A Metaphysics of Personal Identity: Emotion, Others and Time

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by

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introduction

In Proust's funny and melancholic *Remembrance of Things Past* Marcel tells us that '(O)ur social personality is the creation of the thoughts of other people'.[1] Marcel's remark is hardly a comprehensive summary of Proust's position on our relations with others. But the idea that other people play an important part in constituting ourselves is significant. Of course, there are cases where this claim can seem less admissible. That is, what I think about others can be seated in misreadings of their intentions. My perception of other people can be distorted by ignorance and misapprehension.[2] However, it would be misconceived to exert too much emphasis on this commonplace, and perhaps disconcerting, phenomenon. In other words, my relationships with others may lead to finding that there are aspects of the other person that I am not entirely certain about; that there are a plateau of features belonging to another that remain, at a certain time, elusive and unknown to me. But I would like to treat these suspicions as an extension, rather than a trenchant undermining, of the above proposal. They represent one possible outcome of our relations with other people. They are certainly not to be taken as a condition for them. In fact, my intention in this

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1. Proust, Marcel (1989) *Remembrance of Things Past: 1*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin and Andreas Mayor, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 20

2. Apter, T.E (1984) *Self-Defence and Self-Knowledge: the Function of Vanity and Friendship in Virginia Woolf* pp. 83-98, in Warner, Eric (ed.) *Virginia Woolf. A Centenary Perspective*, London: MacMillan, p. 84

thesis is to fully corroborate Marcel's remark. I think that it embodies an extremely compelling strategy for addressing the questions of identity and our continuity over time.

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Marcel's remark allows us to break away from a philosophical tradition that has, to be candid, severely tarnished an understanding of the self's recognition of itself. Traditionally, philosophers have approached these issues through a theoretical framework premised on an utterly different assumption. They have argued that I can know myself without any reference whatsoever to other people and the world, and therefore that the self is also constituted independently of such features. The theories of the French philosopher René Descartes are, in particular, often offered as an emblematic indication of such a view. According to Descartes a finely nuanced act of introspection provides self-knowledge. The mind, he says, is already populated with ideas which tell me all I need to know about myself and the world. He means that I do not need to bother with what lies "outside" me for knowledge and self-knowledge merely involves a scrupulous inspection of facts already located inside my mind.[3] I shall call this view an *introspective standpoint*. My thesis is, inturn, an attempt to abandon such a standpoint. For I think that this view produces a wealth of immeasurable difficulties. In fact, we would be better off focusing on emotion, others, and time as indispensable constituents of identity and continuity. These three elements, I want to demonstrate, give us a picture of the self more sharply attuned to our

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3. Descartes, René (1988) *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch (eds.) *Selected Philosophical Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Second Meditation, p. 86 (34)

ordinary intuitions.

I am, then, distancing myself from the thought that an understanding of identity and continuity is incurred from an act of introspection. This is because an introspective view holds that an "inner", "private" region is an underlying constituent for every act performed by the self (the mind). Furthermore, it claims that this mind, and the objects that it contains, are translucently present to a subject. Lastly, that it is the absolute starting-point for all meaning. Or the mind, simply by itself, provides information about everything that the subject knows. In fact, by virtue of being *the* chief source for all meaning it alone is *also* instrumental for securing our continuity through time.[4]

My thesis can be construed as a frank protest against these assumptions. For I picture the self as being embodied in the world and *perceiving* and creating itself in dialogue with, in particular, other people. Indeed, by integrating the views of other people I weave my life into a whole. That is, the self is embodied. Other people can literally see it. It is a whole person rather than a mind. But it is also an ongoing process as opposed to Descartes view that it is an unchanging substance located inside the body. Descartes reasons that the self is revealed to the subject as a mind, a stable, unvarying substance; when the self's understanding of itself is a progressive process disclosed to it through its emotional relations to the world and others.

Descartes has, of course, been a focus of acute criticism in the present philosophical climate. The undermining of the idea of an enduring mind knowing things from its own case has been a motivating source for theories on the self, and knowledge in general, in the analytical tradition in Britain and also within the continental tradition, hugely influenced by Heidegger and Nietzsche. This thesis

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4. ibid, pp. 82-83 (28) As we shall see in the next chapter this view however creates enormous dilemmas for Descartes.

does, therefore, adhere to the general current of scepticism surrounding Descartes' proposals. However, my misgivings are particularly concentrated on the often astonishing indifference attached to the emotions in philosophical theories influenced, either positively or negatively, by Descartes.

The idea of a self-reflexive mind reduces the self. It turns it into a insensible receptacle recording meanings from a world no longer made up of a vast array of colours, smells, sounds. We understand our world through being affected by it. We hear our feet crush bundles of leaves veneered with an autumn ink. We sink into a state of indolent calm when confronting a noiseless river. That is, the introspective view of Descartes empties the self and the world of the very features required to evoke its enthralling saliance. In picturing the self as a passive, isolated mind he encourages us to mistrust the suggestive influences of other *bodies* and Nature. More significantly, the introspective position has evacuated the self of what is a condition for it. That is, it removes the self from the world and other people by encouraging us to think about it as either a disembodied or mental perceiver ideally discovering truth from within. However, once we become seduced by this view we rob the self of all the minimal conditions which serve to be a touchstone of its identity and continuity.[5]

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger, as we shall find out, describes these conditions as being-in-the-world. He tells us that to exist is to be in an emotional unity with one's world (Care or concern). 'Being-in-the-world, as concern, is *fascinated by*, the world with which it is concerned'.[6] He means that I am never *initially* in the habit of thinking about myself or the world as a collection of ready-made facts that I find out about by an act of introspection. On the contrary, I am always in the process of finding out about myself and the

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5. Romanyshyn, Robert D (1993) introduction to Roger Brooke, *Jung and Phenomenology*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. xiii-xiv

world as I move about within it. That is, I understand phenomenon in reference to *human* interests, desires, intentions and motives. And these features are not mental representations acquired independently from the world but ways of encountering the world anchored in a shared understanding.

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I am not an isolated mind. I am a feeling body. But furthermore, I recognize myself directly through the emotions. The emotions unite me to objects and other people, and as such, I recognize myself as an entity jointly determined by what I feel for. What is therefore central in this case is that I recognize myself as a whole made up of objects and others which I respond to with my emotions. Indeed, here, the model of touching things is suggestive. For when I touch things I become a part of what I touch. I find myself directly participating with the article that pulses beneath the cusp of my fingers without a distinction between an "outside" and "inside". Hence John Macquarrie says:

> (T)hrough our feelings we are immediately participating in the world. Perception through the senses becomes an objective understanding of the world. I detach myself from the object, so that it stands over against me as object. But in feeling I am united to that which I feel, and both it and I are included in a whole. The kind of sense perception that comes nearest to such feeling is touch. Significantly, to touch something is also to feel something and to stand in a peculiarly intimate relation to it.[7]

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6. Heidegger, Martin (1993) *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 88 (61)

7. Macquarrie, John (1972) *Existentialism. An Introduction, Guide, and Assessment*,

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The introspective viewpoint is sketched out in the first chapter of my thesis. In this chapter I also elucidate it as it figures in the philosophy of Descartes and David Hume. There are, of course, startling differences in the conclusions offered by both philosophers. Descartes, for example, reasons that an understanding of identity and continuity is determined by an enduring mind that is very closely woven with the body.[8] For Hume, in contrast, we are invited to think about ourselves as a swiftly moving bundle of perceptions united by the imagination.[9] Nevertheless, we do find outstanding affinities between both arguments formulated by these philosophers. That is, Descartes and Hume connect the 'truthfulness' of an idea to a kind of "internal seeing". Thus, Descartes says that an idea corresponds to an indubitable truth when it appears clear and distinctly in the mind of the subject. While, Hume argues that meaning is contiguous to the shifting vivacity of internal images. But, here, it is difficult to understand how a mere association with the vividness of an internal image is supposed to reveal meaning. That is, both philosophers are extremely attracted to the assumption that knowing is linked to "looking inwards" at ideas in the mind; finding internal pictures which offer information unmediated by what occurs on the "outside". The problem, however, with this view is it that fails to fully appreciate the circumstance that all knowing is what we may call conceptual. What I think about are concepts. We grasp what a thing is through the fact that it is filtered with an understanding of uses or roles constituted by the practices of our

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Harmondswoth: Penguin, p. 157

8. Descartes, René (1988), Second Meditation, p. 82 (27)

9. Hume, David (1985), *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Ernest C. Mossner (ed.) Harmondsworth: Penguin, Book 1: Of the Understanding, Part IV (VI), p. 307

social communities.

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In my second chapter the theme of knowing being associated with what is "outside" is attached to a very important and fundamental argument of this thesis. This is that a subject's understanding of himself or herself is mutually fixed by what he or she relates to in the world. In the first half of this chapter I try to validate the latter point by addressing the work of Gareth Evans. He argues that an understanding of myself must incorporate spatiality and perception. He means that I am a body. Thus, I am aware of myself bodily situated in a particular place in the world, or I have a certain embodied, spatial perspective on the world. This awareness of being located in a space, moreover, is the product of perceptually relating to objects which inhabit the world. Evans says that I find myself already living in a world permeated with an infinite variety of objects and things open to the view of other people. Furthermore, I am aware of these objects as objects anchored in a space which is interdependent with my own spatial location. The spatial location of an object that I perceive in the world is to be defined as a mutual expression of my own. Both subject and object are mutually inclusive. They jointly determine an understanding of my spatial perspective.[10]

However, although this is an important point, a mere emphasis on spatiality presents a disappointing abridgement of our selfhood. Hence, the connection Evans draws between an object on the "outside" mutually determining a subject's perspective, their understanding of themselves, does allow us to

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10. Evans, Gareth (1982) *The Varieties of Reference*, John McDowell (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 222

elude the shortcomings characterized by the introspective standpoint. But an understanding of myself definitely emerges from a richer background than the one usefully alluded to by Evans. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that in the second half of chapter two I aim to enrich his account by drawing attention to the work of the novelist Virginia Woolf.

Woolf is closely associated with the modernist tradition. But her reflections on the self and its continuity over time have been influentially accommodated by more recent philosophers. For example, Giles Deleuze and Paul Ricoeur.[11] My interest in Woolf however concerns the emotional dimensions of our identity and continuity. That is, Woolf is more susceptive to the theme of emotion than Evans. Her novels are filled with highly relevant interpretations of the way emotion figures in understanding ourselves. In fact, she describes the world as a purview which cannot be known independently from one's emotions. This means that there is nothing neutral, disinterested, or numb about what I perceive. On the contrary, we find that every object that I perceive is couched in a significance which is expressive of my interests. In addition, understanding objects is joined to recollection or memory. But, again, not in a neutral sense. For an understanding of objects is arrived through recollections which sustain and amplify a continuity between a past that still emotionally grips me and my present. For Woolf, therefore, our perceptions of objects unfold as stories which tell us something about the subject who perceives them because they refer to elements in his or her past that bear a strong emotional content.[12]

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11. See Deleuze, Giles (1994) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, London: Althone and New York: Columbia University Press. For Deleuze Woolf shows a self which is mingled with what it perceives. He means it is part and parcel of a multiplicity rather than a separate entity

In my third chapter these themes are strengthened through a reading of the work of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's *Being and Time* has been a stimulative influence on the picture of identity and continuity that I wish to convey in this thesis. I have already briefly described his notion of being-in-the-world. This is the idea of the self being continuous with the world and other people through emotion. In fact, what is certainly central to this stipulation is an attempt to repudiate Descartes' notion that emotion is merely extraneously connected to knowing and Being. The two of the cornerstones of Heidegger's philosophy thus are the themes of Care and Time. Both, he says, are interdependent, and both consolidate the self's understanding of identity and continuity. Heidegger also links Care to what he calls a pre-reflective engagement with objects and others. By the term pre-reflective he is alerting us to a kind of knowing or disclosure which is implicit. That is, it emerges prior to reflection. His rather sophisticated argument is that I firstly understand myself on a pre-reflective level. Reflection and its associations with identity and continuity is then not to be taken as the fundamental precondition for self-knowledge.[13] (However this does not mean, as we shall soon see, that reflection plays no beneficent role for the formation of identity and continuity). In other words, it is quite evident that the self is not a

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detached from the world. p. 56-57. Paul Riceour's understanding of Woolf, and his idea of time and narrative is suggestively discussed by Genevieve Lloyd in Lloyd, Genevieve (1993) *Being in Time. Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature*, London and New York: Routledge. Lloyd's book has been an invaluable source and influence on this thesis.

12. Apter, T.E. (1979) *Virginia Woolf. A Study of Her Novels*, London, Basingstoke: MacMillan, p. 50

13. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time*, p. 122 (88)

thinking mind or soul. Its identity is not dependent on finding within one an autonomous unchanging substance, a self not constituted by its relations to the world and other people. The self is, on the contrary, a social construct. It knows itself through a pre-reflective process of interpretation derived from its social community. This means that its understanding of itself is not drawn from its own case, through a mode of introspection in particular. Understanding is rather a function of a pre-reflective (emotionally centred) application of public practices which it acquires through being-with-one-another.[14]

The theme of Time is also dealt by Heidegger in a quite involved manner. In fact, rather than running the risk of obfuscating and convoluting my text with his distinctive vocabulary a literary example may more fruitfully suffice to clarify Heidegger's intentions. Time, for Heidegger, is not to be thought of as a "present" that the self finds itself inserted inside. Time is the self. It constitutes it in respect to a model in which the past and future co-exist in the "present". Or my "present" contains both an understanding of my past and future.[15]

The first book of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* supplies us with an excellent illustration of the undertones explicit in such a standpoint. In *Swann's Way* we find that Swann has fallen in love with Odette. We also find that whenever he hears Vinteul's sonata, the melody develops into an opulent emblem for self-discovery. Vinteul's sonata harbours the rare power to suffuse Swann's "present" with a flux of perceptions; a tumult of sights, scents and sounds associated with Odette. These perceptions, in turn, are central to a constitution of himself. That is, everytime that he is swept by the melody's influence he recalls what he thought of Odette in the past and what he thinks of Odette now through his new encounters with her. And this continuing process of recall and revision,

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14. ibid, pp. 149-168 (114-130)

15. ibid, p. 41 (20)

we discover, mirrors the identity of Swann. In fact, Marcel, the narrator of the novel, frequently alludes to this process as the product of an unknown seamtress. He describes it as the work of a self which collects and arranges different strands of "experiences" into different orders that take on new meanings as a result of the way that they are woven into each other.[16] To put it another way, we find that an increase in Swann's knowledge of Odette produces an increased insight into his love relation with her. For Swan's initial impressions of Odette were of an uninterested kind. It was rather later, in fact, that her appearance inspired an immense pleasure and wanting. Yet later, when he learned that she had a 'reputation', and thus entertained tentative suspicions regarding her commitment to him, Odette inspired a quite different image, one exhibiting love's grief and pain. '(T)he earliest appearances in our lives of a person who is destined to take our fancy later on assume retrospectively in our eyes a certain value as an indication, a warning, a presage'.[17] Therefore, the melody represents a motif for the unfolding story of Swann's life. It serves to demonstrate his evolving continuity through time by viewing it as a story being 'retold again and again, with subtle shifts and changes showing us ever new possibilities for thinking ourselves and our being in time'.[18]

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16. Proust, Marcel (1989) *Remembrance of Things Past: 1*, p. 445. Proust's own view does however share certain affinities with the introspective position. This is because he reasons that the emotion of love is actually a subjective rather than a mutual representation of the loved object. 'No doubt very few people understand the purely subjective nature of the phenomenon that we call love, or how it creates, so to speak, a supplementary person, distinct from the person whom the world knows by the same name, a person whose constituent elements are derived from ourselves.' [p. 505]

17. ibid, p. 414

18. Lloyd, Genevieve (1993), pp. 171-172

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This view represents a very good illustration of Heidegger's view of Time. He says that the self's continuity through time arises as an outcome of a pre-reflective and reflective weaving and re-weaving of its past and future through its unfolding new encounters with objects and others. He means that the self is best understood against the framework of a temporal entity. What it makes of itself is then an outcome of the way that it deals with its temporal structures; its past, present and future. It is not an unvarying substance positioned inside the body. It is instead an embodied individual weaving and re-weaving meaning in response to his or her relations with a miscellany of objects and other people that it encounters from to day to day.

It should, however, be emphasized that an understanding of myself is primarily disclosed as a pre-reflective association with the world and others. That is, I am not introspectively but implicitly aware of myself. Indeed, I recognize myself by undertaking a variety of roles and responsibilities that mirror the interests and meanings of my social community. These, in addition, do not serve to profoundly distinguish me from others. In fact, a pre-reflective understanding of myself is akin to having an identity which is nothing but a comprehension of a shared social existence.[19] For Heidegger, therefore, understanding myself as an individual whom lucidly stands out from other people arises through *modifying* a pre-reflective comprehension of myself.[20] He says that it is by reflecting on all the different beliefs originating in my social community and seizing them as my

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19. Blackwell, H.J. (1961) *Six Existentialist Thinkers*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 92

20. 'On the other hand, *authentic* existence is not something which floats above falling everydayness; existentially, it is only a modified way in which everydayness is seized upon'. [Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time*, p. 224 (179)]

own that I construct an individual identity. Thus, at first, I am aware of myself as a self undifferentiated from other people. This is because I behave with an unquestioned adherence to the social practices of my community. But I am, nontheless, able to construct a separate "individuality" through passionately - by serious reflection and (self)questioning - identifying myself with certain beliefs originating in my social community. Heidegger calls this process an 'authentic' *modification* or understanding of myself. It represents a way of enriching my continuity over time by a form of passionate reflection. That is, it does not indicate a discovery of what I genuinely am. It rather means that I assume a more ample authority over the procedure of making my identity; that I take responsibility, or start to "care" much more about doing the actions that make me the kind of person that I am.

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I want to argue, however, that our ethical practices figure prominently in the constitution of ourselves through our relations with others. That is, an implicit understanding or responses to the world and others are minimum conditions for self-interpretation. Indeed it would be difficult to imagine a world where we did not attach a value and importance to the feelings of others and ourselves. It would be difficult to picture a person whom never felt moved by the plights of other people; whom either never felt the presence of love, or an angered resistance in regard to his or her interactions with them. That is we, through the course of our lives, develop deep felt loyalties and connections with individuals. And here, an understanding of ourselves emerges as a process of evaluating the interests, roles and activities our family, friends, colleagues introduce us to. In my fourth chapter I respond to Jean-Paul Sartre's quite pessimistic perspective on one's relations to other people with this position firmly in mind. In my fifth and sixth chapters I focus on the writings of the philosopher

Ludwig Wittgenstein and Simone Weil respectively, drawing an important distinction between a "metaphysical" and ethical relation to others as modes which consolidate recognition and self-knowledge. Here, nevertheless, I make explicit that an ethical recognition of the other person is part of the framework in which the self is revealed through its interactions with others.

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Sartre offers a penetrating criticism of an internalist psychological interpretation of the emotions. An emotion, he says, gains its meaning in connection to specific beliefs held by a subject about a certain situation. For Sartre an emotion is not an unconscious bodily impulse or reflex similar to hunger but a purposeful and thus meaningful way of engaging with the world.[21] On the other hand, Sartre's negative account of intersubjective relations is critiqued. He claims, rightly, that an understanding of myself is determined in reference to an emotional relation or reaction to the other person. Indeed, in specific, by virtue his or her *look*. It is, then, within the context of an affective recognition of others that I become self-consciously aware of myself as, say, an object of shame. But he adds that my relations with others are governed by mutual mistrust. Moreover, an element of anxiety about being turned into an object against one's will is intrinsic to this response of suspicion. He means that my relations to others can be viewed as a process of self-definition; one particularly governed by a desire to assume a dominance over a situation in which I lose a power to freely determine myself. In this way, love emerges as a futile passion aimed at manipulating another's attentions in order to be aware of

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21. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1985) *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*, trans. Philip Mairet, London: Routledge, pp. 7-8

myself as freely determining my actions. In other words, the self desires to be its own foundation. However, it is better conceived as a capacity for establishing 'a spontaneously free consciousness'[22] freely choosing and creating itself as opposed to one which finds itself determined by *the look* of others. Sartre is not at all denying that other people constitute an awareness of oneself. He is rather asserting that this awareness leads one to feel ashamed or is a mode of a more general awareness centred on being threatened by the other person. Thus, my relationships with others figure as an ongoing battle inspired by an impulse to conciliate this threat by either dominating or purposing seeking to be dominated by the other person.[23]

The main difficulty with this view is that the other person is given only a regulative role in relation to constituting the self. However, if we examine Sartre's thoughts on the caress we find ourselves supplied with a positive erosion of the kind of doubts and fears he previously submits. That is, the caress institutes a relation with the other which does not collapse into an unsuccessful feud riddled with suspicion and despair. It, on the contrary, spells an achievement of mutual trust, a type of relation which encourages both partners to be more open to each other and to be enriched by this mode of openness.[24] Such a reading of the caress can be followed as an alternative to Sartre's pessimistic reading of being in love. In fact, my discussion of the caress anticipates a more detailed reading of this phenomenon in a later chapter. Here, and in a further chapter devoted to the touch and caress, I argue that this form of sensible contact

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22. Murdoch, Iris (1989) *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 9

23. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993) *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes, London: Routledge, p. 364

24. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995) *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, London and New York: Routledge, p. 357

initiates a transition from recognizing oneself in general terms to recognizing oneself as unique and irreplaceable. Indeed, this suggestion therefore plays a central role in the move that Heidegger suggests is central to the constitution of an individual identity. Through being caressed I perceive myself as a unique and irreplaceable source of attachment for another.

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In my chapter on Wittgenstein I attempt to demonstrate that the issue of identity and continuity can be founded on a "metaphysical" ground. Now traditionally, metaphysical foundations have been connected to the theme of eternal truths. Thus Descartes recognizes the "true" meaning of terms to be universally valid truths placed inside my mind by God.[25] But there are no eternal foundations of meaning. Meanings cannot be separated from interpretations which are specific to the different kinds of social communities we dwell within. However, there are certain concepts which tend to remain unchanged in our social communities. A "metaphysical" reading of the themes of identity and continuity, then, comprises of a search for relatively unchanging concepts that are crucial for establishing any thoughts about personal identity. Such a reading is therefore concerned with scrutinizing certain components in our form of life whose absence would make it impossible to intelligibly talk about identity and continuity. That is these concepts are tempered with a metaphysical import not in the sense that they are eternal truths, but rather because they give a certain necessary shape or form to the ordinary background of our human life; that they guarantee that it persists with a certain continuing solidity and recognizability.[26] They, more so, are so

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25. Descartes, René (1988), Fourth Meditation, p. 105 (62)

26. Strawson, P.F. (1959) *Individuals. An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, London: Methuen,

deeply entrenched in our lives that their absence would rigorously modify the type of understanding associated with having a *human life* to lead.

According to Wittgenstein - and what is certainly apparent in Heidegger - a necessary precondition for "understanding" is participating in a social community with a shared set of practices and rules. More specifically, holding an attitude toward the soul gives shape to the kind of background an understanding of myself emerges. That is, it conditions my perception of the other person as a whole person whose behaviour is humanly significant. And what I make of myself emerges from recognizing this human significance as a context in which I share certain possibilities of behaviour or actions with others.[27] An attitude, in other words, suggets that I perceive others within a framework of certain possibilities for mutual forms of interaction and response, a form of life that determines the range of possible roles and self-interpretations that one interprets oneself and others by.

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In my chapter on Simone Weil I argue that an attitude can be set apart from a moral stance toward another. This is because perceiving another person as an outcome of ethical intentions actually indicates holding serious responsibilities to other people.[28] A "metaphysical" stance is, however, a recognition of a quite different - and a more fundamental - kind. That is, I may or may not choose to aid someone in need. But there is clearly no question of *choosing* to respond to

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p. 10

27. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1991) *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 178 (iv)

28. Phillips, D.Z (1996) *Introducing Philosophy*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 93

another person as another human being. There is no room, in this case, for assuming that I *ought* to respond to others as human beings. For this would stipulate that it is literally possible for myself to detach myself from such reactions and contemplate whether I should pursue them or not.[29] The point is that an attitude belongs to a form of life, a context in which such distinctions are already presupposed, and as such, provide the grounds for determining what is meaningful for us.

An attitude, hence, is a pre-condition for a moral stance. It proceeds it, making it one possible form of response. That is, a moral stance represents a critical questioning of our behaviour toward others, and such criticism is an extension of the framework in which such reactions belong. I therefore do think that we can draw a distinction between a "metaphysical" and an ethical stance towards others.

Nonetheless, our ethical practices are a particular important constituent of our form of life in the sense that they do determine the kind of people we are. In other words, in respect to our day to day dealings with other people our ethical practices are central to the social constitution of the self. That is, although our ethical and "metaphysical" stances can be theoretically distinguished, in practice, one cannot easily segregate oneself from some mode of evaluation. I do not live in the world utterly unaware of ethics, or regard it as an activity that I can take up and abandon by virtue of precipitous whims. Being a part of a social community means being acclimatized to its practices, which do remain faithful to principles decreeing a concern and respect for other human beings.

Thus, for example, Weil writes that an understanding of others can be construed as an emotional response seated in being affected by another's presence in ways that I cannot completely comprehend nor protect myself from. She says

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29. ibid, p. 70

that there is something quite mysterious about the other person. Furthermore, this sense of mystery about the other person can be enumerated as a moral understanding; a sign that others matter to me as objects of respect. This is, however, not an example of an attitude towards the soul. It would be more correct to claim that when I meet others and am forced to alter my behaviour as a mark of respectful concern this reflects pursuing an order of responses that we, in our social communities, regard as commonplace and reasonable extensions of an awareness of others. These responses are hence inhabited with a peculiar force in the sense that I am aware of sharing with members of my social community a number of responses that are given a strong importance. However, a failure to embrace them does not imply that my behaviour makes no sense but that I am lacking in certain capacities, such as a motive to be genuinely concerned for another's well-being.[30] Moreover, an ethical stance toward other people can be taken to be a mode of existence in which one *achieves* an enriched understanding of oneself. For by responding to other people as objects of respect, by listening to them with sympathetic affection rather than a questionable distrust, I may gain an objective assessment of my limits, faults and abilities. That is, if I refuse to take into account the views of other people I will not be able to correct or ascertain certain perceptions I may hold about myself. Other people's comments can lead me to isolating certain aspects of behaviour, reading them into a new context, which involves holding new beliefs about myself.

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30. Norman, Richard (1981) *Robert Beeler: Moral Life: Critical Notice*, pp. 157-183, Canadian Journal of Philosophy Volume XI, Number 1, p. 172

A great deal of the central ideas of this thesis are also advanced in a book called *The Divided Self* by R.D. Laing. He tells us that other people determine what I make of myself. And, on a normative point, that a lack of a sympathetic content in my relations with other people generates a fragmentary or disintegrating grasp of selfhood.[31] Laing's suggestions are derived from a study of schizoid/schizophrenic behaviour. He describes these individuals as people who attempt to resist any kind of self-revealing relations with others because other people are taken to be a threat to their identity through time. Laing, however, suggests that I need to interact with the world and other people in order to be actively involved in constructing my identity and maintaining my continuity through time. In fact, the outcome of a schizoid/schizophrenic's strategy to evade others leads to, in extreme cases, a dissolvement of their selfhood.[32] In my sixth chapter I employ Laing's observations in order to show that identity and continuity do depend on other people. The predicaments "experienced" by the individuals he studies signal that the world and others are absolutely central to determining identity and continuity.

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My seventh chapter focuses on Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the theme of identity and continuity through time also influenced by clinical psychological research. In fact, a reoccurring central theme in Merleau-Ponty's work is the claim that meaning is generated in connection to an openness and communication with others. He suggests that in order to know things, including myself, I have to exist in the world and with others - be already open or related to them - on

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31. Laing, R.D. (1975) *The Divided Self*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 85 and p. 139

32. ibid, p. 90

an intersubjective pre-reflective level. He means that knowledge is not acquired independently from the world and others. That is, I am aware of myself as an anonymous body already existing in a relation to the world and other people who I share my world with.[33]

Merleau-Ponty suggests that an understanding of identity and continuity is a social construction. More specifically, it operates against the context of a changing individual history heavily influenced by factors in childhood. That is, what I take myself to be is shaped against a social background of practices that I am first initiated into by interactions with members of my family: parents and siblings, in particular. Here, then, the ethical practices of one's social community feature centrally in the constitution of the self since a recognition of myself consists in being brought up in a family where its members are already disposed to responding to each other in evaluative terms. The point is not that this recognition is initially evaluative. The point is that one fundamental characteristic of self-knowledge is a form of reflection involving a commitment to moral values. Understanding myself thus describes a circumvoluting reflection on my past and present relations and future commitments to others as bonds in which I and others affirm or resist, have succeeded or failed to live up to, particular conceptions of value.

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In this way an understanding of my continuity over time takes shape against what strikes me as significant or is a suggestive focus of concern. That is, the self is not merely disclosed through actions and relationships that belong

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33. Macann, Christopher (1993) *Four Phenomenological Thinkers*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 162

to its basic pre-reflective dealings with the world and others. On the contrary, we reflect, and what we reflect on are a number of vigorous ties and bonds with others which, over the course of our existence, well with a strong value. It is equally for this reason that self-understanding can be aligned to a narrative. Self-understanding can be attributed to an act of narration charting events of significance, turning points in the development of a personality.[34] For Paul Ricoeur, in fact, one noticeable method of self-recognition is the social practice of articulating a narrative in order to comprehend and explain one's "experience" of temporal continuity. Thus, the concept of the continuity of the self can be likened to the concept of the self as a story running from its birth to death.[35] It belongs to the social practice of telling a story about oneself, a story for example related in the fashion of Proust's Marcel. That is, it involves a 'dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us'.[36] Therefore, the concept of the self becomes the concept of a self as a unity produced by the practice of narrating our actions and events as novelists are inclined to convey stories: with a sense of irony, humour, pathos and nostalgia.

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34. Nalbantian, Suzanne (1997) *Aesthetic Autobiography. From Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Anaïs Nin*, Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan, p. 3

35. Ricoeur, Paul (1991) *The Human Experience of Time and Narrative*, pp. 99-116, trans. David Pellauer, in Marion J. Valedes (ed.), *A Paul Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 99

Heidegger's later philosophy aims to rediscover the sheltering and nourishing dimensions of the world one dwells within. However, he suggests that such dimensions are only accessible by virtue of listening to the world instead of judging and manipulating it for entirely scientific/economic intentions. Hence he introduces the term meditative thinking to describe how the Earth that we dwell upon and the resources that it provides can be unmasked as gifts fused to a sense of awe and wonder.[37] In my penultimate chapter the guiding thought behind this insight is situated inside the sexual relation. Focusing on D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* , and applying themes evoked by Luce Irigaray and the later Merleau-Ponty[38], I draw attention to a form of disclosing identity through the context of gratitude, friendship and love. Here I suggest that when the other person is grasped as an evocative source of support surrendering oneself to their touch institutes a rediscovery of the defining contours of my own body. That is, the touch of another person can inspire a recognition of my body as a significant threshold of identity and personal continuity.

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37. Taylor, Charles (1997) *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, p. 230

38. Heidegger, Martin (1993a) *The Origin of the Work of Art*, pp. 143-206 in Krell, David Farrell (ed.) *Basic Writings*, London: Routledge, p. 173

37. Irigaray, Luce (1993) *The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, "The Interwining - The Chiasm"*, pp. 151-184, and *The Fecundity of the Caress: A Reading of Levinas, Totality and Infinity, "Phenomenology of Eros"*, pp. 185-217, in Irigaray, Luce, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press; Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1968) *The Interwining - The Chiasm*, pp. 130-155, in *The Invisible and the Visible* , trans. Alphonos Linghis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

My thesis aims to demonstrate that our emotional relations to other people provide a "metaphysical" underpinning to the themes of identity and continuity. Furthermore, our ethical practices exert an important influence on the determination of the self. This is because we are brought up in a social community where these practices are regarded as commonplace and reasonable extensions of a "metaphysical" attitude toward others. In addition, when this relation is accompanied by moral reflection we have a *modification* of one's identity: an increase in self-clarity and self-understanding. That is, we depend on others for determining and finding out about ourselves. It is through them and not through some highly sophisticated philosophical solitude that we are able to take stock of whom we are.

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In this chapter I shall examine an introspective explication of the self's identity and continuity over time. This standpoint has been closely associated with the writings of René Descartes, and has had a stimulative influence on the work of David Hume. Descartes elucidation of the self is put forward in the *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In an elegantly written narrative he endorses a theoretical division between a disembodied mind and a corporeal body. Descartes suggests that the self is an immortal, indivisible, thinking substance. This substance is, in addition, intimately related to a body. In fact, it is only by an "inward" act of reflection that I can determine that the mind and body are dissimilar essences. Further, the mind is an indispensible requisite for establishing identity and continuity through time.

Hume's model of personal identity involves a much discussed repudiation of this presumption. Moreover, his denunciation of this view leads to conclusions that are extremely different to Descartes. However, this does not exonerate Hume's thesis. That is, (Descartes) conception of the mind still reassumes an effective grip on his imagination. And this, in turn, means that his argument, like Descartes, is inhabited with similar vicissitudes. For example, according to Descartes a review of the contents of my mind suggests that I am an eternal substance, or, an enduring incorporeal object.[1] Hume, in contrast, by pursuing the same introspective method, arrives at a rather dissimilar conclusion.

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1. Descartes, René (1988) Meditations on First Philosophy, Synopsis, p. 73 (13)

He suggests that I "experience" myself as a bustling sequence of - but do note - *self-sufficient* perceptions. The self, he concludes, is an imagined continuity of temporal perceptions - and note again - "in" the mind 'that may exist separately, and have no need of anything to support their existence'.[2]

It is therefore difficult to minimize Descartes' influence on Hume. This does not, however, imply that it is incorrect to point out that both philosophers have drawn markedly different conclusions about the self. On the contrary, this is an inescapable postulate. But, I also think that if we devote too much attention toward differentiating Descartes from Hume we shall, as a result, obscure a more interesting point. That is, in one important way their views coincide with each other. Or, both Descartes and Hume put forward introspective accounts of identity and personal continuity, and by doing so, a number of insuperable difficulties subsequently prevade their analysis. In this chapter I wish to, in fact, demonstrate that the difficulties both philosophers find themselves embroiled with develop as a direct consequence of holding an introspective standpoint.

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2. Hume, David (1985), *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 1: Of the Understanding. Of Personal Identity, p. 300

René Descartes and the cartesian self

René Descartes argues that the concept of the self and its duration over time is constituted by self-dependent thought. Thinking is to be understood as a constitutive attribute of the self. Descartes, furthermore, introduces this premise in order to inculcate a distinction not only between the self and its body, but one which separates the self from the world and other people. The Cartesian argument, however, is notoriously flawed. Descartes, we shall find, is inconsistent. Nevertheless, the motivating theme of his thesis is that if I reflect on my own individual life I will find a single, self-contained entity inside me. Through a certain process of critical reflection I discover inside myself a thinking substance theoretically separate from my body and the world, and whose continuity is sufficient to secure my identity over time.[3]

Descartes argument is not only problematic. It is also far more sophisticated than it may appear to be here. This is because he is not merely claiming that any sort of reflection provides an accurate insight into the self. Descartes has, on the contrary, something more perspicacious in mind: he is speaking of a particular form of reflection. That is, he wishes to ground knowledge of myself and the world on self-evident, eternal ideas or truths modelled on a mode of reasoning associated with mathematical reflection. Mathematics, he argues, testifies indubitable certitudes. In mathematics we apparently meet answers that are eternally true. For example, the number two when added to the number three always equals five whether I am awake or

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3. Descartes, René (1988), p. 74 (13-14) Descartes refers to the self as either the mind or the soul. The latter is traditionally associated with a bodiless substance and we shall find out later this is exactly the kind of picture that Descartes wishes to hold. He is under the impression that thinking is essentially bodiless.

asleep.[4] Furthermore, Descartes reckons that self-evident objectivity is particularly promising for philosophy since it should be conceived as a discipline which aspires to achieve a dependable universality. Thus, the kind of reflection Descartes is interested in is the kind tailored to solving mathematical problems. And this is because he thinks that if we want to put forward a precise erudition of the self (and the world) then we should adopt a method of arriving at truths analogous to a discipline noted for its precision: mathematics.[5]

The *Meditations on First Philosophy* is, in this respect, a hypothetical venture designed to separate truth from falsehood by referring to mathematics *ability* to arrive at objective truths. In specific, it involves an understanding emulating the idea of removing myself away from the world. That is riveting it, so to speak, at a certain distance from myself in order to recapture clearly and distinctly what I perceive. Descartes calls this form of understanding the method of doubt. But although the title may seem to pose something negative, the contrary is the case. For Descartes tells us that the method of doubt is really an inquiry designed to arrive at truthful knowledge. The idea is that in applying this method I will find that there are certain opinions that I cannot conceivably doubt. I will find opinions that I can correctly call truths. Furthermore, by discovering such truths I can build a new and rather more stable foundation of knowledge about the world and myself than I refer to at present.[6]

Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had

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4. ibid, First Meditation, p. 78 (20)

5. ibid.

6. ibid, Synopsis (73) 12

subsequently based on them. I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my ife, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last . . . . So today I have expressly rid my mind of all worries and arranged myself a clear stretch of free time. I am here quite alone, and at last I will devote myself sincerely and without reservation to the general demolition of my opinions.[7]

Descartes confesses that this method does raise a comprehensive problem. If I speculate about what is involved in order to meet this proposal I will find that I have picked up innumerable opinions of which it would simply take forever to inspect each one individually and arrive at a whole new vista of thought. Thus, he claims that in order to save time it would prove more fruitful to turn directly to the basic principles that my opinions are founded on. He means that by dismantling the basic principles that my "truths" are grounded on I will reduce the longevity of my task and, in the process, rescue a few opinions that cannot be doubted. That is, opinions or truths, which I have already mentioned, are needed to build a more stable foundation of understanding.[8]

Descartes, then, concedes that one basic principle for acquiring knowledge is the senses. This is the self's perceptual, auditory and tactile encounters with an object. He, however, warns that I should be rather wary of assuming that they support true opinions about myself and the world. This is because I can be easily deluded by my senses. (I)t is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once'.[9] For example, objects may

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7. ibid, First Meditation, p. 76 (17-18)

8. ibid, p. 76 (18)

9. ibid.

look diminutive and subdued in appearance if I perceive them from a great distance away from myself. That is objects which I will find, on a closer inspection, are rather large and conspicuously solid. Furthermore, Descartes suggests that it is extremely difficult to distinguish a dream encounter of an object from one arrived at when I am awake. In fact, I may be lying in my bed when I am really sitting by the fire in a dressing gown. Knowledge of the world is then tempered with falsehoods for my senses can decieve me and also because I cannot easily adjudicate between what is actually a dream from what is real or indubitable.[10]

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In the first half of this chapter I will question the former tendency. This is implicit in the claim that understanding depends on the mind's capacity to distinguish clear and distinct ideas from the confused ideas suggested by the body. I think that Descartes argument exhibits certain inconsistencies by virtue of distinguishing the process of thinking or understanding from the body, the emotions and a relation to the world. In the first half of this chapter I shall thus address Descartes remarks about the activity of thinking as an inner mental process, arguing that it is better construed as a way of acting. Thinking is an embodied activity involving the emotions and connected to sharing a common language and practices with other people. (An emphasis on thinking being a shared practice and how it rectifies the problems involved in modelling knowledge on private, introspective acts of attention will be dealt with in the second half of this paper on David Hume.)

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10. ibid, pp. 76-77 (18-19)

Thus Descartes wishes to claim that my knowledge of the world is a mode of cognition centred on apprehending objects as extended substances made up of measureable qualities such as:

> (T)he shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things; the place in which they may exist, the time through which they may endure, and so on.[11]

However, we will find that Descartes cannot successfully describe the body as another extended object in the world. This is particularly apparent in virtue of his willingness to invoke a connection between the mind and body in order to explain the phenomenon of the emotions or passions.

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According to Descartes an awareness of myself is indubitable in contrast to an awareness of my body. He arrives at this conclusion by the method of doubt. God, he suggests, could have deluded me about the fact that two added to three equals five, even though this is highly unlikely for God is perfectly good, and by being so, would not wish to deceive me about these things. Yet I could conceivably infer there is an evil demon who has the power to continually cloud my opinions. In fact, Descartes argues that although it may be quite unsound to ascribe to God such a vitriolic trait, the demon hyposis does seem to be credible. Thus, I can plausibly surmise that an evil demon is obfuscating my thoughts about 'the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds, and all external

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11. ibid, p. 78 (20)

things'.[12] I could claim that all these things are to be construed as 'the delusions of dreams' concocted by a malicious entity for the sole purpose of muddling knowledge of myself and the world.[13]

In the *Second Meditation* Descartes discovers that in pursuing this task he arrives at one indubitable proposition. This is that *I am, I exist.*[14] He means that even if I may not be entirely certain about what does exist there is, nevertheless, one thing that I can be confidently assured about. This is that someone is entertaining these thoughts. That is, what is distinctive about the activity of doubting is that it reveals a doubter. Or there is one thing that is necessarily true whatever doubts I can raise, and that is there exists someone who doubts such things.[15]

The proposition 'I am, I exist' is also called the Cogito.[16] And Descartes argues that it demonstrates that I am a substance that is theoretically distinct from my body. In this case, the body has 'a determinable shape and a definable location and can occupy a space as to exclude any other body'.[17] But, Descartes says, if I revive the existence of a malicious demon, plus the fact that my senses are inclined to deceive me, then the attributes that I ascribe to the body cannot

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12. ibid, p. 79 (22)

13. ibid, pp. 78-79 (21-23)

14. ibid, Second Meditation, p. 80 (25)

15. ibid.

16. The *Discourse on the Method* contains the more famous version of the Cogito, 'I am thinking, therefore I exist'. It is similarly a demonstrative proof materialising from the method of doubt, and consistent with the argument presented in *Meditations on First Philosophy*. That is, if I assume an evil demon confusing me about my thoughts - such as making me assume that I exist - I presuppose someone thinking [*Discourse on the Method* p. 36 (32)]

17. ibid, Seventh Replies, p. 123 (481)

possibly belong to the "real" self. That is, the body is an extended substance, and as a result it, like other objects, has an existence that can be doubted. But, what can be doubted cannot make up the self.[18]

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Descartes also draws a distinction between the self and its body, by suggesting that the body offers misleading proof of my "real nature". The body allows certain ideas to be presented to myself. That is, physiological ideas: the emotions, sensations, patterns of reflex behaviour, and ideas suggested by the imagination.[19] But he warns that if I wish to obtain an accurate knowledge of things I must take up a form of pure reasoning exercised independently of the bodily processes. Say, for example, my senses advise me that an object of wax taken from honeycomb has a certain taste of honey, the perfume of flowers, an explicit size, colour, shape, hardness and coldness. But if I place this object before a hot fire these qualities, as permanent as my senses assume them to be, dissolve even though the wax remains.[20] Descartes means that there must be something quite specific about this *changed* object that ensures that it remains the same. But my senses cannot reveal this is to me since the qualities that they have disclosed are no longer presented to my awareness after the object has been placed in the fire. Even the imagination cannot help me here. It only

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18. ibid, Second Meditation, pp. 81-82 (26-27)

19. Wilson, Margaret D. (1978) *Cartesian Dualism*, pp. 197-211, in Micheal Hooker (ed.) *Descartes. Critical Interpretive Essays*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, p. 199

20. Descartes, René (1988), Second Meditation, p. 84 (30)

allows me to visualise a small number of the innumerable amount of changes that this object undergoes.[21] For Descartes it is really by thinking or judging rather than by imagining or the senses that I arrive at true knowledge. In fact, I then learn that the wax in question is an external object. It occupies a particular position in space, and is extended.[22] Descartes means that a judgement allows myself to grasp the "real nature" of things. Or the "real nature" of things, their meaning and content, is grasped by forming a clear conception of them in the mind. Indeed, Descartes adds that if I am willing to agree with this point then I must be equally prepared to argue that thinking tells me about the essential nature of the self. A judgement constitutes an error-free comprehension of the self. (Although Descartes is discussing how I come to know things here, he then turns speedily toward the claim that thinking or judging essentially constitutes the self. He leaps from the claim that thought divulges the self toward the claim that the self is *actually* a thinking thing or a mind.[23]) However the outstanding problem in this case is that "true" knowledge is meant to be obtained independently to a committal to anything external to the self. Thinking, in other words, is meant to be a process which can occur independently of the body. But this is a rather dubious claim, for Descartes accounts of "thinking" are articulated in reference to the metaphor of perception. Understanding a "true" idea in fact means *perceiving* it as a clear and distinct object.

Sense-perception? This surely does not occur without the body, and besides, when asleep have appeared to perceive through the senses many things which I have afterwards realized did not perceive through the senses at all. Thinking? At last I have discovered it - thought: this alone

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21. ibid, p. 84 (31)

22. ibid.

23. ibid, p. 82 (27)

is inseparable from me. I am, I exist - that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking.[24]

Reflection for Descartes means inspecting the inner contents of one's mind. When I reflect on the "real nature" of, say, an object of wax this operation involves "looking inwards" at certain ideas inside the mind. Descartes, additionally, suggests that the term 'idea' should be likened to perceiving an image or *picture* in the mind.[25] Further, a "true" idea is clearly and distinctly perceived. This means it is innate, tailored to the mathematical qualities of objects and shimmers with a certain vivacity.[26] But thinking in this case is being redescribed in analogy to an ordinary perception of external objects. Thinking is modelled on an "inner eye" which presupposes a bodily perception of entities in a public world.[27]

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Furthermore, a direct consequence of Decartes above claim is that I exist as long as I am thinking. That is, the surety tied to reflection here cannot secure anything more than a momentary existence for a thinking thing. Thus, Descartes now needs to rescue the self from a claim that merely guarantees its existence through what is temporally presented to its mind.[28] The problem is,

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24. ibid.

25. ibid, Third Meditation, p. 88 (37)

26. ibid, pp. 92-93 (43-44) and p. 103 (60)

27. Wilkes, Kathleen V. (1988) *Real People. Personal Identity without Thought Experiments*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 219

28. Lloyd, Genevieve (1993), p. 46. A.J. Ayer also raises the same point. Ayer, A.J. (1976) *The*

however, more profound for Descartes because it is equally unclear how certain ideas in the mind are disposed to representing eternal truths through a momentary present "experience"? How can I be sure that certain ideas inside my mind, even if they do "look" more lucid than others, contain the kind of certitude that is beyond any future doubt? (I shall offer a reply to this problem in my discussion on Hume). Descartes replies that their surety is guaranteed by the fact that they have been vouchsafed by God.[29] It is, then, by substantiating the existence of God that Descartes assumes he can confidently vouch the certainty or the objectivity of his ideas and resolve the difficulty of ensuring that he exists only as long as he is thinking. That is, Descartes settles this problem by arguing that the certainty of his existence in the future, like the surety of his ideas, depends on the existence of a non-deceiving God.

The proposal that God ensures the certainty of my ideas, however, leads Descartes to think that we can be a little more tolerant of our senses. He

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Central Questions of Philosophy, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 59

29. Descartes corroborates this claim by offering two proofs of the existence of God in the *Third Meditation*. The first proof ensues from the notion that he understands himself to be an imperfect entity, while he also has an idea in his mind of a perfect being (God). This then means God must have planted this idea within him. This is because it would be inconceivable to assume that an imperfect entity could have thought up an idea of perfection without someone else's aid. If, in fact, he did he says he could see no reason why he himself could not make himself into God, or lack the qualities that he certainly does. The second argument is called the ontological argument. This means, briefly, that God has a necessary existence in the same manner in which the three angles of a triangle necessarily equal two right angles, or that a valley necessarily requires a mountain. Just as I cannot think of a valley without a mountain, I cannot think of God's existence without Him or Her necessarily existing.

[Descartes, René (1988), pp. 97-98 (51-52) and p. 107 (66-67)]

suggests that the senses do hold a certain kind of informative content because God with, so to speak, good intentions at heart furnished them for my purposes. Nonetheless, I must be considerably prudent about awarding them too much of a prerogative. The "real nature" of the world and myself is revealed through reflection (and reveals the former *only* in relation to measurable qualities). I must not be tempted to succumb to the view that my senses are capable of revealing the same sort of lucid certitude that thinking or judging establishes. That is, despite the goodness of God the senses and emotions are liable to lead me astray on some occasions, but as long as I am able to exercise my reasoning capacities and recognize such occasions I need not be misled.

> It is quite clear from all this that, not withstanding the immense goodness of God, the nature of man as a combination of mind and body is such that it is bound to mislead him from time to time . . . . (D)ryness of the throat may sometimes arise not, as it normally does, from the fact that a drink is necessary to the health of the body, but from some quite opposite cause, as happens in the case of the man with dropsy. Yet it is much better that it should mislead him on this occasion than it should always mislead when the body is in good health . . . .
>
> This consideration is the greatest help to me, not only for noticing all the errors to which my nature is liable, but also for enabling me to correct or avoid them without difficulty.[30]

Descartes has actually made an invaluable point that I wish to discuss. For he invites us to think that in respect to the ordinary affair of living the self is a mind closely related to its body; a mind operating in co-operation with the body's sensations and emotions in order to maintain an embodied well-being.

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30. ibid, Sixth Meditation, (89) pp. 121-122

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In the *Sixth Meditation* Descartes tells us much more about the mind's relation to the body. Having declared that the body is unequivocally distinct from the "real nature" of the self he now attempts to re-integrate it into a conception of the self (imagining and sense perception among other things). We, however, should exert a degree of caution in assuming that Descartes is therefore repudiating his previous conclusions. This is certainly not the case. Descartes is rather claiming that the body is theoretically extraneous to the self. While as far as an "experience" of myself in the world is concerned, where I am generally disposed to thinking unclearly about these things, I find myself closely woven to a body. The situation is that the body is a kind of flesh and bone machine that would 'perform all the same movements as it now does in those cases where movement is not under the control of the will, or consequently, of the mind'.[31] That is, Descartes models the mind's correlation to the body to a non-mechanistic artifice influencing a mechanistic one.[32]

Descartes also claims that the mind receives ideas belonging to the body by virtue of the brain. It is the brain - and not the mind - which is immediately affected by the parts of the body. In this case, a sensation of pain in the foot, for instance, produces a signal in the brain which the mind then apprehends and understands as a pain in the foot.[33] In the *Passions of the Soul* he explains, in more detail, that this activity occurs within 'the innermost part of the brain', the pineal gland.[34] When I discover an object 'the animal spirits, the nerves, and even the blood' cause certain images to incandesce on the region of the pineal gland.

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31. ibid, p. 83 (29)

32. ibid, p. 119 (84)

33. ibid, p. 120 (87)

34. ibid, *Passions of the Soul*, p. 230 (352)

And it is these images which are subsequently received by the mind.[35]

My point is that Descartes knows that it is somewhat cursory to speak of the self without referring to its emotional and bodily constitution. On the one hand, he treats the body as a theoretically detached mechanical entity. But on the other hand, he is quite prepared to speak of the self as a substance which also imagines and has sense perceptions; particularly because he is aware that I *reflect* on being in the world through the medium of a body which is affected by its relations to it. In other words, Descartes holds that an *ordinary understanding of myself* is to be associated with the way that the body affects the mind. Thinking is an action of a conscious human agent. But it can be additionally linked to a context of desires, intentions and emotions: that is, via a judgement based on certain effects on the body.

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However Descartes introduces an immaterial substance in order to separate human thought from the working of machines and animals. And by doing this, is now forced to explain how an immaterial substance can interact with a physical one. His answer is that the supposed interaction takes place within a certain area of the brain: the pineal gland. But, here, we do not expunge the problem. We re-introduce the same vicissitude on a rather more novel, perplexing level. That is, Descartes has not satisfactorily explicated how a non-physical substance (mind or soul) can causally affect a physical one (the body). Instead, by positing the pineal gland as the location of this interaction he merely begs the very question he is attempting to clarify. Indeed one of

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35. ibid, p. 231 (354)

Descartes' most revealing remarks relating to this difficult question is delivered to Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia. Addressing her query concerning 'how can the soul of man, being only a thinking substance, determine the bodily spirits to perform voluntary actions'[36], he finally admits that in respect to our finite intellect the whole matter is an inscrutable mystery.[37] But if this true then Descartes clearly appears to be contradicting himself. For in this case he has suddenly turned the mind, a substance which he has previously indiciated is far better known than the body, into a deeply mysterious object. Apparently, the mind is now a substance which operates according to principles, contrary to a prior claim, I do not entirely understand or know better than the body.[38]

Descartes therefore certainly sounds more credible when he claims that having bodily perceptions shows that 'I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit'.[39] He recognizes that if this was not so my feeling of pain, adhering to this metaphor, would parallel the way that a sailor perceives a damaged part of his ship.[40] What is relevant here is that Descartes describes the self as an embodied unity. That is, a pain is a sensation that can be characterized by having a certain body as its focus. It is however difficult to reduce this pain, as Descartes himself acknowledges, to the action of a thinking mind relating to his or her body as an external spectator. For I cannot detach myself from my pain; *know* it as an idea occurring in the

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36. ibid, John Cottingham, General Introduction, p. x

37. Wilson, Margaret D. (1978), p. 209

38. Wilkes, Kathleen V. (1988), p. 220

39. Descartes, René (1988), Sixth Meditation, p. 116 (81)

40. ibid.

privacy of my mind distinct from my body. I rather live a pain. In this situation, I cannot conceive my body as just another extended object in the world but am directly or immediately identified with my body. 'If this was not so, I, who am nothing but a thinking thing would perceive the damage purely by intellect, just as a sailor perceives by sight if anything in his ship is broken'.[41]

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This important comment certainly calls into question Descartes' tendency to reduce the activity of thinking to an inner process of calculation involving drawing inferences of a mathematical persuasion. The activity of thinking is rather a much richer operation in the sense that it encompasses forming and enunciating our emotions. Thinking or thought is to be characterized in conjunction to a suggestion that is conveyed by, for example, Mary Midgley.

> (T)hought in general is not just information handling, such as computers do, but is the process of developing and articulating our perceptions and feelings. This is still true even if we confine the term to serious, 'directed' thought, ignoring more causal musings . . . . Thought is not primarily the sort of thing which is tested in exams. It is the whole organized business of living - seen from the inside.[42]

An understanding of myself and other truths about the world cannot be prized apart from the ordinary business of living, a form of engagement which

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41. ibid.

42. Midgley, Mary (1981) *Heart and Mind. The Varieties of Moral Experience*, London: Harvester Press, p. 3

involves an interpentration of reason, sensation and emotion. For example, after Descartes has presented certain arguments intended to reveal the existence of God (the *Third Meditation*) there ensues a gracefully written statement posing a wish to interrupt the argument for a little while in order to:

> reflect on his (God's) attributes, and to to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it. For just as we believe through faith that the supreme happiness of the next life consists solely in the contemplation of the divine majesty, so experience tells us that this same contemplation, albeit much less perfect, enables us to know the greatest joy of which we are capable in this life. [43]

This is an important comment in the sense that it reveals Descartes making a stronger concession than the claim that the emotions or passions indicate what is merely good or harmful to the body. Indeed, in this case, the sense of wonder that Descartes alludes to shows how various emotions are constitutive elements for our projects; fundamental conditions for regulating the shape and direction of an enquiry, demarcating what does and does not matter to one as an object of investigation.[44] This passage is thus worth studying in respect to the fact that it suggests how far thinking is not a state of being "emotionally indifferent" to things. For if we were "indifferent" to the objects of our inquiry there would be no impetus to focus on one project rather than another. That is, Descartes enterprise would be devoid of direction and purpose without a prior

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43. Descartes, René (1988), Third Meditation, p. 98 (52)

44. Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg (1992) *Descartes on Thinking with the Body,* pp. 371-392, in John Cottingham (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 386

concern to know.

The point is that the emotions are not incidental interludes passively undergone by ourselves. They are, on the contrary, an incessant feature of our activities. They make possible a solicitation with the world, enable us to focus our attention and orient ourselves toward things. That is having thoughts, or more specifically, the process of thinking is accompanied by emotions. For example, if we refer again to Mary Midgley's remark, then, when I am trying to solve a difficult mathematical problem, I am also thinking intently (passionately). Further, if I have solved the problem it would be perfectly commonplace to find myself exhibiting a capacity to take delight in its resolution. In other words, the serious attending Descartes categorises is continually interwoven with the emotions and bodily attitudes. A picture of a bodiless form of thinking, hence, seems less seductive when we break away from the idea that thought is distinct from feeling. If we also focus on the narrative of the *Meditations* we find that Descartes journey toward knowledge is noticeably inhabited with stylish testimonials to the emotions. He remarks that he is so seriously moved by doubt that he is in danger of plunging into a 'deep whirlpool which tumbles me around'.[45] Or, thinking about God 'enables us to know the greatest joy of which we are capable in this life'.[46] Or, one feels 'enslaved and miserable' when tied to the body's passions.[47] These remarks reveal an evident connection between the act of thinking of something and feeling something. Here, Descartes inadvertently expresses a fundamental interdependence between thought and feeling. We could, however, protest that in principle thought and feeling can be distinguished. That, the objection that has been advanced merely highlights a trivial mannerism of our

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45. Descartes, René (1988) p. 80 (24)

46. ibid, Second Meditation, p. 98 (52)

47. ibid, *Passions of the Soul*, p. 237 (368)

language. Apparently, the language that we employ seems to be mistakingly dominated with feeling. Or, Descartes suggestions are fundamentally correct because they could be formulated without the need to convey them in evocative metaphors. But if this is the case then we are forwarding a self that is unusually unmoved by the objects that it sees. Understanding becomes tied to an unemotional process of reflection - and this is at odds with the way that one is ordinarily predisposed to knowing phenomenon. In fact, Heidegger claims that we are left with nothing here but a self that stares blankly at its environment. He means that the self is constantly unmasked through a purposive, emotional mode of perception. My thoughts about myself are thoughts about the activities that I am concerned with. They involve committing myself to a certain course of action and a tacit acknowledgement of it affecting my present concerns.

It is precisely when we see the "world" unsteadily and fitfully in accordance with our moods, that things in the world show themselves in their specific worldhood, which is never the same from day to day. By looking at the world theoretically, we have already dimmed it down to the uniformity of pure present-at-hand, though admittedly this uniformity comprises a new abundance of things which can be discovered by simply characterizing them.[48]

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48. Heidegger, Martin (1993) *Being and Time*, p. 177 (138). Charles Guignon says that when Heidegger claims Descartes' position leads to a mere blank looking at things he also assumes this to be practically impossible. Intellectual perception, for Heidegger, is governed by a certain form of emotional interest; a mood to objectify the world in opposition to responding to it through, say, 'religious fervour or blinding rage.' Guignon, Charles, *Moods in Heidegger's Being and Time*, pp. 229-243, in Chesire Colhoun and Robert C. Solomon (eds.) *What is an Emotion. Classical Readings in Philosophical Psychology*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 239

I think that we should seriously accept his charge that this picture numbs human feeling and movement. That is, we should be suspicious of the conclusion that the self is a passive, tentatively unchangeable, dispassionate perceiver trapped in a body that is prone to delude it.

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Can we find anything inside ourselves that resembles Descartes' self? Certainly David Hume argued that Descartes was confused to believe that this is the case. He remarked that whenever he thought about himself he found a particular perception (including feelings), and nothing underlining it. I think that Hume's argument is, in one way, correct. And it would prove useful now to examine it in more detail.

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David Hume and the fiction of personal identity

David Hume's account of personal identity is elucidated in the first book of *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Here, in particular, he is critical of *a certain kind of* dualistic conception of the self. But, as I have already remarked, Hume's denunciations should not refract attention away from the fact that he is still firmly imprisoned within the same limiting framework as Descartes. Nevertheless, there are good grounds to scrutinize his critique. For although Hume holds an introspective standpoint, he does disclose a genuine vicissitude ensconced within the overall picture of the self put forward by Descartes.

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> There are some philosophers who imagine that we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, of its perfect identity and simplicity. The strongest sensation, the most violent passion, say they, instead of distracting us from this view, only fix it the more intensely, and make us consider their influence on the *self* either by their pain or pleasure.[49]

There are two reasons for connecting Descartes to the more general term, 'some philosophers'. Firstly, the kind of self Hume suggests that some philosophers imagine that I am is a persisting, unvarying substance. That is a continuing entity, whose continuity over time is sustained by an undivided substance. Secondly, Hume comments, that these particular philosophers think that I am intimately acquainted with such a self. I enjoy a first-hand

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49. Hume, David (1985), Book I: Part IV: Sect. VI, p. 299

knowledge of such a substance.

> Unluckily, all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of the *self*, after the manner it is here explain'd. For what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd? This question 'tis impossible to answer without a manifest contradiction and absurdity; and 'tis a question, which must necessarily be answer'd, if we wou'd have the idea of self pass for clear and intelligible. It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every idea.[50]

Hume is sceptical about the existence of the type of self that Descartes has put forward. This is particularly because it has not been empirically proven. '(E)vidence of demonstration' is of ample importance for Hume as an Empiricist. He believes that knowledge, contrary to Descartes stipulations about it being innate, is obtained through the senses. That is, knowing myself and the world depends on finding impressions or perceptions imprinted inside my mind by virtue of the five senses. Furthermore impressions, Hume explains, are informative inner objects which 'pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of ways' inside a chamber typically referred to as the mind.[51] Indeed, in respect to this rationale, if there is a self that resembles the one introduced by Descartes then we should also be able to locate an imprint of it inside the mind just like other impressions.

Thus, an impression is produced by the senses and can be surveyed in the mind. Colour, taste and smell are impressions. They can be, moreover, distinguished from ideas, which are complex perceptions. They are made up of

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50. ibid.

51. ibid, p. 301

different, provisional and distinguishable impressions, and importantly, 'have no need of anything to support their existence'.[52] Hence, an apple is taken to be an apple because it has certain distinguishable qualities. I understand it as an imagined unity made up of several different, fleeting impressions such as colour, taste, smell. These qualities, moreover, are not "experienced" by an unchanging substance, but they are nonetheless discovered inside my mind. In addition, ideas produce less lively and violent repercussions in the mind. Ideas are, in contrast to Descartes, faint images. They are rather muted unlike their more palpable counterparts, impressions.[53]

The motive behind describing Hume's account of impressions is to demonstrate his close affinity to Descartes. That is, we are being offered a picture of a self constructing knowledge from certain images it locates inside its mind. Thus, on the one hand, it is possible to draw a distinction between Descartes and Hume's views. For Hume explicitly dismisses Cartesian reflection by allowing the senses - a feature of the self Descartes distrusts - to be an imperative contribution to knowing.[54] But although we have a sudden turn of emphasis from bodiless thought to sense-given perception, Hume revives Descartes' introspective standpoint by suggesting that understanding myself

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52. ibid, p. 300

53. ibid, Book I: Part I: Sect. I, pp. 49-50

54. Unlike Descartes Hume insists that our emotions or passions directly influence the ordering of our beliefs about the world and others. This is quite evident in the third book of the *Treatise*. Hume rejects the view that moral opinions are derived from reason alone. 'Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particularly' [Book III, Part I: Sect. I, p. 509]. Reason alone cannot inspire us to draw moral judgements. Reason informs a subject about the consequences of acts. It is a capacity of sympathy, however, which leads one to approve or disapprove the act in question.

and the world involves making a distinction between the vivacity and faintness of perceptions discovered in the mind (for example, he speaks of vivid impressions but faint ideas, or memory being constituted by lively and worn out impressions of past events [55]). Therefore, understanding for Hume involves a "looking inwards" parallel to Descartes. Knowledge of identity and continuity over time depends on concentrating on something "internal". Or, we are actually being invited to defend a manner of thinking that Descartes attributes to a bodiless mind by arguing that knowledge of the self is acquired by "looking" at impressions inside the mind. In fact, in this part of the chapter I will try to argue that personal identity cannot be coherently rendered through an exclusive focus on the workings of the mind.

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After this remark Hume endeavours to locate an impression of the self. But before he starts to do so he institutes a necessary condition that such an impression should satisfy. This is, predictably, that 'it must continue invariably the same thro' the whole course of our lives'.[56] He means an indispensable requisite for an impression of the self is that it must be an enduring or an unchanging impression. However, he notes:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch *myself* at anytime without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When my perceptions are remov'd for any time, as by sound-sleep; so long am

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55. ibid, Book I: Part IV: Sect. VI, pp. 133-134

56. ibid, pp. 299-300

I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist . . . . If any one upon serious and unprejudic'd reflection, thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls *himself*, tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me.[57]

Hume suggests that when he attempts to find an impression of the self mirroring the one drafted by Descartes he teeters onto nothing but a particular perception. Hume is correct in one respect. Introspection does not expose the kind of self that Descartes believed he had proven the existence of. That is, a thinking substance underlying my perceptions. It is indeed extremely difficult to corroborate how my nature could be completely divulged to me by simply "looking into" my mind. On the contrary, the object that I am searching for seems to perpetually elude my attention. I do not find a single, fundamental "I" but rather discover myself being acquainted with an assorted series of features that belong to me (Hume calls these, as we have seen, perceptions).

Wittgenstein offered a parallel objection to the view that I can be introspectively aware of a self inside me. Following remarks made by William James he argued that the most introspection confirms is that I find myself in a certain state of attention. That is, I am expressing the word "self" and am trying to investigate its meaning. Again, the point is that rather than locating a self inside me I ascertain other features associated with myself (In Wittgenstein's case what is revealed is a certain way of thinking about things).[58]

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57. ibid, p. 300

58. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1991) *Philosophical Investigations*, 413 pp. 124-125

There is, however, an interesting discrepancy between Hume and Wittgenstein's expostulations. This is that Hume, in contrast to Wittgenstein [59], dismisses the notion that the term mind or soul can refer to a certain, continuing human being. According to Hume we cannot plausibly support the latter point when an introspective search for a self reveals nothing except a particular perception. However, in this respect Hume's argument is decidedly puzzling. That is, it is strikingly odd for one to forward an allocution about perceptions and yet, at the same time, decline to relate them to a perceiver. In fact, Hume's denial of anything underlining my perceptions makes the exact status of a perceiver of these perceptions unexplainable.[60]

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59. Wittgenstein means that understanding is not a mysterious inner process. In fact when he employs the term soul he means to refer to a deeply ingrained *public* practice of reacting to and recognizing other human beings as conscious thinking entities with their own shareable perspective on the world. [ibid, iv p.178]

60. Immanuel Kant has famously responded to this dilemma associated with Hume by introducing the 'trancendential unity of apperception'. (I shall elucidate a view strongly influenced by this theme in the next chapter) Kant questions the notion that we could have an idea of ourselves as subjects comprehending different objects at different times if we recieved fragmentary and disunited representations without any relation to the identity of a subject. In fact, he says that in articulating what I "experience" I at the same time presuppose that these "experiences" 'belong all of them to me.' He means that an "I think" necessarily accompanies all my represenations of things in the world, and this 'I think' is equivalent to 'I unite them in one self-consciousness, or can at least unite them.' [Kant, Immanuel Kant (1991) *Critique of Pure Reason*, Vasilis Politis (ed.), trans. J.M.D. Meikelejohn, London: Everyman/Orion Publishing Group, p. 100 (B133)]

Hume, therefore, repudiates the idea of the self suggested by Descartes by arguing that an impression of the self must be equivalent to impressions in general. But since impressions are by their very nature impermanent existences, then this feature completely clashes with an impression of a self which must be both constant and unchanging. In fact, since he has only found certain ephemeral perceptions and no substantial self underlining them, Hume defines a human being as:

> nothing but a bundle or a collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement.[61]

Hume does not therefore question the notion of "looking inside" my mind in order to procure knowledge. Rather than querying whether there might not be something distinctly erroneous in adopting such a procedure he draws his conclusion by upholding a procedure conditioned by an unquestioned introspective assumption: self-knowledge is obtained by virtue of a reference to what is within one. However, Hume does put forward a novel version of the self, although he adheres closely to Descartes introspective method. He suggests that introspection mediates knowledge of an unsteady, changing self. By virtue of following an introspective method Hume then transforms the self from one having the attribute of an unchanged stability to a collection of swift moving impressions or perceptions. But Hume does not stop here. He continues that I am not only mistaken in thinking that I "have" a self mirroring the one suggested by Descartes. In fact, I must also recognize that the whole practice of identifying selves is a 'fictitious one'.[62]

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61. Hume, David (1985), Book I: Part IV: Sect VI, p. 300

62. ibid, p. 306

Hume assumes that I must certainly draw this conclusion because he thinks that identity, like his definition of the self, must involve a reference to what is constant and unchanging. And this is inconceivable, for there appears to be nothing unchanging inside us. After he has arrived at the conclusion that identity is a fiction, Hume provisionally stops speaking about the identity of the self and begins to address the identity of plants and animals. However, this brief digression still resumes a strong connection to the main theme of his inquiry. That is, Hume now focuses on the identity of plants and animals in order to draw out similarities between their identity and the identity of human beings. Thus he explains that I am wrongly led to thinking that there is identity through change because I fail to notice the changes that objects undergo. He means that if I were prepared to examine objects more closely I may perceive them rapidly changing over time. However, since these permutations are rather small or gradual, I am inclined to be completely oblivious to them, and as a result incorrectly suppose objects are continually the same.[63]

The important purport of Hume's quarrel with Descartes is that it is incorrect to presume that there is identity when there is also change. Identity, Hume suggests, denotes simplicity and sameness. It is a categorically precise term. But if we are inclined to concede with Hume that firstly I am nothing but a bundle of perceptions, and secondly that there is no "strict" identity through change, then we are plunged into a dilemma. I have already advanced this difficulty. That is, if we admit that there is no "strict" identity through change we are therefore led into asking what is it exactly that authorizes Hume to designate a certain set of perceptions as a bundle? How can I address perceptions as perceptions that belong to a certain bundle when they are supposed to be separate existences, distinguishable from each other, and worse,

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63. ibid, pp. 301-302 and p. 304

can exist without having anything to support their existence? How can I speak of *particular* perceptions without presupposing a *particular* perceiver?

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Hume's answer to this question is ingenious. He claims that it is the imagination that stimulates me to connect a certain set of perceptions together. By the imagination Hume means a faculty which brings together simple copies of impressions (the colour green and an impression/ idea of a man) in order to form a rather more intricately complex or composite idea (a green man).[64] Indeed, in respect to the question of identity the imagination is responsible for confusing what are really two separate ideas in the mind. These two ideas are the idea of identity (the thought of a substance remaining "strictly" the same throughout time), and the idea of diversity ('a distinct idea of several different objects existing together by a close relation' [65]). That is, a succession of objects are apprehended or happen to feel the same as an unchanging object because I am predisposed to substitute the idea of identity with the idea of diversity. This substitution occurs, furthermore, due to the operation of three relations construed as customary habits of the mind, and which Hume calls resemblance, contiguity and causation.[66] Hume means that perceptions are discrete existences. They are separate and distinguishable from each other. But the relation of resemblance produces a smooth transition from one perception to another. Thus, since one perception fluently passes toward another in the mind,

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64. '(A)ll simple ideas and impressions resemble each other; and as the complex are formed from them...' [ibid, Book I: Part I: Sect. I, pp. 51]

65. ibid, Book 1: Part I: Sect. VI, p. 301

66. ibid, p. 303 and p. 308

I am prone to resolve they are a part of the same bundle. The point is my mind joins two different perceptions together because they appear to be strikingly similar to each other.[67]

Hume does not convey much about the relation of contiguity because he contends it has a rather meagre relevance to the question concerning what unites a bundle.[68] In contrast, the relation of causation has already been provocatively unravelled in previous pages of the *Treatise.* In fact, here, Hume merely succinctly reiterates his previous conclusions. These are that I am not warranted to connect a cause with an effect for I do not perceive a necessary connection between these two events, the supposed cause and supposed effect. Rather, I exhibit a habit of sealing a gap between two distinguishable perceptions.[69] In respect to the question of identity this means:

> If perceptions are distinct existences, they form a whole only by being connected together. But no connexions among distinct perceptions are ever discoverable by human understanding. We only *feel* a connexion or a determination of the thought, to pass from one object to another. It follows, therefore, that thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and

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67. ibid, p. 308. Hume adds that the faculty of memory multiplies the amount of resemblances the mind discovers between perceptions. Memory delivers faint resembling perceptions of previous events in the mind, the existence of which inspire me to repeatedly link two resembling perceptions together and lead me to think that they are a part of the same bundle. That is, memory increases the quantity of connections between different perceptions. And, because it does so, it not only discovers identity - memory contributes to its formation [ibid].

68. ibid, p. 308

69. ibid, Book I: Part III: Sect. II-IV, pp. 121-131 and Sect. XIV In particular pp. 220-221

naturally introduce each other.[70]

naturally introduce each other.[70]

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Hume's conclusion is rather eccentric. He suggests that perceptions are distinct existences. There are, as his remarks on causation make clear, no genuine links between them. He also argues that there is no identity through change. Identity, on the contrary, can only be correctly employed if one can establish inwardly that what one refers to is strictly unchanging. However, these two premises lead him to infer that it is one's inner constitution, a habit of the mind involving the imagination, which compels one to link two distinguishable perceptions together. But this is, in turn, not Hume's ultimate conclusion. On the contrary, by virtue of these two premises I am not merely deceived in thinking that there is an enduring substance inside me. I am also mistaken in supposing that there is a bundle of perceptions in the first place!!!

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What is puzzling is that Hume is prepared to speak of perceptions while denying that they are owned by a particular individual. In fact, Hume dismantles his own position when he inadvertently includes his own self in an argument intended to deny identity. For example, he declares that 'when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other . . . . I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception and can never observe anything but the perception'.[71] But even if we grant

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70. ibid, Appendix, p. 677

71. ibid, Book I: Part IV: Sect. VI, p. 300

the latter is true, we could still ask who is pursuing this task? Hume, by virtue of producing this statement, seems to be entirely oblivious to the fact that in order for him to decide to even search for a self he must have already agreed upon who he is supposed to be looking within. Or if I am making a mistake when I ascribe identity to myself and others, who or indeed what is it exactly that is supposed to be making this mistake? Hume, then, has evidently presupposed what he is attempting to deny. But to be fair to Hume he is willing to admit that he finds his conclusion highly unsatisfactory. For example, in the *Appendix* of his *Treatise* he remarks that he has plunged into a labyrinth, discovering himself surrounded by doubts and not knowing how to rectify his former opinions. In fact, apparently, the entire problem he tells us springs from his inability to combine two inconsistent principles. These are that perceptions are distinct existences. And that the mind does not perceive a genuine connection between them.[72] In rather more straightforward terms Hume's difficulty is that he cannot understand how I can regard myself as the same individual over time when I am also inclined to have an idea of diversity about myself. That is, Hume finds it extremely puzzling to hold that I can have an idea of identity, when, if I look into my mind, I only find an innumerable selection of fast moving, different and distinguishable perceptions.

It can, however, be argued that these principles appear inconsistent simply because Hume is producing particularly exact assumptions about identity. Hume is offering a far too strict criterion for identity, and this severely inhibits the kind of conclusions that one can draw in such cases. Thus, Richard Taylor calls this kind of thinking polarized thought. He argues that an unhelpful rigidity saturates many philosophical arguments about identity and continuity because philosophers are far too inclined to insist that we can only have it one way. That

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72. ibid, Appendix, pp. 675-678

is, we must claim either that I am the same person over time, or, if there is evidence to suggest the contrary, that I am not the same person at all. Taylor rightly warns that such conceptions clash with our ordinary intuitions, which are not so exacting and do include change.[73] In fact, in this respect, Hume's two suppositions do really appear to far too demanding. Indeed, I wish to show that there are inappropriate criteria.[74]

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I said briefly in my discussion of Descartes that a tendency to align the process of understanding to a self fixing its attention on internal images was misconceived. Now Hume's contribution to the theme of personal identity is strongly indebted to Descartes. That is, he also awards an outstanding priority to images inside the mind.[75] But an internal image or impression cannot possibly grant the type of knowledge Hume (or Descartes) assumes that it

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73. Taylor, Richard (1983) *Metaphysics*, Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, pp. 116-118

74. This argument is influenced by the following papers, notably of a Wittgensteinian persuasion: Rorty, Rorty (1970-71) *Strawson's Objectivity Argument*, Review of Metaphysics, 24, pp. 207-238; Herbert, Robert (1968) *Puzzle Cases and Earthquakes*, Analysis, Vol 28, pp. 79-85; and Shorter, J.M. (1962) *More about Bodily Continuity and Personal Identity*, Analysis, Vol. 22, pp. 79-85

75. 'The intellectual world, tho' involv'd in infinite obscurities, is not perplex'd with any such contradictions, as those we have discover'd in the natural. What is known concerning it, agrees with itself; and what is unknown, we must be contented to leave so'. Hume, David (1985), Book I: Part IV: Sect. V p. 281. This point is noted particularly by Genevieve Lloyd in Lloyd, Genevieve (1993), p. 68

will. For an internal image is meant to be a private entity. The meaning it conveys is acquired by an introspective act of the mind excluding reference to others. This, hence, signifies that what I understand by it is the sole guarantee of its meaning. Or since only I can have access to this image I cannot appeal to any independent source to check or recorrect its validity. In fact, if all understanding consisted in was merely fixing one's attention on an internal image no one, including oneself, would know whether what they expressed meant the same thing to other people. Talk of a right or wrong meaning would have no foothold in this case. That is, an internal image would have an empty content in the sense that there is nothing here to deter people from interpreting their inner images in their own ways.[76]

In order to resolve this vicissitude we have to understand that recognizing, say, a pen means grasping it as a socially learned concept. Understanding has to be a public and shareable activity for, as we have seen, an internal image cannot by itself inform us what a concept signifies. Thus, a pen is not comprehended (in an ordinary context) by an introspective weaving together of various dissimilar and distinguishable impressions but in respect to it having a certain function or use constituted by my social community. That is, it is an implement for writing. Furthermore, my understanding of the concept of a pen demands being able to be understood by other people when I speak of this object. It implies that I have the ability to continue to correctly refer to a pen as an implement for writing in a variety of different situations.

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76. Crossley, Nick (1996) *Intersubjectivity. The Fabric Of Social Becoming*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, p. 39. Also Witgenstein, Ludwig (1991) *Philosophical Investigations*, (258) p. 92

The themes of identity and continuity cannot be associated with what I am aware of inside my mind for three specific reasons. Firstly, they require a skill to correctly apply a socially learned concept to objects and human beings. In order to resolve the problem of personal identity we must thus refrain from exclusively focusing on what is inside the mind. (Certainly, this is the direction that I intend my thesis to take.) We must, instead, re-direct attention to the social situations in which this concept is used. In fact, if we do so we find, contrary to Hume, that the concept of identity is less rigid than he suggests. That is, secondly, a correct use of this concept involves an appreciation of change. My appreciation of the personal continuity of other people, in fact, takes into account as commonplace a gradual transformation of their bodily appearance, articulated opinions and beliefs. Thirdly, Hume could resolve the problem of what unites a bundle of perceptions by referring to *the body*. As we have discovered in reference to Descartes, our perceptual "experiences" belong to a certain body located in space and time. However, attention to the notion of a gradually changing body could abrogate the fleeting character of Humean impressions. Merleau-Ponty, for example, argues that my body exhibits a peculiar permanence through time in the sense that it, unlike other objects, is a stable presence in my relations to the world.[77] This perennial characteristic of the body is also brought out when Marcel is struck by the startling changes in appearance of people he knew a long time ago. Here he finds that they strangely lack the youth and vibrancy of their past through having hardened into old and infirm caricatures of themselves. However, he concludes that this produces the impression that life is in essence an atmosphere of change. He therefore suggests that he has learnt that these people comprise of time itself. 'These were puppets bathed in the material colours of the years, puppets which exteriorised

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77. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 90

time'.[78] They were Time, Time as 'one of those painters who keep a work by them for half a lifetime, adding to it year after year until it is completed'.[79]

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The problem with Hume's account is its infatuation with the mental as an inner available to introspection. He links the questions of identity and continuity to what occurs in the mind because he, like Descartes, thinks that knowing means being acquainted with private atoms of information (impressions), that the structures of the mind alone form the concepts that we employ day to day. But the introspective standpoint formulates an inaccurate picture of how we come to know things (I shall deal with this claim in more detail in the next two chapters). The problem is that introspective arguments operate in respect to principles that can only be corroborated by a private inspection. However this, firstly, makes knowledge of ourselves and the world incommunicable to others. Secondly, it forces us to be sceptical of corporeal or bodily knowledge. I think that an unhelpful minimalistic tendency (an obsession with strict principles and the mind as the self) inhabits both Descartes and Hume's accounts. In reference to Descartes we have seen this inclination lead to tentative and contradictive conclusions about the body and the emotions. While, in insisting on a strict concept of identity, Hume arrives at a puzzling denial of identity. Indeed in the next chapter we shall establish an argument designed to break away from this picture.

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78. Proust, Marcel (1989) *Remembrance of Things Past: 3*, p. 964

79. ibid, p. 978

Descartes and Hume interpret the self's identity and continuity over time in introspective terms. They say that the self must reconstruct knowledge of itself and the world by virtue of inspecting internal elements thoroughly transparent to it in order to draw validated conclusions. However, this position is undermined once we acknowledge that we have to filter inner objects with a social context in order for them to be elevated to authoritative sources of understanding.

Richard Taylor has designated this kind of thinking polarized thought. We have also clearly seen that it has rather unfortunate implications for both Descartes and Hume. For example, amongst other Cartesian tensions, it ensures that Descartes struggle to rescue a mental interior wholly transparent to a certain observer from one whose operations are completely mysterious to it is unsuccessful. On the other hand, for Hume we find that polarized thought generates an irresolvable muddle. In his case, an inclination to treat the self as a bundle of perceptions remains entirely incoherent if we exclude an observer related to his or her mental life.

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In this chapter I shall try to break away from Descartes and Hume's introspective picture of the self. I shall do so by re-evaluating a quite recent argument suggested by John McDowell and Gareth Evans. Both philosophers adopt a sceptical approach to, in particular, a Cartesian (Descartes) accentuation of being aware of ideas inside the mind. It is, however, Evans rather technical

account that shall interest us. In turn, we shall generally be concerned with my relation to objects or the world rather than personal identity. But I think that what Evans has to say is, nevertheless, of acute relevance to the direction that this thesis will take.

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John McDowell and inner space

A great deal of current analytical philosophy is interested in resisting an introspective picture of the self. I have not fully dealt with its challenges to the above standpoint in the previous chapter. However, its reasons for opposing an introspective account foreshadow tensions that have been raised much earlier. For example, John McDowell argues that the introspective view produces severe difficulties involving what I can know about the world. The problem, he suggests, begins by virtue of the fact that "Cartesianism" constructs an inner mental space that, oddly, informs me about the world without having any tenable relations with it. That is, Descartes and Hume contend that knowing the world requires a reflective awareness of isolated inner objects abstracted away from it. They believe this to be so because they think that an inner awareness is the most legitimate method for procuring knowledge. However, according to McDowell, this shift toward the mind becomes juxtaposed to becoming trapped within a private interior. I, in reference to this picture, not only have a shaky knowledge of the world, I am in fact left out of touch with the rest of the world altogether.[1]

McDowell claims that this point highlights an irresolvable problem for Descartes in particular. He means that the fact that we are no longer forced to picture the mind relating to the world epitomizes the sheer unworkability of the introspective position. Thus he says that Descartes' argument is undermined when he advises us that the content of what I perceive in the world can be

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1. McDowell, John (1986) *Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space*, pp. 137-168, in Philip Petite and John McDowell (eds.), *Subject, Thought and Content*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 150-152; and McDowell, John (1996) *Mind and World*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, p. xiii

plausibly tied to an arrangement of internal ideas. This is because Descartes detaches the mind from the world, arguing that it is solely responsible for constituting meaning. (Although we have discovered that Descartes realizes that this implies that a necessary criterion for a correct perceptual judgement involves *only* what the mind determines for itself. Hence, he is forced to introduce the picture of an occult entity for guaranteeing the certainty of knowledge in order to appeal to an objective standard of meaning.) But it is precisely in virtue of this detachment that McDowell reckons we raise difficulties for explaining how my surroundings are meant to be known independently from my relation to the world.

The point is that Descartes and Hume think that what I am more familiar with are introspectable objects. Knowledge is private or incommunicable to other people, and privileged in the sense that I do not have to consult anything apart from what lies inside an interior mental space in order to understand things. But McDowell remarks that if we adhere to this view, then it becomes enormously difficult for us to uphold the kind of revealing surety that my thoughts have according to Descartes. This is because introspective thoughts do not provide a mediating awareness of anything beyond them. They do not reflect the way that the world affects a subject, the manner in which a subject takes the world as thus and so. McDowell is saying that there appears to be no room here to speak of being sensitive to the world; for pointing out that it genuinely figures in my thoughts. In fact, all that introspective thoughts seem to endorse one to talk about is what occurs inside one's mind.[2]

> In the fully Cartesian picture . . . . with the inner realm autonomous, the idea of the subject's authority becomes problematic. When we deny interpenetration between inner and outer,

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2. McDowell, John (1986), p. 151

that puts into question the possibility of access to the external world from within subjectivity; correspondingly, it puts in question the possibility of access to the inner realm from the outside. "Introspective" knowledge can no longer be a by-product of outwardly directed cognitive activities, with nothing to prevent its objects being accessible to others too. The idea of introspection becomes the idea of an inner vision scanning a region of reality which is wholly available to its gaze - since there is no longer any room for facts about the subjective realm which the subject may not know because of ignorance of outer circumstances - and which is at best problematically open to being known about in other ways at all.[3]

McDowell suggests that Cartesian thoughts are alarmingly tentative; in fact, they are in all respects blind.[4] That is, the quintessential problem with "introspected" thoughts lies in the difficulty they create for being able to report to other people that what I know belongs to an awareness of features associated with an objective world. McDowell, as I have already expressed, regards this as a problem for Descartes. For, if we recall, Descartes starts his *Meditations* by consolidating a mind completely transparent to an observer. In fact, it is only after he believes that he has established a lucrative argument for this position that he tries to re-construct an accurate knowledge of the world. But McDowell thinks that the success of such a manoeuvre is altogether implausible precisely as a result of adopting this very assumption. To recapitulate, the only kind of engagement we are qualified to picture for Descartes is one where the mind relates to the internal connections between its thoughts. According to McDowell, then, all we have here is a mind unimaginably detached from the world, or indulging in internal actvities which, because they bear no reference to the

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3. ibid, p. 154

4. ibid, p. 151

world or remain unaffected by the external world, are utterly meaningless.

> The threat which the Cartesian picture poses to our hold on the world comes out dramatically in this this: that within the Cartesian picture there is a serious question about how it can be that an experience, conceived from its own point of view, is not blank or blind, but purports to be revelatory of the world we live in.[5]

The problem is that the self is inclined to lose its grasp on the world from an introspective standpoint. And this is because introspective thoughts lack an edifying density: they are blank or blind. As McDowell explains, introspective thoughts do not evoke a genuine relation to the world because 'the very idea of a thought's directedness at the empirical world is intelligible only in terms of the answerability to the tribunal of experience, conceived in terms of the world impressing itself on perceiving subjects'.[6] McDowell, moreover, argues that in order to resolve the vicissitudes prompted by an introspective standpoint we have to expunge the suggestion that the content of my thoughts is determined by an inward inspection. This he reckons can be achieved by appealing to the idea that the world is immediately involved in my thoughts about it. He claims, in other words, that in order to demonstrate that I do have knowledge of the world we must underline how I am immediately connected to the wordly things that I think about. (By mentioning the term 'content' McDowell therefore means what we express by our sentences is an outcome of the world we inhabit).

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5. ibid, p. 152

6. McDowell, John (1996), p. xvi

We are compelled to picture the inner and outer realms as interpenetrating, not separated from one another by the characteristic Cartesian divide. Arguments designed to force the admission that one cannot know that it is the first disjunct that is in question would be powerless, in the face of this opposition, to induce the threat of losing the world.[7]

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McDowell, in this respect, offers a solution dealt with particular technical detail by Gareth Evans. Evans argues that we can free ourselves from the introspective picture by putting forward a theory which demonstrates that my thoughts have world-involving features. That is, my thoughts have content simply because they are instantiated by how objects are in the world, and equally importantly, my part in relating to them.

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7. McDowell, John (1986) p. 150

Gareth Evans and thinking [8]

Evans accuses "Cartesianism" of failing to understand that a thought has content against the background of an embodied perceptual subject essentially related to the world.[9] For Evans it is only in reference to the context of perception, which fixes the self within an active intentional relation to a certain object situated in the world, that we can plausibly speak of my thoughts bearing content.

When thus Descartes suggests that he has a translucent thought of a piece of wax, or when Hume alludes to being confused when we perceive certain objects, both philosophers have relinquished a hold on a subject of action. They have done so by arguing that what I am more familiar with in these cases are the images that these objects inspire in my mind. Thinking a thought therefore ensues from adopting a passive relationship toward a mental object furnished with an undoubted clarity. But, according to Evans, this is genuinely misconceived. He claims that, in contrast, my thoughts presuppose an active relation to a common background, or a common world which I aim my attention toward. My thoughts, he means, depend on perceptions of objects that occupy a certain place at a certain time. Furthermore, it is this circumstance that I am more familiar with. Thinking, quite contrary to Descartes and Hume's observations, is connected to an active, perceptual affair. It involves a subject turned toward an ordered horizon of objective entities which are also coincidently required if content is to

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8. My reading of Evans' argument is influenced by John McDowell's interpretation [McDowell, John (1996), pp. 46-65] and Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995). Merleau-Ponty's account of perception runs parallel to Evans, especially in reference to the chapters: *Space* and *The Thing and the Natural World*, respectively pp. 243-298, pp 299-345.

9. Evans, Gareth (1982), p. 44

enter his or her thoughts.

> When we hear a sound as coming from a certain direction, we do not have to *think* or *calculate* which way to turn our heads (say) in order to look for the source of the sound. If we did so, then it ought to be possible for two people to hear a sound as coming from the same direction (as 'having the same position in the auditory field'), and yet to be disposed to do quite different things in reacting to the sound, because of differences in their calculations. Since this does not appear to make sense, we must say that having spatially significant perceptual information consists at least partly in being disposed to do various things.[10]

Evans exerts a considerable emphasis on this point. He believes there to be certain visible connections between the way I take the world to be and the kind of embodied and intentional relations/doings that I can have with it. These relations are, in particular, connected to my perceptual capacities, which necessarily involve notions of space and time. For Evans I therefore find myself directed at a common world composed of uniform, re-identifiable objects occupying certain spaces at a certain time. These objects, furthermore, presuppose and fall within the communicable range of possible human conceptions.[11]

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Evans argues that our perception of objects is not a passive registering of ideas in the mind. Perception, in contrast, advertises the body's grip on public

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10. ibid, p. 155

11. ibid, p. 116

objects occupying a common spatial and temporally ordered world. I am not passive spectator in the world that has thoughts which express something independent to ways of acting in the world. My thoughts are instead constituted by and sustained in a context which admits me to respond to, and other people to think about, the objects that I can perceive. That is, my thoughts concern practical perceptual dealings with tangible objects. Further, it is actually this circumstance which places limits on, or governs, the kind of thoughts that I can entertain.

(T)he subject's thinking is governed by a controlling conception he derives from the object. If the question were raised 'How do you know there is such a thing as the thing you take yourself to be thinking about?', he would answer 'I can see (or 'hear', or 'taste' or 'feel') 'that there is.' More distinctively, demonstrative thoughts take place in the context of a *continuing* informational link between subject and object; the subject has an evolving conception of the object, and is so situated *vis-à-vis* the object that the conception which controls his thinking is disposed to evolve according to changes in the information he receives from the object. This already imports an element of discrimination, and it rests upon certain very fundamental perceptual skills which we possess: the ability to keep track of an object in a visual array, or follow an instrument in a complex and evolving pattern of sound.[12]

The kind of thought that Evans is attempting to articulate is called a demonstrative identification. This means that what a subject is able to think of is controlled by a certain information link[13] (perception, memory, the testimony

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12. ibid, pp. 145-146

13. ibid, pp. 121-122 and pp. 145-146

of other people) with a certain public object. My thoughts (demonstrative), then, are information based, meaning that they refer to an object or something in the world which inhabits a certain space in time and can also be made out by other people. The point is perhaps quite obvious. That is, thinking of an object presupposes there being an actual object to serve as the determinable focus of my thought.[14] But it is important to note what Evans intends to clarify in this case. He means that I do not discover myself simply having yens about how things are in the world. Thoughts are intentional or levelled at the world. Thus, when I produce judgements about an object I do so on account of what I encounter in the world. Furthermore, it is a perceptual contact with the world, or its objects, that provides me with reasons for producing judgements. In fact, to argue that all that lies buried behind my judgements are a set of dispositions to make them forces us to lose the very idea of encountering objects at all. Indeed, here there lies no opportunity for other people to get to grips with my thoughts, or for offering any kind of obligation to revise or correct my conceptions about things in the world.[15]

Thus, if a speaker utters the sentence 'This man is *F* ', making a demonstrative reference to a man in the environment he shares with the hearer, the hearer can understand his remark only if he perceives the man concerned, and, bringing his perceptual information to bear upon his interpretation of the remark, judges 'This man is *F* : that's what the speaker is saying'.[16]

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14. McDowell, John (1996), pp. 37-38; Evans, Gareth (1982), pp .100-105

15. McDowell, John (1996), p. 61; Evans, Gareth (1982), p. 229

16. Evans, Gareth (1982), p. 231

We can therefore claim that a thought is not a solitary, incommunicable event produced from an independent within. On the contrary, what I think about enjoys a communicable nearness to public objects, objects which other people are also capable of establishing a perceptual relation to. My thoughts about an object thus must fall within the reach of a rational inquiry.[17] Thoughts involve gathering information about objects which can also constitute another person's reason for thinking that my thought reveals a recognizable point of view on an object.

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Evans, as I said, points out that when I encounter an object, what I understand that object to be is not constituted by a passive awareness of it. When I perceive a tree, though it is correct to claim that I am aware of 'nothing but a tree' as opposed to an image of it inside my mind, it is nevertheless wrong to assume that by simply gazing at this object I somehow grasp its meaning.[18] On the contrary, a perception of an object is meant to be a state of an information system. It belongs to a thinking, concept-applying and reasoning system.[19] This means that what I make out about an object depends on it being vouchsafed to me through my senses (non-conceptually). And further, it is derived from following one's social practices or it depends on making conceptual judgements.[20]

Evans argument is that I do not purposelessly perceive an object. This is because, firstly, an element of its content is connected to a subject having an

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17. McDowell, John (1996), p. 53

18. Evans, Gareth (1982), p. 231

19. ibid, p. 158

20. ibid, pp. 156-159 and p. 227. Evans says that a non-conceptual element is involved when one relates to objects. I think he is suggesting that a biological primitive precondition must exist

ability to discriminate it from other objects. My perception of an object involves centering my attention on one particular object. Or a necessary addendum to demonstrative thoughts is an ability to perceptually differentiate one object from other entities that may inhabit my field of vision.

(T)here is no thought about objects of a certain kind which do not presuppose the idea of *one* object of that kind, and the idea of one object of that kind must employ a general conception of the ways in which objects of that kind are differentiated from one another and all other things.[21]

Secondly, thinking a thought does not merely depend on the fact that I can perceive and locate the object that I am thinking about. What is equally important is that I *understand* my relation to an object.[22] That is, I can link it to certain information that I possess through exercising particular conceptual abilities. For example, to be able to have thoughts of Harry as someone who is happy, I must be able to refer to someone called Harry. But I must also understand the idea of a happy man. That is a concept which I can, in turn, apply to Harry. I must thus understand happiness as a relevant concept-using social practice; as a particular instance of a general order of circumstance that can be

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before a judgement is made. He indeed refers to it as 'a phylogentically more ancient part of the brain' (p. 158). However, although McDowell makes it clear that Evans does not regard a non-conceptual encounter as a 'perceptual experience' [McDowell, John (1996), p. 49] I share his doubts surrounding this claim. In fact I hold the view that understanding is conceptual. But this issue will be resumed in more detail in the next chapter where we will focus on Heidegger's assertion that all understanding is "interpretative".

21. ibid, p. 108

22. ibid, p. 92

applied to someone.[23]

(E)ach of the abilities involved in the thought that *a* is F, though they are separable, can be exercised only in a (whole) thought - and hence always together with some other conceptual ability. This is the analogue of the fact that the understanding of a word is manifested only in the understanding of sentences, and hence always together with the understanding of other words.[24]

For Evans one's utterances bear content when they refer to a common world. Furthermore, they are taken to be true or false when the circumstance that they are describing is an actual event in the world. Moreover, demonstrative reference can be connected to the specific words of an utterance. 'This' or 'that' for example, according to Evans, firstly describe an ostensive identification that designates the location of the thing that I am thinking of, and secondly show that the manner in which I relate to it has a definite character understood by other people. These words, then, delineate an outward manifestation of an embodied activity. They stand for the way that I am able to orient myself toward an object in the world in respect to the presumption of making it accessible or exploitable to myself and others.[25]

Evans designates this mode of discrimination as having an 'Idea' about an object.[26] His point is that a fundamental kind of thought, a thought involving 'Ideas', is required in order to get mental content going. He does not mean that all thoughts require a reference to a certain object. That is, I cannot entertain

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23. ibid, p. 103

24. ibid, p. 102

25. ibid, p. 305 and pp. 312-313

26. ibid, p. 107

any kind of thought if it does not refer to an object. What he rather wants to say is that a picture of thinking must begin with an awareness which allows me to possess a concrete hold on the world. And that discriminatory judgements clearly seem to ensure that this is the case.[27]

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Thinking, according to Evans, describes a perceptual ability presupposing a communicable awareness of something in the world. Thinking is a mode of being in the world involving the dismissal of a possibility to entertain an endless train of doubts about the existence of what I am perceiving. That is, if we continually refrain from referring to a common world when we speak no one will be able to understand what we are talking about, including ourselves.

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27. In fact, Evans suggests that a discourse concerning illusory objects does involve reference-though only within a game of pretence. This issue shall be a point of concern later in this chapter.

a subject and object unity

Evans also suggests that thoughts, although they terminate in reference to an object, are taken up within a certain spatial and temporal system. He is saying that the spatial identity of an object cannot be separated from the subject perceiving it. Here the subject and the object, echoing Heidegger, actually form a single unity or a single spatial and temporal perspective. In other words, a subject and object are to be conceived as mutually interdependent rather than mutually distinct. They are spatio-temporally interdependent with each other.

> Any thinker who has an idea of an objective spatial world . . . . must be able to think of his perception of the world as being simultaneously due to his position in the world at that position. The very idea of a perceivable objective, spatial world brings with it the idea of a subject as being *in* the world, with the course of his perceptions due to his changing position in the world and to the more or less stable way the world is. The idea that there is an objective world and the idea that there there the subject is somewhere cannot be separated, and where he is given by what he can perceive.[28]

Evans is arguing that knowing oneself is established through a reciprocal relation between oneself and whatever one perceives. He arrives at this important conclusion through describing knowing an object in respect to it being ascertained or perceived by *someone* who moves about in the world. Perception, he means, involves something being perceived by somebody situated in the world. The point again is quite obvious, but nevertheless of valuable significance. This is that perceiving an object neccessarily presupposes a point of view or perspective

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28. ibid, p. 222

from which it is seen. This perspective for Evans is, of course, a body inhabiting a certain space in the world.

By the word body Evans is signifying an *active perceiving body*. He is saying that one's mode of perception assumes the form of continually examining what is perceived. That is, I seldom glimpse an obscure admixture of worldly items. The situation is, to the contrary, that I manoeuvre around a world continually adjusting my point of focus until something steals into my perceptual range as a clear and definitive object. My body is hence an active perceiving body through directly involving itself with the object that is perceived, and where its perception of that object, as Evans describes, changes (or clears up) according to its position in the world. In other words, the world that I perceive is disclosed to me in different ways according to the movement of my body. Evans however points out that this manner of apprehending the world presumes an interdependency between the ascription of such "experiences" to myself and a consciousness of the world. That is, my understanding of an object derives from my body actively engaging with an object as a pole of my action, but further, I recognize myself as *this* body as a consequence of being oriented toward *this* object or the goal of my task. Indeed, I am aware of an object's spatial and temporal situation as a mutual expression of my own. Both are mutually inclusive: they jointly determine the spatial and temporal meaning of an object. For example, Merleau-Ponty has remarked:

> The identity of a thing through perceptual experience is only another aspect of one's own body throughout exploratory movements; thus they are the same in kind from each other . . . . I become involved in things with my body, they co-exist with me as an an incarnate subject, and this life has nothing in common with the elaboration of scientifically conceived objects.[29]

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29. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 185

This is an important point. But, equally, Evans emphasis on an embodied spatial location is a minimalistic perspective on the kind of self that I desire to convey. I shall therefore attempt to enrich his notion in the second half of this chapter. However, before I am able do so another aspect of Evans account requires discussion. This concerns pointing out that the person presupposed in the act of perceiving phenomenon understands what he or she perceives through following a social or public practice. Understanding an object, in other words, requires describing the role that act or judgement has within a certain network of publically agreed actions and conceptions of the world. Thus what I perceive is to be conceived as a situation grasped within the contours of an individual and cultural perspective.[30]

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It is partly, in this respect, that two people can perceive the same object, yet entertain two different thoughts about it. For example, I could believe that a mountain viewed from a southern geographical region is called 'Alfa'. I would also pass this judgement because this is how others from this region have become accustomed to identifying it - they follow a public practice in which understanding x depends on being able to apply the same meaning to x on another occassion. (I shall discuss this position in rather more detail in my chapter on Wittgenstein). However, someone else situated in a different northern region and who also perceives the same mountain could, equally and correctly, believe that the same mountain is called 'Ateb'. And again, simply because this is the common public practice specific to his or her region.[31]

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30. Evans, Gareth (1982), p. 222

31. ibid, pp. 14-15

In this case, we have two disparate points of view being taken on the same object. We have two senses for the "same" object or mountain. For Evans this is a perfect illustration of the circumstance that I perceive objects in a specific way. What is, however, relevant, for us here is the idea that in saying that a perception of an object always emanates from a certain point of view we mean that what is perceived depends on where I am seeing it from, or as a result of being positioned in a certain spatial temporal and cultural location.

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In this way, my spatial and temporal point of view is expressed objectively in relation to the object perceived. I do not detach myself from the object perceived and arrive at its meaning introspectively for perception is not a passive contemplation but an active and publically agreed engagement with an object. Furthermore, my perception of an object entails an owner of certain thoughts. To employ a Kantian proposition, a spatio-temporal "I think" accompanies all my representations, or to be considerably more precise, perceiving the world is interdependent with being able to impute "experiences" of it to oneself and others. In fact, for Evans, my perception of an object actually mutually facilitates my own spatial and temporal directedness toward an object in the world.[32]

Evans suggests that a perception of an object presupposes an embodied, active perceiver. A thought is of something in the world, and requires a perceiver doing something which can be communicated across to other people. Further, I and an object are mutually constitutive elements of a certain objective

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32. ibid, p. 228

meaning. The information I entertain in this context requires two constituents: myself and a worldly object, whom form a reciprocal unity.

A thought about a position in *egocentric* space . . . . concerns a point or region of *public* space in virtue of the existence of certain indissolubly connected dispositions on part of the subject, to direct his actions to that place, and to treat perceptions of that place as germane to the evaluation and appreciation of the consequences of the thought. This dispositional connection with a place rests upon a vastly complex network of links between perception and action which allows us to speak of the existence of a unified egocentric space . . . .[33]

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33. ibid, p. 168

Evans and Russellian thoughts

Those acquainted with the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty will find Evans altercations against Descartes familiar. There is indeed an interesting correlation between Evans notion of perception and embodiment and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological dissection of the lived body's being-in-the-world.[34] Nevertheless, Evans' arguments emerge from a certain analytical tradition. That is, they involve a particularised concern with the logical structure of our sentences. In fact, although I do not feel confident enough to thoroughly undertake this issue, it would prove useful to underline certain recent disagreements directed at this aspect of his work in order to establish some foundations for my own appreciation of Evans account.

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Evans theory of perception concerns connecting our utterances to certain worldly circumstances which, in turn, can be regarded as stable referents for the words that we use. It is therefore unsurprising that Bertrand Russell's epistemology has had a commanding effect on his notion of an "Idea." Indeed Evans claims can, to a certain degree, be described as the outcome of a contemporary, post-Cartesian reflection of Russell's theory of acquaintance and description.[35] This is the notion that I cannot produce a judgement about something unless I already know which object in the world this judgement is about. That is, when I utter a sentence containing the words "that", "this" or

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34. This will become clear when I discuss Merleau-Ponty's views on hallucinations.

35. Russell, Bertrand (1988) *The Problems of Philosophy* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 25-32

"which" (logical proper names), the truthfulness of my utterance depends on the fact that I am referring to a certain object in the world. In fact, if I uttered a sentence with the words "that one" and did not mean to refer to a certain object in the world then this utterance would be simply nonsensical. Here, no one would be able to understand what I was speaking about. Thoughts, therefore, couched with definite descriptions are thoughts that are partly determined by the objects which they refer to.

Evans says that we can exploit certain aspects of Russell's theory in order to successfully resist an introspective thesis about knowledge. That is, we can employ Russell to deny that the content of our thoughts are based on the private testimony of a Cartesian mind by claiming that they correspond to, as Russell can be interpreted as corroborating, being acquainted with certain public objects in the world.[36] However, some philosophers contend that a post-Cartesian interpretation of Russell's point - in order to think a thought I must be aware of what my thought is about - is undermined if we scrutinize a situation involving a subject perceiving a hallucination. (I am following a criticism suggested by Harold Noonan[37]). For instance, imagine that I discover a very large spider slowly travelling along the slippery inner rim of my bath. And imagine that my response to its alarming presence is to tentatively lash out at it with a rolled up copy of a rather old newspaper. In such a case, Evans would suggest that my thought passes under the description of a Russellian thought. This is because my action can be coherently rendered in reference to a certain person collecting his attention toward a certain object. That is, my thought/action can be explained in respect to securing on to an item of data of which I and the spider are both constituents.

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36. Evans, Gareth (1982), p. 91

37. Noonan, Harold (1984) *Fregean Thoughts*, The Philosophical Quaterly Vol. 34, pp. 205-224

However think about the same situation, where I am this time time hallucinating a spider that I, in turn, gingerly try to subdue. If we examine the second case it becomes quite clear that we cannot sufficiently explain why I am performing this action in the same manner as above. For an hallucination represents a quaintly "individual" perceptual encounter of an object. It, in other words, merely subsists for the subject whom is hallucinating, and because it does, no one else seems to be able to enter the perceptual path that leads to its bewildering appearance. However, although an hallucination is not perceived by other people, this does not introduce any insuperable difficulties if we wish to continue to speak about someone having thoughts of a specific object in the world with its relevant judgements and motives. The point is that an hallucination appears to challenge the suggestion that what I and other people can perceive is immediately relevant to determining the content of my thoughts here.[38]

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This is a standard criticism against Evans theory. However, I think that Evans's argument shares noticeable affinities with Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on hallucinations. Hence by embracing a line of argument held by the latter we can uphold the underlying kernel of Evans suggestions. That is, Merleau-Ponty champions a similar standpoint to Evans. He argues that a common world is an apparent constituent of my thoughts and judgements. Indeed, he says that it is precisely in regard to this reason that we are ordinarily inclined to maintain a distinction between seeing an illusory object and one which is not. Further, he observes, that we are commonly disposed to interact with the world by virtue

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38. ibid, pp. 211-214

39. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 291

of protecting ourselves from such occurrences.[39] Merleau-Ponty means hallucinations are meaningful only when we are prepared to *contrast* them with more indubitable perceptions of events. He claims this in respect to the fact that he envisages perception as a practical, world involving affair, a practice which presupposes an agreement and disagreement about the existence of meaningful objects constituting a common perceptible world. This is also why, he explains, that I am filled with a sense of unease or an awkward lack of balance when what I perceive is unclear and ambiguous. That is my gaze, far from being a mere blank staring at phenomenon, represents an effort to divest things of equivocation. Perception is a bodily movement consisting of a potentiality to turn an obscure intentional object into a definitive and recognizable entity.[40] Infact, Merleau-Ponty remarks that we filter perception with an irrecuperable ambiguity if we are prepared to apply to an hallucination the same kind of precedence that we give to "real" things. This is because by pursuing this kind of reasoning we transform our world into a world which we can no longer take for granted. Here, instead of describing what is commonly the case (a subject meeting a world composed of reassuring and self-evident entities), we are led toward introducing an endless array of opaque events, where a standard of correctness is solely dependent on the whims of a constituting subject. We, to put it another way, find ourselves creating a situation where we cannot refer to any common certainties which could render our thoughts intelligible to others.[41]

For Merleau-Ponty, then, I confront a common world. Perception depends on certain unquestioned assumptions, and this is dependent on a subject inhabiting a tangible and possible world. Merleau-Ponty also suggests that, if we examine the matter in greater detail, it becomes quite clear that the phenomenon

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4o. ibid, pp. 302-303

41. ibid, p. 338

of hallucinations actually leads us back to a common perceptible source; a world in which each perceived element has for the subject meaningful communicable relations to another one.[42] He illustrates this point by urging us to re-consider the model of dreaming. Dreaming, he says, is another state of being involving perceiving "unreal" things. But, as Descartes points out, my dreams are composed of ingredients seized from a more common and tangible source. Moreover, I could not entertain the notion of dreaming if I were unable to distinguish it from a state of being awake. Dreaming, then, achieves its ordinary meaning only because I am prepared to pinpoint a discrepancy between an otherworldly order and a stable and common world. Of course,, the issue is not that hallucinations and dreams possess no significance for an observer. The issue is rather that when they do appear they are ordinarily conceived as bewildering interruptions superimposing on a world that is perceptually self-evident. Their significance, that is, rests on offering a new perspective or modification of the world that is perceived rather than being a condition for it.

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42. ibid.

I think that Merleau-Ponty offers a particularly convincing line of argument, and as result, places Evans' theory in a more plausible light. Both, in other words, are suggesting that my thoughts presuppose a certain commonly agreed worldly order. For example:

> Slowly welling from the point of her gold nib, pale blue ink dissolved the full stop; for the pen stuck; her eyes fixed, and tears slowly filled them. The entire bay quivered; the lighthouse wobbled; and she had the illusion that the mast of Mr. Conner's little yacht was bending like a wax candle in the sun. She winked quickly. Accidents were awful things. She winked again. The mast was straight; the waves regular; the lighthouse was upright; but the blot had spread.[43]

I also think that the above passage, which launches Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, fruitfully consolidates Evan's intuitions about perception. We find Betty Flanders' eyes congesting with tears, where, subsequently, she perceives a tremulous landscape. That is, her gaze spreads unhurriedly from one object to another, but because it is blanketed with a veil of tears, it happens to unmask a quivering purview of objects. Objects, thus, inhabiting her landscape do not convey an aptly fitting sense of orientation in space. They do not persist with definite vertical and horizontal structures until, in fact, she winks twice discovering her world steadying itself again, resuming a more familiar context composed of regularly organized features. The point is that perception, as Evans suggests, implies perceiving objects exhibiting a general uniform order. Indeed, Woolf's description of a mast bending like a wax candle is not exclusively

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43. Woolf, Virginia (1992), *Jacobs Room*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3

metaphoric. It is also a straightforward depiction of an illusory perception. We can certainly corroborate this. For we find Betty Flanders being coerced to perceptually examine it again, revise her grip on it. In fact, Betty Flanders' penchant to assume that objects must look a certain way clearly indicates a sensitivity to making sure that what we believe accords with how things are in the world. It suggests, as Evans has remarked, a willingness to reform our judgements so that they harmonise with an environment already structured in a certain way.

However, Virginia Woolf's writings complement Evans' proposals in an important way. For she holds that emotion and time (memory) enhances and guarantees my grasp on objects. Vision and its truthfulness, she means, involves an individual perspective deeply embedded within the themes of emotion and time. Woolf therefore offers a rather richer reading of my relation to objects, and my understanding of them, than Evans. Indeed, I believe that within her highly wrought and stylish enunciations of the world there lie a coterie of valuable insights which enrich Evans emphasis on spatiality.

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Woolf's novels suggest that I interact with the world from a variety of diverging standpoints. That is my perspective on the world is not merely a spatial one since it also embodies an individual past. Woolf says that my individual past or history determines the way that I think about objects that I perceive. Or it is not merely an object's spatial location which helps to define my thoughts about it since past events play an equally important role in grounding the way that I respond to and understand the world. Further, an important ingredient for "understanding" is emotion. For Woolf does not conceive the emotions as indiscriminate phenomenon accidentally complementing our thoughts. She regards them as constitutive components of all thoughts. In order to illustrate this notion

she, moreover, speaks of one's past as a setting diffused with a strong emotional element that surfaces in the present (through the faculty of memory) when one suddenly perceives a familiar object. For example, a subject may hear a mollifying melody or distinguish a vase deluged with flowers which revives thoughts about a bygone love affair. In this case, the object perceived discharges a certain individual meaning illustrative of one's developing "character" through time.

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According to Virginia Woolf perception is a discriminative rather than a neutral affair. She means that it presumes a specific point of view belonging to a subject who is interested in what he or she perceives. Further, a selective or discriminative interest does not mysterious emerge from nowhere. On the contrary, we find in her novels that what interests her characters ensues from events in their past. In addition, their past is not construed as a series of events lying obscurely hidden from view, but as a concrete part of what is seen.[44] The central thread of her thought is then as follows: An object can be understood in response to one's individual history. But since we all undergo diverse, unfolding histories this means that what I perceive embodies different perceptual worlds. I do not grasp a world which exists independently from my emotional responses to it. My world is rather always a world perceived from a certain perspective shaped and re-shaped by emotion and time. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway* we discover objects exuding with a sense of time that does not neatly fit into Evans accentuation on spatiality. That is, according to Evans what I perceive is a presentation of an object, which like the subject, inhabits a certain place at a *present* time. But in the passage below we are offered a perceptual encounter reflecting a more voluminous temporal structure.

> . . . . Clarissa (crossing to the dressing table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it there - the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole at one point . . . .[45]

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44. Apter, T.E. (1979), p. 50

45. Woolf, Virginia (1992) *Mrs Dalloway*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 40

The objects that Clarissa perceives convey a period of time that transcends an ordinary present. Hence rather than echoing with one morning they echo with 'all other mornings'. What is, however, imperative for clarifying the content of this perceptual encounter is an attention to the role that Clarissa's perceptual judgements play on this specific occassion rather than on a general occassion. This is, of course, necessary simply because what Clarissa perceives does not belong to a straightfoward manner of perceiving objects which everyone can get to grips with immediately. It instead represents a rather distinctive perspective on things, and as such, draws its sense and significance from a context of intentions, emotions, beliefs peculiar to Clarissa's life history. In fact, for Woolf an explanation of Clarissa's perceptual encounter is derived from the circumstance that what she perceives is a focal point for strong emotions.[46] That is, understanding Clarissa's peculiar perceptual encounter requires an examination of a subject's feelings for what is perceived. Furthermore, such feelings belong to a powerfully affective memory surrounding a personal drama in the past that can be logically reconciled to the present. The idea is that our perceptions can depict points of view marked out by certain events in the past which have had a deeply profound effect on us.[47] It means that understanding what a subject sees also requires focusing on the causal history of his or her emotional responses to the object perceived.

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46. Lee, Hermione (1992),Introduction, pp. ix-xliv to Woolf, Virginia, *To the Lighthouse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. xxii

47. Lloyd, Genevieve (1993), p. 105

This idea is splendidly elucidated in *To the Lighthouse*. Here we discover James, one of Mrs Ramsay's children, perceiving the Lighthouse in two rather different ways. However, both perceptions are clarified as equally meaningful or "truthful". Both perceptions of the Lighthouse, that is, emerge as consistent and correct perspectives on an object although they starkly differ from each other.

To the Lighthouse concerns the Ramsay family. It describes the developing resolution of the thoughts and feelings of a group of individuals against the background of a journey to a Lighthouse. The novel is also divided into three parts. The first part is entitled *The Window* and begins with a six year James Ramsay yielding to a colossal joy because his father has suggested that if the weather is fine tomorrow he may go to the Lighthouse. James perception of the world thus subsequently seethes with an europhic anticipation. 'The wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a nights darkness and a day's sail, within reach'.[48] James' situation is, to put it in another way, fixed in continuity with his feelings. Hence even the pictures that he is cutting out on the floor become steeped with a 'heavily bliss' or are 'fringed with joy'.[49] But in the ensuing paragraphs there transpires an abrupt turn in mood. This is because Mr Ramsay now informs James, with a secret pride over the precision of his wisdom, that he cannot land at the Lighthouse since the weather will not be fine tomorrow.[50] James, in response, vigorously resents his father's sombre logic. Moreover, although Mrs Ramsay attempts to comfort him, later in the evening she is tempted to think ruefully that 'he will remember that all his life'.[51] She reasons that we can be scarred by the past in the sense that

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48. Woolf, Virginia (1992) *To the Lighthouse*, p. 7

49. ibid.

50. ibid, p. 8

51. ibid, p. 68

certain events in our past do not fade into nothingness but continue to contaminate the context of our future actions. In fact, the journey to the Lighthouse commences in the last part of the novel. Here we learn that Mrs Ramsay, together with other characters of the novel, has died. However Woolf describes the dead as those whom do not silently leave the world. In fact, she invites us to envision them surviving in objects that persist and arise after their passing.[52] The reason for this is that their separation has a deeply moving affect on the self, furnishing it with motives to linger over their absence.

> Your absence has gone through me
>
> Like a thread through a needle.
>
> Everything I do is stitched with its colour.[53]

Since, according to Woolf, the presence of the dead endures in the living, the journey to the Lighthouse becomes an informative riposte of the remaining character's lives. The Lighthouse, in particular, becomes subsumed with a significance which cannot be translated without us knowing something about the history of the individuals drawing toward it. That is, it is never described as a neutral object spread on top of the rocks, nor is it tempered with the kind of practical sensibility that defines our more domestic thoughts about objects. It is, rather, depicted within the terms of an individual present that has emerged as a result of certain circumstances in the past. For James, then, it becomes an obstinate measure and reflection of his life. That is, here, James life is outlined by unresolved thoughts about his mother's death and an unspoken

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52. Lloyd, Genevieve (1993) p. 151

53. Merwin, W.S. (1987) *Separation*, in Robert Diyani (ed.) *Modern American Poets. Their Voices and Visions*, New York: Random House, p. 634

bitterness for his father. Thus when he perceives the Lighthouse slowly sliding into view while sitting inside a boat he is described as thinking:

> Something, he remembered, stayed and darkened over him; would not move; something flourished up in the air, something arid and sharp descended even there, like a blade, a scimitar, smiting through the leaves and flowers even of that happy world and making them shrivel and fall.
>
> 'It will rain,' he remembered his father saying. 'You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse.'
>
> The Lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye that opened suddenly and softly in the evening. Now-
>
> James looked at the Lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it?
>
> No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing.[54]

According to Woolf the impulse to revise one perception in favour of another and better one is sometimes misplaced if we are prepared to judge these perceptions against a common paradigm, a *present* perceptual world. This is because on certain occasions our common paradigm for revealing meaning is a subject's individual history. In this respect, James' perception of the Lighthouse as a silvery misty-looking tower and then as a stark, white tower demonstrate two perfectly reasonable manners of seeing and understanding the same object. Indeed, for Woolf this is emblematic of the fact that in life what we perceive and understand is not dependent on a neutral and general process of translating

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54. Woolf, Virginia (1992) *To the Lighthouse*, p. 202

information but instead involves making different kinds of judgements in relation to our emotional relations to the world and others. This does not mean that the judgements we make here are private and hence incommunicable. It means, on the contrary, that they turn on a related network of past beliefs and attitudes that can be understood by others when their causal history is acknowledged. That is, these judgements congruity and truth depends on what has "personally" happened to us, knowing what situations and events have occasioned us to see them under a certain individual light. In fact, James two different perceptual encounters are true because they conform to his feelings at the time he perceives the Lighthouse, or in other words making sense of these differing perspectives means ascertaining the history of emotional connections between the object perceived and the people who perceive them. I shall elucidate the latter in detail now.

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In a variety of cases we come to understand the things other people say and think by being sensitive to the way that certain situations and events have affected them. In *To the Lighthouse* Mrs Ramsay is outstandingly gifted with this ability. She is singled out from the other characters of the novel by possessing 'a secret sense' to steal through to the very heart of a person's utterances and silences.[55] That is, she has a highly developed aptitude to make sense of other people's actions through recognizing their connections to what a person regards as being important or serious to them.

As we know Mr Ramsay informs James that he cannot go to the

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55. ibid, p. 214. I am following remarks suggested in Apter, T.E. (1984), p. 92

56. Beja, Morris (1971) *Epiphany in the Modern Novel. Revelation as Art*, London: Peter Owen, p. 141

Lighthouse because the weather will be unpleasant tomorrow. But although Mrs Ramsay recognizes that this blunt assertion is neither untrue or irrelevant she, at the same time, challenges the idea that it vouchsafes a completely polished perspective on the world. This is because the assertion in question reflects a penchant for deriving meaning from an impersonal mode of ordering phenomenon; classifying phenomenon in sequence from A to Z, and as a consequence, omitting what is of vital importance: the meaningful place that the Lighthouse occupies in the life of his son. Mr Ramsay, however, does not remain ignorant of this circumstance. He is described as being startled into reflecting that he has blundered and thus is filled with a sense of guilt, which filters into his apologetical approach to his wife and an absurdly feeble tickling of his son.[56] Nevertheless, it is quite clear that his attitude is being attacked because it represents a manner of looking at the world which is unresponsive to our emotional relations to things and how they are conditions for making sense of ourselves and others. What we have is a case of:

> (M)inds . . . . formed to receive facts and when once they have a fact so clearly stated that they can take it in their hands, turn it this way and that, and scrutinise it, they are content; with facts, facts of this kind, they can make useful constructions, political, juridical or theological. But for intuitions, for the melody of the song, the mood of a picture, they have little use. There is therefore a whole part of human experience of which they fight shy, in which they confess themselves frankly at a loss . . . .[57]

The kind of inclinations cited above dismiss a crucial link between for example James' feeling, a longing to journey toward the Lighthouse and James

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57. Bell, Quentin (1996) *Virginia Woolf. A Biography*, London: Random House/Pimlico, p. 19

himself. This is however a link that Mrs Ramsay, in contrast to her husband, glimpses instantly. Hence when gazing within the broadening eyes of her child she discovers simmering there a pale touchstone of his longing and is, characteristically, deeply struck by it. She, 'trustful, childlike, reverential',[58] is a better reader of other people than her husband for she identifies what lies unnoticed inside her child's question by virtue of feeling a sharp sense of sympathy for him and his needs. This feeling of sympathy is then for Woolf a mark of recognition. 'This going to the Lighthouse was a passion of his, she saw . . . . her husband had not said enough'.[59] In other words her solacing response to James, or her reluctance to be as obdurate as her husband, illustrates that she "understands" her child's remarks much better than her husband. She sees relevant links between the Lighthouse and James through drawing connections to the Lighthouse and James' needs and wants. These are, however, connections that appear to be particularly unimportant for Mr. Ramsay. He, in stark contradistinction to his wife, is usually only prepared to view his son's relation to things to uncompromising declarations about the way the world is.

(S)he saw in his eyes . . . . something else take its place; something wondering, pale, like the reflection of a light, which at once made him gaze and marvel. Turning across the bay, and there, sure enough, coming regularly across the waves first two quick strokes and then one steady stroke, was the light of the Lighthouse. It had been lit.

In a moment he would ask her, 'Are we going to the Lighthouse? And she would have to say, 'No: not tomorrow; your father says not.' Happily, Mildred came in to fetch them, and the bustle distracted them. But he kept looking back over his shoulder as Mildred carried him out, and

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58. Woolf, Virginia Woolf (1992), *To the Lighthouse*, p. 10

59. ibid, p. 19

she was certain that he was thinking, we are not going to the Lighthouse tomorrow; and she thought, he will remember that all his life.[60]

Thus James' two different viewpoints on the Lighthouse can be consistently and correctly enunciated by a reference to his past. This is because what we want to know in this case concerns the *role* that James' judgements play on this ocassion rather than on a general occasion. And this can be ascertained through investigating the way that past events which have had a deep effect on him have placed him a unique relation to the object that he is perceiving.

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Woolf's argument is that an ability to, say, form judgements depends on assuming a number of different standpoints on the world. What is extremely significant for her in order to vouchsafe this claim is however an emotional standpoint, our affective responses to a situation. That is, my thought content is fixed by the way that I understand a situation. For Evans the content of my thoughts depends on the spatial and *present* location of an object, and this is a perfectly legitimate claim to make. But according to Woolf, one's thought content is rather more complex than this. She observes, and quite rightly, that what I think about consists of degrees of poignancy, an emotional significance. Hence my thought content can also depend on certain responses to objects shaped by a past filtered with strong emotional associations.

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60. ibid, p. 68

chapter three: Martin Heidegger

Descartes and Hume say that knowledge is acquired through an act of introspection. They mean that our understanding of phenomenon springs from a self-conscious mind that obtains meaning independently of an "external" world and other people. It should be, of course, quite apparent now that the introspective thesis sketches a particularly unconvincing account of identity and continuity. However, we have discovered a theory that attempts to resolve its shortcomings. Indeed, McDowell and Evans have located the source of an introspective standpoint difficulties in a failure to amalgamate the self and the world. And I have argued that Evans, in specific, offers an encouraging solution by claiming that a recognition of myself is connected to having a certain embodied spatial perspective on the world. In this case, we have a recognition which cannot be construed as a corollary to an introspective act of the mind. On the contrary, the self understands itself as a spatial perspective which is jointly determined by the object that is perceived.

Evans description of a self is a minimalistic one. Nevertheless, what he disregards is presented in generous detail in the writings of Virginia Woolf. I have, in fact, argued that Virginia Woolf enriches Evans understanding of spatiality by positing that an important ingredient for determining identity and continuity through time is an emotional relation to the past. Woolf reads identity and continuity in the terms of a recognition achieved through objects from the standpoint of an individual's past concerns.

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In this chapter I shall discuss the early work of the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. According to Heidegger what I know about the world and myself is connected to, as Evans observes, my dependency on the world. But he also offers a philosophical theory which richly elucidates Woolf's assertions. In particular, that the themes of identity and continuity involve an emotional engagement with things. In fact, in this chapter I wish to demonstrate that one's identity and personal continuity is constituted by emotion, other people and time.

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The main aim of Heidegger's philosophy is to reinstate a sense of wonder into philosophical enquiries about existence or being. Hence, we find the forgetting of the question of Being central to both the argument of *Being and Time* and his later writings. I shall not, however, be tackling the more evocative strands of Heidegger's philosophy. What interests me is his detailed elaboration of an entity that is meant to have a special relation to Being. Nevertheless Heidegger is not an easy philosopher to understand, therefore it would be prove useful to enter his thought by briefly conveying his assumptions on the subject.

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Heidegger begins *Being and Time* by commenting that although the question of Being stimulated the work of Plato and Aristotle, today it is characterized with a marked neglect and frivolous commentaries. The question of Being is meant to be a teasing anomaly of something which resists definition and something which one acknowledges instantly. But, he warns, that the poignant undertones of this question are no longer responded to as a serious issue by modern philosophers.

It is said that 'Being' is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something hidden has taken has taken on clarity and self - evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it

he is charged with an error of method.[1]

Heidegger says that philosophers are no longer profoundly struck by the expression *"being"*. His misgivings, however, centre around the fact that "recent" philosophy has tackled this question - indeed all questions - as an issue to be settled by a critical reasoning tied to mathematics and science. That is, he thinks that the question of Being is correctly addressed when it elicits a sense of mystery for what Being might be and not when it is approached as a tractable riddle.[2] It is equally for this reason that the phenomenon of emotion is envisaged as a crucial point of entry into the question for Heidegger. He means that to justify the notion of a subject apprehending the world with a sense of wonder demands treating emotion as an important disclosive mode of being in the world. In fact, he makes it clear that emotion is not secondary to critical thinking at all. On the contrary, it is a necessary ingredient for all knowledge. [3]

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the two-fold project of *Being and Time*

Heidegger's task is thus to unravel the question of Being. He also suggests that the best way to get to grips with this question would be to scrutinize the way that it has appeared in philosophy. This, in particular, means addressing the entity or enquirer who is continually available whenever the

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1. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (2) p. 21

2. Graybeal, Jean (1990) *Language and "the Feminine" in Nietzsche and Heidegger*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 95

3. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (134) p. 173

question is advanced: Dasein; the self as being-there in the world and an entity that has a special relation to Being.

Dasein has a special relation to Being because it is inclined to stand out from other entities - objects and animals for example - through confronting its existence or being as an enigmatic conundrum. But the question of Being is also, Heidegger remarks, 'nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself - the pre-ontological understanding of Being'.[4] He means that Being is constantly presupposed in whatever Dasein does, and as such, if we investigate the numerous ways Dasein exists in the world we shall station ourselves in a better position in order to determine the question of Being.[5]

Being and Time is therefore made up of a two-fold task. This is firstly a deconstruction of the history of philosophy; a counter criticism of its various theoretical standpoints as a strategy to unmask certain mistakes made by philosophers in order to work out an important set of leads which will subsequently allow us to restate the question of Being. Secondly, *Being and Time* attempts to provide a systematic - but not exhaustive - speculation of Dasein, who also poses the question of Being.[6] Heidegger, in fact, separates Dasein's relation to the world into three categories: 'in-the-world'; the 'who' of Dasein; and 'being-in as such'. Here, however, he makes it clear that we are not supposed to assume that we have three separate modes of relating to the world. We are rather evoking one unitary phenomenon which has only for the purposes of this

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4. ibid, *Being and Time* (15) p. 35

5. ibid, *Being and Time* (7) p. 27

6. Caputo, John D. (1993) *Demythologizing Heidegger*, Bloomington. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), p. 11

inquiry been split into several constitutive features.[7]

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In this chapter I shall focus on these three manners of being in order to promote a background of identity and continuity involving the emotions, others and time.

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7. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (53-54), pp. 78-79

Heidegger argues that the world is construed under a set of different modes of description. Descartes, for example, depicts it as a realm tantamount to phenomena studied by mathematics. But Heidegger is quite critical of this model. He argues that it gives us a rather too sophisticated picture of obtaining knowledge about the world. Where, then, Descartes says that it is primarily through a detached reflection that I establish a relation to the world Heidegger, in contrast, suggests that I am already out there alongside the objects that I encounter. '(T)he perceiving of what is known is not a process of returning with one's booty to the cabinet of consciousness after one has gone out and grasped it'.[8] In this case, I know objects as 'equipment'; as, in particular, 'ready-to-hand' and not 'present-at-hand' or by virtue of a reflective meditation.[9]

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This claim represents an important excursion from Descartes' thesis. For Descartes hypothesizes that I reason my relations to things. He says that knowing the world, and myself, is a function of making judgements. He means that it involves being aware of insuperably clear ideas of a mathematical order inside my mind. But Heidegger remarks that understanding an object in reference to a set of mathematical preconditions is a derivative mode of knowing. There is, in fact, a kind of knowing that is a necessary pretext to understanding objects as Descartes alludes. And this is understanding an object as a tool, as an instrument to be used in order to fulfil a certain task. Knowing, for Heidegger, is primarily implicit

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8. ibid, *Being and Time* (62) p. 89

9. ibid, *Being and Time* (69) p. 98

and oriented toward dealing with things. It is prior to reflection, or a pre-reflective mode of activity that can be conceived as 'a kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use'.[10] That is, knowing represents a skill, an embodied know-how like, for example, knowing how to ride a bicycle. Knowing, in other words, involves mastering the skills or social practices that one is socialized into.[11] Hence, I know a hammer in the sense that I know what to do with it: hammering in a nail. In fact, the nail is also a constitutive element of its meaning. For every item of equipment brings with it an indispensable reference to another, which Heidegger calls an 'in order to' function.[12] A hammer is thus employed 'in order to' strike in a nail into a block of wood 'in order' to attach that portion of material to . . . . and so on. I therefore do not know single items or objects. I rather know a whole totality of equipment, which is inturn grasped by a special form of 'sight' or an understanding Heidegger designates as 'circumspection'.[13]

Heidegger also says that when I am involved in a task I am not explicitly conscious of myself. When I am hammering in a nail I am not aware of myself as a subject unequivocally distinct from the tool that I am using. I instead find myself absorbed in a situation, which is the job that I intend to complete: the task at hand. Thus, the self and the world are not to be read as two distinct entities. They rather form a unity, a structural whole or being-in-the-world.[14]

If we recall Gareth Evans produced a rather similar argument in order

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10. ibid, *Being and Time* (67) p. 95

11. Dreyfus, Hubert (1991) *Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 14

12. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (68) p. 97

13. ibid, *Being and Time* (69) p. 98

14. ibid, *Being and Time* (70) p. 99

to repudiate Descartes's position. Evans argued that an understanding of my spatial situatedness is interdependent with the spatial location of the object that I perceive. Heidegger also connects the self's awareness of itself to what it is intentionally related to, although through alluding that knowing is strictly linked to a concerned situatedness in the world.

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Thus Heidegger says that *an incipient recognition of oneself is a pre-reflective phenomenon.* I do not know myself, as Descartes describes, by executing an introspective mental act. I rather recognize myself *implicitly* as a shared way of *behaving or acting* in situations with tools that constitute me. That is, Dasein is not initially unmasked to itself as a world inhabited with objects known through calculative thought but as the everyday world of tools which depend on each other and are interdependent with Dasein through a pre-reflective form of dealing. An extract from a short story by D.H. Lawrence should, I think, make Heidegger's assumptions rather clear.

In the intense sunlight, the three worked in silence, knit together in a brief passion of work. The father stirred slowly for a moment, getting the hay from under his feet. Geoffrey waited, the blue tines of his fork glittering in expectation: the mass rose, his fork swung beneath it, there was a clash of blades, then the hay was swept on to the stack, caught by Maurice, who placed it judiciously. One after another the shoulders of the three men bowed and braced themselves. All wore light blue, bleached shirts, that stuck close to their backs. The father moved mechanically, his thick rounded shoulders bending and lifting dully: he worked monotonously. Geoffrey flung away his strength. His massive shoulders swept and flung the hay extravagantly.

'Dost want to knock me ower?' asked Maurice angrily. He had to brace himself against the

impact.[15]

D.H. Lawrence describes the world of work of three farmers. Hence we find a father and his two sons, Geoffrey and Maurice, hoarding large portions of hay on a blistering hot day. Geoffrey is also inclined to pause in order to allow his father to complete his activity. But, here, his patient pauses evoke a sense of being absorbed within the silent whiles of an activity. Therefore Geoffrey does not develop an awareness which is a matter of being explicitly conscious of himself as an individual removed from his task. On the contrary, we find that it is rather the blue tines of his fork that resonate with his awareness. He and the fork he applies to heave clumps of hay on to an already burgeoning stack form a single unity, thus it is his fork - and not an idea inside his mind - which glitters with expectation. Nor do we discover a single object that we could pinpoint in isolation from the rest as the centre of their activity. These individuals' are not relating to one entity but are engaged in the whole worldhood of farming. That is, each object, person or thing - and even sensations - bear a meaning in reference to the work to be done. They constitute a single pre-reflected background: the mounting mass of hay, the profound sunlight of the summer seasons, the mechanical tightening of muscles beneath the sultry heat, all form an individual unity of being-in-the-world. Moreover when Maurice is distracted, he does not find himself driven toward an explicit awareness of himself that resembles Descartes' proposals. This seems to be particularly certain because the nature of his rebuke entails, again, an effort to fend off a diversion involving the task at hand; the work he is trying to complete.

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15. Lawrence, D.H. (1965) *Love Among the Haystacks*, pp. 7-47, in *Love Among the Haystacks and Other Stories*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 12

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Heidegger, however, does not dismiss the thought that I do critically reflect on things in a way that, in some sense, shares affinities with Descartes' proposals. But he does remark that it is a particularly late mode of knowing. In fact, he suggests that it surfaces when there has been a breakdown in the activity which I may have been engaged in. That is when there has been, for whatever reason, a breakdown in an activity objects become startlingly salient: 'conspicuous', 'obtrusive' or 'obstinate'. They lose their 'ready-to-hand' stature in a certain way. Indeed, respectively, an object becomes 'conspicuous' when it appears to merely lie there unable to be used for the task at hand. It becomes 'obtrusive' when it is not available or missing for what I wish to use it for. While it becomes 'obstinate' when it 'stands in the way' or obstructs the task I wish to complete.[16] Thus it is only in respect to certain kinds of situations that my dealings are characterized by a critical reflection favoured by Descartes. That is, critical reflection only arises when I am pressured into trying to work out a way to get along with an item of equipment that was once 'ready-to-hand'.[17]

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16. ibid, *Being and Time* (73-75) pp. 102-105

17. ibid, *Being and Time* (75) p. 106. Heidegger denies that an incipient understanding of things in the world rests on theoretical inspection and examination. Indeed, his comments on the theme of spatiality represent an excellent illustration of this point. Here Heidegger says that spatiality pictured as an objective system of measurement presumes a practical brand of thinking. For example, perceiving an object located in a space means understanding "space" in relation to a current task. Secondly, distance, the expanse of space between ourselves and an object is not initially arrived at by an internal mathematical calculation but by how near or far an object is

2: the everyday 'who' of dasein: concernful circumspection

It could be argued that Dasein is a dubiously impersonal entity. That is, Heidegger has offered an account of the self which certainly repudiates Descartes's introspective thesis, but this is achieved at the expense of expurgating a sense of conceiving oneself as self-reflectively distinct from other people. For example, we have discovered Virginia Woolf drawing attention to the fact that the perceived object of my attention exudes with the rancours and charms of a more personal order. But Heidegger, as we shall find, regards the inclination to speak of Dasein as a "unique", "passionately", "reflective" "individual" perfectly legitimate within a certain context. Reflection, he says, grants a more sophisticated conception of myself. In fact, a rigorous form of self-examination allows me to overcome an impersonality that makes me implacably like everyone else.[18] However, Heidegger does wish to stress that just as self-reflection cannot be the basis for knowing objects, it cannot be the basis of knowing oneself. I initially know myself through performing everyday skills, an execution of social practices. His point is that Dasein's identity is a shared way of being a human being. Thus I am aware of myself in reference to adopting a shared order of public practices; a configuration of socially learned skills, roles, statuses, jobs.[19] These, furthermore, relate to my interests or purposes. Indeed being-in-the-

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to our reach. Moreover, reaching out for an object is a mode of de-severence. It means that we 'make use of' distance not by measuring it but knowing-how to deal with it. For instance, we grasp an object that cannot be reached by closing the distance between it and our body. Thirdly objects have a certain orientation in space, a directionality, or a sense in which they are located to our left, right, before, behind, and so on. [ibid, *Being and Time* (101-113) pp. 134-148]

18. ibid, *Being and Time* (43) p. 68]

19. Dreyfus, Hubert (1991), p. 159

world stipulates being accustomed to, dwelling with, being absorbed in the world.[20] I am therefore constituted by the world. But what particularly characterizes this participation with the world is that it involves a mode of emotionally responding to things in a 'humanly significant way'.[21] In other words, I do not remain unconcerned or unresponsive to the world. I rather apprehend it as a field of items that mirror the day to day interests and concerns of human beings like myself. Furthermore, the world is composed of things which I seize as an incumbent worldhood of conceptual articles; equipment which matters to me from the perspective of a future or a concern which 'means something like apprehensiveness'.[22]

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Here Heidegger introduces emotion and time as necessary ingredients for identity. To recapitulate, he says that an incipient recognition of oneself emerges from a pre-reflective level. I find myself implicitly mutually constituted by the world. But Heidegger also argues that a recognition of oneself is 'a kind of implicit self-presence that is more like being in a mood than like being in a state of Cartesian reflection'.[23]'Care' (Sorge) is the term Heidegger that introduces to clarify this mode of recognition. And with respect to an involvement with 'equipment', it is comprised of the proviso 'concern'. This means that I encounter

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20. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (54) p. 86

21. Kerr, Fergus (1991) *Getting the Subject Back into the World* , in edited by David Cockburn, *Human Beings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 134

22. Martin Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (57) p. 83

23. Farrell, Frank B. (1996) *Subjectivity, Realism and Postmodernism - The Rediscovery of the World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 234

objects in a multiplicity of concernful ways. That is, they figure as things that I attend to, look after, make use of, and, even adversely neglect or ignore.[24] Generally, however, they are taken up as *potential* instruments for completing a task. For example, the narrator of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* reminiscences that when he was a child he was once so eager to receive a good-night kiss from his mother that he produced a note for her. Marcel thus assumes an activity, writing, in order to satisfy an urgent need to be kissed good-night by his mother. Further, the task that he pursues is dominated by an *anticipation* relating to his mother reading his sensitive petition. That is, when Marcel writes he is in a state of apprehensiveness for the 'sweetness of Mamma's attention'; he is aspiring to attain something in his future that matters to him.[25] Thus the kind of solidarity that the self has with the world can be configured with the attitude that 'I am concerned for the success of the undertaking'.[26] I recognize myself by virtue of certain concerns conceived as accomplishing a variety goals lying in the future.

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concernful solicitude

Heidegger says that I encounter objects in the world through emotion, a mood of concern. Similarly, he speaks of a mood called concernful solicitude to describe how other people are disclosed to me. In fact, he adds that *I recognize*

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24. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (56-57) p. 83

25. Proust, Marcel (1989) *Remembrance of Things Past: 1* (1989), p. 32

26. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (57) p. 83

myself through an emotional recognition of other people. He means that a basic condition for self-disclosure is Being-with.[27] That is, Dasein understands itself as being-in-the-world, and here the "world" it is constituted by is one that it necessarily shares with others. Heidegger's point is that self-recognition rests on our relations to the world and others. In fact, an understanding of others is 'not somehow added on' to the self.[28] I thus do not differentiate my "self" beforehand and then proceed to contrive the existence of others but find that 'they are there too, and there with it', the world.[29] In other words, other people are discovered there right at the start as a constitutive component of Dasein's world (or Dasein).[30] That is, since Dasein finds itself initially in the innumerable ways that it deals with the world it is not to be conceived as a certain privileged point separated from the world, but as a self that is constantly in the 'there' of the world, 'the "yonder" which is the dwelling-place of Dasein as *concern* '.[31] Furthermore, since the world it deals with is, fundamentally, a public one, it is disclosed to itself as an entity inter-related with other people. For example, when I am walking along a peninsula and glimpse a boat anchored to a ceaseless downpour of shoreline an awareness of myself is necessarily moulded to the presence of others. My consciousness is constantly indicative of the various ways that other people deal with things. Thus, when I distinguish the empty decks of the object in question I am still with others: what I perceive presumes the absence of people commonly standing on the floor of a boat.[32]

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27. ibid, *Being anf Time* (114) p. 149

28. ibid, *Being and Time* (118) p. 154

29. ibid.

30. ibid, *Being and Time* (119) p. 155

31. ibid.

32. ibid, *Being and Time* (119-120) pp. 155-156

In our 'description of that environment which is closest to us - the work-world of the craftsman, for example, - the outcome was that along with the equipment to be found when one is at work (in Arbeit), those Others for whom 'work' ("Werk") is destined are 'encountered too'. If this is ready-to-hand, then there lies in the kind of Being which belongs to it (that is, in its involvement) an essential assignment or reference to possible wearers, for instance, for whom it should be 'cut to the figure'. Similarly, when material is put to use, we encounter its producer or 'supplier' as one whom 'serves' well or badly.[33]

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Solicitude is a wide term. It encompasses, as well as prefaces, a variety of different ways of being emotionally responsive to the presence of other people. Therefore, as it is the case with 'concern', it also consists of negative instances of engagement with others; such as 'detachment' or 'solitariness'. For example, if I decide to live apart from other people my actions are, nevertheless, governed by a reference to other people. Indeed, if I was not so vexed by other people I would not have contemplated separating myself from them.[34] Heidgger also says that the term solicitude must be distinguished from the concern that I reveal for objects. He means that I do not relate to other people as items of equipment. Even if I assume an indifference to their sufferings, and may treat them as being insignificant as an object, these responses still presume a relation to them that is profoundly different from my ordinary responses to objects. Heidegger therefore suggests that there is a special interconnection between my moods and other people whom constitute the objects of my moods. Further, this interconnection

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33. ibid, *Being and Time* (119) p. 155

34. ibid, *Being and Time* (120) p. 157

is entirely different from my responses to objects. That is other people, even in the most ordinary circumstances, since they seem to be so strangely like me, cannot be encountered as simple items of equipment. On the contrary, we have an important conceptual difference in attitudes between both here.

But those entities towards which Dasein as Being-with comports itself do not have the kind of Being which belongs to equipment ready-to-hand; they are themselves Dasein. These entities are not objects of concern, but rather of *solicitude*.[35]

(Y)et ontologically there is an essential distinction between the 'indifferent' way in which Things at random occur together and the way in which entities who are with one another do not 'matter' to one another.[36]

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These remarks also constitute a recurrent theme of this thesis. For Descartes does not merely describe the self as a substance which can be theoretically distinguished from its bodily performances. He also says that the self is positively distinct from other people. Thus, in the *Meditations*, we find him remarking that others could be merely hats and coats that hide automatons.[37] In fact, Descartes suggests that I have to think clearly and distinctly about other human presences before I can be certain of their existence. Heidegger, however, removes the need for raising such doubts by claiming that I actually know other people as mutually constituted subjectivities through mood. *That is, an*

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35. ibid, *Being and Time* (121) p. 157

36. ibid, *Being and Time* (121-122) p. 158

37. Descartes, René (1988), *Second Meditation* (32) p. 85

awareness of myself is interdependent with an awareness of another person. Dasein understands itself as a world which it shares with others. This world is, moreover, a 'work-world' belonging to other possible 'wearer', 'users', 'suppliers', and 'servers'.[38] To put it another way, my awareness of another person is derived from holding an immediate familiarity with the behaviour of a community of human beings oriented toward the same kind of activities as myself. Others, we may say, are recognized as fellow human beings, entities whom behave in a humanly significant way.

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38. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (118) p. 153

3. being-in as such: state-of-mind (mood)

I want to show that emotion is a definitive feature of Heidegger's interpretation of the self in *Being and Time*. That is, Descartes privileges a critical kind of thinking by relegating the emotions to untrustworthy sources of understanding. However Heidegger says that emotion is, in stark contrast, crucially preliminary for constituting knowledge. In this respect, his theoretical discussion exercises a dominating influence on the kind of picture of identity and continuity that I want to put forward. For, if we recall, I argued that there were inconsistent tendencies in Descartes. He tried to prove that reasoning can, in theory, be isolated from emotional perception through associating the latter with the body. In fact "true" knowledge, he said, was a product of an activity called thinking occurring independently of emotional embodiment. However, as soon as Descartes introduced this discrepancy, we discovered him contradicting it in numerous ways; for example, by enunciating his themes in an elegant emotional diction. The point is that it is immensely difficult to draw a clear-cut distinction between thinking (articulated or written) and feeling. To think lucidly means to reflect passionately. Thought and feeling are suffused rather than independent from each other.

Heidegger supports this point by claiming that Dasein inhabits the world through *being in* a particular 'state-of-mind' or disposition. Here, a state-of-mind indicates always having a mood and a mood constitutes Dasein's relation to whatever it encounters. He means that mood is a basic manner of relating to the world, and as such, this implies that the self's identity involves a necessary connection to its moods. In fact, it is disclosed through them.[39]

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39. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (135) p. 174

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Dasein discovers itself through a state-of-mind (mood or Care).

A helpful way to grasp this point would be to focus on state-of-mind's German counterpart, the word *Befindlichkeit.* This word means 'how do you find yourself' or 'the-way-one-finds-oneself'.[40] That is, Care distinguishes the self as an emotive situation in the world. *Indeed, through Care I am united to the object or other person I relate to, and recognize myself as a whole constituted by it and I.*[41] In other words, the introspective standpoint includes a trenchant shortcoming. It falsely assumes that self-recognition requires a mental act of attention. Hence we find Heidegger saying that an incipient recognition of ourselves is, to the contrary, a pre-reflective mode of disclosure; a practical emotional understanding. That is, knowledge is not arrived at through Descartes' *thinking,* but by an emotional relation to the world and other people. Further, the emotions unite me to an intentional object; thus I understand myself as an individual mutually constituted by the intentional object of my emotions. 'In a state-of-mind Dasein is always brought before itself, and has always found itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has'.[42]

Emotion is a crucial constituent for demarcating a recognition of ourselves. This is because, firstly, Dasein is not a thinking mind, but an embodied individual constantly affected by what it encounters in the world. Dasein is an affective self. In fact, since it is an affective self Dasein's identity is

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39. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (135) p. 174

40. Macquarrie, John (1973), p. 161

41. ibid, p. 157

42. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (135) p. 174

necessarily arrived at by virtue of emotion, an *affective disclosure.* Secondly, an emotion unites me to intentional objects and other people. Thus to undergo an emotion is to be *'Being-in-the-world as a whole'.*[43] Indeed, the writings of Virginia Woolf are diffused with prime instances of this phenomenon.

> She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes . . . . She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like the light.[44]

Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* briefly withdraws from her knitting in order to allow her eyes to settle on and praise a cursive shaft of bright light originating from the Lighthouse. But the effusive gush of elation that she subsequently feels is not "ego-centred". It does not involve formulating that an emotion is 'an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatic way and puts its mark on Things and persons'.[45] Her elation is not a projection of her feelings onto the world. On the contrary, Mrs Ramsay's elation is rather 'without vanity'; the ebb and flow of a feeling reflecting a sense of "sympathy" or being in harmony with the world. She therefore finds herself interwoven with the fluent, bright beam of Lighthouse. Or Mrs Ramsay discovers herself, in reference to Heidegger's proviso, as being-in-the-world.

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43. ibid, *Being and Time* (137) p. 176

44. Woolf, Virgina (1992) *To the Lighthouse* (1992), p. 70

45. Heidegger, Martin (1993) *Being and Time* (137) p. 176

facticity and projection

Heidegger argues that Dasein does not have a determinate essence. I do not, as Descartes alludes, recognize myself as a self positioned inside the body with an already fixed nature. In fact, I never grasp myself as a self-sufficient object - even through a mode of critical reflection. That is, Dasein is perpetually ahead of itself, and as a result, always outruns an effort to seize itself with the kind of lucid clarity that Descartes proposes. For example, it does not have itself but the end of its task in mind when it is pursuing the activity of hammering in a nail.[46] Nevertheless, this does not suggest that Dasein has no distinguishable features. On the contrary, Heidegger says that Dasein interprets itself in the light of possibilities dependent on a shared human understanding; possibilities that it finds in the practices of its social community, and as we shall also discover, are manifested in a common language used by itself and others. Moreover, the kind of self-interpretations open to Dasein are constrained by what it can do in the world ('facticity').[47] The point is that although Dasein has no fixed essence this does not imply that it is positively free to construe itself in any way it chooses. Dasein is rather 'thrown' into the world, and by being 'thrown' into the world it can only take up 'factical' possibilities, possibilities which exhibit a relatively stable historical form. Therefore understanding is, for Heidegger, essentially perspectival. He means that Dasein understands itself by virtue of pre-existing shared "cultural" interpretations; actions, roles, responsibilities which essentially materialize in "actual" situations and are 'bound up in its "destiny" with the Being of those entities which its encounters within its own world'.[48]

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46. ibid, *Being and Time* (146) p. 186

47. ibid, *Being and Time* (135) p. 174

48. ibid, *Being and Time* (56) p. 82

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language and 'inauthenticity' ('falling')

Dasein is constituted by language. Heidegger means that whatever we understand (including ourselves) is disclosed to us by virtue of sharing and using a common language. He thinks that language (by which he means spoken as opposed to written language) unmasks or makes intelligible what is in the world. That is, an object becomes apparent by it being talked about. Thus, he claims, that language actually admits two people to "see" what the other person, in each case, "sees". He means that an assertion is a form of communication; a mode of disclosure linking two people to a common world.

> It is letting someone see with us what we have pointed out by way of giving it a definite character. Letting someone see with us shares with (teilt . . . . mit) the Other that entity which has been pointed out in its definite character. That which is 'shared' is our *Being towards* what has been pointed out - a Being in which we see in common.[49]

Understanding is interdependent with language. And adhering to a previous assumption that a Cartesian position is a derivative outcome of a practical way of relating to the world language, Heidegger says, is essentially a serviceable tool for coping with things. He means that I do not, initially, understand an assertion as a truth functional combination of basic statements about objects. I, instead, understand it as a technique for dealing with things in a variety of situations. Hence, when I utter the word 'hammer' I do not initially

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49. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (155) p. 197

"intend" the predicate of a sentence, but rather 'the hammer itself'. That is, I am conveying a manner of conduct connected to the potential use of the tool in question.[50] For example, by articulating the word 'hammer' I could be insinuating 'hand me the hammer!' In fact, I may prefer the terser expression 'hammer' rather than its the longer counterpart in order to save time and not to breach the fluent rhythm of my activity.

'The hammer is too heavy' or rather just 'Too heavy!', 'Hand me the hammer!'. Interpretation is carried out primordially not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspective concern - laying aside the unsuitable tool, or exchanging it, 'without wasting words'.[51]

The way things have been expressed or spoken out is such that in the totality of contexts of signification into which it has been articulated, it preserves an understanding of the disclosed world and therewith, equiprimordially, and understanding of Dasein-with of Others and one's own Being-in.[52]

However Heidegger adds that since Dasein's assertions are transmitted across from one person to another, and are "socially" bound interpretations, this sort of language suffices to close it off from Being. That is, Dasein is constituted by a structure called 'falling', the everyday present of the 'they'. But by being

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50. ibid, *Being and Time* (155) pp. 196-197

51. ibid, *Being and Time* (157) p. 200

52. ibid, *Being and Time* (168) p. 214 The later Heidegger enriches his earlier notion of language by calling it the house of being. He means that language is not merely a serviceable praxis for it throws light on historic forces (technology) beyond the controlling grasp of human beings. Hodge, Joanna (1995) *Heidegger and Ethics*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 39-40

constituted by the 'they' its appreciation of Being is obfuscated in an important way. In other words, every Dasein is constituted by taking up a communal language without any prior questioning of the assumptions that are ensconced within it. Dasein does not doubt the words that it learns. In fact, it rather speaks them as though they have no need to be re-discovered and appropriated anew.[53] But Heidegger argues that when language is assumed in this manner it is a form of 'idle talk' or 'gossiping'. And when it diffuses into writing, a form of 'scribbling'.[54] Here, Heidegger is not delivering a truculent repudiation of Dasein's' society. It is not his intention to evoke an uncomplimentary instance of being-in-the-world. That is Dasein, he says, may be fully oblivious to the circumstance that it welcomes certain interpretations without really questioning them. Thus, it can be 'Indifferent' to its inherence in the world.[55] However, Heidegger warns, that when Dasein chooses to interpret itself in the manner that everyone else does (the 'they') it 'discourages any new enquiry and any disputation, and in a peculiar way suppresses and holds them back'.[56] He means that Dasein as 'idle talk' is far too ready to take things as self-evident and complete, and as a result cannot take a "genuine" responsibility for the life it leads. On the contrary, we find that it is not sure of itself except in a random, "disunified" fashion of pursuing inconsequential or trivial collusions of self-understanding.[57] In other words, Dasein allows itself to be carried away by the restless hustle and bustle of everyday life; it acts merely to please others, or does things to be accepted instead of thinking for itself and acting on its own behalf.

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53. ibid, *Being and Time* (169) p. 213

54. ibid, *Being and Time* (169) p. 212

55. ibid, *Being and Time* (169) p. 213

56. ibid.

57. ibid, *Being and Time* (390) p. 442

Heidegger is saying that in order for Dasein to assume an identity that sharply distinguishes itself from the 'they' it must take up a form of affective self-concern for the beliefs that exist in its society, and commit itself to those that it finds important.[58]

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Therefore, Heidegger says that the self does not have an a prior fixed essence since it is defined by pre-reflectively assuming shared, social practices. However, he also categorizes this mode of being in the world as 'falling' and 'inauthenticity' because it implies that one 'unthinkingly' falls into or conforms to one's social practices. That is, although the self is ostensibly a distinguishable entity, in a basic ontological sense it is the same and everybody. This is, and quite importantly, an essential constitutive feature of the self. It is *incipiently* inclined to conform to schemas of self-understanding characterized by an unquestioned allegiance to its social community's practices. In other words, I understand myself by acting and responding as "anyone" would, and do so for the simple reason that all forms of self-interpretation are only possible through pursuing the practices that I share with others. However, Heidegger adds that this sort of relation to the world and other people encumbers a more sharper and critical attitude to my situation. He means that in leading such a life I shirk a responsibility to make something of my existence, especially by assuming an unquestioned, complacent confidence in the roles, relations and vocations that I take up from my social or language community and help to define and provide

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58. Bernet, Rudolf (1996) *The Other in Myself*, pp. 169-184 in Simon Critchley and Peter Dews, *Deconstructive Subjectivities* (eds.), Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 174 and also Dilman, Ilham (1984) *Reason, Passion and Will* pp. 185-204 Philosophy 59, p. 186 and p. 202

meaning to my life.[59] In fact, Heidegger contends that it is by seriously reflecting on the previously unquestioned beliefs of my society, by conceiving them as acutely relevant to myself and accordingly applying them more responsibly, that I become responsible for making something of my life as a whole.[60] I shall discuss this idea - 'authenticity' - in more detail. For it is in respect to this concept that Heidegger offers several illuminating insights on the thesis of personal identity.

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'authenticity': temporality and death

Heidegger's model of 'authenticity' is strongly influenced by his readings of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard not only in respect to content, but also in relation to style or narrative. Thus, although his prose lacks the refined cadences of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, Heidegger casts his argument in the form of parables. This implies that it would be rather ill-advised to take the text literally. Nevertheless, what is impeccably clear is that he distinguishes the concepts of 'inauthenticity' and 'authenticity' through relating them to the differing stances that Dasein assumes on the subject of its death.

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Heidegger in fact makes a very important claim when he suggests that Dasein's understanding of temporality is constitutive for self-understanding. That

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59. Guignon, Charles (1989), p. 242

60. Dilman, Ilham (1981) *Identity and Self-Knowledge*, pp. 188-198 in Dilam, Ilham *Studies in Language and Reason*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 191

is, firstly, Care represents, as we know, the innumerable ways that Dasein involves itself with its tasks and other people. The world and other people affect Dasein, they matter to it. But Dasein also bears a past, present and future, and these structures, through Care, determine how it deals with things. The point is that Dasein is disclosed to itself by virtue of pursuing the practices of its social community. This constitutive condition for Dasein, however, means that Dasein is the product of what Heidegger describes as a shared 'tradition', past or established social practices existing in the present. Here he means that the past is an essential demarcating feature of Dasein's understanding. That is, Dasein is constantly speculating about what to do next in reference to carrying forward a cultural practice or 'tradition'. Hence, he argues that the past is not a covert property which Dasein can abandon and leave obscured behind it when it acts in the present. To the contrary, the past is a prevalent characteristic of the self, and looms ahead of it in the future in the sense that whatever decisions it makes, it makes them in the light of the past.

> In its factical Being, any Dasein is as it already was, and it is 'what' it already was. It *is* its past, whether explicitly or not. And this is so not only in that its past is, as it were, pushing itself along 'behind' it, and that Dasein possesses what is past as a property which is still present-at-hand and which sometimes has after-effects upon it: Dasein 'is' its past in the way of *its* own Being, which, to put it roughly, 'historizes' out of its future on each occasion. Whatever the way of being it may have at the time, and thus whatever understanding of being it may possess, Dasein has grown up both into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself: in terms of this it understands itself proximally and, within a certain range, constantly. Its own past - and this always means its 'generation' - is not something which *follows along after* dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it.[61]

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61. ibid, *Being and Time* (20) p. 41

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Dasein is constituted by a past, present and a future. Traditionally, however, Heidegger suggests that philosophers have described the self as an entity that exists inside time with a stark emphasis on the present. And as a result, time has been misconstrued as a sequence of selfsame "nows" that have little bearing on the subject that grasps them.

> The sequence of "nows" is uninterrupted and has no gaps. No matter how 'far' we proceed in 'dividing' up the "now", it is always now. The continuity of time is seen within the horizon of something which is indissolubly present-at-hand.[62]

Heidegger says that Dasein has a pre-reflective understanding of its own temporality. He also comments that this pre-reflective understanding is presupposed and severely disfigured by traditional philosophical conceptions of Time. That is, as we should know, Dasein is not a self which is situated in the world as an object is situated inside a container. Quite the reverse: Dasein is being-in-the-world. Similarly, however, Dasein is not in Time but temporality. In other words, just as the self is not a substance disconnected to the world, Time is not a parenthetic offshoot of the self. It is, to the contrary, an active mode of its being. Thus when Heidegger remarks that Time is traditionally misconstrued in

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62. ibid, *Being and Time* (423) pp. 475-476

63. Olafson, Frederick A. (1987) *Heidegger and the Philosophy of the Mind*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 82

respect to a model privileging the present he means to do so in order to expose a problem implicit in such a theory. This is that the self, according to this view, inhabits a particular present logically distinct from an earlier past and an impending future. And as such, it is utterly unclear how it could stretch out of its present and grasp phenomenon within the framework of a certain past or future event.[63] Indeed if every moment is regarded as an isolated and evanescent "now" my concurrent "experiences" cannot be identified with me beyond that particular "now". That is, I am constantly confronting a past that no longer exists, a future which has not yet occurred and a fleeting present that remains no longer than a current presentation to one's "consciousness".[64] Hence Heidegger argues that Dasein's understanding of itself is an active temporalization. He means that Dasein is disclosed to itself through its actions, and indeed an action is simultaneously a reckoning with Time. To act, he says, is to be concerned with completing a certain task "now", or during a stretch of time. Hence, we speak of having no time, losing the track of time, or finding the time in order to do something. That is, an action arises as a regard to "get something done" and "a what is going to come of it". It implies a reckoning with time, acting in the sense of being oriented toward a task as a feasible, urgent or indispensable target. It also implies responding to situations as temporal events which accommodate the past and future. For example, we make amendments to unexpected difficulties, or we make room for them when we are engaged in completing a task.[65]

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64. Clarke, S.H. (1990) *Paul Ricoeur*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 160

65. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (337) p. 386 and (388) p. 440

For Heidegger Time is public. But he introduces the condition "mine" to lucidly explain Dasein's temporality. "Mine" refers to a particular contingent life. It means knowing how to deal with things competently as they emerge within the ebb and flow of *my own* day to day activities. For example, a resolve to be buried in the town that I was born naturally implies recollecting the location of *my* birth. However, this recollection does not point to a chronological rehearsal of every element in my past, but a focusing on what is acutely relevant to the success of my current undertaking. Moreover, although this decision is especially particular to myself, it is conditioned by the social community I inhabit. This is because my decision to be buried in a certain place is rendered intelligible to others and myself by engaging with a particular historical practice existing in my social community; a social tradition of burying the dead.[66]

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Heidegger, moreover, connects an arrogation of one's own personal death into the kind of temporality that is constitutive for the self. He says that Dasein gains a recognizable particularity precisely because it does not stretch from a neutral past and future but from birth to a specific death. However, it is only by virtue of a repeated reflection on the significance of its own finitude that it can 'pull itself together' as a unity from the 'dispersion' and 'disconnectedness' derived from an everyday understanding of itself.[67] Heidegger is certainly not

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66. Inwood, Michael (1997) *Heidegger*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 78-79. An intersection between a personal and social history being constitutive for understanding an activity is made by Alasdair MacIntyre in his chapter *The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition* , pp.204-225 in MacIntyre, Alasdair (1992) *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Philosophy*, London: Duckworth, p. 207

denying that Dasein's everyday understanding of time is a temporal unity of a past, present and future. On the contrary, he says that Dasein always envisages a "now" or present as a stretch of time consisting of "culturally" fixed 'opportunities and circumstances which concern keeps "tactically" awaiting in advance, (and) have "fate" as their outcome'.[68] That is, in regard to its everyday existence Dasein is perpetually reckoning with Time. It is, as we have already found out, always looking forward to a situation, searching for the right time and place in regard to achieving something by planning ahead, making provisions, detours, responding to setbacks.[69] In other words, Dasein can be envisaged as being concerned about getting things done: it recognizes itself through a daily concern for entities which emerges from its past and is directed toward its future. However, Heidegger adds that an everyday understanding is an inauthentic one when it becomes an *irresolute* preocuppation with the near future rather than a *resolute* appropriation of an individual fate or future.[70]

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Heidgger describes an 'authentic' understanding of Dasein by highlighting how it permits a modified unity of the past, present and future. He wishes to

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68. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (390) p. 441

69. Kisiel, Theodore (1995) *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pp. 343-344

70. 'He who is irresolute understands himself in terms of those very closest events and be-fallings which he encounters in such making-present and which thrust themselves upon him in varying ways. Busily losing *himself* in the object of his concern, he *loses his time* in it too. Hence his characteristic way of talking - "I have no time"' [Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (410) p. 463].

explain that an 'inauthentic' life represents an unquestioned impersonal mode of inhabiting the world. It describes a failure to care about my future in a way in which I could actually assume more authority over the actions that shape my existence. In fact, "recovering" such an authority demands seriously thinking over the subject of my eventual death. For I have a unique relation to my death. That is, it is not a disinteresting universal possibility but my ownmost unique possibility. Heidegger means that it is inhabited with an alarming particularity since it is inevitable and since no one else can die my death but me.[71] However, he describes 'inauthentic' Dasein as deliberately eluding a serious reflection on its impending death. 'Inauthenticity', he says, means a running away from whatever are the urgent subjects and impulses of human existence. Therefore as an 'inauthentic' person I attempt to achieve my goals against the assumption that I have a great deal of time in which to accomplish them. Here, I assume my death lies a long way ahead of me in the future, and as a result content myself with the thought that there remains an *eternity* to achieve what I want. But by adopting this outlook I become more readily accustomed to flirting with my goals. That is, I no longer remain faithful to my projects, for I am now inclined to detain their completion by pretending that I have simply forever to fulfil them.[72] Nevertheless, Heidegger suggests (in the form of a parable) that there is a mood called anxiety which alerts Dasein to the urgency of dealing with its impending death,[73] an anxiety carrying an *existentialist* signification. For example, Albert

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71. ibid, *Being and Time* (250-251) p. 294

72. ibid, *Being and Time* (410) p. 463

73. ibid, *Being and Time* (268) p. 312. Heidegger explains anxiety through the call of conscience. Here, Dasein hears a silent voice which unsettles it by drawing its attention to the fact that it has its own life to live and a limited time in which to make the most of its life, the available possibilities of its existence. [ibid, *Being and Time* (271-289) pp. 315-335]

Camus has explained that the certainty of death makes existence absurd. This is because death spells how indifferent the universe is to our concerns - it is, absurdly, our ultimate reward for making anything of our lives.[74] Heidegger, however, says that thinking about death is neither morbid nor negative, but rather a positive reaction against viewing life as a springboard for absurdity and despair. For he believes that such a reflection can awaken us to an urgent need to fulfil those very goals that death can halt and remove.[75]

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Thus Dasein's past, present and future co-exist together as a whole through a mood of concern. But an 'authentic' appreciation of death involves a modification of these structures, an act in which Dasein moves away from being like everybody else to an entity engaged in the process of preserving its uniqueness. This is important. For Heidegger is saying is that I do not recognize myself by virtue of being a passive observer of, say, ideas inside my mind. I am, instead, disclosed through my actions or by undertaking certain roles and responsibilities belonging to my social community. However, this recognition does not reveal a unique and irreplaceable individual but an occupant of various roles in a practice, a person performing functions that anyone may perform.[76] In fact, according to Heidegger, it is only by modifying this circumstance that I achieve a unique identity or 'authenticity'. He means that it is by carrying out a role with a

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74. Camus, Albert (1995) *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 21

75. Heidegger, Martin (1993), ibid, *Being and Time* (266) p. 311

76. Mulhall, Stephen (1997) *Heidegger and Being and Time*, London and New York: Routledge, p.73

greater interest to the way my actions here affect myself and others around me that I gain a unique identity. Hence, he ties the concept of 'authenticity' to the act of Dasein 'anticipating' its death. The latter means viewing my past as a repeatable source of possibilities and seizing death as a unique limit (facticity) carried forward into the future to serve as a permanent measure for the decisions that I make.[76] In this case, my past and future do not constitute suppressive limits to what I can do. Quite the opposite: they 'free' me to make the most of what lies in my present, which in turn becomes a 'moment of vision', a present which discloses new possibilities emerging from my past.[77] Thus Heidegger defines Dasein as a being-towards-death, or a freedom towards death. Freedom means appropriating death as a significant possibility. It suggests approaching every situation as an opportunity that may certainly not reoccur again. In this respect, I will not waste time trifling with unrealistic plans unlikely to be actuated, nor seek consolation in the routine of the past, where a nostalgia for what has passed deters an impulse to adopt "genuine" novelty and change.[78]

(A)*nticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concernful solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned* **freedom towards death** *- a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the "they", and which is factical, certain of itself, and anxious.*[79]

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77. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (328) p. 376

78. Macquarrie, John (1972), p. 201

79. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (266) p. 311

Heidegger's analysis of Dasein represents a promising contribution to the theme of identity and personal continuity over time. I think that it undermines an introspective account for recognizing and making sense of who we are. Indeed, through a painstaking questioning of the idea that the "mind" is an exclusive originator and ground of meaning. That is, Heidegger suggests that understanding ourselves is determined by relating to entities in the world that *emotionally matter* to us in commonly shared ways. The self does not grasp what it is by virtue of being a mind wholly transparent to itself but through the life or common activities it shares with other people. This is also an incipient pre-reflective understanding. Heidegger means that the self is revealed as being-in-the-world, an entity implicitly absorbed, or emotionally constituted, with the equipment and other people it encounters day to day. In other words, it interprets itself by acting and assuming public roles which draw their sense from the background of the practices of the 'they' or its social community.[80] In addition, Heidegger defines the self as an entity purposively directed toward the future while being absorbed in the present and retaining a relevant past. For Heidegger an appreciation of time is indispensable for properly eliciting self-understanding. This is also crucially important. And I would like to address it in connection to a current interest in a relationship between self-understanding and narrative. My interest in narrative, however, is explicitly wed to Heidegger's allocution that the self is disclosed through its emotional relations with others. I shall focus on this point at the end of this account.

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80. Guignon, Charles (1990) *Philosophy after Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, pp. 649-672, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 50, p. 655

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Recent work on time and the self has been concerned with making explicit a reciprocal relation between narrative and temporality. Thus drawing on Heidegger's claim that Dasein's understanding of time is constitutive for understanding itself philosophers like Paul Ricoeur, for example, have argued that self-identity is closely woven to the public practice of telling stories about ourselves.[81] The main tenor of the argument is that the act of narrating is a characteristic form of human activity for making sense of our lives or for illuminating and grasping a life as a meaningful unity over time. That is, the stories that we tell about ourselves are the means by which we make our actions, and the self which is formed through them, intelligible to ourselves and others. In fact Heidegger, if we recall, suggested that language is an important constituent of Dasein. 'Discoursing or talking', especially, 'is the way we in which we articulate "significantly" the intelligibility of Being-in-the-world'.[82] Indeed, it is precisely in view of this that the act of narrating contributes a discursive unity to the actions of Dasein, identifying for ourselves and others new possibilities of thinking about ourselves.

However Ricoeur places special emphasis on the concept of a plot, or more precisely the activity of emplotment, to show how the notion of time achieves a narrative form. That is, as we know, Heidegger says that an action reveals the identity of the subject in the sense that it is by virtue of acting that

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81. '(N)arrativity and temporality are as closely linked as a "language game" in Wittgenstein's terms is to a "form of life". Or, to put it in different terms, narrativity is the mode of discourse through which the mode of being which we call temporality, or temporal being, is brought to language.' [Ricoeur, Paul *The Human Experience of Time and Narrative* (1991), p. 99

82. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (161) p. 204

that the self undersigns a role identifiable to other people.[83] For Ricoeur, nonetheless, understanding an action involves a subject having an acquaintance with the rules of composition, plot-making. He explains that an action embodies an episodic dimension and an act of configuration. By the former term he means that an action develops over time 'in accordance with the irreversible order of time common to human and physical events'.[84] An action is not an isolated event, a neutral "now", but a related succession of episodes extending toward a future goal. Hence Heidegger adverts to Dasein as an entity which is disclosed through the different ways it is implicitly preoccupied with its practical tasks oriented toward the future, or the various ways it directs itself toward goals, often having to produce adjustments or executing a new set of actions in order to tackle an unpredicted difficulty that comes into conflict with its aims. Now Ricoeur, in acquiesce to this view, adds that the kind of self-disclosure Heidegger mentions is established through performing an existing link between telling a story and the way we understand our actions. That is, the predicted and unpredicted consequences of our actions are made meaningful by what Ricoeur terms as 'grasping together' or an act of configuration. An act prompted, moreover, by the Heideggerean theme of repetition or recollection. He means that the self which is recounted and hence made intelligible through narrative is the outcome of an intentional act akin to plot-making, telling a story with a beginning, middle and end. For example, it is by reading the conclusion of a tale and then retracing its end to its beginning that we are able to thoroughly grasp the meaning of the episodes that preceded it.[85] In other words, it is by virtue of the process of narrating a plot that the expected anticipations or accidental confrontations

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83. Clarke, S.H. (1990), p. 168

84. Ricoeur, Paul (1991) *The Human Experience of Time and Narrative*, p. 109

85. ibid, p. 110-111

belonging to the characters of a tale are brought together into intelligible wholes or through which their lives make sense. [86]

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Therefore narrative is to be construed as a distinctive manifestation of the self's relationship to time. In fact, the activity of emplotment is akin to making a life, a communicable expression of an on going process of self-definition.[87] That is, it allows me to understand myself as a coherent unity over time. And it does so by virtue of what Heidegger has already conveyed as grasping my present situatedness by looking toward the future and accentuating and recollecting certain relevant features of the past.[88] In the following section I wish to illustrate the importance of narrative for understanding ourselves in the light of a pivotal theme of this thesis: our emotional relations to others.

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86. Ricoeur, Paul (1991) *Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator*, pp. 425-440, trans. J.N. Kraay and A.J. Scholten in (ed) Mario J. Valdés (1991), p. 426

87. Nalbantian, Suzanne (1997), p. 38

88. Ricoeur, Paul (1991) *The Human Experience of Time and Narrative*, p. 116

Like Paul Ricoeur, Martha Nussbaum argues that *narratives* are integral to the process of understanding ourselves. What I, however, find particularly attractive about her discussion is that it draws an important connection between self-understanding and our emotional relations with others. That is, the stories that we tell about ourselves refer to certain background circumstances which constitute the context of our lives, such as other people and the innumerable ways that they can matter to us. Nussbaum means that our relations with others are filled with significance and that we recognize ourselves through expressing this significance - the role others play in our lives - in the form of a single narrative unity.[89]

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There is an aspect of Heidegger's appreciation of an 'authentic' being-toward-death that I would like to emphasise to illustrate this standpoint. I am certainly not attempting to rival Heidegger's interesting claim that I am able to grasp my death as a relation to a future that is unique to myself. I only wish to readdress (or enrich) his thematisation of death. That is, Heidegger suggests that an awareness of myself is mutually constituted with my surroundings and other people. Indeed, I would like to maintain that the death of another person is, in

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89. Nussbaum, Martha (1988) *Narrative Emotions: Beckett's Genealogy of Love*, pp. 225-254, Ethics 98. '*(N)arratives* are essential to the process of practical deliberation: not just because they happen to represent and also evoke emotional activity, but also because their very forms are themselves the sources of emotional structure, the paradigms of what, for us, emotion *is*.' [ibid, p. 236]

a similar fashion, interdependent with one's own. I also think that Thomas Nagel raises the point that I wish to discuss:

> Your relation to your own death is unique, and here if anywhere the subjective standpoint holds a dominant position. By the same token, the internal standpoint will be vicariously dominant in your attitude toward the deaths of those whom you are so close that you see the world through their eyes.[90]

It is difficult to be indifferent to the death of those we are very close to; to grasp their annihilation from an impersonal or objective standpoint. On the contrary, we are in fact most susceptible to the mysterious particularity of others in relation to our sense of their finitude. Thus, we find in the novels of Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence that the death of a loved one is greeted with a recognition of their irreplacibility. We also find that it becomes a determining stimulus for shaping an understanding about the direction that one's life is leading to.

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In *Sons and Lovers* D.H. Lawrence explores the implications of being interdependent with a special contingent individual. The relationship he deals with - and for Lawrence with stark restraint - is a son's connection to his mother. What is however of particular interest for us is the way in which Lawrence depicts this relationship. That is, he describes it as exposing a certain passion for a certain individual; one which, through practical deliberation, is constitutive for

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90. Nagel, Thomas (1989) *The View from Nowhere*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 224

making sense of ourselves.

> Who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another; that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together . . . .
>
> "Mother!" he whispered - "mother!"
>
> She was the only thing that held him up, himself amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself.[91]

For Paul Morel the death of his mother spells a recognition of his powerlessness to preserve what is precious. In fact, his sense of loss reveals a self that is sensitive to others and sees itself in relation to its deepest commitments to them. Thus, Martha Nussbaum claims:

> There are some truths about love that can be learned only through the experience of a particular passion of one's own. If one is asked to teach those truths, one's only recourse is to recreate that experience for the hearer: to tell a story, to appeal to his or her imagination and feelings by the use of a vivid narrative.[92]

She means, I think, that what we call love cannot be abstracted from those whom we love. Love is the story of a certain passion for a certain individual. And by articulating that story we are articulating the story of our own lives, and an understanding of ourselves which we have achieved through

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91. Lawrence, D.H (1993) *Sons and Lovers*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, pp. 445-446

92. Nussbaum, Martha (1986) *The Fragility of Goodness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 185

living it.[93]

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Paul is deeply attached to his mother, and in consequence, her death gives rise to a disorienting feeling of helplessness, a sense that the world is somehow impoverished without her presence. But losing somebody forces one to conceive of the past as regrettable, and this gives one reasons to linger and dwell over its fugitive presence.[94] Indeed, this is how Lawrence renders Paul's grief, although the grief in question does not exemplify self-defeat but a positive movement toward self-discovery. That is, Paul recollects his past, not in the sense of recalling an identical replica of what has occurred, but within the framework of serious self-exploration. Here it is revised and reshaped, and through being revised and reshaped leads him into new regions and latitudes of life. Hence, Paul glimpses a restitution as he continues to grapple with his mother's death when, at the end of the novel, he walks toward the town faintly humming and glowing with a hopeful promise to assuage his grief.

> But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's phosphorescence. His fist were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked quickly towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.[95]

Lawrence leads us to find that Paul's thoughts about his mother's death

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93. ibid.

94. Lloyd, Genevieve (1993), p. 105

95. Lawrence, D.H. (1993) *Sons and Lovers*, p. 446

are a mode of engagement with her being in time. That is his novel demonstrates Paul uniting the temporal episodes of another's life; organizing and reorganizing them in the manner of a story that, it is equally clear, develops in symmetry to the changing life of Paul Morel.

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chapter four: Ludwig Wittgenstein

Descartes and Hume say that I construct knowledge of myself by inspecting "inner" objects inside my mind. However, it is quite clear that the contrary has to be the case in order to elude the vicissitudes both philosophers meet in accounting for the self's personal identity over time. In fact, Evans argues that the problem with the introspective view is that it fails to recognize that no form of understanding can commence without connecting my thoughts to a shared world. He means that knowledge is mutually determined by what I engage with in the world. Thus, I recognize myself as a body whose spatial situatedness is interdependent with the location of the object that I perceive.

I have also attempted to strengthen and enrich this position by underlining a connection between being emotionally related to an object/other person and knowing. My sources for this view have been the early philosophy of Martin Heidegger and the writing of Virginia Woolf. In addition, I have focused on the subject of narrative, a pre-reflective and reflective construction of the temporal features of my existence, to consolidate the unity of the self through time in order to reply to the question of self-knowledge.

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In the ensuing chapters I wish to develop the idea that a recognition of myself and others is tied to certain affective responses. Therefore, the starting point of this chapter will be a Wittgensteinian claim maintaining that a recognition of myself presupposes a certain kind of recognition of other people, an attitude

toward the soul. I will argue that I recognize myself through my emotional interactions with others, interactions based on sharing a common life and language. In fact, I will put forward a *descriptive metaphysical* account of identity by highlighting affinities of this kind between Wittgenstein and Heidegger.

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an attitude towards the soul

In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein persistently rejects the idea that the "I", sensations, emotions and beliefs describe private objects located inside the mind. Like Heidegger, he thinks that an introspective theory of knowing severely misrepresents the manner in which I pursue my projects and distinguish other people. Wittgenstein's philosophy therefore represents an important excursion from a philosophical tradition that has, according to the former, erroneously privileged the mind as an originating model for meaning. That is, Wittgenstein says that knowing is not an unmediated product of underlying processes inside the mind but a pre-reflective application of skills and practices which I acquire by being a member of a certain social or language community.

It is what Wittgenstein conveys about distinguishing other people which will be a point of concern in this chapter. A helpful way to approach this discussion would be to focus on his comment that I know other people through an attitude toward the soul. 'My attitude towards him is an attitude towards the soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul'.[1]

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Wittgenstein argues that I find others permeated with what is customarily called an "interior life", but what we shall advert to as *embodied* sensations, feelings, beliefs and aims. Furthermore, I assume this to be so without reflection, an "inner" process of *reasoning*. He means that an awareness of others is not arrived at by entertaining a belief about their "inner" parts (a

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1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1991) *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 178 (iv)

soul or brain). It is not the outcome of *calculative reasoning*, but an immediate or spontaneous emotional acquaintance with another perspective on the world. In other words, it is incorrect to assume that an awareness of others is derived from holding a certain hypothesis about immaterial souls or brains. Recent developments in science, it is contended, have enlightened us about the fact that the latter functions, perhaps at least, as a condition for the kind of "intelligence" that we associate with "human life". But Wittgenstein exhorts that it is misconceived to assume that I have such biological details continually in mind, or consciously revert to them, when I meet another person. Quite to the contrary, I simply *respond* or *react* to persons as "whole" persons.

For Wittgenstein we misrepresent the issue when we assume that my knowledge of others can be reduced to a concern for certain biological relevant properties. That is, an attitude toward the soul stipulates that I do not distinguish other people as bodies with something hitherto in addition to this fact. But nor do I merely perceive bodies. I, instead, immediately find textured in the behaviour, facial expressions, speech, of another person an expression of what traditional/religious philosophy has characterised as the "soul" of a person.

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Some philosopher's have also remarked that an attitude toward the other person epitomizes something unique and "mysterious" about my responses to other people. Thus they argue that what enlivens my conception of another person corresponds to a reaction that is inescapably ineffable.[2] That is, I perceive another person as a distinguishable whole. But, further, their presence strikes

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2. Gaita, Raimond (1991) *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception*, Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan, p. 166

me in ways in which I cannot quite comprehend nor defend myself from. Simone Weil, as we shall find out much later, effectively captures this point when she suggests that 'human beings around us exert just by their presence a power which belongs uniquely to themselves to stop, to diminish or modify each movement which our bodies design'.[3] She means that my recognition of others is arrived at through an affective response exemplified by, for example, finding myself hesitating in their path in a way I simply would not when confronted by an everyday object. (I shall deal with this claim in my chapter centred on Simone Weil and our ethical responses to others).

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Wittgenstein says that I know other people by virtue of an attitude. An attitude is a pre-reflective emotional recognition of others. He means that an understanding of others is not derived from a mysterious inner process but through being a member of a social or language community. An attitude toward the soul is thus *a public* understanding or recognition of others as human beings; a response subject to participating in a community with a set of shared meanings and rules, mastering a shared prevailing practice or skill in my social community. Here, I "master" behaviour through the course of interactions with others, or react a certain way in appropriate circumstances.[4] (I shall say more about social practices at the end of this chapter.)

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3. ibid, p. 175

4. Hertzberg, Lars (1992) *Primitive Reactions - Logic or Anthropology*, pp. 24-39, in Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., Howard K. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XVII. The Wittgenstein Legacy*, United States of America: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 31-33

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We may summarize Wittgenstein's remarks on an attitude towards the soul as follows. Firstly, encountering another person means meeting another perspective on the world as an individual totality rather than a body with something inside it. And secondly, my understanding of other people is crucially linked to the way that they move and affect me. In fact, it precedes whatever beliefs I may have about what properties constitute them.

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'only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it has pains' [5]

When Wittgenstein speaks of knowing other people as another perspective on the world he means that it makes no sense to ascribe the wide range of expressions that we employ to describe other people - that they have sensations or beliefs - to something that resides inside them. Certainly with respect to his remarks on feeling, what Wittgenstein is trying to resist is the temptation to draw a clear-cut distinction between having an emotion and emotional-behaviour. That is, in thinking of an emotion as an "inner experience" that I am immediately acquainted with, and which accompanies my behaviour. In fact, the main problem with this view in this context can be illustrated by reflecting on Descartes ruminations about feeling a pain. Descartes, as we know, pictures the body as a mechanistic artifice closely mingled to an immaterial and non-mechanistic mind or self. Thus, he remarks that when we discover a sensation of pain in the foot a certain signal is produced in the brain (a part of the body and not a part of the self) and the mind apprehends it as an image informing it of the pain in the foot.[6]

Descartes suggests that in order to know something an "inner" mental process has to occur. A recognition of my pain, in this case, is achieved through introspectively centring my attention on an inner object. But we have already found that there are intractable difficulties involved in presuming that I know things by consulting particulars inside the mind. Indeed that inner objects bear no content without a reference to what resides outside the mind.

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5. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1991), *Philosophical Investigations* 281 p. 97

6. Descartes, René (1988), Sixth Meditation, (86) p. 120 Descartes, I mentioned previously, is quite aware of the difficulties that arise here. Indeed, this is precisely why we found him linking knowing a pain to being an embodied unity.

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Wittgenstein[7] asks us to imagine teaching a child the word pain by following the procedure that Descartes has proposed. In fact, it does not take long to discover that this is an unservicable manoeuvre for explaining knowledge of one's pain. This is because it would be impossible to know whether the child in question has mastered the meaning of this word, when the kind of reflection required is private, inaccessible to us. Moreover, how could the child know that a certain sensation is a pain if it has never felt a pain before? Wittgenstein thus argues that when we discover that a child has hurt itself we do not teach it to look inwards in order to understand the word pain. Stripped of a reference to the ordinary situations in which we talk about someone being in pain it would actually be quite impossible to teach a child the meaning of this word. In fact the actual situation is that we teach a child to express pain through publically agreed modes of behaviour and speech. Wittgenstein means that a child masters the word pain by interacting with other people. They, however, do not teach a child to identify an elusive picture inside its mind, but merely to repeat an expression; to express and articulate its pain in certain ways, such as wincing and later sentences such as 'I am in pain'.

The point of these remarks is not to deny that I have a pain only if I behave as if I am in pain. The point is rather that there is no such thing as a bare knowledge of one's sensations. That is, I know my sensations merely from my own case, or independently of the ordinary ways in which others talk about pain. Indeed, an understanding of pain is bound up with public criteria such as pain-behaviour. Knowing that I am in pain involves ascribing criteria which everyone

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7. I have derived the following account from D.Z. Phillips, D.Z (1996), pp. 40-41 and 48-55; and Dilman, Ilham (1987) *Love and Human Separateness*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, especially pp. 27-35

understands (shares); otherwise I would have no check to warrant the correct use of such expressions. Thus Wittgenstein is suggesting that in order to understand what pain means I must learn how to use the word, pain. I must learn to express it in situations where it can be straightforwardly asserted or denied, or to associate it with circumstances which clearly vindicate its expression. For example, we would say that a child has not thoroughly grasped the meaning of the word pain if it smiled and laughed when it perhaps caught its hand in a door.

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I think that we can gain a clearer insight into Wittgenstein's point if we direct our attention to other people or adults and their pain-behaviour. That is, if I assume that I know my feelings through a process of introspection then it follows that I cannot completely know that other people are in pain. I may certainly perceive them behaving in a certain way; but, equally, I cannot be absolutely sure that their outward behaviour is indistinguishable from an "inner experience" of pain because, according to an introspective standpoint, I cannot enter their minds and discover a certain inner image which enlightens them and myself about their pain.

The idea that pain behaviour is essentially separate from an immediate acquaintance with a pain is, of course, certainly more seductive when we appreciate the fact that I am frequently aware of people pretending to be in pain, or even concealing it. In these cases there does seem to be an obvious contradistinction between someone's behaviour and the "having" of a pain. However, if we reflect more carefully on these circumstances it becomes particularly apparent that I tend to doubt someone's behaviour or what they say in special circumstances- and specifically, in reference to subtle changes in their demeanour. For example, if I ask someone who has recently stumbled onto the

floor whether they are hurt and they deny it I may have cause to doubt their assertion if it is articulated with a sudden gritting of their teeth, or if they avoid looking into my eyes, or exhibit an exaggerated smile. Wittgenstein characterizes these intimations as 'imponderable evidence', 'subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone'.[8] But he also argues that I would only notice these nuances if I were already aware of sharing ordinary behaviourial expressions. Thus I may suspect what someone says when their behaviour exhibits a somewhat slender connection with the normal agreed ways people are inclined to behave in certain situations. But my suspicions, in these cases, presuppose rather than refute a certain link between pain-behaviour and having a pain. It certainly does not mean that my knowledge of another's feelings or intentions remains eternally elusive. On the contrary, as Henry James points out, what we know of others is also based on 'The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are on the way to knowing any corner of it'.[9] Our dealings with others include the possibility of concealing behaviour. In such cases, we may have to supply a connection between what they say and what they do not in order to make sense of their intentions. This would not, however, literally involve analysing what is going on in the privacy of their minds, but rather paying more careful attention to their outward behaviour, such as a certain look, an irregular gesture or conversational tone. It would, moreover, be hard to imagine that a child's world could be infused with an equivalent scepticism. It would, if we refer specifically to the above example, have to learn about pride and its peculiar

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8. McGinn, Marie (1997) *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations'*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 168, and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1991), *Philosophical Investigations* p. 228

9. James, Henry (1987) *The Art of Fiction*, pp. 387-413, in Morton Dauwen Zabel (ed.) *The Portable Henry James*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 398

connection to pretence or deception. In other words, it is rather via "experience"- through further interactions with other people - that a child is able to learn to read these clues. That is, make room for such sophisticated human doubts.

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The basic import of Wittgenstein's remarks in this context is that an attitude toward the soul also involves acknowledging that others are *sincerely* expressing their behaviour. Otherwise I would be led into the improbable situation of continually guessing another's intentions; their anger, sadness, joy. In such cases, my relations with other people would then comprise of a muddling ambiguity. The point is that in ordinary circumstances another person's emotions are unmysteriously visible to me. When I perceive someone in pain I immediately *see* it in their behaviour.

> Consciousness in another's face. Look into someone else's face, and see consciousness in it, and a particular *shade* of consciousness. You see on it, joy, indifference, interest, excitement, torpor and so on. The light in other people's faces.
>
> Do you look into *yourself* in order to recognize the fury in *his* face? It is there as clearly as in your own breast.[10]

Wittgenstein claims that a recognition of another person's pain is immediate or pre-reflective. He means that we do not find ourselves reflecting

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10. Wittgenstein, Ludwig *Zettel* (1990) G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Wright (eds.); trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, (220) p. 39

about whether or not someone is in pain for we directly assume this is to be so and respond accordingly. Another way to illustrate the important implications of this view is brought out by the fact that we cannot seriously imagine that the people that we come across in the course of our dealings with the world are merely automata involuntarily responding to their pain. That is, we cannot retain such stances in regard to our ordinary interactions with others because an attitude asserts itself here.

A recognition of others is interdependent with our affective responses. Further, it would be implausible to suppose that we could systematically abandon them without threatening what is inherent in holding any coherent understanding of others, our world and our part in it. The point is that an attitude toward the soul is a necessary pre-condition for recognizing others. It is commonplace and so deeply lodged in our lives that its absence would actually make the entire pattern of our lives with its distinctive cares and concerns different or alien.[11]

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But isn't it absurd to say of a *body* that it has pain? - And why does one feel an absurdity in that? In what sense is it true that my hand does not feel pain, but I in my hand?

What sort of issue is: Is it the *body* that feels pain? - How is it to be decided? What makes it plausible to say that it is *not* the body? - Well, something like this: if someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so (unless it writes it) and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks in his face.[12]

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11. Strawson, P.F. (1971) *Freedom and Resentment*, pp. 1-25 in Strawson, P.F (1971), *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays in Moral Psychology*, London: Methuen, p. 11

12. Wittgenstein. Ludwig (1991), *Philosophical Investigations* (286) p. 98

I do not pity a hand palpitating with pain but the person in pain. According to Wittgenstein pity is interdependent with an understanding of another person as a "whole" human being. There is however more to Wittgenstein's enuniciations, as I have already indicated, than this important condition. For Wittgenstein says that pity presupposes an *appropriate* object. He means that I do not pity a stone but *others* who display pain behaviour because what constitutes an understanding of pity is mutually interdependent with an awareness of a special kind of entity. That is, it is applied to entities that share commonly held presumptions and expectations about behaviour and have the capacity to make something of these forms of conduct. It is, in other words, interdependent with recognizing another perspective which leads a life made up of the same possibilities of interaction and response as my own.

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Look at a stone and imagine it having sensations. - One says to oneself: How could one get so much the idea of ascribing a *sensation* to a *thing*? One might as well ascribe it to a number! - And now look at a wriggling fly and at once these difficulties vanish and pain seems to get a foothold here, where before everything was, so to speak, too smooth for it.[13]

And can one say of the stone that it has a soul and *that* is what has the pain? What has a soul, or pain, to do with a stone?

Only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains.[14]

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13. ibid, *Philosophical Investigations*, (284) p. 98

14. ibid, *Philosophical Investigations*, (283) pp. 97-98

It is not unintelligible to *believe* that a fly is in pain - even to respond with a degree of compassion toward its pitiable behaviour. But it would make no sense for someone to continually wake up in the night screaming that they were acutely afflicted by a fly's agony.[15] We would find this expression of pity absurd, or unreasonably excessive, because the pain of a fly cannot be *sincerely* explored or pondered on in applicable ways to one's own. That is, we assume others can reflect on their pain in connection to it having an impact on their life as a whole. Wittgenstein means that what is relevant to understanding the feeling of pity is connected to the role that pain plays in human life (the way it matters or makes a difference within the web of social practices that consititute a human form of life). That is, mastering its use is part and parcel of mastering the peculiar significance it has for other entities whose judgements and reactions I not only share but am also capable of being exposed to. This is illustrated very well in D.H. Lawrence's short story, *England, My England.*

Egbert's heart burns with pain and guilt when he discovers that an accident to his child's leg has rendered her lame.

> Joyce was once more on her feet; but, alas! lame, with iron supports to her leg, and a little crutch. It was strange how she had grown into a long, pallid, wild little thing. Strange that the pain had not made her soft and docile, but had brought out a wild, almost maenad temper in the child. She was seven, and long and white and thin, but by no means subdued. Her blonde hair was darkening. She still had long sufferings to face, and, in her own childish consciousness, the stigma of her lameness to beat.[16]

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15. Gaita, Raimond (1991), p. 181

16. Lawrence, D.H. (1966) *England, My England,* pp. 7-40, in Lawrence, D.H (1966) *England, My England,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 30

In depicting Egbert's response to Joyce Lawrence provides a description of a whole intricate pattern of reactions to what human life is about. Indeed, he shows that the intelligibility of a feeling of pity is interlocked with other patterns or ways of behaving. Hence, Lawrence describes how guilt, anger, and surprise can enter our sense of how pain takes hold of another person. That is, Egbert's pity is mingled with a parental sense of outrage and guilt, and an element of wonder at how children can fortify themselves against pain, become strangely resilient to their affliction. The point is, therefore, that the difference between responding to the suffering of a fly and a human being is tied to being unable to see strong affinities with its behaviour and other relevant features that are inclined to go with pain and shape a human form of life. Wittgenstein thus suggests that 'If I imagine such a person I also imagine a reality, a world that surrounds him'.[17] He means that understanding words like pain is derived from mastering its role in a distinctive pattern of life that an individual is brought up in. This distinctive pattern of life is a specific social and historical context that determines the range of possible roles and self-interpretations that an individual interprets themselves and others by; a whole interconnected complex network of beliefs and responses that manifest certain common ways of encountering things. 'When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions'.[18]

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17. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1989) *On Certainty*, G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (eds.), trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, (595) p. 598

18. ibid, *On Certainty* (141) p. 21

a *metaphysics* of identity

Wittgenstein's emphasis on an attitude toward the soul as a pre-condition for recognizing another person has important implications. What, moreover, makes it particularly pertinent is that it places us in a good position to construct a *metaphysics* of identity. However, it would be misconceived to link Wittgenstein's philosophy to the term metaphysics as it has been traditionally conceived. For his prime intention is to expose problematic metaphysical impulses implicit in, say, Descartes picture. In fact, a central feature of his work is a repudiation of accounting for what exists by an appeal to a final complete system made up of timeless, abstract principles that are objectively true independently of an individual's social and historic situation. That is, for Wittgenstein it is utterly misconceived to search for fixed, given essences which determine the concepts that we use once and for all. Indeed, he insists that we cannot explain our concepts in reference to a single underlying framework because it implies wrongly assuming that our concepts are formed in relation to one common paradigm rather than a multiplicity of different practices (language games) each with their own relevant standards of intelligibility. In fact, he explains that the kind of concepts we have rather rest on the varying needs and situations of human beings; their usefulness in indefinitely arising and changing circumstances for dealing with the world.[19]

It may thus seem that Wittgenstein's view is hardly appropriate to the pretensions of traditional metaphysicians such as Descartes. Nevertheless, if *metaphysics* is regarded as a descriptive metaphysics we can remain faithful to

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19. Strawson, P.F (1986) *'General Review', Part 1, The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* reprinted as *Kant: The Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 290-317, in Ted Honderich (1986) *Philosophy Through its Past*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 316

the general thrust of Wittgenstein's philosophy and also illuminate a certain, overall framework for the identity of the self. That is, a descriptive metaphysics concerns an attempt to properly describe our conceptual scheme. Here, it sets out to offer an account of what needs to be in place in order for certain concepts to emerge and hold good for human beings.[20] In fact, in this respect, an account of identity would involve describing those concepts that are fundamental or presupposed in its ordinary application. In other words, a metaphysics of identity is concerned with scrutinizing certain elements in our form of life whose absence would signify the inability to engineer an identity. The contrast with Descartes's aims is also, as I have already mentioned, made explicit in noting that for Wittgenstein (and Heidegger) the concepts that we are seeking to describe are not to be envisaged as timeless essences. Understanding a concept is tied to correctly following the set of practices which form the life of a social community. But, these concepts are not fixed or static. They may, on the contrary, change or evolve over time due, perhaps, to innovative advances in science, or equally, other social forms of life.[21] However, there are certain concepts which bear a special status as general identifying conditions for making our practices intelligible or characteristic of human life. Heidegger diagnoses them as 'fundamental existential's', while Wittgenstein speaks of 'grammatical propositions'.[22] What is nontheless typical about these concepts is that they are tacit taken for granted pre-reflective responses. And what gives them a peculiar metaphysical connotation in this context is that they are necessary pre-conditions for understanding myself. Or for having any kind of sense of what the possibilities

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20. Hamlyn, D.W (1989) *Metaphysics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 8

21. Strawson, P.F. (1986), p. 314 and p. 316

22. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (13) p. 33. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1991), *Philosophical Investigations* (251) p. 90 (295) pp. 100-101

for my human existence are.

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For Wittgenstein, then, certain concepts cannot be doubted. Indeed he describes them, in one place, as constituting the 'scaffolding' of our ordinary lives.[23] He means that they are pre-conditions or the foundations necessary for being understood. But their status as foundations, he warns, is derived from the fact that they have remained relatively unchanged in the history of our social communities. They are foundations - though not timeless foundations - in the sense that they give shape to the ordinary setting of human life, ensuring that it persists with a particular continuing solidity and recognizability. P.F. Strawson expresses these sentiments perfectly when he suggests:

> (T)here are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all. Obviously these are not the specialities of the most refined thinking. They are the commonplaces of the the least refined thinking; and yet the most indispensable core of the conceptual apparatus of the most sophisticated human beings.[24]

In this respect Heidegger's concernful solicitude, and its lineal counterpart for Wittgenstein, an attitude toward the soul, represent constitutive requirements or *metaphysical conditions* for identity. Here both reflect an understanding of myself as a mode of recognition interrelated with others. That is, it is quite incorrect to tie self-understanding to an apprehension of inner ideas

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23. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1989), *On Certainty* (211)

24. Strawson, P.F. (1959), p. 10

or perceptions unrelated to an external social world, for a necessary requisite for making sense of who I am is a relationship founded on sharing commonplace practices or behaviour. Others are constitutive for self-identity, and more so, are presupposed within the proliferate variety of self-interpretations it is possible for myself to adopt. Thus, Merleau-Ponty appropriately associates the term other person with my *alter ego.* An understanding of others, he means, does not collapse into an apprehension of isolated subjects utterly removed from my point of view, but, rather, anticipates them as a recurrent 'possibility of my own being'.[25]

Two important points are being advanced here. And it is fruitful to deal with them separately. Firstly, solicitude or an attitude places emotion within the centre of our engagements with other people. This means that a recognition of others is not a bare neutral registration of a fact. My involvement with other people and the world, as Heidegger continually accentuates, is not disinterested but a stance constituted by Care.

> Care is always concern and solicitude, even if only privately. In willing, an entity which is understood - that is, one which has been projected upon its possibility - gets seized upon, either as something with which one may concern oneself, or as something which is brought into its being through solicitude.[26]

Heidegger suggests that an interminable feature of understanding is a *concern* for what I relate to. He says that understanding involves an emotional intentional orientation toward time, the future most particularly. Hence, objects do not lie in the world to be stared at. They are grasped, on the contrary, as

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25. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 448

26. Heidegger, Martin (1993), *Being and Time* (194) pp. 238-239

salient objects. They stand out or matter as tools in respect to specific interests directed at my future. Thus Heidegger identifies making sense with being situated in a concernful, temporal stance toward the world and others. Indeed secondly other people, he claims, also stand out. But they do so in a manner that can be sharply distinguished from a concern for instruments or tools. He means that I know other people, initially, through their behaviour; their actions and gestures, which as Wittgenstein has described, are understood as humanly significant or constitute a straightforward expression of themselves. The point is that behaviour is understood in respect to a shared understanding. Dasein understands other people as entities whose Being is like its own. And as such, it will interpret itself through this common understanding. '*Promixmally*, it is not "I" in the sense of my own Self, that "am", but rather Others, whose way is that of the "They"'.[27] To put it another way, understanding myself rests on an appeal to a social world shared by others. I, thus, do not understand myself in isolation from others, but through a mutual recognition of other people whom exhibit commonly shared patterns of behaviour. These patterns of behaviour are, moreover, the roles, actions, projects and intentions that are a reflection of a particular social community. Hence, in understanding and performing these patterns of behaviour I am adopting standards that are publically derived and "general" in their application in the sense that I take them to be applicable both to myself and others not only in the present but also on future occasions.[28] It would not make sense, for instance, to assume that our ways of acting were applicable to one person on only one occasion.[29]

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27. ibid, *Being and Time* (29) p. 167

28. Grene, Marjorie (1973) *Sartre*, New York: New Viewpoints. Franklin Watts, p. 161

29. Taylor, Charles (1997), p. 174

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There is nothing illegitimate in aspiring to anchor our concepts into a fundamental, general framework. But the legitimacy of such a task is not rooted in adopting the type of view promoted by Descartes. Understanding and self-understanding is not derived from discovering fixed metaphysical "truths" but from engaging in the practices relative to the social community that I belong to. Yet this does not imply that the concepts of our social community are somewhat random and arbitrary. For, as Wittgenstein and Heidegger claim, making sense of ourselves consists in certain concepts which are steady and regular expressions of our form of life. Of course, they may change, but it is equally important to note that they are so deeply ingrained in our lives that their absence would radically alter the kind of understanding we associate with having a human life to lead.

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chapter five: the emotions and other people: Jean-Paul Sartre

In this chapter I shall address certain aspects of the thought of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre has, to his credit, written profusely about the emotions. However he does give a prominent position to their negative characteristics, and I am inclined to think that this devalues his discussion. The present chapter will therefore claim that this standpoint is questionable, although it should not be construed as a straightforward critique of his thought. On the contrary, my intention is to bring out certain legitimate and necessary elements in his analysis of the emotions. Thus, the first half of this chapter will be concerned with Sartre's views on the emotions. The second half will take up again what was explicated in the previous chapter. This is the theme of identity being interconnected to our affective responses to others.

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In *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* Sartre is critical of psychological theories on the emotions. He, in particular, admonishes the discipline for construing them as *internal* involuntary responses to a situation. That is, the view Sartre opposes says that my relation to the world can be reduced to interior physical/biological laws of action and reaction. However, Sartre thinks that an allusion to *internal* biological regularities introduces the highly implausible picture of a passive recipient responding to external stimuli in an involuntary manner. He, in contrast, argues that my everyday relations to the world must sharply oppose this standpoint since a central feature of the self is that it can be held responsible for its behaviour. He means that emotional behaviour represents, in contrast to an internal psychological standpoint, an active or practical interaction with things which the self as an *agent* can rationally justify to itself and others.[1]

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Sartre says that we need to develop a view of the emotions which preserves their purposive, individual import (*agency*) if we wish to elude the limitations common to an internalist psychological standpoint. Hence he describes the emotions as a meaningful form of engagement with the world. That is, he suggests that an emotion bears an intelligible content by being related to what a specific individual *agent* makes of his or her situation. By the term agency Sartre means that the self is being-in-the-world and exhibits emotions that are a mode of being-in-the-world of a *teleological* character. To put it another way, Sartre

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1. Sartre, Jean-Paul Sartre (1985), p. 24

says that we must grasp a subject's being-in-the-world to fully appreciate the content of an emotional state. We must understand that an emotion reflects an intentional structure, a purposive orientation toward things: it involves an individual holding a variety of beliefs and aims (a cognitive element) about an intended object. In fact, he suggests that it is only by addressing the cognitive ingredients of an emotion that we can rescue an intelligibility rendered incomprehensible by internal psychological explanations.

This point is important for our inquiry. However, we shall take up this issue only after we have clarified what Sartre means by asserting that the emotions bear a cognitive element. That is, Sartre suggests there are three determining factors for unravelling the emotions. These are: bodily reactions, behaviour, and consciousness properly so called. Indeed, he argues, that when we put these three components together, we will be able to put forward a thesis that is more faithful to what it means to "have" an emotion than the one offered by an internal psychological account.[2]

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emotions and their cognitive elements

Sartre introduces the idea of a cognitive component as a necessary feature of the emotions by firstly raising certain problems involved in linking the emotions to physiological disturbances. Sartre does not suggest that the physiological changes that the body undergoes when it "has" an emotion is irrelevant for understanding its content. But he does argue that if we decide to adopt a theory which treats the emotions in isolation from one's beliefs and

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2. ibid, p. 20

aims we omit their concrete import. Or if we insist, as William James certainly does, that the emotions are 'nothing but the consciousness of physiological manifestations' we cannot depict their individual, purposive quality.[3]

William James holds a peripheric theory of the emotions. He claims that we should picture understanding an emotion as an awareness of shifts in our bodily states. We thus 'feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble'.[4] Sartre, as I have said, concedes that an awareness of the body's physiological changes is an important feature about understanding an emotion. That is, he admits that the peripheric theory does specify something quite important. And this is that an emotion is not an idea inside my mind, but, on the contrary, an embodied state of being. An emotion involves the body's and not a mind's relation to the world.[5] But Sartre adds that it is misconceived to posit an account of emotion which privileges a consciousness of physiological manifestations. This is because our physiological changes reveal slender differences between different states of emotion. For example anger varies from joy in respect to a 'slightly accelerated respiratory rhythm, slight increase in muscular tonicity, extension of bio-chemical changes, aerial extension etc'.[6]

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The argument is that a consciousness of certain shifts in my bodily states cannot exhaustively unfold the phenomenon of emotional arousal. Rather,

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3. ibid, p. 33

4. Baugh, Bruce (1990) *Sartre and James on the Role of the Body in Emotion,* Dialogue XXXIX, pp. 357-373, p. 358

5. ibid, p. 361

6. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1994), p. 32

conversely, what underlines an understanding of my emotions is an awareness of my situation, the context in which my emotions occur. A mere awareness of a bodily state is thus not a sufficient condition for an understanding of an emotion. For instance, a feeling of nausea may be accompanied by certain fluctuations in the stomach. Yet it would be misleading to assume that I can scrutinize the meaning of this emotion by merely anchoring my attention onto this sensation. This is because I can correspondingly imagine this sensation to be the outcome of some other condition of the body; something perhaps more picayune, like indigestion.[7] The point is that understanding an emotion requires a reference to a subject's current beliefs and aims.[8] Thus, my nausea can be differentiated from a milder bodily symptom by virtue of examining my relationship to the world at a specific time: it could be my nervousness through finding myself in a room containing a lot of people which really causes certain fluctuations in that region of my body.

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What James ignores, according to Sartre, is that understanding an emotion depends on a cognitive interpretation of a situation. The cognitive element of an emotion also motivates Sartre's interesting renunciation of Janet's exposition of the emotions. In fact, Sartre's resistence to Janet's theory is interesting in the sense that he does adopt one notable aspect of the latter's thought. That is, Janet suggests that the emotions are a substandard form of automatic behaviour. And although Sartre refuses to accept that the emotions are reflex responses he does however agree that they can be envisaged as a

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7. Baugh, Bruce (1990), p. 359

8. ibid.

species of 'a behaviour of defeat'.[9]

According to Janet an emotion is a response to a situation which generates psychological tension. I may find a certain task difficult to complete because it requires a more demanding form of 'superior behaviour'. In such a circumstance I may therefore try to tackle the situation through an emotional response because it alleviates my psychological tension by re-structuring the situation into one which no longer places a demand for the 'superior behaviour' in question.[10]

Janet supports this argument by rendering a clinical encounter with a young woman whom, having to attend to an unwell father, would roll on the floor in turbulent outbreaks of emotion. What is properly significant about this young woman's behaviour, suggests Janet, is that she displays a predilection to erupt into sobs *only* when she begins to acknowledge the fact that she finds the idea of being a sick nurse for her father utterly unbearable. According to Janet, then, what is revealing about the young woman's response is that it arises in order to ensure that she is able to avoid fulfilling a more difficult task. She responds emotionally in order to get around admitting to Janet that she finds the role that she has been forced to adopt as a result of her father's illness particularly uninviting and difficult to tolerate. However, Sartre turns down the assumption that her response represents a form of automaticism. It is unwarranted, he claims, to call an emotion a purposive response while still adhering to the view that it is an automatic reflex. He means that a reference to an automatic reflex reduces an emotion to the blind outcome of mechanistic psychological forces inside a person, and as such, omits what is definitive about something being purposive. This is that it involves a conscious unified human agency. Thus

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9. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1994), pp. 36-37

10. ibid, p. 37

Sartre argues that the young woman's behaviour must be conceived as 'intentional', a purposive and not an involuntary reflex response to a certain situation. The young woman in question 'sobs precisely in order not to say anything'.[11]

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Sartre says that certain shifts in our bodily states do not in isolation inform us about being emotionally aroused. On the contrary, our emotions bear a cognitive element. They are bound up with certain beliefs and aims arising in connection to a particular situation. That is, an emotion is an intentional response to a situation with a *teleological* character. It is a meaningful form of behaviour for it is constituted by holding a variety of beliefs and aims about an intentional object. Furthermore we can formulate a general aim which motivates *all* emotional responses. This is an incentive to turn a difficult situation into an easier one by removing a demand to deal with it with a more trying requirement. In other words, Sartre thinks that an emotion is a form of behaviour which magically transforms the world. However, he describes this view as an intentional colouring of the world modelled on a spontaneous, unreflective, yet oddly, purposive act of consciousness.[12] What does he mean?

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11. ibid, p. 40

12. ibid, p. 61 and pp. 84-85

13. Sartre introduces this concept of the self by differentiating two terms: being-in-itself (en-soi) and being-for-itself (pour-soi). The former applies to physical facts. It involves identifying an inert immaterial object as self-sufficient or 'filled with itself'. But, being-in-itself directly contrasts with being-for-itself. Sartre says that it is a consciousness of what it is not. Being-for-itself is thus dissimilar to being-in-itself for it involves consciousness, or an awarenesss of not being what it

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being-for-itself and the pre-reflective cogito

The idea of an unreflective but purposive act of consciousness is discussed in detail in *Being and Nothingness*. Here Sartre says that the self is constituted by an awareness of something else; of, in specific, what it is *not*.[13] In this case, there is nothing inside the self. '(I)t transcends itself in order to reach an object, and it exhausts itself in this same positing'.[14] Thus, a consciousness of a table is a consciousness *outside*, or of an object in the world. Furthermore, I understand myself as not being the table.[15] That is, I find myself as *not* being what I aim toward. This does not mean that my identity is something prior and separate to what I aim toward. For Sartre being conscious logically entails being conscious of something in the world. In addition, the self aspires to be self-sufficient and complete, 'a totality of being-in-itself.'[16] Sartre means that my identity can be defined as an evolution toward an unattainable completeness. That is, the self knows itself as a lack since it cannot be identified positively but only negatively with what it aims toward. Thus, I desire to become god-like, to be my own pure and absolute support, but fail miserably for I am precisely *not* what I orient myself toward.[17]

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is directed at. [Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), p. xxxix and p. xli]

14. ibid, p. xxvii

15. ibid, pp. xxvii-xxviii

16. ibid, p. 615

17. ibid.

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Sartre also introduces the term the pre-reflective cogito in order to define the self. He argues that although to be conscious I have to be conscious of something, it is equally necessary for myself to be aware of being conscious of something. He means that another awareness is necessarily entailed in being aware of something. Otherwise we would have a self aware of being conscious of, say, an extended object in an infinite regress. Indeed, things exist for a certain knower, a final term: a person.[18] The central idea is, however, that consciousness entails "within" itself a tacit or implicit concern for itself as not something else. Of course, Heidegger has already spoken about an implicit or pre-reflective awareness. But we should note that Sartre has a rather richer conception of an implicit awareness in mind. In fact, this idiosyncratic aspect of his philosophy is derived from his understanding of the concept of freedom.

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Sartre says that when I am aware of an object in the world I am, at the same time, aware of not being what I am aware of. For example, if I am aware of being a waiter I am, at the same time, aware of the *possibility* of not being a waiter. Sartre also assumes that this observation implies that whatever role I *choose* to adopt brings with it an option of not adopting it. Hence, at every moment I take up the role of a waiter I bring into the world the *possibility* of not being one. That is, who I am is determined by assuming certain commonly agreed social roles and practices. But since every action that I perform entails an awareness that I could have acted in another way, this means that I have to at

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18. ibid, pp. xxviii-xxix

every moment choose to sustain my choice if I am to be continually identified with it.[19] In this way my identity and continuity is moulded by pursuing and maintaining possibilities inhabited by an awareness of choice. Both are, moreover, the outcome of exerting a continual commitment toward a certain course of action or role; for I am aware, at every moment that I choose to do something, that my choice can be overturned by adopting a numerous number of other choices that could be made at the same time. 'We are perpetually engaged in our choice and perpetually conscious of the fact that we ourselves can abruptly invert this choice and "reverse" the stream"'.[20]

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Thus, according to Sartre, the emotions are the purposive activity of a pre-reflective cogito. They describe a deliberate changing of the world's appearance to a self pre-reflectively conscious of its choices. That is, I am unreflectively conscious of employing my emotions in order to counter a situation which *should* require a more demanding mode of "decision". For example, a man who abruptly faints when he confronts a situation that makes him afraid does so by virtue of a spontaneous, unreflective intentional act. His fainting is, firstly, purposive but unreflective in the sense that although he acts deliberately to avoid the more difficult situation of confronting the "object" that makes him faint, his behaviour is nevertheless an example of being caught up "in" an emotion rather than a product of lucid calculation or reflection. Secondly, Sartre assumes that the emotions should be construed as a type of wish fulfilment. Here, instead of pursuing an ordinary cause and effect path in order to resolve a problem, I

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19. Danto, Arthur C. (1991) *Sartre*, London: Fontana Press, p. 66

20. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), p. 465

transform the world in such a way that I try to achieve an aim by operating in accord to the rules of magic. Thus, we can speak of the man who faints in the above example as a man who is magically wishing away the undesirable features of a situation. Finally, an emotion is to be associated with relinquishing his responsibility, a freedom to identify himself with his choices and the crucial aims that would resolve the problem he confronts, by exaggerating the difficulty of his situation.[21]

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I want to argue that Sartre is wrong to assume that the emotions are always counter-productive responses to a situation. An emotion is rather an appraisal of a situation dependent on a common agreed background of understanding developed in our social communities. That is, an emotion is defined against an understanding that certain features of a situation (holding specific beliefs and aims about an object) constitute my reasons for feeling a certain way. This means that the emotions are, in contrast to Sartre, defined against perfectly reasonable conditions of validity, or appropriateness and inappropriateness, set by our social practices.[22]

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21. Baugh, Bruce (1990), p. 362 and p. 370

22. Sartre's theory gains more credibility in respect to negative emotions, since here we are more inclined to explain behaviour in reference to hidden motives. However he argues that optimistic emotions, like joy, are also degraded meaningful performances. For example, a lover about to see their beloved after a long time is likely to anticipate the desired "object" with a degree of agitation. This is because the beloved remains an inaccessible goal, and as such, meeting them anticipates an unease about the love relationship. That is, a lover's reconciliation with a beloved is an aspect of a longer drama involving having to pursue demanding lines of conduct in order to

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Philippa Foot has argued that a person cannot simply feel a sense of pride for the sky or sea. That is, it is difficult to point to a clear-cut juxtaposition between these intentional objects and a sense of achievement or advantage. In fact, if a person does respond this way to the sky or sea we would want to suggest that his or her emotion is motivated by a special reason - maybe, a crazy delusion of grandeur. Or in order to explain this emotion we would have to resort to filling in a special background linked to the person concerned.[23]

Sartre, I think, has failed to fully appreciate a connection between a subject's reasons for behaving emotionally and them being suitable or fitting responses to a situation. In our ordinary dealings with other people we, in fact, expect them to provide a rational explanation for their emotional behaviour.

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strengthen and increase the love that commits them to their true love. Thus a lover's joy, rather than conveying a delight about meeting a loved one, exhibits a short-cut, adopting an easier form of behaviour. Joy masquerades as an attempt to elude the outbreaking of the anxieties that arise in sustaining a relationship based on love. [Sartre, Jean-Paul Sartre (1994), pp. 71-73]

23. Foot, Philippa (1978) *Moral Beliefs*, pp. 110-131, in Foot, Philippa (1978) *Virtue and Vices and Other Essays*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 111-112. Pride is a complex emotion. Hence Gabriele Taylor, in a paper on Hume's theory of pride and humility, explains that its cognitive elements not only feature a subject holding well founded beliefs about a situation but beliefs concerning what the subject values. Thus, a man who is proud of a successful feast believes that he is responsible for the successful feast, that the feast is of value, and, importantly, that 'it is of value his having achieved such a thing or increased his merit or importance'. Pride, she means, is justified in reference to an agent's *own role* in a situation and his or her *evaluation* of certain aspects of it. Taylor, Gabriele (1980) *Pride*, pp. 385-402 in Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg (ed.), *Explaining Emotions*, Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, p. 392

We, moreover, reveal a tendency to criticise and discuss their emotional behaviour only after assuming that the emotions are a justifiable strategy for dealing with certain situations. For instance, if I encounter a threatening object I become afraid, and may even run away. Yet, in this case, my fear is both rational and justifiable because it is a correlate to an appropriate reason for running away from a danger. In fact, my fear would be conceived as an inappropriate emotion, and prompt a special explanation, in cases where it would be considered to be utterly immoderate in proportion to the "object" that makes me afraid. For example, a fear of open spaces or the dark. Indeed, it is in respect to certain specialized cases of behaving that we are inclined to investigate other beliefs held by the subject in order to work out their reasons for behaving in the way that they do. That is, it is when we think that a person's emotional response to a situation is extremely excessive that we are predisposed to introduce the concept of delusory emotions. Moreover, we would not be capable of particularising an emotion as an immoderate response to a situation unless there existed an anterior and more fitting way of responding to fearful "objects".

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In aligning a counter-productive aim to the emotions Sartre's discussion of the emotions offers a fascinating insight into the way some people are inclined to behave. But it is difficult to feel completely swayed by the force of Sartre's examples. Where, in fact, he flounders is his failure to notice that the emotions are taken up in the lives of people against patterns of appropriate action. Understanding is rooted in sharing a common form of life with other people. Thus, what a certain concept means is a matter of mastering an established social practice, where its conditions for intelligibility belong to being able to apply it appropriately and not merely as Sartre seems to think inappropriately, to various situations. We may then say that understanding an emotion is conditioned by it

being shared by others in the light of a suitable and unsuitable agreement of application. In fact, it is only when this is in place that the intriguing special cases Sartre alludes to make sense.

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Sartre argues that the emotions are a counterproductive mode of behaviour. They are a substitute for a more demanding line of conduct that I tend to find too difficult to pursue. It may, then, appear puzzling to find him endorsing the notion that the emotions play an important part for determining my own and the other person's identity. That is, Sartre now effects an interesting shift of attention from associating the emotions to an illusive subterfuge to a form of disclosure. I am, however, inclined to think that this is not an illegitimate turn of direction. Sartre, as we shall see, conceives meeting and identifying others as a response that, in part, shares close affinities to Wittgenstein's attitude toward the soul and Heidegger's concernful solicitude. Even more pertinent, what he clearly seems to find characteristic about making sense of myself is that it is a matter of the way other people are given to move and affect me. Nevertheless Sartre, as we have already seen, tends to justify his conclusions by overlooking the common and obvious features of human life. He sees something more sophisticated, and usually negative, underlying our recognition of concepts. Thus in *Being and Nothingness* he continues to concentrate on the negative import of the emotions. This is particularly apparent in respect to his celebrated analysis of *the look.*

> Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through the keyhole. I am alone and on the level of non-thetic self-consciousness. This means first of all that there is no self to inhabit my consciousness, nothing therefore to which I can refer my acts to qualify them . . . . My consciousness sticks to my acts, it *is* my acts; and my acts are commanded only by the ends to be attained and by the instruments to be employed. My attitude, for example, has no "outside"; it is a pure process of relating the instrument (the keyhole) to the end to be attained (the spectacle to be seen), a pure mode of losing myself in the world, of causing myself to be drunk in by things as ink is by a blotter in order that an

instrumental-complex oriented toward an end may be synthetically detached on the ground of the world.[24]

Sartre introduces an individual peering through a keyhole at a spectacle lying behind it. Further, this individual is assimilated with what he is looking at as an unreflective whole. The idea should be familiar. Heidegger characterizes this mode of engagement as a pre-reflective being-in-the-world. I and my world are not two things unequivocally distinct from each other but rather a single unity. However, Sartre declares that his discussion of other people offers a richer point of focus on the emotional aspects of being-with than Heidegger. Others, for Heidegger, mutually constitute the self. But although Sartre agrees that an awareness of myself is constituted by others, he is equally adamant in pointing out that, in practice, my intersubjective relations hardly convey the "experience" of existing on an equal footing with someone else. What is, on the contrary, startlingly definitive about encountering the other person, he says, is that he or she is revealed 'in my own innermost depths....as not being me'.[25]

But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure - modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the reflective *cogito* . . . . This means that all of a sudden I am conscious of myself escaping myself, not that I am the foundation of my own nothingness but in that I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other.[26]

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24. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), p. 259

25. ibid, p. 251

26. ibid, p. 260

It is certain that my shame is not reflective, for the presence of another in my consciousness, even as a catalyst with the reflective attitude; in the field of my reflection I can never meet with anything but the consciousness which is mine. But the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed as *I appear* to the other.[27]

I become aware of myself through other people. This awareness is not derived from an inner process of reasoning. It is, instead, grounded in an implicit affective response or an attitude toward another human being. That is, prior to another's *look* I remain engrossed within a pre-reflective continuation with my environment. However, as soon as I discover someone gazing at me I am immediately *affected* by their *look*. Indeed, it is within the context of an affective reaction toward another that I become self-consciously aware of myself or am pushed into viewing myself as he or she sees me.

Sartre is suggesting that a self-conscious awareness of myself is attached to how other people see me. He means that being self-conscious is a mode of consciousness quite different to a pre-reflective awareness of objects.[28] That is, the former involves being conscious of the fact that the world I inhabit is also inhabited by others, and that by being so, whatever I take my world and myself to be must involve an interpretation of how others take it and me to be.[29] Hence, the kind of recognition I have of myself is one of shame.

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27. ibid, p. 222

28. A self-conscious awareness of myself is not a new and separate category of existence. Being-looked-at is not derived from a more basic awareness of a self unrelated to others. On the contrary being-for-others, suggests Sartre, is an equally central constituent for the kind of understanding that the self has of its world. [ibid, pp. 260-261]

29. Howells, Christina (1988) *Sartre and Levinas*, pp. 91-99, in Robert Bernanoni and David Wood (eds.), *The Provocation of Levinas*, London: Routledge, p. 92

Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general being an object; that is, of *recognizing myself* in this degraded, fixed, and dependent being which I am for the Other. Shame is the feeling of an *original fall*, not because not because of the fact that I may have committed this or that particularly fault but simply that I have "fallen" into the world in the midst of things and that I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am.[30]

A recognition of myself is a matter of finding myself determined or fixed from the outside. It is actually disconcertingly akin to having my hold on the world stolen from me. Sartre means that I perceive the other person as a separate centre of action. This is due to the fact that other people are elusive and uncertain to me because they hold beliefs and aims which I cannot predict with the same measure of precision and surety as my own. Other people, evidently, also make choices, and as a result, when I am looked at by someone else I find myself organized in reference to a network of beliefs and interests that I have not chosen. [31]

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30. Sartre, Jean-Paul Sartre (1993), p. 221. Sartre makes a distinction between shame and guilt in order to highlight a connection between shame, my identity and both of these dependency on others. Guilt, he means, concerns an act of wrongdoing to others while shame, in contrast, is more a recognition about how I stand in relation to others. Gabriele Taylor therefore remarks that the feeling of shame is an emotion of self-assessment. For where guilt refers itself to what is done to others, shame involves a subject's own standing to themselves; the type of person they think they are. Taylor, Gabriele (1996) *Guilt and Remorse*, pp. 57-73, in R. Harré and W. Gerrod Parrot (eds.), *The Emotions. Social, Cultural and Biological Dimensions*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, p. 60

31. Sartre, Jean-Paul Sartre (1993), pp. 261-262

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I, however, think that Sartre has severely misconstrued Heidegger's claim. For Sartre, it certainly seems, that understanding myself is tantamount to a mode of alienation. It spells being acutely exposed to and in danger from the presence of others.[32] But what is peculiar to this feeling of exposure, as Merleau-Ponty points out, is the *look* from another human being. A dog's look could not, he claims, resonate with the same overtones. The point is that the kind of estrangement Sartre conveys could only arise among human beings. That is, in the midst of a tacitly presupposed commonality.[33] In fact, this was also quite clearly what Heidegger had in mind when he invoked the concept of being-with.

There is, nevertheless, much that is promising about Sartre's account. Undoubtedly, in making a feeling of shame central to a recognition of others Sartre is upholding Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's thesis that knowing another person is not derived from a form of reasoning but of holding relevant attitudes or a matter of being moved and affected by others who share a common world. Furthermore, it would also prove worthy to examine Sartre's discussion of the various ways we are inclined to relate to other people. Again, this is because Sartre gives a distinguished place to the emotions; the role they perform in our perception of ourselves and others.

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Sartre argues that finding my world stolen from myself by someone else's *look* does not entail that I am an acquiescent recipient of another's point of

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32. Dilman, Ilham (1987), p. 67

33. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 361

view. The self is not a passive reflecting cogito as Descartes insists. The self is, instead, unavoidably in possession of a freedom to define itself through its actions. Thus in meeting another person the self becomes embroiled in a struggle to freely determine itself by trying to retrieve a mastery of the situation.[34]

Sartre suggests that what is most prominent about my relations with others is that they comprise of a mutual battle for recognition rather than the equally balanced rapport offered by Heidegger. The situation is that the other person is viewed as a means for self-definition. The latter, if we recall, arises through myself consciously or freely choosing to sustain certain social roles. But since the other person also possesses this capacity he or she poses a threat to the freedom I require in order to choose myself. In fact, the only recourse available in order to preserve any kind of latitude necessary for a project of self-definition is to deliberately take up two attitudes toward the other person. That is, either turn myself into an object or, conversely, resort to altering the other person into an object. In other words, Sartre suggests that there are two basic modes of relating to other people. These are not of two subjects engaged in a harmonious rapport but of object and subject, or being-looked-at and being-in-the-act-of-looking. These two modes of relation illustrate, in addition, two attitudes that the self assumes about the other person in order to procure a mastery of the situation; to become a being-in-itself with a freedom unthreatened by other people.[35]

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34. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), p. 363

35. ibid, pp. 364-367

I shall, in the ensuing sections, explore Sartre's exposition of these two attitudes. My intention will be to uphold the sartrean thesis that who I take myself to be is the outcome of the kind of emotional interactions that I have with others. But I will question Sartre's suggestion that our relations with others consist of a form of domination or appropriation. This is because there are other less self-defeating forms of relating to others. Of course, Sartre is quite aware of this. For example, he speaks of the caress as a double reciprocal incarnation. However, I would like to show that Sartre does not give sufficient significance to the promising potentialities immanent in such a relation.[36]

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36. Dilman makes a similar point. He suggests that Sartre, in analysing the kind of intimacy and reciprocity characterized by sexual contact, fails to recognize that there need not necessary be only one outcome to love and sexual desire. On the contrary, what is definitive about we call love, for example, is that it takes a variety of forms in human life. [Dilman, Ilham (1987), p. 72].

Sartre on love

Sartre says that being in love is a fitting illustration of how a self-conscious awareness is enacted in the first attitude. Love, he means, is a state of being-looked-at. This is because it demands mingling myself with the other person as an object while, at the same time, reinforcing their subjective features or freedom. A lover's strategy, thus, reflects a subtle ruse to win over their beloved's attention by affirming them as a freely betrothed consciousness in order to further his or her desire.[37] In this respect, love is the pursuit to possess another free subjectivity. But because it is, it inevitably harvests self-defeat. Indeed, love is traditionally pictured as a situation in which two people mutually value and support each other and their aims. A regard for the other person as a unique, irreplacable freedom rather than a merely contingent object in my life, more so, seems to touch on everything that makes love so suggestive and significant. Thus Sartre says that surrendering to the other person under the motive of love appears to contradict the uneasy anxiety usually associated with encountering another as a subject. In fact, one feels that their existence is riddled with an immutable joy: 'we feel that our existence has been justified'.[38] Sartre, however, subsequently questions such a conviction. In fact, he thinks that an aim to secure the freedom of the other person is bound to fail because a desire to be loved is an important motivating feature of the intentions of the other person. That is, the other person has an analogous wish to turn me into a subject, while he or she becomes an object of my attention. And as such, the other person's presence is destined to alter from one that bestows joy toward one that constitutes a frustrating limitation of my freedom.

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36. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), p. 367

38. ibid, p. 371

Each one wants the other to love him but does not take into account the fact that to love is to want to be loved and that thus by wanting the other to love him, he wants the other to want to be loved in return . . . . I demand that the Other love me and do everything possible to realize my project; but if the Other loves me, he radically deceives me by his love. I demanded of him that he should found my being as a privileged object by maintaining himself as pure subjectivity confronting me; and as soon as he loves me he experiences me as subject and is swallowed up in his objectivity confronting my subjectivity.[39]

According to Sartre the love relation reveals an inherent precariousness. What is, moreover, important about this precariousness is that it distinguishes all my relations with others. Other people, through possessing the capacity to freely act and will as intentional agents, will unavoidably come into conflict with my projects. In the case of love, for example, the other person's desires and purposes are inclined to generate a friction with similar designs of my own. Sartre, in fact, considers conflict to be such a fundamental condition of our relations with others that he describes the perversion masochism as an essential consequence of love. That is, he says that the kind of behaviour required to rescue my project here involves the self-defeating project of turning myself into a degenerate object before the other person. He means that by pursuing this strategy I abase myself to such an extent that I actually end up treating the other person as an object for my enterprise rather than as a free subjectivity. I am, in other words, no longer able to seize the freedom of the other needed in order to continue my project. Quite to the contrary, I am tactically exerting a freedom on my part. 'Even the masochist who pays a woman to whip him is treating her as an instrument, and by this posits himself as a transcendence in relation to

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39. ibid, p. 376

her'.[40]

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Sartre and sexual relations

If this relationship fails (according to Sartre it definitely will) Sartre suggests we will start to assume the second attitude toward other people. This attitude involves turning the other person into an object and is characterized by 'indifference', 'desire', 'sadism' and 'hate'.[41] I think that the category of 'desire' is of specific relevance to my own project. In particular, it looks forward to another chapter concerning the primacy of the touch.

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40. ibid, p 379

41. 'Indifference' is the denial of other people as subjectivities. Here, I act as if I am alone in the world by responding to others as inert obstacles or functions of their practical roles, such as ticket collectors, waiters. However, I am still implicitly conscious of the alienating *look*. Yet by ignoring the other person as a free subjectivity, a strategy to regain mastery over them will require an act of self-assertion over someone whom I am in danger of without knowing it. Indeed, the unease that their presence causes me, despite avoiding an explicit awareness of their freedom, leads to rather bizarre, exaggerated and quite unfeasible attempts of mastery. [ibid, pp. 380-382] Sadism is a deliberate attempt to apply pain to another person in order to force them to be acutely aware of their body. A sadist, in other words, tries to master their situation by dominating the other person's body through violence. However, the other person can still subdue the sadist with the *look*. That is, this relation still contains the permanent possibility of the other person's freedom coming into conflict with the freedom belonging to the subject. Or a sadist is confronting an individual with an unpredictable freedom [pp. 402-405]. Hatred involves seeking the destruction of the other person as a general hatred and destruction of all other subjects. However, even killing

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the caress

Sartre suggests that the caress constitutes a route to self-awareness. If we recall, Sartre regards a recognition of other people to be an outcome of an affective reaction. Knowledge of the other person is not derived from an act of reasoning but rests an emotional recognition of another subjectivity that is not me. Moreover, an awareness of myself is constituted by others (through their *look*). We also discovered that an emotion cannot be reduced to a mere awareness of physiological modifications (James) or a system of impersonal, automatic reflexes (Janet). An emotion is, on the contrary, intelligible in reference to the current or appropriate beliefs and aims held by subject in connection to a certain situation. Further, an emotion is an intentional (or magical) transformation of a situation. The subject assumes a specific manner of apprehending the world. In this respect sexual desire, says Sartre, is firstly a desire for a certain living and feeling person and not sexual satisfaction.[42] Secondly, it involves a 'For-itself [which] puts itself on a certain plane of existence',[43] a world appearing as 'the world of desire'.[44] And thirdly, as a purposive mode of engagement sexual desire aims at enchanting the other, or is a special case of a struggle for mutual

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someone results in failure. For although the other no longer exists, I cannot stop them from having existed. Thus their death transforms into a haunting motif of my hatred, which will now endlessly contaminate my thoughts as a fixed past. That is, there are no palpable means of restructuring this relationship to my favour in the future since the other is dead. [ibid, pp. 411-412]

42. ibid, pp. 384-385

43. ibid, p. 386

44. ibid, p. 392

recognition. In his discussion of the caress Sartre integrates these three strands of thought, alluding to it as an act which evokes 'a double reciprocal incarnation'.

> Thus the revelation of the Other's flesh is made through my own flesh; in desire and the caress which expresses desire, I incarnate myself in order to realize the incarnation of the Other. The caress by *realizing* the Other's incarnation reveals to me my own incarnation; that is, I make myself flesh in order to impel the Other to realize *for-herself* and *for me* her own flesh, and my caresses cause my flesh to be born for me in so far as it is the Other *flesh causing her to be born as flesh*. I make her enjoy my flesh through her flesh in order to compel her to feel herself flesh. And so possession truly appears as a *double reciprocal incarnation*.[45]

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Sartre refuses to embrace an optimistic philosophy about our relations with others. It is suggested that I am self-consciously aware of myself as an object determined by the other person's *look*. Moreover, what is fundamental to this mode of self-disclosure is a certain state of alienation corresponding to having my world stolen from me, and my freedom put into question. But Sartre's discussion of the caress can, in contrast, be dissociated from his overall negative picture by re-envisaging a 'double reciprocal incarnation' as a more encouraging and productive aspect of a mutual recognition.

For Sartre sexual desire involves a subject endeavouring to establish a mutual carnal reciprocity with another person. The outcome of this desire, however, leaves both *subjects* increasingly involved and aware of themselves and

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45. ibid, p. 391

their bodies as singular focuses of sexual response. From the standpoint of erotic contact, thus, what becomes predominant is a revelation of my body as well as the other. In this situation I find myself both overwhelmed by my desire or within the 'non-thetically lived project of being swallowed up in the body', and yet simultaneously am also trying to maintain some hold of myself through attempting to appropriate the other person.[46] Hence Sartre speaks of the caress as 'not so much taking holding of a part of the Other's body as of placing one's body against the Other's body. Not so much to push or to touch in the active sense but to place against it'.[47]'Thus the final state of sexual desire can be swooning as the final stage of consent to the body'.[48]

The idea of collapsing into a pre-reflective conformity with the impulses of one's body does not mean that sexual desire is determined by brute reflexes or drives. For Sartre the structure of sexual desire, like the structure of all emotions, is properly conceived as a tacit understanding emerging in accordance with the practices and beliefs of a certain social community.[49] Sartre's stress on the caress, however, as an act which reveals my own body as well as the other contains promising undertones. That is, his remarks on sexuality belong to a more general thesis. This is that my identity is determined by the way other people are inclined to move and affect me. Indeed, his discussion on sexuality therefore allows us to enter into the thinking that the caress conveys a process of taking refuge in a self-reflective cognisance of my body affected by

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46. ibid, p. 389

47. ibid, pp. 390-391

48. ibid, p. 389

49. 'I, by whom meanings come to things, I find myself engaged in an *already meaningful* world which reflects to me meanings which I have not put into it'. Sartre is speaking of facticity. [ibid, p. 510]

another's attention. There is a sense of being lulled into shape by another's caress; a sense of acquiring a revealing access to the warmth, weight and fleshy borderlines of my body. Proust conveys, in part, the notion more eloquently.

> My body, conscious that its own warmth was permeating hers, would strive to become one with her, and I would awake. The rest of humanity seemed remote in comparison with this woman whose company I had left but a moment ago; my cheek was still warm from her kiss, my body ached beneath the weight of hers.[50]

This position is a fruitful advance on Sartre's previous claims about our relations to others. For we can argue that the caress reveals an awareness that is an opposing correlate to an anxious dependency on the other person. What is described by Proust is a memory/premonition of a unique person who singled us out from others and offered the support and fulfilment of needs which we have long desired and could not bring to fruition on our own. Indeed, the special way in which the caress allows me to become conscious of my body clearly presupposes a subject whom looks forward to and hungers for another[51] as a source of solace and consolation rather than fear and anxiety.

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50. Proust, Marcel (1989) *Remembrance of Things Past: 1*, pp. 4-5

51. 'The caress . . . . is made up of this increase of hunger, of ever richer promises, opening new perspectives onto the ungraspable. It feeds on countless hungers'. [Levina, Emmanuel (1989) *Time and the Other*, pp. 58, trans. Richard A. Cohen in Seán Hand (ed.) *The Levinas Reader*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 51

Sartre, however refuses to subscribe to the optimistic ramifications present in this view. He argues, in a way that should be quite familiar now, that a positive reciprocity is impossible to *sustain* simply because the presence of the other person instances a form of conflict. In fact, Sartre says that sexual pleasure consolidates 'the death and the failure of desire'.[52] He calls it a form of self-indulgement, a turning away from the world and into myself. That is, sexual desire makes me want another but pleasure, in contrast, conjures a reflective consciousness, and consequently I find the other person to be a self-contained and inaccessible body. Sartre means that the other person in pleasure is so much diffused with their own ecstasy that I believe they can no longer ascertain an awareness of me as an object or subject. Indeed, in this case, I am excluded from counting on another person's recognition as a means to maintain my own subjectivity.[53]

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It would be ingenuous to argue that Sartre's standpoint on love and sexual desire fails to encompass certain aspects of our relations to others. However, it is more difficult to appreciate his view as a comprehensive description of underlining tendencies basic to all intersubjective relations. The problem is that Sartre associates a recognition of myself with seeking to *master* the other person's *look*. But as I have already mentioned in reference to Merleau-Ponty, *the look* can only arise among entities whom anticipate a tacit

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52. Sartre Jean-Paul (1993), p. 397

52. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), p. 397

53. ibid, pp. 397-398

commonality. Thus although frustration and exclusion are often features of our interactions with others, it would be more proper to construe them as an outcome of a certain way of relating to other people than a condition for them.[54] In my account of the caress, for example, I explored a more positive self-revealing relation with others to substantiate this point. In the next chapter I shall address how an ethical relation to others can serve as a counterpart to Sartre's discussion. But, more pertinently, in what way it is a part of the framework in which the self is revealed through its interactions with others.

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54. Dilman, Ilham (1987), p. 72 and also Crossley, Nick (1996), p. 21

chapter six: other persons and Simone Weil [1]

Like Wittgenstein, Weil connects my conception of another person to an emotional or affective response. In fact, we find that, for Weil, the way in which I am affected by the presence of others is *proof* of there being an indisputable disparity between recognizing a person and an object.

> The human beings around us exert just by their presence a power which belongs uniquely to themselves to stop, to diminish or modify each movement of our bodies design. A person who crosses our path does not turn away our steps in the same manner as a street sign, no one stands up or moves about, or sits down again quite in the same fashion when he is alone as when he has a visitor.[2]

If we recall, Wittgenstein explained that my recognition of others is delivered through an attitude toward the soul, a pre-reflective emotional response. He thus says that others are perceived as entities starkly unlike ordinary objects through a subject recognizing a certain kinship or affinity with their behaviour. Weil, however, attaches a special priority to the idea that a recognition of another person is an emotional response to someone startlingly different from myself.

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1. My reading of Simone Weil is influenced by Peter Winch's chapter *The Power to Refuse* in Winch, Peter (1989) *Simone Weil. The Just Balance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 102-119

2. Quoted from Gaita, Raimond (1991), p. 16

What essentially constitutes my perception of others, she means, is an awareness of their "otherness". That is, my recognition of others is implicit in the way that I react to them as a profound or ineffable limit to my will.

Viewed in this way, Peter Winch has suggested that Weil shares noticeable affinities with Sartre. That is, Sartre describes others as entities who exert a certain power over us by immediately coming into conflict with a *freedom* to pursue certain goals. His most famous example of this phenomenon, moreover, involves how a subject is made to feel ashamed for looking at an event developing behind a keyhole. In a similar fashion Weil therefore says that when I act I have a certain goal in mind and my attention is riveted on that goal. However, as soon as I become aware of another's presence, I lose an unanimous mastery of my project in the sense that their consent becomes a necessary factor for continuing to pursue my goal.

A man is capable of imposing obstacles by virtue of his power to refuse which he sometimes possesses and sometimes not. When he does not possess it, he constitutes no obstacle, and hence no limit either. From the point of view of the action and agent he simply does not exist.

Whenever there is an action thought reaches right through its goal. If there was no obstacles the goal would be attained the moment it was conceived. This is how it is sometimes. A child's mother has been away: he sees her from far away and is in her arms before realizing that he has seen her. But when the immediate attainment is impossible, one's attention, which to begin with was fastened on the goal, is inevitably claimed by the obstacle.[3]

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3. Quoted from Winch, Peter (1989), p. 105

If we accept that Weil pictures others as entities who permanently foreshadow my interests then her standpoint seems to be inhabited by the same negative undertones which characterize Sartre's philosophy. Indeed, Winch acknowledges this - although he also qualifies this acknowledgement by explaining that her picture resembles Sartre's through envisaging a subject's actions in instrumental terms; aiming at goals or the completion of projects through one's own point of view.[4] He means that if we interpret action in instrumental terms we will obviously conceive others as entities who produce a necessary friction with our projects. Thus we found Sartre arguing that other people suddenly steal my world from me; turn me into an object or define me through a *look* in reference to their own beliefs and aims. In fact, my only defence against their incriminating gaze, Sartre claims, is to invert this relationship. However Winch also suggests we would do scant justice to Weil's thought if we left the matter here. This is because Weil's thought, unlike Sartre's, exhibits rather more optimistic leanings. I think this is quite true, and that this therefore makes Weil's remarks particularly interesting. In fact, I wish to suggest that an investigation of Weil's ideas throws an enlightening light on identity and its connections to our relations with others. In particular, by reference to her remarks on the self as a perceptual interlocutor which acquires self-knowledge through a rigourous ethical attention of others.

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Winch says that Weil pictures my responses to other people as an evaluative activity. That is, she thinks that my perception of others is a moral discrimination; in fact, a spontaneous reaction of compassion that is most noticeably evident when the self confronts the predicaments of others in need.

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4. ibid, p. 104

Thus when she says that I would hesitate in the path of another person in a way that I seriously would not if I were confronted with an everyday object she means that I automatically assume that this person is 'one to whom a certain consideration, or respect, is *due* '.[5] That is, my hesitation represents a recognition acknowledging that 'there are some things one *must* do and some things one *cannot* do in dealing with the other'.[6] Indeed, in this respect, what is certainly central to Weil's thought is the assumption that my recognition of others is dependent on the way that they move and affect me. However, she also thinks that the idea of being moved and affected by others is conditioned by an awareness that one is ethically committed to another. She means that my recognition of the others cannot be sufficiently characterized in reference to the universal generic classes produced by biology or the other human sciences. On the contrary, Weil thinks that my perception of others belongs to a more exclusive and profound *reaction*. She means that the former view tends to remove a sense of mystery inhabiting our encounters with others. It, in particular, erases the way that others are present to us precious beings through having a unique and strange life of their own to lead.

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Winch is quite correct about Weil's thoughts. But I also think that this makes her position an utterly different one from Wittgenstein's. In fact, I wish to elucidate this distinction in the ensuing sections.

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5. ibid, p. 115

6. ibid, p. 107

a contrast between Wittgenstein and Weil

I would like to explain how Weil's reflections about my responses to others differ from those forwarded by Wittgenstein. In fact, an important distinguishing feature is the kind of enquiry that concerns both thinkers. That is, Wittgenstein's attitude toward the soul represents a philosophical denunciation of certain Cartesian tendencies that have influenced philosophers' arguments about how I perceive others. While in contrast, for Weil, the central significance of my perception of another person is drawn from a religious and radical political context and interests. Wittgenstein is thus formulating a general reply to a philosophical debate, whereas Weil is more concerned with the enigma of existing in a modern industrial world inhabited with a kind of suffering which makes the existence of an all-loving God paradoxical.

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Weil suggests that the presence of another person is unavoidably ineffable. She means that my understanding of others thrives on a recognition that they affect me in ways that I cannot completely comprehend nor guard myself from. Hence, she speaks of this recognition in respect to a sense of being compelled to pause in their presence in a manner that conflicts with confronting an everyday object. For Weil, in fact, we may say that my perception of another person rests on drawing an imaginative connection with what is mysterious about a human life. She is saying that an understanding of others is conditioned by an emotional response, and what is particularly significant about this response is that it is centred on a hesitation expressing that one is imaginatively touched by their otherness.

Certainly, if we reduce others to souls, brains or elaborate corporeal mechanisms we are liable to lose a solid hold on what immediately coerces me to

hesitate in the path of another person. For the latter vacillation is stimulated by a perception of another person's otherness and not the entertainment of mental substances, properties or capacities belonging to others. That is, knowledge of the latter unhelpfully obscures the sense in which others are present to us as people who move and affect us in certain ways. Indeed, thus, Sartre speaks of our perception of others as one rooted in feeling in my innermost depths that the other person is not me. For Weil, likewise, I find that another person's presence expresses an imaginative inflexion of having a mysterious life to lead.[7] She means that my recognition of others involves being moved by others as entities that have their own unique existence to pursue.

Otherness is a philosophical term that has, I think, evaluative associations in this context. It suggests that perceiving others does not rest on making an identification produced by the theoretical sciences. That is, Weil rightly raises the point that I do not perceive others in accordance to recognizing them as representatives of general categories, like homo sapiens. She suggests that I rather perceive the other person as someone who is precious through being unique and irreplaceable.[8] Thus she says that if I were walking in the desert and came across someone dying of thirst, I would automatically assist that person. She thinks, in other words, that if I recognize the otherness of persons I cannot treat them unjustly.[9] However, Raimond Gaita has suggested that this is not a straightforward example of Wittgenstein's' an attitude towards the soul. He claims that Weil is actually giving expression to a further kind of response. In fact, he says that acting spontaneously in response to someone who needs assistance is

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7. Diamond, Cora (1991) *The Importance of Being Human*, pp. 35-62, in David Cockburn (ed.), (1991), p. 49

8. Gaita, Raimond (1991), p. 152

9. ibid, pp. 187-188

better described as a gesture of goodwill or love.[10]

I think that Gaita is correct to draw this distinction. That is, when Wittgenstein speaks of an attitude toward the soul he is rendering an emotional response to another person which is an important preliminary toward treating them as a moral entity. The central point is that an attitude is not a response signalling a recognition of another as a moral entity. It is, instead, a condition which makes an ethical response one possible mode of encountering another. To put it another way, Weil's response to another person is conditioned by a richer appreciation or recognition of another human being. Indeed, she is describing a perception that addresses a regard for someone that demands going beyond our ordinary, commonplace reactions to other people. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, is delineating a pre-reflective engagement with another person which is based on acknowledging a general and shareable humanity. Thus, as we have already discovered, he suggests that my meetings with others are centred on finding a unique kinship with their behaviour.

Wittgenstein's attitude describes being attuned to the significance of another person's behaviour; perceiving it as humanly significant - and not morally significant. In fact, what sharply distinguishes a moral stance toward another person from the pre-reflective response proposed by Wittgenstein is that the latter expresses our sense of the seriousness of certain obligations to other people.[11] That is, I do not doubt that other people have sensations, beliefs, emotions etc. There is no room for the thought that I ought to do this, or should seriously think about doing so. In fact, the idea that I have an obligation to respond to others behaving as though they have sensations or beliefs makes no sense because there is no legitmate use for the word "ought"

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10. ibid, p. 188

11. Phillips, D.Z. (1996), p. 93

here. But, in contrast, I can refrain from an obligation to assist others in need, or assume a contradictory stance that is however equally intelligible. The point is that there is no similar degree of ambiguity present in recognizing another person as another human being. That is, in being prepared to assist someone in need it is quite clear that I am doing something more than recognizing another human being. Indeed, my response is an expression of love, of perceiving others as precious human beings and wishing them well for their own sake.[12] Weil is therefore articulating a different kind of interdependence between the self and others from Wittgenstein. In one way she retains a grip on the Wittgensteinian notion of an attitude by suggesting that a knowledge of others is delivered through pre-reflective, emotional responses. But, nonetheless, Weil's "responses" owe their imaginative force to principles that command a richer, attentive insight into another's presence.

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12. Gaita, Raimond (1991), p. 188

I am upholding a distinction between Wittgenstein's attitude toward the soul and Weil's ethical response to others. But I should point out that our ethical practices are a part of the framework through which we are constituted as people. It would, in fact, be extremely difficult to picture a world in which there did not exist expressions of moral concern. This does not mean that it would be quite impossible for such a world to exist. The issue is, instead, that such a world would be deprived of stages of understanding and profundity which fill and colour the kind of life we lead.[13] That is, an attitude toward the soul can be conceived as a minimum requirement implicit in having any coherent conception of the world and our place in it. But imagine a person who, in their behaviour, displayed absolutely no suggestion of being moved by the plight of others, or even felt indignation at being mistreated. Here, we would be quite right in claiming that ***this person shows no recognition of the fact that we attach a value and importance to the feelings of others and ourselves.***[14] My point is thus that whatever conception a person has of themselves is developed through their relations with others. Now traditionally, these conceptions begin within the family and later with friends, acquaintances and strangers.[15] But indeed what is particularly significant about these relations is that they allow a subject to enter into more sophisticated and sensitive interpretations of self-identity through introducing him or her to a new range of feelings, roles, and activities centred

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13. Murdoch, Iris (1992) *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 26

14. Hertzberg, Lars (1983) *The Indeterminancy of the Mental*, pp. 91-109, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, (Supplement), pp. 105-106 and Nussbaum, Martha (1988), p. 233

15. Melden, A.I. (1977) *Rights and Persons*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 66

on evaluating certain phenomenon.[16]

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I would like to begin this argument by focusing on Simone Weil's dissertation *Science and Perception in Descartes.* It was written at the Ecole Normale, and offers an interesting philosophical introduction into her writing. In this paper Weil argues that the self is not an isolated mental consciousness as Descartes alludes, but a dynamic embodied thinking and feeling subject interwoven with the world. She means that it is not a passive "I think" but an active "I can".[17] In this respect, seeing is obviously not a passive perception of "inner" objects inside the mind but, conversely, an *intentional* movement of the body; the way that it gets a grip on the world. That is, Descartes is wrong to think that I know objects by virtue of an inner representation. On the contrary, the self is a feeling body, and as such, objects are apprehended as centres of assent and resistance relative to the orientation of its bodily passions.[18] Even a blind person, suggests Weil, is not a passive human being. He or she is not helplessly acquiescent to the world for a blind person's body is a human feeling body or being-in-the-world. That is, it mingles with the instruments it uses, and can be thought of as a sensible pincer which encompasses and purposively handles the world.

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16. Taylor, Charles (1997), pp. 106-107

17. Je puis, donc je suis: I have power, therefore I am. Weil, Simone Weil (1987) *Science and Perception in Descartes*, pp. 31-88, Dorothy Tuck McFarland and Wilhelma van Ness (eds. and trans.), *Formative Writings 1929-1941. Simone Weil*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 59

18. ibid, p. 79

The blind man does not feel the different pressures of the stick on his hand; he touches things directly with his stick, as if it were sensible and formed part of his body . . . . (T)he blind man, far from purely and simply being subject to his sensations of contact, as we are apt to think, uses his stick as a hand and touches, not perceptible matter, but the obstacle. And conversely, for each of us the blind man's stick is simply his own body. The human body is like a pincer to grasp and handle the world.[19]

When Weil therefore says that the self is an "I can", an active, embodied, feeling human being, she means that what it knows about the world (and itself) does not depend on what it finds inside its mind, but the way that it interacts with its surroundings. Knowing is not a passive activity. It is rather rooted in a progressive stretching out toward the world and other people.[20] To

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19. ibid.

20. Weil, however, assumes a Cartesian outlook by claiming that an active relation to the world mirrors a mathematical order in the world- sequences of number. She thinks that we pursue our tasks in a certain logical order or an orderly progression. For example, shepherds feed their flock through rations of grain, methodologically or in measurable quantities. Counting, she remarks, even suffuses the activity of walking since I walk by taking one step and then another. But Weil is not saying that the world is only properly grasped in a mathematical form as Descartes is inclined to. She is rather claiming that the paths human actions take can be broken up into a geometrical order particularly echoed in science [Nye, Andrea (1994) *The Thought of Rosa Luxemberg, Simone Weil and Hanna Arendt*, London: Routledge, p. 82]. To be fair to Weil we could argue that a certain kind of order is assumed in many of our activities, though not all. This is because mathematics is a human social practice, a certain method for dealing with things. Furthermore, it is not the founding ground of my relations to the world but derived from, as Heidegger has already shown, a circumspective concern.

put it another way, Descartes says that my senses are deceptive sources of knowledge. He means that they cannot truthfully reveal the world or myself since they lack a firm footing established through critical reflection. In fact, if I submerge a straight stick halfway into a pool of water I am misled into believing that it is bent when it clearly is not. Descartes point is that perception unmotivated by "reason" obscures rather than informs me of the genuine "nature" of what I perceive. However, Weil says that perception is a perfectly legitimate act of understanding, and this is because perception is already a unique reasoning instrument. Indeed, it is via a further step by step perceptual exploration of an object that I correct distortions in my field of vision. That is, perceptual illusions presuppose veridical perceptions. Seeing is a form of knowing, an effort to divest doubt. In other words, knowing an object involves putting myself in a better position, another point of view, so to establish a clearer grip on it. Now in her notebooks Weil ties this theme to the idea of disclosing illusions of the spirit, distorted views about ourselves and others.

> In the case of sensible perception, if one is not sure about what one sees, one shifts one's position while going on looking (for example, one goes round the object) and the real appears. In the life of the spirit, time takes the place of space. Time brings modifications in us, and if throughout these modifications we keep our gaze directed on a certain thing, finally what is illusory is dissipated and what is real appears; always provided that our attention consist of a contemplative look and not one of attachment.
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> Attachment manufactures illusions, and anyone who wants to behold the real must detached.[21]

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21. Weil, Simone (1976) *The Notebooks of Simone Weil. Volume Two*, trans. Arthur Wills, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 334

Weil says that although perception is an act of knowing it becomes a restricted mode of apprehension if it emerges from a limited point of view. By a limited point of view she means failing to seriously reflect on what I perceive through examining my deeds from different points of view by using my reason and imagination.

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I wish to associate Weil's remarks in this context to a reflective knowledge that has its basis in a shared form of conversation and interactions with others. That is, Weil suggests that knowledge is arrived at through both a prudent and severe mode of observation, a careful re-examination and removal of past ambiguity. If I, for example, refuse to correct a perceptual illusion by dismissing the idea of exploring it from a series of imminent different points of view I will only perceive an illusion. In respect to my relations with other people this kind of perceptual interrogation assumes a mode of clarification and discovery centred on "reflection" or learning to examine and question unexamined characteristics of our behaviour after it has been exposed to us through communication with another. It involves bringing to one's attention the significance of certain different perspectives on the world and thinking *seriously* over them. That is, what is important here is the thought that other people draw to our attention new ways of considering things or arriving at an understanding of them. For example, in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* the seven main characters of the novel are identified with the red, puce, purple shaded petals of a seven sided flower - 'a whole flower to which each side brings its own contribution'.[22] That is, each character plays a part in shaping and informing the perspective

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22. Woolf, Virginia (1977) *The Waves* (Great Britain: The Hogarth Press, p. 85

each has on themselves. In fact, for Woolf, the contribution made by others is a moral one. She sees our relations with others as a process of developing connections which mutually inform, affirm and enlarge the outlines of the self.[23] She means that through others and their support we may gain a more objective picture of our faults and limitations, and learn to look at them in a new way by connecting them to more positive intentions.[24] The character Rhoda, for instance, thinks she is less cleverer than the rest. In doing so she also exaggerates her own faults, believing them to be irremediable and only partially - if at all - understood by others. But for Woolf this tendency to magnify a lack of understanding between ourselves and others reflects our own unwillingness to put our whole trust in others, a trust needed to undermine self-doubt and achieve a more coherent understanding of ourselves. Indeed, it is for her as it is for Weil, a form of conceit.

> Something has altered from vanity. We have tried to accentuate differences. From the desire to be separate we have laid stress on our faults, amd what is particular to us.[25]

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I come to know myself through my interactions with others. Moreover, increasing self-clarity and self-understanding means being more responsive to my interactions with them. It means listening to them without conceit,

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23. Apter, T.E. (1984), p. 98

24. Woolf, Virginia (1977) *The Waves*, p. 92

25. Cavell, Marcia (1996) *The Psychoanalytical Mind. From Freud to Philosophy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Cambridge University Press, p. 92

the idea that what I know about myself and the world is profoundly superior in content to what others can offer. That is, it represents a movement away from vanity toward humility; putting others on an equal footing with oneself because others are people for whom a certain respect is due.[26] On a related issue, this kind of relationship is also an essential counterpart to the sarterean one based on viewing the other person as either a manipulating or manipulative source of identity. For this kind of listening, in contrast to Sartre, describes a readiness to receive and accept another's speech without suspicion and a defensive anxiety, with a less egocentric and more receptive and open mind.

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Simone Weil's writings suggest that an attentive concern toward the other person makes him or her an ineffable limit to my will, a moral entity. However, I have focused on the idea that a sympathetic concern for the other person's discourse is a method for enriching an understanding of myself. This relationship has only implicit affinities with Weil's overall position. Nonetheless, if we put together what I have said about Wittgenstein and Weil (the idea of perceiving the other person as an impersonal constituent of myself, and as a further avenue through which I enrich an understanding of myself) we arrive at the following conclusion: my identity is dependent on an emotional relation to others. That is, a recognition of myself is disclosed through the way other people move and affect me. Others, then, are a necessary constituent for making sense of myself. Through a morally charged exchange they are also vehicles for enriching self-knowledge. In fact, in the next chapter I shall emphasise the necessity of the first feature by examining what happens when our relations to

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26. Taylor, Gabriele (1975) *Justifying the Emotions*, pp. 390-402, Mind LXXXIV, p. 398

others break down. For if we require others in order to know ourselves then a developing knowledge of ourselves through others will obstructed if our relations to them become vitiated in some way.

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I have followed Wittgenstein by suggesting that a philosophical enquiry aiming to provide an understanding of ourselves and our surroundings must begin with a description of our everyday practices and the background circumstances which make such practices possible. Here, the kind of understanding which gives our world a recognizable intelligibility does not rest on timeless "truths". It lies in mastering public practices which have remained relatively unchanged during the history of our social communities. An attitude toward the soul is such a fundamental practice. It demarcates an understanding of other people or grounds the special ways that we respond to them. However, an attitude toward the soul cannot be likened to a moral stance. A moral stance involves taking seriously the idea of undertaking certain ethical obligations towards others. It involves treating others as objects of respect by virtue of reasoning that they have a mysterious life of their own to lead. That is, there is no question of choosing whether I should or should not respond to other people as whole persons. An attitude is a condition for recognizing others, while an ethical recognition of others is a commonplace extension of this recognition, and manifests itself in a context where the former reaction already has a place.

I have employed the word commonplace on purpose. For, I think, that that an understanding of other people and the world that we inhabit would have a rather exiguous complexion if we omitted all reference to an ethical relation to other people. That is, we form strong loyalties and bonds with others. And when such relationships are seriously reflected upon in reference to a mutual respect of the other's point of view there emerges a profound enrichment of an

understanding of ourselves.

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In this chapter I shall discuss the self's dependency on others. In particular, how a certain relationship with other people is constitutive for the self to *maintain* a steady sense of continuity over time.

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schizophrenia in *The Divided Self*: an introductory note

The Divided Self is a study of "madness" and the process of going mad. It is R.D. Laing's first book on a mental illness called schizophrenia. Laing however refrains from conveying his account of "madness", schizoid schizophrenic behaviour, in reference to the clinically accustomed use of the term. Nevertheless, he does offer particular reasons for doing so. That is, he prefers to restrict the term schizophrenia to a psychotic state or a breakdown of personal continuity. Laing also suggests that psychosis is a mode of being-in-the-world. I and my world are one entity, or I become a certain kind of world which has a human relevance and significance. Thus, Laing employs a rather unique terminology to illustrate that psychosis ensues from a "sane" schizoid neurosis. He means that there is a meaningful movement from neurosis to psychosis, or from "sanity" to "insanity".[1]

I think that Laing deliberately converges neurosis with "sanity". That is, this calculated correlation is meant to suggest that schizophrenia (psychosis) is the outcome of something going wrong socially, and particularly, in respect to our relations with other people. Indeed Laing understands identity as the frailest of concepts. He means that it is liable to breakdown, and its breakdown is interdependent with a continuing need for recognition from people (the family) whom we are initially bound to without our choosing. Laing, thus, juxtaposes schizophrenia to our most "personal" of social environments rather than picturing it as an inevitable product of an inherited biological or genetic dysfunction.[2]

It is not clear whether Laing would wish to preclude any talk of

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1. Laing, R.D (1975), p. 17

2. ibid, p. 190

biological dysfunctions.[3] What he, however, certainly draws an exception to is the view that the inner, in whatever form (a cumulus of neural events or a soul), is a sufficient *cause* for explaining a subject's behaviour. Laing's work, in fact, represents a continual antipathy to this view, which he also associates with the existing psychiatric outlook on "mental illness." He suggests that it generates a depersonalizing picture of human action and the self. In the following section we shall attempt to understand what he means by this.

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I want to show that Laing's objections to certain reductionist views of the self highlight a background we require in order to secure a picture of identity and personal continuity involving emotion and other people. In fact, Laing's argument in the ensuing section is that if we are prepared to think of "mentally ill" persons as a collection of depersonalized aspects and isolated from the world and other people we cannot get to grips with how such persons understand themselves, and further, utilize this knowledge to aid their "illness". He means

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3. Hugh Meyell argues that although Laing does focus exclusively on the social aspects of mental illness, the idea of hereditary biological dysfunctions is not incompatible with his thesis. [Meyell, Hugh (1971) *Philosophy and Schizophrenia* pp. 17-30, British Society for Phenomenology 2, p. 28] In fact, Laing's view is that 'it is highly likely that relatively enduring biochemical changes may be the consequence of relatively enduring interpersonal situations of particular kinds'. He means that a biochemical change is best conceived as a consequence of the way the self relates to others rather than a pre-determined pre-condition for schizophrenia. However, I read him as suggesting that our social relations are one condition, among other conditions, necessary for the phenomenon called schizophrenia. [Laing, R.D. and Esterson, A (1964) *Sanity, Madness and the Family*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 18]

that we must speak of the self as a human agent revealed through its behaviour and already related to others and the world to properly evoke the phenomenon of self-disclosure.

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Laing on intentional behaviour [4]

Laing's main objection to the clinical psychiatric view is that it adopts assumptions which can be perused as materialistic leftovers of "Cartesian" thought. He means that although this view assumes that it is strictly opposed to a dissimilitude between the inner and outer it has, on the contrary, been strongly influenced by it. That is, this view begins with the person as an isolated entity. Thus it presupposes that persons are not essentially related to the world or other people and also splits them into conceptual aspects. Indeed, the most familiar are the Freudian ego, the superego and the id. Laing, however, protests that once we pursue this line of thought we turn the idea of a person into a collection of depersonalized impulses. That is, instead of drawing us closer to the schizoid/schizophrenic's being-in-the-world we are, in this case, only driven further away from the 'general human relevance and significance of the patient's condition'.[5]

Certainly the objections that Laing advances against this view cannot be separated from what it clearly appears to assume, Descartes' "Cartesianism". That is, the idea that my behaviour can be construed in reference to "impersonal" properties or forces located inside the mind owes a great deal to Descartes. In fact, Descartes argues that the mind is a thinking substance which inhabits a body closely mingled with it, and directly influences its behaviour. He means that actions - or at least one important kind (willing) - begin in reference to

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4. Laing is following Hegel. But to make his interpretation more applicable I rely on Alasdair MacIntyre, Alasdair (1988) *Hegel: On Faces and Skulls*, pp. 322-334 in Ted Honderich (ed.), (1988) and Norman, Richard (1980) *The Moral Philosophers. An Introduction to Ethics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 145-170

5. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 18

a substance inside the person, a mind or soul temporarily melded to all parts of the body.[6] Now the view that Laing is objecting to quite evidently denies the existence of an immaterial soul or mind. However, despite this noticeable deviation from Descartes's presuppositions, this view still considers behaviour as an inevitable outcome of internal properties inhabiting the person. Indeed it, usually by alluding to peculiar unconscious drives and intentions, regards them as empirically discoverable internal causes of one's actions.[7] In response to this view Laing therefore asserts:

> Expressed in the language of existential phenomenology, the other, as seen as person or seen as an organism, is the object of different intentional acts. There is no dualism in the sense of two different essences or substances there in the object, psyche and soma: there are two different Gesalts; person and organism.[8]

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Laing is critical of such internalizing pretensions. In fact, he thinks that my behaviour serves to be an actual expression of myself. He means that when I act I am expressing myself and not a part of myself, an internal component I may or may not be conscious of. The point is that behaviour is intentional. Thus, if

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6. 'And the activity of the soul consists entirely in the fact that simply by willing something it brings about that the little gland to which it is closely joined moves in a manner required to produce the effect corresponding to this volition'. Descartes, René (1988) *Passions of the Soul* (360) p. 253

7. Johnston, Paul (1991) *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 49

8. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 21

we speak of human behaviour in the terms of the contraction and relaxation of muscles, or as the inevitable aftermath of certain inner sequences, we depersonalize human action. Action, here, no longer retains a palpable human relevance and significance. That is, if we adopt this model in order to explain behaviour we are assuming that my actions are no different from those that we ascribe to objects and machines. Indeed human and non-human action is speciously evened into one kind of action in this case: an external outcome issuing in a discoverable law-like manner from a particular internal cause. However, Laing thinks such a reading of human action indicates a failure to distinguish two different Gesalts - world views of talking about behaviour. He means, I think, that I respond to human behaviour differently from the actions of machines. This difference, furthermore, constitutes a difference in attitudes. The former I, in fact, presume reflects the ends and purposes of a human agent.

It is, however, true that some of my actions may certainly appear to reflect no meaningful ends, while others may seem habitual, habits which can be properly described in reference to the metaphors "mechanical" or "automatic". Moreover, certain human actions do appear to be compulsive in another way: digesting food and sneezing for example. But even these are tied to the way we respond to each other as whole persons. That is, I may say that my car digests petrol. Yet could we continue to speak of its movements, the sound of its motor or the swishing of its windscreen wipers, in the same tone without feeling that this is deeply inappropriate? The point is that this kind of talk would simply not make sense. For we are disposed to attributing a narrative to human actions (a related sequence of beliefs, desires, feelings, thoughts etc.); a narrative which is not consequent on the ascription of internal causes, but one which presumes or can be woven into shared (publically learned) concerns and interests of entities like me, human beings.

Thus Laing is emphasizing that the cause of my actions or behaviour is not something independent of my behaviour. He also offers two reasons for

holding this view. I have already dealt with the former. This is the point that behaviour is meaningful only when it is viewed in relation to a human agent as opposed to an automatic external effect prompted by an internal cause. The latter point, however, concerns the idea that instead of speaking of an inward relation - a correlation between a willed or empirically internal cause and an outward effect - my behaviour is rendered intelligible in reference to the context in which it arises. For example, an individual who stretches out an arm as their car approaches a crossroad has produced an intelligible action to those accustomed to the rules of driving, That is, to those driving behind this person this gesture indicates the direction that this individual wishes to turn his or her car. Furthermore, the intelligibility of this person's action, our understanding of what he or she means by stretching out an arm, is interpreted in respect to the practices or habits of our culture - for example, the rules of driving. Thus, it would seem rather odd to assume that, say, someone driving behind this person can only comprehend this gesture by associating it with something occurring inside the person before him or her. On the contrary, his or her gesture is a publically learned response to a certain situation. Indeed, moreover, a response that is only properly conceived in reference to that situation.

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Laing's objection to the existing clinical view is therefore twofold. He says, firstly, that it is incorrect to think that my behaviour is properly explained in reference to an internal cause. On the contrary, this view literally undermines the way that I perceive and understand behaviour. That is, it reduces the person to a series of depersonalized abstractions, a set of conceptually detached terms, which are in no manner typical of the way that I encounter other people. In fact, in ordinary cases I am not so concerned with what is going on inside someone but what is being expressed by that person's body, face, or speech. That is, I do not

respond to a person's actions as evidence of something independent to them localized within the self but as a straightforward expression of the intentions of a human agent. Secondly, I find behaviour intelligible because it occurs within a certain context governed by public rules.

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Thus, Laing's objections to the clinical view are centred on the thought that it works with a highly inadequate model of the self and its behaviour. In fact, one of Laing's central objections to the clinical view takes the form of a critique involving construing schizoid/schizophrenic behaviour by splitting the self into two conceptual realms. These are an inner realm which is the originator of my actions and an outer realm, the body, which exhibits these actions. Indeed, as I argued in the introduction to this section, we need to speak of the self as a whole person interacting with the world and other people in order to speak of disclosure - the self recognizing itself. However although Laing's remarks do challenge an introspective standpoint, the very notion of "mental illness' does raise certain difficulties. This is because if my behaviour is intelligible in reference to a specific context - that we understand human actions if we understand the practices of our social community - we should also note that a schizoid/schizophrenic's actions do seem quite out of the ordinary, if not frequently incomprehensible. In fact, even their speech content or 'schizophrenese' is particularly difficult to follow since they order words and phrases in unusually unconventional ways. Furthermore as we shall find later, these people, and in a quite calculated fashion, employ obscurity and pretence in order to confuse other people about themselves. The point is that their behaviour does not follow the familiar cultural norms and practices which would secure its intelligibility.[9]

Laing acknowledges this difficulty. But he also assures us that this contention does not present formidable obstacles to his approach. Thus he

concedes that although it is perfectly true that my behaviour is made intelligible against the practices of my social community, its intelligibility nonetheless requires focusing on the idea that these practices concern individuals with particular histories.

> Each person not only is an object in the world of others but is in a position in space and time from which he experiences, constitutes, and acts in *his* world. He is his own centre with his own point of view, and it is precisely each person's *perspective* on the situation that he shares with others that we wish to discover.[10]

A context is a specific, temporal context. This means that decipering an action spells understanding its relation to individuals with specific histories. That is, the meaning of my behaviour in certain situations is connected to how aware I am of my past and how aware I am of my aims and desires oriented toward the future. For example, the actions of a person who strikes another person dead because they were 'murderously attacking' them may look no different from the same person who strikes someone dead in a 'fit of bad-tempered gratituous aggression'. But there is a fundamental discrepancy between both, and one which would entirely elude us if we knew nothing of the history of the persons whom respond to this situation.[11] In a similar manner Laing considers there to be a comprehensible logic underlying "mad" nuances of behaviour. But in order to extract this knowledge, he suggests, we must imaginatively enter such persons' perspectives. He means that we can gain an understanding of their actions by conceiving them as responses emerging from a certain individual - not biological

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9. ibid, p. 163

10. Laing, R.D. and Esterson A. (1964), p. 19

11. MacIntyre, Alasdair (1986), pp. 324-329

- history. Or, we must try to imagine what a situation looks like from their perspective, and this involves relating their behaviour to a particular personal and social context.

> It is of considerable importance that one should be able to see the concept or experience that a man may have of his being may be very different from one's own concept or experience of his being. In these cases, one must be able to orientate oneself as a person into the other's scheme of things rather than see the other as an object in one's own world, i.e. within the total system of one's own reference.[12]

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Laing therefore thinks that although a schizoid/schizophrenic's behaviour does seem to divert from ordinary standards or conventions it does nevertheless retain its own individual logic. In fact, in order to discover this logic he tells us that we must understand such a person's situatedness in the world. This line of argument, of course, reflects a standpoint mentioned by Virginia Woolf. That is, she argued that a person's past resurfaces in the present and colours it with a certain meaning which also serves to illuminate the character of the person concerned. Thus in *'Mrs Dalloway'* she describes Septimus Smith Warren, whom after seeing a soldier and a good friend who has died in the war, shouts his name 'Evans, Evans'. Now the servant girl, who hears him and who cannot see Evans, thinks 'Mr Smith was talking aloud to himself'.[13] Hence, we are led to believe that she assumes his behaviour is entirely irrational since there is no such

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12. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 26

13. Woolf, Virginia (1992) *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 102

person to be seen. However, since the narrator frequently conveys Septimus Smith's behaviour from his perspective his articulations do reveal an idiosyncratic logic . That is, Septimus Smith is, in an important respect, performing a quite ordinary action. For I am inclined to articulate the name of someone that I know if I see them and wish to arouse their attention. In other words, my action gains its meaning in terms of playing an appropriate role on a particular occasion. In similar respects, Septimus Smith's action is readily intelligible once we understand the role that it plays on this given occasion in reference to his individual perceptual history.

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Thus Laing pictures the self as an intentional agent. He means that it is oriented toward the world and already related to other people. He also suggests that neurotic and psychotic behaviour exhibits a uniquely "rational" mode of relatedness to the world and others. However, he adds that in order to investigate this mode of relatedness we must carefully avoid imposing our own notions of what is "normal" behaviour and a depersonalizing framework. In other words, we must try to imaginatively enter another's perspective if we wish to understand their behaviour. In the next section I shall discuss Laing's interpretation of this perspective.

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ontological insecurity and schizophrenia

Laing suggests that schizoid-schizophrenics suffer from ontological insecurity. He means that they "experience" themselves to be detached from the world, their bodies, and exceptionally vulnerable to the presence of other people. Indeed, others are imagined to be filled with an insuperable sense of menace, a capability to dissolve their identities.[14] Thus Laing speaks of others as entities whom give rise to an anxiety which he subsequently isolates into three forms. These are engulfment, implosion and petrification[15]- but what is typical to all of them is a recognition of others as an outstanding threat to identity. Laing also observes that schizoid/schizophrenics' recognition of others happens to reciprocate their own awareness of themselves. That is, if I am conscious of something that threatens me then I am also conscious of myself as an object of that threat. Similarly, since these persons feel tremendously threatened by others they, as a result, imagine themselves to be vividly transparent beneath their gaze.

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14. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 85

15. Engulfment refers to an individual who believes others will engulf his or her identity. Moreover, interaction with others is connected to feelings of being buried alive, being drowned, being caught, being dragged into quicksand and being on fire. Implosion, on the other hand, concerns an individual who imagines themselves to be a vacuum. In fact, interaction with the world is "experienced" as a mode of being perforated, like a gas streaming into and extirpating a vacuum. Lastly, petrification refers to an individual who fears being turned into stone or a robot by others; that is, of having no freedom to determine his or her own actions. In this case, in addition, an individual magically transforms others into, say, stone first in order to avoid being turned into stone themselves [ibid, pp. 43-49]

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It is difficult to ignore a resemblance between Laing's observations and those mentioned by Sartre. For he, as we now know, tends to regard the presence of the others as a mode of alienation. Thus others, he says, objectify the self with their *look*, robbing it of an ability to freely determine the meaning of its own actions. In a similar vein, Laing suggests that schizoid/schizophrenics find the gaze of others to be a keen penetrative radar or scanning mechanism which immobilises and sunders the self.[16]

According to Laing a prominent consequence of schizoid/schizophrenics ontological insecurity is echoed in their tendency to isolate themselves away from the world and other people. He, moreover, thinks that this *decision* reflects a rational strategy which it would be more profitable to understand in reference to the metaphors voiced by his patients. Indeed, they explain that they find themselves to be divided into a "true" and "false" self, and regard the former to be a felicitous representation of what they essentially are. They mean that it is real, invisible from other people, and unspoiled by the threatening embellishments of the outside world. On the other hand, the "false" self is assumed to be entirely perceivable, or since it is not hidden it is thought to be utterly disassociated from the "true" self.[17] Schizoid/schizophrenics also speak of eluding the threat posed by others by "concealing" themselves behind their bodies. Here, the body is construed as a part of the 'false self system' or not a direct expression of the self. They mean that it - like the external world and others - is unreal and operates by itself, automatically.[18] However, Laing thinks that this strategy is

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16. ibid, p. 113

17. ibid, p. 78

18. ibid, p. 69

better conceived as an attempt to become 'invisible' to others by falsely assuming that the body is a veil, a form of camouflage. Thus, he is not saying that individuals can literally hide behind their bodies. Such talk must certainly not be associated with the idea that the self is a hidden repository, a "Cartesian" mind. On the contrary, Laing means that certain individuals skew themselves from others in the sense that they no longer directly relate to others through their actions. In other words, they attempt to become their own object by identifying themselves through modes of observation and fantasy.[19] Here, the former mode involves exaggerating behaviour, our intentions, thoughts and feelings, in order to mislead others about our "genuine" intentions, thoughts and feelings. Schizoid-schizophrenic's however adopt a rather elaborate and compulsive game of pretence.

> He never quite says what he means or means what he says. The part he plays is not quite himself. He takes care to laugh when he thinks a joke is not funny, and look bored when he is amused. He makes friends with people he does not really like and is rather cool to those whom he would 'really' like to be friends. No one, therefore, really knows him or understands him.[20]

Laing says that, initially, others do not take this game to be a pathological phenomenon. Quite the reverse; for the "false" self is assumed to be a model child, an ideal husband, an industrious clerk; an individual who emerges in acquiescence to the demands of others (although he or she is actually executing these roles in order to "conceal" a "true" self). However, through the course of time such behaviour escalates into an unusually stereotypical and out of the

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19. ibid, p. 137

20. ibid, p. 114

ordinary comportment.[21] At the same time these individuals become somewhat passive and critical spectators of themselves. That is, they attend to their thoughts with a scrupulous and, for Laing, rather bitter indignation. Yet again this mode of "introspective" scrutiny does not entail becoming immediately conscious of a Cartesian mind or a profusion of private inaccessible thoughts but rather a refusal to disremember any aspect of oneself, no matter how minute in significance it may seem to others. These individuals, then, are persistently aware of their intentions, thoughts and feelings, 'compulsively preoccupied with the sustained observation of his own mental and/or bodily processes'.[22] Indeed, what Laing's patients term the "false" self and what Laing prefers to call the 'false-self system' is merely a technique for masking one's actions and sustaining one's identity. Respectively, these are modes of pretence and scrupulous observation.

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Laing thinks that the idea of fantasy is another representation of the above in the sense that it figures as a compulsive fantasizing about phenomenon to avoid interactions with others while "experiencing" an unsubdued sense of freedom. By freedom Laing means that these individuals feel secure with the objects of their fantasies by assuming that they are in "control" of them, unlike their interactions with others. Fantasy, however, not only represents a mode of being in command of our world. It also implies that we are closed off to others and is thus a method of hiding from the world and others.[23] But it

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21. ibid, pp. 99-100

22. ibid, p. 112

23. ibid, pp. 87-88

would be false to assume that a preoccupation with fantasy generates a genuine dichotomy between the self and the world. The self, as we know, is continually oriented toward the world; so although Laing claims that a schizoid/schizophrenic is compulsively anchored to an imaginative realm, Laing warns that at the same time he or she remains thoroughly aware of the engulfing, implosive and petrifying threats of others.[24] Furthermore, the richly suggestive contents of our fantasies are never created from our own case. As even Descartes realises, they are contrived through interactions with the world and others - they presuppose them. In fact, Descartes remarks that the imaginary creatures painters may conjure onto their canvasses are merely the jumbled up limbs of actual or real animals.[25] However, what Descartes fails to mention is the idea of there being a mutual dependency between our imaginary thoughts and the world; one which becomes particularly tenuous, suggests Laing, in the cases of schizoid/schizophrenics. That is, Laing says that the laws which objects conform to in fantasy are magical laws in the sense that imagined objects enjoy contrived relationships with each other, or relationships deliberately fashioned against how things may be thus and so in the world. But since schizoid/schizophrenics spend a great deal of time fantasizing Laing reckons that they assume the characteristics of their fantasies. Thus they believe that they are bestowed with magical attributes, possess fantastic extra sensory abilities or are a reincarnation of the Buddha. That is, such individual's thoughts about themselves, by failing to be directly mediated by others, take on 'fantastically idealized proportions'.[26] Now, this point is crucial for Laing as well as for us. For it suggests a revealing connection between self-disclosure and relating to others. The point is that self-

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24. ibid.

25. Descartes, René (1988), First Meditation, (20) p. 77

26. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 89

disclosure is arrived at through an appeal to mutually agreed roles and social practices. Thus, a persistent refusal to pursue such interactions generates confusions about our identity. In fact, Laing suggests that the fantasy world of a schizoid/schizophrenic is inclined to dry up the more he or she attempts to refuse to interact with it and others.

> The 'reality' of the physical world and other persons ceases to be used as a pabulum for the creative exercise of imagination, and hence comes to have less and less significance in itself. Phantasy, without being either in some way enriched by injections of 'reality' becomes more and more empty and volatilized. The 'self' whose relatedness to reality is already tenuous becomes less and less a reality-self and more and more engaged in phantastic relationships with its own phantoms (imagos).[27]

Laing says that an imaginative "world" is not a private realm but continuous with the everyday world of the self. He means that the world and others are an indispensable constituent of what we can imagine, and thus if we *try* to breach this continuity our imaginative life becomes impoverished or 'desolate' and 'arid'.[27] I think that Laing is advancing two highly important points. Firstly, what we imagine about ourselves is not derived from our own case but through a participation with the world. Thoughts about ourselves, whether imaginary or "actual", presuppose a relation to a common world built up of mutually agreed rules of practice. Furthermore, an imaginative construction draws on commonly agreed procedures for distinguishing what is a fanciful creation from what is "real". Indeed, thus, an inordinate involvement with imaginary fantasies, unchecked by a reference to a common world, leads to a subject losing a hold

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26. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 89

27. ibid, p. 85

of this distinction; confusing fanciful objects for real things. That is, I become confused about myself through no longer relying on a shared standard for determining the significance/intelligibility of the kind of things that I am able to do. Secondly, Laing thinks that maintaining a coherent understanding of ourselves requires an *ethical* involvement with others. He means that other people are essential for understanding ourselves through being a corrective for the kind of possibilities there are for our existence. In fact, he carefully observes that a recognition of the possibilities in question originate in a family context. That is, he thinks that understanding ourselves is closely associated to the way that we learn to be held accountable for the actions that define us by significant others. However, if a child receives *persistently* confused or contradictory responses to its actions by its significant others it will find it increasingly more difficult to maintain and develop a coherent view of itself.

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It is then obvious that Laing is not merely suggesting that a recognition of ourselves is mutually dependent on our relations with other people. In fact, he is arguing that the different kinds of relations that we have with others shape what we think of ourselves - but in order to maintain a coherent understanding of our selfhood our relations with others must be based on a sincere mutual dialogue or other moral modes of interaction.

Her inability to find significant others with authority to confirm or validate her point of view left her, as we saw, mistrusting the fabric of her experience. More than this, it left her disheartened and dispirited.

"I feel I'm being ignored or just forgotten. It's been like that all my life, people just ignore me."

She says she mistrust her experience because she is weak-willed, and that she cannot evaluate the words and actions of others, or even be sure that they are saying anything at all. Yet she tends to believe what other people tell her even if she thinks they are wrong. This she calls weakness of will. She feels sometimes that it might be due to lack of confirmation, but she is not sure whether her experiences are not confirmed because they are in fact as incorrect as her mother and father continually tell her. She is very confused, and one of the few certainties she has is that she is weak-willed. [28]

Laing thinks that the above confusion ensues when the individual concerned has not been given a sympathetic attention by members of her family.[29] His point is that if a person grows up in a family environment where *emotionally* trusted sources of authority present contradictory beliefs about him or her, this person is likely to become *emotionally* confused about themselves. I shall discuss a paper written by Merleau-Ponty in order to illustrate this position.

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28. Laing, R.D. and Esterson, A. (1964), pp. 64-65

29. Laing, R.D. (1975), p. 90

Merleau-Ponty on our relations with others

Like Laing, Merleau-Ponty bases his conclusions on borderline cases investigated by experimental psychology. However, this may lead us to question the legitimacy of their approach. That is, it is difficult to see how a "metaphysical" framework of the self can be established in reference to evidence bearing a limited relevance to our everyday dealings. I think that this is an important point, but misplaced when considering the work of Laing and Merleau-Ponty. This is because both thinkers are committed toward articulating a better understanding of self-identity. Thus they are investigating borderline cases in order to uncover a background that makes a distinction between "normal" and abnormal" behaviour possible.[30] In other words, Laing's account of schizophrenia and Merleau-Ponty's interest in impaired disorders and the world of the child do signal the kind of concepts that are central to thinking about ourselves. That is, they draw attention to what needs to be in place in order for us to be able to differentiate borderline cases from ordinary cases. For example, Laing's says that our relations to the world and other people are cardinal to maintaining identity. But by this he means that this is a condition which is presupposed in the cases of "healthy" individuals, and has undergone a rather radical change in borderline cases.

I shall now focus on Merleau-Ponty writings in order to fill out a background already made prominent by Laing in the above sense.

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30. Langer, Monika M. (1989) *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception. A Guide and Commnentary*, Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan, p. 45

In a much neglected paper *The Child's Relations with Others* Merleau-Ponty dismisses a psychological version of an introspective account of the self. Now his critique of this view shares certain affinities with Wittgenstein, but, nevertheless, it would prove worthwhile to examine his account on its own terms. That is, Merleau-Ponty says that psychologists of the classical period regarded the self as an inaccessible entity. They, he means, pictured the self as an entity which enjoys an immediate and privileged access to its own "experiences". However he adds that this picture, subsequently, raised difficulties in respect to accounting for knowing the behaviour of other people. This is because if we adopt this assumption then it follows that I cannot directly know what others are thinking. On the contrary, I can only guess at the meaning of another person's words, facial expressions and gestures.[31] In fact, Merleau-Ponty notes that classical psychology aimed to counter this problem by introducing the idea of knowing others through a cenesthetic sense. This concept refers to a mass of private sensations which communicate to the self the state of its organs and bodily functions (the sense of touch or an introceptive image of one's body). Indeed, therefore, knowing another person became equated to having an ability to decode another's behaviour by projecting 'what I myself feel of my own body' onto the body which I perceive.[32] In other words, this view contended that it is by analogy from my own "experience" that I surmised the meaning of another's behaviour. For example, if you smiled I interpreted your facial expression as a smile by comparing it to the kind of sensations involved when I smiled.

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31. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1964) *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, James M. Edie (ed.) Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, p. 114

32. ibid, p. 115

Merleau-Ponty finds this argument untenable. Hence he says that a child is at an early age receptive to the smiles of others, a quite too early age to perform the sort of intricate judgements or association of ideas that we master later in our life.[33] He also adds that we are led to producing such untenable assumptions through premising our argument on the idea that the self is inaccessible to others. That is, by neglecting that the self is 'primarily turned toward the world, turned toward things; it is above all a relation to the world'.[34] He means that our awareness is intentional. It is aimed at the world and cannot be initially distinguished from the world. Thus he mentions that, prior to six months, a child's awareness is ubiquitous. Here, a child 'is unaware of himself and the other as different beings', or as other subjectivities with their own unique points of view.[35] Moreover, it never analyses its thoughts in the way we assume adults do. Far from being provoked to connect them together it allows them to occur spontaneously in what he calls a self-evident world, an environment, and usually a room, where everything takes place, including its dreams.[36] The important point in this case for us, however, concerns Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that a child finds itself co-extensive with others. We will now try to enunciate what Merleau-Ponty means by this remark.

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33. ibid, p. 115

34. ibid, p. 116

35. ibid, p. 119

36. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 355

Merleau-Ponty says that a child finds itself mingled with other people. He means that its intentions play across to an adult and the adult's play across to it. He also illustrates this claim by describing how a baby of fifteen months is inclined to open its mouth when an adult takes one of its fingers between their own teeth and playfully pretends to bite them.

> The fact is that its own mouth and teeth, as it feels them from the inside, are immediately, for it, an apparatus to bite with, and my jaw, as the baby sees it from the outside is immediately capable of the same intentions. 'Biting', has immediately, for it, an intersubjective significance. It perceives its intentions in its body, and my body with its own, and thereby my intentions in its own body.[37]

Merleau-Ponty argues that it is implausible to think that we understand the behaviour of others through a process of reasoning by analogy. This is because the self is not inaccessible to others. In fact, as the above example indicates, understanding another person's behaviour involves perceiving it as one side of the same act. That is, a child is initially not aware of itself and others as distinct individuals, but as a plurality of "subjects" whose behaviour refers back to its own body as a common way of acting in the world.[38]

> The communication or comprehension of the gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my gestures and intentions, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other

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37. ibid, p. 352

38. Hammond, Micheal; Howarth, Jane, and Keat, Russell (1991) *Understanding Phenomenology*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 231

people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his. The gesture which I witness outlines an intentional object. This object is genuinely present and fully comprehended when the powers of my body adjust themselves to it and overlap it. The gesture presents itself to me as a question, bringing certain perceptible bits of the world to my notice, and inviting my concurrence with them. Communication is achieved when my conduct identifies this path with its own. There is a mutual confirmation between myself and others.[39]

The body alluded to by Merleau-Ponty strongly corresponds to Heidegger's Dasein. It is thus an entity disclosed through its pre-reflective involvements with objects and others. But unlike Heidegger - who rarely mentions the body - Merleau-Ponty thinks that self-disclosure is dependent on a knowledge that we acquire of our body through it always being with us when we act and through us being our body. This knowledge, moreover, refers to understanding ourselves from the point of view of a body undertaking common ways of acting or actions mutually reversible between two subjects.

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Merleau-Ponty has called this relation to others 'an indispensable acquisition underlying that of maturity'.[40] He therefore comments that this kind of response originates in childhood and continues to figure in our mature relations with other people. However, the idea that we know others through their behaviour, and further, find ourselves coupled to their bodies in the sense that

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39. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 185

40. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1964), p. 118

we are revealed as two sides of an equivalent phenomenon, a single system, [41] could be interpreted as an allusion to inborn predispositions or an innate intercorporeality.[42] This is, of course, a problematic inference to make since it tempts us to picture the body in essentialist terms. That is, self-disclosure now seems to parallel a form of understanding organized around already "given" attributes of the body. I think that it is not unreasonable to read Merleau-Ponty in this way. However, it should be made plain that we can successfully elude the essentialist aspects of his earlier thought through focusing on his treatment of meaning as a contingent phenomenon. Indeed, we can challenge the idea of pre-given bodily attributes by formulating our understanding of embodiment as a series of acts and roles that arise in response to, and are determined by, the varying historical and cultural situations of the self.[43] The point is that Merleau-Ponty also connects the idea of recognizing our behaviour to the form of life that we share with others. In other words, he does not connect the meaning of our behaviour to any "given" conceptual framework, but one furnished to refinement, correction and extension[44] in accordance to the varying needs of an indefinite series of situations.

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41. 'Husserl said that the perception of others is like a 'phenomenon of coupling' (accouplement). The term is anything but a metaphor. In perceiving the other, my body and his are coupled, resulting in a sort of action which pairs them (action a deux). This conduct which I am able to see, I live somehow from a distance. Reciprocally I know that the gestures I make myself can be the objects of another's intentions' [ibid].

42. Crossley, Nick (1996), p. 52

43. Vasseleu, Cathryn (1998), p. 24-25

44. Strawson, P.F (1986), p. 316

I have therefore said that when Merleau-Ponty claims that a child is "already" mingled with the world and others he is saying that a recognition of ourselves is interdependent with knowledge of their behaviour, and that this knowledge is not arrived at through a process of reasoning but by virtue of being a body which finds in other bodies a consummation of its own intentions. His central point is, then, that we come to know ourselves through our interactions with others. In fact in the next section I want to show, in reference to Merleau-Ponty's work, that understanding ourselves as distinctive individuals (a modification of an embodied pre-reflective mode of being-in-the-world) cannot be separated from an unfolding understanding of others.

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language and the emotions

What is clearly central to Merleau-Ponty's account of identity, a viewpoint on the world, is that it *concerns arriving at a recognition of new conditions of emotional interdependence with other people.* In fact, he is saying two things here. Firstly, that our identity is not delivered through an act of introspection but within a shared or public framework; beginning usually against the background of one's relations to members of one's family. Secondly, it is a continuing process rather than a phenomenon that is autonomous and determined at once. In other words, Merleau-Ponty argues that the inception of a point of view on the world demands a formidable transition from one form of relatedness to other people to another. We are in this case, he says, speaking of a movement away from an anonymous co-existence and dependency with other people - the child is many important ways still dependent on its parents for sustenance - to mastering a sense of autonomy and a certain kind of concern for the separatedness of others.

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Merleau-Ponty associates this process with the learning of language. He means that it is through acquiring a language that a child learns to distinguish itself from others. That is, it is when the concept of another person as a distinctive "I" enters a child's awareness that it is able to refer to itself as an "I". However, he adds that this programme proceeds in a somewhat dilatory fashion because a child is still accustomed to regarding itself as indistinct from others. Hence he remarks that when a child learns to articulate the word 'hand' when presented with a photograph of a hand, it initially means 'hand-hand'. Indeed, this is because its articulation expresses perceiving its parent's hand in conjunction

with its own.[45] Similarly, when it learns to utter its name it does so in relation to the use of other persons' names. Merleau-Ponty's point is that there is a special reason for explaining why the word "I" is a comparatively overdue acquisition for a child. This is that learning a language points to being trained to master an intricate phenomenon of identification.[46] In other words, when a child learns a language it is learning to play a sequence of new roles or kinds of behaviour. However, in view of this, learning how to apply the word 'I' correctly to itself involves a rather significant transposition. That is, here, a child redirects itself from its "earliest experiences" of being *mingled* with the world, and thus an acquiescent dependence on others, toward acquiring a *separate* point of view on the world which involves an emphasis on more active and autonomous forms of relating to other people.

> The *I* arise when the child understands that every *you* that is addressed to him is for him an *I* that is, that there must be a consciousness of the reciprocity of points of view in order order that the word *I* may be used.[47]

Merleau-Ponty, moreover, thinks that what is prominent about a child understanding how to apply the word "I" is that it involves seeing itself as a separate individual accountable for its own actions, recognizing that it is at issue in the way that its actions turn out. In fact, Merleau-Ponty suggests that this standpoint is aptly illustrated in relation to when a child finds that it will soon have to accommodate its parents attentions toward a younger sibling. He means that one significant way in which a child learns to distinguish itself from others is

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45. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1964), p. 151

46. ibid, p. 109

47. ibid, p. 150

through learning how to deal with and respond to the circumstance of another sibling entering the family network. Merleau-Ponty also mentions that what is particularly revealing about this situation is that it involves, on the child's part, an abrupt proliferation in the use of the first person pronoun; indeed, one emerging at the same time that the child is made aware that it shall no longer be the centre of attention within the family.[48] This process is, in addition, a matter of undertaking emotional attitudes. That is, he says that a child may learn to exhibit feelings of being threatened by the emergence of a new sibling and therefore assume an insinuating captative attitude. In other words, it may take up a passive self-involving attitude; refuse to see itself as an individual who is independent from its parents and rather revert to a clinging, sedentary dependency which marked its "early" "experiences" in the world. In fact, for Merleau-Ponty, a child masters the use of the word "I" through overcoming such an inclination. He means that understanding the word "I" involves a child learning to distinguish itself from others, and that this differentiation involves undertaking an oblative attitude, a matter of being committed to another sibling through a dependable, caring stance.

> In order for her to accept the birth of a younger brother, what was basically necessary was a change in attitude. Whereas the little girl had been, until then, the object of attention and of all caresses, she now had to accept these caresses would be transferred to another, and to associate herself with that attitude. She had to pass from an ingratiating (captative) attitude (i.e. one in which the child receives without giving) to a selfless (oblative), quasi-maternal attitude toward the child about to be born. It was necessary for her to accept a relative abandonment, to turn and confront a life that would henceforth be *her* life, that would no longer be supported, as it had been then, by exclusive attention of her parents. In short, the girl had to accept an active attitude,

whereas until then her attitude has been passive.[49]

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Merleau-Ponty's therefore says that our identity is arrived at through relating to others and understanding the kind of responsibilities involved in relating to them. He means that understanding myself as a distinct individual is a modification or a development of an initial recognition of similarity between myself and others. It, furthermore, concerns taking more responsibility for my actions so that I can give a more definite shape to my life. And this kind of responsibility is partly constituted through recognizing that my actions affect others, that I have to answer to others for the way that I treat them.

To be sure, emotion plays a role to the extent that it gives the subject the occasion to re-structure her relations with her human environment, and not simply as emotion. If the problem had not been resolved, if the subject had shown herself incapable of overcoming her jealousy or her uneasiness, nothing good would have come from the experience . . . . In sum, the intellectual elaboration of the world is constantly supported by the affective elaboration of our experience of our inter-human relations. The use of linguistic tools is mastered in the play of forces that constitute the subject's relations to his surroundings. The linguistic usage achieved by the child depends strictly on the 'position' (in psychoanalytical terms) that is taken at every moment in the play of forces in the family and his human environment.[50]

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48. ibid, p. 111

49. ibid, 112

50. ibid, pp. 112-113

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In his *Phenomenology of Perception* this theme moves into the direction of a Proustian account of self-identity. Merleau-Ponty says:

> In the home into which a child is born, all objects change their significance; they begin to wait some as yet indeterminate treatment at his hands; another and different person is there, a new personal history, short or long, has just been initiated, another account has been opened.[51]

He is saying that self-disclosure concerns a continual renewal of meanings and possibilities revealed through reflecting on our temporal attachments to objects and others and organizing them into a coherent unity. As Marcel tells us in the closing sections of *Remembrance of Things Past* it is by connecting and reconnecting together his recollections, his memories extending all the way to his childhood, that he has rediscovered his life.

> But the truth, even more, is that life is perpetually weaving fresh threads which link one individual and one event to another, and that these threads are crossed and recrossed, doubled and redoubled to thicken the web, so that between any slightest point of our past and all the others a rich network of memories gives us an almost infinite variety of communicating paths to choose from.
>
> At every moment of our lives we are surrounded by things and people which were once endowed with a rich emotional significance that they no longer possess. But let us cease to make use of them in an unconscious way, let us try to recall what they once were in our eyes, and how often do we not find that a thing later transformed into, as it were, mere raw material for our

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51. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 407

industrial use was once alive, and alive for us with a personal life of its own. [52]

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Our identity is disclosed through a context of public practices that we are initially introduced into through our interactions with members of our family. These interactions, however, make a child aware of the possibilities of its existence - possibilities through which it defines itself - by introducing it to ethical modes of evaluation. In fact an understanding of ourselves, as Proust's novel certainly shows in regard to how much attention he gives to Marcel's relationships with his mother, grandmother, friends and lovers, involves defining ourselves through our deep-felt commitments to significant people. It involves seeing ourselves through the pride they feel or do not feel for us. It also concerns learning to take responsibility for our own lives; a task, as Laing has shown, emerges when their presence gives us a sense of self-respect, well-being and hope.

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52. Proust, Marcel (1989) *Remembrance of Things Past: 3*, p. 1086

chapter eight: the primacy of the touch

In this chapter I want to explore a central thesis of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Here, Lawrence describes being touched and caressed by another person as a form of self-awareness. This idea is also outlined from a more recognizable philosophical framework by Luce Irigaray. She suggests that in being touched we become intimate with the contours of our own body, and are invited to appropriate ourselves in reference through this uncalculated strategy of seduction.[1] She means that the other's touches and caresses organize a sensible recognition of ourselves; that, the sensation of being touched by another person, particularly within a sexual context, reveals one's embodiment.[2]

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This standpoint directly challenges an introspective account of our selfhood. This is because it reveals the touch to be a phenomenon which cannot be condensed to the action of a thinking mind. That is, the touch unearths the other person and ourselves as a sensitive, affective body. In this chapter I shall clarify this statement. This means that Lawrence's observations will be filtered with themes that preoccupied the later thoughts of Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray. I will, in particular, focus on Merleau-Ponty's comments on the phenomenon of

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1. Irigaray, Luce (1993), p. 204

2. ibid, p. 186

the touch. He says that I recognize myself with respect to a pre-reflective sensible relation with others, as an *affective* unity with the other person in analogy to the way our hands can touch each other while never achieving an ideal or complete coincidence.[3]

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3. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1968), p. 133

being out of touch

What will therefore concern us in this penultimate chapter is the theme of the touch evoked in the writing of D.H. Lawrence. For Lawrence, in fact, the sense of the touch is developed as a metaphor for being in touch with others and coincidently myself.[4] In this short section I shall concentrate on the predicaments of being out of touch with others and thus myself as Lawrence views them. For example, R.D. Laing says that I need to interact with the world and other people in order to be actively involved in constructing and sustaining my identity. Schizoid/schizophrenics, he suggests, pursue a rigorous strategy designed to avoid any kind of self-revealing communication with others. Their evasions are, furthermore, premised on the notion that others constitute a violation of their identities. But by pursuing this project they lose rather than maintain a thoroughly lucid grip on their identities. In addition, he comments that the process of defining myself as a stable, coherent unity is promulgated by a relationship with others centred on a certain kind of mutuality of concern. My identity is continually revised or reshaped through new emotional encounters with other people. However, when these responses are comprehended in accord to a mutual sympathetic communication, instead of conflicting or contradictory beliefs held by others about me, I am able to construct a more coherent perspective on myself.

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4. Cowan, James C. (1986) *Lawrence and the Touch*, pp. 121-135, D.H. Lawrence Review p. 121

I wish to read Lawrence in this way. But my account will be centred on what he conveys about my body. That is, Lawrence thinks that we are mistaken to infer that our bodies are accidental to what we are. He stresses that we are our bodies. Further, that we find ourselves constituted as embodied persons in a crucially distinctive way when we find that our embodied existence *matters* to another person.

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The idea that in permanently eluding other people we erode the capacity to make sense of who we are is reinforced in Lawrence's short story *The Man Whom Loved Islands*. Here, Lawrence ties a withdrawal of interactions with others to failing to achieve an *ethical* relation permitting a recognition of ourselves as distinct, embodied persons. He means that a withdrawal from the world and other people characterizes someone who is limited in sympathy for others; someone who lacks a "tenderness" in order to rouse a more substantial scrutiny of one's body. In this chapter I shall, then, focus on the way that Lawrence dramatizes a connection between knowing other people intimately through putting our trust in them and, by virtue of this communication, being able to generate a reflection of our bodies as a *significant* provenance of personal identity.

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Lawrence portrays being out of touch with the world and others as the death of the self. In *The Man Whom Loved Islands* this death is rendered in connection to the metaphor of snow, or relenting into a world of withdrawal or

'white emptiness'.[5] Here, Cathcart aspires to sever all links to other people by separating himself from them through inhabiting a succession of islands. On the last island, however, when he is completely alone, or removed all traces of any kind of interaction with others, he finds himself reduced to a single point in space darkening and chilling like the snow he perceives rolling over the sea.[6] Rather like Laing's assertions concerning the schizoid/schizophrenic, who strives to elude contact from others through retreating into a world of fantasy, Cathcart's isolation is meant to elicit a connection between the deterioration of his world and his own selfhood. Both simultaneously become transfigured into an impoverished landscape; a horizon covered with numb, white snow.

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What Lawrence is trying to evoke is the idea that an attempt to perpetually distance ourselves from other people has cataclysmic repercussions for our continuity over time. With respect to the absence of other people I, in fact, find myself unusually removed from myself. There is a passage from Sylvia Plath's novel the *The Bell Jar* which elucidates this predicament very well.

> Only I wasn't steering anything, not even myself. I just bumped from my hotel to work to parties and from parties to my hotel and back to work like a numb trolley-bus. I guess that I should have been excited the way most of the other girls were, but I couldn't react. I felt very still and very empty, the way the eye of the tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hulaballoo.[7]

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5. Leavis, F.R (1973) *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 326

6. Lawrence, D.H (1965) *The Man Whom Loved Islands*, pp. 97-124, p. 124

7. Plath, Sylvia (1966) *The Bell Jar* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, pp. 2-3

The Bell Jar describes the dilemmas faced by a young woman who feels removed from the world, removed as if it were apprehended behind a distancing glass barrier. Moreover, like Lawrence's Cathcart, this case points to a connection existing between an ethical relation with others and determining a coherent understanding of one's selfhood. We may understand this better by drawing a connection between Plaths' character's feelings of being continually separated from people with feeling empty inside and less rather than more certain of who she is or where she is going. The point is that the type of distance she feels from others and the emptiness and uncertainty about herself it creates is related to the idea that she does not perceive herself as a significant individual, someone who is responded to by others as a self whose actions make a difference in the world.[8] What is absent in her life and what makes her feel empty and unsure about herself is then the *content* of her relations with others. They are not characterized by sympathetic responses from others; responses from which she can, in turn, learn to create and convey her own identity.

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What is especially significant about Lawrence's short story is the depiction of Cathcart's attitudes towards others. Lawrence portrays Cathcart as a self-interested individual, someone predisposed to viewing all his interactions with others in reference to his own concerns. In other words, Cathcart attempts to become a self-sufficient self. He desires to make 'the world wholly his own' in order to maintain his identity, or aspires to know himself in absence of being determined by a deeply-felt emotional relation with another.[9] But we find that a

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8. Norman, Richard (1990), p. 166

9. Lawrence, D.H. (1965), p. 107

pursuit for self-sufficiency without others produces feelings of unease and an immense suspicion of the intentions of other people. 'He knew quite well that his people didn't love him at all. He knew that their spirits were against him, malicious, jeering, envious, and lurking down to him'.[10] As a consequence 'He became just as wary secretive with regard to them'.[11]

On the second island Cathcart meets a widow called Flora and subsequently gets her pregnant. But the thought that this means entertaining that he has a serious obligation toward her makes him feel depressed. He finds that this is a knowledge that he cannot bear. 'The millstone was tied round his neck'.[12] Worse: '(S)he began again to look at him with those aching, suggestive, somehow impudent eyes. She loved him so'.[13]

Lawrence is suggesting that Cathcart's intentions expose a refusal to tolerate the idea that it is through other people that we discover the kind of people we are. Moreover, this refusal rests in feeling horribly unprotected and in danger from others. That is, Cathcart's unwillingness to commit himself to Flora is inspired by the fact that he cannot put his faith in another person. He is unable to endure her presence as a revealing source of self-knowledge, and this is because he fears being exposed to himself and others as a person who craves for protection. Indeed Cathcart is particularly reluctant to respond to people with the kind of openness and receptivity we can find in relationships characterized by, say, love and sexual desire. That is, in forging such attachments we do not merely derive sexual pleasure, but a pleasure penetrated with a sense of comfort and support. We - this is a point we shall return to in relation to Irigary -

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10. Leavis, F.R. (1976), p. 324

11. Lawrence, D.H. (1965), p. 107

12. ibid, p. 116

13. ibid.

regard the other as divine and seek to safeguard their divinity. Yet Cathcart always feels misunderstood and humiliated with others.

> If only it had been true, delicate desire between them, and a delicate meeting on the third rare place where a man might meet a woman, where they were both true to the frail, sensitive, crocus-flame of desire in them. But it had been no such thing: automatic, an act of will, not of true desire, it left him feeling humiliated.[14]

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The sort of self-awareness Lawrence is interested in is not brought on by merely understanding the other person as a fellow human being (attitude). Lawrence is instead emphasizing that an awareness of ourselves branches into an ethical concern for other people. He reasons that if I presume that I matter to the other person then I will feel that my "self" can be opened up safely in order to gain insight into myself. Sartre, for example, claimed that when I am looked at by someone else I find myself being turned into an object. I conceive myself to be wholly infused with someone elses opinions of myself and am hence alienated from my own particularity. Yet for Lawrence, if the other person is pictured as someone who cares about me I inhabit a situation which does not consist of two alienated selves but two selves whom mutually share and acknowledge each others particularity. He means that our sense of our own bodies is crucially connected to the esteem in which others hold them. That, the *reality* of my own body is given through the sensitive intervention of others, or is arrived at within deeply felt relationships.

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14. ibid, p. 114

the sacred or vulnerable body

In this section I want to focus on what Lawrence says about an understanding of my body as a communicative object of value, a *scared body.* He wishes to argue that I am enabled to understand myself by reflecting on my shifting relations with others. In particular, one mode of sharing my life with others is a sexual relation, and by virtue of thoughtfully pondering it I discover that I am as Rudolf Bernet comments 'a tense, changing and vulnerable self'.[15]

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Lawrence wishes to emphasize that sexual feelings are not brute urges, urges whose satisfaction is connected to pursing behaviour that relieves the tension they may create in the individual. They are, on the contrary, *meaningful modes of behaviour* oriented toward achieving more enriching ends: Martha Nussbaum for example claims they are tied to consolidating such aims as friendship, self-expression and communication[16], or an unconditional expression of love. Lawrence, then, holds the opinion that sexuality should be positioned in the context of a therapeutic and epistemological realm. He reasons that a certain understanding of the sexual relation allows myself to achieve a more profound insight into myself. This insight furthermore involves "making present" certain constitutive beliefs about my body suppressed by a religious perspective on the world; showing that a certain kind of sexual relation has the recuperative effect of

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15. Bernet, Rudolf (1996), p. 170

16. Nussbaum, Martha (1986), p. 153

restoring an understanding of my body.[17]

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The religious view that Lawrence is questioning pictures the self as a human being made up of a soul and a body. The central idea, in respect to this view, is that the soul is the absolute unchanging core of a human being and can survive the body's disintegration after death. Descartes' thesis, of course, exalts this way of looking at ourselves. Moreover, his rather questionable tendency to dissociate the emotions from the mind or soul can be viewed as a protest against the thought that the emotions - such as sexual desire - occupy a pivotal position for disclosing the self. On the contrary salvation, according to a traditional religious standpoint, requires overcoming our "dark" emotions, treating them as disruptive hindrances, a somewhat vulgar sign of our fallen state on earth. That is, the body which houses these unruly passions is pictured as a place of exile which the soul has been inserted into as a punishment. And salvation is gained through finally leaving it as a bodiless substance freed of such coarse inclinations and entering an immaculate paradise.[18]

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For Lawrence, however, we are our bodies. And it is by virtue of an emotional embodiment that we succeed in getting in touch with other people and

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17. This reading is based on a psychoanalytic cure for neurosis in Robyn Ferrell in Ferrell, Robyn (1996) *Passion in Theory. Conceptions of Freud and Lacan*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 94-101

18. Kerr Fergus (1986) *Theology After Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 169

coincidently ourselves. He is saying that the self is known through its bodily emotional interactions with the world, and particularly other people.

What man most passionately wants is his living wholeness and his living unison, not his own isolate salvation of his "soul" Man wants his physical fulfilment first and foremost, since now, once and only, he is in the flesh and potent . . . . There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter on the surface of the waters. So that my individualism is an illusion. I am part of the great whole, and can never escape it. But I *can* deny my connections, break them, and become a fragment. Then I am wretched.[19]

Lawrence says that we cannot be abstracted from our bodies. This is because when we perform an action we do not grasp ourselves as a mind inside a body executing an action. We are instead constituted through an action as a body which moves around the world and is also affected by it or alive to it. Furthermore, a certain kind of relationship can make us aware of ourselves as a *significant* individual, an individual whose actions make a crucial difference in the world. Indeed, here, Lawrence's argues that an understanding of ourselves as a body which is potent or alive to the world is connected to understanding how other people can exist for us through love and sexual desire.[20] He means that one prominent feature of sexuality is that it gives rise to a distinctive mode of self-awareness of the body. Thus Bernet, for example, suggests 'One enjoys oneself, and yet one enjoys the other more than oneself'.[21] His point is that to sexually

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19. D.H. Lawrence, D.H (1981) *Apocalypse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin pp. 125-126

20. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 154

21. Bernet, Rudolf (1996), p. 183

encounter another person is to both become obsessively fascinated with their body and sensitive to our own as a corporeality being unclothed or exposed.[22] That is, the duress and bulk of another's body against our own ushers a recognition revealing the sensitivity of our bodies; a sense in which we both acknowledge the other person's bodily presence and are enabled to reflect on our own as a starkly affective object of their attention.

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However, it is equally conceivable to find sexual desire figuring as an unequivocal threat. Sartre has insisted that there lurk undertones of menace and intimidation in all our relationships with others. We are told that a person who is subjected to *the look* is deprived of their specificity through becoming an object which merely reflects the *looker's* perspective. In fact he comments that this outcome is unavoidable, even within the context of the caress. This is because the caress leads toward pleasure and pleasure, by being a self-indulgent process which cuts one from the world, excludes the subject from counting on the other person's recognition in order to maintain his or her subjectivity. But, according to Lawrence, a sartrean recognition persists within sexuality only as long as our bodies are identified as a focus which the other person is attempting to bend to their will. Indeed, in such circumstances we become foreigners to our bodies, adhering to the notion that a significant vestige of ourselves lies unprotected and obscurely disclosed to the other person.

> In this sense, the woman whom renounces her responsibility as a lover . . . . her fall into the

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22. Vasseleu, Cathryn (1998) *Textures of Light. Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 58

identity of the beloved one cancels out any real giving of self and makes her into a thing, other or something other than the woman she needs to be. She lets herself be taken but does not give herself . . . . She gathers round herself and wraps herself with what was secretly entrusted to her - without his knowledge. With no responsibility for bringing to life that something more than man's strategy of seduction which lies hidden within him? For unveiling a difference that remains obscurely connected to him.[23]

Lawrence thinks that the touch is a forceful rejoinder to the above. He does so in particular because he finds the touch to be a spontaneous mode of interaction occurring within an ethical milieu. By spontaneous Lawrence means that our responses to another person are not conditioned by a "willing mind" aspiring to control its reactions. On the contrary, the touch does not reveal a calculated strategy to dominate another, or to care for them through a calculated allegiance to a sense of moral duty. The touch is rather a spontaneous outburst of tenderness, a kind of self-forgetting, a sense of being delightfully absorbed with another.

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It is hence in respect to the notion of developing a recognition of the other person's vulnerable presence (tenderness) that Lawrence introduces the theme of the touch. He suggests that the touch enacts a sense of ourselves as a body with certain distinguishable boundaries when we are treated as an object of value by the other person. He also thinks that it can restore a sense of balance in a sexual relationship, a sense in which we are not totally mingled or lost within the perspective of the other person. We thus have 'a maintaining of the self in

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23. Irigaray, Luce (1993), pp. 198-199

mystic balance and integrity - like a star balanced with another star'.[24] (I shall say more about this in reference to Irigaray). That is, in particular respect to this case, there arises a reassuring recognition of separation between both partners; an important vestige of difference which the toucher does not wish to injure nor destroy but to affirm with tenderness. I shall return to these aspects of the touch offered by Lawrence when I have explored the significance of the touch in reference to the later work of Merleau-Ponty.

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24. Lawrence, D.H (1978) *Women in Love*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 170

the reversibility of the touch: Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The later writings of Merleau-Ponty can be read as a straightforward repudiation of his earlier work. That is, Merleau-Ponty thought that he had not shed certain introspective assumptions in the *Phenomenology of Perception,* and that this tendency therefore threatened his critique of Descartes' dualism.[25] This is, however, a rather troubling admission since we have found his arguments to be, in contrast, satisfactory indictments against an introspective position. Nevertheless, not every commentator is prepared to admit that Merleau-Ponty's later work constitutes a completely fresh submission of the self and its relation to the world. Some are even inclined to translate it as an enrichment of many early Pontyian motifs.[26] I am also not concerned with scrutinizing the main differences between Merleau-Ponty's early and later work. What I wish to attend to is his later and certainly more particularised treatment of the self as a subject that is *sensibly* revealed through its interactions with the world, and most importantly, other people.

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Merleau-Ponty's later work is centred on the reversibility of the touch. This thesis is intended to overcome a subject/object dichotomy which he assumed was implicit in his earlier work in addition to being a defining characteristic of

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25. Dillon, Martin C. (1990) *Merleau-Ponty and the Reversibility Thesis* , pp. 77-99, Henry Pietersma (ed.) *Merleau-Ponty. Critical Essays,* United States of America: The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, p. 77. Dillon's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty has greatly influenced my reading of Merleau-Ponty's later work.

26. ibid

the Western philosophical tradition. The subject/object dichotomy, as we should be now well aware in reference to Descartes, refers to a philosophical standpoint which understands phenomenon by presuming a fundamental division between a self-evident consciousness or mind and the world and other people. In Merleau-Ponty's final uncompleted text *The Visible and the Invisible* we also find the touch serving as the quintessential paragon of the reversibility thesis. Here, he remarks that if, for example, my left hand touches my right I undergo a double sensation. I find that the action of touching is succeeded by the sensation of being touched. Merleau-Ponty, however, refuses to think of the double sensation in relation to two separate sensations 'felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side'.[27] This, he suggests, leads to a dualistic theory of embodiment which is his intention to replace. Indeed, he criticizes Sartre for holding such a view. For Sartre says that to touch and to be touched correspond to two different orders of reality which cannot be reunited. That is, to feel that I am touching belongs to the structure called the pre-reflective cogito or my body for me. While, in direct contrast, to feel that I am being touched belongs to the structure called my body for others. It implies perceiving myself in relation to how others are inclined to view and fix me as an object.[28] Merleau-Ponty, in response to this standpoint, claims that the double sensation represents a single phenomenon. That is, rather than evoking two mutually exclusive spheres of sensing it reveals two alternating sides of the body: an inside and outside which turn around one another.[29]

Merleau-Ponty is thus saying that the manner in which one hand touches the other reveals a peculiar characteristic of the body. It suggests that my two hands never exist as two discrete organs of sensation, but as 'one sole

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27. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 93

28. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1993), pp. 402-403

29. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1968), p. 130 and p. 137

organ of experience' or become dual elements of a single incorporeality which investigates the surrounding world.[30] The point is that to touch is simultaneously to be affected/touched. Both roles do not at all constitute two separable functions, but one single process: the reversibility of the body.

However, Merleau-Ponty suggests that although the subject/object dichotomy is dissolved through there being an essential reversibility insinuated within the role of touching, we do not encounter an ideal coincidence. This is because the same role is not subsumed by my two hands. It would, in fact, be more accurate to describe this situation as one involving a subject arriving at the threshold of coincidence.

> My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of two things occurs: either my right hand really passes over the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it* - my right hand touching, I palpate with my left hand only its outer covering.[31]

Merleau-Ponty is saying that my right hand touching my left hand triggers a moment of cognition, a reflective appreciation of my body. This is, then, a particularly crucial claim for us. For Merleau-Ponty is conveying that the touch inspires an affective judgement, an affective cognitive process by which my embodiment is revealed to me.

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30. ibid, p. 142

31. ibid, p. 141

Luce Irigaray comments, in her reading of Merleau-Ponty's later work, that the distancing he depicts emerges more forcefully when the touch is assumed in reference to another person.[32] For Merleau-Ponty, in fact, touching someone else emulates what he has previously described in relation to my two hands touching each other. That is, touching another person belongs to a phenomenon involving a set of dual elements - two selves - whom figure as the reverse of each other. If, for instance, I touch or shake another person's hand I thus 'feel myself touched as well as the same time touching'.[33] Again, this recognition is not to be understood as an ideal coincidence. What Merleau-Ponty rather wishes to convey is that I and the other person can assume each other's viewpoints by being two elements of a single Being. He is, then, distinguishing this recognition as an implicit affective identification expressed in the language and practices of a social community which I share with the other person. It, to put it another way, denotes an anonymous/tacit response centred on a mutual knowledge of belonging to the same world or flesh.[34] However, although the self and the other's viewpoint are reversible Merleau-Ponty insists that I cannot live the other person's identification of myself. My body, on the contrary, inhabits a specific space in the world, and as such, whatever is perceived presumes a particular point of view from which it is seen. In fact, in the *Phenomenology of Perception* we find him giving prominent status to the circumstance that my body exhibits an invariable perspective; it is the first co-ordinate of my intentions directed at an object which features as the pole or goal of my acts.[35] Similarly, in his later

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32. Irigaray, Luce (1993), p. 167

33. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1968), p. 142

34. Vasseleu, Cathryn (1998), pp. 54

35. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1995), p. 100

writings, he suggests that 'I am always on the same side of my body'.[36] He means that my identification of the other person corresponds to recognizing that we share a familiar network of intentions and behaviour; one aptly demonstrated through the fact that we can reverse our roles and assume each others' viewpoints. However there, equally, persists a distinctive incongruity between the self and other. This lived nuance, indeed, takes the form of a recognition that the other person is a human body like myself but yet situated in a different space from me in the world.[37]

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Despite underscoring a difference between the self and other person, Irigary contends that Merleau-Ponty does not give sufficient attention to the otherness of the other person. She argues that other people can be present to us as human beings with a mysterious life of their own to lead. And that it is this feature, in her estimate, which is most poignantly exposed through the trace of resistance that lovers feel in touching and caressing each others bodies. We have, of course, already dwelled on this characteristic of the other person in reference to Simone Weil. In fact, we may fairly say that Irigaray (like Weil) wishes to introduce an ethical element into our interactions with others.[38] The kind of separation that she claims exists between two people is thus not supposed to be an allusion to an irreducible chasm between the self and Other (Sartre), nor does it to point to a basic tacit recognition of embodied spatiality (Merleau-Ponty).

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36. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1968), p. 148

37. Dillon, Martin C. (1990), p. 89

38. Whitford, Margaret (1991) *Luce Irigaray. Philosophy in the Feminine*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 149

On the contrary, the separation Irigary focuses on is meant to describe an acknowledgement of a difference which serves as a necessary condition for love and friendship. For example, she says that 'Touching can also place a limit on the reabsorption of the other in the same. Giving the other her contours, calling her to them amounts to inviting her to live where she is without becoming other'.[39] Through being touched by another person the self becomes conscious of the defining borders of its body. That is, an awareness of oneself can be dependent on another person without any intimations of coercion, or of being utterly reduced to a fixed cultural inscription derived from the other's viewpoint. Instead, the touch signifies two selves responding in a silent rapport to each others intentions, feeling both strangely apart and bound to each other.

> Before orality comes to be, touch is already in existence. No nourishment can compensate for the grace, or the work, of touching. Touch makes it possible to wait, to gather strength, so that the other will return the caress and reshape, from within and from without, flesh that is given back to itself in the gesture of love.[40]

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What therefore distinguishes Irigary's standpoint from Merleau-Ponty's is her emphasis on the otherness of the other person. However, despite this sharp distinction I would like to underline an important affinity between both thinkers' discussions if we wish to understand Lawrence's view. This is that both Irigary and Merleau-Ponty consider the touch to be mutually constitutive of the self's awareness of itself. Nevertheless Irigary makes an important point by

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39. Irigaray, Luce (1993), p. 212

40. ibid.

stressing that the touches and caresses of lovers offer a special condition of self-awareness. That is, they expose an ethical recognition of difference or alterity between the self and other. This difference, it should be pointed out, is not meant to allude to an aspect of the self's identity which is private and inaccessible in a Cartesian manner. On the contrary, a recognition of the other person's otherness rests on identifying him or her as a self like myself. We cannot speak of a sensitivity toward another's otherness without distinguishing the other person as a human being whom possesses common human needs and desires.[41] But, furthermore, what appeals to me about Irigary's discussion is that the touch indicates a position where one grows more sensitive to oneself through the tenderness that another arouses. To put it another way, a recognition of myself is constituted by an affective reaction to the other person. This reaction consists of both acknowledging an implicit sameness and difference between myself and the other. However, in regard to the touches and caresses of lovers the touch permits both parties to find a positive reciprocity in the contact that they make with each other. This is because this situation resists a willed assertion of one party's viewpoint on another. Indeed, here, the other person exists as an evocative source of support, someone whom offers a space in which the self can witness its own body within the terms of a difference that is valued and esteemed.

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41. Derrida, Jacques (1978) *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, London: Routledge, p. 125

Heidegger's later thought

In his later writings Heidegger introduces a term called meditative thinking. This is a new term, and marks a distinctive turning in his thought. For, previously, in *Being and Time* Heidegger had little to say on Dasein's relationship to "Nature". "Nature", here, was envisaged as the constitutional worldhood of a practical oriented Dasein. The later Heidegger, however, speaks of establishing a conceptual nearness to things by circumventing a focus on their practical use. That is he now sees practical use synonymous to a mathematical/scientific purview, a standpoint which encourages one to neglect a sense of mystery inhering in things through confronting them as merely familiar functional utilities. Thus, Heidegger intends to introduce meditative thinking in order to counter what he conceives to be a reduction of things inspired by calculative thought. He means that calculative thought reduces the world to a geometrical matrix of objects or a standing reserve of goods existing merely for the production and consumption of human beings. Indeed, Heidegger reasons that such a standpoint reflects an acquisitive impulse that erodes an essential reciprocity between ourselves and the world, a sense of feeling at home in the world and looking at it with a fresh amazement that inspires one to cultivate and protect it from an incautious technological manipulation.[42]

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42. Heidegger, Martin (1993a) *The Question Concerning Technology* pp. 311-341 and *The Origin of the Work of Art*, pp. 143-203, David Farrell Krell (ed) *Basic Writings*, London: Routledge, pp. 172-175

This new notion is developed in detail in Heidegger's long essay *The Origin of the Work of Art.* He says that a work of art illumines "truth" as a 'happening' or 'event' emblematic of an uncanny world belonging to a community of people. He means that a Greek temple is not disclosed as a work of art by analysing the geometrical qualities and functions of the materials that it is made up of but by feeling a sense of delight and wonder in the way that its stones convulse to the subtle dance of light and shade.[43] The Greek temple, in this way, unearths an enigmatic mode of dwelling. Heidegger is saying that it discloses a sense of being lodged to an *earth* that supports our steps and exists as a vast wellspring of nourishment and shelter regulated by the varying permutations of the seasons.[44] D.H. Lawrence also conveys a similar idea.

> It was enough for the men, that the earth heaved and opened its furrow to them, that the wind blew to dry the wet wheat, and set the young ears of corn wheeling freshly about: it was enough that they helped the cow in labour, or ferreted the rats from under the barn, or broke the rabbit with a sharp knock of the hand. So much warmth and generating pain and death did they know in their blood, earth and sky and beast and green plants, so much exchange and interchange they had with these, that they lived full and surcharged, their senses full fed, their faces always turned to the heat of the blood, staring into the sun, dazed with looking towards the source of generation, unable to turn around.[45]

Lawrence, like Heidegger, evokes a sense of gratitude for the world, of

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43. Villela-Petit, Maria (1996) *Heidegger's Conception of Space,* pp. 134-157, trans. Christopher Macann (ed.), *Critical Heidegger,* London and New York: Routledge, p. 154

44. Caputo, John D. (1993), p. 182

45. D.H. Lawrence, D.H. (1969) *The Rainbow,* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, pp. 8-9

finding it a strangely beautiful and sufficient place and thus living more completely in it. That is, the "men" above do not appreciate its contingencies as a totality of equipment permitting them to get on in the world - which is what one does through a posture of calculative indifference. These contingencies are instead likened to gifts connected to a sense of wonder and a pressing responsibility to nurse and safeguard a realm susceptible to human exploitation.

In the conclusion of this chapter I want to show Lawrence transposing this theme to the self's relations with others.

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D.H. Lawrence had initially decided to call the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover Tenderness.*[46] This is an interesting point for the latter does appear to suggest more explicitly his aims in respect to the theme of the touch. That is, Lawrence envisaged the touch as a phenomenon representing 'the tide of sensitive awareness' which offers to 'reveal the most secret places of our life'.[47] In other words, he reasoned that the touch played a crucially significant role in constituting a recognition of the self.

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Lawrence begins to show what this is through making a need for a deeply felt relationship with the other person a main motif of his novel. We are, for example, informed that the two central characters, Connie and Mellors, feel profoundly removed from other people or no longer engage in a sympathetic ebb and flow with them. Furthermore, dissatisfied with the life that they share with others they have withdrawn into themselves and now suffer from the alienating repercussions that isolation can arouse. They thus discover a 'body going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance'.[48] In fact, Mellors distances himself from others by turning into a hermit who inhabits the wood. His discontentment with life, moreover, is explained in reference to a severe bitterness derived from his preceding relationships to women. This

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46. Hough, Graham (1961) *The Dark Sun. A Study of D.H. Lawrence* , Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 176

47. D.H. Lawrence (1960) *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 104

48. ibid, p. 72

explanation, however, contains undertones of sexism if it is translated as a dissatisfaction emerging from the seductive ruses of women. Nonetheless, the act of distancing oneself from others may be better appreciated as an expression of a general contingency lying within our relations with others. That is, our responses to other people can be infected with fear, resentment and shame, and when they are we are more likely to seek an isolating detachment from other people than finding a meaningful reciprocity with them. For example, Connie does not feel significant in respect to her relationship to her crippled husband, Clifford (my italics).

As for sex, the last of the great words, it was just a cocktail term for an excitement that bucked you up for a while, and then left you feeling more raggy than ever. Frayed! *It was as if the very material you were made up of was cheap stuff, and was fraying out of nothing.*[49]

That is, Lawrence reasons that in order to feel significant another person must respond to us in a certain way. In fact, a significant recognition of ourselves is dependent on the esteem in which other people hold us.[50]

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49. ibid, p. 64

50. I want to speak of this esteem as an ethical recognition. But, certainly, in respect to the theme of sexuality, there are other ways of reacting to the other; such as being enthralled by their presence; the powers of their body, a muscular strength and quickness. This is evident in Lawrence, as it is in Henry Miller (Miller's italics):

'I ran my two hands over her flesh, caressed her back as one would caress the flanks of a lioness. It was curious that I had never been aware of her superb back. We had slept together many times and we had fallen asleep in all sorts of postures, but I had noticed nothing. Now, in this big huge bed which seemed to float in the wan light of the big room, her back became

She saw the clumsy breeches slipping down over the pure, delicate, white loins, the bones showing a little, and a sense of aloneness, of a creature perfectly alone, overwhelmed her. Perfect, white, solitary nudity of a creature that lives alone, and inwardly alone. And beyond that, a certain beauty of a pure creature. Not the stuff of beauty, not even the body of beauty, but a lambency, the warm, white flame of a single life, revealing itself in the contours that one might touch: a body! [51]

Connie and Mellors thus find themselves severed from "life" and their bodies. However, according to Lawrence, the touch figures as a healing and restorative apparatus. It assuages and re-seals such divides. In fact, by virtue of eschewing an intimate relation to others both have forgotten the startling impact that another's touch has on the body. When therefore the impulse to touch is revived it fills them with an irresistible ennui which leads to a keen perception of themselves, their actions, and the other: 'A sudden little flame of new awareness went through her. How was it possible, this beauty here where she had been previously repelled?'.[52] What is particularly significant about this encounter is that it represents a new self-awareness achieved through changing the way one responds to others. There, in other words, emerges a new insight into oneself by virtue of moving away from a previous resistance to others toward finding delight and contentment in another person's presence; feeling a sense of wonder for

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engraved in my memory. I had no definite thoughts about it - just vague pleasure sensations of the strength and vitality that was in her. *One could support the world on her back!* I didn't formulate anything as definite as that, but it was there, the thought, in some vague, obscure region of my consciousness. In my fingertips more likely'. [Henry Miller, Henry (1993) *Sexus*, London: Flamingo/HarperCollins *Publishers*, p. 153

51. Lawrence, D.H (1960) *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, pp. 69-69

52. ibid, p. 182

being alive and a sense of life's importance through seeing the other person as a source of joy, solace and support. Indeed also being moved to nourish and protect such factors implicit in their presence. In this respect, the touch in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* figures as a celebration of the body as an effective instrument for establishing self-revealing connections with other people. Thus we find Mellors claiming: 'I'd thought I had done with at all. Now I've begun again'. 'Begun what?' asks Connie. 'Life' he replies.[53]

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53. ibid, p. 122

conclusion

Considering the monotony and consequent insipidity of life one would find it unendurably tedious after any considerable length of time, were it not for the continual advance of knowledge and insight and the acquisition of even clearer understanding of all things, which is partly the fruit of experience, partly the result of the changes we ourselves undergo through the different stages of life by which our point of view is to a certain extent being continually altered, whereby things reveal to us sides we did not yet know. In this way, despite the decline in our mental powers, *dies diem docet* still holds indefatigably true and gives life an ever-renewed fascination, in that what is identical continually appears as something new and different.[1]

I have attempted to offer a cogent starting point for addressing the question of identity and our personal continuity over time. This task has required repudiating a traditional theory of understanding and meaning. I have called this theory the *introspective standpoint* and, throughout this thesis, I have exposed its mistakes in reference to its supporters and opponents. The former are René Descartes and David Hume. The latter are, principally, Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Indeed, I have marked out two prominent errors made by the *introspective standpoint*. The first error concerns the pretext of a mind that obtains clear and distinct ideas independently of a relation to the external world and others. The second error involves fostering misconceived conceptual

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1. Schopenhauer, Arthur (1970) *Essays and Aphorisms*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: England: Penguin, p. 124

dichotomies. The latter, as we have seen, does not merely concern cutting the self off from the world/others. It also entails drawing a distinction between reason and the emotions, the idea that knowledge is derived from an unemotional intellect and only muddled or obscured by our feelings.

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I have argued that the identity of the self cannot be attributed to a mind pictured as a private storehouse of mental representations and perceiving its body/the world/others as distinct external substances. On the contrary, the self is disclosed to itself as a body. That is, as an embodied spatial situatedness interdependent with the object perceived. Furthermore, the self's identity cannot be coalesced to a disinterested or neutral form of disclosure. This is because all types of disclosure, as Heidegger and Wittgenstein have convincingly asserted, belong to holding appropriate *attitudes*. They are tied to following a social practice, understanding the place of a pre-reflective reaction in our form of life.

Thus, my point has been that the self is disclosed through the moods or emotions that it has and these draw their sense from the background of our social practices. This disclosure, moreover, requires the mediation of another. The other person, as Sartre aptly explains, is 'indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself'.[2] He means that our identity is not determined in reference to an introspectively achieved self-presence. It is, in contrast, demarcated through our pre-reflective and reflective emotional relations to *humanly significant* objects and other people.

The upshot of my argument is therefore as follows: we initially grasp

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2. Sartre, Jean-Paul (1997) *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet, London: Methuen, p. 45

ourselves on a pre-reflective level. Here we recognize ourselves as an emotional unity with what we relate to. The self is *being-in-the-world*, which means that it is revealed to itself as an entity implicitly emotionally absorbed with the *equipment* and other people that it meets from day to day. Furthermore, the unity described above belongs to a mode of disclosure associated with mastering publically agreed practices so deeply ingrained in our lives that to question their existence would radically alter the whole pattern of our human form of life. These practices, thus, bear a *metaphysical* import - but not in the sense of describing perpetual "given" features of our lives. The practices in question are *metaphysical* in the sense that they have remained relatively unchanged, and as a consequence of being so, have ensured that our form of life persists with a certain continuing stability and recognizability. In fact, self-recognition initially amounts to apprehending ourselves as anonymous place-holders in a social community or the *they*. I have, however, argued that this form of disclosure also involves a matter of being moved and affected by others in ethical significant ways. This does not mean that an understanding of ourselves is primarily ethical. It means, instead, that an understanding of ourselves is bound up with the various commonplace practices prevalent in our form of life - that an ethical perspective is a feature of the contexts in which an *attitude toward the soul* or *concernful solicitude* already has a place.

Secondly, there is the possibility for the self to gain a richer knowledge of itself. This involves moral reflection. That is, an ethically informed sensitivity toward the profundity and stature of our relations to others. We recognize ourselves through our deepest commitments to others. These are, as we have seen, revealed through the touch and caress. Here, we recognize ourselves as a body that is esteemed and valued by another. But self-understanding and self-definition is also constituted through the process of *narrative*. As Heidegger has remarked the self is disclosed to itself as a temporal unity, as an entity purposively oriented toward the future while being absorbed in the present and

while retaining a relevant past. Paul Ricoeur, concurring to this view, thus speaks of self-identity as a social/public practice of articulating a *narrative* in order to explain and grasp our "experience" of time. By wedding this point to the idea that we are disclosed through our emotional relations with others I have therefore claimed that our passions for others are stories with a beginning, middle and end, and in articulating these stories we convey the story of our own lives and an understanding of ourselves which we have achieved through living it.

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To conclude, I envisage our personal identity as a continual process where other people perform an essential role in constituting, maintaining and enriching it. It is, in particular, through our friendship with others, through their support, that we find the emblems of self-knowledge necessary for augmenting an understanding of ourselves. I also think that the kind of contact with others that is most salutary for producing this sort of erudition is an ethical relation as opposed to one stimulated by either vanity or a Sartrean mistrust. I am saying that we come to know ourselves through interacting with others and that we broaden the parameters of self-knowledge when this interaction takes the form of being earnestly disposed to others as objects of respect. Indeed, although it is difficult avoid sounding unduly whimisical, we enrich knowledge about ourselves through finding *joy* in our contact with others. That is, a joy or gaiety which I think Collète's Renée Néré enunciates extraordinarily well: 'Gaiety, it seems to me is something calmer, something healthier, something more serious'.[3]

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3. Collette (1988) *The Captive*, trans. Antonia White, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 26

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