerge themselves into a virtual world, and they act together using their avatars as their bodies (Liberati 2013). In this second world, they are able to change their body as much as the running program allows (Stevenson Won et al. 2015). On the other side of the connection, other subjects do the same, and they meet each other in this second world in their own avatars appositely customized.

The creation of this virtual environment completely disconnected from the reality is one of the main elements which make the virtual reality attractive (Krueger 1991). It represents the best way to make users live their own dreams (Gibson 1984) allowing them to perceive what they want in a virtual place.[4] In this dream, the virtual world is not the real one (Milgram 1994). The avatars are not the original bodies of the

subjects, but they stand for them as interactive representations of the "original" subjects just like the picture archived in the social networks.

As we have shown in the previous case, we have two main elements in this kind of digital connection.

Firstly, subjects do not perceive the "original" person in the everyday world because they "merely" perceive their avatars which stand for the subject's body. The two subjects do not perceive each other in the same everyday world where they usually live, but they perceive themselves in a virtual world. Since the virtual world is not the real one, a digital meeting in this second world could be not enough to reach the other because subjects' perception merely stops to the virtual representation of the other.[5] In other words, the other does not perceive the subject, but merely a representation who exists within the virtual world. In the case of two lovers, the bodies touching each other are not the real bodies of the two subjects, but merely interactive representations of them confined in a different world. They stand for the real person, but they are not the real subject.

Secondly, the avatars are creations generated by the users and so they are representations chosen by them. The avatar of the other is not only an entity which exists in a different world, but the users have the ability to shape it as they like, and so the other person perceives only what the other wants to show. The avatar could resemble the original body of the person, but nothing stops the users to create an avatar completely different from their actual appearances.

Even if there is this possible scission between the appearance of the avatar and the one of the subject in the everyday world, the avatar has still a tight relation to the user in the everyday world. The avatar can be taken as an "aspect" or a "face" of the everyday user. Through the avatar and the freedom in its customization, the users can express themselves, and so the avatars embed in themselves the desires of the users in how they want to be perceived in the virtual space (Mancini and Sibilla 2017). To build an avatar is a way to be perceived by others very closely related to the way of choosing the clothes to wear for a special occasion in order to present themselves in a particular way (Liberati 2017b; Twigg 2009). However, there is a difference between wearing clothes and building an avatar. In the case of clothes, the users perceive each other as part of the same everyday world. One subject perceives the other in their everydayness. In the case of virtual reality, one subject has to immerge into a digital world, and what this subject perceive is not the other in the everyday

world, but an avatar confined into a virtual world. Avatars do not "wrap" the subject allowing the others to perceive them in the everyday world like clothes, but they provide a duplicate which excludes any possibility of the other to reach the other subject. Therefore, even if the avatar is a way of showing oneself to others, it also limits the possibilities of the others to access the user in the everyday world. An avatar is a face of the subjects, but, at the same time, it excludes any other "face" of the user by limiting the perception of the other to just the selected elements. This limitation compromises the possibility of having intimacy following Sartre's analysis.

In the case of teledildonics, we do not have these two elements. Teledildonics are devices which allow different users to perceive each other with tactual stimulation through the internet (Rheingold 1990, 1998). A subject uses a teledildo to capture bodily motions and send them to another teledildo in another place of the world. This second teledildo reproduces these motions for a second user. At the same time, the second teledildo records the tactual feedback received from the second user, and it transmits it back to the first subject. In this way, teledildos produce a tactual interaction between the users.

The subjects perceive each other through the technology (Ihde 1990; Verbeek 2005). The actions of subjects run through the two teledildos, and they reach the other body developing an embodiment relation with them (Liberati 2017a). In this embodiment relation generated between the device and the subject, the perception of the subject is shaped by introducing magnifications and reductions (Liberati 2015) even if the general structure of a subject directed toward an object in the everyday world persists.[6]

There is a clear difference between these two main technologies: virtual reality and teledildos. Virtual reality allows people to gather through the creation of a virtual space where they can produce their own avatars along with achieving the meeting. The perception stops to the avatar of the other instead of the original subject. Therefore, through the avatar the subject perceives just a representation of the other. With teledildos, people "simply" touch each other through the technology without producing any kind of representation of themselves. Obviously, the perception is mediated by the device which allows the user to perceive the other in a slightly different way than a face-to-face connection, but they are still perceiving the other and not its representation.[7]

Sartre, as we have shown, clearly links the possibility of intimacy to the type of relation the two subjects have.[8] In the case of teledildos,

the two subjects have direct access to the others' body in the everyday life through the use of the digital technologies. Therefore, subjects do open themselves to the others' "gaze" by allowing the others to tactually explore their bodies freely in the everyday world. The other is vulnerable to the other in the most literal sense since the other can touch them intimately and even violate them (Sparrow 2017).

As we said, the critic moved by Turkle highlights a point which is relevant even for the realization of the self. According to Turkle, a person, in order to be self-realized, needs a connection to the other person which is not mediated by the digital devices. Without this connection, the person is left alone. Through digital technologies like virtual realities, the subjects can intimately realize themselves through the meeting with another person, but not in the same way of a face-to-face meeting because the way subjects disclose themselves to the eyes of the others is different, and so it is different also the way they constitute themselves as subjects in relation with others. Therefore, the way they live their intimate life is different from the face-to-face meeting, and, as Turkle, suggests, they risk to have an intimate life "alone".

However, it seems pretty evident now, the digital mediation can vary and, with them, the way people are connected and the way they are together can vary as well. Therefore, it is not possible to simply label different digital technologies in the same way just because of their digital nature, but we need to take into account how these technologies mediate the relation between subjects in order to understand if such a self-realization is possible or not. Teledildos clearly show how it is possible to maintain some elements of the face-to-face meeting. Therefore, even if they shape the way people perceive each other, and the way people are perceived by the others, they still allow them to have the direct connection disclosing vulnerability required by Sartre. For this reason, subjects can have a digitally mediated intimate life in a similar way of a face-to-face meeting without being "alone".

Conclusions

This paper highlights the capability of these new technologies to become pervasive and to touch our intimacy. They are not merely devices placed in our environment, but they are mounted on our body, and they intertwine their activities with our most intimate ones.

In the first section, we presented possible problems arising from such a tight intertwinement between our intimate relations and digital technologies. We focused especially on the possibility of losing important elements in human relationships by always mediating our social interactions through digital media. Sherry Turkle clearly highlights this risk. However, she does not provide any phenomenological element in order to understand why we are losing something in the passage from a face-to-face communication to a digitally mediated one. Mediation theory helps us by highlighting how we are shaped through the use of technologies by focusing on how subjects perceive each other through the use of these new devices.

In the second section, we showed how Sartre highlighted the importance of an element in perception in order to have intimate relationship: to be open to the other's gaze. Thus, we introduced two main technologies in order to see if they were able to open the subjects to the others' gaze: Virtual Reality and Teledildonics.

Both of these technologies digitally mediate intimate relationships by shaping the way subjects perceive the others, but in different ways. Virtual Reality provides avatars which stand for the subjects and which are designed by the users. Therefore, it is not possible to have any contact with the original subject if not through the avatar. Teledildonics have a completely different way of connecting people. Teledildos do not provide any avatar, but they allow a tactual contact among the users in the everyday world. This element makes the two technologies completely different. If we accept Sartre's point of view, and we assume that there must be an opening of the subject to the other in order to develop intimate relationship, only teledildos are able to provide intimacy. Therefore, while in virtual reality the subjects develop a different way of being intimate together or "alone" together as Turkle suggests, with teledildos the subjects are able to develop an intimate life similar to the one they have with face-to-face meetings. For this reason, if we think of intimate self-realization, teledildos allow subjects to develop an intimate life with the same elements of face-to-face meetings without leaving the subject "alone".

We are shaped through the use of technologies, and our intimacy is shaped as well. Instead of focusing on the risk of digital technologies in general, we should focus on specific devices and their particular use in order to show how their design is able to shape the way we are all together.

Notes

1. See, for example, *Fitbit* and *Apple Watch*.
2. The application *Snapchat* made sexting even more pervasive (Poltash 2013; Roesner et al. 2014).
3. The use of virtual reality for such intimate activities is so rooted that it is also possible to give birth to digital children in it. For example, in *Second Life* it is possible to have sexual intercourses by buying and customizing users' avatars with sexual organs, and consequently even to give birth to a virtual child thanks to a specific intimate virtual sexual intercourse among avatars.
4. Augmented Reality clearly shows this interest of augmented reality by making the digital content of the experience emerge from a different world into the every day (Azuma 1997; Milgram 1994).
5. This kind of critics can be moved also towards social media like Facebook which provide a representation of a subject through images and comments displayed on a webpage, instead of allowing a perception of the other directly (Lopato 2016).
6. Teledildos, in the way they act by connecting people together in an embodiment relation, are not new technologies. There are many technologies which allow people to connect in the same way and which are also used for intimate and sexual praxes. The most famous one is the phone (Bray 2000; Block 2015). The phone, as teledildos, allows two users to interact together perceiving directly the other person and not an avatar. The relation is deeply shaped by the technology used because the two subjects are allowed to perceive just the voice of the other person, but they still perceive and interact with the other person and not with a representation of the other. In the same way, websites like *Chatroulette* are designed to allow users to exchange sexual messages with the addition of audio and visual interaction.
7. It is possible to conceive teledildos as a tactile telepresence. In order to see other possible applications of robotic telepresence see, for example, (Martinez-Hernandez et al. 2017).
8. A subject needs to be open to the gaze of the other in order to be vulnerable and to develop intimacy. With virtual reality, subjects do not perceive themselves in their everyday world, but they access merely to the representation of their own bodies within a digital world. Therefore, subjects do not show themselves, but they limit the access to their mere representation, and so they limit the gaze of the others. The fact the users are able to customize the avatar is not problematic per se. The freedom expressed in the creation of the avatar is still a way of being "open" to the gaze of the other because it shows particular desires of the users. The problem is that this avatar is in another world, and so it precludes the access to any other different face of the subject.

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CHAPTER 14

Nishida Kitarō, Takahashi Satomi and the Schelerian Philosophy of Love

Ching-Yuen Cheung

Introduction

Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎 1870–1945) and Takahashi Satomi (高橋里美 1886–1964) are two important philosophers in modern Japan. The former is famous for his maiden work *An Inquiry of the Good* (1911), while the latter is known for a critic of Nishida's philosophy. The philosophy of Nishida, who is regarded as the father of Kyoto School, should not be understood as an "Eastern philosophy" or "Zen Buddhist philosophy," but is strongly influenced by Western philosophical thoughts such as phenomenologist. However, Nishida has never left Japan, and could only mention some basic thoughts of Husserl, Scheler, and Heidegger. Takahashi did visit Europe, and was one of the first commentators of Husserl's phenomenology. While Nishida mentioned Scheler's name in his discussion of *Einfühlung*, Takahashi used the Schelerian concept of *Einsfühlung* in his philosophy of love. This paper will discuss on how Nishida and Takahashi read Scheler's philosophy of love, and suggest some significance of their readings.

* * *

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Scheler's Phenomenology of Love

Max Scheler's philosophy of love begins with his phenomenological analysis of feeling. In *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik: Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus* (1913/16), Scheler distinguishes "feeling of something" (*Fühlen von etwas*) and "feeling-states" (*Gefühlszustände*). There are four types of feeling-state:

1. Physical feeling-states, e.g., pain, sensation of tickling, itching, etc.
2. Vital feeling-states, e.g., weakness, anxiety, illness, health, etc.
3. Psychic feeling-states, e.g., sorrow, joy, sadness, melancholy, etc.
4. Spiritual feeling-states of person, e.g., blissfulness, despair, pangs of conscience, security, peace, etc (Scheler 1973a, 332).

Of these feelings, physical feeling-states are the most fundamental ones. For all physical feeling-states are physiological in nature, which makes them extended and localized. These feeling-states cannot be generated without an external stimulus. They are felt almost-immediately when the body is stimulated. Physical feeling-states are sensible in nature and their extension increases with intensity. These feeling-states are the object of investigation in the field of medical science by means of scientific observation and measurements. Vital feeling-states are non-extended and non-localized. However, they play a significant role in our life. In the sensible feeling of itching, for example, one may merely be annoyed for a while without any effect on his life. However, during a vital feeling-state such as anxiety, there may be severe effects on one's mental and physiological health. In a state of vital feelings, one can even feel her life itself. In the case of a severe illness or injury, one may even feel an increase in vitality, which is in fact a result of a strong vital-feeling. Scheler argues that physical and vital feeling-states are only within the subject of feeling, but psychic and spiritual feeling-states can be reproduced and shared by other persons.

In the case of deep sorrow, one may use expressions such as "I feel sad (*Ich fühle mich traurig*)," "I feel sadness (*Ich fühle Trauer*)," "I am sad (*Ich bin traurig*)" (Scheler 1973a, 342). Scheler suggests, "We can then only '*be*' blissful or in despair. We cannot, in the strict sense of the word, 'feel' bliss or despair, nor can we even feel 'ourselves' to be blissful or in despair" (Scheler 1973a, 343). We may not feel the "pain" of the other, but

we can share the "sadness" of the other. This sharing of feelings is related to the phenomenon of "sympathy." In *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1923, formerly published in 1913 under the title *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühl und vom Liebe und Haß*), Scheler distinguishes between four different concepts of "sympathy" as follows:

1. Immediate community of feeling (*das unmittelbare Mitfühlen*).
2. Fellow-feeling about something (*das Mitgefühl*).
3. Mere emotional infection (*die bloße Gefühlsanteckung*).
4. True emotional identification (*die echte Einsfühlung*).[1]

Immediate community of feeling is the act of direct feeling shared by two persons. For example, it is the act of grief between a mother and a father when their beloved child has passed away. Fellow-feeling about something is the state that one can feel the feeling of the other. In the above example, a friend of the parents can feel their sadness them, but sadness in this friend is phenomenologically different from the act of grieving in the parents. Mere emotional infection is found in mass. When a baby is surrounded by other crying babies, she or he may cry without any reason. In true emotional identification, two persons can feel as one, despite the fact that they are separate embodied selves. A typical example can be found in the "telepathic" feeling between a mother and her child. Although they are clearly two beings, (as at least the mother would claim) they can actually feel as though they are one single being. Scheler further subdivides two types of emotional identification, namely, the idiopathic type and the heteropathic type. For the former type, the other is absorbed in me. For the latter type the I is absorbed in the other. Especially in the case of truly loving sexual intercourse, one self is totally combined with the other, for the two persons seems to be of one body. In other words, their spiritual personalities are apparently combined into one single life-stream (NS 18).

It is worth noting, first, that Scheler's concept of *Einsfühlung* is not *Einfühlung*: in *Einsfühlung* the feeling becomes one (*eins-*), while in *Einfühlung* the feeling is transferred or directed (*ein-*). Secondly, Scheler does not regard empathy as a form of sympathy. Indeed, the very aim of Scheler's study lies in the clarification of the difference between empathy and sympathy. He states,

> We must first distinguish from true fellow-feeling all such attitudes as merely contribute to our apprehending, understanding, and, in general, reproducing (emotionally) the experiences of others, including their states of feeling. Such acts have often, and quite mistakenly, been assimilated to fellow feeling. This has come about chiefly through the theory of projective "empathy" which attempted to explain both at the same time. (NS 8)

In *Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler criticized Lipps and many other theorists such as von Hartmann, who discussed the concept of sympathy, but failed to distinguish between the four types of sympathy. Otherwise, Scheler claimed, they simply could not explain clearly the phenomena. Scheler's theory of sympathy can be seen as a third position rather than the theory of analogy and theory of empathy. In the theory of analogy, I can only have an analogical feeling of the other. It might be true that we cannot actually feel the physical pain of the other, but we can still share the spiritual feeling of sadness by analogy.[2] In the theory of empathy, this "sharing of feeling" is explained as a feeling "transferred" from one to another. In other words, I can know the feelings of the other through the act of empathy. Here, empathy presupposes the ability to understand the feeling of the other by means of linguistic expression and other kinds of bodily expressions such as gestures and facial expression. But empathy is not sympathy. Sympathy does not even presuppose the understanding of the other's expression. I, without an understanding of feeling of the other, can have the same experience with the other despite the fact that we are separate embodied selves. In a case wherein I understand you are suffering, I can have the feeling of sympathy (*Mitleid*), pleasure-from-suffering (Schadenfreude), or indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*). For example, one may say, "I can understand your feeling, but I cannot sympathize with you!" (*Ich kann Ihnen da sehr gut nachfühlen, aber ich habe kein Mitleid mit Ihnen*!)

Another important finding from Scheler is that empathy is more profound in adults, who try to "understand" the feeling of the other rather than "sympathize" with the other. Scheler explains the difference between adult and children in the following way,

> The mental life of children, which in so many respects differs, not in degree but in kind, from that of the adult, also exhibits a type of identification analogous to these pathological cases. Thus, in the "make-believe" of children, and still more when they are taken to see a play or a

> puppet-show, the situation is very different from the parallel cases in which the adult "play-acts" or indulges-as they say-in aesthetic "empathy." What is empathy in the adult is self-identification for the child. What is only "play" to the adult is "in earnest" to the child, and at least for the time being "reality." Consider the charming example given by Leo Frobenius, of the child playing "Hansel, Gretel and the witch" with three burnt matches. Even Freud's case of the child and the dead kitten belongs more to child-psychology than psychopathology. In the child's mind, individual self-awareness is still too unstable and incoherent to resist the childish capacity, which far exceeds the adult's, for ecstatic surrender to some eidetically projected personage. When the little girl plays at "mother" with her doll, the make-believe character of the play, the "Let's pretend that I'm Mother" is apparent only to the adult onlooker. In the act of playing the child feels herself (in the image of her own mother in relation to herself), completely identified with "mother" (which still stands for an individual here, and is not an expression of general reference); the doll she identifies with herself. Hence it also comes about that the child's reaction in a theatre may so easily be quite unlike the adult's. (NS 23–24)

Of course, Scheler does not mean that all adults lose their ability of emotional identification. As mentioned in the case of mother-child relationship, it seems that the mother can "feel" with the child as "one." She may feel that her child is hungry, even though the child does not give her parent any hint. Scheler writes,

> When the mother wakens at the slightest sound from her child (but not in response to much stronger stimuli from other sources), the stimulus does not merely evoke the image of an utterance from the child which then has to be understood; it operates directly upon the ever-watchful parental instinct, transmuting it into an activity which only thereafter brings to light what would otherwise have been necessary before understanding could take place. Thus a mother can make intuitive prognoses for the turn of a child's illness, which often astonish the doctor. This is why mother-love has been held so indispensable in every age and clime, and not merely because of the greater solicitude it displays. The intuitive psycho-somatic unity of mother and child is not so entirely severed by their physical separation that its place can be wholly taken by the interpretation of organic symptoms through a system of physical signs. (NS 28)

Scheler argues that sympathy, as found between mother and child, presupposes the higher emotion of "love." Needless to say, "love" is a

highly ambiguous concept. In the history of philosophy, there are many different notions of "love," such as *eros*, *philia*, *amor*, *caritas*, *agape*, etc. Here, I shall concentrate on two notions of love, namely, the Hellenistic notion of *eros* and the Christian notion of *agape*. *Eros* is the notion of love in ancient Greek philosophy; it is essentially a *methodos*, i.e., an upward urge to the ultimate Good. Scheler explains,

> The most important difference between the ancient and Christian views of love lies in the direction of its movement. All ancient philosophers, poets, and moralists agree that love is a striving, an aspiration of the "lower" towards the "higher," the "unformed" to the "formed," the "*me on*" towards the "*on*," "appearance" towards "essence," "ignorance" towards "knowledge," a "mean between fullness and privation," as Plato says in *Symposium*. (Scheler 1961, 85)

The Christian concept of love is a reversal of the Hellenistic concept. *Agape* is a downward movement, from a higher level to the lower. It is a feeling of sympathy from the perfect being to the other beings. Scheler continues,

> Let us compare this with the Christian conception. In that conception there takes place what might be called a *reversal of the movement of love*. The Christian view boldly denies the Greek axiom that love is an aspiration of the lower towards the higher. On the contrary, now the criterion of love is that the nobler stoops to the vulgar, the healthy to the sick, the rich to the poor, the handsome to the ugly, the good and saintly to the bad and common, the Messiah to the sinners and publicans. (Scheler 1961, 85)

Here, we can distinguish two meanings of *agape*: In the narrow sense, only God—a "perfect" being by definition—can love the "imperfect" beings. However, in a broader sense, we can love others, including friends, neighbors, strangers or even enemies, no matter how good or bad they are.[3] Scheler criticizes Nietzsche, who claimed that Christian love is the "flower of *ressentiment*." "He [Nietzsche] believes that through this idea the *ressentiment* accumulated by an oppressed and at the same time vindictive nation, whose God was the 'God of revenge' even when it was still politically and socially independent, is justified before this nation's consciousness" (Scheler, 63). For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is a "mental self-poisoning" (*seelische Selbstvergiftung*). As in the case of Christian love, the rich is now regarded as bad and the poor is

now seen as good. However, Scheler argues that the root of Christianity is not *ressentiment* but love. For Scheler, pain and suffering have their origin in love; they would not exist without love. On the other hand, love is the main source of sorrow, joy, blissfulness, and despair.

In fact, Scheler defines man as *ens amans*, a personal being in love with others. The meaning of the idea of person in love, or *ens amans*, was discussed in the treatise "Ordo amoris," first appeared in 1916. Scheler focuses himself on the problem of love and man, arguing that man is neither a thinking thing nor a willing thing. "Man, before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volens*, is an *ens amans*" (Scheler 1973b, 110–111). Man is a loving person, for love is the essence of human beings. The *ordo amoris* represents the structures of human feelings and value-preferences of a person. Every unique person has its own *ordo amoris.* "Whoever has the *ordo amoris* of a man has the man himself. He has for the man as a moral subject what the crystallization formula is for a crystal. He sees through him as far as one possibly can. Now love is defined as "the movement in which each concrete individual object that carries values attains to the highest possible values for it according to its ideal nature; or in which it reaches the ideal essential value peculiar to it" (Kelley 1997, 130). The *ordo amoris* is an original objective order of love, which is universal in nature. In the fundamental act of love, which is the primary act of person, there is no distortion of the order, but in reality this order of love may be disordered or distorted in case of particular persons (Kelley 1997, 123). Disorder results when hatred is felt instead of love. In the act of hatred, there is a confusion of the order of love. Scheler argues that hatred is origi-nated when a particular person is disvalued. When there is a difference in the order of love among persons in a community, comparison may occur and hence the original order of value is disturbed.

For Scheler, love is prior to knowledge. When one person loves another, they are fully opened to each other and the ego-ness or individuality vanishes. In this way, man becomes a personal being in the strictest sense. "The more deeply we penetrate into a human being, through knowledge and understanding, guided by personal love, the more unmistakable, individual, unique, irreplaceable and indispensable does he become in our mind" (NS 121). The *ordo amoris* has an autonomous "logic of the heart," which is independent from the logic of reason. This ordered system of values is solely from the perception of values by the heart. The logic of heart has its own rules and measures and this order is the same in all personal beings.[4]

Nishida's Dialectic of Love

Let's us return back to the phenomenon of "sympathy," which can be found in many religious teachings. In the Buddhist notion of "compassion," Buddha feels the pain of others (e.g., life, aging, illness and dying) in the real world. In Confucianism, one may argue that all man has the heart of "commiseration," when they see a child about to fall into a well. In the Bible as well, it is the feeling of "mercifulness": "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5: 7). Similar to Scheler, Nishida Kitarō also argues that these notions are related to "love," which can be defined as the union of subject and object. In *An Inquiry of the Good*, Nishida explains,

> And why is love the union of subject and object? To love something is to cast away the self and unite with that other. When self and other join with no gap between them, true feelings of love first arise. To love a flower is to unite with the flower, and to love the moon is to unite with the moon. The love between a parent and child comes forth only when the parent becomes the child and the child becomes the parent. Because the parent becomes the child, the parent feels each of the child's gains or losses as his or her own; and because the child becomes the parent, the child feels as his or her own each instance of joy or sadness on the part of the parent. The more we discard the self and become purely objective or selfless, the greater and deeper our love becomes. We advance from the love between parent and child or husband and wife to the love between friends, and from there to the love of humankind. The Buddha's love extended even to birds, beasts, grasses, and trees. (Nishida 1990, 174)

While Scheler emphasizes the love between mother and child, Nishida focuses on the love of any child, even the child of a stranger. Nishida writes, "To love, therefore, is to intuit the other's feelings. When one saves a child who is about to fall into a pond, there is no room for the thought that the child is cute" (Nishida 1990, 174). This specific example is mentioned in Mencius' discussion of "heart of commiseration." Mencius says,

> When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: even now-a-days, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. They will feel so, not as

> a ground on which they may gain the favour of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbours and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing. From this case we may perceive that the feeling of commiseration is essential to man, that the feeling of shame and dislike is essential to man, that the feeling of modesty and complaisance is essential to man, and that the feeling of approving and disapproving is essential to man. (Mencius 6: 3–4)

Unlike Scheler's claim that love is prior to knowledge, Nishida argues that to love is to know. "From a certain angle, I love my friends because I know them. The more our circumstances are the same, the more our thoughts and tastes are the same; the deeper we understand each other, the richer our sympathy becomes" (Nishida 1990, 174). Love could begin with the self, but it ends up with a larger unity. Nishida writes, "The so-called self-love of an individual is ultimately nothing more than this demand for unity. Because our infinite spirit is never fundamentally satisfied by the unity constituted by an individual self, it inevitably seeks a larger unity, a great self that envelops both oneself and others. We come to express sympathy toward others and seek congruence and unity between oneself and others. Our love for others is the demand for such a supra-individual unity with them. Accordingly, we feel greater peace and joy in love for others than in love for ourselves. God, the unity of the universe, is the base of this unifying activity, the foundation of our love, the source of our joy. God is infinite love, infinite joy, and peace" (Nishida 1990, 83).

Later, Nishida explains this "loving" or "knowing" with the idea of "feeling-with." In an article titled "Affective Feeling" (1918), Nishida writes,

> We have to feel with (*mitfühlen*) the thing in order to know truly the thing. At the foundation of all knowledge there is what Lipps termed empathy. We have to sympathise with a person in order to know truly the person. To know a colour is to feel with the colour. To know a sound is to feel with the sound. An artist perceives colour as a continuum of various *Dimensionen* with which he sympathises and acts together. When a person sees a high-wire acrobat, he is acting with the acrobat. We have to combine first with the act in order to know the things, and the combination with act is feeling. (Nishida 1979, 227; translation modified)

Surprisingly, Nishida raises the following question in a typically Schelerian way: "Where should we find the ground of sympathy, in which we are happy with other's happiness, and are sad with other's sadness?" (*Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* [henceforth NKZ] 5: 310). In *Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler questions both the analogical theory and the empathy theory. Peter Spader summarizes Scheler's opposition against analogical arguments, for "[e]ven simple empirical investigations of animals and young children show behavior that the analogy approach cannot handle. Scheler is also not satisfied with the empathy theory, which is to establish is a 'blind' belief, not a self-evident intuition or even a rational postulate" (Spader 2002, 240). For Scheler, it is phenomenologically evident that we can feel, but not think, the feelings of the other. Here, "phenomenological" is not referred to as the transcendental phenomenology of subjectivity, but as the phenomenology of feelings: it is impossible to know the other by means of analogy, but it is also not the case of knowing the other by any means of empathy. Nishida's philosophy of otherness can be understood in a phenomenological way: by the act of sympathy, I can recognize you by seeing you inside me, while you can recognize me by seeing me inside you. The phenomenon of sympathy is evident in the persons in love, but not in a person who trying to know the other.

For Nishida, the other is not grasped from the outside of the person, but it is simply the ground or place that is inside the personal self. In fact, Nishida's concept of place (場所) refers to an underlying principle or the ground for personal beings. The logic of place is one of the most important concepts in Nishida's philosophy, and it also plays a role in his attempt to solve the problem of the other. This place can be seen as the absolute medium "M," which is the ground for I and Thou. We can say that Nishida's approach is to deconstruct the traditional dichotomy of the internal sphere and the external sphere, and to reveal the original ground or place, in which the person I and the person you are yet to be differentiated. Nishida's method is not to take the individual self as the Archimedean point of his philosophy. Rather, Nishida abandons the very idea of Archimedean point. In fact, pure experience is not given an ontological primacy as in the case of the primordial sphere of transcendental subjectivity in Husserl's phenomenology. The fundamental ground in Nishida's philosophy, namely place, is not a sphere with I alone, but a sphere with both the I and the thou. This is Nishida's very solution to the problem of solipsism. James Heisig explains,

> In later years, Nishida attempted to redress the imbalance that had set in his thought as a result of his stress on the nature and process of self-awareness. His introduction of the historical world, and more particularly a culturally pluralistic world, are clear in his idea of locating beings on the field of absolute nothingness (the "logic of place"). The same idea allowed him to speculate on the structure of the I-Thou relationship, also passed over in his early work. This speculation is concentrated in his book *I and Thou* (I will refer to this work from here on by its Japanese title, *Watakushi to nanji* 私と汝, to avoid confusion with Buber's book), which is best read in conjunction with a companion essay, 'Love of Self-Love of Other and the Dialectic,' that appeared four months earlier. (Heisig 2000, 189)

In fact, Nishida mentioned Scheler's name in his "Watakushi to Nanji." Nishida writes, "Needless to say, it is difficult to hold the theory of analogy, in which the expression of you is known by the analogy of my expression. As what is said by Max Scheler, even there is something such as empathy, one cannot explain how I know the individual being of you, and you know the individual being of me" (NKZ 6: 373).

Nishida neither clearly quotes where his reference of Scheler came from, nor does he explain why Scheler's philosophy is a theory of empathy. It is not clear as to whether or not Nishida actually read Scheler's work, so his knowledge of Scheler could likely have come from an indirect reference. Although Nishida was not familiar with Scheler's phenomenology of sympathy, there are some common positions in the philosophies of Nishida and Scheler. In his paper "Scheler's Person and Nishida's Active Self as Centers of Creativity," Arthur R. Luther argues that there are some similarities between Scheler and Nishida's philosophy of person. First, they both emphasize on activity, which is from immediate and direct experience. Second, they agree that person is not object but "active self." Third, they are against the Cartesian notion of self-realization, and instead propose a non-Cartersian idea of dialectical or dialogical act which is a created-creating. However, there are also some structural differences in the philosophy of the two philosophers. First, they have different ontological presuppositions: Scheler's philosophy of person is on beings as in the Western tradition, but Nishida's philosophy of person is on non-being. Luther writes, "Personal unity in Nishida's perspective can only be understood in terms of the Buddhist notion of emptiness (*suntaya*). For Nishida the active self is essentially empty of own-being, which means that the active self is not an entitative substance in any sense… The Buddhist notion of emptiness is central

here because its deepest meaning is dialectical. Emptiness does not mean radical nothingness, but rather an egolessness or selflessness which is functional as negation-qua-affirmation as Nishida would say or as active negativity-reflecting as I would say" (Luther 1977, 137). Luther notices there is a fundamental difference in the philosophy of love in the two philosophers. "Nishida speaks of love as an emotion, an emotion of the fusion of the self and the other or the union of subject and object… Scheler describes love as a moment in which every person is able to attain or to achieve his highest possible value according to his own potential fullness" (Luther 1977, 139). Luther concludes that Nishida's active self is dialectical, for it lives as the other in the active process of self-identity of contradiction; but Scheler's active person is dialogical, for the person lives with the other.

We can see a "turn" in Nishida's philosophy of love. In earlier stage, Nishida has proposed love as *eros*. In other words, "Love is the feeling of congruence between self and other, the feeling of the union of subject and object. Love exists not only when one person faces another, but also when a painter encounters nature. In his renowned *Symposium*, Plato states that love is the feeling that arises when that which is lacking tries to return to its original, perfect state" (Nishida 1990, 135). However, Nishida later emphasizes more on love as *agape*. He writes, "Love your neighbor as yourself (*agape*) is a unity of absolutely differentiated beings. I do not love [my child or parent] because I am the parent or I am the son. I do not love [my country] because I am a countryman. Indeed, I do not love because of value. I love because we are human beings. This love is contradictory to desire, and has a different meaning to Plato's notion of *eros*, which is a longing of idea" (NKZ 6: 319).

Nishida mentions two directions of love, namely, *eros* the love from below to above and *agape* the love from above to below. He might have borrowed this insight from Scheler, but in fact Nishida quoted Heinrich Scholz (1884–1956)'s *Eros und Caritas* (1929): "*Agape* is not longing but sacrificing. It is god's love and not love in human beings. It is from God to human beings, not from human beings to God" (NKZ 6: 421). Nishida also quoted Anders Nygren (1890–1978)'s *Eros und Agape* (1936): "God does not love us because of our values. Rather, we possess values because we are loved by God" (NKZ 6: 425). Similar to the theologians, Nishida argues that true love (真の愛) is not *eros* but *agape*. He writes, "True love only exists in the relationship between human beings. It is not in the sense of *eros* but *agape*" (NKZ 6: 273). Elsewhere, he

writes, "*Agape* is not based on *eros*; rather, *eros* is based on *agape*" (NKZ 6: 426). For Nishida, the self and the other are absolutely contradictory, but these two completely different persons can be "united" in love.

Takahashi's Philosophy of Love

Takahashi Satomi is one of the pioneers of phenomenological research in Japan. "In 1921 he assumed a post in the science faculty of Tohoku [Imperial] University in Sendai. He subsequently spent two years studying abroad in Germany with Rickert and Husserl" (Heisig 2011, 822). He is the author of *Husserl's Phenomenology* (フッセルの現象学), which was published in 1931. Takahashi is also well known as a critic of Nishida's philosophy. Back in 1912, he wrote a paper titled "The Fact of Consciousness-phenomenon and its Meaning" (意識現象の事実とその意味) to review Nishida's *An Inquiry of the Good*, published a year earlier. It was one of the earliest philosophical debates in the history of modern Japanese philosophy. Takahashi's basic position can be summarized as below: "The totality of enveloping, both in terms of content and in terms of experience, must be regulated as a love that is a single unity embracing will and action along with knowledge. In this way, the ultimate consists of absolute love as empirically regulated absolute nothingness. Hence, all things, at bottom, can be wrapped together in an absolute love in which at once all is one and one is nothingness" (Heisig 2011, 827–828). According to Takahashi, Nishida's notion of love can be understood as a "dialectical love" (弁証法的愛). "Dialectical love is to see the self in self with the absolutely contradictory other, and to see the other in the other with the absolutely contradictory self" (*Takahashi Satomi Zenshū* [henforth TSZ] 5: 226). Takahashi criticizes Nishida's dialectical approach, and develops his own philosophy of "one-being-love" (一在愛).

In an article titled "A System Which Includes Dialectic" (TSZ 3: 316–317, written in English), Takahashi explains his philosophy as follows:

> Most of the now prevailing logics in our philosophical circles may be characterized as 'dialectic.' Some of these dialectics, departing from their Hegelian origin, are transforming themselves into new types of thinking more adapted to our traditional thought, and are becoming increasingly Oriental and familiar to us, by being blended with Buddhism, which, as regards way of thinking, may be regarded as a certain type of dialectic.

> The author of this essay [Takahashi], however, thinks we should proceed more cautiously in the present situation, which requires us to exercise a critical spirit. For it is possible that a traditional thought, because of its familiarity, being regarded as self-evident, may escape critical examination. The need for caution and criticism in this sense has motivated the present work. It sets out to show how dialectic in general will, by reason of its inner necessity, resolve into a system which the author chooses to call 'that which includes dialectic.'

Takahashi examines different types of dialectic: "dialectic of process," "dialectic of field," "dialectic with two poles." "dialectic of pure negation or pure movement," "dialectic of the middle," "dialectic with three poles," "dialectic with an infinite number of poles" and "dialectic of the whole and parts," etc. Takahashi develops his own dialectic, which is a "wholeness which includes all the dialectic." Takahashi argues that "Hegel insisted that his absolute idea contained as negative-and-preserved (*aufgehobene*) moments all the dialectic processes which have occurred before becoming itself… Hegel's '*aufheben*' (sublation) implied in the idea of the Absolute means nothing more than the result, and so he did not succeed in attaining the full idea of '*aufheben*' which he had intended to realize. The realization of this is includes all dialectics or 'wholeness which includes and transcends' all processes existing along the course of dialectic development." Takahashi further develops his dialectics with the notion of love. He writes,

> The question which had continually occupied the author [Takahashi]'s philosophical thinking was how the transcendent being can be immanent in the real world. The idea of "wholeness which includes and transcends all the dialectic" is an attempt to resolve this fundamental problem. For he believes nothing less than that the idea can combine transcendence and immanence: i.e. transcendent in the sense that it 'passes over' by inclusion, and immanence in the sense that such 'passing over' is made by inclusion and penetration. He thinks such relations as these between whole and part, infinite and finite, eternity and time, ideal and real, should be re-examined from this new standpoint. He believes also we can find the ethical or religious counterpart of "wholeness" which includes and "transcends" in "love" as a unifying principle. The way to overcome skepticism was once sought by him through an act of the will, but he is now convinced love is the true source of all volition and action. Love unifies intellect, feeling and volition by including as well as transcending them, while enabling

> them to continue to exist. The author believes, moreover, that this all-inclusive whole itself should be included in "Absolute Nothingness" of which the ethical or religious counterpart is "Absolute Love." That is why in the last analysis he maintains that all is included in absolute love. (TSZ 3: 316–317)

In 1956, Takahashi was invited to deliver a lecture to the emperor. His topic is "Forms of love as basic motivation of culture (文化の根本動機としての愛の諸形態). In the beginning of this lecture, Takahashi suggests that "Love is the fundamental feeling of human being. Without love, it is inconceivable to have nation, state or their co-existence. It is the principle that connects human beings, and unites them into a community. Therefore, love should be understood as the basic motivation of world culture" (TSZ 5: 202). He follows with the discussion of three forms of love, namely, the Hellenistic notion of *eros*, the Christian notion of *agape*, and "dialectical love" that unites the *eros* and *agape*.

It is noteworthy that Takahashi mentions the Schelerian notion of *Einsfühlung*: "What I called one-being-love (一在愛) is similar to what Scheler calls *Einsfühlung* (一体感). However, this love is not about the foundation of different forms of sympathy, as in the case of Scheler; rather, it includes all other things" (TSZ 5: 231–232). Elsewhere, Takahashi mentions Scheler's *Nature of Sympathy* as "the most remarkable work on *Einsfühlung* (TSZ 5: 197). Takahashi agrees with Scheler that "The ultimate love is consciousness-identification (*einsbewusst*) and emotional-identification (*Einsfühlung*)" (TSZ 5: 269). I believe Takahashi can be regarded as one of the earliest Schelerians in Japan, and his project is to interpret love as *Einsfühlung*. It is an important event in the history of modern Japanese philosophy.

Takahashi continues to argue that love is the very essence of Japanese culture, i.e., "harmony" (和). A sympathetic reading of this would suggest that he takes love as the acceptance or tolerance of the other. In reality, however, is it the case in Japan? Would Japanese in love with the less privileged, the *Zainichi* Koreans, Ryukyu people, Ainu people, victims and sufferers in Hiroshima, Nagasaki or Fukushima, as well as her neighbors in East Asia? In postwar Japan, Japanese are facing "the suffering of the neighbours, nature disasters and the massive killing by nuclear bombs" (TSZ 5: 42). As Scheler would emphasize the role of philosophical anthropology for providing a "unified" idea of man in the age of crisis, Takahashi suggests reflecting on a "unified" notion of love in a difficult postwar era. To borrow Takahashi's own words,

> One may be proud of the advantages of the Japanese notion of one-love, but she or he should also realize the drawbacks of this notion. In order to beware and avoid these shortcomings, sometimes we will have to emphasize on *eros*, while in other occasions it is necessary to emphasize on *agape*, *philia*, or even dialectic love. But eventually, we need to try to develop love as one-being-love, which encompasses all the other notions of love. (TSZ 5: 247)

In fact, Takahashi did mention *philia* as the fifth definition of love, followed by *eros*, *agape*, dialectical love and one-being-love. It comes to another difficult question: what is friendship? As discussed in Plato's *Lysis*, what does it mean to be friends? Do friends have all things in common, or have nothing in common? Towards to end of the dialog, Socrates sums up the arguments as below: "If neither the beloved, nor the lover, nor the like, nor the unlike, nor the good, nor the congenial, nor any other of whom we spoke-for there were such a number of them that I cannot remember all-if none of these are friends, I know not what remains to be said." Philosophy, or the love of wisdom, is about *philia*. Like the cases of man and love, we will have to search for a "unified" idea of friendship, in which all notions of friendships can be included in one.

Concluding Remarks

Love is regarded as a possibility of self-realization. When we are in love, we are still two personal selves; but in the same time, this two selves can "share" the feeling together. To feel as one is one of the forms of sympathy. Although sympathy is not the same as love, love can be regarded as the foundation of sympathy. The Schelerian notion of *Einsfühlung* is a form of sympathy, and should not be understood as love as such. Takahashi is a Japanese philosopher who uses *Einsfühlung* to explain love. This attempt is similar to Nishida's early philosophy which tried to "unite" the differences between knowledge and faith, philosophy and religion, religion and culture, etc. But Takahashi and Nishida are still different in many ways. While Nishida argues *agape* is the foundation of *eros*, Takahashi does not agree with this standpoint. Besides, Takahashi noticed a different in the sense that Nishida is more influenced by *Zen* (禅), but Takahashi himself is rather influenced by *Jodo Shinshu* (浄土真宗, the True Pure Land Sect of Buddhism) (TSZ 5: 8). Here, it

is impossible to go into details of the two Buddhist sects, but it is clear that Nishida and Takahashi are not simply "Zen Buddhist" or "Pure Land Monk." They philosophize on various topics, including the problem of sympathy and love. Both philosophers tried to avoid a one-sided "nationalistic" approach to philosophical problems. For Takahashi, he understands Japanese philosophy as a "global Japanese philosophy" (世界的日本哲学) (TSZ 5: 260). Scheler could have some important contributions to the development of Japanese philosophy, if he accepted the offer to become a professor of sociology in Tohoku Imperial University. We all know that Scheler did not manage to go to there, yet Takahashi became the president of Tohoku University from 1949 to 1957. In 1950 Takahashi delivered the following speech in a graduation ceremony: "Japan is not only Japanese's Japan. It is also Japan in the world, Japan for the world. We should not fight for the sake of fighting, but to love as one. In this sense, Japan can establish her subjectivity, and can expand love to the world" (TSZ 5: 289). Although it is not an easy task to love your neighbors or enemies, Japanese philosophy has much to offer in the philosophy of love.

Notes

1. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954, p. 12. Hereafter abbreviated as NS.
2. Scheler is against theory of analogy, for example, "I know myself to become vivace when being happy so the other person's vivacity must mean happy." See Jos V. M. Welie, *In the Face of Suffering*. Nebraska: Creighton University Press, 1998, p. 112.
3. The central idea of Christian ethics is the love of enemies. "But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hatred you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who take away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (*Luke* 6: 27–31).
4. In this sense, I argue that Scheler can be understood as the "phenomenological Pascal." See my article "From Phenomenology of Man to Philosophical Anthropology: Max Scheler's Turn and its Significance," in *Phenomenology 2010 Volume 1: Selected Essays from Asia and Pacific Phenomenology in Dialogue with East Asian*.

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CHAPTER 15

Self-Realization as Self-Abandonment

Richard Stone

Introduction

The work we will be handling here, *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (published in 1946), begins with a public confession of powerlessness. The Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime admits that during the course of World War II, he lost all self-control. His old-attachment to reason and rationality proved to be insufficient as a philosopher living in an irrational time. According to his reflections on his own predicament during the war, Tanabe found himself stuck in an impossible situation to solve as a philosopher who felt responsible to support his country. Criticizing his corrupt government, remaining silent to encourage national unity, and doing nothing were all options that not only seemed entirely unappealing, but also carried tremendous weight. This failure to solve his problem through rational discourse caused Tanabe to reach a limit situation. While his only potential method of solving a problem that by all means required resolution was the faculty of reason, it became clear to him that he was not even capable of accomplishing this task. In the face of this powerlessness, all Tanabe could do was repent for his futility and abandon his very self.

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Yet it was precisely because of this breakdown that Tanabe was able to reach a religious epiphany and a new form of self-realization. At the moment in which he let go of his own self, he simultaneously met with a power greater than himself. In Tanabe's words, this act of repentance (*zange*) was the basis for his revival through the workings of absolute Other-power (*tariki*). According to Tanabe, this total rejection of his right to self-hood allowed him not only rebirth, but a radical transformation to a new mode of being, in which it was no longer his life, but Other-power living through him. Borrowing from both the Christian tradition of confessional philosophers such as Augustine and the Other-power thought of pure land Buddhism (specifically, the thinker Shinran was influential), Tanabe would furthermore go on to attempt to construct a philosophical system based on this transformation from self-power to Other-power as a means for other suffering citizens to find shelter from the harsh conditions of the post-war era.

From a modern standpoint, the above given narrative may be a bit hard to swallow. Because he worked from the standpoint of a philosopher writing in the midst of war time Japan (and having thus experienced a turbulent intellectual background as well), we may be tempted to write off Tanabe's work as a by-product of his specific political and cultural background. Otherwise, we could follow the lead of some of Tanabe's contemporary scholars and claim that his system was founded on nothing more than a desire to efface any responsibility his actions and thought may have had during the war.[1] Yet, at the same time, we ought to recognize that underneath the very specific circumstances which led to Tanabe's work, there is a valid philosophical issue to be explored: how is the self to be realized when it is no longer capable of continuing by means of its own power? Is self-realization still possible at this stage? How can one cope with the sort of extreme regret or feeling of powerlessness that Tanabe wrestled with? As I shall demonstrate in this contribution, this investigation into what appears at first glance incommensurate with our modern society is actually an important resource for giving a logical account of how recovery from a state of pure powerlessness can even be understood for those of us living in the "secular age."[2] First, we shall give an account of what is meant by the word powerless as meaning a realization of powerlessness against one's relative (and hence fallible) nature. We shall then move on to discuss how the process of self-abandonment after a thorough examination of this powerlessness can spur on a unique transformation based in self-abandonment. Finally, we

shall show how this transformation can change one's relationship with their community, and thus provide a real effect capable of leading to a unique form of self-realization.

Powerlessness, Relativity, and Evil

Now, before we discuss further how Tanabe's religious epiphany managed to provide salvation from his own powerlessness, we ought to be more transparent about what we are discussing when we talk about realizing one's own "powerlessness." My introductory discussion here will be based off of the hints Tanabe gives us in his writing. However, due to the abstract nature of Tanabe's writing, we will utilize some philosophical considerations that have been made in the field of addiction and self-control to give us a more concrete understanding of this phenomenon.

First, when we are referring to "powerlessness," we are not merely referring to a powerlessness before specific or temporary problems. We are instead referring to the realization of a deeper level of powerlessness concerning the very nature of the self. In this sense, the powerlessness with which we are concerned is a powerlessness concerning our own *relativity* and *futility*. These notions of relativity and futility point to the fundamental defects of individuals which cannot ever be fully addressed (precisely because overcoming them would presuppose that we humans could ever be anything other than relative and fallible beings). Indeed, the epistemological limits of our faculties of reason prevent us from ever being fully capable of knowing what to do in a given situation. What's more, we can never fully trust the limited reason we have to be truly unbiased when we remember that we can never be fully conscious of the various motives and interests that are always somehow intertwined with our process of reasoning.[3] What's more, the fact that our will is also relative points to the possibility that we may not always have the self-control necessary to do what needs to be done.

What we are specifically interested in here are cases like Tanabe's, in which this inability to escape relativity becomes apparent to the point of consuming the subject whole, and potentially leading to a breakdown in one's day-to-day life. Tanabe himself believed that this relativity itself pointed to a radical evil,[4] and seemed to be under the impression that a thorough reflection on one's self will bring about a feeling of powerlessness for ethically serious subjects (after all, who can ever truly say that

they are sufficiently ethical?). While I see no reason to follow Tanabe in even attempting to somewhat universalize this association of relativity and powerlessness (even if we are never perfect, I would surmise that a good deal of persons believe that they are doing well enough and, even if not, that they still see ways to improve their behavior) there are cases in which a realization of relativity can stop a moral subject in her tracks. How can one know how to improve her behavior when she has seen first-hand how ignorant she is? How can one with a perpetually weak-will overcome his desires after failing to restrain himself with all his might? In these cases, relativity becomes a barricade to self-realization and self-improvement, instead of a mere building block for one or the other. Furthermore, as was the case with Tanabe, this impediment can swallow the subject's conscience whole, leaving them unable to progress in any meaningful way.

Obviously, our analysis does not need to be undertaken only at the level such abstract examples. Indeed, it is quite the opposite, for even if our considerations on powerlessness and evil up to this point have been abstract, it is a phenomenon that can be found with some amount of ease in the real world. For instance, the most common case that we can likely find to illustrate our point is that of addiction. That is to say, insofar as addiction is used to mean a loss of self-control, we can find a situation in which the limits of self-power become fully apparent at a level beyond particular instantiations of akratic behavior. Addiction is a situation which contains the ultimate paradox, insofar as the only item desired is at once the only item from which the subject cannot be free from. Even if there may be some persons who can quit "cold turkey," by means of sheer will power, there also exist plenty whose efforts to this end constantly fail.[5] It is these persons, who come face to face with the fact that they are too weak to quit of their own accord, who cleanly illustrate the phenomenon of powerlessness as we are discussing it here.

Now that we have hopefully managed to make the notion of powerlessness more clear to some degree, we can hopefully see the paradox lurking within it. Once we have reached the stage at which we have faced this powerlessness, we find ourselves in a limit-situation: insofar as we have reached a state in which we cannot help but be unethical, we must do something to overcome this situation. Yet, at the same time, the relative nature of our existence (be it of our will or reason) prevents us from ever actually overcoming the defects which haunt us. Insofar as we have reached this paradoxical state of needing to do something about the fact

that one cannot do anything, we can see clearly the following question. How can one go beyond this powerlessness when any of one's actions are, by definition, insufficient to do so? It is precisely on this point that I believe that we should return to Tanabe's work: in addition to his own personal experience of finding recovery in other power, we can see that the only legitimate answer is to look for sources beyond what we have called here "self-power."

Metanoetics and Transformation

Now that we have discussed the context in which we are using the word powerlessness, we shall now ask how it can be overcome. We have seen in the introduction that Tanabe claimed to have experienced a personal renaissance as a result of accepting his own powerlessness, and thus allowing himself to abandon his very self to an absolute Other-power. In this way, Tanabe paradoxically seems to have found a unique form of self-realization that is possible *only* once one has realized that one's own self is thoroughly inadequate and must thusly be discarded. Tanabe recalls the experience of meeting this Other-power in the following way:

> *Zange* thus represents for me an experience of Other-power acting in and through *zange* to urge me to a new advance in philosophy. I entrust my entire being to Other-power (*tariki*), and by practicing *zange* and maintaining faith in this Power I confirm the truth of my own conversion-and-resurrection experience…I have died to philosophy and been resurrected by *zange*. It is not a question of simply carrying on the same philosophy I had abandoned in my despair, as if resuming a journey after a temporary interruption. It cannot be a mere repetition without negation and change. In the life of the spirit, 'repetition' must mean self-transcendence; 'resurrection' must mean regeneration to a new life. (Tanabe 1986, 1i)

At first glance, Tanabe's personal experience seem to be little more than a re-hashed testimonial of what was already found within several different religious traditions (of specific interest to him were confessional thinkers such as Augustine and the Other-power thought of Shinran). In this way, the question of how one who has been consumed by their own powerlessness to solve their own problems can be solved easily: the introduction of a higher power presents the possibility of logically solving the

powerlessness of the relative subject by providing a different source of ethical action other than the subject's inherently relative "self-power."

With that said, there are any number of reasons that this retreat to religion could be considered unappealing. First of all, the existence of any kind of God seems to be empirically unverifiable, and an uncritical acceptance of the existence of such an Other-power could easily fall into a mere dogma. Moreover, any implication that the leadership of Other-power makes a relative subject infallible should be rejected immediately. However, we find in Tanabe an interesting diversion away from unverifiable dogma which makes his understanding of religious transformation interesting to us. First, Tanabe claimed that his personal transformation was *real*; i.e., that it caused a genuine transformation in the very nature of his self. Second, Tanabe claimed that this transformation was not the transformation from relative fallibility to absolute perfection; instead he claimed quite the opposite, that this is a transformation which presents relief from powerlessness without actually curing it. This is connected to his third claim, in which he also claimed that the Other-power that caused this transformation is not an all-powerful Deity, but is instead an *absolute nothingness*. In what follows below, we shall follow along Tanabe's own attempts to philosophically and expound upon his theory and methodology based in *Philosophy as Metanoetics* in order to demonstrate how Tanabe was able to give a logical account of a real rebirth via Other-power without resorting to an empirically unverifiable mysticism.

The ramifications of Tanabe's denial of an omnipotent God figure to resurrect him—and thus guide his actions with infinite wisdom—and simultaneous affirmation of the reality of his conversion is enough for us to wonder precisely how Tanabe intended to tell such a seemingly conflicting story. Was Tanabe's "re-birth" a mere psychological effect?[6] Was Tanabe using the word "nothingness" in a way so as to hypostatize it, and somehow treat it as though it were capable of "being" the savior of she who is practicing *zange*? Answering these questions, and demonstrating precisely what Tanabe can show us about what it means to achieve self-realization, requires an analysis of both the process of self-abandonment as the nullification of the self as a real transformation of consciousness (as described above, in Tanabe's case), and also of how such a transformation is capable of leading us to any form of self-realization without relying on any particular notion of God as an omnipotent deity.

So, then, how can a powerless subject overcome the pain that follows along with their futility? As we have seen in the previous section, a

thorough-going inventory of one's powerlessness can reveal a paradox in some cases, in which nothing can be done to overcome this futility, but not doing anything is similarly unacceptable. As we furthermore saw in the introduction, Tanabe's conclusion is that the only (non) option left in this situation is to accept one's own incapability to ever be sufficiently moral and, following this resignation, abandon their unworthy self. In other words, insofar as the self is no longer an agent capable of being moral, the only option left is to reject its very right to determine its own actions. Instead, one must recognize that in his or her own powerlessness, the only recourse left is to "let go" of any delusions of competence that it may have once held.

This rejection of one's own self, and the ensuing "letting go" bring about a transformation. The self who had previously sought to organize the world in accordance with its own determinations (or, otherwise, by means of its own "self-power") and maintain its hypostatized self-identity, is reduced to a total nothingness. As it thoroughly denies its own prior attempts to begin from the affirmation of its own reasoning and decision-making, the self is rendered entirely passive. The process of self-abandonment as denoted here is essentially a discombobulation of self and self-consciousness, with Tanabe using words such as "disruption" or "shredding" to indicate the abruptness of the "death" of the self at the hands of its own thorough resignation. At this stage, what once thought itself to be an independent and self-reliant entity capable of affirming and expressing its own right to life has been reduced to a total negation of all those things.

This drags the self down into a total abyss. At this state there is no sign of any kind of god to "catch" the practitioner of *zange* in her freefall from her everyday life towards her new and unexplored total disruption of self. There is only what Tanabe, in accordance with his own philosophical intuitions (and in a larger context, the tradition of the Kyoto School as a whole) called absolute nothingness. That is to say, what awaits the subject is none other than a pure negativity that could never assert itself directly. The subject finds only an endless fall into an abyss that evades self-identity and appearance into the world of being. The self, by means of its death by resignation, is obliterated to the point of meeting with this pure negativity.

However, although the self has metaphorically died, or at least renounced its right to directly affirm its own desire to determine its own life, our experience of the world does not merely disappear. Quite to the

contrary, no matter how hard the self may curse its sinful existence or deny its own qualification to exist, one still *lives*. This realization of being allowed to (or better yet, made to) live in spite of one's fallible nature is taken as the *forgiveness* of the absolute:

> Although the sin inevitably produced by one's action is always condemned from an ethical viewpoint, from a religious viewpoint it is always forgiven by the boundlessness of metanoesis. Hence consciousness of the forgiveness of one's sinfulness returns one to the relative… In this way metanoesis functions as a mediating force through which the evil of sin, without disappearing, is transformed into the bliss of forgiveness and salvation grounded in absolute nothingness. (Tanabe 1986, 25)

Without washing away the relative nature of the self (or the particular sins which resulted from it), one still finds a somewhat masochistic gratitude towards that which gives it life: the Other-power of absolute nothingness referred to above. Insofar as it continues to mediate the very existence of flawed and relative beings, even once such a being is no longer able to support its own self, absolute nothingness can negate even the radical death caused by *zange*, thus bringing about a rebirth. In this sense, the subject, without achieving any form of enlightenment or overcoming its inherent powerlessness, finds a certain form of all-encompassing forgiveness from the absolute.

It is in this dialectical development that the subject discovers the truth of its (non) being. Whereas previously the self merely attempted to directly seek its own affirmation of its own reason and will, almost as if to ignore its relative and incomplete nature by affirming its independence in its action, this has changed upon the performance of *zange*. Instead, this radical self-abandonment brings the subject to the realization that at the ground of its existence is none other than absolute nothingness, and that it is (relative and finite as it is) not capable of existing independently of the absolute, which should thus be the true ground of its action. Hence, the self, rather than clinging to its own privileged claims to self-determination, instead realizes its nature as an "empty being" that owes its very life to the passive support of the absolute. Upon this realization, the self thus transforms into a vehicle that mediates the workings of an absolute nothingness that, by definition, can never exist directly in the historical and relative world of being.

This brings us to the core concept of Tanabe's thought: returning to the relative world after religious conversion, or, in his terms, *genso*. Tanabe co-opted the term outgoing from his interpretation of Shinran's Pure Land Buddhism to express the salvific action of the Amida Buddha in sending already awakened Bodhisattva to aid the as-of-yet unenlightened masses. While the term came to have a noticeably different meaning in Tanabe, the concept of the relative being returning from a religious experience as a mediator of the workings of the absolute maintains a strong theme in his work.[7] Tanabe states as much himself below, when he says:

> The self is restored to a state of 'empty being' as a mediator of absolute nothingness. In our gratitude the self is led to cooperate in a mediating function in the absolute's work of saving other relative beings… Hence we may speak of its quality as 'absoluteness-qua-absolute *genso*,' in contrast with the return of the relative to other relatives that mediates this return of the absolute. (Tanabe 1986, 256)

Thus, in the same way that the practitioner was able to find relief and transformation through the "compassion" of the nothingness that continues to support her existence regardless of her relative nature or sins accumulated, she can pay back her by returning to the relative world to engender this role in lieu of an absolute that can never appear directly in the relative world.

This shift from a self-sufficient subject (whose actions were determined by self-power) to the self as a mediator for the appearance of Other-power as absolute nothingness in the relative world completes a transformation in the nature of the self. The self is rendered passive, left only to contemplate its own futility, which in turn renders it capable of being supported by the absolute. Yet, at the same time, this relationship between the absolute and the relative subject alone would not be sufficient for a genuine form of self-realization (insofar as the absolute itself is nothing, and hence, not capable of giving positive leadership to anyone). Hence, even if we have seen a transformation from dynamic self-determination to a passive non-being supported only the absolute, it is still unclear as to what possible benefit such a transformation could have. What we must make clear in the next section, then, is how this transformation is able to provide any form of *real* change in the life of a powerless subject.

Genso: Praxis and Love

In order to tackle the above-mentioned question, we must focus more on the previously introduced notion of *genso*. What we have found thus far is that the practitioner of *zange*, as a mediator of the appearance of the absolute, returns to society for the sake of the affirmation of the relative others who have not yet found their own salvation. Yet, we have not specified how this is possible considering one specific Tanabe's theory faces: how can one be lead to guide others to salvation if the guide does is nothing at all? Thus, we must attempt to provide a concrete account of how self-abandonment can lead to a new mode of relating to others.

The key to understanding Tanabe on this point seems to be in recognizing the effect that the transformation to this pure passivity that we have dubbed Other-power has on the *action* of the subject. After all, having rejected one's own right to direct self-affirmation, the subject's action can no longer come from their own decision making. Yet at the same time, the absolute Other-power to which the self has died is not anything at all, and as such could not possibly directly influence the actions of the subject. As such, Tanabe notes that relative others become a necessary mediator in our actions. With direct and unmediated action out of the picture, the only option left is the passive acceptance of the leadership or guidance of other relative subjects. Inasmuch as Tanabe himself stated during a lecture that "As I have abandoned my 'self' as a being that is capable of accomplishing *something*, I have transformed and reached a new state in which *I am willing to try anything* and *willing to be made to do anything*," (Tanabe 2010, 19, italics are my own) we can see a difference in the general attitude towards action after this transformation. Specifically speaking, there is only a total open-ness towards the leadership and guidance of others, as well as a willingness to try anything in order to help search for their salvation. Action becomes both entirely dependent on and entirely for the sake of our interaction with other relative subjects, as mediated by the shift to passivity via absolute nothingness.

So it would seem that there is a fundamental change in the way in our action following this transformation, and this change necessitates providing relief to other troubled subjects. However, after all this we could still ask: what exactly is the *purpose* of doing anything (or being made to do anything) for the sake of others if our actions are still, by Tanabe's

description, inherently flawed? Yet, to ask this would be to overlook the simple fact that the concrete result of this interaction with others is less important than the change in the relationship itself. What matters is the very shift towards prioritizing the salvation of others over personal gain. Regardless of the practical implications of working for the sake of others, the subject finds herself compelled to put them aside and instead focus solely on finding their affirmation. For Tanabe, this act of self-sacrifice for the sake of the affirmation of others is the work of the absolute (to lead them to overcome their own powerlessness and find rebirth); it is the realization of what has been called "god's love" many traditions within the relative world, insofar as the negation of one subject allows for the affirmation of the other. This notion of love meant to spur on the salvation of others is not a means to achieve a higher goal: it is the very ends which the practitioner of *zange* must demand.[8] The realization of a community of those who, through such a conversion, are all willing to give the shirts right off of their proverbial backs. *Genso*, in the end, is realized in the end by returning to the relative world for the sake of nurturing just such a society.[9]

Of course, we still face at least one more problem. Despite the fact that we have referred repeatedly to a "return" to society, the picture we have to ask whether this denial of self-determination and reason is actually healthy. If self-power and relative reason are both left shredded on the floor with only passive faith in the leadership of the absolute, then how can we be sure that the transformed subject will not be led into dangerous situations under the guise of saving the unenlightened? Could this not lead the subject in question to become easy prey for cults or radical religious organizations? Could what started off as an attempt to return us from a life-shattering personal crisis instead remove us from society entirely? If this is the road that Tanabe's road leads us down, then we should be wary of his thought as a whole. So is there anything left to defend him?

This question as a whole seems to haunt his philosophy, and Tanabe himself does not seem particularly interested in giving a thorough overview of how he can avoid it. Indeed, there seems to be an (almost naïve assumption) that action done after performing *zange* is bound to be ethical. While there have been notable attempts to try to flesh out a potential response to this question,[10] the only one that I can find in his philosophy is the importance which he gives to social praxis. Insofar as Tanabe denies vehemently any ascension to a higher level of spiritual existence,[11]

the only actual way to engage in this neighborly relationship is to go about one's day-to-day life in the same praxis that one always has. The only difference now is that one has come to terms with their own relativity and futility and—for that reason—these daily activities are now aimed only to help the needs of society, instead of personal gain or interpersonal competition.

The upshot seems to be that, from Tanabe's perspective, the only solution to the total powerlessness of relative beings is found in the formative process of a quasi-religious society in which the constituents all aim to help one another equally in accordance with what is necessary for the salvation of everyone. The transformation that once removed one from their ordinary and daily life that they had known does nothing other than return the subject back to where it came from. With that said, this does not mean that nothing changed. The return to society brings the subject back in a "self-less" state, in which the same social praxes meant for social gain and competition have become tools for the sake of the salvation of others. This shift in priorities offers a new form of self-realization to those who had once lost sight of it, even as they continue to be plagued by their own powerlessness and afflictions.

Now, the final question we will touch upon here is whether or not the machinations of a post-war Japanese philosopher who had used a mixture of traditions domestic and foreign to speak to others in his country who felt the same powerlessness, could potentially make sense in modern society. The fastest way to do this is to revisit one of our previous examples of how powerlessness can affect one's life: addiction. To tie our formulations of Tanabe's philosophy back with addiction, we can see that the communities that form to counter them are paradigmatic examples of the phenomenon we have described here. Of specific interest to us are 12 steps programs, which not only offer this kind of mutual support system, but in and of themselves require an inventory of personal powerlessness as the first step to get in, which is only later followed by public apology and a return to society after rebirth.[12] While it is exceedingly difficult to prove the efficacy of these groups in contrast to other forms of treatment,[13] its universality for all types of persons and patients is not important. All we need to concern ourselves with here at the moment is the fact that these communities can exist and can serve as a place of recovery for those who can no longer cope with their own powerlessness.

Conclusion

Over the course of our reflections on powerlessness and Tanabe's attempted solution to the problem, we have found that it is possible for persons suffering from this feeling of powerlessness to use this feeling as a springboard to transform, and find a totally new form of selfhood defined by the passive affirmation of other selves. By accepting this powerlessness, and in this acceptance finding strength in a community of other powerless subjects, one can find a sort of paradoxical form of salvation consisting of mutual support between still-powerless subjects. We have here provided a logical schematic for this transformation and attempted to give empirical grounds to it with the very brief example of addiction treatment.

The only question left to address, then, is how this relates to self-realization. That is to say, can a theory which relies on the metaphorical death of the self ever truly be considered self-realization? Instead, is this reduction of the self to a passive mediator for the affirmation of other selves not the end of realizing any self? Does it not instead preclude the very possibility of self-realization? If we were to put all of these questions together, we could easily ask, what does this transformation mean for the realization of the self?

What I believe can be found when we examine the investigation we have made up to this point is a shift in the meaning of self-realization to match with the transformation of self. Self-realization on this model would no longer point to a Maslow-esque search for creative expression and social relationships that follows only after procuring the various interests of one's own self. The change in priorities here twists self-realization into a process which relies on the total abandonment to these interests and the rejection of the self's right to dynamic self-determination, replacing it with a reciprocal self-negation for the sake of other equal individuals. As was mentioned above, the mutual benefits or results that can be gained from this reciprocity are not what matters. Overcoming one's own personal limits and being freed from the paradoxical trap of "needing to do something about the fact that you can't do anything" within the new context of life with others is in and of itself a valid form of self-realization.

Notes

1. Specifically, Tanabe's emphasis on forgiveness from a higher power not subject to church doctrines or other relative beings seemed to cause friction with those who were critical of his responsibility towards the war. Tanabe's political philosophy had often been conceived of as far-right statism, and had otherwise seemed to equate the emperor and the absolute, depending on interpretation of course. The particular details or the veracity of these interpretations are not important. All we need to remember is that a certain set of the Japanese public viewed Tanabe as holding some modicum of responsibility, and that this religious turnabout seemed to be a case of Tanabe granting himself forgiveness from an absolute not subject to church doctrine or the judgment of relative others. I have no interest in Tanabe's personal situation for the sole reason that his logical formulations are—as we shall soon see—valid regardless of the purity of his intentions. Tanabe's political philosophy's problematic aspects are discussed in Heisig (2001). Parkes (1997), although not spending much time on Tanabe in particular, shows that many historical works that accuse the Kyoto school of fascism are based on an incomplete understanding of their work, which could also be applicable to Tanabe. On the other hand, Suares (2012) gives a much less sympathetic reading of Tanabe, and points to less pure potential motives, such as merely giving himself a platform to recuse himself from all responsibility.
2. I borrow the phrase, of course, from Charles Taylor. More importantly, though, is for us to recognize the importance that a trans-cultural investigation into religious consciousness can have for a society that has been more interested in spirituality than specific religious dogma for the last several decades (cf. Taylor 2007).
3. It is on this account that Tanabe seems to equate self-power and reason, even going so far as to group the two together openly. Tanabe substantiates this with his "absolute critique" of reason, in which he shows that any critique of reason is fundamentally incomplete and relative. This may seem incomplete as a motive to put "reason" and "self-power" together. However, Maraldo (1990) shows that other twentieth-century philosophers like Habermas have, in various ways, demonstrated the connection of personal interest and reason, and in this context, the idea that the two are connected can make sense. Once we have admitted this point, we are now faced with the fact that the self's capabilities to reason are equally powerless and, thus, equally ill-equipped to overcome powerlessness.
4. A thorough treatment of the concept of radical evil in Tanabe's philosophy can be found in Taguchi (2017).

5. What is likely more important than formal possibility of losing self-control is the phenomenology of experiencing one's own powerlessness. As Wisnewski (2014) has shown, there is very much an experience of what it is like to face a world painted by one's powerlessness to their addiction (to "reach rock-bottom", so to speak). Whether or not the subject could do something else, or if there is a theoretical best option, is not crucially important if the subject has no epistemological access to these solutions. Instead, the fact that this sort of face-to-face meeting with the limits of one's own power and knowledge is precisely the problem at hand.
6. For instance, P. Suares (2012) notes that Tanabe's description of his own personal experience is consistent with the psychological notion of *reaktionsbildung*, in which persons who undergo trauma often seem to lose grasp of their self in response to the extreme stress of the situation.
7. A more detailed comparison can be found in Laube (1990).
8. Note that Tanabe himself sees *Zange* as the key to realizing a society that could be equated with ideas like Kant's "Kingdom of Ends" or Augustine's "City of Heaven."
9. Perhaps one necessary question that wasn't asked is the matter of whether or not reciprocity within a community is actually necessary or even possible. We've already seen that *Zange* itself starts from a thorough self-inventory which in and of itself does not necessitate the intervention of others. Hence, it would seem that this transformation does not require reciprocity. Moreover, assuming that one's own personal transformation will also cause others to transform would need to be justified. If I give the shirt off my back to a member of my community, it is possible that the recipient could gain nothing from the exchange other than a new shirt (as opposed to a deep lesson about kindness or altruism). Otherwise, we can also imagine a situation in which the self-sacrificial lamb is merely taken advantage of as someone who will not think properly of her own self-interest, i.e., as an easy or gullible target. The question to be asked here, though, is whether or not this would invalidate the system we are painting here. Would this change in relationship with others be as effective for those struggling with their own powerlessness if no one else in the community would negate themselves for the sake of the affirmation of the powerless subject? Is action for the sake of others sufficient in and of itself? If not, is this whole system nothing more than a roundabout way to seek out a higher form of self-satisfaction that requires the involvement of others? Answering these questions in detail would require a new paper, so we will not solve them here. All I will say here is that Tanabe requires more clarity concerning the necessity of reciprocal relationships that can't be guaranteed.

10. Cf. Maraldo (1990).
11. Tanabe describes his own position specifically as a "philosophy of action following the path of *genso*," which is opposed to mystic positions which he reduces to purely speculative or contemplative philosophies. Tanabe (1986, 3).
12. Maraldo (1990) presents the most serious attempt to answer this question by trying to rely on the reformation of reason. With that said, when Tanabe says he will be made to try anything, he does not say that with the qualifier that he will try something as long as it falls within the realm of reason. In a sense, it is the exact opposite: the unreasonable practice of giving one the shirt right of your own back is necessary for this system to work. Hence, we cannot take Maraldo's answer seriously until we have given a far more substantial account of what this type of reformed reason would be and why it allows for such a selective process.
13. We ought to remember that the efficacy of spirituality in addiction treatment, much less specific groups like the twelve steps is not a universally accepted phenomenon. What the precise meaning of spirituality is in these groups (and whether or not they do not presuppose specific religious dogma), apparent disconnects between social workers and therapists familiarity with religion and that of the patients themselves, as well as whether or not these groups actually produce significant results are all problems that remain in the background. Discussions concerning the first two topics can be found in Dossett (2002). Problems concerning bias towards Christian theology can be found in Cook (2004). Now, with that said, there is evidence that these programs can be beneficial for patients. Jarusiewicz (2000) provides a survey that indicates spiritual treatment seems to be a comparatively superior form of treatment.

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