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SELF AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Suppose the mind to be reduc'd even below the life of an oyster. Suppose it to have only one perception, as of thirst or hunger. Consider it in that situation. Do you conceive of any thing but merely that perception? Have you any notion of *self* or *substance*? If not, the addition of other perceptions can never give you that notion.

—David Hume

In his recent book 'Kant and the Mind' Andrew Brook makes a distinction between two types of self-awareness. The first type, which he calls *empirical* self-awareness, is an awareness of particular psychological states such as perceptions, memories, desires, bodily sensations etc. One attains this type of self-awareness simply by having particular experiences and being aware of them. To be in possession of empirical self-awareness is, in short, simply to be conscious of one's occurrent experience. The second type of self-awareness he calls *apperceptive* self-awareness. This type of self-awareness entails an awareness of oneself as the subject of experience. For this type of self-awareness to obtain, it would not be enough merely to be conscious of, say, an occurrent perception of a chair, one would also have to be aware that it was oneself who was perceiving the chair. And as Brook adds, when I am self-aware in this way, I am not only aware of being the subject of a single experience, but also aware of myself as the common subject of other psychological states (Brook, 1994: 55-57).

I find Brook's distinction illuminating, but it raises a question which I would like to pursue in this paper. When we speak of self-awareness, do we then necessarily also speak of a self, is there so to speak always a self involved in self-awareness, or is it rather the case, as Brook's notion of empirical self-awareness might suggest, that there are types of self-awareness which are 'selfless', or to use two other related terms 'subjectless' or 'non-egological'? Is self-awareness always to be understood as an awareness of a self, or can it be understood simply as the awareness which a specific experience has of *itself*? Ultimately, I believe an answer to these questions are important, both when it comes to an understanding of what exactly self-awareness amounts to, and also when it comes to a proper understanding of what a self is. To be more precise, I believe that an examination of self-awareness contains a key towards what it means to be a self.

1. The non-egological challenge

Let me illustrate the two alternatives by using Gurwitsch's well-known distinction between an egological and a non-egological theory of consciousness (Gurwitsch, 1941). An *egological* theory would typically claim that when I watch a movie by Hitchcock, then I am not only intentionally directed at the *movie*, nor merely aware of the movie being *watched*, I am also aware that it is being watched by *me*, i.e., that *I am watching the movie*. In short, there is an object (the movie), there is an experience (the watching), and there is also a subject, myself, the one having the experience. Thus, an egological theory would typically claim that it is a conceptual and experiential truth that any episode of experiencing necessarily includes a *subject of experience* (Shoemaker, 1968: 563-564). In contrast, a *non-egological* theory (also known as the *no-ownership* view (Strawson, 1959: 95)) would deny that every experience is for a subject. It would, in other words, omit any reference to a subject of experience, and simply say that there is an awareness of the watching of the movie. Experiences are basically egoless. They are not states or properties of anyone, but mental events which simply occur, so that self-awareness properly speaking must be understood as the

anonymous acquaintance which consciousness has of *itself*, and *not* as an awareness of an experiencing *self*.

If one examines some recent influential accounts of self-awareness, it is not difficult to find arguments against the egological theory and in favor of a non-egological position. Let me start by giving a brief account of arguments to be found in Dieter Henrich and Ulrich Poehst, and then turn to Sartre's classical position.

According to Henrich and Poehst, any egological theory claiming that self-awareness is properly speaking an awareness of *myself*, as a self, subject or ego takes self-awareness as a kind of object-awareness, and is therefore prone to all the devastating problems confronting the so-called reflection theory of self-awareness.¹ Furthermore, to speak of a self or ego is normally to speak of an *agent*, that is, some principle of activity and volition. Basic pre-reflective self-awareness, however, is not something that is initiated or controlled by a subject, it is something that precedes all performances, and it should consequently not be attributed to an ego, but rather be understood as an anonymous and egoless occurrence. Finally, if one conceives of the ego qua subject of experience as something which *has* the experience, one obviously makes a distinction between the ego and the experience. They are not identical. In this case, however, it is difficult to understand why the ego's awareness of the experience should count as a case of *self-awareness*. Against that background, Henrich and Poehst conclude that it is better to avoid introducing any ego into the structure of basic self-awareness, and they consequently state that self-awareness is originally egoless and anonymous (Henrich, 1970: 276, 279, Poehst, 1971: 76, 81. Cf. Frank, 1991: 252, Cramer, 1974: 573).

This view is fairly close to the position advocated by Sartre. In his work *La transcendance de l'ego* Sartre basically employs three different arguments, attempting to show that the ego is neither *necessary*, *possible*, nor *actual*. To start with, Sartre takes issue with the tradition, and argues that the ego is *superfluous*. It has often been assumed that the mental life would dissipate into a chaos of unstructured and separate sensations if it were not supported by the unifying, synthesizing and individuating function of a central and atemporal ego. But as Sartre points out, this reasoning misjudges the nature of the stream of consciousness. It does not need an exterior principle of individuation, since it is *per se* individuated. Nor is consciousness in need of any transcendent principle of unification, since it is as such an ecstatic flowing unity. It is exactly qua temporalizing that consciousness unifies itself. Thus, a correct account of time-consciousness will show that the contribution of an ego is unnecessary, and it has consequently lost its *raison d'être*.²

Secondly, Sartre claims that the ego for essential reasons cannot possibly be a part of consciousness. As is well known, Sartre takes consciousness to be characterized by a fundamental transparency. Its being consists in self-giveness or self-manifestation, and there is consequently no part of consciousness which at any time remains hidden. The ego, however, is opaque. It is something whose nature has to be unearthed gradually and which always possesses aspects yet to be disclosed. Since it is never given in its entirety and consequently never given adequately, it lacks the transparency of consciousness, and cannot be part of it.

Sartre's third and final argument is to demonstrate that a correct phenomenological description of lived consciousness will simply not find any ego, understood as an inhabitant in or possessor of consciousness. One occasionally says of a person who is absorbed in something that he has forgotten himself. This way of speaking contains a truth. When I am absorbed in reading a story, I have a consciousness of the narrative, and a pre-reflective self-awareness of the reading, but according to Sartre, I do not have any awareness of an ego, nor of the reading being done by me. Thus, Sartre seems to accept Lichtenberg's critique of Descartes. The traditional rendering of the cogito affirms too much. What is certain is not that 'I am aware of this chair', but that 'there is awareness of this chair' (Sartre, 1936: 31-32, 37).

According to Sartre, pre-reflective consciousness has no egological structure. As long as we are absorbed in the experience, *living* it, no ego will appear. This only happens when we adopt a distancing and objectifying attitude to the experience in question, that is, when we reflect upon it. But even then we are not dealing with an I-consciousness, since the reflecting pole remains non-egological, but merely with a consciousness *of* I. As Sartre puts it: the appearing ego is the object and not the subject of reflection. When I engage in a reflective exploration of this object, I will be examining it as if it were the ego of an other. That is, I will assume the perspective of an other on myself, and naturally this perspective will never reveal the original self-giveness of my own subjectivity (Sartre, 1936: 65, 69). Thus, Sartre can write: "L'attitude réflexive est exprimée correctement par cette fameuse phrase de Rimbaud (dans la lettre du voyant) 'Je est un autre.'" (Sartre, 1936: 78).

Sartre's argumentation apparently supports the position of Henrich and Pothast. But is it really convincing? Is it really legitimate to attribute *self*-awareness to an impersonal and non-egological stream of consciousness, or does one not rather reduce the experience to a third-person entity if one insists on speaking of it in strict non-egological terms? It is obviously possible to speak of the self or ego the way Henrich, Pothast and Sartre do. That is, as an active principle, as an owner of experiences, or as a person with habits, character traits, persisting convictions etc. But is that the only appropriate way?

In the following I will argue that it is not only possible but also necessary to operate with a more basic notion of self than the one criticized by Sartre, Henrich and Pothast. To be more precise, I wish to argue that it is appropriate to ascribe a fundamental type of *egocentricity* or *ipseity* to experiential phenomena as such, and that any theory of self-awareness which fails to do so is inadequate. My argumentation will make use of some of Husserl's reflections on the matter, since they contain important insights both when it comes to an understanding of what it means to be a self, but also when it comes to a comprehension of the relation between self and self-awareness.

Before I proceed, just one terminological remark. In the following I will use the terms 'self' and 'ego' interchangeably. I realize that there might be objections to this, since the terms are occasionally used with different connotations, but to simplify things, I have chosen to ignore these differences.

2. An egological reply

2.1. *The ipseity of first-personal givenness*

Initially, that is, in *Logische Untersuchungen*, Husserl started out with a non-egological conception of consciousness (a conception which resembles the one adopted by Sartre in *La transcendance de l'ego*), but he later abandoned this position. As Marbach has shown, one of Husserl's principal reasons for this change was the difficulties his theory encountered when it came to a phenomenological analysis of *intersubjectivity* (Marbach, 1974: 77, 90)! A condition of possibility for investigating intersubjectivity is that one operates with a conception of subjectivity that allows one to demarcate one consciousness from another, thereby allowing for plurality. But as long as Husserl held on to a non-egological theory, which operated with anonymous experiences belonging to nobody (Husserl, 1973e: 40), and which took the unity of consciousness to be nothing but the sum total of all contiguous experiences, he was faced with difficulties of the following kind. If we imagine a situation in which I am puzzled by the unexpected anger of a taxidriver, we would say that I am puzzled not by my own anger but by the anger of another. But it is exactly this distinction which will evade me as long as I opt for a non-egological theory. As Marbach puts it:

Die Analyse phänomenologischer Erfahrung bringt einen kardinalen Unterschied zur Geltung: ich habe Bewußtseinserlebnisse, die ich als 'eigene' bezeichne, und ich habe Bewußtseinserlebnisse *von* Bewußtseinserlebnissen, welche *nicht* 'eigene', vielmehr 'fremde' sind. Soll Klarheit herrschen, kann nicht mehr von 'niemandes' Erlebnissen gesprochen werden (Marbach, 1974: 100).

In my encounter with the taxidriver's anger, I am both self-aware and aware of somebody else. I am conscious of two different subjects. What is it that permits me to distinguish between my own experience (of puzzlement) and the other's experience (of anger)? In contrast to physical objects which can exist regardless of whether or not they *de facto* appear for a subject, experiences are essentially characterized by having a subjective 'feel' to them, i.e., a certain (phenomenal) quality of 'what it is like' or what it 'feels' like to have them (Nagel, 1986: 15-16, Jackson, 1982, James, 1890: I/478). Whereas the object of my perceptual experience is intersubjectively accessible in the sense that it can in principle be given to others in the same way that it is given to me, my perceptual experience itself is only given directly to me. It is this first-personal givenness of the experience which makes it *subjective*. And it is clear why I do not mix up my own experience with the other's experience (Husserl, 1962: 416). When I am aware of a pain, perception or thought from the first-person perspective, the experience in question is felt immediately, non-inferentially and non-criterially as *mine*, i.e., I do not first scrutinize a specific perception or feeling of pain, and subsequently identify it as being mine. If I am puzzled, I can neither be in doubt nor mistaken about who the subject of that experience is, and it is nonsensical to ask whether I am sure that I am the one who is puzzled, or to demand a specification of the criteria being used by me in determining whether or not the felt puzzlement is really mine. But whereas my own experience is given to me originarily in a first-personal mode of presentation, this is obviously not the case with the driver's anger. In fact, the first-personal

givenness of the other's experience is in principle inaccessible to me. It is exactly therefore that the other is characterized by a fundamental alterity and transcendence. It is exactly for that reason that the other is given to me as an other. As Husserl writes: If I had direct access to the other's experiences, they would become part of my own subjectivity, and the difference between the two of us would disappear (Husserl, 1973a: 139, Husserl, 1973d: 12).

When Husserl realized this, he abandoned his non-egological theory. Every conscious experience belongs to a subject, i.e., either to me or to somebody else. It cannot belong to nobody. Whether a certain experience is experienced as mine or not, does not, however, depend upon something apart from the experience, but exactly upon the givenness of the experience. If the experience is given originally, in a first-personal mode of presentation, it is experienced as *my* experience, otherwise not (Klawonn, 1991: 5, 141-142, James, 1890: 1/226-227, Smith, 1989: 93). Obviously, this form of egocentricity must be distinguished from any explicit I-consciousness. I am not (yet) confronted with a thematic or explicit awareness of the experience as being owned by or belonging to myself. Nevertheless, the particular primary presence of the experience makes it mine, and distinguishes it from whatever experiences others might have (Husserl, 1959: 175, 1973b: 28, 56, 307, 443).

Das ursprünglichst Meine ist mein Leben, mein 'Bewusstsein', mein 'ich tue und leide', dessen Sein darin besteht, mir als fungierendem Ich ursprünglich vorgegeben, d.i. im Modus der Originalität, des Es-selbst zugänglich erfahrbar, erschaubar zu sein. All mein Leben ist original für mich erschaubar, es ist fungierendes und dann anonymes Leben oder aktuell erschautes und dann thematisches (Husserl, 1973c: 429).

Thus, Husserl ultimately ends up equating the first-personal mode of givenness, self-awareness, and a certain basic sense of egocentricity or ipseity.³ One way to capture this point is by replacing the phrase 'subject of experience' with the phrase 'subjectivity of experience'. Whereas the first phrasing might suggest that the self is something that exists apart from or above the experience, and for that reason something that might be encountered in separation from the experience and even something the experience might occasionally lack, the second phrasing excludes these types of misunderstanding. It hardly makes sense to say that the subjectivity of the experience is something that can be detached from or isolated from the experience, nor for that matter that it is something the experience can simply lack. But to stress the subjectivity of experience is not an empty gesture, but is on the contrary to insist upon the basic egocentricity of experiential phenomena.

A possible objection might be that this reading makes the thesis concerning the self in self-awareness acceptable, but also quite trivial. However, as long as the thesis is routinely denied by advocates of the different impersonality theses, i.e., by adherents to the no-ownership view, the radical anonymity thesis, the non-egological account, etc., it does not seem superfluous to make the point. Moreover, as both Wittgenstein and Heidegger have remarked, one of the tasks of philosophy is exactly to call attention to and elucidate those fundamental aspects that are so familiar to us, so taken for granted, that we often fail to realize their true significance and might even deny their existence.

If we look back, the non-egological theory would claim that it is possible to have strictly *impersonal* experiences, which do not include any reference, not even an implicit reference, to oneself as the subject of the experience. Thus, even if one had to concede that two persons, who had two simultaneous and qualitatively identical experiences, would still have two numerical distinct experiences, this would not be the case because each of the experiences had a different *subject*, but simply because, to quote Parfit, "one of these experiences is *this* experience, occurring in *this* particular mental life, and the other is *that* experience, occurring in *that* other particular mental life." (Parfit, 1987: 517. Cf. 1987: 252).

An objection to this position comes to mind the moment one adopts a first-person perspective. Is it really true that the primary difference between my perception and my friend's perception is that my perception is *this* one and his *that* one? Is this not, as Klawonn has argued, a parasitic and derived characterization? Is it not rather the case that an experience is *this* one exactly because it is *mine*, i.e., given in an irreducible *first-personal mode of presentation*, whereas the other's experience is not given in a first-personal mode for *me*, and exactly therefore no part of *my* mental life? (Klawonn, 1991: 28-29).

I have earlier mentioned Pothast's argument against an egological theory of self-awareness: If the ego is conceived as something standing opposed to or above the experience, it is difficult to understand why the ego's awareness of the experience should count as a case of *self-awareness*. As Husserl's discussion of the originary givenness of my own experiences has shown, however, one does not need to conceive of the ego as something standing apart from or above the experience, nor to conceive of the relation between self and experience as an external relation of ownership. It is also possible to describe the very first-

personal givenness of an experience, that is its very self-givenness or self-manifestation, as the most basic form of egocentricity. In this case the ego would not be something standing opposed to the stream of consciousness, but be an essential part of its structure.⁴

For this reason, Sartre's position must be criticized as well. One has to question Sartre's revised paraphrase of the cogito. It does not seem adequate to render the cogito as "there is a perception of a chair," nor for that matter as "somebody perceives a chair" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 249, 277) since the two formulations overlook one significant detail. If I and the reader are looking at the same chair, these two perceptions of the chair might very well be anonymous in the sense of lacking any explicit self-thematization. In fact, on the pre-reflective level there is probably no explicit awareness of the experience being mine. But the two perceptions are definitely *not* anonymous in the sense of being undifferentiated and indistinguishable, regardless of whether this is taken to imply strict numerical identity (in which case the two streams of consciousness would have merged) or merely qualitative identity. On the contrary, the moment we take the first-person perspective seriously, it is obvious that there is a vital difference between the two perceptions. Only one of them is given in a first-personal mode of presentation for me. To acknowledge this is to acknowledge that experiential phenomena are as such characterized by a basic level of ipseity. To deny this, i.e., to argue for radical anonymity in the sense of *undifferentiatedness*, seems utterly absurd. Thus, a thorough consideration of the alternative increases the plausibility of the egocentric position.

A further argument given in defense of the radical anonymity thesis relates to the problem of *intersubjectivity*. It has been claimed that the only way to avoid the threat of solipsism is by conceiving of the difference between self and other as a founded and derived difference, as a difference arising out of a common and shared undifferentiated anonymous life. I think this solution is much too radical. Properly speaking it does not solve the problem of intersubjectivity, but dissolves it. To speak of a fundamental anonymity prior to any distinction between self and other obscures that which has to be clarified, namely intersubjectivity understood as the relation between subjectivities. On the level of radical anonymity there is neither individuation or selfhood, but nor is there any differentiation, alterity, or transcendence, and there is consequently room for neither subjectivity nor intersubjectivity. To put it differently, the radical anonymity thesis threatens not only our concept of a self-given subject, it also threatens our concept of the transcendent and irreducible other. I consequently think that it is more than doubtful whether this radical anonymity with its latent solipsism can help us understand the possibility of intersubjectivity. On the contrary, it seems to present us with one of those cases where the medicine turns out to be part of the sickness it was supposed to cure, and in the end just as deadly.

To avoid possible misunderstandings, let me emphasize once again that I am by no means denying the existence of what has often been described in the phenomenological literature as *anonymous experiences*. I am just criticizing a certain concept of anonymity. For an experience to be anonymous is for the experience in question to lack any explicit self-awareness; it is not for it to lack self-givenness, individuation or first-personal givenness altogether. To suggest something like that is to conceive of the first-personal givenness of the experiential phenomena as something quite incidental to their being, as a mere varnish that the experiences could also lack without ceasing to be experiences. And I believe that to be a radical mistake (cf. Searle, 1992: 172, Smith, 1989: 95, Chalmers, 1996: 4, Strawson, 1994: 71). If, however, the thesis were maintained, it would be necessary to explain how something like first-personal self-givenness could eventually arise out of this undifferentiated dimension of anonymity. Here I believe the radical anonymity thesis is basically faced with all the difficulties confronting the reflection theory of self-awareness—difficulties which I also very much doubt can be solved.

The problem with Sartre's argumentation is consequently that he (just like Henrich and Pothast) operates with too narrow a concept of the ego. However, it might be argued that Sartre eventually came to realize this deficit himself. For whereas he in *La transcendance de l'ego* characterizes the pre-reflective, non-egological field of consciousness as *impersonal*, he describes this view as mistaken in both *L'Être et le néant* and in the important article 'Conscience de soi et connaissance de soi'. It is, as he says, not the ego which personalizes consciousness, it is consciousness which by means of its fundamental self-givenness or selfhood (*ipséité*) allows the ego to appear: "...si la conscience n'a pas une ego au niveau de l'immédiat et de la non-réflexivité, elle n'en est pas moins personnelle. Elle est personnelle parce qu'elle renvoi, malgré tout, à soi." (Sartre, 1948: 63. Cf. Sartre, 1943: 114, 142-143, 284, 1936: 19, 78-79). At this point the difference between Husserl's and Sartre's positions no longer seems substantial, and one might merely object to Sartre's terminology. I think it would have been more reasonable to ascribe a fundamental egocentricity or ipseity to consciousness as such, and reserve the term 'personal' for the socially constituted self.

To recapitulate: To have egocentric self-awareness is not to apprehend a pure self apart from the experience, but to be acquainted with an experience in its first-personal mode of presentation, that is, from

'within'. It is exactly the primary presence or first-personal givenness of a group of experiences which constitutes their *myness*, i.e., make them belong to a particular subject. The subject or self referred to in *self-awareness* is consequently not something apart from or beyond the experience, but simply a feature or function of its givenness. One advantage of this view is that it incidentally makes it clear that self-awareness is not to be conceived of as an awareness of an isolated worldless self. To be self-aware is not to withdraw to some self-enclosed interiority. It is not to interrupt the experiential interaction with the world in order to turn the gaze inside. On the contrary, subjectivity is open towards and engaged in the world, and it is in this openness that it reveals itself.⁵

2.2. Identity in difference

So far I have argued that the self-givenness or first-personal givenness of an experience entails some basic type of selfhood, and that this fact constitutes an argument against a non-egological theory of consciousness.

The notion of self discussed so far is, admittedly, a very minimalistic notion. Nevertheless, it still strikes me as fundamental in the sense that nothing which lacks it deserves to be called a self. When this is said, it would, however, be an obvious mistake to think that this is all there is to the relation between self and self-awareness. There are obviously also other notions of self, and more complex forms of self-awareness, to be considered. If one had any doubts, one would only have to read Strawson's article 'The Self and the SESMET' where he sums up some of the recent discussions in *Journal of Consciousness Studies* by enumerating no less than 21 concepts of self. In what follows I will not attempt to elucidate this manifold, but simply draw attention to a further quite crucial aspect of the relation between self and self-awareness which I have not mentioned so far. Once again I will use Husserl's reflections as a clue.

Husserl not only speaks of self in terms of the self-givenness or first-personal givenness of an experience. He also operates with the notion of an act-transcendent ego in the sense of an identity-pole which is shared by all experiences belonging to the same stream of consciousness.⁶ As Husserl points out, the ego cannot be identified with the experiences, since it preserves its identity, whereas the experiences arise and perish in the stream of consciousness, replacing each other in a permanent flux (Husserl, 1952: 98, 1974: 363). But as he then emphasizes, although the ego must be distinguished from the experiences in which it lives and functions, it cannot in any way exist independently of them. It is a transcendence, but in Husserl's famous phrase: *a transcendence in the immanence* (Husserl, 1976: 123-124, 179, 1952: 99-100, 1973c: 43, 1973b: 246).

What is crucial about this characterization? Obviously the attempt to *differentiate* between the ego and the experiences. Despite my earlier reservations this differentiation seems to be warranted the moment we pass beyond a narrow investigation of the self-givenness and egocentricity of a single experience, and instead consider the kind of self-awareness established when a plurality of experiences is involved. After all, it is not only possible to be aware of one's own burning pain, it is also possible to be aware of oneself as the common subjectivity of a manifold of simultaneous experiences, just as one might be self-aware across temporal distance, and recall a past experience as one's own. In these latter cases it is necessary to distinguish the self from the occurrent experience since the self can retain its identity although the experience change. And any account of the relationship between self and self-awareness which ignores this feature must be characterized as defective. In other words, if there are forms of self-awareness which bridge the gap between numerical different experiences, these forms must also be accounted for, (and this incidentally appears particularly difficult for a non-egological account, since such an account cannot recur to any act-transcendent principle).

Since I am pursuing the relation between self and self-awareness, the question I would like to raise is: How are we aware of this ego? How is it given to consciousness? Or to phrase the question in a way that makes it clear that we are in fact dealing with a new type of self-awareness, and not simply returning to the one treated in the discussion of the first-personal mode of presentation: When does my self-awareness contain a reference to an *act-transcendent* identity? I think a plausible answer would be that the self-givenness of a single experience is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for this type of self-awareness to occur. The latter entails more than a simple and immediate self-awareness, it also entails a difference or distance which is bridged, that is, it involves a *synthesis*. Why is that? Because the self cannot be given as an act-transcendent identity in a *single* act (Kern, 1989: 60-62, 1975: 66, Marbach, 1974: 110, 112). It is only when we are acquainted with a manifold of different acts which are then compared that we can encounter something that is given as the same despite the change in experiences. It is only then that we can encounter something transcendent that retains its identity through changing experiences.⁷ In short, we only

need to operate with a difference between experience and self, the moment we realize that the self retains its identity through different experiences. But this realization cannot occur as long as we stick to a single experience, but only in the moment we relate and compare several different experiences, that is, the moment a synthetization takes place.⁸

I hardly need to point out that we are presently approaching something that is very close to Brook's notion of apperceptive self-awareness. Brook wrote that when one was in possession of apperceptive self-awareness one was not merely aware of being the subject of a single experience, but also aware of oneself as the common subject of other psychological states. The point now being made is of course that this reference to a plurality of experiences is not merely incidental, but quite essential for something like apperceptive self-awareness to occur.⁹

One question that has to be asked concerns the relation between the earlier description of the self involved in first-personal givenness, and the present description of the act-transcendent identity of the self. What is the connection? It could be claimed that there is in fact no connection, since the present description insists upon the difference between self and experience, whereas the earlier description attempted to abolish this difference. However, this claim would be mistaken. As a closer examination reveals there are in fact good reasons for insisting upon the *difference* between our singular and transitory acts and the abiding dimension of first-personal experiencing, between *die Erlebnisse* and *das Erleben* (Husserl, 1980: 326, Husserl, 1973c: 46). After all, it makes perfect sense to say that I had an experience of joy which has now passed. I might even completely forget about it and only recall it much later. But whereas the act can become past and absent, the dimension of experiencing that allows for presence and absence cannot itself become past and absent (for me). Whereas we live through a number of different experiences, the first-personal experiencing itself remains as an unchanging dimension. To use a striking image by James, it stands permanent, like the rainbow on the waterfall, with its own quality unchanged by the events that stream through it (James, 1890: I/630). Of course, this should not be misunderstood. Distinguishability is not the same as separability. We are not dealing with a pure or empty field of experiencing upon which the concrete experiences subsequently make their entry. After all, the field of experiencing is nothing apart from the concrete experiences. Nevertheless, the moment we expand the focus to include more than a single experience it becomes not only legitimate but highly appropriate to distinguish the strict singularity of the field of first-personal givenness from the plurality of changing experiences (Klawonn, 1994: 143, Brough 1972: 316). To use a nice formulation by Klawonn, the latter are exposed in it (Klawonn, 1991: 77, 128). It is their exposure in this field of first-personal givenness which makes them mine. And of course this exposure is not something incidental to their being. It is not a mere superficial varnish, but that which makes them conscious experiential phenomena.

Granted that it is their exposure in the same field of first-personal givenness which makes different experiences belong to one and the same self, it is possible to explain, both how self-awareness can be established across numerical different acts, and more specifically how self-awareness can bridge temporal distance and allow me to remember a former experience as *mine*. The relationship between my present and past experience cannot be compared to the one entertained by two different beads on one and the same string of pearls. Whereas it is possible to examine the beads without being aware of their relation to each other or to the string, and whereas we would need to assure ourselves that they were in fact joined by an uninterrupted string in order to be certain that they are connected, this is not the case for the two experiences. In order to determine whether a past experience is really mine, I do not first need to assure myself of the uninterrupted, temporal continuity between my present recollection and the past experience, but can do so immediately. Or to be more exact, I do not have to do anything, since no criterial self-identification is involved (cf. Strawson, 1966: 164). If an experience is reflectively accessible to me in recollection, it is automatically given as *my past* experience. (Obviously this is not to say that episodic memory is infallible - I might have false beliefs about myself - but only that it is not subject to the error of misidentification (cf. Campbell, 1994: 98-99)). To argue against the unity of mind by pointing to alleged interruptions in the stream of consciousness (such as dreamless sleep, coma, etc.) is consequently pointless, since one thereby makes the erroneous assumption that it is the *contiguity* between two experiences that makes them part of the same subjectivity, rather than their shared manner of givenness.

But let me return to the question concerning the relation between the two notions of self. Although the act-transcendent identity of the self only reveals itself in acts of synthesis, the identity in question does not arise out of the blue, but is clearly grounded in the pervasive dimension of first-personal experiencing.

3. Conclusion

Let me conclude. In the beginning I posed the following question: is there an intimate link between self and self-awareness. Is there always a self involved when we are self-aware, or is it also possible to speak of self-awareness without assuming the existence of anyone being self-aware? In short is *self-awareness* to be understood as an awareness of *a self*, or rather as the awareness which a specific experience has of *itself*? On closer examination, however, this way of putting the question turned out to be misleading. First of all, it presents us with a false alternative. Self-awareness is not *either* an awareness of a self, *or* the awareness which an experience has of itself. On the contrary, it must be realized that there are different kinds of self-awareness. I can be pre-reflectively self-aware of my current perception, and I can reflect and thematize this perception. But I can also reflect upon myself as the subjectivity of experience, that is, I can reflect upon myself as the one who thinks, deliberates, resolves, acts and suffers. If I compare that which is given in two different acts of reflection, say a perception of birds, and a recollection of a walk, I can focus upon that which has changed, namely the intentional acts, but I can also focus upon that which remains identical, namely the subjectivity of experience. Secondly, the formulation suggests that if self-awareness were merely a matter of the awareness which an experience had of itself, we would be dealing with a non-egological or subjectless type of self-awareness. But, as I hope to have made clear, this suggestion is mistaken, since it overlooks the egocentricity involved in first-personal givenness. (For which reason the initial Gurwitschian definition of the difference between an egological and a non-egological theory also turned out to be too crude). Thus, my conclusion is that there is selfhood or ipseity involved whenever there is self-awareness. And there is self-awareness not only when I realize that *I* am perceiving a candle, but whenever I am acquainted with an experience in its first-personal mode of givenness, that is whenever there is a 'what it is like' involved with its inherent 'quality' of *myness*. As Flanagan puts it: "...all subjective experience is self-conscious in the weak sense that there is something it is like for the subject to have that experience. This involves a sense that the experience is the subject's experience, that it happens to her, occurs in her stream."(Flanagan, 1992: 194). Needless to say if this is true it has some obvious consequences for the attribution of both self and self-awareness to infants and animals (cf. Husserl, 1973d: 173). But it is just as obvious that there are also higher forms of self-awareness which the newborn infant (and most, if not all, animals) lacks, for instance the apperceptive self-awareness mentioned above.¹⁰

Notes

1. For a criticism of the reflection theory cf. Zahavi 1999.
2. Sartre, 1936: 21-23. Referring to Husserl's investigations in *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*, Sartre mentions in passing that the *Längsintentionalität* unites the chain of retentions, but he does not elaborate on this (Sartre, 1936: 22).
3. Husserl, 1985: 193, 1973b: 184, 1952: 252, 350, 1973c: 151. For a profound investigation of Husserl's notion of *life* cf. Montavont, 1999.
4. Henry, 1963: 580-581, 1965: 53, 1989: 55. For the very same reason, it is bizarre to argue against an egological theory of self-awareness by pointing out that pre-reflective self-awareness is a passive, given state which precedes all egological initiative (Henrich, 1970: 276). The very same thing can be said about our selfhood. To be a self in the most basic sense is a gift, the result of a happening (*Ereignis*), and not something that we decide to become (Henry, 1966: 31).
5. Space does not allow me to show this in detail, but I think this account is easily compatible with the Gibsonian notion of an ecological self and with his idea about the way in which the different sensory modalities provide us with self-specifying information. Cf. Gibson, 1986: 115, 126.
6. Husserl, 1973b: 248, 1962: 207, 1952: 277. In his repeated characterization of the ego as a *pole or center of action and affection*, Husserl also calls attention to the ego's function as a *structuring principle or*

principle of focus (Husserl, 1952: 310, 1962: 315). If we look at experiences such as concentrating on a task, making a decision, suffering a slight, feeling ashamed, scolding somebody, these experiences do not only entail a reference to an object, but also a reference to the subject as the *agent* or *patient* of the act. And ultimately, an adequate investigation of egological consciousness would have to undertake a detailed taxonomy, since the precise character of the ego-involvement differs from act-type to act-type. The ego is present in voluntary acts in a different way than in involuntary acts just as one must distinguish the egological character of, for instance, experiences where I am formally present such as perceptions or recollections, experiences where I am emotionally engaged and responding with feelings of joy, indignation or hatred, and acts that I am responsible for and the author of (cf. Hart, 1992: 68-69).

7. Husserl, 1973b: 318, 1962: 208, 1966: 309-310. Cf. Fink, 1992: 114, 117. In fact, Husserl more specifically speaks of the importance of presentifying acts, i.e. acts involving a sort of self-displacement. I have chosen to downplay that part of his theory, since Marbach gives an excellent account in his article in this volume.

8. Cf. Marbach, 1974: 117-119, Bernet, 1985: xiv. As Bernet has pointed out, Husserl's notion of a pure ego cannot simply be taken as a manifestation and confirmation of his adherence to a metaphysics of presence, since Husserl only introduced the pure ego the moment he started taking intentional acts characterized by self-division, self-absence and self-alienation seriously (Bernet, 1994: 303-304).

9. Let me stress that this should not be taken as an argument in favor of Sartre's thesis concerning the ego being a product of reflection. It is true that reflection confronts us with an emphatic type of I-consciousness, but this is due to the identity across difference which it reveals, and not to the self-objectivation peculiar to it. Moreover, whereas Sartre claimed that reflection presents us with a consciousness of I, and not with an I-consciousness, since the appearing ego was the object and not the subject of reflection, it is in fact the entire process of reflection which is egological (Kern, 1975: 65-66). When I reflect, I am not simply confronted with some indefinite individual who perceives something. If I did, I would not say 'I perceive a black billiard ball', but 'Somebody perceives a black billiard ball'. By saying 'I', I am affirming the identity between the reflecting and the reflected subject.

10. Speaking of infants, results from contemporary developmental psychology seem to corroborate the thesis I have defended above. Until recently it was customary to claim that the infant initially lived in a kind of *adualism* where there were no distinction between self, world, and other. Thus 'adualism,' 'primary narcissism' or 'symbiosis' were terms used to describe the first period of the infant's life, a life where there were not yet supposed to be any boundary between experience and reality, not yet any differentiation between self and non-self (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969: 22). Thus, it was assumed that the infant were originally incapable of distinguishing itself from the caregiver, not only in the obvious sense that it were unable to *conceptualize* the difference between self and other, but in the sense that the infant existed in a "state of undifferentiation, of fusion with mother, in which the 'I' is not yet differentiated from the 'not-I' and in which inside and outside are only gradually coming to be sensed as different." (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975: 44. Cf. Spitz, 1983: 217, 249). This state of symbiosis was then assumed to be the milieu from which the infant gradually separated itself in order to reach a sense of the difference between self and other, only thereby acquiring self-awareness. This traditional hypothesis, which mirrors the views I have been criticizing above, since it takes the infant's experience to be initially impersonal and anonymous has been rejected by dominant positions in contemporary developmental psychology. On the basis of numerous experimental data it is now assumed that the infant already from birth begins to experience itself, and that it never passes through a period of total self/other indifferenciation. As both Stern and Neisser have argued, there is no symbiotic-like phase, and there exists no systematic and pervasive confusion between the child's experience of self and other, nor between the child's experience of the other and the world (Neisser, 1988: 40, Stern, 1983: 51, Stern, 1985: 10, Butterworth, 1995: 90). However, although this conclusion seems to corroborate my criticism of the non-egological position, it also raises questions of its own, particular when it concerns the way in which the infant is supposed to be able to distinguish between self and other. Stern has suggested that the infant is not initially overwhelmed by a surge of unstructured sensations, but that it on the contrary has inborn capabilities which permit it to discriminate different gestalt constellations of stimuli in such a fashion that it can distinguish the patterns of stimuli that only arise on the occasion of its own actions or mental processes from the patterns that belong to the movement and actions of particular others (Stern,

1983: 56-62, 1985: 7, 65, 67). It is obvious, however, that this account is insufficient. Even if the infant is able to distinguish between different constellations in such a way that no confusion takes place, this does not answer the key question: How does the infant 'identify' one of these experiential configurations as *itself*? But, of course, if one is forced to ask this question, thereby implying that self-awareness is the result of a successful criterial self-identification, something is wrong. The infant does not first scrutinize a specific experience and subsequently identify it as its own. To suggest something like that is to commit the error of conceiving of self-awareness in terms of criterial object-identification. To put it differently, the problem of self-awareness is not primarily a question of a specific 'what', but of a unique 'how'. It does not concern the specific content of an experience, but its unique mode of givenness. As a consequence, even prior to any conceptual discrimination between self and world or self and other, the child is self-aware due to the unique first-personal mode of givenness of its experiences, that is, due to the intrinsic self-manifesting character of its consciousness. This is a fact that Stern perhaps realizes himself, since he acknowledges that the infant's (direct and immediate) experience of proprioception and volition is of crucial importance (Stern, 1983: 65).

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